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FOR ALL THE BEAUTIFUL SHADES OF YOU: how race, gender, and embodiment shape the retail beauty work

Borzoo, Sepideh

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FOR ALL THE BEAUTIFUL SHADES OF YOU: how race, gender, and
embodiment shape the retail beauty work

by

Sepideh Borzoo

A THESIS

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Abstract

In my dissertation, I examine various forms of subordination as well as resistance along the multiple axes of identities experienced by marginalized women of colour in the beauty industry. I specifically focus on how employees navigate their positions in the retail division of cosmetic industry, both in large chain stores owned by white men and in small entrepreneurial companies owned by women of colour. Using qualitative methods —in-depth-interviews with 30 women working in the beauty stores, and discourse analysis of the social media content produced by my focal companies, I show how gender and race act as organizing structure of women’s work experiences in the business of beauty in conjunction with sexualities and immigration status. In the big box stores, the gendered and racialized processes in organizations shape and reconfigure the subjectivities of their employees. I underscore that in these stores, women employees’ personhoods, including their embodied and emotional qualities, are governed and reconstructed under, direct and indirect, organizational control. Gender discourses are activated in this feminized occupation through specific organizational policies as well as the intangible organizational culture recreated through customer-employee interactions. Bringing sexuality and class on the same level of analysis as gender, I show how hierarchy, not only between women and (gay) men, but among women with various immigration statuses, is legitimized within the aesthetic economy. Focusing on beauty companies run by Indigenous, Black, white, and immigrant women of colour entrepreneurs, I show how deploying marginal positionalities under conditions of immigration status, gender, and race marginalization serve not only to redefine these women’s identities as empowered, but also to decenter masculinity and whiteness in organizational culture through their leadership style. Located in the Canadian context, my research shows how women’s work within the

business of beauty traverses across intersectional experiences of Indigenous, Black, white, and immigrant women of colour.

Keywords: Beauty Industry; Racialization; Gender and Embodiment; Work and Organization; Entrepreneurship

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

As an international student of color with a legal but uncertain immigration status, my options to access financial resources over the past six years of living in Canada have often been limited. With the onset of the COVID pandemic, I was thrown into a severe state of anxiety as international students were excluded from financial support programs. With Canadians trying to self-quarantine and millions of people getting infected, the “dirty” front-line service jobs became open for people of color, specifically new immigrants of color with no previous Canadian work experience (Banerjee and Thomas 2022). While many small businesses and companies had to follow the lockdown and stay-at-home mandates across Canada, some essential retailers stayed open. That’s how my interaction with North American retail setting began. Working as a part-time sale associate provided me with a deeper insight into the gendering as well as racializing processes that shape employees who work in the retail sector. While I never got the opportunity to work in more upscale beauty companies such as Sephora for lacking Canadian work experiences as well as the aural and physical aesthetics such as being an English native-speaker and (the unwritten rule of) fitting into Eurocentric beauty constructs (Williams and Connell 2016) , my work experience in various retail settings gave this research a more clear direction. This work experience also provided me a better understanding of how the business of beauty, often presumed to be luxurious, takes different shapes across race and gender divides while embedded within the same colonial and capitalist economy.

My dissertation, therefore, is inspired by my personal investment in understanding how organizations and workplaces shape the experiences of women of color. This research is spurred by my

intellectual urge to explore how gendered and racialized processes of work and organizations within the business of beauty have further complicated the experiences of these women.

The beauty industry, colonialism, and capitalism: An intertwined history

The beauty industry is one of the most traditional emblems of Eurocentrism rooted in colonial epistemology. The practice of beautifying and ornamenting the body has been historically intertwined with colonialism and the anthropocentric ways of connecting to the society as well as beautifying/fashioning the body (Wynter and Scott 2000). Anthropocentric epistemology is built upon the supremacy of human beings over any living being including animals and nature (Kopnina et al. 2018). In accordance with this Eurocentric way of knowing, any form of beauty and beautification outside “Western philosophical tradition,” as Elhichou (2021: 218) puts it, will be dismissed as “ugly” or undesirable. From a holistic perspective, the colonial dynamics based upon which the entire system operates come to light, ranging from human labor exploitation (e.g., low- wage, poor working condition, child labor) (Bliss 2017; Liao 2016; Yang 2014) and its detrimental impact on the environment (e.g., ocean chemical pollution, plastic pollution, air pollution, animal cruelty) (Frantzeskos 2022; Malkan 2007; Rogula-Kopiec et al.2019; Zota and Shamasunder 2017), to the racism and colorism embedded within the representation of beauty (Jha 2015; Phoenix 2014). Entrenched in the capitalist economy, exploitive extraction of natural resources and labor make up the politics of the beauty industry to this day, through the exploitive use of natural resources that it sees as infinite and cheap labor of women of color as the ideal pliant workforce to grease the wheels of the industry (Banerjee and Connell 2018; Liao 2016).

What we witness today as free-market ideology and global capitalist economy have their roots in colonial/racial hierarchy between the mainstream/central market and the peripheral market segments (Elhichou, 2021; Wallerstein 1979). The historical documentations of the beauty and cosmetic industry in the North American context shows the extent to which the industry is built on the same central/peripheral divide with the most lucrative beauty and cosmetics institutions located in the Global North and the Global South being the supplier of natural resources and cheap labor (Bliss 2017; Jones 2010). A similar colonial hierarchy has historically existed within the beauty business in the Global North. This hierarchy exists between white businessmen dominating the mass capitalist market which heavily relies on the Eurocentric episteme and people of color, specifically women of color business owners, who are pushed to the margins as their brands and products are not considered assimilatory to the Western and Eurocentric viewing of the world (Gill 2010; Piess 1999; Phipps and Prieto 2018).

The overrepresentation of women in feminized and female dominated fields is often derived from the unpaid labor they historically performed within their families and communities (Adams 2010; Kang 2010). Feminized professions and industries have often been socially associated with lower status, autonomy, and pay, and often require embodied labor, closer contact with clients, and hands-on care (Adams 2003, 2010; Cohen and Wolkowitz 2018; Irvine and Vermilya 2010). Bodily labor and emotional labor have been the key components of feminized occupations due to the cultural associations of bodily touch and emotion with women and femininity (Cohen and Wolkowitz 2018; Sanders 2005). Much like other feminized industries, the predominance of women in the cosmetic and beauty industry was derived from the work they traditionally performed at home, for themselves and their families, including doing makeup (Gamber 1998; Kang 2010). What distinguishes the beauty industry from the other feminized fields is the crucial role that women, specifically women of color, played in the

industry, not only as consumers and workers but also as agents of change since its early stages (Peiss 1999; Jones 2010).

The historical documentations of the beauty and cosmetic industry in the North America show that women business owners achieved high level of success prior to emergence of mass market and capitalist economy (Byrd and Tharps 2014; Peiss 1998, 1999; Plitt 2000; Schweninger 1990). Selling beauty products, specifically hair products, by Black women within the Black community could be traced back to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Baird 2021; Phippes and Prieto 2018; Harvey 2005). The increase in the number of Black entrepreneurs during the early twentieth century in the US, according to Boyd (2000), was a result of their exclusion from the labor market. Oppressed communities in response to racial segregation and in search for means of livelihood during the great repression in the US became “survival entrepreneurs.” (Boyd 2000) Within the beauty industry, Black women survival entrepreneurs targeted and provided service to the already accessible Black community. With the white mainstream industry avoiding catering to Black women customers, Black women, with access to an untapped customer base, created a niche within the industry that provided services to a population excluded by the mainstream industry (Harvey 2005). An entry into the business of beauty allowed Black women to earn a livelihood through the existing demand within the community for beauty services from Black women who, as Phippes and Prieto (2018: 39) write, “perceived that maintaining a well-groomed appearance was a necessity for securing employment.” Urban growth and migration during this period of history have been also highlighted as important contributing factors in women entering the beauty industry as low-wage workers such as hairdressers, manicurists, and cosmetic sales associates (Kessler-Harris 2003; Peiss 1999). Women also played crucial roles in the industry as manufacturers as well as distributors of the beauty and cosmetic goods (Peiss 1999, 1998). Annie Turnbo-Malone (1869-1957),

Turnbo Malone (1869 –1957) and Madam C.J. Walker (1867-1919) are among the most notable Black women entrepreneurs who manufactured hair and cosmetic products for Black women and recruited other Black women in their businesses (Harvey 2005; Peiss 1998; Phillips 2003; Rooks 1996). These American beauty business owners made a profound impact on Canadian Black women entrepreneurs in the business of beauty. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, institutional racism in the Canadian Society left self-employment as one of the few opportunities for communities of color (Thompson 2019). African Canadians deployed their entrepreneurial resources to build their status in a racialized society. Much like in the U.S., the business of haircare offered Black Canadian women an opportunity to both create jobs for their communities and resist Eurocentric beauty ideals (Thompson 2019).

Entrepreneurs of color in North America, mainly working-class immigrants, or Black women from marginalized backgrounds, began occupying space at the periphery of the beauty and cosmetic market (Peiss 1998; Thompson 2019; Jones 2008). Starting from marginalized and disadvantaged social positions, most of these women founded salons or home-based small companies operating on door-to-door methods of promotion and delivery of products that required little capital (Manko 1997; Peiss 1998; Thompson 2019). Pioneering in modern franchising methods such as direct selling, women recruited other women and community members into their companies (Peiss 1999). Black women were specifically successful in deploying this strategy. Madam J. Walker, for instance, was one of the prominent Black beauty entrepreneurs who would use the door-to-door strategy to train Black women to maintain their hair and recruit direct sellers and sales agents for her company (Prieto and Phipps 2019). Beauty salons within Black American communities turned into a predominant space wherein Black business owners would hire and train other Black women through shop apprenticeship (Blackwelder 2003). These entrepreneurs in the beauty industry tried to be the agents of change in the

landscape of the industry (Baird 2021; Gill 2010; Jones 2017; Phipps and Prieto 2018). Through entrepreneurship, the Black beauty industry has historically served as mediators for Black communities as they facilitated Black women's inclusion into the mainstream white world through manufacturing skincare, haircare, and cosmetic products for specifically Black women (Phipps and Prieto 2018; Peiss 1998). "Creating social value" and contributing to the development of the community is what, according to Phipps and Peirto (2018: 42), make these pioneering Black women social entrepreneurs. As social entrepreneurs, these beauty business owners contributed to the development of the community by creating job opportunities for community members, fostering self-love and racial pride, and most importantly, creating a space for increasing political awareness and activism among Black women (Gill 2010; Phipps and Prieto 2018). Since the growth of women owned enterprise within the beauty industry, shared experience and the social positionality of the owner became one of the important commercial strategies. Here, race played an important role in the way companies represented themselves to gain authority and legitimacy. White beauty culturists and entrepreneurs attempted to identify with white elite women through detaching themselves from their social class-based background as working-class individuals, such as the case of Elizabeth Arden or Helena Rubinstein, to illustrate the "American myth of self-making and individual mobility" (Peiss 1999: 80). Unlike white women entrepreneurs who attempted to adopt a high-society image, Black women beauty entrepreneurs would deeply embed their businesses in the collective history and experiences of American Black communities (Phipps and Prieto 2018). In her speech at the 13th Annual Convention of the National Negro Business League in Chicago in 1912, Walker shared her background: "I am a woman who came from the cotton fields of the South. From there I was promoted to the washtub. From there, I was promoted to the cook kitchen. And from there, I promoted myself into the business of manufacturing hair goods and preparations. I have built my

own factory on my own ground.”¹ The importance of race in creating two opposite and segregated trajectories for white women entrepreneurs versus Black women has been widely documented (Peiss 1998, 1999; Phipps and Prieto 2018). The business of beauty had often taken a political turn for Black entrepreneurs and beauty culturists. Profit-making, for these women, has mingled with collective advancement and more far-reaching social and political purposes (Black 2004; Bundles 2002; Gill 2010; Peiss 1998, 1999; Phipps and Prieto 2018; Trawick 2011). The racially segregated industry made Black beauty business owners tied to ethnic markets and direct selling. While white women business owners had more access to mainstream advertising and networks, it was community as well as the church that played an important role in advocating for Black women’s businesses (Gill 2010; Rogers 2009). The historical documentation of the beauty industry in the US shows the extent to which the industry remained racially segregated until the late twentieth century (Baird 2021; Peiss 1999).

After World War I, the cosmetics mass market and big box chain stores, headed by men, proliferated and started to sell beauty products to women. With the growth of capitalist economy and thereby emergence of mass production and mass markets, as well as new methods of advertising and marketing in the early twentieth century, women entrepreneurs lost their power over the industry and were pushed to the margins (Peiss 1998, 1999). “By 1929,” as Peiss (1998:98) writes, “new cosmetic firms primarily led by men, embraced these methods to create a mass market and sell beauty products to all women.” Claude Hopkins, Carl Weeks, and eventually Max Factor are among those who hustled into the trade and were able to find their way more easily into the system of retail distribution and modern and national advertising compared with the women beauty entrepreneurs (Peiss 1998; Leah 1993).

¹Records of the National Negro Business League, Part I, Annual Conference Proceedings and Organizational Records, National *Negro Business League 1900-1919*, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

“Mass market manufacturers — mainly men,” as Peiss (1999: 104) continues, “moved comfortably within the regular system of wholesale and retail distribution.” Oglesby (1937) in her historical review of fashion careers mentions how the ownership of small fashion companies once owned by women was passed to mostly businessmen during the first half of twentieth century.

Businessmen, however, needed the knowledge of femininity and women’s habits to attract women customers, and hence hired women to “translate beauty to business” (Peiss 1999: 133). White women, therefore, started staffing cosmetic stores, sales positions, advertising, and media companies (Scanlon 2020; Peiss 1999). By the first half of the twentieth century, the cosmetic industry had become one of the largest and most profitable industries in the US (Jeacle 2006; Leah 1993). Jeacle (2006) in a historical documentation of the business of beauty identified the rise of department stores as important contributing factors in thriving the industry. While beauty products have often been stocked in drugstores and grocery stores, department stores were for the more premium or luxury segment of the cosmetic market. According to Reekie (1993: 148-9, cited in Jeacle 2006: 93):

Although cosmetics had been worn by fashionable American women without stigma from the late nineteenth century, department stores made them widely available and more socially acceptable to relatively provincial markets. Lipstick, powder compacts, powdered and cream rouge, liquid face powder, vanishing cream, eyebrow pencils and astringents were, by the late 1920s, part of the department store’s standard cosmetic counter.

Department stores, therefore, played an important role in enhancing the social respectability of cosmetic products. Compared with other segments such as jewelry and fashion, cosmetics have

reported top sales until the late twentieth century in the UK and the US (Jeacle 2006). In her documentation of the historical role of Canadian department stores between the late nineteenth and mid twentieth centuries, Belisle (2011) highlighted the role of department stores in the construction of the Eurocentric beauty culture in Canada. While serving a wide range of customers of diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds, Hudson's Bay, owned by white men, played a pivotal role in advancing white beauty ideals and culture. Belisle (2011) spotlights how white Canadian women were cherished and advertised as the ideal image of modern consumers whereas Indigenous and Black people were portrayed as primitives and laborers respectively which perpetuated racial hierarchy and the colonialist ideology of white supremacy.

Although the industry remains racially segregated, the mass-market cosmetic industry tried to cut across the racial divide (Baird 2021). Whereas the American beauty industry began to change after the World War I, Canada's beauty industry remained racially segregated until the second half of the twentieth century (Thompson 2019). In the US, by the mid-twentieth century and with the growth of mass market, white owned companies and chain stores found profit in the Black beauty market and tried to cut across the racial divide through displaying cosmetics products specifically for Black women (Baird 2021; Craig 2017 Jones 2010; Peiss 1999; Phipps and Prieto 2018). Businesswomen and women entrepreneurs remained in a disadvantaged position in the mass market due to increased competition, high-priced distribution and advertising which demands greater capital (Peiss 1999). This also coincided with the changes in the immigration laws in the mid and late twentieth century which created waves of immigration from the Global South to the Global North (Reimers1983). The international flow of migration changed the dynamics of the capitalist economy by not only creating a new market that the

industry could cater to but also cheap labor for the emerging service sector (Foster and Harris 2005; Perriton 2009; Blackmore 2006).

The relocation of industrial manufacturing in the Global South and the dominance of the service sector in the Global North in late twenty first century generated the demand for low paid service beauty workers in large cosmetic chain stores. This resulted in the influx of immigrant women of color in the low-wage sector of the service industry in the Global North (Casanova 2011; Cranford 2012; Banerjee et al. 2020; Jenkin 2019; Kang 2010; Lidola 2014). Women of color who joined the beauty industry in the service sector had to adhere to the Western beauty standards forcing them to change their appearances and put on normative displays of white femininity for their work as part of their body labor (Kang 2010; Casanova 2011).

The transformations in beauty industry in Canada paralleled those in the U.S. Thompson (2019) in her historical documentation of the beauty industry in Canada shows how the history of Canadian beauty culture and its transformation over the twentieth century could be understood through examination of two contradictory waves of policy change. The first, marked by anti-racist immigration policies during the first half of the century, and the second marked by anti-racist policies from the second half of the twentieth century onward (Thompson 2019). The emergence of multiculturalism in 1960s at both policy and socio-cultural levels generated new immigration flows from the Global South. During the same time, the Canadian beauty market, including retail sector, began to denote the idea of multicultural beauty and anti-racist Black beauty through advertisements, modeling, and offering a wider range of products for women of color with darker skin shades (Peiss 1999; Thompson 2019). The immigration of gendered and racialized bodies of women of color from the Global Southern countries,

mostly West Indies, China, India, Iran, Philippines, and Mexico (Canada Statistics 2016) provided the industry with an ideal workforce that could also transform the racially exclusive landscape of the beauty industry.

While the role of women entrepreneurs of color has been documented by historians, their presence remained publicly invisible until the past few years. The 2020 Black Lives Matter movement created a rush within the beauty industry, including chain department stores, to give Indigenous, Black, and women of color (IBWOC) beauty brands and entrepreneurs more visibility and support through grants to help their business grow (Brown 2020). On the other hand, giant retailers from Sephora to those at the end of the hierarchy such as Walmart and Targets have increased their shelf spaces to Black-owned and people of color owned brands.

Over the past decades, sociologists and social scientists across disciplines have interrogated women's paid work that focuses on the bodies of others in their scholarship (Cohen and Wolkowitz 2018; Gürson 2021; Kang 2010; Twigg et al. 2011). The scholarship on bodywork/ labor has largely emerged from studies of beauty service work which focuses on transforming or improving the body, such as hairdressing, tattooing, waxing, and manicuring (Cohen and Wolkowitz 2018; Kang 2010; Ward et al. 2016). These jobs provide a context in which women enact beauty standards on both their own bodies and that of others (Black 2004; Gimlin 1996; Sharma and Black 2001; Simpson and Pullen 2018; Toerien and Kitzinger 2007; Wolkowitz 2018). There has been, however, relatively little research on the cosmetic industry and women's work in this industry. Scholarly articles have focused primarily on consumers of cosmetics and women's everyday makeup and appearance practices (e.g., Armstrong et al. 2009; Dellinger and Williams 1997; McCabe et al. 2020). Over the last two decades, researchers have

shifted the focus of their studies from consumers of beauty products to those who are hired to sell them (Johnston and Sandberg 2008; Lan 2003; Otis 2016). The characteristic of bodywork as a feminine preoccupation (Cohen and Wolkowitz 2018), and therefore a feminine occupation, positions women beauty workers as compatible with their femininity. The feminized and racialized workforce recruited into low-paying jobs of selling cosmetics is crucial to the functioning of the beauty economy. The beauty industry is an important site to study the intersection of gender and race because of the feminization of labor and clientele as well as racialization of the low-wage sector within the industry. It is a site to not only study how these organizations are gendered but also simultaneously racialized.

Given the important role that women of color played in the industry, the embodied experiences of women in the retail sector of the cosmetic industry have remained understudied, specifically in the Canadian context. This research is an attempt in filling the gap in the Canadian literature on work that suffers from a paucity of research on the beauty industry, women entrepreneurs and women of colors' embodied work experience. My research addresses these gaps and expands the literature on Canadian work with an intersectional analysis of two firm types that comprise the beauty industry, a large global retail business and small localized entrepreneurial businesses owned by women in Canada. Located in the American context, previous studies often reiterate the consistent racial segregation and the white-Black divide within the industry (Baird 2021; Craig 2002; Peiss 1999; Phipps and Prieto 2018). Located within the Canadian context, this study shows how women's work within the business of beauty goes beyond white/Black dichotomy and traverse across intersectional experiences of Indigenous, Black, white, and immigrant women of color. This study compares the giant and chain retail settings, owned primarily by white men, with entrepreneurial Canadian companies that are owned by women of color. I will focus on one of the upscale mass market retailers, Sephora, to study the role of

gender, class, immigration, and racial difference in the type of customer and correspondingly, workers and different types of services that they provide. Another part of this research is studying the local Canadian beauty and cosmetic companies which are owned and run by Indigenous, Black, white and immigrant women of color. This comparison provides an understanding of how the business of beauty provides women with intersectional marginalized positions defined by race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexualities, and immigration status, an opportunity to assert leadership not only in their communities but also in the larger social and political domain. This comparison serves the dual function of unveiling the institutional whiteness and inequalities embedded within the chain stores and offering an alternative perspective to the landscape of the beauty industry by highlighting the leadership practices, work culture, as well as subversive beauty practices performed by women of color in these local companies.

In this study, I examine the retail sector of the beauty industry and the experiences of women of color with a white institution and organizations of women of color within this industry. I build on four bodies of literature: 1) Commodification of emotions and corporeality; 2) Identity construction and entrepreneurship; 3) Representation of beauty and embodied intersectionality; 4) Critical whiteness through the lens of critical phenomenology and critical diversity studies. I bring together these bodies of literature to argue that understanding the selling cosmetic products as a feminized occupation, and cosmetic stores as a historically feminine space, is not limited to an understanding of gender dynamics alone but reflects the complicated ways in which gender is shaped by race, sexuality, and class. I deploy this body of literature to provide a macro level analysis of the beauty industry and the neoliberal economy of retail cosmetics as well as a micro-level analysis of the real, everyday consequences on the work experiences of women of color in this field. This chapter, thus, presents a review of the literature used in this dissertation.

In my conception of class, I move away from the Marxist analysis of class and adopt a Bourdieusian class analysis. Unlike the traditional Marxian class theory that conceive class inequality as a hierarchy of unequal economic capitals, Bourdieu's conceptualization of class domination is not confined to the economic status, i.e., income (Bourdieu 1977). By extension, while his conceptualization of class shares affinities with Marxist approach to class, it goes beyond economic criteria (Veenstra 2007). Social class, in Bourdieu's perspective, is identified by the possession and deployment of various capitals including economic capital but also cultural and social capitals. Classes, according to Bourdieu, are formed by groups of individual sharing similar circumstances:

One must therefore construct the objective class, the set of agents who are placed in homogenous conditions of existence imposing homogenous conditionings and producing homogenous systems of dispositions capable of generating similar practices; and who possess a set of common properties, objectified properties, sometimes legally guaranteed (as possession of goods and power) or properties embodied as class habitus (and, in particular, systems of classificatory schemes) (Bourdieu 1984:101).

In his conceptualization of class, Bourdieu incorporates various forms of capital, including economic capital, cultural capital, and social capital, based on which groups distinguish themselves from one another. In my research, I will discuss how my participants' educational background, social background, language skills, and their access to ethnic and racial resources can provide them class-relevant capital. According to Bourdieu, social space is built upon possession of various forms of capital through which class differences are manifested (Bourdieu 1984). In chapter 6, I will explain how women of color draw on their social background, racial identifiers of difference, and cultural resources

to maintain boundaries between themselves and the mainstream industry. In chapter 4, I will show how native English accent is a form of social capital through which second and third generation immigrants in interactive service positions maintain boundaries between themselves and employees in non-interactive positions with accented speech. Thus, I deploy the notion of class divides in my research, not as a reference to the distribution of income among my participants but primarily to their possession of cultural and social capital.

I begin with the literature on commodification of emotions and bodies of employees to explore how capitalist aesthetic economy derive value from various aspect of employee (Bohm 2003; Hancock and Tyler 2000; Hochschild 2012; Parker 2002; Phillips and Knowles 2012; Warhurst et al. 2000; Warhurst 2016; Williams and Connell 2010, 2016; Witz et al 2003). I deploy theories of identity construction and self-employment to understand the entrepreneurial vision and practices among Indigenous, Black, white, and immigrant women of color and to create an understanding of how these practices are framed and co-constituted by gender, race and class in a transnational context (Essers and Benschop 2007; Jenkin 2019; Lacy 2004; Meghji 2017; Purkaystha, 2005; Rollock et al. 2011, 2014). Furthermore, I use the intersectional scholarship on identity construction to explore the strategies that individuals holding marginalized social locations use to subvert these same marginalized identities and push back the systems of oppression. In addition, I discuss theories that help me analyze representation of the body and beauty as gendered and racialized, using specifically intersectional embodiment theories (Ahmed-Ghosh 2003; Balogun 2012; Gal and Kligman 2000; Mirza 2013). Finally, I built on the critical literature on whiteness through a lens of critical phenomenology as well as critical diversity theories to unveil the workplace dynamics in chain cosmetics stores and the beauty industry on a larger scale (Ahmed 2007; Puwar 2004; Schwarz and Lindqvist 2018; Yancy 2014).

This study is built on two-pronged qualitative methodology including in-depth interviews and social media discourse analysis. My purpose is to understand how intersectional identities of race, gender, class and other categories of difference play out in everyday interactions of marginalized people of color in the workplace. I conducted 30 interviews firstly with women and women of color salespeople working in Sephora (a total of 15) and women entrepreneurs in the business of beauty and their employees (a total of 15). To gain a deeper understanding of how women of color, immigrant women of color, and white women navigate their positions in the retail division of cosmetic industry, I conducted critical discourse analysis of social media content provided by my focal companies including the official websites, Instagram and Facebook pages.

Overview of the chapters

The dissertation is divided into seven chapters, including the introduction. Here is an overview of the chapters.

In chapter two, I describe the theoretical frameworks used in this research and explain why and how they are related to my research. I build on the feminist critique of service economy situated within aesthetic capitalism (Barber 2016; Entwistle and Mears 2013; Hancock and Tyler 2000, 2007; Hochschild 2012, 2011; Kang 2010, 2013) to expose the gendered, racialized, classed, and sexualized nature of the service interactive job, creating an unequal division of labor to further marginalize employees with multiple marginalized identities in the workplace. To understand and analyze the ways in which women entrepreneurs frame their business practices, visions, and leadership styles, I deploy the literature on self-employment among communities of color highlighting the notion of identity construction through a feminist intersectional lens. Building on this body of literature, I argue in my

study that multiple identities and marginalized social locations not only frame women of color's entrepreneurial practices, but also provide the women the resources to subvert their marginalized identities. I draw upon the literature on representation of beauty and intersectional embodiment to show the ways racialized and gendered bodies of women are a site through which intersecting axes of oppression/identities come into play. I also put Sara Ahmed's critical whiteness theory in conversation with critical diversity studies to spotlight women of colors' labor of diversity work mediated through their gendered and racialized bodies in both tiers of the industry and explain the embeddedness of whiteness in the beauty industry.

In chapter three, I present an enumeration of my methodologies. I describe the process of rapport building, sampling, and recruitment of participants and provide a detailed description of my sample. The chapter ends with a description of my epistemology, decolonial approach, and my standpoint as a researcher and the ways in which I negotiate my positionality and power relations in the context of my research.

In chapter four, I build on 15 in-depth qualitative interviews with women working in Sephora to explain how aesthetic subjectivities are reproduced under organizational control embedded within capitalist aesthetic economy. I discuss the role of organizational control in formation of employees' personhoods through regulation of their comportment, looks, voice, and speech and the psychological effect of this control on the employees' mental well-being. I then discuss how gender as well as implied heterosexuality are embedded in the employees' performance of aesthetic and emotional labor.

Chapter five brings together theories of critical whiteness theories (Ahmed 2007, 2009, 2012, 2018) and critical diversity theories through the lens of critical phenomenology, and embodied intersectionality (Mirza 2013, 2018) to show how women of color are called on to undertake the embodied labor of diversity work in both tiers of the industry, namely chain stores owned by white people and local companies owned by women, including women of color. I begin by examining the chain retail stores' engagement with the discourse of diversity and how it is reflected in daily interactions in organizations. I explain the impact of invisible norms of whiteness, reproduced through daily activities of employees and their interactions with managers, on employees of color. I then discuss the ways local companies and their employees are expected to engage with the mainstream discourse of diversity, directly or indirectly, and how they repoliticize the mainstream discourse of diversity.

In chapter six, I provide an analysis of interview narratives with women entrepreneurs on the outskirts of the beauty industry in Canada and social media content created by these local beauty/cosmetic companies. Informed by intersectional scholarship on boundary work (Lacy 2004; Meghji 2017; Rollock and et al. 2011; Yosso 2005) and the literature on intersectional representation of beauty (Balogun 2012; Huisman and Hondagneu-Sotelo 2005; Tate 2007, 2013), I attempt to provide an understanding of how the complexities of women's gender, racial, and class positionalities offer them resources to assert their racial and ethnic identities as a means to create alternative future of the beauty industry as well as the resources to enter the white dominant industry.

Chapter seven is built on identity construction scholarship and intersectional literature studying entrepreneurship and feminist leadership ethics as a way to provide an understanding of the ways women redefine and construct their identities through entrepreneurial leadership and management

practices. Looking at women's self-employment through an intersectional lens, I attempt to show how gender conflates with multiple axes of identity to shape their vision, goals, and business practices. This chapter starts with women's account of positioning and location along multiple axes of identity such as gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, and immigration. I will then discuss how this local business has created spaces wherein women of color could share their lived experiences of oppression and dialogue about race and gender inequalities. In the next sections, I show how impossible locations of participants as gendered and racialized have informed women's self-employment as a site for ethical practices such as connectivity, care and empathy, vulnerability, celebration of employee situatedness as well as community building and empowerment. I draw upon feminist leadership ethics (Binns 2008; Brown 2019; Fletcher 2004; Kark et al. 2012; Pullen and Vachhani 2021; Sinclair 1998) to portray women's attempt towards resignifying and revisiting masculine organizational culture by turning feminized attributes into a valuable source of strength. I also argue that women of colors' gendered racial identities create political possibilities for their leadership by changing the matrix of success, mentoring co-ethnics, and enhancing the awareness of injustice and discrimination within and outside their ethnic and/or racial communities.

In the concluding chapter, I spotlight my main findings throughout the dissertation and highlight the contribution of my findings to the larger body of literature. Further, I outline how my findings can provide an entry into the discussion about undoing regimes of inequality within the organizational context of the beauty business. I discuss how the organizational cultures in small companies can serve as a source of course correction in the overall scenario of institutionalized equitable practices and broader organizational policies and structures.

In summary, my dissertation centers the voices of women of color as they experience work in the beauty industry defined by white norms. The retail sector of the beauty industry, as a space to examine the intersection of race, gender, and class inequalities and dynamics has remained understudied. The work performed by frontline employees, mostly women of color or non-binary individuals, is low- paid and lacks social prestige. In addition to feminization and racialization, frontline occupations in the retail sectors of the cosmetic/beauty industry are deemed to have low status and fewer rewards. This group is a perfect case to investigate feminization and racialization of a profession. More importantly, it unveils the ways through which feminization and racialization are fused into the patterns of gender and racial segregation and exclusion. This is clearly highlighted by domination of white, including gay men in senior and high-status positions of my focal chain stores in particular and the industry in general.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

My dissertation seeks to understand the dynamics of retail cosmetic industry and unravels how selling cosmetic products as a feminized occupation and cosmetic stores as a historically feminine space is not limited to analyzing gender dynamics alone but reflects the complicated ways in which gender is shaped by race, sexuality, and class. To establish an argument that encapsulates the intersectional implication of a feminized profession, I delve into four bodies of literature simultaneously. These bodies of literature are: 1) Commodification of emotions and corporeality; 2) Identity construction and entrepreneurship; 3) Representation of beauty and embodied intersectionality; 4) Critical whiteness through the lens of critical phenomenology and critical diversity studies. I employ these bodies of literature to provide a macro level analysis of the beauty industry and neoliberal economy as well as a micro-level analysis of the real, everyday work experiences of women of color in this field. This chapter presents a review of the literature used in this dissertation.

I begin with a section on the commodification of emotions and bodies of employees to explore how the capitalist aesthetic economy derives value from various aspects of employees. Second, I present theories of identity construction and self-employment and argue that to understand the entrepreneurial vision and practices among women and (immigrant) women of color we need to explore how these practices are framed and co-constituted by gender, race and class in a transnational context. Furthermore, I discuss the intersectional scholarship on identity construction to explore the strategies that individuals holding marginalized social locations use to subvert their marginalized identities. Third,

I discuss theories that help me analyze representations of the body and beauty as gendered as well as racialized, specifically by using intersectional embodiment theories. Fourth, I present the critical literature on whiteness through a critical phenomenology lens and simultaneously draw upon critical diversity theories to unveil the workplace dynamics in chain cosmetics stores and the beauty industry on a larger scale.

Commodification of emotions and corporeality within capitalist aesthetic economy

As capitalism grew over time, control over the labor process also changed form (See, Bohm 2003; Bohm and Land 2012; Hardt and Negri 2004). The rise of service economy coincided with the development of what Bohm (2003) describes as aesthetic economy:

The aesthetic economy starts out from the ubiquitous phenomenon of an aestheticization of the real and takes seriously the fact that this aestheticization represents an important factor in the economy of advanced capitalist societies (2003: 72).

To expand the traditional dichotomy of use/exchange value, Marxist scholars have included a third value, namely staging value (Bohm 2003) or symbolic value (Baudrillard 1996) as a means to conceptualize the considerable emphasis placed on landscaping of organizational artifacts including employees' bodies in the aesthetic economy (Gagliardi 1996; Hancock and Tyler 2007). Bohm further explains aesthetic economy as a certain stage in the development of capitalism, which is based upon desires, rather than the satisfaction of material needs:

At a certain stage of development in which the material needs of society are generally satisfied, capitalism must bet upon another type of needs, which calls for the appropriate term desires [...]. Desires are those needs which, far from being allayed by their satisfaction, are only intensified. [...] that are directed toward the staging, and hence the intensification, of life. There are no natural limits to presentation, glamour and visibility. Each level, once reached, demands instead its further intensification. Because growth belongs intrinsically to capitalism, when capitalist production attains a particular stage of development typified by the fundamental satisfaction of people's material requirements, it must henceforth explicitly turn to their desires. The economy thus becomes an aesthetic economy (Bohm 2003: 73).

By turning to desire as an ever-intensifying resource, aesthetic economy produces aesthetic value centered around the aesthetic component of commodities in a consumerist society. By extension, the structure of needs in this phase of capitalism is transformed in a sense that production of commodities rests upon desire, which, in contrast to material needs, increases when fulfilled. Aesthetic value is produced through stylizing and landscaping organizational artifacts, including employees' embodied subjectivities as well as organizationally appropriate ways of performing identity (see Hancock and Tyler 2000; Parker 2002; Phillips and Knowles 2012).

Studying how the material body of the employee presents as a site upon which organizations situated within the aesthetic economy construct and communicate their desired identities has been central to critical gender scholarship over the past two decades (See Hancock and Tyler 2000, 2007; Hochschild 1983; Warhurst et al. 2000; Warhurst 2016; Williams and Connell 2010, 2016; Witz et al 2003). The critical gender scholarship on service work within the aesthetic economy has been

dominated by Hochschild's emotional labor paradigm (1983) and subsequently, aesthetic labor introduced by Warhurst and Nickson (2001). This body of literature, inspired by Hochschild's conceptualization of emotional labor (1984) in her pivotal study on flight attendants, highlights how employees are required to regulate their emotions as a way to construct and perform an identity construed as organizationally appropriate. In her groundbreaking study of the airlines industry, Hochschild (1983:163) highlighted the hidden job demands in interactive service work by articulating the term emotional labor as "the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display". She alluded to the performance of emotional labor as gendered, based on which women and men engage in different forms of management of emotions rooted in cultural expectations. In this study, I borrowed Hochschild's notions of surface acting and deep acting to show how employees use emotional labor strategies (both deep and surface acting) in their everyday working lives through emotional dissonance as well as internalization of organizational/societal emotional rules. According to Hochschild, surface acting refers to a dissonance between the displayed emotion and the emotions the employee has. With deep acting, the employee attempts to rouse feelings aligned with organizational display rules (Hochschild 1983). She writes:

Surface and deep acting in a commercial setting, unlike acting in a dramatic, private, or therapeutic context, make one's face and one's feelings take on the properties of a resource. But it is not a resource to be used for the purposes of art, as in drama, or for the purposes of self-discovery, as in therapy, or for the pursuit of fulfillment, as in everyday life. It is a resource to be used to make money (1983:55)

As Böhme (2003) discusses in his critique of aesthetic, consumerist economy, every aspect of the employee's being, including their emotions, becomes an asset for a capitalist firm to derive profit from. Employees' emotions have found exchange value in the capitalist market. Emotional labor has been widely examined in research on service work, specifically in the retail and hospitality sectors. This area of research highlights expectations for employees to develop relationships with clients and the ways in which these might reify gendered division of labor in the workplace (Nixon 2009; Ward et al. 2020; Nickson et al. 2003; Williams 2003). Customers' expectations play a significant role in reactivating gendered scripts and reinforcing gendered division of labor within the context of gendered services (Adib and Gerrier 2003; Forseth 2005; Kang 2010).

Subsequently, critical gender scholars, focusing on gender as subtext in service work, extended the notion of emotional labor through adding an embodied and material perspective to the mainstream theory. This was further achieved by introducing the notion of aesthetic labor (Warhurst et al., 2000; Lan 2003), body labor (Kang 2010), and body work (Wolkowitz 2002; Twigg et al. 2011; Cohen 2011; Wolkowitz et al. 2013) to bring attention to the more invisible and often unpaid bodily labor of employees on their own body as well as the bodies of clients. According to Witz and colleagues (2003), Hochschild's notion of emotional labor does not fully capture the embodied labor that workers often engage in to create, manage, and display organizationally appropriate feelings. The terms aesthetic labor and bodily/ body labor emerged in response to the absence of an analysis of embodiment in the scholarly literature on gendered service work. Aesthetic labor scholarship primarily originated from scholars observing an increasing demand for stylized and good-looking employees, specifically women, to serve customers in retail settings (Lan 2003; Gruys 2012; Nickson et al. 2003; Pettinger 2004; Warhurst et al., 2000; Warhurst and Nickson 2001). Indeed, aesthetic labor is primarily manifested

as the aestheticization of body, comportment, and voice by employee as a part of the labor process to appeal to customers. As Warhurst and Nickson (2007:107) write:

Aesthetic labor is the employment of workers with desired corporeal dispositions.... However, and importantly, employers then mobilize, develop and commodify these dispositions through processes of recruitment, selection, training, monitoring, discipline and reward, reconfiguring them as ‘skills’ intended to produce a ‘style’ of service encounter that appeals to the senses of customers, most usually visually or aurally.

Influenced by Bourdieu’s (1984) notions of habitus, Warhurst and Nickson (2009) define aesthetic labor as a set of dispositions based upon which individuals act. Such dispositions are used and mobilized by employers to increase their profitability. Subsequently, other scholars deployed the notion of aesthetic labor to highlight how social inequalities are reproduced through naturalization of hegemonic gender ideology. Pettinger (2004) discussed how different tiers of brands demand employees to perform various forms of aesthetic labors and stereotypical femininity depending on the customer base that the brand is catering to and its social class identities. By extension, employees’ “embodied competencies” (Warhurst et al. 2000: 4) become an asset based upon which organizations reconstruct and display their identity, often as gendered (Pettinger 2004). Similarly, Barber (2016), in her study of women hairstylists serving heterosexual men in hair salons, shows how women employees, regardless of their gender identities, are expected to display stereotypical hetero femininity in their interactions with men clients, thereby legitimizing gender and sexual hierarchies. To create commercial value, companies situate employees as their “embodied billboards” (Frew and McGillivray 2006:166) through harnessing traditional gender norms. Aestheticizing bodies as a part of service work has remained unpaid, despite

being laborious and costly in the long run for employees (Hancock and Tyler 2000; Williams and Connell 2016).

The existing scholarship on aesthetic labor has highlighted how the aesthetic economy has legitimized job segregation based on employees' gendered, racial, classed, and sexual identities. The literature has shown how women employees feel the pressure of performing exaggerated femininity, hence maintaining hegemonic femininity by engaging in embodied aesthetic labor (Hochschild 1983; Hall and Broek 2012; Hancock and Tyler 2007; Pettinger 2004). Bringing attention to hegemonic gender aesthetics, the literature unveiled how gender is *written into* service organizations, resulting in the perpetuation of gendered inequalities in the workplace (Acker 1990). Yet, the interactive sector of service work happened to sort women racially into hierarchies with women of color finding themselves working in the backrooms while white women, as faces of the company, are assigned positions that require face-to-face interaction with customers (Adib and Guerrier 2003; Duffy 2005, 2007; Warhurst 2016; Williams and Connell 2016). In her historical study of care work during twentieth century, Duffy (2007) documents a racial hierarchy among women care workers in the service economy, with women of color predominantly occupying reproductive and more devalued sectors of paid care work including cleaning, cooking, and childcare, while white women were overrepresented in interactive service work. Distinguishing between reproductive labor and nurturant care work, she provided a historical and contextual analysis of distribution of caring as gendered as well as racialized (Duffy 2005). Exploring the intersection of gender with other categories of difference including class, ethnicity, race and nationality, Adib and Gerrier (2003) unveil the gendered and racialized hierarchies in the context of hotel work. In this article, the authors illuminate how positions requiring domestic skills such as chambermaiding are held by immigrant women, while positions which demand face-to-face interaction

with customers, and subsequently emotional labor such as reception work, are usually the domain of white women. This body of literature expands the idea of care as gendered from interactive service work towards care in a lower status, laborious, and non-interactive sector of the service industry, which is not only gendered but also racialized and classed. Warhurst (2016) suggests how aesthetic labor can not only be gendered and racialized but also classed. Building on this, Bourdieu's notion of symbolic violence discusses how working-class service workers are often excluded from interactive service positions due to lacking aural appeal. He writes (2016: 227):

Being working-class means having a skill deficit, and although these jobs are putatively working-class, employers justify not employing the working class in these retail and hospitality jobs because of this perceived deficit.

Putting stress on employee's speech, according to Warhurst (2016), is a subtle way to reproduce and maintain unequal social hierarchy among employees based upon which those at the bottom of the hierarchy are denied access to certain resources. Williams and Connell (2016) demonstrate this pattern in their work, which shows upscale retail stores recruit white middle-class women who serve white middle-class customers.

Additionally, critical feminist scholars have spotlighted the significance of sexuality in gendering organizational culture and processes, including worker-customer interactions (Adkins 2000; Barber 2016; Entwistle and Mears 2013; Kang 2013; Mears 2011; Stokes 2015). In her study of Korean manicurists, Kang (2013) discusses sexualization of body contact occurring in nail salons by certain customers, rendering workers vulnerable to "racialized sexualization". She refers to "racialized

sexualization” as a historical and contextual process of imbuing sexual connotations into body related services provided by immigrant women of color. In a different study, Entwistle and Mears (2013) for instance, show how women models shape their bodies to suit traditional hetero-feminine attributes, while gay male models engage in aesthetic labor and strategically perform (homo)sexuality to increase their employability as models on a daily basis. Similarly, in her study of high-service men salon, Barber (2016) shows how women employees perform heterosexual aesthetic labor and capitalize on their hetero-feminine gender identity to create a “hetero-masculinizing customer experience” (2016:627) for men customers in a space traditionally defined as feminine. The first upcoming empirical chapter in this dissertation contributes to this body of literature by showing how women are called on to perform heterosexual aesthetic labor to support organizational hetero-gendering of the brand. Simultaneously, (gay) men are expected to perform a non-normative gender identity to retain employability in these historically women-only spaces.

The notions of body labor and body work could also be considered as extensions of the notion of emotional labor through an accentuation of embodiment aspects of emotional management. While bodywork is often used as a general term to refer to any effort geared towards maintaining or improving others' bodies, body labor refers to labor performed on the body of others in exchange for money (Kang 2010; Cohen 2011). In her previously mentioned study of Korean nail salons, Kang (2010) articulates the notion of body labor which shifts the research lens away from the original conceptualization of performing emotions as a white, middle-class labor. Instead, she focuses on embodied emotional labor that women of color take on in the low-waged sector of the beauty industry. As a concept, body labor "emphasizes the management of commercialized embodied exchanges and thus examines feelings as they are related to the servicing of bodies." (Kang 2010: 21). Kang frames

body and emotional labor as intertwined with various forms of gender, race, and class inequalities by highlighting the types of emotional and body labor which is demanded of Korean manicurists in different tiers of salons that cater to customers of specific racial and class backgrounds. The results show that the salon providing services to upper class white women customers emphasizes a display of emotional attentiveness and provides physical pampering for clients. In contrast, manicurists in the salon serving mostly working and lower-middle-class African American women customers take on certain body labor that accommodate Black women customers' desire to display a unique and artistic sense of self (Kang 2010). Kang's (2010) study of Korean nail salons unravels the intersectional effects of structural constructs based on categories of social difference such as race, class, gender, and sexuality.

My study contributes to embodied emotional labor scholarship by investigating the company's demands as well as customer expectations of investment in the body, both of which are placed upon women retail workers in cosmetic stores, which reproduces employees as self-disciplining subjects. Drawing upon gender scholarship on emotional, body, and aesthetic labor, I show how organizational aesthetic regimes govern employees' labor on their own bodies and the ways through which they discipline each other's bodies in their everyday working lives.

Entrepreneurship and intersectional identity making

There is a significant body of literature that has explored identity work both at individual and organizational levels, primarily focused on identity work as a process of formation and reformation of the self. This functions as sense-making of past experiences and social positionalities (Alvesson

2010; Ashforth 2008; Banerjee 2022; Hatmaker 2013; Polzer and Caruso 2008; Weick et al. 2005). Scholarship on identity has primarily conceptualized one's engagement in the process of meaning making to negotiate the dissonance between self-identity and social identity (Goffman, 1959; Hatmaker, 2013; Watson 2008). Unfortunately, much research on identity making has failed to move beyond individual subjectivity and the process of meaning making at an individual level. In disregarding this level of analysis, identity scholarship fails to provide analysis of structures and processes within which individual practices of identity construction take shape.

Gender identity as a social construct has been conceptualized by West and Zimmerman's (1987) study on "doing gender" and later on by Butler's influential work on gender and the body (see Butler 1995, 1999, 2011). In *Bodies that Matter* (1993) and *Gender Trouble* (1999), Butler defines performativity in reference to the "constructedness" of social categories of gender in order to destabilize the conventionally accepted and taken for granted norms. Gender is constructed through repetition of actions, behaviours, and bodily gestures in line with conventionally defined feminine or masculine attributes as appropriate. Performativity, within the Butlerian framework, is not synonymous with performance, which refers to performing agents as autonomous and conscious. It is rather a disavowal of the idea of the agent as "standing outside of the discursive conventions by which we are constituted" (Butler 1995: 136). Identity is shaped and framed through a process of reiteration of norms in everyday life. Gender, as Butler (2020: 61) writes, "is instituted through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self." It is through the reiteration of gendered and/or racial performances that individuals turn into gendered and/or racialized beings and

construct, frame, and redefine their identities. By extension, identity is a “constructed social relation,” rather than a natural one (Gregson and Rose 2000: 436).

In its conceptualization of identity work, intersectionality takes the idea of constructedness of identity one step further to unveil, problematize, and disarm power “situated within multiple shifting identities and social locations” (Allison and Banerjee 2014: 70). The concern with unveiling and problematizing power in multiple identities and social locations made intersectionality an important framework for critical gender and race scholars studying identity work shaped by the intersecting inequities tied to gender, sexualities, class, race, ethnicity, immigration status, and other categories of difference (Anthias 2002; Barbera 2015; Banerjee et. al. 2020; Compton-Lilly et al. 2017; Essers and Benschop 2007; Jenkin 2019; Meghji 2017; Purkayastha, 2005; Ray 2018; Robert et al. 2008; Showers 2015; Wilkins 2012). For instance, in her study on African American hairstylists, Jenkin (2019) demonstrates how citizenship status defines Black west African immigrant women, Black American women’s performance of selves, and their practice of distancing themselves from one another. Situated within a racial and gendered hierarchy, Black women are engaged in othering each other based on national and citizenship differences, reifying the pre-existing systemic racism in the United States. Along similar lines, Showers’s (2015) study of identity making among West African immigrant nurses within the workplace shows how racial inequalities frame women’s boundary work and their construction of professional identity. This study documents how West African nurses perform professionalism and shield themselves against controlling images of African women as low-skilled workers in low-status occupations by distancing their occupation from both: 1) sectors deemed as low-skilled; and concurrently, from 2) their co-ethnics through avoiding institutions with high representation of West African women. In another study, Banerjee (2020) shows how occupation, immigration status,

gender, race, and class contribute to the construction of mothering identities among South Asian single mothers in ethnic enclaves. Intersectionality opens up new avenues to examine how identity is formed and constructed at the intersection of multiple positionalities. Building on the intersectional scholars of identity making, my research is trying to show how the self-employment behaviors of immigrant women and women of color is framed and co-constituted by gender, race and class in a transnational context, towards formation of the desired enterprise identity.

The intersectional scholarship on identity construction also explores the strategies that individuals holding marginalized social locations use to subvert their marginalized identities. Meghji's (2017) study of heterogeneity of the Black middle-class in Britain, for instance, highlights how they construct their identities within the poles of class and race. While for some, class and class-based social and cultural practices are considered as the most central to their identities (the class-minded pole), for others, race and Black cultural resources are the chief component of their identity (the ethno-racial autonomous pole). Lastly, the author conceptualizes strategic assimilation as a reference to those who constantly oscillate between the two poles of class and race. People employing strategic assimilation display affinity with their co-ethnic community, and, concurrently, attempt to assimilate into the white middle-class milieu. In a similar study, Lacy (2004) examines the assimilation trajectory of native-born Black middle-class in two suburban areas. Her study found that middle-class Black people with access to white spheres such as educational institutions and workplaces deliberately accentuate their racial identity through maintaining connections with Black communities, which she refers to as strategic assimilation. Similarly, Rollock and colleagues (2011) explore how middle-class Black people harness their cultural resources as tools for survival in a white dominant society. This research demonstrates how participants use their racial resources as well as their middle-classness to assimilate into the white

world and resist racial discrimination. Yosso's (2016) conceptualization of community cultural wealth, namely cultural wealth derived from communities of color, shifts the research lens away from communities of color, which were historically constructed as disadvantaged milieus wherein individuals lack necessary cultural capital for social mobility. Rather, looking through a lens of critical race theory, Yosso identifies the empowering characteristics of communities of color and their culture through various forms of capital including aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial, and resistant capital (Yosso 2016). Along the same lines, Banks (2010) documents how consumption of art among middle class Black people is geared towards advancement of Black culture. She shows how middle-class Black individuals view their act of sponsoring and consuming art produced by Black artists and Black cultural groups as a means of creating racial solidarity and communicating their racial belonging. Building on this body of literature, this study investigates how self-employed women of color intentionally spotlight their ethno-racial, and in some cases, classed identities to disrupt hegemonic discourses and assert their gendered, racial, and classed subjectivities within a hierarchal industry imbued with gender and racial stereotypes.

Intersectional scholarship exploring self-employment dynamics among communities of color have often highlighted the interplay of structure and agency (Essers and Benschop 2009; Rehn et al. 2013; De Clercq and Honig 2011; Banerjee 2019; Wingfield 2008; Wingfield and Taylor 2016; Valdez 2016). For instance, Valdez, in her 2016 study on middle-class Mexican entrepreneurs, examines how the intersecting dimensions of their identities shape their experiences. The research shows that men benefited from family ideology and traditional gender norms, which expected daughters to drop out of college and stay at home while sons had greater access to education. The interplay of gender and class therefore shape women's access to resources. While working-class women are expected to drop out of

school, children in the middle-class household are encouraged to get a college degree regardless of their gender. In addition, male entrepreneurs with wives and children have access to the unpaid labor of their wives for starting their business, bookkeeping, emotional support, and so forth. In laying out these findings, Valdez argues that the experiences of self-employed immigrants are not shaped merely by their ethnicity. Class, family ideology/structure, having access to entrepreneurial capital and family labor facilitate entrepreneurial activities of family members. Essers and Benschop's (2009) research on immigrant Muslim women entrepreneurs of Moroccan and Turkish origin in the Netherlands show that women use their multiple identities (religion and gender) to create spaces for their own individualism, honor, and entrepreneurship. In her study of self-employed Iranian women, Dallafar (1994) shows that access to entrepreneurial resources in immigrant communities is mediated by gender, for instance women business owners engage in more relational and emotional work like socializing in the community. In a study on spouses of highly skilled Bangladeshi men in Toronto who adopted diverse pathways to entrepreneurship through small businesses and home-based businesses to overcome credential barriers experienced by many such families, Akbar and Preston (2020) argue that women in these families are key to the economic survival of the family. The common theme in this body of literature is exploring self-employment through the lens of intersectionality. Deployment of multiple aspects of identities combined with self-employment create opportunities for women of color to use their ethnic/racial status to redefine masculine organizing style. Along similar lines, in her study on Black beauty salons, Wingfield (2008) highlights how multiple identities of working-class Black women business owners shape their entrepreneurial practices and decisions. In another study of Black entrepreneurship, Wingfield and Taylor (2016) highlight intersectional counter-framing as significant elements in forming Black self-employment practices. Drawing on Feagin's (2013) conceptualization of racial counter-framing, Wingfield and Taylor argue for the salience of oppressive structures related to

identities such as gender, class, and race, in leading Black business owners to consider self-employment as an attractive career path and in the way they conceptualize various aspect of their businesses. The common theme in this body of literature is how entrepreneurial dynamics among immigrant and people of color are tied to their multiple identities and social locations. Banerjee (2019), for instance, in her study of Indian immigrant entrepreneurs on dependent visa, shows how self-employment turns into a form of subversion for women against their immigration status as “dependent” in the US. In her research on Black hair salons, Harvey (2005) shows how hiring and relationship building with the stylists serves as a resource for working-class Black women salon owners to build their businesses. In another study, Knight (2016) discusses how self-employed Black women use their status as entrepreneurs to reconstruct their identities as respectable professionals. Despite dismantling various axes of marginalization, intersectionality scholarship has, thus, capitalized on individuals’ subversive acts as a means to overturn the unequal distribution of power (e.g., Balogun 2020; Banerjee 2019; Harvey 2005; Knight 2016; Muñoz 2013).

Entrepreneurship as boundary work among communities of color within Canadian context has remained understudied. Self-employment among immigrant people of color is often articulated as a result of experiencing exclusion from Canadian labor market (Johnson 2000; Maitra 2013; Nkrumah 2016; Zhang and Chun 2018). Zhang and Chun, for instance, in their 2018 study on identity construction among Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in Canada, show that Chinese immigrants used entrepreneurship to resolve identity-based conflicts that they have been experiencing after migration and searching for new selves. While exclusion from the mainstream labor market has often been identified as a significant contributor that drive marginalized communities’ entrepreneurial decisions, it has a risk of downplaying self-employment as a site for resistance, activism and pushing the boundaries of racially

exclusive labor market among communities of color. Building on the literature on entrepreneurship, identity making, and boundary work, my research contributes to the Canadian scholarship on entrepreneurship through exploring the ways in which the complexities of women's gender, racial, and class positionalities in Canada shape their boundary strategies, entrepreneurial practices, and resources. The absence of studies that explore immigrant women entrepreneurship and self-employment as boundary work in Canadian context constitutes a gap in the literature. This research seeks to fill some of the gaps by exploring how Canadian women of color entrepreneur in the business of beauty build on feminine, ethnic, and racial resources as a means to push against the boundaries of entrepreneurship as masculine and white while simultaneously adhering to the white colonial capitalist system.

Previous research has documented women leaders and/or entrepreneurs carving out and building upon their femininity and feminine attributes as significant resources in shaping a unique version of management style and organizational structure such as connectivity, empathy, power sharing, and valuing collective betterment over personal interest (Eagly and Karau 2002; Folta et al., 2012; Hanson 2009; Lewis 2013). Lewis (2013) for instance, observed the ways women entrepreneurs strategically harnessed their conventionally defined feminine dispositions (such as empathy, care, connectivity, work-life balance) to define their leadership style as authentic, while simultaneously adopting certain masculine characteristics to frame their organizing style as legitimate and professional. Eagly and Karau in their 2002 study on authentic leadership underscore that while women in leadership positions feel the pressure of espousing masculine behavioral norms, they display more communal behaviour compared with the men in similar positions. Gender is not the only identity that has mattered in shaping the management and leadership model. There is a dearth of studies, however, that explore organizing and management style in entrepreneurial and small companies through an intersectional lens.

In her study on Black women in various leadership positions and professions, including entrepreneurship, Johncilla (2007) adopts an intersectional lens to highlight the role of community support, ancestral cultural knowledge, reflective storytelling and activism as key elements of Black women's leadership practices. Johncilla shows how Black women engage with reflective storytelling to call back past experiences and knowledge as a way to not only construct their identities but also resist experiences of oppression. Building on the existing scholarship that centers around the subversive potential of intersectionality for women of color within organizations, I explore how the complexities of women's gender, racial, and class positionalities shape their entrepreneurial vision, values, and practices as well as their leadership style. I adopt an intersectional approach to analyze identity-making and to highlight how entrepreneurs build on feminine, ethnic, and racial resources as a means to construct authenticity. In the dissertation, I unravel the organizational styles of women, Black women and immigrant women of color through an intersectional lens to investigate how gender conflates multiple axes of identity to shape their vision, goals, and entrepreneurial practices. I attempt to understand how gender operates in conjunction with race and class in shaping various aspects of entrepreneurship by women of color.

Representation of beauty and embodied intersectionality

Intersectionality as a conceptual framework centers the multiplicative ramifications of identities in individuals' experiences of marginalization and privilege (Crenshaw 1991). Developed by a generation of Black feminists and activists, intersectionality is the framework to understand the ways multiple forms of disadvantage are co-constituted and intertwined to shape the life chances of individuals in an unequal society (the Combahee River Collective 1978; Crenshaw 1991; Collins 2002). This recognition that disadvantages and oppression can be experienced along interlocking matrices of

gender, race, sexualities, ethnicity, class, and other factors of difference has shaped critical feminist theorizing of identity and identity construction among marginalized groups.

While intersectionality has been widely and globally recognized by feminist scholars, the intersectional, embodied experience has specifically gained recognition. Embodiment perspective seeks to relocate the debates about intersectionality as a way to understand the embodied experiences of individuals as bounded and constrained by social and political systems within which those experiences have taken shape. By extension, intersectional embodiment scholarship identifies the processes through which the social scripts are invoked and materialized through embodied subjectivities (Kang 2010; Mirza 2013). As spotlighted by intersectionality scholarship, analysis of representation of one's embodied, gendered self cannot be understood without exploring oppressive structures related to identities such as race, gender, class, sexuality, and other categories of social difference (Collins 2004). Intersectional scholarship on embodiment and presentation of beauty suggests that women's bodies have historically served as bearers of national identity, cultural symbols, political and economic shifts (Ahmed-Ghosh 2003; Balogun 2012; Gal and Kligman 2000) as well as essential sites for resistance against hegemonic representations of beauty (Tate 2007; Veresiuand Parmentier2021). Balogun (2012), for instance, explores how Nigerian beauty pageants display idealized femininity embedded within the same context. Her study unveils how beauty pageants' bodies serve both as bearers of traditional Nigerian femininity as well as modern, cosmopolitan femininity under two contrasting gendered nationalist agendas based upon which the nation attempts to project a national and/or cosmopolitan image of itself. Focused on the change in Bosnian Muslim women's refugees' clothing in the context of migration, Huisman and Hondagneu-Sotelo (2005) examine how Bosnian Muslim women refugees have negotiated embodied presentation of self through an adoption of the western feminine dress. The

authors illuminate how women still cling to Bosnian ideals of feminine presentation of self through clothing, while wittingly or unwittingly embracing the host country's gendered dress standards which could be read as increased individualism and freedom. Bosnian women, as symbols of their group's identity, used agency to adopt western clothing standards and sought to reconstruct their identities as international and cosmopolitan. Focused on fashion modeling as a cultural industry, Mears (2010) shows how agents as well as clients are engaged in fashioning femininity along the axes of race and gender. Mears investigates how agents produces various versions of femininity that in addition to being sexed, gendered, and raced, is also classed. Differentiating commercial modeling from the editorial one, Mears finds that commercial fashion models, with a more diverse demographic representation, envision feminine ideals consistent with middle-class femininity. In contrast, editorial fashion models display white, elite upper-class femininity through whiteness, slenderness, and uniqueness of their models' looks.

The intersectional study of embodiment and embodied experiences is not limited to the representation of beauty. The scholarship on intersectional embodiment does not only explore representation of beauty but also how individuals experience intersecting matrices of marginalization through their bodies. To unpack how gender, race, religion, and other forms of differences have been lived within and through Muslim women's bodies, Mirza (2013, 2018) developed the conceptual framework of "embodied intersectionality." This framework not only sheds light on how intertwined axes of oppression shape everyday experiences of women of color, but also how these experiences have been mediated by and through their bodies. Central to her theory, is the racial, gendered, and classed bodies of Muslim immigrant women. She explores the mechanisms through which Muslim women

construct and reconstruct their gendered and racialized identities within the Western Islamophobic context.

Focusing on interactive service work, previous studies have brought embodiment and intersectionality together as a way to explore: the division of labor within the workplace based on employees' race, gender, and class status (Adib and Guerrier 2003); management strategies in changing the composition of the workforce based on the tourism flows and their perception of customers' preferences in hotel industry (Alberti and Iannuzzi 2020); the role of customers' expectations and multi-layered identities in shaping the service provided by employees in a racialized and gendered service work (Kang 2010); and the intersection of race, class, and sexuality in shaping the work experiences of men in feminized occupations (Barber 2008). Kang's 2010 study of Korean manicurists reveals how Asian immigrant women need to take on different versions of embodied emotional labor in their interaction with women customers with different racial and class identities. While she never used the term "embodied intersectionality," her study contributes to the scholarship of embodied intersectionality through unveiling how the intersectional identities of immigrant women, as well as their customers play a role in forming the bodily labor of manicuring in Asian nail salons. However, the organization of cosmetic work and the evolution of this work as gendered, racialized, and classed have remained understudied.

Informed by intersectional scholarship on embodiment (Collins 2004; Kang 2010; Mirza 2013; Tate 2007, 2015) and intersectional literature on representation of beauty and identity construction display (e.g., Balogun 2012; Otis 2020; Toomistu 2019; Veresiu and Parmentier 2021), my thesis explores the ways in which identities have been embodied and constructed by women through

compliance with and, concurrently, subversion of societal norms. Looking through this lens, I will attempt to understand and analyze how women strategically use their embodied identities to create alternative futures for the beauty industry. I ask how intersectional embodied identities can be instrumentalized through subversive strategies by women of color entrepreneurs in order to push the boundaries of what is considered as beauty in western societies.

I ground my framework in embodied intersectionality scholarship to investigate how women of color deploy gender in conjunction with multiple categories of difference as a means for constructing and framing their identities in the context of the feminized and racialized occupation of selling cosmetic products. My research compares women's labor of selling cosmetic/beauty products in different tiers of the industry to investigate how racialized and gendered bodies of women are turned into a site through which intersecting axes of oppression/identities come into play. The embodied intersectional approach is specifically relevant to this research as the labor of women in the cosmetic industry is highly embodied, hence involving not only the work of the women on their bodies but also their work on bodies of customers. I apply embodied intersectional approach to explore not only how women stage diversity mediated by their racialized and gendered bodies, but also how women of color on the outskirts of the industry push against the systemic barriers in the industry.

Critical whiteness through the lens of critical phenomenology and critical diversity studies
in organizations

The exploration of experiences of racialization among Black and people of color in a white supremacist society and the ways in which white people understand their positionality and privilege, are situated at the heart of critical whiteness studies (Doane 2003; Johnson and Joseph-Salisbury 2018; Matias and Boucher 2021; Mirza 2018). Arguing that whiteness and white privilege are socially constructed and fabricated, critical whiteness studies examines the ways in which systemic privilege and oppression are reproduced and reinforced in white dominant institutions.

Critical whiteness scholarship has borrowed various lenses and conceptual frames to study the embeddedness of whiteness and the ways it has been taken up and/or subverted. Critical phenomenology, as a conceptual frame to explore whiteness, centers the lived experiences of whiteness and how these experiences take shape through repetitions of actions and habits in a racialized society (Ahmed 2007; Puwar 2004; Schwarz and Lindqvist 2018; Yancy 2014). Whiteness as “an ongoing and unfinished history” (Ahmed 2007: 149) residing “as a background to experience” (Ahmed 2007: 149), became central to phenomenological conceptualization of how racialization is experienced by and lived through “bodies out of place” (Puwar 2004). Puwar’s (2004) critical phenomenology is concerned with embodiment and space based upon which spaces, as well as the bodies occupying these spaces, are socially constructed. Indeed, space invasion happens when a discrepancy between bodies and spaces occurs. She writes:

Some bodies are deemed as having the right to belong, while others are marked out as trespasser, who are, in accordance with how both spaces and bodies are imagined (politically, historically and conceptually), circumscribed as being ‘out of place’ (Puwar 2004: 8).

The presence of women's 'raced' bodies in a historically masculine and white space creates a discomfort which reveals the nature of spaces as gendered as well as racialized. Similarly, Sara Ahmed examines the ways in which bodies are reproduced through the process of racialization. Drawing upon Merleau-Ponty (1962), Fanon (1986), Ahmed (2006, 2007) investigates how whiteness resides and lives within institutions. In her phenomenology of whiteness, she explores whiteness as "a background to experience" (2007: 150) which lives through and mediated by the body. She places emphasis on the notion of orientation as the direction subjects take in their lives through inhabiting whiteness. "Orientations", as Ahmed writes, "are about the directions we take that put some things and not others in our reach." (Ahmed 2006: 552). The notion of orientation enables her to unveil how 'raced' bodied constantly feel 'out of place' in white dominant institutions. Indeed, whiteness is conceptualized as an orientation the body takes towards certain objects within spaces to create a sense of belonging. From a phenomenological lens, whiteness is socially fabricated and sustained through colonialism, suggesting that race is real in a sense that is lived through and mediated by the materiality of the body (Ahmed 2007; Yancy 2005). Indeed, whiteness as "an ongoing and unfinished history" (Ahmed 2009: 149), defines how we occupy a space and what our bodies orient themselves toward. As she writes:

Whiteness is an orientation that puts certain things within reach. By objects, we would include not just physical objects, but also styles, capacities, aspirations, techniques, habits. Race becomes, in this model, a question of what is within reach, what is available to perceive and to do 'things' with. (Ahmed 2009: 154)

While white bodies feel at home and comfortable in institutions, 'raced' bodies feel estranged and out of place. To be more specific, 'raced' bodies are supposed to feel disoriented in an

organization wherein whiteness is the norm. I build on Ahmed's critical phenomenological approach to whiteness to investigate the experience of gendering and racialization among women of color in the retail sector of the beauty industry. Spotlighting the lived experiences of women of color in the context of interactive body-related service industry, I seek to contribute to the literature on phenomenological analysis of the employees' experiences of racialization in this specific workplace.

Critical theories of whiteness are central in shaping critical diversity studies in organizations. Critical diversity scholarship grew as a response to organizational diversity management initiatives during mid-nineteenth century (Zanoni et al. 2010). Critical diversity scholars investigate the complex ways in which different categories of social difference structure the experiences of marginalized groups in an institution wherein gender and race manifest themselves as organizing structures (e.g., Schwarz and Lindqvist 2018; Johnson and Joseph-Salisbury 2018; Plotnikof et al. 2022; Yucel 2016). Critical diversity scholarship unveils the unequal relations of power that frame and continue framing the diversity management efforts in organizations (Ahmed 2009, 2012, 2018; Plotnikof et al. 2022; Turner 2018; Yucel 2016). Shying away from the oppositional call for social justice, the discourse of diversity management simplifies, neutralizes, and depoliticizes the political questions of inequality through essentializing differences and individualizing inequality while masking the structural roots of discrimination (Ahmed 2009; Jackson 2018; Plotnikof et al. 2022). Diversity management efforts in white dominant organizations have been criticized for individualizing differences (Plotnikof et al. 2022), reifying heteronormativity (Bendle et al. 2008), and reproducing gender inequality (Perriton 2009). Ahmed discusses non-performativity of diversity work arguing that diversity management efforts in organizational contexts do not translate into fundamental change. She develops the notion of "diversity workers" as a reference to a labor that employees of color take on to embody

organization's promises of embracing and welcoming differences. In a study on diversity scorecard as a new approach to creating change in organizations, Bensimon (2004) argued that while embracing racial and ethnic diversity within the organization is meritorious, it does not imply achieving equality. The author places emphasis on diversity scorecards as a tool for educational institutions to identify equity outcomes and remove barriers for underrepresented students to achieve their academic goals. Other scholars take a similar stance to demonstrate the ways organizations aestheticize diversity through commodifying and exoticizing embodied markers of gendered, cultural, and ethnic differences among employees to enhance profitability (Arciniega 2021; Yucel 2016; Liu 2017; Scarritt 2019). Based on in-depth interviews with students focused on the university's diversity initiatives, Scarritt (2019) shows how such efforts are welcomed by white students while discussions about racism and inequality are dismissed as an assault on humanity without any critical engagement with the issues. According to the author, the emergence of de-racialized, consumerist diversity, divorced from social justice concerns in US universities has amplified racism among white students who are convinced that by paying for their education and becoming a part of the conservative project of multiculturalism, they contribute to the betterment of society. Similarly, in an ethnographic study conducted on diversity professionals including diversity officers, human resources professionals and so forth, Arciniega (2021) discusses how these professionals create a business case for selling diversity to white men as their new clients in a neoliberal organization. Building on the mainstream discourse of doing diversity as inseparable from doing business, diversity professionals untwine diversity of its moral and social justice values, hence institutionalizing diversity management initiatives through including white men workforce who are traditionally and historically construed as individualist, self-interested economic actors (Arciniega 2021).

While diversity management efforts have been widely documented in white dominant institutions, a few studies (eg., Bunten 2008) have examined the ways organizations owned by people of color engage with the mainstream discourse of diversity management through self-commodifying and self-exoticizing which simultaneously enable expression of multiple identities among minoritized groups. Focused on an Indigenous owned tourism business in Alaska, Bunten shows (2008) how Indigenous tour guides are engaged in sharing culture through self-exoticization of their otherness, thereby commodifying their ethnic culture for tourists to consume. I will contribute towards recent critical diversity research in work and organization studies that point to the ways in which diversity masks the persistence of unequal relations of power (Ahmed 2009, 2018; Banks and Harvey 2020; Johnson and Joseph-Salisbury 2018; Yucel 2016). Building on Ahmed's notion of diversity work and Bunten's conceptualization of self-commodification and exoticization as "other", I attempt to explain the ways not only chain retail stores, but also local beauty companies "packaged" (embodied) cultural and ethnic markers of difference to compete in the global market.

This research, thus, employs the literature on phenomenology and critical whiteness (Ahmed 2007, 2009, 2018), critical diversity theories, and embodied intersectionality (Mirza 2013, 2018) to show how women of color take on the labor of diversity work mediated through their gendered racialized bodies in both tiers of the industry, namely chain stores owned by white men and local companies owned by women and women of color.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I reviewed the literature and the theoretical frameworks that I build on in this dissertation. The feminist critique of service economy situated within the aesthetic capitalism (Barber

2016; Entwistle and Mears 2013; Hancock and Tyler 2000, 2007; Hochschild 1983, 2011; Kang 2010, 2013) exposes the gendered, racialized, classed, and sexualized nature of interactive service jobs which has created an unequal division of labor to further marginalize women and women of color in the workplace. I build on this body of literature to explain how capitalist corporations enhance consumption through elevating customers' status as sovereigns and enforcing employees to engage in unpaid labor of exhibiting and maintaining the right appearance and demeanor.

To understand and analyze the ways through which women of color entrepreneurs frame their business practices, visions, and leadership styles, I put the literature on self-employment among communities of color with the notion of identity construction through a feminist intersectional lens to suggest that multiple identities and marginalized social locations not only frame women of color's entrepreneurial practices in this study but also provide them resources to subvert their marginalized identities. I presented the intersectional scholarship on strategic assimilation to illuminate how women harness their cultural resources as a tool for survival in a white dominant society and resist gendered and racial discrimination.

The review of the literature on representation of beauty and intersectional embodiment shows the ways racialized and gendered bodies of women are a site upon which intersecting axes of oppression/identities come into play. I build on this body of literature to analyze the mechanisms through which self-employed women of color construct, reconstruct, and undo their marginalized gendered and racialized identities in transnational contexts through a display of their bodies in social media. I also put Ahmed's critical whiteness theory in conversation with critical diversity studies to

spotlight women of colors' labor of diversity work mediated through their gendered racialized bodies in both tiers of the industry and to explain the embeddedness of whiteness in the beauty industry.

Chapter 3
METHODOLOGY

Introduction

As I was getting ready to enter the field for my dissertation research, the 2020 global COVID-19 pandemic shut down public access to my research sites. The emerging pandemic — and uncertain future it left in its wake — meant that I had to drastically reorient my research project from the immersive feminist ethnography I had originally conceived. In consultation with my supervisor, I discovered a new way to approach my study. While the foundational research questions remained the same, I incorporated more nuance to the questions such that I could complete my study without the need for a full-scale ethnographic encounter.

Given such, as stated in the introductory chapter, this dissertation seeks to answer the following questions:

1. If and how are racialized and gendered bodies of women employees in the retail sector of the beauty industry turned into a site through which intersecting axes of oppression/identities come into play?

2. If and how are women of color experiencing gendering and racialization in the context of interactive body-related service industry which is historically defined by colonial Eurocentric logic?

3. If and how such experiences vary for women working in chain store compared with those working in the local stores?

4. If and how intersectional embodied identities can be instrumentalized through subversive strategies by women of color entrepreneurs in order to push the boundaries of what is considered as beauty in western societies?

My research questions are concerned with the experiences of front-line service workers which place the participants' understandings of their everyday work at the forefront of the research. Qualitative methodology is most suited to answering this question because it allows participants to share their own working lives. I use qualitative methodology to create a deeper understanding of how intersectional identities of race, gender, class and other categories of difference play a role in everyday interactions of marginalized people of color in the workplace and their experiences of inequality.

This methodology chapter begins with a discussion of how my social location as an immigrant woman of color from the Global South has affected my research questions and methodology as well as the access to participants for interviews. I describe in detail the process of recruitment, interview, and data analysis. I also describe how I used social media data to analyze the content each company created as a means to build a public identity of itself. I conclude this chapter with a discussion of my epistemology and my insider-outsider status. I explain how I grapple with being an outsider to the field and how this status shaped the experiences of my participants.

Rapport building and recruitment

This research was initially conducted in Calgary, which is an under-represented city in academic research compared with other large cities in Canada including Vancouver, Montreal, and Toronto. The city is home to people of diverse backgrounds (cultural/ethnic, social class, gender, education) including foreign migrant workers who started relocating in the city as a result of the oil-driven economic boom during the early 2000s (Barnetson and Foster 2014). The growth of international migration to Alberta was part of a broader wave of international migration from the Global South to Canada and the Global North in general (Barnetson and Foster 2014; De Haas et al.2019). The number of immigrants and foreign workers, mainly arriving from Philippines, India, China and Mexico, increased to more than 60,000 in 2010. The number of foreign workers reached a peak of 77,000 in 2013 (Barnetson and Foster 2014; Foster 2012; Luciano and Foster 2020). Since the 1980s, immigrants, in Canada, are more likely to get hired in low paid, temporary, and precarious jobs deemed low-skill, including food services and retail sectors (Chun 2011; Fuller and Vosko 2008).For instance, Foster (2005, 2012), in his study on foreign workers in the first half of the century, shows a drastic downward shift in the skill level of the jobs to which migrant workers were recruited from the Global South. By extension, closer to the 2010s, the number of immigrant workers populating occupations labeled as low skilled, such as service work and manufacturing, increased drastically in Alberta. The existing scholarship confirms this trend as a part of a broader trend happening across Canada based on which immigrant workers from the Global South were mostly populating jobs deemed "low-skilled" (ESDE 2014; Polanco and Zell 2017). Since the early twenty-first century, immigrant workers, despite having a high level of education, have faced greater challenges in entering Canadian labor market. Immigrant workers as a result of employers' requirement for the Canadian experience (Fuller and Vosko 2008)

were being channeled into insecure and low-paying jobs (Man 2004). The service sector, including hospitality, food services, and retail work, was crucial in the expansion of occupations categorized as "low-skilled" and temporary, which were portrayed as occupations that allowed immigrants to acquire Canadian work experience (Chun 2011; Fuller and Vosko 2008; Polanco and Zell 2017; Polanco and Geraldina 2013). Since 2020, the COVID-19 outbreak and lockdowns accelerated this process by allowing certain professions and employees to substitute on-site for home-based work to prevent the spread (Chowhan et al. 2021). Thus, the low-wage service sector saw an increase in demand for sales personnel, with Canadian/domestic workers having access to governmental financial resources and the ability to stay home.

Given this background, this study initially focused on the emerging front-line workforce within the retail sector of the service/beauty industry, who are primarily international immigrants in Calgary, Alberta. The COVID-19 global pandemic and subsequent lockdowns allowed me to recruit participants from all over Canada and conduct online interviews. I expanded my recruitment location to other Canadian cities including Vancouver, Toronto, Winnipeg, Edmonton, and Kelowna. This allowed me to access larger communities of self-employed women of color across Canada and explore the impact of race, ethnicity, and class in women's work experiences in the green and ethical sector of the beauty industry. It is noteworthy to mention that the purpose of this study is not offering a comparison of women employees' and self-employed women's experiences based on varying geographical locations. The analysis of the interview data with employees in different Sephora stores across the country showed no evidence of the impact of geographical location on the experiences of employees. This could be partly explained by the traditional hierarchical system under which each store operates across the country. In the context of women entrepreneurs, I seek to show how local beauty stores

owned and run by Indigenous, Black, white, and immigrant women of color are emerging across the country while marking themselves as agents of change.

Sephora and entrepreneurial companies are particularly important cosmetic retailers sites to compare in the ways that both these firm types responded to anti-racist social movements such as Black Lives Matter (BLM) and policies such as equity, diversity, and inclusion policies. Sephora, as I will explain later in this chapter, is one of the beauty retailers that has publicly committed to making the shopping and employment environment more inclusive and equitable for customers, employees, and the larger beauty community. The company has visibly increased the representation of Black, Indigenous, and women of color brands, created training modules for employees on anti-racism among other initiatives (Kohan 2021). Following a period of negative media attention provoked by debates around the company's lack of diversity, Sephora launched different beauty campaigns that celebrate marginalized groups (Raun and Christensen-Strynø 2022). As I will explain in chapters 6 and 7, women and women of color entrepreneurs and their employees, who are mostly from marginalized backgrounds, deploy similar inclusivity formations through embodying diversity as marginalized women to gain visibility in the industry.

The two sectors provide contexts to explore the extent to which the historical racial segregation has been disrupted through inclusion mandates and policies that has shaped the industry. In this research, I argue that identity boundaries and the social meanings of racial and gendered identities are continually rearticulated in response to political projects. Through this comparison, I attempt to situate micro-level and meso-level articulation and rearticulation of social meaning of intersectional identities and boundaries within the post-racial multicultural beauty industry.

Rapport building and recruiting participants for this study began after receiving approval from the Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board in the fall 2020 (Appendix A). The original application proposed conducting participant observation in store locations in Calgary and qualitative in-depth interviews to capture daily interactions between the employees and managers from one side and employees and customers from the other side. Due to pandemic-related lockdowns, I wasn't able to continue conducting observations. As a result, I requested revisions to the original application and was granted approval to expand my recruitment location to other Canadian cities.

I began to build relationships in the spring of 2020. Not being able to hang out in store locations, I was forced to pivot and find innovative ways of building rapport. I sought permission to be included in online social beauty communities, which were accepted easily given that I was a woman student who posed no disruption in these spaces. Being a younger woman also made me a potential consumer of beauty products and perhaps allowed me easier access to these spaces. These groups included women in business networking groups, makeup artists' beauty portals, makeup business owners' networking communities, and so forth. In these groups, I asked permission from the admins and moderators of online social beauty communities to share my research flyer, including the information about my research and the contact information through which the potential participants could contact me. In these groups, I formed a few friendships with those working in the beauty industry who began referring me to other women in this field.

Over the summer and fall 2020, retail stores opened again and governmental restrictions were relaxed. Due to financial difficulties, I faced as an international student, I had to look for a part-time job in the retail sector of the fashion industry. Over the six months of working in these chain stores,

I formed friendships, which allowed me access to some additional potential participants. Participants also referred me to other women. I began interviewing women in the beauty industry in winter 2021. I built relationships with at least one contact in each store, including Sephora. I wanted to ensure possible variations by class, race, and immigration status and tackle the homogeneity issue that might happen in snowball sampling. In most cases, my primary contact introduced me to a few other potential participants working at the time of the interview or previously employed at the same company.

In terms of race and gender, the majority of participants came from different racial backgrounds and identified as women. I was, however, able to introduce variation in respect to immigration status and class. Those working in Sephora, as an upper-scale beauty company were mostly middle-class and second/third generation immigrants. I intended to compare Sephora, as a giant and chain retail beauty company, owned primarily by white men, with entrepreneurial, women-owned Canadian companies. These local Canadian beauty and cosmetic companies are primarily owned and run by Indigenous, Black, White and immigrant women of color. My goal was to examine the experiences of women of color in white institutions compared with women of color led institutions. This comparison provides an understanding of how the business of beauty provides women with intersectional marginalized positions defined by race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexualities, and immigration status an opportunity to assert leadership not only in their communities but also in the larger social and political domain. The goal for this comparison is to understand how whiteness is infused into the organizational logics of a chain store and to offer an alternative perspective to the landscape of the beauty industry by highlighting the organizational culture in women of color organizations.

As I entered the field, I intended to conduct in-depth interviews with 30 people working in the retail sector of beauty/cosmetic companies. My design called for 15 individuals in local beauty stores and 15 individuals working in chain beauty stores until the point of saturation. One of the main recruitment criteria was that individuals either worked in the retail sector of the cosmetic and beauty industry or were currently working there at the time of the interview.

I recruited participants by sending recruitment flyers to personal contacts with the request that they forward the recruitment flyer to their contacts who might qualify and be interested in participating in this research. I also shared the flyer to the various online (Facebook) groups and communities I was a member of. They shared my flyer on their social media platform. I also asked my personal contacts in each of the stores to put up my recruitment flyer in employees' rest areas in their workplace. In addition, I shared my recruitment flyers in online communities and groups. As the word spread, I received emails from prospective participants.

Between fall 2021 and 2022, I conducted interviews with women entrepreneurs and workers, using interview guides (Appendix B) that I pre-tested with my personal contacts. I revised the interview guideline based on the feedback I received from these participants. All interviews were conducted in English. I obtained an informed consent (Appendix C) before I began the interview and tried to make sure they clearly understood my research project. Due to the Covid pandemic, all interviews were conducted online via Zoom or WhatsApp. Each interview took between 40 minutes and 1.5 hours. All interviews were audiotaped with the permission of participants. My interview schedule included questions about participants' entrance into the beauty industry, prior occupation trajectory, their work experiences, their views on their occupations and their everyday job tasks, the organization they're

working for, their clients, as well as their views about the industry, the challenges of their job, and their future career path. I also asked participants at the end of interviews if I could do follow-up interviews with them if I had any questions and most of them agreed.

Data Description

I obtained qualitative data from 30 in-depth interviews and social media content analysis. The 30 interviews included 15 people working in Sephora and 15 entrepreneurs and their employees. I found that the first five and six interviews produced more new information in the dataset and that little new information was gained as the sample size approached 12. I discovered that majority of the identified main themes turned up in the first six interviews and more than 90 percent of the themes were identified within the first 10 to 12 interviews. Therefore, I decided that I had achieved saturation by the 15th interview (for each sector) as I stopped identifying new themes. My initial goal was to also conduct observations in the store setting. However, I had to leave out this part of the data collection due to the global COVID-related lockdowns and social distancing. I decided to complete this as a post-dissertation project. In the rest of this section, I will describe the demographics of my participants (Appendix D).

Women entrepreneurs who showed an interest in participating in my research were either employees in a local beauty/cosmetic company or one of the co-founders of those companies. In my analysis, I attempted to make distinction between the owners and employees throughout this dissertation. Discerning difference between owners and employees would help provide more nuanced analysis of organizational culture through highlighting employer-employee relationships and power

relations between the two. In total, four Black women, two white women, one Indigenous woman, and one south Asian woman owned companies. Two of these companies were family-owned and did not recruit employees outside of family. The number of employees in these companies ranged from 1 to 20. The average length of time in business was 6 years. The average age of participants in the local beauty stores was 38. All the women had at least a bachelor's degree. They were first- and second-generation immigrants. The majority of women were married. Participants were from various racial backgrounds including Indigenous, Black, Hispanic, and South-East Asian. Most of the women working in small stores were planning to stay in the industry (11 out of 15 participants). The majority of participants also identified as middle-class. Except for two companies, most participants mentioned that their products cater to a diverse body of women customers. One of the companies manufactures and advertises products specifically for Black women. Another company specifically for women with severe skin issues such as cancer.

The average age for participants in big box cosmetic stores was 25 years old. Most of the participants were college students at the time of the interview and were planning to pursue other careers. A few aimed to stay in the beauty industry and train for makeup artistry. The average range of income was \$12000 annually. Except for two participants, all interviewees were women of color with different nationalities, including Indian, Pakistani, Afghan, African Canadian, Iranian, Filipino, and Vietnamese. They were second or third-generation immigrants. All women except one were still employed in the retail store at the time of the interview. All except three participants were single. All of these women, except for one participant have been still employed in the retail store by the time of the interview.

In addition to in-depth interviews, I collected and analyzed social media content created by my focal companies to understand how the companies reproduce a public identity for themselves and how they are engaged in social justice. I figured that social media, specifically Instagram, after the COVID pandemic has turned into an important channel for promotion and sale for cosmetic companies, specifically the entrepreneurial ones. They deploy their Instagram platforms to build relationships with customers through videos and images of their products, clientele and employee diversity. They also use social media to engage with social issues such as racism, colorism, Black Lives Matter, inclusivity, and so forth. In addition, a few of my focal entrepreneurial companies with no physical stores were using their online platform as their primary sites for serving customers, building community and their brand identities, and advertising their merchandises. While both sectors have been involved in social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram), for Sephora, physical stores (as I will explain in chapter 4) play a more crucial role in building connection with customers and creating a unique shopping experience. Instagram is deployed by the company as a secondary site for advertising new products rather than a means for building brand identity and connection with customers. Thus, for the purpose of this dissertation, I solely provided analysis of social media content created by the small enterprises as Sephora's social media content did not answer my research questions regarding representation of identities, identity making, and rearticulation of racial boundaries. As a part of my future research, however, I will provide a nuanced analysis of how social media is deployed differently by the two sectors. I will focus on YouTube beauty campaigns created by Sephora and how they are related to and informed by the racial projects and social movements.

I collected social media content from the official websites, Facebook, and Instagram pages to examine the public representation of each company, public identity that the companies are attempting

to reproduce, and the way they engage with the idea of beauty in its gendered and racialized sense, and how each company build on the notions of race, ethnicity, gender, and class to build a public enterprise identity. Social media as a medium for people to express their opinions, emotions, and daily experiences, becomes a medium for identity construction, specifically marginalized groups (Putri and Satvikadewi 2017). For self-employed individuals, social media has become a powerful arena wherein individuals attempt to present a public self to audiences of various racial, ethnic, and classed backgrounds (Brydges and Sjöholm, 2019; Duffy, 2017; Duffy and Hund, 2015; Heizmann and Liu 2022). The entrepreneurs in this study deployed social media platforms, specifically Instagram, to feature the products and also build community. Time spans of their social media presence, number of posts, and number of followers at the time of analysis are presented in a table attached in the appendix. I collected every publicly available post the entrepreneurial companies published since opening their accounts until December 2022 which adds to more than 10,000 Instagram posts. I did this by taking a screenshot of each post so that I could analyze the image and also interpret the visuals in relation to the descriptions provided with the post. To collect social media data, I used purposive sampling. The goal of purposive sampling is to select information-rich individuals, groups, or texts that represent and enhance the understanding of the phenomenon of interest (Devers and Franckel 2000). To this end, I specifically collected and analyzed social media content that answered my research questions regarding representation of embodied identities, identity construction, and rearticulation of gendered and racial boundaries. The textual and visual elements of each company's "About Me" section wherein owners discussed the creation of the brand were also coded. While all the social media accounts were publicly available, to protect their anonymity, I used pseudonyms for each company and deidentified images.

Organizational Background

In this section, I will provide a brief organizational background for my focal companies, including organizational structure and culture, as well as the type of products they sell and/or manufacture. This research focuses on the experiences of women working in these organizations rather than organizational ethnography. Given this study's purpose, the information I provide in the following section regarding organizational structures and hierarchies may not be comprehensive and thorough. However, providing a brief background of the organizational dynamics could help create an understanding of how the business of beauty is performed in each company. I will first discuss Sephora, and then I will discuss the local companies.

Chain store

Sephora

Sephora is an upscale specialty store that offers more high-end beauty commodities. Owned by the luxury company Louis Vuitton Moet Hennessy (LVMH), Sephora is a multinational retailer selling cosmetics, skincare, hair care products, and fragrances, across 31 countries with more than 2700 freestanding stores. Sephora, headquartered in France, opened its first store in 1969 in the US, New York (Sephora. N.d.). The company's revenue reached \$4.4 billion in 2020 (Maamoun 2022).

At Sephora, enhancing customer experience through offering retail theater is paramount (Baron et al. 2001; Kessler-Harris et al. 2001; Pinto et al. 2017). The company's employees are referred to as "cast members", the sales floor as the "stage," the backroom as "backstage", and uniforms as "costumes." Since 2016, the company has expanded the "beauty insider" program, which rewards loyal

customers who spend more than a certain amount annually with special products, information, and events (Maamoun 2022). In addition to its customer reward programs, the company attempts to provide a unique in-store shopping experience through providing customers with an entertaining experience "with the motto of bringing free shopping experience for luxury & mass beauty." The stores provide customers various services including makeup and skincare counseling, cosmetic treatments, makeup classes, and one-on-one skin care treatments. The company targets women between 18-34, hence aligning its values and marketing strategies with the millennial generation (Koetz 2018; Weber 2013).

Sephora is a traditional organization with a hierarchical structure including an executive and leadership team, a management team (in-store), and front-line sales associates. In the summer of 2020, promoting and advocating diversity and inclusion became a substantial part of the company's agenda for change, which, according to the company's strategic/ action plan in 2021, is now reflected in the structure and demographic characteristics of the team. According to this report, 83% of the people who work in the company identified themselves as women. People of color comprise more than half of the workforce (64%), and Black employees comprise 16% of the total number of employees of color. At the executive and management level, more than 60% of the executive team are white women, less than 20% of the management team are Hispanic, and less than 10% are Black (Sephora 2022).

In terms of diversity of the products, the report indicates an increase in the number of Black-owned brands carried by the company from 11% in 2020 to 15% in 2021(Sephora 2021:2) and it is expected to reach to 25% in 2026. With a focus on honoring and expressing recognition of diverse clientele, small campaigns are launched to celebrate milestone events for various ethnicities such as "National Indigenous History Month Campaign" and "Black History Month" and non-English

languages, including Spanish, were added to the YouTube videos produced monthly. The number of influencers of color, creating social media content in line with the values on diversity and inclusion, reached 79% in 2021 (compared with 50% in 2020). In addition, the company launched beauty campaigns such as *we belong to something beautiful* to advocate for diversity of beauty and broadening content that "provides authentic representation of diversity" (Sephora n. d; Raun and Christensen-Strynø, 2022). As mentioned in the campaign, "Sephora believes in championing all beauty, living with courage, and standing fearlessly together to celebrate our differences." (Cidnei R. 2020). Lastly, training workshops have been launched to drive an inclusive work culture to protect customers from experiencing racial bias. Aiming at establishing relationship with minoritized groups, the company-initiated partnership with organizations such as the Black North Initiatives to fight against systemic racism.

Local Companies

Diva Cosmetic is a family-owned cosmetic manufacturer and retailer founded by a second-generation Black woman immigrant and her two young daughters in Ontario. The owner left her corporate job in a well-known bank in 2016 to create a cruelty-free cosmetic line for darker skin shades. A few years after, she opened her second store in Ghana. The company sells a wide range of products from mascara and eye shadows to primer, concealer, foundation, and lipsticks. The pricing of the products ranges from \$5 to \$60. In addition, the store provides in-store professional makeup services to customers.

Beauty Queen Aesthetics designs skin care products using botanical ingredients. The company was built by a first-generation Black woman immigrant entrepreneur and certified cosmetic formulator in 2016 in Vancouver. The company takes pride in being a brand of all nations through building a team of diverse immigrant women of color employees. The employees come from diverse racial backgrounds, including South Asia, Latina, Black and Middle Eastern. All employees identify as first-generation immigrants. In terms of the organizational structure, the company has a flat structure with the CEO at the top and then the store manager, formulators, social media content creator, and sales associates. The company manufactures and sells skin care products. The pricing of the products ranges from \$50 to \$350. The store also offers facial treatment services including deep cleanse, exfoliation, extractions, therapeutic massage, and restorative masque.

Mighty Beauty is a local retailer selling cruelty-free cosmetics and skincare products built by a white woman in 2013 in Winnipeg. One of her primary purposes is to sell and advocate for women-owned beauty brands and businesses. She opened the second location in 2019 in Kelowna. The store carries makeup products, skincare, body and hair care products manufactured by local Canadian entrepreneurial companies. In addition to selling beauty and cosmetic products, the store provides in person makeup services and skincare treatments. Promoting for women-led brands and providing mentorship for women small business owners are the company's main values. The company is run mainly by white Canadian women and has a flat structure with the owner at the top, two store managers, and 17 sales associates.

Another focal cosmetic retailer and beauty salon for this thesis is **Power Beauty**, owned by a first-generation Black woman immigrant entrepreneur. The owner is a trained electrical engineer with

a deep passion for the beauty industry and women empowerment, as she mentioned in my interview. She seeks to empower women through makeup. She started the company in the UK in 2014 before moving to Canada, Calgary in 2015. She sells makeup and offers makeup services. She also offers makeup artistry courses as a part of her business and holds seminars named *unmasking beauty and women's empowerment*. She has six other associates and shares the space with two other entrepreneurs who do skincare treatments. The majority of employees in this company are Black women except for a South Asian new immigrant and a Syrian refugee.

Holistic Wellness is a company located in Yukon. The company is owned by an Indigenous woman who manufactures natural and handcrafted skin products including body oils, facial oils, and soaps. Prior to starting her own business, she was a professional heritage worker and community advocator who had worked in oral history projects. In addition to her products, whose ingredients and packaging have the stamp of Indigenous culture, she features the beadwork of Indigenous artisans. Sustainability, earth connecting, and language learning are three main values for this entrepreneur. She occasionally hires two or three casual assistants within the community who assist her with packaging and wild botanical gathering. The company mainly operates online. However, at the time of the interview, the owner was in the process of renting and opening her own retail store.

The Feel Beauty is a corrective plant-based, sustainable, non-toxic, vegan, gluten- and-cruelty-free makeup line built in 2017 by a white woman who had started her career in the TV and film industry. According to her, the beauty industry has been historically about glamour and those suffering from severe skin issues remained invisible. To help those undergoing challenging physical conditions, she creates formulas that incorporate pure, potent plant-based ingredients, which allows the skin to

breathe and heal. The core of her brand is to boost the self-esteem and confidence of those suffering silently from challenging and extreme skin conditions such as cancer/radiation, rosacea, eczema, burns, and scarring. This company operates mainly online with one or two casual assistants who help her with social media content creating and packaging.

Heal Well is a skincare line of products owned by a South Asian woman. She was a former pharmaceutical executive who decided to pursue her career in clean beauty through working with Ayurvedic doctors in the Indian state of Kerala. She manufactures a line of skin, lip, hair, body, and eye care products based on the heritage of Ayurvedic tradition. This is also an online store run by the owner and another casual employee who works as media content creator.

Coding and analysis

I used thematic coding to analyze my interview data. I first conducted an open coding of the interviews where I identified broad themes such as "job satisfaction", "experiences with clients", "dress codes", "codes of conduct in the workplace", "organization structures", "organizational culture", "career trajectory", "job challenges" and so forth (Charmaz 2004; Corbin 2007). Next, I wrote short analytical memos on these themes to determine the questions I wanted to answer in the dissertation. I then did multiple rounds of nested coding on the broad themes. For instance, under "codes of conduct" I honed in on how the companies attempt to impose different versions of the ideal worker for women and men working in the cosmetic stores, reinforcing traditional gendered scripts. Then, I wrote more focused interpretive memos for each code to determine what I would need to focus on next. Thus, the second

coding round was nested under the first. An example of that would be the power divide not only between managers and frontline employees but also among employees themselves appeared in daily interactions in the workplace informed by gender, racial, and class divides under “organizational culture”. The third round of coding was about how the work in the beauty industry setting was informed by bigger economic and political structures and how those structures reflected in daily work of employees. Some themes overlapped between codes but writing analytical memos at each phase of coding was crucial in parsing the nuances of the data.

Social media data was analyzed through critical discourse analysis (CDA) informed by Fairclough (2003). For Fairclough (2003) critical discourse analysis investigates the individual’s choice of words, metaphors, and images in relations to their lived experiences and values, through which the negotiation and manifestation of power could be understood (Rambe 2012). This analytical approach allows data to be analyzed in three levels: textual, discursive, and social. In his definition of CDA, Fairclough writes (1993:135):

Discourse analysis aims to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practice, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power; and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony.

At a descriptive analysis level, the focus is on the properties of text and micro-linguistic concerns. Discursive or interpretive level of analysis is concerned with the ways in which the text is

socially produced. The social level is engaged with the macro level of analysis, which contextualizes the text in the broader social context (Cook and Hasmath 2014). In this context, CDA would allow me to examine the representation of gender, race, and other factors of difference as well as the representation of social events. Using CDA, I analyzed both textual and visual signs. Some of the themes in the analysis used to categorize social media posts (both images and the texts generated with the post) were: negotiating femininity, strategic negotiation of racial and class identities, Black and anti-racist beauty aesthetics, and claims of racial solidarity. My fundamental goal with using CDA is to highlight discourses that sustain neoliberal capitalism, patriarchal order, systemic racism, and unequal relations of power that systematically privilege certain group and disempower others. Through CDA, I attempt to study the intricate and often subtle taken-for-granted hegemonic gendered and racialized norms and assumptions that are recreated, maintained, reinforced and at times undone through everyday interactions in daily life (Lazar 2017).

Epistemology: the status of researcher and the relations of power

I use decolonial critical feminist epistemology to carry out qualitative research (Narayan 1999; Sprague 2016; Wolf 2018). My research participants are from different racial and social class backgrounds. They are not, in this context, a vulnerable population. However, as a researcher I recognize that I'm in a position of power. To create a more transparent and egalitarian exchange of information, I shared complete information about my research and its purpose with my participants. I will also share the results of the research with my participants once the dissertation is completed. I'm particularly interested in voicing the work experiences of immigrant women and women of color and the

negotiations that they need to make in an industry that is informed by the norms of whiteness. One way I tried to ensure that their concerns are addressed was by pre-testing my questions with a couple of my personal contacts. During the interviews, I attempted to let my participants take the lead in the conversation about their work experiences. This was an epistemological decision I made to help my participants feel heard.

I also share critical feminist goal of dismantling inequality through my research. It is my hope that this research sheds light on the inequalities that take place in the workplace and the ways through which we can reduce gender and racial inequalities in the context of a feminized and racialized occupation embedded within an industry that is also structured by gendered and racial scripts. As a woman growing up in Iran, where women's bodies are often under the utmost form of policing, the experiences of my participants were resonant with my own. Growing up in an ethnocentric religious fundamentalist society, I learned that bodies, specifically women's bodies, are often a battleground wherein power, ideology, hegemony, and at the same time, counter-hegemony intertwine. In contemporary and post-revolution Iranian society, feminine bodies have been subjected to body politics not only by heteropatriarchal culture and religious-based politics but also the Western and White norms of beauty despite the country being internationally isolated over the past four decades due to Western diplomatic sanctions. It was this gendered and embodied lived experience that informed this research.

Power dynamics between the researcher and participants can define the researcher's access to knowledge and/or the extent to which they are welcomed in the field (Guevarra 2006). The concern with power dynamics leads to the discussion about the researcher's standpoint and their insider/outsider status. This status includes not only the way researchers identify themselves but also the way they are

perceived by participants (Davis and Craven 2022). While the insider status provides researcher with a more in-depth understanding of the standpoint of those being researched and their experiences, many factors can situate researcher as an outsider and shape participants' perceptions of the researcher as dissimilar. That is, being an insider does not automatically provide trust and openness in participants (Banerjee 2022). Feminist scholars have documented the merits as well as disadvantages of both insider and outsider status of the researcher (e.g., Davis and Craven 2022; Sprague 2016; Alexander 2003). According to Collins (1999), scholars of color hold the "outsider within" status due to their marginalized racial and gendered identities in historically white dominant academic institutions. The outsider status for these marginalized scholars offers them a lens to view and investigate the systemic racism and power dynamics based on which academia functions. While sharing the same experiences with participants is important in having access to the community, it does not necessarily translate into knowing the experiencing of that community (Fay 1996).

As a sociologist studying gender, embodiment, and intersectionality, my awareness of how the body can be turned into a tool for not only control but also resistance provided me a nuanced understanding of the work experiences of women in my study. In addition, my standpoint as an immigrant woman of color who had the experience of working in the retail environment and low-wage positions provided me with an understanding of the experiences of my interview participants in retail service industry. The feeling of "being out of place" is an inextricable part of immigration experience. As a woman of color with embodied signifiers of difference on temporary visa in a white society, I experienced various forms of marginalization. As an international student of color, I have grappled with issues of racism, mental health, and financial issues after arriving in Canada which added to my liminal position as a temporary resident. My research provides an insightful analysis of gender, race, and class

dynamics in a feminized and racialized occupation/ industry and how gendering and racialization can become subversive within the same occupational context.

With the participants, I would share my own past experience of working in the retail sector of the beauty industry. In addition, sharing my immigration background and marginal status in Canada also helped my participants feel more comfortable and understood. First-generation immigrant women of color felt a certain camaraderie with me given my status as a first-generation immigrant woman of color. They saw me as an immigrant going through the same challenging trajectory, they had been through many years ago.

Despite certain layers of my identity such as gender and immigration status that provided me a nuanced understanding of my participants' experiences, I considered myself more an outsider than an insider. My race acted as a challenge and sometimes an impediment to connecting with Black and Indigenous participants, who sometimes perceived me as an outsider who does not share the same racial identity and historical oppression. Other women of color participants may have felt a sense of difference due to my status as a researcher, even though I may share a similar class status and more or less similar work experiences. This shows that the category of women of color is not monolithic, or which guarantees me an automatic insider status. Thus, I had to build trust and rapport with all my participants carefully.

As I conducted this study on women's work in a multi-racial industry, I had to contend with my educational privilege vis-a-vis Middle Eastern immigrant women working in low-paying occupations. While as a first-generation immigrant, I do not benefit from White racial privilege

embedded with the North American societies' structures, I hold a "hidden privilege" (Flores 2016:191) because of the prestige accorded to graduate-level education. According to Flores, education can be considered hidden form of privilege because it can remain invisible until the researcher shares it with participants. However, the second group of my participants (the immigrant women of color entrepreneurs) are higher in terms of social and economic class than I. While I was an insider in some respects due to sharing similarities with immigrant women of color respondents, I also remained an outsider to Indigenous and Black respondents. As a feminist scholar, this awareness and acknowledgement of these subcategories within these identities is important in my analysis and I attempted to negotiate the multiple "identity status" of myself and my participants. Once I built trust and rapport, my participants started feeling comfortable sharing their work experiences because I understood their gendered and racial experiences and did not threaten their social position. In addition, some entrepreneur participants with higher economic class tried to treat me like a new immigrant whom they needed to support as immigrant women.

While my research is not community-based, I attempted to actively work to deconstruct colonizing approaches and practices while advancing racially marginalized participants' self-determination, such as Indigenous and Black individuals. As an immigrant on a temporary visa permit, I consider myself a guest in the ancestral homeland of Indigenous people. As a person new to Indigenous lands, I endeavored to be purposeful about reflecting carefully on the interview narratives and ensure that I was not misinterpreting them. By constantly examining my methodological approach and developing research perspectives in action, I attempted and hoped to contribute to cross-cultural research scholarship, while engaging in decolonizing research in interaction with Indigenous, Black, and women of color participants and the knowledge they brought to this research. As a non-Indigenous

person raised in a non-multiracial society, I must continually decolonize and indigenize my mind (Smith, 2021). To this end, I must examine lives, experiences, and institutions in ways that challenge hegemonic perspectives. I center the stories of marginalized women of color to understand their conceptions of gender, race, and identity which required interacting with these participants in a culturally sensitive manner, preparing myself by learning about the history, customs, and concerns of people in racially marginalized communities. Too often, when highlighting the significance of the study, the concern with the deficits of the focal communities is accentuated, which can undermine the strengths of the community (ies) under study, and in turn, risk victimizing them (Beeman-Cadwallader et al. 2012). In this research, I illustrate the richness of Black, Indigenous, and immigrant communities' resources without denying their marginality and complexities. My epistemological struggle is who gets to tell these marginalized communities' stories, which can draw a clear dichotomy between insider and outsider. The way I attempted to handle this struggle was what I believed to be my decolonizing approach. While I was an outsider to Black and Indigenous communities, I often strived to shift the power to my participants, who at times presented me the paths that were not a part of my initial intention, and I allowed the research to go to a different direction. In some cases, the research questions changed after engaging with participants. Nowhere in my original research plan was the analysis of social media content, yet I realized that for the research to reflect what is important for these marginalized women of color, social media content needed to be added as a unit of analysis to understand the connection people make to their multiple axes of identities through their occupation.

Many feminist researchers have argued for a reciprocal model (Dwyer and Buckle 2009; Mies1993; Reinharz 1983) that aims to produce “non-hierarchical, non-manipulative research relationships which have the potential to overcome the separation between the researcher and the

researched” (Reinharz 1983, cited in Cotterill 1992: 594). To make the relationship more reciprocal, I tried to value their expertise, ask for their professional opinions about makeup and skincare routines, and shop regularly from them to keep my relationship with them beyond the research. I felt they appreciated this acknowledgment of their social location and the resources they have access to. To make interviewing an interactive experience, I tried to bring their personal role into the research relationship by answering participants’ questions and sharing my experiences.

I have strived to deploy a critical feminist epistemological framework in my interviewing method. I used a research technique that allowed participants to question my research agenda or provide feedback when they find the interview questions irrelevant to their experiences. I did that by asking my participants to provide feedback on designing the interview questions, sharing the purpose of each question with them and asking for their input, and sharing the analysis once the thesis is complete.

Conclusion

Critical and decolonial feminist epistemology allowed me to focus on the subtle nuances that are necessary to understand the ways gender in conjunction with race and class are at play in everyday work practices of women in an industry defined by White norms. Using qualitative methodology enabled me to connect micro-level practices that happen in participants’ everyday lives to macro-level social and political structures. Using in-depth interviews and social media critical discourse analysis enabled me to cross-check the validity of my research findings from the interviews with social media content. In-depth interviews enabled me to examine and shed light on various facets of my participants’ everyday work experiences before entering the beauty industry and how they navigate their gendered and racial embodied differences in a field where whiteness is the norm. Analyzing social media content

allowed me to investigate my participants' engagement with social events and how their business practices are informed by their multiple and intersectional layers of their identities. The experiences of my participants helped me analyze theories about intersectional embodiment, identity construction, gendering, and racialization of work. The combination of interview data and social media content gave me an insight into structural, political, and economic logic of working in a white feminized occupation and industry. As a researcher deploying critical decolonial feminist epistemology, I went beyond the traditional theoretical repertoire of sociological research and endeavored to bring a commitment for a more just and inclusive workplace culture and structure.

Chapter 4

“I feel watched on stage”: Making the ideal aesthetic service workers

Drawing upon critical feminist epistemology, this chapter offers a critical analysis of employee’s work experiences, specifically women, in interactive service economy. Building on 15 in-depth qualitative interviews with women in Sephora, I explain how aesthetic subjectivities are reproduced under organizational control embedded within capitalist aesthetic economy. This chapter contributes to the aesthetic labor scholarship by investigating the company’s demand of investment in the body in cosmetic stores, which reproduces employees as self-disciplining gendered subjects. This chapter highlights how employees, both women and gay men, engage with heterosexual aesthetic labor in line with organizational “hetero-gendering” of the brand and in a space historically defined as feminine (Denissen and Saguy 2014). This chapter is primarily focused on gender as organizing structure of women’s work in Sephora. Discussions of race and racial positionality will be tackled more deeply in chapter 5.

In what follows, I first discuss the role of organizational control in formation of aesthetic subjectivities through regulation of their comportments, looks, voice, and speech and the psychological effect of this control on the employees’ mental well-being. I then discuss how gender as well as heterosexuality are written into employees’ performance of aesthetic and emotional labor.

Reproduction of Aesthetic Subjectivities and organizational control

In this section, I discuss the company's efforts towards creating an entertainment experience for customers through designing a theatrical environment in the store and regulating employees' bodies as a secondary site for consumption.

One of the influential themes that appeared in the interview narratives was the company's deployment of dramaturgical metaphors through vocabulary policies and regimented scripting strategies that employees needed to adopt in their interactions with customer. Parker, a white man and sales associate, mentioned:

I remember when I got hired, there was like a whole section on lingo. Stage for sales floor, backstage for backroom, cast member for co-worker, and then like costumes are like your uniform.

The creation of a business concept through a theatrical lens is not new. Disney was among the first entertainment companies which adopted a theatrical framework in its theme parks to create a unique consumption experience for customers (Gross and Pullman 2012; Pine and Gilmore 2013). Subsequently, many service companies such as restaurants, hotels, retail stores, as well as health care services espoused dramaturgical concepts such as staging, scripting, and acting to enhance customer experience (Kozinets et al. 2002; Gross and Pullman 2012; Tsai et al. 2012). The deployment of a dramaturgical framework by retail stores where the sales floor symbolizes a theater set and employees become actors is congruent with the nature of interactive service work which exhorts employees to immerse themselves in the performative aspects of a service job. Balqees, a middle eastern woman, and a beauty advisor, explains the idea behind equating workplace with stage. She shared:

The idea is that you're out there presenting your best picture. It is like a stage. It is like a performance. We practice how to speak with people a lot. It's not just buying makeup, it's the experience of being at Sephora which we would really value. So, it's all about the experience you're bringing to people. When people go to the theater, they go for entertainment and that's what Sephora believes. We are here to create this experience for clients.

Much like entertainment economy, the company attempts to enchant (Ritzer 2005) customers and lure them into further consumption through building on a certain degree of Disneyization (Bryman 1999) and creating a cinematic/theatrical escape for the customers (Korczynski 2005; Wolf 1999). Creating a theatrical atmosphere as a way to create an entertaining experience for customers and turning employees' bodies into a site of consumption as a part of the process of the enchantment of customers with the retail experience and brand could add a third value to Marxist use and exchange value, which Bohme (2003:72) refers to as "staging value". Shying away from addressing primary and essential needs of customers, capitalism derives value from aesthetic qualities of the commodities (Bohme 2003, 2012; Hancock and Tyler 2007; Roberts 2003). This new category of use value, as Bohme writes (2003:72), "derives from their exchange value in so far as use is made of their attractiveness, their aura, their atmosphere. They serve to stage, costume and intensify life." Indeed, I argue that fostering a theatrical atmosphere and aestheticization of organizational artifacts including employees' bodies and putting them on display in the sphere of exchange could be geared towards production of staging value which has the potential to increase both exchange value as well as the use value of the product.

Along similar lines, Angela, a Filipino woman and sales associate, mentioned the performative metaphors used by company. She noted:

First when I started, they explained it as if you are in theater, you're in a play, you're on stage. I was like ok when you're on stage you're putting on that performance in front of not only the clients and people who come in but also in front of your co-workers and cast members. And then going backstage means you can take that deep breath out, be yourself and say what you want to say. I definitely find with Sephora that when they use that term of being on stage, they really want you to be that perfect model like you are the face of the company. So, like best behavior, best look. There's no room for human error in that sense. You're not allowed to let your emotions and job intersect on stage.

Angela's explanation of the theatrical aspect of selling commodities and her emphasis on the distinction between her inner self and her performing self, mirrors Hochschild's conceptualization of surface acting (2012: 48-49). Angela distances her inner self from her performing self which in Hochschild's theoretical framework is known as "surface acting" based on which employees tend to break free of the display rules when stepping off the stage. Building on Goffman's (1959) conceptualization of the dramaturgical self, Hochschild articulate surface acting as a means to display emotions in workplace in line with display rules which structure organizational social interactions. Hochschild frames surface acting as a tool to distance the inner self and emotions from a self who acts out certain emotions as a way to fit in within the workplace. Similarly, in their analysis of the company's vocabulary policies, women participants revealed performance of a specific version of self in line with organization's feeling and aesthetic rules without internalizing those rules as their own. By

highlighting two versions of self, Angela identifies an interior, pre-discursive self in the backstage where she “can be herself and say what she wants to say,” as opposed to her performing self on the stage wherein she needs to constantly engage in management of her impressions and emotions.

Huda, a previous employee who was a beauty advisor, discussed the adoption of corporeal and emotional expressiveness by employees as a part of creating a theatrical and performative atmosphere. She noted:

When they were like, ok girls go on stage now, we were supposed to be always happy always smiling, always have a basket. You know like there is a point in time where we're like customer service it's great to have a really good customer service. But it's almost like they're asking us ok to put your mask on, which is all this makeup that you are required and then go on and put on a show and sell.

Huda's description of the performative service work scenario is another evocative illustration of Hochschild's (2012) articulation of enacted performances by employees embedded within broader relations of power. Cosmetics store is a site wherein women are expected to activate gendered scripts through display of non-verbal as well as behavioral cues such as wearing full makeup and strategic channeling of their feelings. Cosmetic stores as a site for practice of selling cosmetics has created an arena for recreation of a discourse about gender, historically criticized by classic feminist scholars such as Bordo (2000) and Wolf (1991). Indeed, women are required to stage their bodies in line with gendered scripts and cultural expectations to endow customers with an authentic theatrical aura to enhance consumption. The recurrent emergence of “mask” in participants' narratives is an indicator

of their awareness of the performative aspect of the job. In this case, I argue that a perception of the “me” as an innovative self against the “not me” who needs to “be always happy always smiling always have a basket,” as Huda mentioned, was developed as a form of resistance against the organizational rules. She further elaborated on using performative metaphors by the company geared towards generating a homogenized workforce through imposing strictly regimented demeanors on employees. She added:

Most of the people at work are younger. First of all, a lot of these girls think of the company as something amazing. Then you bring them on and train them to look certain way, talk certain way, and then like what happens when you’re not on stage? What happens when you leave? It can get very toxic. And I think a part of that is how we’re made to feel. Yes, we can express ourselves through art, through makeup, but we also had to doll ourselves in lots of other ways.

Huda briefly alluded to the share of Sephora employees by age group who are disproportionately at the younger scale of the spectrum. By recruiting younger applicants who strongly identify with the brand, according to her, the company ensures that the recruited employees will have an acceptable degree of docility and malleability so they could simply conform to the company’s idealized image of femininity. In this respect, the workers in this study represent a new version of docile subjectivities that Foucault (2012: 135) discussed about in the crude factories during early neoliberal era who could be considered as “machine... something that can be made; out of a formless clay.” In her statement, Huda hinted at the process of standardization through which employers strive to produce subjectivities through meticulously sculpting employees’ personhood. Her statement draws attention to

the processes of formation and construction of subjectivities by the company through targeting younger candidates as a means to easily channel their personhood to the organization's ultimate goal for profit making. Huda explained further how the company's demand for emotional management and customer care through a prescribed speech style places barriers to their creative expressions, leading to alienation from work. She noted:

When you actually think about it, it's kind of they're training you to be robotic. They want all the girls to be the same. We want to say the same thing, we want to do the same thing, we want to sell the same thing. It feels robotic. The interactions lack meaning and look performative.

The recurrent emergence of the term "robotic" in women's narratives, in my view, reveals the extent of "McDonaldization of the society" (Ritzer 2008) in general and the service work in particular through deployment of a calibrated and meticulously planned approach to social interactions which can abstract personal attributes of both employees and customers, reducing the opportunity for workers to build relationships with customers. Huda's statement of "interactions lack meaning" indicates the extent to which standardization of communication can depersonalize interactions between employees and customers, leading even to a cynical and detached approach on the employees' part in dealing with customers.

Along the same line, Angela mentioned how such theatrical atmosphere in the workplace fosters self-policing. She shared:

It's a little weird because sometimes I feel watched on stage where I can't be myself entirely. It holds us back from being real people.

In order to discipline individuals to police themselves, it is more effective to exercise power from a distance (Lavrence and Lozanski 2014; Yun 2010). I argue that creating a dramaturgical scenario could be the company's tactic to inculcate employees with self-monitoring. In my view, the notion of stage and working on stage can evoke different feelings including "being watched", thereby channeling employees to actively monitor and align themselves physically and psychologically to the marketed image of the company. Employees are not allowed to stray from regulated routines, which, according to Angela, "hold employees back from being real people." Indeed, the woman service worker, as Hochschild (2011) reminds us, embodies a new version of Marx's alienated factory worker who attempts to distance the "me" from the "not me" to change her state of alienation.

The employees' voice and speech, in addition to their appearance, are considered commodities that need to be controlled and aestheticized. Donya, a Middle-eastern woman and a sales associate, explained:

The way that you go on stage, you automatically feel like you have to be in a certain way. Even the way people talk to clients. It's funny. I have a different tone. When I know it's a client the way I say greetings is completely different from the way I greet a friend. We all know each other. We say oh it's your customer voice because you have to talk in a certain way. If they tell you something, you have to take it with a smile.

Organizations consider verbal presentation to be an important factor in facilitating business success (Ward 2006; Warhurst 2016). Along with the management of bodies and emotions, the worker's aural appeal can add symbolic value to the product, thereby increasing the company's profitability. While an organization does not depict the ideal expressive intonation style as feminine, gender is indexed by exploiting a body language and vocal tone traditionally coded as feminine and signified as a good customer service. "Smile" as a non-verbal form of communication, along with expressive intonation has been symbolically and socially characterized as feminine behavior (Hochschild 2012; Cameron 2000). Cameron (2000) suggests that women use a wider range of intonation and pitch as ways to sound more emotional, helpful, at times tempting, and less authoritative. In my view, regulation of employees' expressive intonations within the context of a feminized occupation could be indicative of display of femininity as a means to create relationship with women customers and evoke the feeling of warmth and sincerity.

Along similar lines, Rachel, a Mexican woman and a sales associate, discussed management of her personhood, including her speech, as a way to appeal to the customers. She added:

Definitely the way I speak has changed. So, I can't use anything like very casual. Even when customers are like thank you so much. Instead of being oh not a problem, it has to be oh my pleasure. There are certain things I had to change in order to make that point of deference like body language. Your hair has to be tied up properly. You express yourself with a product the way you hold it, the way you present it. I won't grab a palette and be omg look at this it has twenty-four colors. I'd be more like, look at this beautiful eye shadow palette, it contains these four beautiful unique colors. And you have to tell a story that is

created by our director of makeup. At first it was a bit tough because I wasn't not used to being like a book.

Regulation of employees' linguistic behavior to ensure their "verbal hygiene" (Cameron 2000: 336) is a way to shape and commodify employee's personhood as a component of corporate image and identity. Language, commodified in the late capitalism, has been subjected to stern taylorized regimentation (Holborow 2018; Urciuoli and LaDousa 2013). Holding a symbolic and cultural value, language, alongside employees' appearances, is an asset that is convertible to economic value. Labor either in manual or mental form, as Holborow (2018:4) writes, "is a multi-skilled whole, involving a range of human capacities which are all put in motion at the same time." Cameron (2000) in her study on regulation and standardization of women's speech in a call center, differentiates between styling and scripting by the employers. While scripting, meaning prescribing certain set of words for employees to use in their interaction with customers, standardizes the speech, styling standardizes the way employee utters those words. As indicated in the above extracts, not only employees are trained to utter scripted mantras in their interactions with customers but also their tone of the voice needs to be different to sound more excited and cheerful.

In the same lines, Angela elaborated on company's constant construction of employees' selfhood through policing worker's speech and behavior. She added:

Managers would put you aside and would be like "so that's not the Sephora way to do it". They go through a lot of different trainings to make you be the Sephora seller. There are a lot of different modules, and they tell you that you have to be that. Like no room to be

yourself. There's been people who they don't want to be their Sephora selves. They want to be themselves. They've went to makeup school, and they say this is how I know how to do and I'm not going to change myself. You can see how different management treat them versus people who take on the performance because they just don't align with their morals.

Angela explicitly differentiated between "Sephora self" and "the real self" which is indicative of failure of the company's efforts towards constructing a new personhood for employees and production of new subjectivities. Building on Marx's notion of alienation, Hochschild (2011) discusses how woman service worker, as new versions of alienated nineteenth century factory worker, perform emotional labor (surface or deep acting) to change her state of alienation and estrangement. In this study, women's deployment of emotion management and surface acting could be arguable considered as strategies to distance themselves from the performative self that they put on in the workplace and in their interaction with customers. Furthermore, Angela's statement indicates that exertion of indirect control and self-governance as discussed in previous section, is not hundred percent successful. As Angela also mentioned, direct control is exerted at times by managers through scolding and pulling employee to the side as a way to prod them back into line. Employees not malleable enough, not willing to, as participants mentioned, "be their Sephora selves," are treated differently or threatened with firing if necessary. In this regard, Donya noted:

Sephora is all about having a uniform experience with one person breaks that cycle they will be constantly like 'you're not doing this; you're not doing that.' There are so many people who I know that they got fired or had to be on one-on-one meetings [with managers]

because they aren't performing the way Sephora wants. You can see that these people have the toughest time at work.

Much like Angela, Donya stressed company's efforts towards building a homogenized workforce through enforcing a uniform, prescriptive selfhood on employees, while penalizing those avoiding incarnating the company's identity into their selfhood.

Previous research has highlighted the mental and psychological impact of scripted discourse on employees such as emotional burnout and workers' alienation from work (Williams and Connell 2016; Warhurst 2016; Yun 2010). Women's narratives indicate that enforcing a packaged discourse and regulating workers' personhood and demeanor by the company can have a detrimental impact on their mental health. In this regard, Nihal, another South Asian sales associate, shared:

There is always the pressure of looking your best. When customer sees you, they're judging you by your appearance and making assumptions. You need to impress them with your look and your personality. It's this judgment that takes a toll on your self-esteem and you keep judging yourself. You're always second-guessing yourself. Your self-love is altered because you never feel good enough. There's always someone that looks better, speaks better, and they are better to perform better on stage. You must constantly think about your image and those things are very consuming. It's always on your mind so there's a lot of pressure. Even when you're not working, you constantly need to think about how to elevate your image and your look. The show that you need to put on can be both emotionally and physically exhausting.

Women's narratives show that it is not the product itself that creates value for customers anymore. It is rather the experience of consumption that brings bliss and pleasure (Bohme 2003). Workers as moderators of this experience are expected to support or satisfy the desire for excessive consumption in consumers through self-commodification which goes beyond aestheticization of the body and extends to projecting a certain version of the self (Pettersson 2014). With increasing prevalence of service in the contemporary capitalism, workers bring to and sell in the "personality market" their physical aesthetic attributes and their personality (Hochschild 2012; Warhurst 2016), to deliver the organizationally appropriate service. Here, the cultural expectations of customers play an important part in bringing gender to the centerstage. It is due to the gendered expectations that employees construct and display versions of femininity and masculinity in the workplace (Acker 1990; Forseth 2005). Women's stories reveal how gendered discourses are activated by cultural expectations based upon which women employees are willing to bend over backwards to meet customer expectations. The residual psychological and physical effects of such labor, however, often remain invisible. As previous literature also has shown, employees' performative labor of representing stylized as well as empathetic image of woman service worker can jeopardize their physical and emotional well-being, leading to alienation and emotional burnout (Busoi et al. 2022; Gursoy et al. 2011; Hochschild 2012, 2011). Nihal highlighted how constant display of normative femininity expected by the company and customers has chipped away at her self-confidence and self-love, leading her to doubt herself and her job performance. Nihal is concerned with her body and how to incessantly cultivate it, even outside of her workplace. This self-surveillance by women to achieve social acceptance is intensified within neoliberal discourse of subjectification based on which women embrace "self-policing narcissistic gaze" (Gill 2007: 153; Lavrence and Lozanski 2014) and consider such practices of caring for the body as self-care rather than self-regulation. Reading gendered discourses on a broader level, I argue that constant embodied self-

regulation implies that women's bodies can never become feminine enough as they constantly fail to meet the exacting and hegemonic standards of beauty. In a consumerist capitalist society wherein consumption and body regulation are entangled, consumption is considered a way to reverse women's failure to be feminine (Lavrence and Lozanski 2014; Urla and Swedlund 2007).

Along similar lines, other participants shared their opinions about regimented sales scripts imposed on employees and how employee's engagement in management of their personhoods as a key component of service work can be emotionally depleting. Atiya, a South Asian woman and a sales associate, for instance, said:

The worst thing about the job is how structured it is to interact with people. It's exhausting. I don't think I would do it a hundred percent every time because people can see right through that. They would tell this is fake, it's not real. It's kind of exhausting and uninspiring. I don't feel like interacting with people because I feel like I have a script for whatever reason. I just feel it's so stagnant.

Much like other participants, Atiya's narrative shows that prescriptive behavioral rules and regimented sales scripts not only are emotionally draining but also prevent employees from offering meaningful, personal, and humanized services to customers. The terms "stagnant", "robotic", "exhausting", and "uninspiring" are characteristics of a job that is not emotionally satisfying for employees.

Sephora's deployment of dramaturgical lens and the adoption of this framework by employees create a unique context to explore the production of value in the aesthetic economy. To this end, I attempted to explain the performance of aesthetic labor by workers as an essential component to interactive service jobs through production of labor and value in contemporary capitalism. I explained how employees reproduce value in today's service economy that is no longer created through the production of material commodities, but rather produced through engaging in embodied, material aesthetic and emotional labor, thereby creating social relations based upon which production happens.

Consumerist (unpaid) labor of displaying hetero-feminine gender identity

The analysis of the interview data indicates that organization enforces strict and scrupulous prescriptive aesthetic and presentation rules. Donya for instance, explained makeup requirements for women employees to start their shift. She shared:

We have to at least have five pieces of makeup. So, you can't go to work if you don't have five pieces. Either has to be foundation or concealer. You have to have one piece of eye makeup, either mascara, eyeliner, eyeshadow. You don't have to have all of them, but you need to have one piece. You need to have some sort of lip. You have to have some sort of a blush or contour. And the other one highlight. Sometimes people do more makeup and spend more time doing their foundation, concealer but you have to have at least five pieces to be able to start your shift. Even our hair and nails should be done always.

Previous research on aesthetic labor placed emphasis on commodification of employees' gendered embodied identities by the corporate as a way to lure customers and create commercial value within the context of aesthetic economy (Duffy et al. 2017; Nickson et al. 2003; Pettinger 2004; Witz et al. 2003; Williams and Connell 2010). Marx (1976), in his analysis of capitalism, explains how labor, even when recompensated, can produce surplus value above the wage due to indeterminacy of the amount of labor expected from the worker. New Marxist economists take up the concepts of labor and value to extend the production of value outside of the employment relationships and beyond the confines of workplace (e.g., Cooper and Burrell 1988; O'Doherty 2008). To complement this understanding, contemporary Marxist scholarship suggests that the contemporary capitalism depends heavily on production of social relationships and symbolic value rather than production of material commodities (Böhm and Land 2012; Hardt and Negri 2004). Indeed, as capitalism grow overtime, control over labor processes has changed form, hence seeking to squeeze more value from employees including their embodied and emotional attributes. Engaging in material and embodied aesthetic labor, employees reproduce value that is no longer created through production of material commodities (Böhme 2003; Böhm and Land 2012; Hardt and Negri 2004). Hardt and Negri (1994) were among the first Marxist scholars who suggested the notion of immaterial labor as central to production of value to refer to the production of symbolic value within a service context. They wrote:

Since the production of services results in no material and durable good, we define the labor involved in this production as immaterial labor – that is, labor that produces an immaterial good, such as a service, a cultural product, knowledge, or communication. (Hardt and Negri 2004: 108).

Thus, women's narratives show that immaterial, emotional, and aesthetic labor is placed at the center of their work in cosmetic stores. Indeed, such immaterial labor is productive as it creates social relations based upon which production happens (Böhm and Land 2012; Hardt and Negri 2004).

Being constantly on display, a saleswoman is expected to work on and invest in her body as a crucial component of creating a desirable consumption experience for customers. Many of participants hinted at onerous unpaid labor that they had to take on to make their bodies representable for the work. Shabina, a South Asian woman and a manager, for instance, shared:

It's very costly putting together that appearance because you need to do your hair, your nails done. You need to put hours before to get ready. You need to invest. Lots of resources has to go into proper clothing, proper makeup which is unpaid.

As cosmetics sales representatives, women are compelled to perform hegemonic femininity and support gendered brand image through consumption of the merchandises. By extension, the organization actively fosters an "aesthetic experience" (Böhme 1993, 2003) for customers by enforcing employees to maintain and display normative femininity, hence capitalizing on gendered aesthetic labor in a historically feminized space. Angela alluded to the additional and unpaid labor of exhibiting the right appearance that she needs to undertake before starting the shift. While the face is the key part of the body that needs to be worked on, women need to routinely cultivate their hair and adorn their nails as a way to display their constructed feminine beauty before a predominantly hetero-feminine gaze of the customers. Displaying hetero-feminine gender identity requires taking on unpaid labor of body management such as "doing hair and nails" as well as undertaking the extra labor of wearing makeup in

line with dominant gender norms. Much like previous studies (Cohen 2010; Lazar 2017; Pettinger 2004, 2011; Warhurst et al. 2000) employees need to go above and beyond formal job descriptions and expectations and draw on their emotional and gendered aesthetic attributes to expedite consumption and to produce social relations.

In the same vein, Angela elaborated on undertaking the labor of aesthetics on her body even though it was not expected from her during the pandemic. She shared:

I would start getting ready at least one and half hour before leaving for work, so I can do a full-face makeup. Sometimes we have different events or different brand events, I would focus on how I make my makeup look. Even during COVID, some people skip facial makeup, but I still do eyeshadow, eyebrows, and really intense eye makeup because I believe that we're selling what we're wearing.

Postfeminist culture within neoliberal capitalism has expanded the scale of beauty work to a labor, thereby intensifying self-governance and regulation of different parts of women's bodies (Lazar 2017; Negra 2009). Angela's narrative of wearing full makeup even though her face was partially covered by a mask, reflects the neoliberal postfeminist discourse of free choice based upon which women take aesthetic labor eagerly upon their bodies in line with normative feminine standards. Furthermore, I argue that while the labor of selling cosmetics and displaying of femininity are strongly associated with woman and femininity, it is considered sexually neutral largely due to the space being segregated by gender and numerically dominated by women. Previous research showed how feminized service occupations, entailing selling and staging the embodied self, can historically carry connotation

of sexualized display (Mears and Connell 2016; Sanders 2006). Women's investment in their hetero-feminine bodies rooted in conventional femininity is indicative of "the performativity of heteronormative gender" (Entwistle and Mears 2013: 326). Shabina discussed how employees need to stage their bodies and turn their aesthetic attributes into a selling point as a part of embodying the conventional gendered beauty ideals and alluring customers into spending more money. She noted:

It's just one of those things about beauty industry. It's so visual that you definitely need to put on an appearance in order to sell what you're selling. You need to sell yourself first. It's overwhelming. Clients need to buy into your image of what the product would transform them into. So, if you're someone that is beautiful and looks perfect and talks in a very happy confident tone, then they feel like if they would buy this eyeshadow palette, they could transform into that Instagram supermodel.

Aesthetic labor for many participants implied commodifying and selling the body as a secondary site for consumption. Within the context of interactive service industry, "employees" as Mears (2014: 133) explains, "become a part of the product being sold." As a component of performing hetero-femininity, women in cosmetic retail settings need to commodify their bodies by adhering to the hegemonic norms of gendered embodiment which requires artistic skills but also involves time and money. Unlike highly sexualized labor such as sex work, visual consumption of the body is not the primary component of retail service work. It entails, however, a certain degree of display based upon which the employee is actively engaged with the performative construction of hetero-feminine norms of being appropriately attractive, buoyant, yet docile and malleable. By extension, organizational aesthetic rules are built upon hegemonic norms of heterosexuality and traditional feminine standards.

Along similar lines, Huda, a Middle-eastern woman and a beauty advisor, hinted at the employee's body being commodified and made marketable within the beauty service industry. She mentioned:

What I didn't like was that we were kind of pressured into being treated like I myself I'm an object for sale. In order for me to sell and to be such a successful employee I have to make sure that people can look at me and be like wow I want to look like that.

To enchant customers, as Korczynski (2005) argues, frontline employees need to generate a fantasy in customers about the transformative power of the products they are attempting to sell. As an "expressive organization" (Schultz et al., 2000), in the era of capitalist aesthetic economy (Böhme 2003), the employees are expected to perform in order to produce and affect customers' definition of reality (Hancock and Tyler 2007). Central to this process, as Hancock and Tyler (2007:512) also show, is deploying and mobilizing the "aesthetics of gender" embedded in the normative idea of feminine beauty. Indeed, employees need to create and represent a credible fantasy or image of selves that customers "buy into" through undertaking material, embodied aesthetic labor. This attempt towards projecting a self that not only is capable of exhibiting a happy demeanor but also embodies the "Instagram supermodel" trope as Huda mentioned, through the act of wearing makeup could also be read as reinforcement of normative hetero-feminine norms. Conforming to heteronormativity, women feel the pressure to exaggerate and display femininity through ornamenting their bodies within an industry wherein visual consumption is the expectation. I argue that when there is an expectation of projecting hetero-feminine ideals, employees need to become the consumers of the brand. Huda further pointed out the cost and effect of brand consumption. She mentioned:

People [colleagues] would say oh it seems like you break out, I felt like that they more wanted to help, but in order to help you have to kind of like make the other person feel like there is a problem. For me if my friend had a pimple, when we see each other, I'm not going to point it out the first thing and be like hey to deal with that I use this, this, and this. I won't do that but in the beauty industry, it's like people are consumed by it. When you're working that's what you're thinking about, that's what you're doing. Maybe I don't want to use eye cream, maybe I don't want to use a toner, maybe I don't want to use a serum. You know I never saw this while I was in it. It would frustrate me a bit. But I was so consumed with the industry that I was almost blind to these things that were happening. But when I left, I felt like hey my skin looks fine without me having to buy a ninety-dollar eye cream.

Situated within the neoliberal discourse of self-care, the company enforces a consumerist version of governance and self-surveillance. Indeed, the idea of the responsible subject is placed at the heart of the neoliberal society which folds health and beauty into consumerism (Lavrence and Lozanski 2014). Peer surveillance, in my view, fosters the employees' voluntarily adherence to the company's goals and desired image which goes beyond representing the brand and extends to voluntarily bowing to the stringent rules governing hair, nails, and skin perfection and flawlessness. It is through consumption of beauty products that the ideal femininity can arguably be attained. The establishment of motive in employees to police each other's bodies or body parts that do not fit the idealized portrayal of feminine body is in alignment with the neoliberal discourse of individualism and self-care based upon which health as a personal responsibility and consumption are conflated (Lavrence and Lozanski 2014). Huda's narrative, hence, unveils the pressure employees feel to invest heavily in their bodies for the consumption of customers which can be costly for low paid employees.

In a different example, Ami, a white woman and a sales associate, recalled a story of an employee being sent home by manager for her skin imperfection. She noted:

Once I remember one of the girls had red circular rash on her skin, very small. So, she did not put any foundation on that part of her skin. It was not even noticeable. But I remember the manager talked to her and asked her to leave and let that part of her skin heal then she can come back to work. It was like you can't be at work selling beauty stuff with a skin that is not even perfect.

A key component of a neoliberal postfeminist self-actualized subject is compliance with the new gendered “regimes of self-perfectibility” (Elias and Gill 2018: 10; McRobbie 2009) based on which women undertake the consumerist labor of aesthetic upon their bodies to achieve bodily perfection. Participants’ physical imperfections, under intense scrutiny, construct them as inept and outside of hegemonic, embodied aesthetic norms. I argue that employees’ flawed bodies disrupt the process of enchantment of customers that aims at creating pleasurable fantasies around the magical power of beauty products. The display of an employee’s imperfect body, in my view, might lead to the site of consumption losing its ability to enchant customers.

Many of participants pointed at the labor of producing the aesthetic self as emotionally and physically depleting. Atiya, a South Asian woman and a sales associate, shared her feelings about the company’s representation rules. She noted:

Sometimes you don't feel like doing makeup. It gets definitely hard, and I feel forced. It takes a toll on you. You go to the store, and you see everyone else has full makeup, but you don't feel like it. I would give myself an hour before. Even if I went from school to work. I would have to leave an hour before, sit in my car, do my makeup. Everything needs to look good. It is high standards to meet. I used to do make up and felt like it was relaxing. I still love it so much but over the years I feel more and more like it's a piece of my uniform.

Framing beautification of the body as “a piece of uniform” and a sort of chore by Atiya reveals company's aesthetic rules as a pressure on employees and an additional unpaid labor that they are expected to willingly undertake. She hinted at how adhering to look policies and prescriptive representation rules can emotionally take a heavy toll on her. Women's narratives show that women's aesthetic labor involves time and additional work which is not reflected in their salaries.

Similarly, Nihal shared about the mandate of putting makeup on in the workplace:

If you're working in heels all day, then it's going to damage your whole body. So does wearing eyelashes. It's terrible for the eyes. As if you're putting glue and then tearing it off. So, you're ripping off your own eyelashes.

To display hyper femininity, women employees extravagantly embody feminine personas through gendered clothing and aesthetics such as high heels, full makeup, fake eyelashes, and polished nails. Nihal hinted at long-lasting physical and emotional risk that embodying gender-appropriate persona can leave on women's health.

Aesthetic performance and consumption of the beauty products as a part of service work, however, does not strictly apply to men employees. Donya, for instance, mentioned:

The standards are different. They're fine without makeup. It's optional for them. They're not required to wear five pieces of makeup every day because from a client's perspective, they can be seen as oh you're a guy you don't have to wear makeup.

While women reproduced conventional gendered norms with their makeovers, dress codes, as well as feminine-coded demeanors, men can benefit from normative gender rules which naturalize aesthetic labor as a component of femininity, allowing men to benefit from less costly and laborious representation rules. In line with previous studies, women's narratives show that aesthetic labor, traditionally associated with feminine body and feminized occupations, is primarily undertaken by women employees (e.g., Nickson et al. 2012; Pettinger 2004, 2011; Sheane 2012). Donya's statement also reveals that reconstruction of employees as gendered entities extends to employee-customer face-to-face interactions within the context of a feminized occupation. I argue, however, that it is not only organizational rules but also the normative gaze of customers under which employees are made to regulate their bodies to display hetero-femininity in concert with the stereotypical image of woman's aestheticized and ornamented body, thereby reproducing and reinforcing femininity/masculinity divide.

Along these lines, Atiya discussed the absence of strict representation rules for men working on the sales floor. She noted:

As long as, they just wear black shirt and pants, they're good to go. Whereas we have a shirt and different black pants and a dress. I would love to just wear black shirt and pants. But also, they're not required to wear any makeup at all. And they won't be called on it if they don't wear any makeup. I would just love it if we were not also required to wear makeup sometimes.

While women's narratives indicate that the makeup industry has seen a noticeable rise in the number of men as makeup artists, the company reifies the socially and discursively constructed association of beautification with hetero-feminine body by imposing the policy of "five pieces of makeup" on exclusively women employees.

Along the same lines, Balqees, a Middle-eastern woman and a beauty advisor, discussed the gendered division of emotional labor and men being less engaged in display of emotions in their interactions with customers. She shared:

In general, I find that if it's a guy and they're not smiling, it's okay because they're guy. And clients they don't expect them to be super friendly just because they're a guy. Even if it is for example someone co-worker that I know who's always smiling who's having a bad day from a client's perspective, it's no different than another guy. But if I act the same way as him, I'm not approachable. Versus if it's a guy, well he's just a guy.

Display of emotion, framed as a feminized labor, (Hochschild 2012; Barber 2016) reproduces gender inequality in workplace. Women are expected to undertake emotional labor in line

with the underlying normative assumptions and standards about gender. By all accounts, men are able to get away with being nice and polite instead of being smiley and empathetic while women might sound inapproachable without presenting the right verbal and/or nonverbal cues. As Balqees mentioned, there is less expectation of being served by a caring male sales associate on customers' part, thereby transforming the display of emotions as an almost exclusive parcel of woman's labor. Gendered expectations, thus, reinforce certain version of femininity and masculinity in service interactions. In line with previous research on interactive service work (Barber 2016; Hochschild 2012; Forseth 2005), women's narratives show how gender is embedded in job expectations, calling on women and men employees to engage in different forms of emotional labor. The above extracts, however, reveal how emotional and aesthetic labor are unequally divided in the workplace between employees in the same occupation.

In this section, I showed how the practice of selling cosmetics has created an arena for recreation of a discourse about gender. I argued that performance of hegemonic femininity by women employees is linked to consumption of the merchandises to foster an aesthetic experience for customers. I situated employees' consumption of beauty products within a neoliberal discourse of self-care based upon which women undertake voluntarily the consumerist, unpaid labor of bodily maintenance upon their bodies. I also argued that customers' expectations intertwined with organization's representation rules naturalize aesthetic and emotional labor as essential components of femininity, hence reproducing gender inequality in the workplace.

Capitalist ideology of customer sovereignty and construction of modern servitude

Generating detailed play scripts for employees to follow is an important component of enchanting customers through creating a theatrical atmosphere. A scripted speech that appeals to the customer is often considered by employers as a factor that can help build the brand's identity as well as publicize a unique type of customer service offered by the company (Warhurst 2016; Nickson et al. 2012). Atiya, for instance, discussed training programs through which the company defined a highly regimented routine for employees to follow when interacting with customers. She noted:

I really thought about it when we were going through some model techniques and trainings. We used to have a program called "We Care" about how you say welcome for example, start talking with someone and how you engage with them, how you consult with them, and invite them back. They would give us really specific things to say, and really specific ways to sell people as if these are like our lines, these are the way we have to describe ourselves.

In their encounter with customers, workers in this company are expected to use scripted mantras. Having employees to "speak from a packaged discourse", as Yun (2010: 318) puts it, is a strategy through which capitalist firms attempt to standardize the work (Yun 2010; Warhurst 2016; Nickson et al. 2012). Standardization of language is at its core about enhancing predictability and to some extent efficiency in service work (Cameron 2000). Through creating a guideline for every word that the employee should utter in different situations, the organizations strive to promote predictability of interactions and evoke a sense of service excellence through providing customers a set of consistent and standard words in various situations. It is also important to take notice of the title of the program, namely "we care" in Atiya's narrative. With the rise of service economy, customer care and servicing the needs of clients are of paramount importance. Service interactive occupations, numerically

dominated by women, require attending to customers' physical and/or emotional needs and engaging in providing caring services to customers, traditionally defined as a "woman's job" (Charles and Grusky 2005; Storer et al. 2020). The idea is to create a sense of being genuinely and personally cared for in the customers, thereby increasing the brand loyalty and consequently the company's profit (Cameron 2000). The scripted language used for customer service, thus, has become increasingly the language of care which is discursively constructed as "feminine linguistic style" (Cameron 2000: 339). In this regard, Huda discussed a video created by the company as a means to train employees to provide customer care excellence. She shared:

We had just one video at Sephora, which when people get hired on, they're made to watch this video. Basically, it shows a girl like waking up, starting her day and she feels not great. She looks at her hair into the mirror, she looks at her hair and not feeling great. She feels sluggish. And then she goes to Sephora for a makeover, had a really good conversation with artist. Enjoys her time over there. Leaves feeling beautiful, heard, understood, appreciated. Someone spent one on one time with her, listened to what she wanted and made her feel really good.

As indicated in the above narrative, the company, embedded in a competitive capitalist economy, strives to involve in "instrumental empathy" (Korczynski 2005: 73) with customers through presenting itself as an empathetic friend who listens, understands, and is ready to provide service excellence. "Customer care" requires developing relationship with customers through empathy, care, and being able to understand and listen to customers' needs and concerns. Constructing "care" as a key marketing tactic to increase customer loyalty, in my view, could make overrepresentation of women in

low-waged frontline service jobs more justifiable. Care, conventionally defined as feminine attribute delivered in form of unpaid labor, becomes an inextricable part of women's work role and exchangeable for wage in capitalist market economy (Glenn 1992; Baines 2006). In that video described by Huda, the company provides a template for how employees should harness their capacities to engage in emotional labor as a means to create a sense of being cared for in customers in a safe and convivial space.

In line with previous research, the analysis of women's narratives reveals that caring for customers was a source of satisfaction for women employees and plays a crucial part in identity construction at work (Forseth 2005; Huppertz 2009). Fiona, a white woman, brand representative and a full-time salesperson, shared:

I want the customer to feel that they've been listened to and that somebody cares about the concerns that they have. And is willing and capable of addressing it even when it means I'm not selling them anything in the store and sending them to a dermatologist. Even if it means when they can't afford a product here, I tell them that I know enough about the products in drug store and I sent them there. I love helping people and I love making people good about their skin. I have the opportunity to make their days in a genuine way.

Building on discursively constructed feminine attributes such as care and empathy, many of participants expressed certain degree of satisfaction with the job. They articulated the component of care, inextricable from providing quality service, as voluntary rather than normative and imposed.

Along similar lines, Ava, an Asian beauty advisor, in her discussion about the reason she chose this job, hinted at caring for people as a source of joy. She mentioned:

I knew that I liked to help people and caring for people. I lived with my grandparents almost all my life growing up. I wanted an occupation that allow me to do that. I always thought that I would be a nurse. So, I was actually going to school for nursing and at the time I wanted to step foot in the beauty industry, and I was lucky enough to get a job at a big retail beauty store.

Ava made a connection between her service job and other feminized care work such as nursing, associating both occupations with care. Previous research (England 2005; Lightman and Kevins 2019) highlighted the intrinsic benefits of the work of care as an important source for job satisfaction. That is, despite being emotionally and physically arduous, care work can be exclusively rewarding for the workers. Indeed, women's narratives in this study also reveal that despite the customers' contribution to their emotional exhaustion, many of the employees capitalize on helping and connecting with customers as rewarding.

In another example, Huda highlighted the reason why she stayed in the company for a prolonged time. She noted:

One of the number one, main things that made me stay there as long as I did, was the ability that we had to really connect with our clients. I'm a psychologist and I always talk about this experience. In Sephora I was doing a lot of indirect counselling. Even though there's

problem in the beauty industry, I feel like a lot of times the reason why it's so successful and why Sephora is so successful, is that it provides more than just makeup. It provides that one on one authentic genuine connection. It's kind of with your hairdresser. When you go get your hair done, you talk about life and that person just listens non-judgmentally or whatever.

Similar to Ava, Huda's statement alludes to another feminized profession (counselling) which is associated with care work. Identifying similarities between her field of study (psychology) and the work of serving customers in retail cosmetic store, she aptly argued that both jobs require counselling, listening, understanding and empathizing with clients. According to her, selling cosmetic products goes beyond working on customers' bodies to create "authentic genuine connection" with them. Building on the caring facet of service work, women derive satisfaction from attending to customers' needs and making connections with them.

Based on interview narratives, I found that a systematic part of the (organizational) culture of "customer care" are abusive customers who expect to be in charge of the interactions. Donya, for instance, discussed employees being emotionally damaged by irate customers:

There are times that a lot of girls they just go backstage crying. It happens that people start yelling at you and if you're not super nice to them, because they expect you to be "oh no I'm so sorry" and be really apologetic, and if you're not that, they'll just start yelling. And they do yell. People throw things. It happens a lot because they think they can treat us this way.

The emergence of customer as an omnipotent stakeholder in the labor process within the context of consumer capitalism has elevated customers to a position of power, hence demanding service as well as servitude from service workers (Bolton and Houlihan 2005; Forseth 2005). The capitalist culture of service excellence, construes customers as “a bundle of needs, desires, and preferences,” (Bolton and Houlihan 2005:688) served by “self-empowered” workers who are equipped with required soft skills to deliver “customer care.” Customers, as “mythical sovereigns” (Bolton and Houlihan 2005: 686), expect a persuasive performance of customer care by employees, and thereby get frustrated when the surface and/or deep acting performed by employee is not convincing enough and do not fit the enchanting myth of “customer as king”. As Korczynski (2003: 57) aptly writes: “it is when enchantment turns into disillusion that the customer may react angrily.” Interview narratives show that women workers are often the primary target of customers’ anger in situations wherein they feel the lack of sovereignty. Donya’s statement of “lot of girls they just go backstage crying” reveals the unequal relations of power between customers and service workers, occasioning employees distress and pain in social interactions. Here, it is important, in my view, to take note of how gender matters in different ways in service work setting. Women’s historically subordinated position in the society, as Hochschild mentioned, has left them with a weaker “status shield” (Hochschild 2012) compared with men who are associated with authority and power. In an organizational level, women have been documented as more vulnerable against customers’ irate and violent behavior due to cultural expectations as well as being placed at the bottom of the hierarchy (Hochschild 2012; Forseth 2005).

Along similar lines, Huda brought an example of customer’s sovereignty and its emotional cost for employees. She noted:

I was in this position multiple times by my superiors. You have to sit down an hour with a customer applying makeup on them, your face is like few inches apart, and you have to make conversation and be friendly. Sometimes clients are rude and treat you like their slave. They would be like; take this off right now, this looks terrible, or excuse me but do you actually know how to put makeup on? The manager would come and tell that color artist to take off this client's makeup and reapply it in whatever way she wants. So now they've been humiliated by the client, management does not have their back, we're also forcing them to sit there with the same client who has just insulted them, spend another hour with them, talking to them like they didn't just offend them. If I had a choice, I would be like listen don't talk to me like that. I don't deserve to be treated like this.

The ideology of customer sovereignty which is marketed by many organizations in the service economy (Forseth 2005; Korczynski and Evans 2013) allows customers to vent their frustration at employees when they see a discrepancy between their expectations and the provided services. In Huda's example, employee was asked to serve customer nicely even through her professional skills were undervalued. Even when she was dismissed by the customer as unqualified and incompetent, she could not walk away from this undignified situation altogether. Instead, she had to engage herself in another hour of uncomfortable and tedious service interaction with the same customer. Behind the word "slave" used by Huda as a reference to customers' abuse towards employees, servant appears in the discourse of service work. Forseth (2005: 442) in her conceptualization of "modern servanthood" refers to ambiguous role boundaries in service occupations, reproducing a more complex distribution of power. With the emergence of the customer as a third party in the power dynamic between manager and employee, the service job has seen a change in power balance, creating "a dilemma between serving and

selling” (p. 449). Much like Forseth’s (2005) research, women’s narratives reflect contradictory role expectations. Employees are expected to spend time with each customer, comply with their demands, and create a pleasurable consumption experience for them while mastering artistic skills that allow them to provide various services in the fast-paced retail environment.

In this section, I argued that policing employees’ voice, speech, appearance, and personhood through a scripted speech and regimented routine for employees to follow in their interactions with customers could be intertwined with capitalist ideology of customer care and construction of consumers as “mythical kings” in the service economy. I also showed how women employees in service work are called on to display the ideal feminine persona, embodying alienated factory workers conceptualized by Marx during the nineteenth century. While management of emotions and bodies can be alienating for employees, distancing the performative self from the inner self through engaging in surface acting could, in my view, be considered as a tactic for employees to alter the state of alienation.

Aesthetic labor regimes and workplace segregation

The analysis of the interview data revealed that the ideal worker in this upscale cosmetic store is middle-class gendered subjectivities which fully fit the company’s image and aesthetic. Workers or applicants who do not “sound right” and do not have the right aural aesthetic are either excluded or pushed to backroom positions. Angela, for instance, hinted at the way the company sorts workers and assigns them to different positions based on their aural aesthetics:

We used to have a bigger operation team [in the backroom]. The full-time employees that we had and always working in the back operational were new immigrants with heavy accent

who couldn't speak English effectively. I've only seen a handful of them being client facing. More often they are in the back. One of them speaks Mandarin and the only time she is client facing when they put her to only greet in front on the store.

Segregation in service work and sorting of employees based on their gender, race, and class in the same occupation is well documented by previous literature (e.g., Adib and Guerrier 2003; Duffy 2005; Glenn 1992). Exploring hierarchy in hotel work, Adib and Guerrier (2003) show how reception which requires face-to-face interaction with customers is predominantly undertaken by white middle-class women while ethnic women of color are mostly clustered in chambermaiding as a non-interactive, dirty, low-status job. Much like previous research, this study shows that gendered work in cosmetic retail setting is segregated based on class and immigration status. According to participants, new immigrants with "racialized accents" are assigned to non-interactive positions due to having a perceived deficit in aural aesthetics leading to a hierarchy between interactive and non-interactive positions. She added:

They kind of make it seem like they are two separate entities like there is this selling process and operation process. They are very different, and they are treated very differently as well. They are treated differently in the sense that they aren't picked for training or the opportunities to develop their careers. If they are doing new trainings, it's never for people in the back. They aren't the first picks and if they are, people [employees] will complain why are they picked, and that these people should not be client facing which I think is kind of unfair because they want to develop their career. They should be allowed to. I also know

that they get far less gratis than everybody else which are the free products that we are given. I do find that they usually get far less.

This process of imposing one style of demeanor, or certain accent over another creates and reproduces hierarchy among employees. The neoliberal economy strongly depends upon service industry wherein communication and language skills play crucial roles (Duchêne and Heller 2012; Heller and McElhinny 2017; Ramjattan 2019). Neoliberal construction of language skills and non-accented speech as a skill for entering job market and maintaining the job can justify marginalization of foreign-accented employees because of not having aural appeal, hence being perceived as having skill deficit (Harrison 2012; Lorente 2017; Piller and Takahashi 2013; Ramjattan 2019). In this case, even though the foreign accented employees were hired in the company, they were still marginalized in a workplace wherein non-accented English speakers were given privilege. Piller and Takahashi (2013), for instance, in their study of Japanese flight attendants' experiences in an Australian airline show how Japanese attendants were being disadvantaged in their encounters with clients who often complained about these attendants' non-white accented English. Similar to previous research, women's narratives indicate that workers with foreign accented English are discriminated against and considered unqualified to face customers in a workplace where oral communication plays a key role in carrying out job responsibilities.

Along similar lines, Huda discussed assigning new immigrant employees to the non-interactive positions for lacking in aesthetic appeal. She shared:

One day we hired a girl for Christmas season. She had I think come to Canada not too long ago, but she had a really strong accent, to the point that when we would communicate over

headset, we would not understand what she was saying to us. So, they took her off stage and made her work in the back because if you're working at the back and you're putting products on stage the only thing you really have to say to clients is 'ok let me get you somebody.' So, we can teach her a sentence and she can do that. But when she helped customers, they would often complain that she can't speak good English and that they can't understand her.

Indeed, the neoliberal aesthetic labor regime makes job segregation based on gender, race, and class natural, legitimate, and right (Williams and Connell 2016). The subtle, covert, and internalized process of exclusion of some groups of people with "racialized accent" and denying their access to resources reveal the institutional whiteness that the company is attempting to preserve. Indeed, accented English, discursively constructed as "wrong", do not match the hegemonic yet invisible norms of whiteness. As an ethnic and/or racial feature, accent, unlike a few other visible markers of difference, is not easy to cover up, hence rendering the bodies of employees "out of place" in an institution wherein whiteness and its essential features, including non-accented hygienic speech, define normality.

Along similar lines, Nimrah, a Black woman and a sales associate, discussed the marginalization of accented English speakers. She mentioned:

We had also a few other people who maybe their social skills weren't the best, they weren't necessarily new immigrants with thick accent but also those with social anxiety or a form of autism that made them a bit awkward once speaking to clients. We have certain image of cast members in Sephora and someone like that doesn't fit the mold. They put them at the

back or in fragrance because people usually don't interact with us a lot in fragrance or if they do interact, it is more like 'hey can you make me this sample'.

Hegemonic construction of accented English as skill deficit within organizational context, in my view, reproduces and reinforces unequal class hierarchy between employees at various levels of aural competence. Nimrah, however, hinted at a few other marginalized and excluded groups such as employees with disabilities who do not fit the image of the organization. Thus, displacement of employees with markers of difference from interactive positions and being denied access to certain resources such as training and job promotion can lead to emergence of a "new invisibility", as Warhurst (2016: 228) writes, in the labor market.

(Un) doing gender normative discourses: the case of gay employees in a feminized space

The analysis of the interview narratives indicate that cosmetic retail stores provide a setting for both men and women frontline, interactive service workers to perform gender in the workplace. As discussed in previous sections, gender discourses are activated in cosmetic store setting as a site for social interaction through female employees wearing gendered coded clothes, makeup, and displaying a consistent feminine demeanor.

Men employees, according to women's narratives, not only are held accountable for displaying normative masculinity but also are called on to build on non-normative sexual/gender

identities to define their professional identity in the workplace. Balqees, for instance, discussed (gay) men being deemed by customers to have more expertise in makeup application. She shared:

It's funny some customers trust men more to do their makeup. You'll hear some say "oh I trust men to do my makeup", "men are better at doing makeup." And I am like why? Where does that come from? It's funny that all famous makeup artists in the industry are also men. I don't think it has to do with talent or ability at all. What it has to do, with I believe, is the way you're grown up to think that men are able to handle those leader, higher positions. They have more control; they have more discipline. Even women have that mentality too.

Being historically excluded from the mainstream labor market, gay men have been taking advantage of gender-based privilege in certain feminized industries such as fashion (Stokes 2015; Entwistle and Mears 2013) or cosmetics industry (Homant and Sender 2019). As gay men in a feminized occupation and a workplace that is numerically dominated by women, they benefit from masculine privilege and discursively constructed image of men as creative and autonomous compared with their women counterparts (Schilt and Westbrook 2009; Wingfield 2009). As Balqees aptly argues, these expressions such as "I trust men to do my makeup," can't be treated as innocent remarks. Rather, they unveil how gendered power relations are socially constructed. According to this construct, masculinity refers to control, authority, professionalism, and dominance, whilst femininity is associated with stereotypical characteristics such as care, empathy, and nurturance. The above extract, in my view, shows heteronormativity as embedded in the organizational culture and the logics of the workplace. Heteronormativity refers to an institutional standard and assumption that turns heterosexuality culturally and socially normative and all other sexualities as deviant (Butler 2011; Cottingham et al. 2016). Such

institutional standard, associating women with femininity and men with masculinity, regenerate femininity/masculinity, sex/gender, and man/woman as mutually exclusive categories (Cottingham et al. 2016). In the case of this specific study, I argue that heteronormativity acts as an organizing structure of the workplace which has sexualized everyday interactions between customers and employees. Customers and their cultural expectations, on the other hand, reinforce normative masculinity through constructing men with higher artistic skills.

Much like Balqees, other women mentioned customers' contribution to reification of gendered power relations through bias towards men sales associates and makeup artists. Atiya, for instance noted:

A lot of famous makeup artists are men. Like makeup by Mario. We have these men who are really huge. And really big women artists are typically influencers. There's a hierarchy of, you can call like a, I don't want to put these terms to it, but like a white collar/ blue collar distinction. You see the replication of that kind of higher up. Right? And I think that obviously you see the same things even in the store for example. When a client interacts with a man makeup artist, they have an assumption maybe that the person came to the work because of their expertise and artistry skills. The truth is men have a certain level of authority. I had this conversation with one of the men who used to work with us. He was like, it's totally true but I'll just take it because more clients come to me, and I can do my job. Maybe because some people are used to see just another woman in the beauty industry.

In a historically and culturally feminized space, men employees are able to take advantage of the processes embedded in everyday interactions within the workplace that can facilitate their advancement (Stokes 2015; Wingfield 2009). I argue that the construction of men sales associates as makeup artists and experts serves as a subtle mechanism, hence facilitating men's advancement in a feminine occupation. What is specifically noteworthy is that Atiya alluded to blue-collar versus white-collar jobs as a reference to inequalities and divisions of power in gender-segregated occupations. According to her narrative, professional makeup artistry with a higher status and higher pay is dominated by men while invisible digital forms of labor with marginal status are predominantly performed by women. Atiya's reference to gender-based occupational clustering provides a structural explanation why men embody power and control in feminized occupations. Much like other gender-segregated spaces, social interactions embedded within cosmetic stores reifies and naturalizes the idea that there are only two opposite genders through "maintaining the gender hierarchy that subordinates women to men." (Cameron and Kulick 2003: 45) In the same vein, Donya, a woman sales associate, said:

In general, if I'm recommending something to the client, my male co-worker who recommends the exact same thing, it's more likely for them to make a purchase if the suggestion comes from a guy. If they're talking to a guy, they spend more money. They value men's opinion more. Because they think oh this is a girl but if it's a guy who suggests the same thing, he must know what he's doing.

In their everyday interactions, men often confront customers who do not expect to see a man "doing a woman's job" (Wingfield 2009: 10) in a space that is culturally defined as feminine.

Williams (1995) articulates this process under the term “glass escalator” which includes the norms and expectations embedded in feminine professions that push men, even though they are numerically minorities, upward into the positions of power such as management. I argue that the perception that men are not suited to sell discursively constructed feminine merchandise such as makeup products, unless they have “expertise and artistry skills”, as participants mentioned, can contribute to the effect of the “glass escalator” (Williams 1992) and ultimately contribute to moving them into a position more legitimate for men. This assumption also implies that men employees are overqualified for this job, hence granting them more authority. Schilt and Westbrook (2009) conceived the process of doing gender in everyday practices as intertwined with making heteronormativity. Women’s narratives in this study shows that cisgender women customers deployed normatively gender assumptions in their interactions with gay men, reinforcing the binary view of gender/sex. Such deployment of normative gender assumptions, in my view, simultaneously reaffirms heteronormative assumptions that associates masculinity with competence and authority. Parker, a sales associate who works in skincare department, shared his experience with encountering customers who mistake him for a makeup artist. He noted:

Me and my mom talk about it a lot. Like a lot of times people that come to me tell me they rather come to a guy. They’re like oh my goodness there’s a boy here, be my makeup bestie, tell me whatever I need to know, teach me all those makeup tricks. That’s not always the case. I’m just a guy here. I kind of find it funny.

Masculinity and its performative qualities such as showing control and expertise in a historically feminized position (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Cottingham et al. 2016) are ideals to which gay men in this study, constructed as male-identifying subjects, are constantly held accountable

for. Even though Parker identifies as non-binary, he is expected to act based on normative gendered norms that validate and privileges heteronormative binaries of femininity/ masculinity.

For gay employees, the intersection of gender and sexuality facilitates their career advancement and at times complicates their experiences of working in cosmetic industry. The analysis of the interview data showed that even a gay-friendly workplace can reify the duality of normal/homosexual. Angela for instance mentioned:

I don't know what it is about straight women being obsessed with gay men. But they always want them to be their gay best friend, have them do their makeup. Which is kind of an unfortunate because I got my best friend hired in Sephora and he have another close friend who is also a gay man, and they often say, 'people think we're like a doll that they can play around with.' Even empathizing them like "oh you're so cute" and it's like ok they're like grown men. It's like they're being othered.

Previous research has shown that in workplaces, construed as non-sexual spaces, there has been an approval of the individuals' self-identity gender (Schilt and Westbrook, 2009). Feminized spaces rest on gender discourses that construct women as weak and having vulnerable subjectivities and heterosexual men as sexual predators (Westbrook, 2008; Westbrook and Schilt 2014). Encountering individuals that challenge ideology of gender segregation, I argue that cisgender women customers in my study, deploy tactics to undo the potential threat to feminized spaces construed as non-sexual and safe such as infantilizing non-binary/genderqueer men. Westbrook and Schilt (2014:34) used the term "gender panic" to refer to situations wherein "people react to disruptions to biology-based gender

ideology by frantically reasserting the naturalness of a male–female binary.” Cisgender women customers quell this panic, in my view, by constructing gay men as the demasculinized, “cute” other.

Angela added:

You also get people who are on the whole opposite spectrum. We have clients who go and find a woman and they’d be like I need your help because I don’t what that help from a man. It could be so many different things. It could be religion, just like uncomfortability with men or whatever. It’s another form of “othering”. It like they’re not the same as everybody else. They treat you so differently.

The above narrative shows that not all customers are able to repair the rupture to gender ideology ignited by the presence of masculine bodies with “uncontrollable sexual urges” in a supposedly sex neutral woman-only space. Women’s narratives show that in such moments of ideological disrupture, cisgender women customers react differently to naturalize woman-man polarity. To undo the threat constituted by non-normative bodies of gay men and reassert discursive gender binary, in my view, some customers demasculinized gay men while others avoided men’s touch altogether.

One of the influential themes appeared in women’s narratives was the importance of display of femininity by gay employees to undo the intrusion caused by the presence of masculine bodies in a feminized space of cosmetic store. In this regard, Armanita, a Black woman and a sales associate, mentioned:

It needs to be a certain type of man for this environment. If you have a feminine energy that would work but if you are very masculine that would be difficult for you. Versus someone who have that feminine side to them and their comfortable bringing that feminine side to the store. When a female customer walks in they might be ok with a guy who represent themselves in a feminine way versus having a very masculine butch man talking about makeup. It might not really translate.

Service work is a field wherein employees attend to the needs of customers through engaging in body and emotional labor (Hochschild 2012; Kang 2010). The labor of working on customers' bodies and selling feminine products, traditionally performed by women, is in conflict with norms of masculinity. Armanita's narrative indicate that cosmetic salesmen can face difficulties when the demand of working in a feminized space is at odds with the norms of masculinity and construction of men's touch as sexualized. I argue that men employees, with masculine verbal and behavioral cues, can disrupt the presumed safety of "sexuality free zone" (Westbrook and Schilt 2014: 49) in cosmetic store predominantly occupied by women employees and customers.

Along similar lines, Shabina discussed the importance of men employees displaying femininity. She noted:

They need to have a more feminine side; they need to have a little bit of flamboyant side to them. They don't have to wear makeup if they don't want to, but they need to be able to speak to a woman in a womanly way. You know? What I mean is that the personality

doesn't have it, so they have to put it on. So that they feel comfortable and woman who is the consumer feels comfortable with that.

While many occupations rest on heteronorms, we can see this inverted in gender-segregated, specifically feminized occupations. To make "customers feel comfortable", as Shabina mentioned, men employees strategically need to perform (homo)sexuality through performative enactment of femininity. Intimate touch of customers' bodies, conventionally performed by women, is associated with hypersexuality when performed by men (Cottingham et al. 2016). I argue that over-performance of (homo)sexuality through the tone of voice, word choices, and grooming practices is an important component of interaction with women customers as a way to desexualize their presence and their touch in a feminized space. In my view, gay men are expected to confound the performative qualities of normative masculinity such as showing mastery with "queered" and feminized bodily performance in a gender segregated workplace, predominantly occupied by women. Rachel, a Latina woman and sales associate, discussed a situation in which the gay employee was "out of place" in the store setting by the virtue of having traditional masculine physical and verbal cues. She shared:

He is a tough person. He dresses up like a man, but he curls his hair maybe like mid almost long hair with makeup on. So, it's like very confusing for a person. I find some people wouldn't approach them. They are like, why is this guy helping me? Customers come and say last time somebody helped me and I'm like do you know who was the person? They say a guy that looked like a girl. Some people have accidentally called him a she and they can get a little triggered by that.

According to Rachel, beautification and cosmetic practices conflicts with traditional masculine norms. Rooted in the essentialist idea that a person's body conveys meaning about their gender, Rachel naturalizes and legitimizes "biology-based determination of gender" (Westbrook and Schilt 2014: 33) on the customers' part. Westbrook and Schilt (2014) defined "determination of gender" as the process of placing individuals in a gender category to determine their gender identities in social interactions. In her narrative, Rachel referred to the process of "gender determination" of the gay employee relying on certain visual cues such as clothing and their grooming style. In her narrative, there is an implicit acceptance of socially constructed gender dichotomization, hence solidifying and naturalizing masculine/feminine and woman/man polarities.

In this section, I argued that women employees wittingly or unwittingly tap into gender discourse through embodying hegemonic hetero-femininity while gay men need to perform normative as well as non-normative masculinity. I argued that the gendered retail organization has created a deadlock for gay men in a feminized, women-dominated occupation. They take advantage of gender-based privilege in the cosmetic industry with a certain feminine performance and benefit from masculine privilege and discursively constructed image of men as creative and autonomous. However, they need to perform non-normative gender identity to repair the rupture to gender ideology ignited by the presence of masculine bodies "as sexual predators" in a supposedly sex-neutral, woman-only space.

Conclusion

As a company that conflates beauty and entertainment industries, Sephora creates an organizational culture that is both informed by gendered/ racial normative discourses and consumer capitalism. This chapter explored how this company attempts to govern and reconstruct employees'

personhoods through deriving value from every aesthetic quality of employees to enchant customers. In line with previous literature, I argued how speech, along with other aspects of employees' selfhood such as voice and appearance, has been subjected to stern tailored regimentation in the service economy. My analysis underscores how this process, embedded within the capitalist aesthetic economy, naturalizes a "practically limitless exploitation" (Bohme 2003:81) of employees and undermines credibility of women's work and expertise. I also discussed how the company exerts both indirect and direct control. I argued that creating a dramaturgical scenario is the company's tactic to exercise power from a distance, hence inculcating employees with self-discipline and self-surveillance. Direct control, however, is exerted at times by managers to prod undocile workers back into line through scolding, pulling employee to the side, and/or the threat of being sacked. As a chain retailer, Sephora provided a context to explain the production of value by employees in today's service economy through engaging in embodied, material aesthetic and emotional labor, thereby creating social relations.

My analysis of women's narrative revealed how performance of hegemonic femininity and consumption conflate. In alignment with the neoliberal postfeminist discourse of free choice based upon which women take the onus of gendered aesthetic labor eagerly upon their bodies, the industry demand employees to constantly worry over their appearance and their engagement in a unpaid, consumerist labor that goes into managing and perfecting their bodies. Situated within the neoliberal discourse of self-care, I argued that the company enforces a consumerist version of governance and self-surveillance through establishment of motive in employees to perfect those bodies or body parts that do not fit the idealized portrayal of feminine body. Customers' expectations intertwined with organization's representation rules, thus, naturalize aesthetic and emotional labor as essential components of femininity, hence reproducing gender inequality in the workplace. Gender discourses were activated in

cosmetic store setting as a site for social interaction through wearing gender-coded clothes, makeup, and displaying feminine demeanor such as care and empathy by employees.

Building on employee-customer interactions, I attempted to unveil abusive and irate customers as a systematic part of the culture of “customer care” within the context of consumer capitalism, which has transformed the power relations in the workplace with customers to a position of power. Customers, thus, as “mythical sovereigns”, demand service as well as servitude from frontline service workers who are often the primary target of customers’ anger in situations where, they feel the lack of sovereignty, occasioning employees emotional distress and pain. The analysis of women’s narratives indicates that work process in cosmetic retail store, encapsulate the same alienating work process articulated by Hochschild (2012) in her landmark study of emotional labor among flight attendants.

I also attempted to bring sexuality and class to the same analytical level as gender to show how organizations mobilize employees’ sexual and class identities to create a happy experience for hetero-feminine women customers. Drawing upon the interview data, I argued that aesthetic economy naturalizes hierarchy between women employees based on their aesthetic qualities. The company recruits middle-class, second/third generation immigrants primarily for positions requiring face-to-face interactions with customer while assigning new immigrants with “racialized accents” to non-interactive positions for having a deficit in what is deemed as standard aural aesthetics. Building on women’s narratives about their male colleagues, I argued for heteronormativity embedded in the organizational culture and the workplace logic. Through the narrative voices, I showed how women customers reproduce the binary view of gender/sex through deploying normatively gender assumptions in their

interactions with gay men. I contended that in this gendered realm of the cosmetic industry, and an organization which is women-dominated, gay men can benefit from gender-based privilege as the feminized and discursively constructed image of men as creative and autonomous. However, they need to perform non-normative gender identity to repair the rupture to gender ideology ignited by the presence of masculine bodies “as sexual predators” in a supposedly sex-neutral woman-only space.

Chapter 5

Performing Otherness: Gendered Racialized Bodies doing diversity work within white spaces

This chapter brings together theories of critical whiteness theories (Ahmed 2007, 2012, 2013, 2018) and critical diversity theories through the lens of critical phenomenology, and embodied intersectionality (Mirza 2013, 2018) to show how women of color are called on to perform the labor of diversity work mediated through their gendered racialized bodies in both tiers of the industry, namely chain stores owned by white men and local companies owned by women of color. Building on the critical phenomenological approach to whiteness, I investigate the experience of gendering and racialization among women of color in the retail sector of the beauty industry. In this chapter, while spotlighting the lived experiences of women of color in the context of interactive body-related service industry, I seek to contribute to the literature on phenomenological analysis of the employees' experiences of racialization in the workplace.

This chapter also joins the recent critical diversity research in work and organization studies that point to the ways in which diversity masks the persistence of unequal relations of power (e.g., Ahmed 2013, 2018; Johnson and Joseph-Salisbury 2018; Yucel 2016). I begin by examining the chain retail stores' engagement with the discourse of diversity and how it is reflected in daily interactions in organizations. I focus on Sephora, as one of the biggest chain cosmetic retail stores. I begin by analyzing institutional attempts towards extraction of gendered and racialized labor within the beauty industry as a way to gain legitimization, increase profitability, and appear inclusive. I argue that the company's diversity management practices oscillate between two competing discourses of diversity,

namely the business-based discourse with the purpose of expanding market share and the moral discourse primarily based on a call for equality and social justice (Ahmed 2013; Carrillo 2021). Staging the embodied subjectivities of employees as a business strategy as well as gender and racial stereotyping of occupations by customers reinforces white/ non-white, normative white woman/ exotic woman of color binary paradigms within predominantly white organizations. I later unravel the impact of invisible norms of whiteness, reproduced through daily activities of employees and their interactions with managers, on employees of color.

Diversity as a capitalist project of gendered and racialized labor extraction

Much like previous studies on diversity management initiatives in corporations, women participants viewed transforming the company's profile and image, often with financial purposes, as underlying impetus for its strategic diversity initiatives. Atiya shared her opinion about the company's recent attempts towards establishing a diverse workforce. She noted:

I would say in the company, in our store for example, we're definitely more diverse now than we were before. When I started for example, I was one of racialized people, something we could count with hands. And it was very difficult because with a few managers we had a lot of issues about racism for sure. It was considered to be 'whitewashed'. But over the years, especially after some events you know like Black Lives Matter in 2020, the company has made a lot of effort to diversify their models in advertising and hired more racialized

people. I'm very cynical about these things and I think there is a lot of performativity that the company do to just get with the times.

According to Atiya, the company that once was exclusively white has been seeking to embrace and promote inclusivity through increasing the representation of women of all backgrounds within the workforce. Construed as “whitewashed”, the company has been striving to allay growing public concern about racial and gender inequality through using women of color as their “embodied billboards” (Frew and McGillivray 2005: 166) and constructing itself “the right image” (Ahmed 2013: 45). I argue that diversity, in a white dominant institution, is an added value brought in by racialized and gendered bodies of employees. In the above statement, Atiya cited “organizational performativity” as a reference to the labor involved in “dramatic and contingent construction of meaning” (Butler 1990: 139) upon which the organization depend. Expressed differently, Ahmed (2018), in her critical reading of diversity, talks about how organizations accord recognition to gendered racialized subjects whose markers of difference allow organizations to perform diversity and appear inclusive. She mentioned:

Some of us come to embody diversity; we appear different, because of whom we are not, which means we allow an organization to appear different. For women of color this means that we often come to embody the promise of inclusion within universities. Women of color have found themselves being the face of the company as an inclusive institution (P. 333).

Embodying the organization's commitment to welcome justice and change, gendered and racialized bodies of employees become an asset through which the company constructs the impression of an inclusive, democratized space that embraces differences.

Similarly, Isabella, a Latina woman and a former beauty advisor, views organizations' efforts toward increasing the representation of diverse identities within the workforce as a response to the growing public concern about inequality issues. She shared:

The majority of their diversity can be seen merely on the surface level with the models they choose for campaigns. To truly be a diverse company, there must be diversity at the very core of the company — in the team of people who have the power to make decisions. It's very easy to hire a person of color in an entry-level position. And by no means do I want to discredit diversity in that level, but I do believe where we will see true and lasting change is by diversifying at the top level, the CEO level.

To Isabella, diversity is deployed as a means for concealing rather than challenging and abolishing inequality. Brought to the organization by the bodies of gendered and racialized employees, diversity seeks to transform the image of the organization whilst leaving the institutional whiteness intact. Featuring employees of color is often aimed at changing the image of the company as “white” and “men-owned”, thereby creating an illusion of fairness and inclusion. The company, drawing on the intersectional embodied identities of employees, is seeking to sell itself as a place in which inequality in its various forms has been unraveled and resolved.

If one of the repeated views was that organizations adopted the discourse of diversity as a way of finding legitimacy and creating the politically appropriate image, it is also the case that many of participants cited the business angle of diversity and spotlighted its economic value for the company.

Armanita, a Black Canadian woman and a former manager in the company, shared her opinion on the reason women of diverse backgrounds are recruited. As she put it:

I don't think that has anything to do with inclusion. They would hire diversity because we have all kinds of clientele. White people, Black people, Indian people, Asians, anybody would come in. So, it's just good for somebody to come in and be able to find someone who they can immediately relate to, someone with the same skin tone or features.

Armanita's statement underscores celebration and management of differences as a strategy to maximize corporate profits. The company's diversity management practices oscillate between two competing discourses of diversity, namely the business-based discourse and the moral discourse (Ahmed 2013; Carrillo 2021). Building on a business case for diversity in organizations through demographic match between employees and customers coincided with international migration flows to the global north and the possibility of attracting a new market (Foster and Harris 2005; Perriton 2009; Blackmore 2006). As a strategic business tool to deal with diverse clientele, embodied subjectivities of service workers are staged, hence reproducing white/ non-white, normative white woman/ exotic woman of color binary paradigms within predominantly white organizations.

Gender and racial categorization extends to employee-customer face-to-face interactions. Analysis of the interview data shows that customers look for help from employees that mirror and match their own embodied identities. The majority of participants highlighted the significance of their ethnic and feminine visible features in alluring customers. Balqees, for instance, shared:

I have super curly hair and brown girls feel more comfortable when my hair is curly than when my hair is straight. When they see my hair straight, I think they assume that I don't know when I suggest something. They're like are you sure? They're more questioning. And when they see me curly, I can tell they feel more comfortable. They trust me.

Balquees is a light-skinned woman of color whose long brown hair comply with normative ideals of feminine body while at the same time sets her apart from her white peers due to her hair texture. Not being identifiable by visible markers, she needs to prove her racial identity through accentuating her other markers of difference, such as her curly hair curly. Women's labor in the interactive service industry is often complicated by gender, racial, and class differences. I argue that this form of labor, in the era of diversity, regulates the bodies of employees to display difference in concert with the existing racial ascriptions and categorizations, hence redrawing and rearticulating racial lines and boundaries. In Balquees's case, customers of color repose absolute trust in her when she refuses to emulate white physical characteristics such as straight hair.

On her distinct appearance, Angela, a Filipino woman and sales associate, had this to say:

Darker skin people, like darker skin Indians or even African, they look for somebody like them. They were like in order for me to find a color match perfectly I need to go and find another black girl or another brown girl. I would be told all the time by clients that we waited for you to finish with your other client so you can help me because I didn't want to ask a white girl.

Donya, who is of Middle-eastern descent and a sales associate, explained how customers relate to their appearance:

There was a Black lady that came in and then she wanted foundation. She wanted something to wear every day. I know that I shouldn't get her something heavy. So, I matched her to the right foundation. She went to buy it. Then she saw a girl in the counter with similar skin tone. She was like 'oh what are you wearing?' She wants the same thing that she was wearing. She goes and gets it. I was like okay I understand. She was probably like oh you have different skin color.

There is an implicit acceptance, in participants' statements, of the business case for diversity which posits matching employees with co-ethnic (or co-racial) customers as natural. Concurrently, the statements implicitly reveal women's consciousness of their bodies being constructed as gendered and racialized entities in the context of a feminized occupation. Indeed, embodied intersectional identities are imposed, rather than chosen, in a context where employees are expected to eagerly "perform essentialized otherness", as Mirza mentions (2013:9).

The hidden and vacuous core of diversity initiatives comes into light when Indigenous bodies step into white spaces. Indigenous customers, as mentioned by many of my participants, often cause unease and discomfort in the store. Presumed as shoplifters, these customers are constantly subjected to intense scrutiny. As Atiya mentioned:

Nine out of ten times that person is usually an Indigenous person or like a brown person, someone who looks like me or you, sometimes a black person. The other day there was a woman, you could tell she was Indigenous, she was in a hoodie, nice jewelry on, she just looked like anybody else. But they followed her around the entire store. I'm telling you, every step that this person took, they were behind her and it crushed me. It drives me so angry. And everyone takes part in it.

While the study of customers' experiences is beyond the scope of this dissertation, the reactions that the 'raced' bodies of Indigenous customers often provoke could provide an example of the failure of this retailer's diversity initiatives in transforming the racial stereotypes. According to Puwar (2004), people of color are rendered *bodies, out of place* when entering white dominant institutions that have been historically occupied by white people. While this instance cannot offer full-fledged analysis of customers' experiences and points of view, I argue that such instances indicate that not all 'raced' bodies are translatable into organizational capital. The diversity project targets certain outgroup customers as desirable while others remain excluded. The arrival of "the wrong body" (Ahmed 2006: 162) becomes noticeable creating unease and discomfort among employees in the store which subjects these "wrong bodies" to humiliations. They are being followed, stopped, and searched more often than other bodies. "Some bodies' more than others," as Ahmed writes (2006: 362), "are recognizable as strangers, as bodies that are 'out of place'". In Atiya's narrative, wearing proper clothes and "nice jewelry" does not make any difference if customers have "the wrong body", meaning a body identified as Indigenous is also translatable to being a thief.

Another influential theme appeared in my analysis of interview narratives is the labor of embodying and performing exoticized gender diversity by women of color. Huda discussed the ways in which women's transnational and cultural resources and/or skills can inform their artistic skills. She noted:

Let's say it was like in your country of origin like a national day celebration and you can do an eye shadow look with your country's flag. They would encourage it because they think of it as that's going to start a conversation with client.

The labor of diversity work that women employees take on leads them to "self-exoticize" or "self-commodify" (Bunten 2006), to lure customers into a conversation about the self that embodies an exoticized gendered diversity in the hopes that the customers spend money serving the larger capitalist project. Women of color employees, tapping into gendered stereotype of women as natural providers of beauty services and their ethnic resources, derive value from their multi-layered embodied identities within white dominant institutions to trump their qualifications as makeup artists.

Along similar lines, Shabina, an Indian sales associate discussed how gendered and cultural scripts are invoked, mediated by the embodied subjectivities of both customers and employees in the context of body-related services. She noted:

We have diverse clientele. The hardest clients, and this is known, every person that applies makeup on someone else every makeup artist knows this, that the most difficult clients are the Indian brides. Because the techniques that we use when we do Indian bridal work is

usually more dramatic looks and it needs perfection right? So, the more complex, the cat eye, the double-wings liner, the dramatic eyeshadow, you know? All those are usually Indian brides. We used to get not just the bride, we used to get like a bridal party coming down for makeup applications. Those take the longest and are also hardest to execute. So, a lot of people who could execute things were ethnic in a way. So, they (the employees) used to put this makeup on themselves maybe, on their family members, right?

Women's labor of diversity work, taking shape at the nexus of gendered, cultural and racial forces, involves catering to customers' needs through practices of gendered work between co-ethnic women. In a white dominant organization, women employees of color tap into their transcultural skills and resources, hence turning their otherness into an exchangeable commodity through which they enact beauty regimes informed by gendered ethnic norms. As Kang (2010: 2) mentions, women are not free agents in constructing their bodies. Rather, "they are nailed to social positions and structures that shape not only their own bodies and the bodies of other but also the terms of commercialized embodied services." This work, as Shabina also noted, requires both artistic expertise and cultural knowledge, which, much like any other work in the service industry, remains largely invisible. In a way, controlling images that poses ethnic women as natural providers of "ethnic looks" are played out as women subtly reproduce them in their daily interactions with co-ethnic customers. I argue that practices of gendered work between co-ethnic women, enforced by company's matchmaking strategy of pairing employees and customers with similar gender and ethnic identities, reproduce the binary paradigm of the normalcy of white woman's body/ the exoticism of the othered ethnic woman.

In this section, I have discussed how the discourse of diversity management is espoused by the company as a way to both gain legitimization and increase profitability. Ahmed refers to employees who are used for institutional diversity, as a diversity worker hired to perform the invisible labor of embodying diversity because they carry identifiable markers of difference (Ahmed 2018). I argued that diversity workers not only transform the face of the company but also bring more profit to the company by alluring clients of color even as they do the extra labor of embodying diversity performance for the business. I have attempted to argue that embodying diversity requires extra labor of self-commodification that reifies the normative image of the exotic racialized and gendered other.

Diversity and the Sustaining of Institutional Whiteness

Similar to previous studies, the analysis of participants' narratives reveals that the corporate initiatives in enhancing diversity have failed to change institutional culture and structure including its whiteness. Reflecting on her first couple of years of working at Sephora, Isabella, a Filipino sales associate, discussed the challenges she faced in an organization wherein, as Ahmed (2007:150) puts it, "whiteness is lived as a background to experience". She shared:

I'm all of 5 feet and most women my size are dainty and quite thin. However, I have a more athletic build and fluctuate between a size 6 and a size 8. I have small almond eyes, a flatter nose, and wide, round face. No feature I've just described was ever present in mainstream media or the beauty industry while I was growing up. My ideology surrounding beauty was

framed by what I saw and although people would compliment my beauty, I still never felt beautiful.

Isabella's account reveals her consciousness of the disjunction between her body and white normative standards of beauty. Colonial beauty standards reflect Eurocentric paradigms of beauty for cis gender women that eulogize lighter skin color, blue eyes, straight blond hair and a certain body type. All other paradigms of types of beauty are pitched as undesirable or exotic when compared to the colonial paradigm (Murray 2015; Robinson-Moore 2008). Comparing herself to such a narrow definition of beauty, Isabella names every part of her body that is socially constructed as "out of place". As an Asian woman, her visible and identifiable markers of difference (such as the shape of her nose and eyes) become extensions of her skin color that mirror the image of racialized and gendered "othered" body. She added:

When I began working in the cosmetic retail industry, I became accustomed to wearing a "full beat" and I used makeup to manipulate my facial features. I applied eyeshadow and eyeliner in such a way that my eyes would look bigger, I would contour dramatically to minimize the roundness of my face and make my nose look sharper.

Isabella's act of wearing makeup, in my view, is informed by the invisible norms of whiteness that she experienced through her body. Inhabiting whiteness, she strived to "pass as white" by covering up her facial features that are socially constructed as "wrong" and do not match the hegemonic white beauty standards. As Mirza (2018: 180) argues, in order to "pass into the heart of whiteness, one needs to cover up their ethnic and racial features and 'act white'." Here, wearing makeup

acts as materialization of her feeling of discomfort as the result of “standing out”. She added how inhabiting whiteness has been taking a toll on her mental well-being:

I don't believe these challenges affected my occupation; however, it did affect how I saw my own beauty. I would look at myself without makeup and didn't like what I saw. Whenever I didn't wear enough — or rather, whenever I wore my makeup in a more natural way — I didn't feel as beautiful.

Isabella's experience reflects the impact of racialization of bodies and its long-lasting effects on the well-being of the employees. Working in an institution in which whiteness defines normality, she is incapable of feeling “at home in her own body” (Ahmed 2006). Inhabiting the culture of whiteness, her body has been oriented around whiteness. In framing whiteness and queerness from a critical phenomenological perspective, Ahmed (2006) uses the term orientation as a reference to the ways bodies tend towards certain objects through (repetition of) actions. In Isabella's case, this orientation gave her a lens that allows her to notice certain things and not to see others. The image of white woman's body as normative was reinforced as Isabella uncritically reproduced it through her daily habitual makeup practices. She mentioned: “I was there for years and it kind of became normal.” By extension, she has inhabited the institution for so long that she oriented her body to whiteness by doing certain actions (wearing normative make-up defined by whiteness) repeatedly without giving it close attention. As Ahmed writes: “Whiteness becomes a social and bodily orientation given that some bodies will be more at home in a world that is orientated around whiteness’ (2006: 138). When raced bodies cannot fit in the norm of whiteness, they feel “out of place” and uncomfortable. Isabella's discomfort manifested itself in her efforts to manipulate her facial features which in fact reaffirms “the whiteness of

the institution”. As critical phenomenologists argue, history and past experiences are written on the body through gestures, postures, and repetitive actions (Ahmed 2006; McMahon 2020; Butler 1989; Merleau-Ponty 1962). “What Bodies ‘tend to do’”, Ahmed writes, “are effects of histories rather than being originary” (Ahmed 2006: 553). It is the legacy of colonization that perpetuated in Isabella’s everyday makeup practices. In other words, makeup allows the body to “feel at home in her body” when the body constantly “feels out of place” (Ahmed 2006: 9).

Muslim women’s bodies are often a context within which multiple categories of difference are experienced. The hypervisibility of the marker of their religious identity, namely headscarf, subject them to intense scrutiny and supervision. Atiya shared a story about being in a work orientation session with a group of new employees:

There were a lot of micro aggressions that people don’t notice. But sometimes I pick up on. Those little things are so hard to shift in people. Those are the things we get all the times from clients. But there are a couple of moments that were really big moments like managers commenting on somebody or in a passing or something. Just to give you a specific example, we were hiring a group of people, and we had just hired a couple of people with hijab. And there was a comment mad in passing and I was there standing beside them, but I could hear it. And they were like ‘oh my god, we’re hiring so many of those people’.

Women of color, at times, seek strategies to fade in the background while inhabiting whiteness, as mentioned in Isabella’s case. “Whiteness”, as Ahmed (2007: 159) writes, “is a straightening device: bodies disappear into the ‘sea of whiteness’ when they ‘line up’”. When, however,

gendered racialized bodies don't blend into the whiteness, they stand out as hypervisible, engendering a feeling of unease among the management team. A comment such as "hiring so many of them" was normalized due to its presumed unintentionality rather than being considered as racist. As Wilkins and Lall (2010) show, racist comments, in such cases, intended for people of color are characterized as unintentional rather than racist. In the above comment, Muslim women sharing similar gendered markers of religious identity are construed as a monolithic group who also share similar backgrounds. This comment, constructing Muslim women as a collective "them" and a monolithic racialized "other", invalidates diversity as the project of cultivating differences through representing a homogeneous community of women sharing the same symbol of religious identity.

In another example, Huda discussed how dress code policies subject Muslim women's bodies to further supervision and regulation. She experienced being constantly pulled to the side by manager because of the color and patterns of her headscarf which, as the manager mentioned, "did not match with the dress code." She noted:

I remember sitting in my manager's office and then I was like you already tell me how much makeup I have to have on, you already gave me a uniform tell me what I have to wear, now you're telling me what kind of a scarf, what pattern of the scarf can I put on. And nobody else out there has to deal with that because nobody else wears scarf. So, in that way I don't appreciate being told now what I have to wear on my head.

Huda fully understands her disadvantage in an organization where her religious and gendered status intersects and co-constitutes to push her to the margins. As a woman, she is expected to

adhere to the gendered presentation rules and attire policies of the company, including wearing makeup and short black dresses. However, as a Muslim woman, her gendered religious body is subjected to a close scrutiny. She added:

There were girls that would dye their hair, they would color their hair in those crazy colors, and they'd be like florescent green and florescent pink and yellow. They can come on stage looking like that and having all these crazy hair colors but I have to wear a solid color? Also, what I learned, and this is before my time, the company had a rule that you needed to have a natural hair color. So, you couldn't dye your hair. So, they moved away from that to be more inclusive but at the same time who are you being more inclusive towards to? You are being inclusive towards hair and people who don't wear scarf.

Dress code does not apply equally to all bodies. Instead, the seemingly neutral dress code standard operates in conjunction with multiple axes of difference such as gender and religion. Unlike other women whose hair color in “florescent pink and yellow” is construed as exotic and different, wearing headscarf makes the racialized bodies of women stand out as hypervisible. By all accounts, veil as a radical marker of difference is at odds with the image of exotic other woman. As critical race and gender scholars suggest, the veil is emblematic of difference as well as rejection of the norms of white womanhood and the ultimate goal of multiculturalism to “assimilate differences” (Khiabany and Williamson 2008; Lentin 2016; Mirza 2018:184). According to Mirza (2018: 181), people of color “can be benignly or exotically different but not too racially sexually and religiously different as such radical difference is taken as a rejection of the institutional ‘host society’s gift of the multicultural embrace’.” Invisible norms of whiteness establish context for microaggressions that employees encounter in

everyday interactions in the workplace. Women's narratives reveal that policing and hyper supervision of Black bodies allow Black women very little room for error.

Nimrah, a Black woman and sales associate, explains how this transpires:

Whenever we make a mistake, we are never taught in a nice way, oh this is what you're supposed to do like they do with white people. They'd be like ok we need to put you in the office and talk about it. I feel like I've been trying so hard to prove myself no matter what I do, no matter how hard I work I don't get that recognition. Whenever my supervisor who is a person of color comes, she always vouches for me and she's like I noticed how much hard work you're putting in this and that, but when white managers come, they pull me to the back and try to get me in trouble. I work my butt off, but they will always find a reason to tell you that you are not doing it right.

Nimrah's experience indicates how intersectional complexities of race and gender can operate at micro-organizational level in the context of everyday interactions between employees and managers. Gender and race scholars studying occupational discrimination discuss mechanisms of racial and gender micro-aggression that emerge in a form of non-verbal and subtle assault in everyday life, driving mental health inequality among employees (Alfrey and Twine 2017; Kanter 1977; Zambrana and colleagues 2017). "Standing out" as Mirza writes, "can invoke deep feeling of need, rejection, and anxiety within the white other." (2018:181). Nimrah's experience of being pulled to the side and talked to involves many meanings: to stop, to check, to investigate. Black women employees experience exclusion through being blamed and constantly interrogated for their actions. As Ahmed (2006: 161)

mentions, “the ‘unrecruitable’ body must still be ‘recruited’ into this place, through the very repetition of the action of ‘being stopped’.” Nimrah’s account of her grueling work to achieve recognition indicates how being constantly policed can have a long-lasting effect on employees’ mental well-being. To answer my question about how it feels to be repeatedly investigated and policed, she mentioned that it led her to second guess her performance, or always think she “has done something wrong”, as the consequences of working in that environment. Seemingly innocuous behavior on the part of employers in the workplace can chip away at the confidence and well-being of employees of color. Scholars have discussed the presumption of incompetence that escalates when the gendered racialized other enters an organization that has been traditionally occupied by white men (Y Muhs et al. 2012; Heilman et al. 2015). Women of color experience and at times internalize the assumption that they are ill-equipped to perform the job. In Nimrah’s case, being blamed and constantly interrogated has left her in doubt of her abilities, constantly worried that she is in the wrong. The affective outcome of this self-doubt is the internalization of presumed incompetence.

Armanita, another Black employee, compared her experience to her white male peer who is, according to her observations, given the opportunity to make errors, learn from his mistakes, and improve his performance:

He does as much slacking, talking to clients in his own personal way but he never gets any criticism, he never had a one-on-one meeting. He’s allowed to get away with not acting the way they wanted him to act. He is so likable, and everybody likes him, and he is a gay friend so he can get away with it.

Armanita's narrative reveals her embodied experience as raced and gendered in a workplace that unequal relations of power are subtly at play. While white men employees are allowed to make errors, she is harassed for any aberrations. Those who are "breaking the mold", as she puts it, will be punished, judged, and watched constantly. Sara Ahmed (2018) explains that women of color who are hired to embody organization's promise of diversity are expected to be manageable and docile, bowing to the prevailing norms that subjugate them. To Armanita, the racially privileged employees who self-identify as gay achieve a certain level of respect among employees. In this case, the employee's co-constituted gender and racial identities paved his way for attaining positions of authority and insider status in a white dominant institution.

The standards of performance by which Black women employees were assessed did not apply equally to white men employees. Parker, a white employee who identifies as gay, discussed getting preferential treatments in the workplace. He noted:

I don't know really what it is but there's definitely times that I felt like maybe I experienced a little bit of favoritism. Not anything specific. I think I might get away with a lot of stuff at work. Just like little things. I have a lot of personalities and everybody think of me as kind of fun. So, if I do something wrong, they'll be like oh he's funny versus if somebody else does the same thing the management will be like ok don't do that. Nothing too big just small stuff. But I also think that it comes down that I work hard, and I get stuff done.

Race and gender and the privileges they confer are invisible to the members of dominant groups. Parker's statement reveals a level of color blindness and an individualistic perspective that

conceals gender racial privilege. He positions himself as genderless and raceless through associating the preferential treatments that he benefits from with “his fun personality” and “his hard work”, reproducing the individualist ideology that presumes the success of white men due to competence (Carrillo 2021). “One privilege” as Acker mentions, “of the privileged is not to see their privilege.” (2006: 452) Parker described those favoritism as “nothing specific”, “nothing too big”, “just small stuff”. Discussing the privilege of whiteness, Ahmed writes ‘whiteness is only invisible for those who inhabit it, or those who get so used to its inhabitance that they learn not to see it even when they are not in it’ (Ahmed 2007: 157). Inhabiting white and male privilege, Parker learns not to take notice of durable inequalities embedded in organizational culture and structure. He further compared his experience to his women peers who according to his observations were mistreated more often by customers. He mentioned:

People get mad or yell, but nothing really directly directed at me cause I’ve seen coworkers being yelled at. I think it goes down to personal interactions a lot of the times.

Parker in these sentences, stressed “personal interactions” as an underlying reason for employees’ exposure to customer incivility, positing that inequality stems from contingent encounters with customers and not from the inequality embedded in culture and structure of the organization. Parker’s narrative here conveys privilege blindness and individualism.

What happens when “the other”, as Holvino (1996) puts it, “speaks back”? Ahmed (2018) considers complaint as a form of diversity work. Women’s narratives show that any complaint alleging race discrimination was dismissed and/or ignored by managers and in some cases, subjected those

employees who made complaints to harassment and persecution. Armanita discussed her experience with taking a complaint to the HR regarding the racist behavior of the store manager. She shared:

I went to the HR and discussed the racist behavior of the store manager towards me and another Arab woman who was working in the backroom. I didn't know that these two were close friends. She goes and shares everything I told her with the store manager, and they made my life a living hell.

Ahmed (2018) analogizes making a complaint in a white dominant institution to banging the head against a brick wall and being persecuted after calling out injustice to the feeling of being buried under the wall debris (Ahmed 2018: 343) which ultimately leave the person with a feeling of soreness. In Armanita's case, the complaints inaugurated openly hostile actions on managers' part.

Similarly, Atiya, a Muslim woman who overheard managers' racist comment about Muslim women, brought a complaint to HR. As she put it:

I went to the HR and said this person has to realize that it's not ok to say this, especially to the person who's just been hired. There was really no follow up from the HR. I had to stop her and ask her: 'hey did you talk to so and so because I hope that everything's ok, I don't mean to like, be super rude about it. I just want to know that things are ok.' Just in a very kind manner. Just wanted to check in. and she was like: 'oh yeah we talked to her and told her you need to watch what you say around people.' And I was like "ok but did you tell her why it's not ok?" and she was like: 'we just told her watch what you say.' There was a level

of we don't want you to have that conversation happening. So, you let certain things go. I know that these are the dynamics at play, but a lot of people are not comfortable with that conversation. And they don't want to pinpoint certain things as racism.

Atiya's narrative reveals the management's effort to shut down any conversations about racism which often has the risk of disrupting the hegemonic narrative of happy diversity. As Ahmed (2013) reminds us, speaking about racism, "is to hurt not just the organization, re-imagined as a subject with feelings, but also the subjects who identify with the organization, the 'good white diversity' subjects, to whom we are supposed to be grateful. (p. 46) Likewise, the above extracts show the extent to which an honest and open conversation about racism has remained difficult to execute, inaugurating a range of reactions from denial to anger and animosity in a white dominant institution. The organization's hierarchal and gendered structure (Acker 1990) can contribute to continuation of racism in the workplace. By extension, women of colors' experiences of microaggressions in this study reveal the perpetuation of "race- based trauma" (Davis et al. 2014; 267) in organizational structures. Davis and colleagues refer to experiences of racism as trauma that can wittingly or unwittingly result in mental and psychological injuries such as stress and depression. Silencing conversations or complaints about racial microaggressions can, in long term, lead to perpetuation of race-based trauma among employees of color.

Narratives of women of color working in Sephora stores contribute to the literature on diversity management. My analysis of the data showed that diversity is often used as a marketing appeal by chain cosmetic companies owned and run by white men as a means to transform their images to diverse and democratized organizations. The analysis of participants' interviews showed that

corporate initiatives in addressing diversity have failed to dismantle the culture of whiteness embedded in the organizational structures and processes. Building on women's narratives, I attempted to argue that adopting the discourse of diversity was not only a way of creating "the right image" by organization, but also a strategy to enhance profitability through alluring more customers of color to spend money. I argued that gendered and racialized bodies of employees, under diversity discourses, become assets that can be exploited by organizations to enhance profit.

Building on these narratives, I contend that predominantly white institutions reproduce binary paradigms between white/ non-white, normative white woman's body/ exotic body of woman of color through adopting the strategy of linking employee's co-ethnic customers. I have strived to illuminate that embodying diversity in terms of one's appearance, requires the labor of self-commodification that reifies the normative image of racialized and gendered other as exotic. Building on experiences of Muslim and Black employees, I have attempted to call attention to relationship of power that operates as multiple axes of differences intersecting to shape the work experiences of certain employees of color.

Conclusion

Cosmetic department stores in the North American context, as explained in chapter 1, has historically relied on the process of racialization that locates the bodies of women of colors as undesirable (Craig 2002; Belisle 2011). Diversity and visibility, therefore, have become one of the most pressing issues in the beauty industry, which is based on the recognition that this industry, much like

cultural industries, have been unrepresentative of racialized groups. Building on women's narratives working in cosmetic and beauty stores, I attempted to provide an empirical study on how diversity is mobilized in the retail sector of the beauty industry. In this chapter, I adopted critical phenomenology and critical diversity perspectives to understand how diversity management initiatives have defined the everyday work culture within my focal organization and how they are written on and lived within the bodies of employees of color.

My analysis of women's narratives working in the Sephora accounts the effects of the discourse of diversity management as lived through the embodied subjectivities of women of color employees. I found that company's initiatives towards increasing the representation of women of color within the workforce was a way to gain legitimacy and, at the same time, to maximize the profits. I argued that diversity, in its present form, is an added (symbolic) value brought into the predominantly white dominant and feminized institution by the bodies of women of color employees. I also argued that employee-customer demographics matching strategy to cater to diverse clientele reinforces the binary paradigms of white/ non-white, normative white woman's body/ exotic woman of color in the context of interactive service work. In line with the previous literature, I found that women's labor in the interactive body-related service industry is often complicated by gender, racial, and class differences. Under the normative gaze of customers that look at them as embodied ethnic (and racial) other, employees perform otherness by self-exoticizing and commodifying themselves, thereby reifying the normative image of the exotic racialized and gendered other.

Scholarship suggests that diversity policies adopted by institutions as a way to espouse new era of democratization have instead kept the institutional whiteness intact (Ahmed 2018; Banks and

Harvey 2020; Jackson 2018; Johnson and Salisbury 2018; Mirza 2018; Noon 2018). The Black and Muslim women's experiences of microaggression in retail chain cosmetic stores show a point of convergence with the literature. I found that diversity initiatives have failed to successfully support disadvantaged and marginalized groups due to perpetuation of the culture of whiteness embedded in the organizational structures and processes. Building on experiences of Muslim and Black employees, I attempted to call attention to the relations of power that operate as multiple axes of differences shape the work experiences of employees. The hypervisibility of the marker of their racial and/ or religious identities subject Muslim and Black women employees to intense scrutiny and supervision, gradually chipping away at their well-being. Presumed as incompetent, women of color, at times, internalized the assumption that they are ill equipped to perform the job, leading to perpetual feeling of self-doubt.

This chapter answers questions about how women of color live strategic diversity management initiatives through their embodied subjectivities and the ways they redo and reinforce the token diversity schemes that have been serving to uphold their marginality. Working under intense surveillance, women employees of color in chain retail stores conform to industry standards and meet customers' expectations by exoticizing and commodifying the self.

Chapter 6

Entrepreneuring and doing the boundary work at the intersections of gender, race, and class

This chapter explores how women entrepreneurs from various racial and ethnic backgrounds deploy their intersectional embodied identities through subversive strategies as a means to overturn beauty standards as well as their experiences of racial oppression in a white society. This chapter is informed by intersectional scholarship on strategic identity construction (Lacy 2004; Meghji 2017; Rollock and et al. 2011; Yosso 2005) and intersectional embodiment literature (Balogun 2012; Huisman and Hondagneu-Sotelo 2005; Tate 2007, 2021). I have used both interview data and social media content created by the companies to explore how the complexities of women's gender, racial, and class positionalities provide them resources to assert their oppositionality to the mass-producers of cosmetic and beauty products and to create an alternative, more just, and inclusive future of the beauty industry within the boundaries of capitalist economy. While interview data provided me a deep understanding of women's work experiences and daily work practices, looking into social media content helped me to get a clearer understanding of how these women attempt to represent their gendered racialized subjectivities in a white dominant industry as a means to publicly construct their identities. Here, I first discuss the significance of femininity and how women entrepreneurs highlight their feminine self as empowered. I then discuss how immigrant women of color entrepreneurs negotiate their racial and classed identities in their representation of brand. Later, I illustrate the way Black women entrepreneurs claim racial solidarity through embodying and representing anti-racist Black beauty.

Negotiating Femininity and Entrepreneurship

Promoting gender equity, fostering sisterhood and solidarity among women, and representation of the idea of empowered woman entrepreneur were some of the most common themes appeared in the analysis of social media content created by white women and women of color owned companies. The owner and CEO of *Mighty Beauty*, a white woman, shared about embracing her feminine self through building community with other women within an entrepreneurial context. She noted:

For years I felt frustration and anger with the position of women in our society and culture. I believe it stemmed from my upbringing surrounded by boys and men who convinced me women were weak and a mother who took that submissive role. I had a burning urge to prove myself better than women. In my early adult-ish life, I took it that I had to be a man to be good. I subconsciously repressed the feminine side of me, thinking it was making me stronger, better. As I grew older, I started to tap into my feminine self. I created a brand where women from all experiences of life come together. Building and running this company is my way to honor the feminine within me.

The above narrative reflects the business owner's awareness of the gender norms in a patriarchal society that hold masculinity superior to femininity and how she has unreflectively been engaging in gender practices that complied with the rules of femininity that tells women "they are weaker," as she mentioned in the above quote. Her approach to femininity later in her life shows how

gendering became subversive through conscious act of deploying undervalued qualities associated with femininity as an asset for her business, a source of self-empowerment, and community building.

The theme of empowered femininity remains an influential theme in social media content created by my focal companies. Another example of that is figure 1, created by the *Beauty Queen Aesthetics*, a Black immigrant owned company which portrays assertive power and bodily discipline through representation of cross racial sisterhood. The postures of women in this photo serve at dismantling the association of femininity with weakness through striking power poses. This image, in addition, aims at creating a sense of cross-racial unity among women of all racial backgrounds. The image, arguably, communicate the organization’s intersectional praxis and the ways in which these women negotiate their commonalities and differences as women coming from various racial backgrounds. The collective identity, stressed throughout the social media by this Black immigrant owned company, can arise from this recognition that women with particular experiences of marginalization, can work as a unified group towards destabilizing inequality.



Figure 1. Beauty Queen Aesthetics

In another post (Figure 2), the CEO of the company is portrayed in gender coded clothing such as lace dress as well as long straight hair as indicatives of hyperfeminine gender performance. The reading of the image is reinforced by the caption which starts with “Dressed like a princess but feeling like a queen inside.” The notion of a Black “princess” carries connotations different from that of the Eurocentric, white image.

Not only does it display femininity through her long hair and gender-normative clothing, it also is emblematic of power and discipline when associated with the term “queen”. By recounting her trans-locational positionality as a Black immigrant, she represents herself as a powerful and agentic girl who “came to build something strong and empowering”. The association of empowerment with Immigrant women within the neoliberal capitalism, discursively represent these women as resilient, agentic, and self-made subjects who, freed from the old impediments previously imposed to them as women and racial minorities, have the opportunity to define and construct their identities (Ringrose 2007; Lavrence and Lozanski 2014). In line with post-feminist discourse, women entrepreneurs represent themselves as empowered and agentic who, at the same time, embrace femininity. Princess, as represented in popular culture, not only signifies beauty, but is often associated with kindness (Adriany 2019). According to the narrative, despite dressing up and looking glamorous, she is a “resilient warrior” who has set the example of a “kind and good” woman of color entrepreneur.



Dressed like a princess but feeling like a queen inside... 🌟 This is the story of an immigrant woman, a woman of color who came to build... Something strong, something beautiful, something bold, something empowering. I came from Togo, was raised in Montreal and finally set home in Vancouver, Canada, where I founded I... I am a traveler, an adventurer, an inspired visionary and a resilient warrior. I am my life's cultural experiences and a future that I await to discover. 🌟

The world needs more examples of good, kind, persevering people (of color) that are showing you that you can start with what you have and turn it into something greater than you. I had the recent pleasure of being interviewed by / writer who wanted to share my story before it even began and she captured it very well!

Check the link in bio to find out how it started and what's next for I... This will give you a good insight into the essence of my brand, why is a resilient and empowering brand & how we are going to make an impact around us. I feel proud and grateful for the opportunity to make my dreams come true as an immigrant woman living in a country as beautiful as Canada. Thank you Canada! I celebrate my mixed heritage. Feeling blessed and looking forward to an amazing future ahead. 🌟🌟🌟

Figure 2. Beauty Queen Aesthetics

Femininity and empowerment could be also read into the representation of woman's maternal body and the way motherhood is turned into a source of identity for working women entrepreneurs. The example of that is figure 3 in which the CEO of *Mighty Beauty* is portrayed in a yoga pose with hands in namaste, parading the most significant marker of her femininity, namely her pregnant body. The wolf and alligator painted on her belly can arguably reflect the power of her maternal and feminine body. The above account could be characterized as a "success story", hinting at a connection between motherhood and enterprise. Spotlighting motherhood, women of color attempt to negotiate their conventionally opposing identities as mothers and self-employed women. In congruence with this perspective, motherhood is not held in opposition to business success by the CEO but is rather situated at the heart of her business, constructing an ideal image of a successfully balanced, entrepreneurial feminine subjectivity. To explain the ways in which she grapples with the challenges of being a working mother, she wrote in the caption: "I put my bare feet into the ground, touch a tree,

squeeze the grass and take deep breath.” This description of emotion management, establish an alignment between nature and femininity, hence turning nature into a space wherein such feminine attributes thrive. As Butler mentioned (1999 [1990]), the conventional association of nature and femininity positions feminine body as naturally beautiful, pure, caring, nurturing, and maternal.



Figure 3. Mighty Beauty

Figure 4 is another example of staging woman’s maternal body posted by an Indigenous owned company that portrays a woman sitting in a bathtub filled with water, pink roses, and pine leaves. To explain the photo, the text provides a quote from Rachel Olson, an Indigenous writer and social anthropologist:

I have been taught by elders that there’s a direct connection between the health of our bodies and the health of environment, and that we must approach everything fully understanding and respecting that connection. (Holistic Wellness)



Figure 4. Holistic Wellness

Building on the unique Indigenous cultural resources, the image creates an association between maintaining a healthy feminine body and Indigenous lifestyle. Indeed, the text serves at signaling the racial identity and unique cultural capital of the company and its owner. In her study on middle-class Black people in a white dominant society, Lacy (2007) spotlights the cultural resources that these individuals carve out as a means to minimize the possibility of discrimination. Similarly, women of color in this study have a range of “cultural toolkits” (Moor, 2008:498), including elders’ knowledge in this case, through which they can publicly communicate and signal their identities. The overlap between beauty and wellness embedded within the neoliberal postfeminist discourse of beauty is evident in the above narrative. In this neoliberal and post-feminist moment, beauty culture moves from the appearance into the realm of the “beautiful healthy inner self” through emphasizing on physical and mental health (Gill 2021). The Indigenous business owner, however, ties the neoliberal postfeminist beauty culture of the healthy body to the non-anthropocentric and decolonial way of relating to and

connecting with the world through disrupting the separation between human and nature. Anthropocentric epistemology, which is at the nucleus of white colonial capitalism, is built upon the supremacy of human over any living being, including animals and nature (Kopnina et al. 2018). Through building a “direct connection between the health of our bodies and the health of environment,” as mentioned in the above text, the Indigenous business owner attempts to resist the politics of extraction and pollution based upon which the global capitalism operates.

Thus, women, including women of color owners of the business of beauty deploy the embodied resources they have at their disposal including their femininity and maternal bodies as a source of empowerment which not only distinguishes them from a masculine enterprise but also serves at creating an authentic brand identity. Hardt and Negri (2000), in their study of global capitalism, argue for the conversion of mode of production from material to immaterial during the late capitalism including services that include production of culture and information, leading to the emergence of the immaterial labor. Immaterial labor is a form of labor that aims at producing symbolic or cultural value for the commodities in order to incite certain emotions in customers (Hardt and Negri 2000). By extension, production of value under the supremacy of the immaterial labor is dependent on not only production of commodities but specifically on the creation of social relations. Women, in the case of immigrant women as well as Indigenous business owner, engaged in immaterial labor through commodifying their racial signifiers. They did that through either narrating immigration trajectory or infusing the social media content with cultural heritage as a means to create an authentic public identity in the context of neoliberal capitalist economy wherein production of an authentic subjectivity makes up one of the imperatives (George 2003).

Strategic negotiation of racial and class-based identities

The analysis of the social media content and interview narratives shows an oscillation between racialized and classed positioning and identification among immigrant women of color in the *Beauty Queen Aesthetics*. They not only draw heavily from the cultural richness of racially diverse employees but also attempt to highlight their upper-classness as immigrant women of color. An example of drawing on their ethno-racial identities is Figure 5: posted on March 2021. Women, in this image, display their femininity as well as their ethnicity through stylizing bodies in ethnic apparel to call for diversity, sisterhood, and unity among women of color, as mentioned in the caption.



In the midst of what's going on around the world, I wanted to share a message of peace, love and unity. Okoko is a multi-cultural POC brand with a diverse team from all over the world. We have many stories, we come from different backgrounds, our lives may be filled with hardships sometimes, but we remain strong and united.

Growing up and being inspired from different cultures, I wanted to build a brand where people of all backgrounds would feel welcome, respected, valued and supported. To empower each other, get empowered and empower our community is one of the things that brought us together.

👉 We must intentionally focus our actions on the vision and journey of a society where justice reigns for all. Our message: unity is strength.

Feeling blessed to build with such wonderful women. At Okoko we believe in inclusivity, dignity, respect, sisterhood and unity. Like if you agree! 🍷💕

41w

Figure 5. Beauty Queen Aesthetics

Here, as a “women of color organization”, the company is striving to navigate difference and sameness. Relying on the “same difference” (Luna 2016), the similar experience of “hardship” is highlighted as a reference to the systemic gendered and racial oppression that immigrant women of color are exposed to. While the difference between women is acknowledged in the caption by spotlighting the diversity of the stories and backgrounds, the emphasis is placed on shared experiences of hardship as a ground based upon which women of color can unite and join forces. Such oneness as the undertone of all the differences is considered as the crux of identities of immigrant women of color that need to be spotlighted in public domains. Here again, women perform authenticity, in line with capitalist economy’s demands through staging their intersectional embodied identities and the symbols of their “othered” cultures in an era that organizations strategically market their social responsibility and inclusivity agendas (Friedel 2008). The narrative of authenticity is often deployed by small business owners to counter mass-produced capitalist market (Cavanaugh and Shankar 2014; Schwind 2022). While this narrative of authenticity can serve as counter narrative, it simultaneously reinforces economic value in form of symbolic value within the colonial capitalist system (Hardt and Negri 2004). The relevance and authenticity of local brands and their products as oppositional depend on the existence of a capitalist mass market and its industrialized products that lack identity (Schwind 2022). Tapping into the ethnic identities to construct the authentic subjectivity as the face behind the commodities can be arguably a tactic to assert oppositionality through creating counter narratives while concomitantly allowing these entrepreneurs to adhere to the neoliberal capitalist rules of deriving cultural value from the products by attaching the “authentic” label on them.

Isabella, a Filipino woman who works in this company, accentuates the diverse positionalities of employees and the shared capital of resilience in the context of immigration that define the enterprise identity. She shared:

One of the things that make it so beautiful is that we are a brand of all nations and because we are diligent to foster that spirit of unity because we have all stories of seeing our parents work so hard and have to sacrifice so much. And sometimes even parents who sacrifice comfortable life to come over. People flee from war and prosecution. From countries that had zero hope for the future. Gabriel is a first-generation immigrant. Another colleague is an immigrant who come from India. Amara came from Africa as a five-year-old. I came to Canada around six or seven years old from Philippines. We have another employee who immigrated from Bulgaria. So, all of us have stories of what our parents or themselves had to go through.

The above narrative indicates how women deploy their shared experiences of relocation from the Global South to the Global North as a wealth. Yosso (2005) in her analysis of cultural wealth highlights enabling potentials of the culture of communities of color. Yosso (2005) identifies aspiration as a cultural capital among marginalized communities which allows individuals to show resilience in the face of systemic oppression. Narratives of immigrant women of color in this study show how aspiration and resilience are developed in the family context through parents having to work hard, as Isabella mentions, to allow their children to dream beyond the oppressive conditions in which they lived. The authentic experience of “war and prosecution,” creates certain knowledge and skills for these women which are rooted in the legacy of resilience to oppression. Such common experience of immigration,

relocation and settlement, according to Isabella, enhances the spirit of unity and sisterhood among the immigrant women of color.

The company seeks to define a brand that is not only authentically natural and ethical but simultaneously, “luxury.” This is specifically relevant in a racially exclusive niche which caters dominantly to middle- and upper-class white women. Gabriel, a first-generation immigrant Latina woman who works in company owned by a Black woman discusses the absence of representation of immigrant women of color in the more luxury segment of the beauty industry. She noted:

Being a team of immigrant in a luxury brand in a green beauty sector is very rare and I think it also made us to push ourselves harder because we don’t get the same visibility per se than a team of Caucasians. It’s just the norm to see Caucasian women, brands that market towards Caucasian women, marketing that all include Caucasian women. So, as a team of women of color what we want to do especially with our campaigns and our content in social media is that we want to tell women of color that you are included... We want them to have a platform to share their concerns. We want to tell them in order to enjoy luxury skincare or self-care, you don’t have to look like a certain way.

Gabriel’s narrative about the challenges of gaining visibility as a “team of immigrants” shows her understanding of the society as racially constructed which is structured, as Rollock and colleagues (2014:14) write, by “white identifications, norms and interests”. They seek to rework the highly classed discourse of self-care and extend it to the racialized others by representing racialized feminine bodies as producers as well as consumers of luxury beauty products in a field that, as Gabriel

mentioned, “it’s the norm to see Caucasian women.” The notion of luxury, however, requires further unpacking in the context of the beauty industry. Luxury, in its broad sense, carries a promise of exclusivity, excellence, as well as a quality that is achieved through complicated techniques and elaborate craftsmanship which give the product an authentic status (Elhichou 2021). “Luxury,” as Elhichou (2021: 216) mentions, “was a driver of European imperialism and colonialism, through which their pursuit of luxurious goods such as silk, ivory, coffee, porcelain, etc. was justified; a legacy still deeply engraved today in the West’s ownership of luxury and its meaning.” I argue that branding the products as luxury serves a dual function for these women business owners. Not only do women redefine their identities as middle- and- upper-class immigrant women of color but also decenter the production of luxury in a racially exclusive niche through claiming ownership of luxury consumption.

The analysis of the interview narratives showed that the majority of women in this Black immigrant owned company have changed status from working-class to middle and upper-class over their life courses. Gabriel, for instance, mentioned:

We grew up not having a lot materialistically. My parents immigrated here way back in the 80s fleeing from the war and they came here wanting to give me and my brother a better chance, a better future. So, they sacrificed a lot in order for me and my brother to have a better chance at life.

Rollock and colleagues (2011) in their study of Black middle-class negotiation of identity at the intersection of race and class discrimination show how transition from working class to middle-class created a resource for Black middle-class individuals to construct their identities and survive racial

discrimination. Similarly, Gabriel's narrative of her social class background growing up and her change of status in Canadian society allows her to create a "public identity" (Rollock et al. 2011: 1081) as an upper-class immigrant woman who can afford to produce and consume "luxury" and ethical beauty products.

The identity of the company as a luxury brand run by immigrant women of color is recurrently accentuated on the social media platform:

We decided to take this group shot wearing traditional, cultural clothing to celebrate who we are. Salvadoran, Filipino, India, African, we are all beautiful and unique. Our dresses were made by select designers from our regions. Together, we are building a brand that is aligned with our values; that empowers all, that is authentic, that is real and diverse, that is inclusive. This is the new luxury. Diverse & inclusive. We are here to change the narrative and show you that luxury can be experienced by all of us. (Beauty Queen Aesthetics)

The above statement evokes the idea of class mobility by associating "luxury" and "luxurious" beauty products with women of color. Women's efforts towards redefining and constructing their status as upper-class immigrant women manifest itself in display of their designer's dresses and, thereby showcasing their consumption of "luxury". Stylizing gendered racialized selves with luxury "designer clothes", perceived as contributors to the transformation of the racial and classed landscape of the industry, the women attempt to foster a more diverse and inclusive image of "luxury".

Thus, coming from a working-class background as immigrants who have had to work their ways up, I argued that the women of color in *Beauty Queen Aesthetics* move back and forth between racial and class identities. They redefine their class status through associating their brand with luxury and at the same time mobilize their racial and ethnic resources to produce authentic and genuine subjectivities.

Black anti-racist aesthetic and assertion of racial/ethnic solidarity

The analysis of the Instagram content shows that multiple marginalized embodied identities based on gender, race, and migration are performed and staged as a way to construct and define the distinctiveness and authenticity of the brand. The theme of racial salience and resistance to white standards is the most influential theme in the interview narratives and social media content created by Diva Cosmetics, a Canadian Black-owned cosmetic company.

Figure 6, for instance, portrays the founders of *Diva Cosmetics* in their ethnic apparels with other co-ethnics wearing similar ethnic fabrics at the background.



Figure 6. Diva Cosmetics

This image spotlights a form of cultural wealth nurtured within the community carrying a sense of belonging, history, and memory. The interweaving of family and community can unveil these women’s approach towards their own racial identities. Rollock and colleagues (2014) in their study of Black middle-class people’s identity construction in the white society distinguish participants’ perceptions of Blackness as incidental from those who understood their racial identity as collective. Collective racial identity, as they argue, refers to being in line with “a political or conscious sense of collective worth and investment” (Rollock et al. 2014: 24). Highlighting Black cultural spaces free from white interference, women in this study assert and perform publicly their racial and ethnic difference to the white norms. In a video, Mia, the COO of *Diva Cosmetics*, talked about the vision of the company. She shared:

We want to make sure that all women of color have products that actually matches them. Matches their neck, chest, so everything has one shade and looks natural. Here are the full team not only for the community but women at large of color. Just trying to show everybody that we are here, we understand the struggles that we've had for years. White people were trying to show us what our shades are what our undertones are, and it really isn't. So, we're really kind of educating people with the proper way of finding a product that just works for them. (Diva Cosmetics)

Moving away from assimilation with white norms, Black women in this company move towards what Meghji (2017) calls ethno-racial autonomous pole wherein they publicly and openly resist white norms and standards. In this case, resistance is demonstrated through offering products for women of darker skin tones as a means to reorient feminine 'raced' bodies away from hegemonic racialized beauty ideals. "Such reorientation," as Tate (2013:222) reminds us, "means that which has been racially intensified as 'other' can be transformed to become the norm/the ideal through alternative beauty discourses". Producing cosmetic products for Black people and those with darker skin tones is an example of speaking back to being positioned by "white people" which Meghji (2017: 1018) refers to as "meta-positioning."

Similarly, Lily, a Black woman and another COO of the company highlights similar resistance to the white world through adopting an ethno-racial autonomous perspective. She noted:

A lot of times the head of those big beauty companies are white males. They don't understand. You can only explain so much but those in the community understand what

someone needs. People who are in the community, they realize what their people need. This is the struggles I've gone through so let me try to do something to help.

The above narrative shows how the community, specifically the Black community in this case, unapologetically attempt to resist against being positioned by “white men” and white-owned beauty product manufacturers through emphasizing on the importance of the social positionality that the producers of the beauty products hold. Only those “who are in the community” and “have been through the same struggles,” as Lily pointed out, are capable of raising the demands of “their people” and understanding their needs. The common struggles have a transformational protentional based upon which Black women attempt to destabilize the beauty ideals through producing cosmetic products for those skin shades that have been historically excluded from the mainstream cosmetic industry.

The stigma of “Black ugliness” and policing of Black women’s stylization practices is one of the influential themes in social media content created by the company. For instance:

Growing up, how many times have we heard these stereotypes telling us what color makeup we should or shouldn’t wear because of our skin? A stereotype we intend to shatter [is that] Black/Brown girls can’t/shouldn’t wear Red Lipstick. (Diva Cosmetics)

The above statement unveils the notion of beauty as historically racialized which categorizes bodies in beautiful/ugly dichotomy (Tate 2013). Self-employed women, in this case, make efforts towards mediating grooming choices of Black women through encouraging customers/audiences to wear makeup colors that are conventionally defined for light skin as a means to create new beauty

subjectivities. They redefine the representation of their gendered racialized identities through makeover practices as a way to undo and resist the stereotypes Black women have been historically exposed to. Adopting natural Afro hair style and hosting talks with other Black women entrepreneurs revolved around maintaining natural hair is at its core about rearticulation of race and racial boundaries in day-to-day working lives. Fostering new beauty practices such as daily hair styling or makeup routine is aimed at shaping and reshaping racial meanings and boundaries. It's also important to acknowledge the role that the contemporary anti-racist activism and current Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives in the wake of Black Lives Matter movement could have played in women's choices about adoption of what Tate (2007) calls "anti-racist aesthetics". Within the Black anti-racist aesthetic, which grew out of the Black power movement during 1960s, dark skin and natural afro hair were symbols of Black pride and beauty (Craig 2002; Tate 2007). Such day-to-day practices of beauty related to mundane life can unveil how marginalized racial groups rearticulate racial boundaries and engage in collective self-identification (Craig 2002). For instance, Mia, one of the COOs explained why and how she decided to relax her natural hair. She stated:

I decided to do this I remember right after the COVID-19 hit certain incidents happened which had to do with my daughter. Basically, what happened was that she tried to put towel or blanket on her head and saying how beautiful it was because it was long, and she kept shaking it back and forth saying how flowing it was. So, I was thinking what message I am sending to her? I thought deep into it. I know that a lot of us have been going through that phase that put towel on our head and thought it's pretty. But now, in 2020 ... I wanted to address it before it's too late or turns into something bigger. (Diva Cosmetics)

Many feminist scholars have discussed the yardstick of colonial Eurocentric beauty standards privileging lighter skin color, straight and flowing hair (Hobson 2018; Hunter 2005). In this case, Mia's reflection on her stylization practices can arguably position her within an anti-racist beauty aesthetics based upon which grooming styles represent political and anti-racist consciousness (Tate 2003). Using a racial symbol, namely her hair, that is embedded within multiple structures oppression, she attempts to forge new meanings of racial and gender identity. Tapping into the impact of white aesthetics — such as Disney princess films — on Black women's body image, she further explains the importance of adopting grooming practices that affirms her racial pride. She added:

So, I looked at my wigs and I set them aside And we let her understand how beautiful her natural hair is, how she should embrace it. ... There had to be our representation for her, so I decided to embrace my hair. but it occurred again. She actually woke me up in my sleep and she was like mommy I want Rapunzel hair... She was like yeah, my hair is short and when I shake it, it doesn't move. ... And I just came to the realization that I have to continuously be that representation for her. ... Right now, she thinking that having wigs means that she's beautiful, that's not what I want to teach her. (Diva Cosmetics)

Stories generate, as Wilkins (2012:177) writes, “a collective identity, imbue it with meaning and socialize Black women into common dispositions and practices”. What sets the twenty first century anti-racist Black aesthetic activism apart from the 'Black is beautiful' and Black power movements in the late twentieth century is the way it gained its grounds through story sharing and community building in online platforms (Byrd and Tharps 2014). Digital media created accessible communal networks for free expression and enhanced the capacity for collective responses to the experiences of racism and sexism

(Clark-Parsons 2018). Sharing the story of her daughter in the company's online platform, the COO built on and reshaped the regulatory norms of gender and race to enact a new beauty subjectivity for Black women. Mia considered the desire of her 3-year-old daughter to have the "Rapunzel" kind of long and flowing hair, as the perpetuation of colonization which reinforces the historical stigma of Black ugliness (Tate 2003). By embracing her natural hair, she assiduously sought to revalorize her racial signifier and create the right "representation for her child." Wigs, in her narrative, are positioned outside of anti-racist discourse of Black natural beauty due to its unnaturalness. In Black women and immigrant women of color narratives, stylization practices are at conjunction with politics, self-identification, and racial rearticulation. Omi and Winant (2018) used the term rearticulation as a reference to the ways in which racial identities are socially redefined and reframed. Race, as a social construction, is shaped by a set of socially constructed boundaries. Adopting natural hairstyle, Mia strives to rearticulate race and its socially constructed boundaries. Such rearticulation grows out of her specific gender and racial positions.

Racialization of beauty and the beauty industry remains an influential topic of discussion in these monthly virtual talks. In another discussion hosted by the company, the guest who was also a Black entrepreneur and manufacturer of beauty products for textured hair, discussed the importance of using entrepreneurial resources as a means for creating spaces to educate audiences about colonial Eurocentric ideals of beauty. She shared:

I just talked about it in a presentation at TDCD, a school my daughter goes to. And I was telling the kids that for four hundred years, when we were in slave, we heard that we are not beautiful... We were treated less than a human. And I'm trying not to get emotional right

now. So, for four hundred years, even for more than four hundred years, it is embedded in us that we're not beautiful. That we're ugly. So, I guess having a space like that to show people that we are beautiful is really important. (Diva Cosmetics)

Tate (2013) in her study on Black beauty shame shows how Jamaican women in diaspora overturn shaming events through disidentification, redefining the normative beauty ideals. Black women, in the above extract, pointed out the shame of being constantly othered and the pressure of complying with the beauty standards under the colonial regimes of beauty which subjects their gendered racialized subjectivities under constant policing and regulation. Scholars have documented the significance of hair and hairstyle among Black women as a form of cultural expression and a means for construction of Black womanhood (Battle 2021; Hill 2021). The hair styling and its transformation provide a window onto the ways women rearticulate race and racial boundaries (Craig 2002; Jenkin 2019; Hill 2003). Celebrating natural hair and new beauty practices is a strategy through which my participants challenge racial conventions while positioning themselves against and in relation to the existing meanings of race and gender. In addition, the women's narratives in my research speak on the role of cosmetic stores and their online platforms as spaces where women of color address systematic gendered racial violence through sharing their survival stories. The virtual talks organized by *Diva Cosmetics* were intentionally designed to not only enhance awareness about regimes of beauty that subjugate Black women, but also to articulate strategies to resist the system of oppression. Featuring models with Afro-textured hair and providing tips to audience on how to maintain natural Afro hair, Black women in my focal companies take part in a beauty culture that is centered around Afrocentric standards of beauty rather than the Eurocentric one. Similar to Hill's (2003) study on Black beauty

salons, my study speaks to local cosmetic companies as a space where embodied experiences of Black womanhood become meaningful.

Thus, performing identity, in companies of beauty products owned by women of color, goes beyond generating desire for the brand in the market and seeks to rearticulate racial identities through politicization of their bodies as a means to foster self-love, racial pride, and redefine gendered and racial representation. The politicization of bodies, for Black women and women of color entrepreneurs, came down to their day-to-day choices about how to style their hair and wear makeup.

Conclusion

The beauty industry acts as a mirror of the colonial capitalist society, reflecting its dynamics and transformations as a whole. In this chapter, I juxtaposed social media content and interview data narratives with self-employed women in the business of beauty to highlight how the beauty businesses at the periphery of the mainstream market are contributing to a more just and inclusive beauty discourse while embedded within the colonial capitalist framework. I brought together the intersectional research on identity making and boundary work (Lacy 2004; Meghji 2017; Rollock and et al. 2011; Yosso 2005) and intersectional embodiment literature (Balogun 2012; Huisman and Hondagneu-Sotelo 2005; Tate 2003, 2007, 2021) to examine how women entrepreneurs deploy race in conjunction with multiple categories of difference as a means for constructing and framing their racial and gendered identities within and at times beyond the boundaries of the capitalist market economy.

Building on the social media content and interview narratives, I argued how both white women as well as women of color entrepreneurs stressed gender norms, embraced middle-class and upper-class aspirations, and pushed against racial conventions simultaneously. I tried to link women's celebration of authentic and agentic femininity as a source of empowerment to post-feminist ethos located in the neoliberal capitalism. Black, Indigenous, and immigrant women of color, however, constantly attempt to assert their oppositionality to colonial Eurocentric mass market through representation and politicization of their historically "othered" racial and ethnic embodied identities. Located at the outskirts of the industry, these women frame their identities at the intersection of gender, race, class, and immigration status to adhere to and concomitantly push against the colonial logic of the industry.

Immigrant women of colors' narrations of immigration trajectories and experiences of war in the Global South highlight the enabling and transformative potential of oppression and inequality. Linking the richness of their diverse cultures to their stories of immigration, these women mobilize their community wealth (Yosso 2005) that allows them to form a public identity that buffer discriminatory experiences. I argued that Black and Indigenous women entrepreneurs rearticulated their racial identities and asserted publicly their racial and ethnic differences to the white world through recounting the stories of oppression, valorizing embodied racial signifiers, and embracing cultural heritage. I attempted to show how Black women's reflection on their stylization practices in this study positions them within an "anti-racist beauty aesthetics," as Tate (2003) argues, hence representing their political and anti-racist consciousness. Authentic branding, as I discussed earlier, is increasingly valued in a capitalist global market for its connection with specific ethnic, racial, and/or gendered groups (Cavanaugh and Shankar 2014), as a means for commodification and consumption. While women's

deployment of various categories of marginalized identities could be read as a branding strategy within the same colonial (racial) capitalist industry built on discrimination, it can create an alternative future for the industry beyond the colonial dichotomized epistemological system through recognizing, embodying, and representing a “plurality” of beauty as Tate noted (2013) under but also in response to the colonial white normative gaze.

This chapter contributes to intersectional embodiment and boundary work scholarship by showing how racialized and gendered bodies of women in the business of producing/selling cosmetic/beauty products both adhere to the rules of capitalist economy and simultaneously turn into a site through which intersecting axes of oppression are subverted.

Chapter 7

Leadership ethics at the intersection of gender and race, and subjugated situatedness

This chapter is informed primarily by the literature on situatedness and positioning to examine the ways in which identity (ies) has/have been enacted by entrepreneurs and their employees through both complying with and undoing social norms. I draw on identity construction scholarship intersectional and the literature studying entrepreneurship and feminist leadership ethics to investigate the ways through which women redefine and construct their identities through entrepreneurial leadership and management practices. Looking at women's self-employment through an intersectional lens, I show how gender and multiple axes of identity conflate to shape the vision, goals, and business practices of these women.

I start with women's account of positioning and location along multiple axes of identity such as gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, immigration, and so forth. I show how women build on their marginalized positionality and experiences of subjugation to create businesses that fill the gaps in the industry. I show how narratives of positionality could be considered as practices of boundary making and identity construction among middle-class immigrant women and women of color through which women create a story of who they are while mobilizing their intersecting identities. Then I discuss how the need for financial profitability and economic survival in a capitalist competitive field may lead local beauty business owners to engage in self-commodification and exoticization by carving out and displaying their markers of difference.

I then discuss how this local business has created spaces wherein women of color can share their lived experiences of oppression and dialogue about race and gender inequalities. I argue that physical stores as well as their online platforms serve as tools for women to advocate for justice through the radical discussions about discrimination. In the next sections, I show how social locations of participants as gendered and racialized informed women's self-employment which served as a site for ethical practices such as connectivity, care and empathy, vulnerability, acknowledging employees situatedness as well as community building and empowerment. I draw upon feminist leadership ethics (Binns 2008; Brown 2019; Fletcher 2004; Kark et al. 2012; Pullen and Vachhani 2021; Sinclair 1998) to portray women's attempts towards resignifying and revisiting masculine organizational culture by turning femininized attributes into a valuable source of strength. I also suggest that women of colors' gendered racial identities create political possibilities for their leadership through changing the matrix of success, mentoring co-ethnics, and enhancing awareness of injustice and discrimination within and outside their ethnic and/or racial communities.

Accounts of location, belonging and otherness

Accounts of location and positionality are stories of how subjects position themselves in terms of social categories of difference such as gender, race, class, and religion, and also who and what they identify, and concurrently, disidentify with (Anthias 2002; Jones et al. 2008; Jenkin 2019). Women entrepreneurs in this study share stories of their positionalities and the ways in which their multilayered identities had an impact on their business visions and entrepreneurial practices. Lily is a third-generation

Black immigrant and the COO of a family-owned cosmetic company. She shared the story of how her mother started the company in the first place:

At that time, she was working corporate. I could see her having her makeup done as a part of the routine of going to the office. But she was struggling a lot with finding the right shade. So, she'll go to makeup counters, and they'll be like oh mix this and this or try this and this. And she was like she never felt it was her match. A lot of the times maybe she would go with my aunt, and they would try to give them the same color but my aunt and my mom are two completely different shades. My mother was inspired to create her own brand after years of not being able to find her correct foundation shade, after years of being dissatisfied with products that left her skin with an ash, grey or high red finish.

This story, posted on the company's website and the social media platform and being repeated at the beginnings of each social event, reveals the exclusion that many Black women and women with dark skin have often experienced within the context of the cosmetic and beauty industry. Furthermore, it mirrors the women's awareness of the impact of racialized as well as gendered beauty regimes on their embodied subjectivities and how that shaped their family entrepreneurship. Telling stories of positionality is a useful strategy for outgroups such as migrants and minority communities to apprehend their transnational life path and to resist their lived experiences of discrimination and oppression (Anthias 2002; Dalmau 2015; Duchêne and Heller 2012; Wilkins 2012). Sharing stories of marginality among member of outgroups whose voices have been silenced is used as a means for contesting erasure (Glisson 2019; Dalmau 2015; Duchêne and Heller 2012). Transforming marginality to strength, the business owner draws on her experience of subjugation and annihilation as a resource to

build a business that fills the gap in the industry. According to Lily, this story created a bond and had the power to circulate within her community. She added:

Our story is kind of similar to other stories to other people in our community. My mom's story not to be able to find a foundation color, when we told that story, we get phone calls from people saying oh my gosh literally this is been my struggle. We have a story, and our story resonates so much with other people.

Beyond a personal story, her narrative provides a reference point to which customers/audiences can resonate with. As Bietti and colleagues (2019) argue, the true value of storytelling lies in strengthening in-group cohesion, thereby enabling the construction and reconstruction of a collective identity. The women, in this study, use storytelling as a strategy to grapple with and subvert the systemic processes that has marginalized them, hence bringing the community together. Business turns into a channel that enables the business owner to build unity among Black women who shared the same experience of unjust exclusion within the mainstream industry.

Drawing on gendered and racial status as a means for both boundary making and brand building remains influential in other women's narratives. Amara is a first-generation Black Immigrant woman who built a beauty company in Vancouver. In her social media platform, she shared her life trajectory as an immigrant Black woman:

My story is a story of an immigrant. An immigrant who has big dreams and is determined to pave the way and make an impact. I came here from Togo when I was five years old to be

reunited with my parents. My parents immigrated to Canada in their mid-twenties to start and build a better life. The challenges that I had to overcome as an immigrant helped grow as a more resilient person. I didn't speak English or French, so I had to learn the language. I had to adapt to a new climate, to new people, new food. So, it was a lot of adaptation. I also had to know a new family that I didn't know well. All of this made me a more resilient person. It also gave me motivation to give the best that I could from the opportunity to be in Canada.

Authenticity in connection with entrepreneurial self-conception within the context of capitalist consumerist culture has been debated in length (Frederiksen et al. 2020; Genz 2015; Marwick 2013). Neoliberal capitalism quests the display of "the inner self" (Genz 2015) as a self-branding technique. I argue that the display of immigrant gendered self could serve as an "affective commodity" (Genz 2015: 547) in a competitive capitalist market. Affective commodity could be conceptualized through the Marxian notion of "immaterial/affect labour" which involves the production of an emotional response through the (unpaid) labour of manipulating affects (Hardt and Negri 2004). In this case, branding the self (as an immigrant woman of color), in my view, enriches the products with a "commercial storytelling" (Lewis and Bridger 2000: 39) that can create emotional response and desire. Such affective commodity and self-branding are simultaneously used as boundary strategy between the racialized selfhood and the white others in the era of multiculturalism. Starting with "My story is a story of an immigrant," Amara expressed solidarity with immigrant community while constructing her difference from the host country. Lacy (2004: 910) in her study of inclusion strategies and identity construction among middle-class Blacks in suburban areas conceptualizes boundary work as "a type of cultural work where individuals associate selected aspects of their identity with a specific cultural

repertoire in order to maintain a consistent narrative of who they are.” Women of color entrepreneurs in this study, rely on their ethnic and/ or racial communities to construct their racial identities, thereby deploying their businesses to accomplish this goal. She goes on to elaborate on her transnational life trajectory and its effects on her career path, saying:

It was really hard, but I persevered and told myself “be strong”, “you can do it”. My initial experience as a little immigrant girl in a foreign country, and the emotional impact that came with it shaped my future inspirations, dreams, visions and values. After a few months spent immersing myself into the French-Canadian culture, I was among the top students of my classes to the amazement of my teachers and Canadian-born friends. Then, I won my first academic award of merit for excellence in the French language & mathematics. That was a huge win for me. And it taught me that success, small or big is the child of hard work...determination and perseverance... Well, that was a long time ago, but those experiences, and others besides have helped define who I am, and how I approach my life and achieving my goals.

Amara’s narrative reminds us of the neoliberal discourse of success (Bradford and Hey, 2007; Lavrence and Lozanski, 2014; Mirza, 2013). Success, based on this discourse, is achieved through, not perpetuation of socio-economic inequality, but diligence and hard work. Bradford and Hey (2007) allude to psychological and personal virtues of self-assurance, diligence, forbearance, and hard work discursively constructed as hallmarks of a good citizen within a neoliberal economy. The ideal neoliberal subject as resilient, self-managing, and reflexive, who shoulders the responsibility of making her own future, emerges in Amara’s story. According to Bradford and Hey (2007:601), young working-

class people, within the context of neoliberal success discourse, are inscribed with “confidence and resilience in the face of psychological and social pressures,” as a way to develop and harness certain psychological resources in individuals such as resilience and desire for self-achievement. Drawing upon the neoliberal self-actualization narrative and their psychological resources such as determination, perseverance, immigrant self-employed women have made efforts towards blending into the Canadian culture.

In defining their Black and racialized womanhood within white supremacist patriarchy, women harness their intersectional identities based on gender, race, and ethnicity and shared stories of marginality and/or transnational life trajectory as a means for contesting erasure. Concurrently, transforming marginality to strength functions as boundary making between “we” (minoritized women of color) and “they” (primarily white people) as well as strengthening the sense of collective identity. I attempted to argue that immigrant (working-class) women’s reference to their personal attributes such as fortitude and determination is in line with the language of neoliberalism and its marketed ideals of personal achievement and self-actualization.

Cultural commodification and self-exoticizing as other

The analysis of interview narratives shows that self-employed women of color at the margins of the industry need to adhere to the neoliberal project of multiculturalism through staging their racial and gendered bodies to represent their products as symbolically distinctive and authentic, thereby transforming the symbols of their gendered ethnic identities into an added value through. Gemma, an

Indigenous woman, is a professional heritage worker who also started her own health and beauty company. She shared:

It took me a long time because I think western ways of promoting products is here's a picture buy me. I was never putting my face on my social media because I was like no you're not supposed to do that because that's typical. But it took a while to see that shift. People want to know the maker, they want to know where I'm from, what inspires me, they want to know behind the scenes. What I talk about is the strength and the resilience of the people when they can have jobs that match their lifestyle, learning the culture and language, supporting people in a way through skills, providing them employment, nurture, and love based in this foundation of culture.

Mobilizing cultural and racial resources to start up the business was not an ordinary act for all entrepreneurs. Gemma discussed the considerable effort she had to put into adopting the rules of capitalist aesthetic economy which is based upon aestheticization of organizational artifacts as a way for invoking desire in the marketplace. Through stylized representation of her racial and cultural markers of Indigeneity, she attempted to construct a marketable identity for the company. Taking off from Banerjee's (2019) study of subversive self-employment among marginalized Indian immigrant women in the US, my study shows how women of color carve out their ethnic and cultural markers to mobilize resources for entrepreneurial purposes. Indeed, recounting the past by marginalized communities and sharing stories of resilience and survival has functioned partly as increasing brand desire in a competitive marketplace. In her social media platform, Gemma shared with her followers:

I have been sharing my journey of learning my language and culture and been inviting others to join me in learning. I share the very real and hard parts of cultural revitalization but the beautiful moments. I also share my message in my grandmother's language on packaging of essential oils, a little "cheat sheet" of plants connected to my soaps goes in each mail order, and when I speak at events- I try to incorporate language. Although that I believe I create good products, I see my impact more through storytelling. I will continue sharing the stories of our survival, of our culture, of our knowledge holders and will bring life to the issues that impact us.

Embedded within the neoliberal principle of irrelevance of race, the beauty industry depoliticizes racial representation, turning it into an aesthetic category. In its calls for representation of diverse racial identities, the industry as well as cultural expectations are demanding an unthreatening representation of race disarticulated from its (oppressive) history which could be simply integrated into post-racial hegemonic discourse of diversity. The neoliberal project of multiculturalism and pluralism, as Yucel (2016) argues, depoliticizes the diversity practices through dissociating them from the more radical modes of engagement in social justice practices. What is embedded is Gemma's comment of "sharing hard but beautiful moments" is the industry's expectation of creating a tourism experience for customers/audiences by women of color through aestheticization of their racial differences and depoliticizing their unpleasant and sad stories of racial trauma.

In another example, Isabella talked about the distinctiveness of the company's initiatives towards celebrating racial identities of employees. She shared:

In a time of racial unrest, to have a company intentionally celebrating cultural diversity was so special. Many big companies began employing diversity in their marketing strategies by hiring people of color to model for their campaigns. The difference between other brands and ours is that we partnered with real women and gave them a voice and a platform to share not only the struggles they experienced as a woman of color, but also the beauty in being a woman of color. Women of color do experience challenges due to their ethnicities, but we also wanted to celebrate their ethnicity. We did the “You matter campaign” to show women that you are beautiful regardless of where you come from. We had models that were first nations, Afro Caribbean, we had mature women models, women that are over fifty, women that are of different colors, shapes, and sizes.

Body and representation of “raced” body remain central to the industry from its margins to the mainstream. What pits the margins against the mainstream, as Isabella mentions, is the local company’s intention towards creating a safe space for women of color, to voice their lived experiences of oppression. To celebrate differences in the local companies, race and embodied racial identity are intertwined with its history, rather than divorced from it. However, I also argue that it is important to take note of the pronoun “You”, in “the You Matter Campaign.” Indeed, deploying the pronoun “You” to address women of color as a unified collective has a dual function of concealing the women of colors’ distinctive experiences and status, while creating a bridge of agentic solidarity with other women of color.

While self-commodification through carving out racial and cultural knowledge and resources can reinforce the hegemonic ideology of “the exotic other”, it has also had enabling effects.

Gemma, for instance, shared:

I decided to come into the community, the village where my grandmother came from, because I wanted to give back by creating jobs and learning language for myself. What I’ve been trying to do although I haven’t been good at these things is that when I’m making products, I’m listening to the recordings of the elders and listening to the language for my own.

The above extract reflects the enabling possibilities that the business of self-commodification had provided for women in this study such as providing job for the community and reconnecting with the culture. Dismantling and re-structuring the unequal relation of power requires challenging and moving beyond the rules of the game, as Hanson (2009) writes, rather than playing by them. I argue that the women from marginalized communities, in my research, attempt to overturn oppression and inequality from their position of otherness through deploying the same stigmatic elements of difference that has historically subjugated them. Not only does the commodification of the cultural resources provide Gemma with financial means, it also enables her to contribute to the community’s development and betterment.

Similarly, Linda, a second-generation Indian immigrant who built a business based on Indian Ayurveda, talked about her struggle with conforming to the self- presentation rules in the era of aesthetic economy. She shared:

When I started it, I wanted to be in the background. But the story is getting more important because now there are hundreds of clean brands, but people will ask so that's it? You're just clean? There are brands that have tons of money and can pass that part, or they are celebrity or someone unique, so they don't have to tell the story. I feel like it puts a lot of pressure. For instance, I don't like posting videos of putting products on me because I feel silly. But then I have to remember that's what people want to see.

Representing the brand as unique and authentic demands staging her exotic otherness. Harnessing her cultural and ethnic resources and knowledge (Ayurveda), she made her products sophisticated for clients, "especially those outside of her community", as she put it. However, commodification of her otherness goes beyond exclusively incorporating cultural resources into the product. Rather, she is expected to conform to the normative representation of "Indianness". She added:

I remember I was in New York and when you launch a product you have to go and meet people and telling them this is what's new in my products and etcetera. There was this woman who was working in a magazine, and she wanted us to meet her at a restaurant. So, I went to meet her, and she was like 'you must be vegetarian. What can you eat?' and I'm like 'I'm not a vegetarian.' And she was like 'how could you not be vegetarian? You're Indian and you believe in Ayurveda.' So again, people want me to be that way as a part of their narrative of how an Ayurveda founder should look like.

Here, Linda's comment of "people want me to be that way," is an indication of the enormous pressure exerted on women of color to present a version of themselves that as Bunten (2008:

386) writes “conforms to Western concepts of the Other, popularized in television, movies, books, museum.” Presentation of the ethnic authentic other needs to take place within the bounds of colonial imagery of the racialized other. She further explained the enabling effects of a business pivoted on exoticizing of the “othered” self:

In a funny way it also made me a bit more comfortable than when I was a child. Like the social media girl said to me oh it’s Mother’s Day do you what to post a picture of you and your mom? And I said oh it’s a good idea. And I was looking for some old pictures that my mom would wear traditional sari. When I was young, I wasn’t comfortable she was wearing that. But actually, now our culture is more celebrated. People want to see that.

The above extract shows that being in an ethnic business and bowing to the rules of hegemonic discourse of self-commodification could have, at the same time, empowering effects for women. That is, the business of self-commodification enabled Linda to embrace her ethnic identity again and reconnect with her culture as a gendered racialized other in a white dominant industry.

Thus, women of color repoliticize race through playing by the unwritten rules of the industry. Commodification of the eroticized ethnic and cultural markers of difference, demanded by the industry, have also allowed marginalized women of color to grapple with inequality and the lived experiences of subjugation through reconnecting with their culture and getting engaged in the community development.

Fostering a safe space for critical dialogue and coalition building around justice

My analysis of women's narratives shows that creating spaces to dialogue about race and gender inequalities wherein women of color could share their lived experiences of oppression has been an integral component of women's entrepreneurial efforts towards increasing inclusivity and fostering awareness of discrimination in larger social context. Sharing survival stories is deployed not merely as a means to connect with the audiences but also to foster awareness of discrimination in larger social context.

Lily, a COO of the company, underscored the significance of company as a space where whiteness is decentered inadvertently through promoting Afrocentric standards of beauty. She noted:

The thing with makeup, is a service that you're in someone's personal space. You're in their face, you're standing there, and you have a good forty-five minutes to one hour to talk. So, people become comfortable and start expressing themselves...Even a simple thing like ok I'm testing something, and I say your eyes are so beautiful. And they look at me; are you serious? I'm like yeah you have such nice eyes. And they're like you don't even know. I hated my eyes. When I was younger people used to make fun of me. So, you say what are you talking about? You have to realize that you can wear this, you can do this with your eyes. You have a good eye space to do this with your eye shadow. And they're like oh my god thank you. Or people who have been told your lips are too big. And when you tell them wear red lipstick they're like no I like to hide my lips. I'm like why? People are paying to get your lip shape. Find a lip color and feel comfortable, and then they're like oh my gosh...

I never knew me standing out is ok. And I'm like no you're supposed to stand out. So, it's been a lot of therapeutic sessions.

Previous research has centered the role of beauty shops as alternative to traditional spaces for mental health where Black women find their emotional support system (Mbilishaka 2018; Linnan and Ferguson 2007; Gill 2010). Mbilishaka (2018) refers to beauty shop as a site for "Psychotherapy" where Black women garner comfort through exchanging deep conversations with hairstylists. Similarly, Lily referred to makeover sessions as therapeutic for customers. The everyday interactions in beauty stores both reproduce and overturn regulatory regimes of beauty. These spaces enable Black customers to simultaneously adapt their bodies to the regimes of beauty and subvert the hegemonic Eurocentric norms. For women of color, the company serves as a tool for uplifting women of color by making them "feel confident with who they are and be comfortable in their own skin" as Lily puts it, while mitigating their marginal status.

The theme of mobilizing entrepreneurial resources to develop spaces that advocate justice is an influential theme in women's narratives. On the company's social media platform, Gabriel talked with women of color around the lived experiences of inequality. In one of these interviews, the participant is asked to share about the challenges she navigates as a Black woman in her daily life. She shared:

I'm the mother of three young children who are half-Indigenous, half-African. My partner and I spend a lot of times running ourselves and claiming our identities and reclaiming our culture. We learn and relearn our identities to be able to help our children own their

identities and their place in the world. One of the biggest challenges that I have encountered is to make sure that my children feel joy. I often get worried with the risk of them being children of color, children that are not only Black but also Indigenous. Making sure that they understand who they are but also that they are able to stay peaceful.

While focusing on cultural and ethnic diversity tends to adopt a less oppositional approach, it has not supplanted the radical discussions about discrimination and justice. Local cosmetic/beauty companies mobilize their entrepreneurial resources to foster a space for other women to dialogue about inequality issues and the unhappy consequences of racism and sexism. The statement above elucidates how multiplicative positionalities such as being Black and Indigenous, interweave and interlock to frame subjects' lived experiences reproducing a mesh of marginalization. The woman in the above narrative is fully aware of her children's intersectional marginal positions in an unequal society where the intersection of Blackness and Indigenousness define their life chances and experiences. The above statement also casts light on active engagement of women of color with the co-constitutive effect of gender and race through their entrepreneurial activities as a means for overturning the marginalizing effects of multiple axes of difference. Self-employment as a site for gaining agency among minoritized groups is documented by previous research (Banerjee 2019; Jones 2017; Gill 2010). In line with previous research, women of color entrepreneurs in this study draw on their multiple identities to create spaces for agency and upliftment of other women of color.

Pyles (2020) argues for promoting awareness of systemic oppression among marginalized communities as a crucial part of empowerment project. Fostering a space where community members can share their stories of resilience and survival, and connect them to the larger-scale structural issues,

pave the way to empowerment and social action (Pyles 2020). As a part of building a company, women of color create spaces of agency and carve out ways to push the bounds of their intersecting marginal positions, hence concomitantly allowing the repoliticization of diversity work (Plotnikof et al. 2022).

Search for an authentic entrepreneurial identity: Does gender matter?

Women's narratives show that the idea of implementing a different way of doing business is reflected not only in the company's identity but also in women's leadership practices. The narratives reveal that women, specifically white women working in *Mighty Beauty*, a white woman owned company, rely heavily on conventional feminine attributes such as empathy and emotional connection to construct the authenticity of their leadership style within the entrepreneurial context that is traditionally defined by masculine norms. Nina, a white woman employee in *Mighty Beauty*, distinguished feminine leadership style from the conventional masculine one. To her, women's inherent ability in connection building is one of the most distinctive characteristics of women run companies. She mentioned:

Women have better revenues and profit market. Literally women make money better. And staff are treated better almost every time. Having that relationship with staff is very important for management here. I guess it just means women are able to carry a relationship better.

Nina created an association between feminized attributes and women's leadership practices. To her, conventional feminized attributes such as connectivity and the ability to establishing

relationships serve to women's advantage in the interactive service industry. Deploying historically devalued feminine attributes, women in this study attempt to mobilize their gender identities to create a distinctive leadership style.

Harnessing feminine dispositions and attributes as a way to construct their identity and define the distinctiveness of the company reflected in other narratives. Katya, another white woman employee, believed that certain capacities such as empathy and care inherently reside in women, hence making them better leaders and managers. She stated:

Women have more natural propensity towards personal relationship, especially because our sales depend on relationships. And you can have that [relationship] with nine hundred different clients if you're on the salesfloor. The empathy and caring are a natural part of women.

Decades of research studying organizations and leadership allude to the leadership as gendered (Binns 2008; Brown 2019; Fletcher 2004; Kark et al. 2012; Pullen and Vachhani, 2021; Sinclair 1998) which is historically equated with masculinized qualities including toughness, self-reliance, competitiveness, result-orientation, and strong desire for success (Binns 2008; Fletcher 2004). Accordingly, any attributes such as sharing emotions and vulnerabilities have been pushed to the margins within the organizational context (Due Billing and Alvesson 2000). Critical feminist scholarship on leadership, however, has recently spotlighted and reconceptualized care and empathy, openness and connectivity as core elements of leadership ethics (Ladkin 2008; Pullen and Vachhani 2021; Von Wahl 2011). In her narrative, Katya constructs leadership as feminine as opposed to the

discourse of masculine leadership. Spotlighting feminine attributes, in my view, becomes a boundary strategy through which women business owners construct an authentic public identity to distinguish themselves from male-owned businesses.

In her comparison between her previous work experience in a male-owned company and her current workplace, Anna, a white woman who is also a store manager in *Mighty Beauty*, highlights connectivity and empathy as key characteristics of organizational culture in women owned companies. She noted:

It's like day and night. There's just so much warmth and compassion and understanding here. Even the connections. The CEO doesn't feel like unattainable or unreachable. And they listen, any idea any time you have an idea about something, you can get feedback on it right away. There's never that feeling of "oh is this stupid," Should I ask this question? Everything's open and fair. No dumb questions she always says. Like a safe space. Right now, a couple of our people are having a tough time with different things. There's no question that we're there for them. We're not employees, I'm not the manager and she is not my employee. It's not like that at all. We're always there for each other. It's incredible I've never had that experience before. So, in that way we're always there for each other.

In Anna's narrative, warmth, compassion, and nurturance characterize her workplace culture. In her comment of "We're not employees, I'm not the manager", she cited the absence of rigid power divide that exist in traditional bureaucratic organizations. To Anna, the company's ways of doing business such as establishing close relationship with employees, valuing feedback provided by

employees, creating a supportive and safe work environment, and power-sharing are elements that distinguish her current woman-run workplace from the previous ones run by men. Much similar to Katya, Nina reconstructs feminine leadership as opposed to the discourse of masculine leadership. However, constructing leadership as feminine, as Due Billing and Alvesson (2000) argue, can have the risk of reinforcing stereotypical feminine attributes as well as gendered division of work. Recreating the duality of masculine versus feminine has the risk of reproducing masculinity as normative standard based on which women's leadership practices need to be evaluated.

Nina further discussed the strategies she deployed to educate herself about employees' personalities as a way to establish stronger relationship with them. She mentioned:

I'm genuinely caring. At our last meeting I did a personality profiling, and you have to answer just really quickly what is most like you and what is least like you. And then you pluck them into different graphs with your personality type. So, I've done that with them and that really helped them understand their own personalities and helped me understand how to connect with other people. Because even within our team there are so many of us that are opposites of each other, right? So how do you connect? Empathy makes our team a lot stronger. This emotional connection and communication are something that I think is missed by the companies that are run by men.

Gabriel (2015) in a study of leadership style highlights caring leader as going the extra mile to devote personalized attention to employees. Anna can be an archetype of that caring leader. Instead of tailoring an ideal prescriptive image of service worker and having employees to fit into that, she

attempts to educate herself about the employees' personalities so she can deeply connect with them accordingly because she "genuinely cares", as she put it. Previous research extended Hochschild's notions of surface and deep acting and identified a third form of emotional labor: "Authentic and natural emotional labor" (Ashforth and Humphrey 1993; Ashforth et al. 2008; Ashforth and Tomiuk 2000; Humphrey et al. 2015). Held in opposition to other methods of performing emotional labor (surface and deep acting) based upon summoning and exhorting the appropriate emotions, the notion of spontaneous emotional labor insinuates that the employees' genuine and authentic expression of emotions bow to the organizational display rules. Building on Hoshcschild's conceptualization of surface and deep acting, Ashforth and Tomiuk (2000) differentiate between performance of surface authenticity as display of emotions that reflect employee's current emotions and performance of deep authenticity which refers to display of emotions in line with display rules that one has internalized as a component of identity. Anna's narrative of her organizing style based on her caring personality is in line with Ashforth and Tomiuk's (2000) conceptualization of deep authenticity. Internalizing some aspect of service role (such as being caring) has enabled Anna to identify with the role. Drawing on conventional feminized attributes as a source of constructing an authentic and genuine entrepreneurial identity, women entrepreneurs seek to resignify and revisit masculine norms of entrepreneurship through turning feminine difference into a valuable source of strength in a business context.

Katya, a white woman and a store manager, talked about empathy and communication as important component of her leadership strategy. She shared:

For me, in how I work with staff, is super important. You can't get anywhere if you don't ask questions and you don't ask questions if you're not empathetic. If it's a matter of this

wasn't done properly, I would ask what's missing? what happened? how can I support? How can I help? And that means that employee will grow, eliminate the issue, and probably will be a lot better than just saying here's what need to be done and here is how you do it. So, understanding and communication are super important.

Katya is focused on improving employee performance and training through what she calls, "communication and understanding" as opposed to the culture of blame according to which mistakes are considered as negative. Coupling leadership with doing gender, Fletcher (2004) underscores post heroic leadership model rooted in socially ascribed feminized qualities which focuses on mutual learning and cocreating knowledge by both leaders and followers. Katya, in the above narrative, has attempted to create a learning environment based upon connection and empathy wherein growth and thriving can occur.

The analysis of women's narratives indicates that flexible attire and presentation policies could, arguably, be an indicator of women's efforts towards constructing their organizing style as distinctive, inclusive, and surreptitiously, feminine. To answer my question about the rules of presentation and conduct in the workplace, Katya stated:

I absolutely get to be my own person. There are women who do never ever wear makeup. There are two or three makeup artists who their passion is makeup. It's art on their face and that's what they want to be doing when they come to work. So, our sales come from us building a relationship. I guess what matters is being genuine.

Katya spotlighted the significance of sincere, genuine, and authentic presentation of self as a means for building relationship with customers. Authentic display of emotions is a core component of women's work in the feminized sector of service industry (Ashforth and Tomiuk 2000; Huynh et al. 2008) which requires internalizing the display rules by employee in order to express emotions that are consistent with the emotions that one actually experiences (Hochschild 2012; Ashforth and Tomiuk 2000). The participants' narratives in this study insinuate that there is less concern with aestheticizing employees' physical appearances, whilst employees are expected to perform authenticity through engaging in genuine expression of emotions as a way to connect with customers and build trust.

Along the same lines, Anna, the store manager, hinted at the absence of prescriptive presentation rules and the importance of genuine representation of self in the company. She shared:

Honestly the more you the better. There's only one rule and that's no solid black top. You can wear anything but not all in black. A new person started a couple of weeks ago and she was like oh can I wear my hair in cornrows? And I was like yeah of course you can. She was like oh ok I wasn't sure. I was like be you whatever like represents you. That's what you do. There's no stereotype, right? Sometimes there are a couple of people that are crazy makeup sometimes they wear no makeup. We're all over the place. But even our director I don't think she wears makeup at all.

Anna's statement of "there's no stereotype" disavows the idealized, stylized prescriptive look often enforced on interactive service workers. The comment of "being you, whatever represents you" insinuates the significance of alignment between presentation rules and employees' values and

dispositions, whilst reaffirming the company's emphasis on authentic expression of emotions. Previous literature has examined performativity as a central component of interactive service work (Hochschild 2012; Bryman 2004; Hancock 2008). In this study, women's narratives revealed that managers avoid standardization of self-presentation while concurrently, reinforce expression of genuine emotions in line with regulatory feminine gender norms within the context of feminized front-line service work. Authenticity and self-authentication, in this case, becomes a boundary strategy between the authentic women owned business and male owned chain stores characterized by their standardized and fast-paced service encounter. Nina, another employee, talked about the importance of authentic display of emotions as a way to connect with customers. She shared:

It should come to you naturally. They've never been like you can't talk that way with the client. No way. We speak completely different from one to another. And the language too. Some big companies don't hire people with accent to client face. I'm so against that. We have a couple of employees who speak English as their second language. We've had employees before with strong Japanese accent. It's super important to have that because they connect with a totally different audience on a much deeper level than someone else can. We're directing customers through excitement to show them something not through manipulation and not through an act.

Feminist leadership ethics is not only centered around the notion of care but also proclaim openness to differences (Pullen and Vachhani 2020) rather than limiting them and flattening their differences through standardization. Nina's statement about embracing employees' foreign accent is at its core about pushing against the image of service employee as a generalized other and treating

employees as individuals with various and multiple layers of identities. The analysis of women's narratives shows that leadership is a practice of caring for others as well as allowing employees to learn from their mistakes and to be emotionally genuine. In addition, genuity and authenticity is an influential theme in these women's narratives. Performing authenticity and achieving authenticity as a capital, much like any other forms of immaterial labour, requires consistent labour. In a sense, performing authenticity is only achievable through constant and conscious negotiation and recreation of meaning including active employment of brand cues (Beverland and Farrelly 2010). In the course of negotiation of authenticity, the employees attempt to distance themselves as businesswomen from the living mannequins in mainstream retailers.

Another key element of doing business differently, pointed out by participants, is attending to the emotional well-being of the employees. Katya in her discussion about emotional connection among staff, hinted at the strategies that are adopted by the CEO to enhance workers' mental well-being. She added:

We connect together on this app called chanty so we're always all on there, always sharing positive stuff. We have mental health talk day where we share our feelings, our struggles in workplace or life in general. It's amazing that we don't even see each other but we feel so connected because we're so open with each other.

Having "mental health talks" reflects the leader's concern with employees' emotions. Acknowledging employees' "struggles in life" unveils women's attempt to create a link between their

work and non-work life, indicating that life outside of work is not disregarded which, as Katya mentioned, surreptitiously enhances relatedness and connectedness in the workplace.

While deriving feminine attributes was an influential theme in white women's narratives working in *Mighty Beauty*, it was also highlighted by women of color entrepreneurs and their employees. In her comparison between organizational culture in her previous corporate job with the small company she is currently working in, Isabella alluded to the feminine discourse of difference. She noted:

I was at the bottom of the proverbial ladder. Usually, those at the bottom of the ladder are easily replaceable. If someone doesn't work out, there's probably about 50 more applications they can easily look through to find a replacement. However, working for this company is vastly different — not only because of the size but because of our founder and CEO. The founder is just cut from a different cloth — she is generous, kind, and genuinely cares for the well-being of her employees. I feel seen and empowered, whereas I was nothing but a number at Sephora. My contributions actually affect and are welcomed here, whereas I just clocked in and clocked out at Sephora.

Isabella, much like other participants, differentiated between the organizational culture in traditional bureaucratic organization and the local company she was working in. While in a bureaucratic organization employees mean nothing but a piece of machine that can be easily replaced with a new one, in a non-hierarchical organization employees' feedback and contributions are valued. To her, "being seen" made her feel empowered and valued as employee. She further elaborated on the CEO's concern

with employees' well-being and creating a working environment that welcomes differences and vulnerabilities in employees. She added:

Even my ethnicity is and has been celebrated by the company through different campaigns. It takes me a bit of time to open up to people, but there have even been times where my boss has encouraged me to open up more and be vulnerable with the team. So even if I wanted to put on an act and pretend, I'm stronger than I am because I don't want to be seen as weak, Amara creates a safe working environment that allows everyone to feel that their well-being matters, because it does to her.

Based on the above narrative, Amara's leadership is not only built on life experiences of the employees but also their psychological resources. As Binns (2008) argues, the main component of the feminist leadership ethics is responding to employees as situated others. Instead of treating employees as instrumental tools for enhancing the company's profitability, Amara 'transgress the boundaries of discursivity' (Lloyd, 1996: 263) and redefined employees as embodied subjectivities with vulnerabilities and imperfections. In Isabella's statement, Amara not only acknowledges "ethnicity" and cultural resources of the employees but also their psychological resources such as resilience, vulnerabilities and /or weaknesses. Her approach has created a safe environment wherein the colleagues can share their vulnerabilities, strengthening the connection among employees in the workplace.

Thus, based on the above narratives, women employees turn their socially ascribed feminized qualities central to their professional identities. White women and women of color in their attempts towards defining and constructing an authentic business identity, build on conventional

feminized attributes to create a distinctive style of organization through empathy, mutual understanding, developing relationship with employees, and attending to the emotional well-being of the employees.

Transformative entrepreneuring: Women of color as agents of change in the community

The analysis of women's narratives indicates that women of color in this study define their businesses beyond individual ambition and delineate the idea of success as contribution to their communities and also changing the landscape of the beauty industry. The most common contributions cited by participants were adopting a new vision of success, providing employment opportunities for other women in the community, changing the landscape of the industry, advertising for other woman of color owned businesses, mentorship and role modeling, and enhancing awareness of racial and gender discrimination within and outside the community.

Building hybrid enterprises: The analysis of the interview data revealed that the women in local businesses of beauty are disrupting the competitive and interest driven logic of business ownership. In line with previous research (Hanson, 2009; Jones, 2017; Lewis, 2013), women entrepreneurs seek to change matrix of success through defining their success not in terms of financial profit, but in terms of contributing to the community's development. Participants' narratives revealed a moral conception of business aiming at leaving a positive impact on the outside world. Amara, a Black woman and the CEO of the Beauty Queen Aesthetics, discussed the core values of the company based upon doing business differently and ethically. She shared:

We do feel that we have a responsibility to do business in a different way because at the very core of what we are doing, we are creating an alternative to conventional products. Because we don't believe in having to use such toxic chemicals in order to moisturize your skin, to diminish fine lines or acne. So even at the very foundation we are telling people we are creating this alternative because we believe in a healthier version, a healthier way. That has to go into the deeper aspects as well. We also believe in a healthier way of business. We believe in a profit-making business for sure but also making a difference, making a change. Shifting the narrative of what beautiful means.

In the above extract, Amara discussed a “healthier way” of doing business through advertising non-toxic products as well as “making a difference” in the industry. To her, making change goes beyond marketing non-toxic products and extends to doing business differently in line with “ethics of care” (Fine 2009; Held 1993; Pullen and Vachhani 2021). Ethics of care refers to moral dimensions of leadership that relies on the needs of others with empathy, connectivity, and nurturing (Hechavarría et al. 2017). Women of color entrepreneurs, in this study, place more emphasis on the creation of social value rather than economic one through manufacturing non-toxic products from one side and shifting the hegemonic idea of beauty from the other side. Women of color fully understand how the dominant narrative of “what beautiful is” has historically othered and excluded other paradigms of beauty. During my interviews, deploying entrepreneurial resources to offer an alternative and a more inclusive definition of the notion of beauty was frequently mentioned by the participants as an indicator of doing business differently.

Along similar lines, Gabriel, a Latina woman who works for Amara as formulator, customer care associate, and marketer, shared her definition of success and her goals towards creating social value. She noted:

It's because we don't just want to sell. We also want to make an impact. If making a (bath) bomb or serum can help a woman feel beautiful about herself. Gifting it to someone who may not be in the position to purchase the products, makes a woman feel beautiful and valued for one day then it worth it.

In the above narrative, one of the significant indicators of success, apart from financial success, is contributing to the community betterment through helping “a woman feels beautiful” and allowing working-class women access to luxury products. She seeks to make her products available for minoritized women in lower income brackets. Thus, entrepreneurial activities are largely driven by women of color entrepreneurs' shared experiences of marginalization and their goals of challenging multiple forms of oppression that has disproportionately affected women of color.

Along similar lines, Isabella discussed transforming the controlling image of immigrant women of color as providers of cheap labor, relegated to low-paying, low-status, and dirty jobs. To her, while growing the business and increasing profit was a significant component of the job, it was not so much about her own ambitions of becoming wealthy, but it was more importantly about the survival of a business that could alter how the world views immigrant women of color. She asserted:

Yes of course we have to make money, we're always want to increase our sales. But we also want to make an impact. Amara had to push so hard in order for her to be respected, in order to be seen at a people level of excellence. She knows that had she been born in Canada and had a certain look, things would have been a lot easier for her. We want to tell the world that we are not only good for doing the grunt work of running a company. We can lead these companies. We can build these companies.

Isabella's assertion that the business of an immigrant woman of color is beyond making money is centrally about changing the make-up of the industry itself while also shifting the perception about immigrant women of color and making it about projecting a sense of empowerment that she, and other immigrant women of color workers in her position experience.

Along similar lines, Gemma, the Indigenous business owner, shared her understanding of profit. She stated:

Somebody asked me yesterday about my profit. Yes of course I make a profit but what I really mean profit is that I get to employ all these young women in the town. So, it's not that I'm trying to get rich through this business at all because I just want to build it more and more.

The analysis of women's narratives in this study reflects the emergence of a novel version of enterprise with an embedded social or political goal, named "hybrid organization" (Doherty et al. 2014; Hanson 2009) which bridges the gap between non-profit and for-profit organization. Hybridity allows

the coexistence of financial values from for-profit organization as well as social purposes from a non-profit one (Doherty et al. 2014; Hanson 2009). Gemma also acknowledged the importance of financial profit while defining success as providing job opportunities for Indigenous women in the community which can lead to contributing to the community's growth and well-being.

Thus, the analysis of interview narratives revealed that women of color seek to extend the idea of success in business to the creation of social value through contributing to community development and changing the controlling image of immigrant women of color as providers of cheap labor.

Changing socio-economic status and the landscape of the industry: Most of the women in this study consider their businesses as a space of action for themselves and other individuals in the community. Women deployed their entrepreneurial resources towards changing their socioeconomic status while also making larger societal changes at least in their own view. Gabriel's story explicates these emotions in nuanced ways. She discussed the experience of being an immigrant person of color entrepreneur in a white dominant industry. She shared:

It also makes us much prouder because if you look at the way our brand looks, even physically, you wouldn't expect that a team like this to be running a luxury green beauty brand and where we are is at gas town in Vancouver, and people look into the window and sometimes they're like what? An Indian woman, A Latino woman, A Filipina woman, A Black woman in a luxury store? Because we always got used to seeing people like that being nurse or cleaning ...We want to do what we can to we leave a mark... And if we are a drop

in the bucket to make a change in the beauty industry to change the narrative in the beauty industry, that's something that I'd be super proud of.

Similar to other participants, Gabriel was profoundly proud of being a part of a business that dispelled the controlling image of immigrant women only engaged in low-wage, what is often labelled low-skilled or unskilled work. Gabriel's pride flowed through in this statement affirming selfhood and community. This was particularly relevant in the context of her class and racialized status in Canada that minorized her like many immigrant women of color. Growing up in a working-class family, Gabriel saw her self-employment status in a predominantly white, middle-class industry as her way to subvert her class and racial marginalities. She noted:

I grew up a single mother family. I grew up in a very poor neighborhood and I saw the outcome of many families, you know people my age who grew up in that and continued that cycle poverty and addiction. I didn't want that for myself. I feel so proud working in this company and being able to break that cycle.

To be in the business of producing ethical skincare products on a larger scale gave her a sense of moral purpose both in terms of her business as well as by empowering other women of color by creating access for them to luxury, ethically produced, and high-quality skin products that had been exclusively available to white middle-class women. Being a part of this business thus became a conduit for immigrant women of color like her to pronounce their agency in affirming ways. Gabriel's use of the term "we leave a mark" is profound in this regard. She used the royal "we" to specifically create a bridge of agentic solidarity with other women of color in the industry. To her, her presence in the

industry is not only about her own growth, mobility and journey but about changing the racialized landscape of the industry as predominantly white. It is also about changing the dominant perception of immigrant women workers as low-wage care workers. What is specifically noteworthy is she alluded to two feminized low-wage work (cleaning and nursing) as attached to immigrant women. Both of these occupations are feminized and associated with care work. In many ways, it can be argued that the beauty industry and Gabriel's own work in the industry also falls in the purview of feminized labor (consulting and producing beauty products). Gabriel, however, creates distinction in her work not only because she owns the business but because she is creating products for other women of color and pushing the bounds of an industry that is globally corporatized and dominantly owned by white men. This makes her a changemaker in her own way and evokes her pride in her positionalities.

Along similar lines, Isabella discussed the impact of the company as a woman of color beauty company in changing racial dynamic in the industry. She stated:

To change the narrative. Especially in green beauty because green beauty hasn't been very inclusive. Often what you see content wise, marketing wise, they do not speak to Latina or Asian women or Mediterranean background. There is no intentional marketing toward people outside of Caucasian race that the green beauty is for you too. You [women of color] should care about what you put on your skin too.

Women in this study have deployed their entrepreneurial resources required for changing their socioeconomic status while also contributing to larger societal community. Hanson (2009), in her study of women's entrepreneurship in both Global North and South, shows how self-employment

provides women the opportunity to get involved in dismantling gender rules in a male dominated field. Isabella's statement indicates that women entrepreneurs by speaking to women of color's concerns and experiences seek to change the gendered racial landscape of the industry.

Thus, being multiply marginalized, immigrant women and women of color seek to not only change their socio-economic status through self-employment but also changing the landscape of the industry by allowing working-class women of color access to luxury and ethical beauty products as well as dispelling the controlling image of immigrant women only engaged in low-wage jobs.

Community empowerment: The analysis of the women's narrative indicate that women contribute or believed that they contributed to the empowerment of the community through providing jobs for the individual members of the community, mentoring and collaborating with other entrepreneurs in the community, setting examples for community members, and educating people about culture within and outside community.

Helping individual members of the community was mentioned by some of women as an indicator of their contribution to the community's betterment. Nadina, a first-generation Nigerian immigrant, launched her beauty brand a few years back along with her beauty salon. She intentionally hired immigrant women, specifically Black women. She admitted that providing jobs for new immigrants and advertising for other Black-owned local businesses were a big part of her agenda. Amal, a Syrian refugee woman who came to Canada a few years ago with her husband and her son, works for Nadina. She shared:

I was new in Canada and needed a job very badly. One day I was walking in the street and saw an ad for this beauty company. I went there and I had to go to a couple of workshops. Because I was very interested in doing makeup and learning new things, she decided to hire me. She helped me because I was really struggling. She supported me on my path of grief after leaving my country.

Amal's explanation that Nadina hired her because she was struggling as a new immigrant in Canada and this job allowed her to work through the trauma of her past is at its core about empowering and supporting the community. But this was possible only because Nadina set up a business with an explicit goal of uplifting other women of color. This account of Nadina's business practices is not merely a reflection of an entrepreneur whose livelihood is to run the business, but to uplift other immigrant women and their businesses. Her business ethics are entrenched in her consciousness of gender and racial justice that is a mark of intersectional consciousness of injustice that is based in lived experiences. While Nadina mostly employed other women of color, her non-Black immigrant women employees of color also saw how her business was transforming their lives.

Similarly, Gemma explained how she helped a community member in time of need. She shared:

This past year there was a terrible murder in the community and the sister of the man who died was my neighbor. She couldn't do her job anymore she just had so much grief that she couldn't go to work. I asked do you want to come and work with me? You can have your peace and you can work, and she loved it because she bought her iPad and her headphones,

and she just put on a movie and just put sticker. So, she didn't have to talk to anybody. She didn't have to think because it was just repetitive, and she only had to do this for a few weeks then she was able to go back and do her other job. But that, I knew I helped her, and I was able to support her on her path of grief.

Much like Nadina, Gemma deploys her resources as an entrepreneur to help a community member “on her path of grief.” She provided job opportunity for a community member as she was going through a traumatic experience of losing a family member. Giving her flexible tasks that she could complete on her own time, she was helping another Indigenous woman in the community to heal from the trauma of the past while at the same time make money.

In another example, Gabriel discussed the enabling effects of working in this enclave economy for employees. She shared:

What she's [Amara] doing, because she works so hard, is providing for my family, is providing for [name of another employee] and her family, is providing for Isabella and her family.

Banerjee (2013) in her study of South Asian low-waged immigrant women in ethnic market shows how working in ethnic enclave economy has enabling effects for South Asian women through providing them the opportunity to enhance financial well-being of the family and to negotiate relations of power within the household. Women, in this study, deploy their entrepreneurial resources to provide for their families, helping other immigrants and people of color to provide for their families, changing

the societal perception about immigrant women's work and redefining the notion of beauty and the beauty industry.

Beyond the project of supporting specific individuals in the community, women of color entrepreneurs engaged in the beauty business strive to help other women entrepreneurs through mentorship and marketing one another's products. Gabriel, for instance, discussed how mentoring other entrepreneurs and carrying their products is beneficial not only to individuals but also the whole community. She shared:

We also carry brands that are carried by women of color. They are all super top notch, excellent formulations. The coconut oil is owned by Filipino women. She's enabling native farmers to keep their old ways of farming. So, they don't have to travel to the city and the women don't have to be sex trafficked in the city. So, it's like a ripple effect. And that's what we want to tell people. When you purchase a bottle of coconut oil from us versus from Costco, this is what you're helping to do. You are making a change in the world. So, you are not powerless.

The above extract reveals women's concern with improving social and economic status of other women of color and immigrants. Gabriel considers the company's activities as contributors to large-scale community development and growth. To her, buying products from Filipina farmers can prevent Filipino women from migration and getting trapped into an informal economy such as sex trafficking. She added:

The resources were always given to us because we're sharing it. We're not holding it for ourselves. We want to grow and pull other women up with ourselves.

Thus, in their narratives, women highlight the importance of sharing resources and helping other community members grow as a part of their agenda. To Gabriel, sharing resources and giving back to the community, opens new opportunities for the company through increasing their access to other resources.

Similarly, Amara highlighted the importance of collaboration among women of color business owners and learning from each other. She shared:

There are enough resources for everyone to grow in this world, so we don't have aggressive competitive mindset here. We have a very collaborative mindset. Of course, there are healthy competitions among all brands, but we don't necessarily feel like if a brand is in the same niche as us and is succeeding is taking away from us. If anything, it will challenge us. How can we grow, how can we innovate and learn from this company? How could we learn from what they are doing?

These statements reveal the extent to which women of colors wittingly or unwittingly destabilize masculine organizational culture such as "aggressive competitiveness," espousing an alternative conception of organizational culture based on co-operation. Scholars have adopted the term "co-opetition" as a reference to an organizational culture shaped through the interplay between competition and cooperation (Gnyawali and Park 2009; Gnyawali et al. 2011). I argue that women of

color entrepreneurs in this study, put emphasis on the spirit of collaboration over aggressive competition as a way to enhance efficiency and growth.

Along similar lines, Lily, a Black woman and the COO of Diva Cosmetics, discussed the importance of community support and highlighting other Black businesses. She shared:

For us the community is everything and we know how hard it is for us to advertise and for us to get noticed. So, it was very important to us to highlight other Black businesses. It's just something natural to us. We met so many entrepreneurs who are doing amazing things that people don't know about. We were like ok we have this platform. Why not spend a little bit of time, and let other people know what's available out there? It was not really a thing you would think about. It just came very naturally.

Lily placed value in establishing strong ties with nascent Black entrepreneurs. Her concern about uplifting other Black entrepreneurs reflects the company's emphasis on collective empowerment and collaborative mindset over the personal interest and competitive organizational culture. She understands fully Black community's disadvantage in a gendered racialized industry where ethnic support network is brought to the fore as a coping strategy by minoritized groups to achieve a wider recognition while at the same time subverting the system of oppression and privilege. In all the talks that the company has hosted with other Black entrepreneurs, one of the primary themes is "tribe building," as participants often put it. For instance, in one of the talks with a Black entrepreneur, the guest discussed the importance of Black community support by highlighting the differences between Afrocentric and Eurocentric worldviews. He stated:

The Eurocentric worldview is centered on I. I did this, I got promotion, I.I.I. Our worldview, Afrocentric and Indigenous worldview, is centered on we. ... Because we share each other's joy and each other's pain. That's how we are wired as a community. (Diva Cosmetics)

Here, it is the importance of Afrocentric world view that is highlighted and represented as an affirmation of cultural belonging and intergroup commonness. According to the guest, the difference between Black community and white people pertains upon their opposing worldviews. According to the above narrative, while Black people's worldview is based upon collectivism, revolving around "we" and community development, the Eurocentric worldview is rooted in individualism and personal benefit. Previous research has characterized a sense of belonging and collectivistic worldview as important elements of identity among Black individuals (Carson 2009; Komarraju and Cokley 2008; Hunter et al. 2019). Similarly, the above narrative spotlights collectivism and community-centered development as significant components of Black identity.

Along similar lines, Amal a Syrian woman working for a Black woman-owned beauty shop hinted at ethnic solidarity network among Black communities. She shared:

They support each other so much. Sometimes a customer comes, and Nadina (the owner of the company) asks me to put other Black-owned makeup brands on them. And I ask her why? The quality of your products is better. My community is not like that at all. These people support each other like members of tribes.

Amal drew analogy between community and “tribe” as a reference to the strength of racial solidarity among Black entrepreneurs. Racialized network and establishing ties with co-racial peers with entrepreneurial experiences is a strategy that allow minoritized entrepreneurs to offset the barriers they may encounter in accessing the necessary resources to build a business (Wingfield and Taylor 2016; Jones 2017). Women’s accounts suggest that strengthening gender and/or racial solidarity was used by immigrant women and women of color entrepreneurs as a strategy to mitigate socio-economic inequalities that have disproportionately affected their lives across gender and class.

The importance of mentorship and co-racial networking remained an influential theme in other narratives. In one of the live talks organized by the company Diva Cosmetics, Mia, the COO of the company discussed the importance of collaboration and passing on the knowledge to other Black entrepreneurs. The guest placed value on mentoring nascent Black entrepreneurs and establishing ties with other Black women in a business context. He shared:

There are so many people I talk to, and I believe knowledge is useful until you can pass it on, until you can use it to empower somebody else. Sometimes people get selfish and are like I don’t want to help this people because they’re going to go further than me. The next generation is supposed to go further you. That’s supposed to happen. [...] the more people you can help to pass you, that’s what creates legacy. Legacy is not just about oh I’ve created this and this, the value of leadership is how many leaders have you created.

The language of “passing knowledge on” and “creating a legacy”, in my view, are indications of a commitment to create social value beyond individual success and to alter the world

around oneself by knowledge-sharing and mentoring other community members. Fine (2009) discusses moral leadership based on which success is defined in terms of being of service to the community and the larger society. Indeed, the women entrepreneurs that I spoke to for this aspect of my study did not appear to consider individual profit as success unless it helped the growth of the larger society, revealing their moral approach to leadership.

Contribution to community development through mentorship was also highlighted by white women working in *Mighty Beauty*. Katya, for instance, discussed mentoring women-led business owners as the core elements of the company's entrepreneurial activities. She shared:

Supporting women led businesses is a big part of the company's drive. There is a large disparity in the industry between male-owned businesses and women owned ones. So, the company wants to support women entrepreneurs. So, it's bringing female entrepreneurs like higher up to meet that same level and exceed as possible. Almost all of the brands are run by women. It's a little bit of partnership. We provide mentorship in how they build their line, enhance their lines, share their products and stuff like that. Some of them have super small companies. So, there's one company that has one product only. It's an incredible product. When they come to us, we're like ok we'll help you do some of your advertising. These are the way your photos should look like when you do it. Packaging would be better if you do this. So, the company supports them that way. It's like growing both together.

The above narrative not only reflects the employees' awareness of the gender disparity in the industry, but also the way women entrepreneurs and their employees grapple with gendered inequality

through negotiating for other women entrepreneurs in the beauty industry to gain visibility and recognition. Much like Jones' (2017) study on entrepreneurial practices among Black people, the above narratives show that resources are shared within the community to pave the way for community development and growth. Indeed, women feel responsible and concurrently empowered to make choices that uplift other women and improve the community's well-being.

Thus, entrepreneurship is resignified and constructed not as a mere pathway to financial success, but possibly more as a response to the existing systemic exclusion (Banerjee, 2019). In my study too, I show how establishing gendered racialized network and mentoring relationships with co-racial women peers were used as a strategy to help participants overturn women of colors' invisibility in entrepreneurship context.

Apart from direct contribution to gender/racial empowerment of the community through mentorship and providing job opportunities for community members, the work of the women had a subtle impact of inspiring other women of color. Olivia, for instance, a Black woman who works in a Black-owned company, shared how Black business owners were inspirational for the community. She shared:

When people see that something is run by Black women, it kind of inspires them and make them think 'ok maybe that idea that I had, I can do it because people I see are doing the exact same thing.'

Considering themselves as inspirational to other women in their community, immigrant women and women of color entrepreneurs trust that they typify agentic subjectivities who have pushed the boundaries associated with their gender, and racial status. Along similar lines, Amara shared:

For some, I am a young woman of color running a natural skincare brand and they are inspired to see us be part of the green beauty community. We get a lot of feedback from women of all different places, Africa, Latin America, Asia. They comment all the time that how inspiring our company is to them. How inspiring I am is because I'm doing something that they thought was impossible, something that culture said it's impossible.

I argue that self-employment became women's way of resisting the intersectional oppressive identities that relegated them to the realm of low-wage, occupationally immobile work. The women constructed the identity of the new inspirational, immigrant women and women of color entrepreneurs who bring hope to and set an example for their community members.

The analysis of the interview data revealed another core component of community empowerment which is the deployment of entrepreneurial resources to educate people within and outside the community about issues of inequality that have disproportionately impacted minoritized groups and to resuscitate and resurrect the values of cultural identity. Gemma, an Indigenous entrepreneur, discussed the responsibility she bears as an indigenous person to raise awareness about Indigenous culture and language. She shared:

Supporting people's learning is important. I also feel like that I have a role, a responsibility, to educate non-Indigenous people and people tell me that a lot. That's why I think my social media following has grown, like on Instagram and Facebook. People appreciate when I share information about real issues. Also, when I have young people working with me, I hope I can inspire them to continue to learn our culture, learn our language.

Gemma places value on educating non-Indigenous people as a core component of her business. Furthermore, the statement of "People appreciate when I share information about real issues" is indicative of clients' expectation of a woman of color business owner that goes beyond manufacturing beauty products. There is an expectation that women of color entrepreneurs draw on their racial (or ethnic) and gender identities to build a community-engaged business, thereby voicing the community's needs and concerns. Gemma's entrepreneurial practices demonstrate her continuing commitment to raising awareness of pressing social issues such as climate change within the community. She added:

As much as we can talk about land defenders and water protectors, I have also seen people waste a lot too. Especially with colonization and with how the economy has changed I think there's been a shift away from what matters, our values and land. So now I'm trying to reconnect and remind people of their traditional roles. And that has been so lost, and we see that of course not just in disconnection from the land but also in addiction, mental health and all of these different things and how broken people can be.

Gemma is concerned about how large-scale economic changes as well as colonization have led to the Indigenous community's forced disconnection from the land and culture. Through re-

educating the community and reminding people of the cultural values of protecting the environment, lost or suppressed through colonization and colonizing forces, she is striving to uplift the community and contribute to its organic well-being.

In a different example, Lily, discussed the company's commitment to educate Black women about colonial beauty ideals and push against the hegemonic standards that have historically stigmatized Black woman's body. Lily mentioned:

Empowerment is like oh there is actually something out there that fits me. People are being told oh it's going to be very hard for you to find that works for you so when they find that one it's that Wow and we really noticed that once one person finds it, they feel so excited about it and they're telling other people. We've worked with people who when they came into the store, they don't wear makeup at all. And right now, if you see them. They're trying new colors. They're like you guys have really given me the confidence to wear makeup. And now that I know I can wear makeup, I'm going to keep trying new things. I'm going to step out of my comfort zone. That's one thing I noticed a lot is that empowerment of people who can step out of your comfort zone.

The above extract shows that being a part of these small businesses is much more than a pathway to individual empowerment and financial stability. The company has created a space wherein Black women push against the exclusion of its Black customers and subvert racialized gendered violence against Black women through enabling them to simultaneously adapt their bodies to regimes of beauty and overturn the hegemonic Eurocentric norms. The narrative reflects the way business owners

in this study grapple with the Eurocentric beauty norms and contribute to empowerment of customers through making them more at home in their own bodies. For women of color, these ways self-employment became the tool of disrupting the experiences of gendered racial exclusion in the cosmetic industry, which wittingly or unwittingly can affect community members through “helping them feeling confident with who they are and being comfortable in their own skin” as Lily put it.

For Gabriel, community empowerment is about educating customers of all races to help them make more informed choices. She shared:

Unfortunately, the majority of women who suffer from cancer and hormonal imbalances and infertility and all of these things happened to be women of color. We want to educate people. We want to educate all cultures, all races. We understand that our company is a luxury product and not everybody can afford the products. But what we can do is to educate people to make the right choices so that even when you do not shop with us, you can at least find something that is suitable to your budget that will address your skincare needs. This way you feel more empowered to make more informed choices.

Gabriel is concerned about racial gendered disparities faced by women of color with cancer that can be related to applying toxic beauty products. The statement of “educating people to make the right choices even if they do not shop with us,” indicates that she is not merely motivated by financial needs. I observed in the course of my interviews that to be in the business of producing ethical skincare products on a larger scale gave these women a sense of moral purpose in terms of providing women of

color information about ethically produced, and high-quality skin products that had been, according to Gabriel, so far exclusively available to white middle-class women.

Thus, educating the minoritized community about racial, gendered discrimination that Black women and women of color are exposed to is, in my view, one of the indicators of the participants' contribution to the community betterment and creation of social values.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

In this dissertation, using qualitative methods, I explored the work experiences of low paid women workers and the organizational dynamics in white institutions compared with women of color entrepreneurial companies within the service sector.

The contributions of my findings in this dissertation could be understood along a few intertwined dimensions. One is the intersectional analysis of gender and sexuality in my analysis of work experiences of gay men and straight women in a gendered organization and the traditionally hetero-feminized occupation of selling cosmetic products. The second is engaging in critical epistemologies to reframe the marginalized positionality of immigrant women of color as empowering and enabling within an occupational context. The third dimension is engaging in critical whiteness theories as well as critical diversity management theories to explore both corporate and small companies run by women of color engagement with the dominant discourse of diversity within the context of aesthetic capitalism.

Based on my analysis in this dissertation, I have a few main findings. In my first empirical chapter, one of my main findings was the governance and reconstruction of employees' personhood as a part of a stern tailored regimentation in the service economy. I illustrated how creating a dramaturgical scenario in the workplace as a means to lure customers can be a tactic of exercising power on women workers from a distance. The neoliberal discourses of "customer care" as well as "self-care" offer ideological tools for the service industry to discipline the bodies of women in the workplace and

naturalizes a “practically limitless exploitation” (Böhme 2003:81) of employees. I attempted to bring sexualities and class difference to the same analytical level as gender to show how organizations mobilize employees’ sexual and class identities to create a happy experience for heterofeminine women customers to whom the company’s products cater. Focusing on women’s narratives about their men colleagues, I argued on the embedded heteronormativity within the organizational culture. I showed how in this feminized, female dominated organization, gay men can benefit from gender-based privilege in the cosmetic industry with a feminized and discursively constructed image of men as creative and autonomous artists and/or leaders. However, I also pointed out that they need to perform non-normative gender identity to repair the rupture to gender ideology ignited by the presence of masculine bodies “as sexual predators” in a supposedly sex neutral woman-only space.

In line with Warhurst (2016) in his study on the impact of aesthetic rules an economy on working-class employees within the service economy, I found how aesthetic economy naturalizes hierarchy between women from different social classes with different immigration status. Based on this hierarchy, new immigrants with “aural aesthetic deficits” who not yet assimilated properly into the service culture of “customers as mythical kings” are assigned to the backroom and non-interactive positions.

My second main finding, based on the second and third empirical chapters of this study, was how gendering and racialization could be enabling and transformative. I showed how women turn their embodied markers of difference into a subversive tool and became engaged in boundary making through turning their racial and ethnic identities into an added value in a white capitalist society. I showed how

women entrepreneurs in this study turn their marginalized positionalities into a wealth to transform and speak back to the system of oppression.

I argued that immigrant women, mostly coming from working-class backgrounds, oscillate between racial and class identity as a strategy to assimilate in the white dominated green industry and at the same time signal their racial identity to their racial/ethnic communities. On the other hand, Black Canadian and Indigenous women rearticulated their racial identities and asserted their ethnic and racial difference to the white other through recounting the stories of oppression and valorizing their ethnic and racial markers of difference. I attempted to show in these two chapters how the business of beauty activates intersecting axes of identities which can have, simultaneously, oppressive and enabling effects. In defining their Black and racialized womanhood within white supremacist patriarchy, women have harnessed their intersectional identities based on gender, race, and ethnicity and shared stories of marginality and/or transnational life trajectory as a means for contesting or subverting their potential or supposed erasure. My analysis of women's narratives also showed that creating spaces to dialogue about race and gender inequalities, wherein women of color could share their lived experiences of oppression, has been an integral component of women's entrepreneurial efforts towards increasing inclusivity and fostering awareness of discrimination in larger social context. Sharing survival stories was deployed not merely as a means to connect with the audiences but also foster awareness of discrimination in larger social context.

Further, I showed how these women's leadership ethics resignify and revisit masculine organizational culture through changing the matrix of success, mentoring co-ethnics, and intentional political act of educating community members about racism, injustice, and discrimination. Drawing

upon narratives of white women and women of color business owners, I showed how they turn their socially ascribed feminized qualities central to their professional identities. Women of color that I spoke to, however, defined their businesses beyond individual ambition and delineated the idea of success as contribution to their communities and changing the landscape of the beauty industry. The most common contributions cited by women of color were adopting a new vision of success, providing employment opportunities for other women in the community, changing the landscape of the industry, advertising for other woman of color owned businesses, mentorship and role modeling, and enhancing awareness of racial and gender discrimination within and outside the community.

Another main finding based on chapter seven is the commodification and self-exoticization under the neoliberal project of multiculturalism. I showed how women employees in both sectors of the industry are engaged in the discourse of diversity through their bodies as a result of the industry's rush towards increasing diversity and inclusivity. Focusing on giant retailers, I argued that company initiatives towards increasing the representation of women of color within the workforce was a way to find a certain diversity legitimacy, so to speak, and, at the same time, to maximize the profits. I also argued how the gendered and racialized bodies of women of color turn into an added (symbolic) value brought in a predominantly white dominant and feminized institution. I also tried to show how diversity management strategies such as employee-customer demographics matching strategy imposed by the company from one side and customers' expectations from the other side can reinforce the binary paradigms of white/ non-white, normative white woman's body/ exotic woman of color in the context of interactive service work. Employees' diversity work take shape under institutional diversity policies as well as customers' understanding of the exotic racialized and gendered other. Focusing on the experiences of microaggression among Black and Muslim women employees, I have tried to argue that

the cultural whiteness has remained intact and is embedded in the organizational culture and structure. Building on the case of women of color entrepreneurs, I have attempted to provide an understanding of how diversity policies are redone and reinforced as a tactic for economic survival within this capitalist competitive economy but also repoliticized as a way of empowering their marginal positions. While self-commodification is a strategy that women entrepreneurs use to derive symbolic value from their ethnic and cultural difference in a market built upon racial commodification, it also has the enabling effect of allowing these women to feel connected with their ethnic culture and community.

Engaging in intersectional feminist scholarship, in this study, the analysis of the interview data suggested that working in the beauty industry has created a deadlock for marginalized women of color: the very mechanisms of gendering and racialization that applied to subordinate and marginalize these women could be served at the same time as tools for subjectivity, resistance, and subversion. The business enterprise based on manufacturing and/or selling cosmetic and beauty products have created or can potentially create empowering spaces for these women, who have historically held a paradoxical relationship with mainstream beauty ideals, to heal from the deep wounds inflicted on them due to intersecting challenges of racism, sexism, and classism. Exploring those spaces cast light on the ways through which women of color have perceived and created social, political, as well as economic change within and beyond their communities.

Dismantling gendered racialized organization

In this study, I provided a comparison of organizational culture in white institutions and women of color organizations. In my analysis of women's work experiences in chain cosmetic stores, I showed how those stores are not only feminized but also racialized and classed organizations. The organizational context of this feminized and immigrant-dominated occupation created different form(s) of gender, racial, and class-based inequality. Drawing upon the narratives of women in giant retailers, I showed that women of color are overrepresented as sales representatives on the sales floor and underrepresented in higher positions. Professional makeup artistry positions, on the other hand, are filled by gay men in the industry in alignment with the glass escalator theory (Williams 1992, 2013; Wingfield 2009). The expectation of men as makeup artists by both clients and co-workers, channels them upward into the higher-status, higher-paying positions. I also discussed how rigid display rules in the workplace primarily applied to women employees. While women reproduced conventional gendered norms with their makeovers and dress codes, which additionally force them to invest more on their appearance, as well as feminine-coded demeanor, men could benefit from normative gender rules which naturalizes aesthetic labor as a component of femininity, allowing them to benefit from less costly and laborious representation rules. These narratives provided example of gender inequality embedded within the organization or an example of what Acker calls the "gendered organization" (1990, 1992).

I do not argue that the entrepreneurial companies and chain retailers are similar in terms of organizational hierarchy and structure. Nevertheless, providing a contrasting example of experiences of (in)equity, (anti) racism, diversity and inclusion that women of color undergo in pre-dominantly white institutions versus women-of-color owned businesses can create an image of how an anti-racist and inclusive organizational culture can look like. Acker's (1990, 1992) theory of gendered organization and inequality regimes (2006b) gave birth to a wealth of scholarship on the perpetuation of gender

inequalities in workplaces through organizational policies, structures, processes, and everyday practices. Her articulation of organizations as inherently gendered illustrates how “advantage and disadvantage, exploitation and control, action and emotion, meaning and identity are patterned through and in terms of a distinction between male and female, masculine and feminine.” (Acker 1990: 146)

Women’s ways of doing business, in this study, such as establishing close relationship with employees, valuing feedback provided by employees, creating a supportive and safe work environment, and power-sharing, doing constant self-education as managers about the employees’ personalities, vulnerabilities, and their strengths, as well as flexible dress code policies are elements that distinguish the current woman-run workplace. Feminist leadership ethics is not only centered around the notion of care but also proclaim openness to differences (Pullen and Vachhani 2020) rather than limiting and flattening them through standardization. Women entrepreneurs’ leadership practices showed how they steered leadership away from its historical connotation which equated it with masculinized qualities to a practice of caring for employees while allowing them to learn from their mistakes and to be emotionally genuine. I argued how valuing employee feedback and creating a working environment that welcomes vulnerabilities and imperfections can allow employees to feel valued and empowered. These findings can provide an entry into the discussion about if and how women and women of color can undo regimes of inequality when they are in positions of power. In her epistemological study on gendered organization theories, Britton (2000) alluded to the study of conditions under which gender can be undone as crucial part of undoing the regimes of inequality. I argue in this study that women of colors’ access to the positions of power from which they are often excluded, can challenge gendered and racialized way of thinking, doing business, and leadership. My interviewees who are women of color have created a “community of dissent”, as Chandra Mohanty (2010) argues for, to push back racist and sexist structures

of power and provided them a channel to make their voice heard. I acknowledge that in a chain bureaucratic organization, even gaining access to the higher-up positions for these women is not equivalent to having the power to transform the systemic sexism and racism in the workplace. I maintain, however, that women's stories of their leadership styles can open the doors to the possibility of arguing for women of color as the "agents of change" (Cohen and Huffman 2007) when in decision-making positions. The examples of women of color small businesses in this study can serve as guidelines for the overall direction of change and transformation in organizations and broader organizational policies and structures.

Following are some recommendations to increase equity and inclusion that can undo organizations as gendered and racialized:

1. At an interpersonal and interactive level, forging empathy and emotional connection into the organizational culture might be able to increase the sense of belonging among employees. Empathy, often dismissed as a feminine trait in organizations defined by masculine norms, can forge connections between different social worlds. Storytelling and conversations can be used as an important tool to create that connection.
2. Forging mentorship as an empowering relationship between managers/leaders and employees into the organizational culture may not only help both parties give and receive critical feedback, but also minimize the oppressive aspects of codified organizational policies and behavior.

3. My analysis of the interview narratives shows that women of color, at the intersection of multiple axes of oppression, can face different forms of microaggressions in the workplace. Increasing their awareness and mindfulness about different forms of microaggression can prevent the women from seeing the barriers and the challenges they face as their personal failings.
4. Microaggression can negatively impact employees' lives at work and even outside of it. Designing effective and evidence-based tools to diagnose systemic racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination can increase the efficacy of diversity and inclusion programs. These tools need to unveil how bias infiltrates organizational processes and structures including hiring, promotion, policies of behavior and dress code.
5. As a part of diagnosing bias, organizational leaders and managers need to identify the patterns that can indicate racial or gendered discrimination. This could be achieved by consistent monitoring of the representation of diversity at different levels, hiring and promotions, and turnover by demographic characteristics of employees across hierarches, as well as mechanisms of regular interaction with employees to understand their perceptions of managerial feedback in terms of quality, frequency, and clarity.
6. Tools and programs need to also be introduced to increase awareness among leaders that create an understanding of how bias can unintentionally have an impact on their decision making.

I also argue that beauty service work could be a subcategory of care work as it entails emotional and body labor which are an indispensable part of the work and ethics of care. Placing beauty service work as a subcategory of care work could give this job and the low paid workers more visibility. The act of beautifying a customer's hair by hairstylist or adorning the customer's face by a beautician involves not just skill but various forms of care — from management of feelings to working on self-restraint to condone customers' anger and violence. I showed how participants drew on similarities between specialized care work occupations such as nursing or counselling to highlight the component of physical and emotional labor that beautifying a customer's body requires, including listening to them, understanding their needs and empathizing with them.

Through this dissertation, I advance the sociological scholarship in the area of gender, racialization, and intersectional embodiment by showing the gendered, racialized, and classed nature of selling cosmetic and beauty products and its oppressive as well as enabling consequences for both women employees and women entrepreneurs. However, the primary strength of this research lies in giving voice to my participants whose work activate and at the same time subvert intersectional systems of inequality. These voices demand more visibility of the subversive work that some of these women do to enrich racialized communities and also to change the organizational policies and discriminatory workplace culture that disadvantage women and women of color in the service industry.

Limitation of the Study and Suggestions for Future Research

Much like any other research, there are certainly gaps within this study that can be addressed in future research. The study of cosmetic stores and the discussion about gay men employees/makeup artists could possibly serve as a theoretical tool that complement the glass escalator literature by highlighting the mechanisms that brings gay men's artistic skills into spotlight. However, it would be worthwhile exploring the impact of glass escalator for racialized men in the retail sector of the industry. A closer attention to race and racial positions of gay men may provide additional insight on how the intersection of race and gender combine to frame the work experiences of racialized men, who are a sexual minority, in the culturally feminized field of work.

Another gap concerns the choice of method. I draw upon qualitative in-depth interviews to gain deeper understanding the everyday working lives of employees that both form and are formed by organizational cultures and processes. It would be worthwhile conduct participant observation in the store settings to get involved in the day-to-day or routine activities of employees and the daily interactions between employees and customers. Participant observation can provide an opportunity for the researcher to build stronger rapport with participants and simultaneously offer a more nuanced analysis of organizational processes that shape employees' working lives.

Another interesting site of inquiry would be conducting a comparative and contrastive analysis of working women in other beauty/cosmetic departments. Comparing Sephora as an upscale beauty store with other beauty departments in discount mass market retailer such as Walmart and a luxury retailer such as the Fifth Saks can provide three different settings based on customers that the companies are catering to, which accordingly can have an impact on the employees' characteristics based on gender, race, class, and immigration status.

Another gap concerns geographically dispersed research participants. As mentioned in the methodology chapter, I recruited my participants from various cities in Canada. While offering a comparison of employees' experiences based on various geographical locations is beyond the scope of this study, it would be worthwhile to provide a nuanced analysis of how the workplace culture varies based on the size of the city, the culture of that city, and its economic/political developments.

Concluding remarks

This dissertation used the feminized work of selling beauty products as the focus to provide windows onto the intricacies of working within gender segregated and feminized spaces within which racial boundaries and the social meanings of gender and racial identities are continually reconstituted in response to changing social structures and political projects. The comparison between the two cases, namely the chain store and the local beauty stores, offered different accounts of the beauty work shaped by the logics of racial capitalism and post-racial neoliberal politics. This political/economic conjuncture is characterized by commodifying race and converting it into a capital while reproducing whiteness through new modes of racial violence. This research is important because it has demonstrated that what is considered as gendered work can be shaped by a diverse set of political and economic interests that create division of labor across race and class lines.

The case studies of this research offered conflicting images of the beauty work. The first case was about cosmetic stores creating gendered self-disciplining consumer employees who are trained to sell out gendered products under stern tailored regimentation while putting an economic value on their differences. The second case was about women entrepreneurs who also use the same logic of racial

capitalism to build beauty businesses through which they simultaneously commodify themselves while engaging in antiracist activism.

The scholarship on activism among beauty business owners is focused on the significance of beauty salons among Black communities. The case of self-employed women of diverse background shows that while anti-racist activism among diverse communities of color is embedded within and shaped by the current multicultural rift, it has disrupted the Black/white dichotomy within the North American beauty industry. In addition, the role of retail sector of the beauty industry in community building is often downplayed due to a rigidly controlled and tailored work environment in the retail sector of the service economy. The study of small beauty stores and women business owners and their community building efforts can contribute to the literature on women's activism in the beauty industry.

While the beauty industry as a field wherein gendering and racialization occur is well documented, there is also no systemic study of various sectors within this industry. Thus, a comparative study of gendered and racialized systems of beauty work appears to be important. Such study highlights how contradictory image of aesthetic labor and beauty service work across organizations can relate to more fundamental questions about various facets of capitalism. Studying the business of beauty across different and contradictory sectors, namely mainstream chain store versus entrepreneurial companies, and the political and economic logic that shapes the workplace culture, help understand the interconnectedness of micro-level practices and macro-level structures and processes. I hope that this research sheds new light on the debates over multiple relationships between gendered racialized bodies and workplace settings. My work further illuminates how diversity tropes reinforce materially unequal conditions of work for women of color at work in feminized working conditions while also propelling a

genre of businesses (local beauty businesses owned by women and women of color) that have the potential to transform the politics and the economy of retail beauty industry.

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Appendix A: CERTIFICATION OF INSTITUTIONAL ETHICS REVIEW

Ethics ID: REB20-1117

Principal Investigator: Pallavi Banerjee

Co-Investigator(s):

Student Co-Investigator(s): Sepideh Borzoo

Study Title: Feminization of beauty work: Embodied and emotional labour of service workers in cosmetic stores

Sponsor:

Effective: 23-Sep-2020 **Expires:** 22-Sep-2021

Restrictions:

This Certification is subject to the following conditions:

1. Approval is granted only for the research and purposes described in the application.
2. Any modification to the approved research must be submitted to the CFREB for approval.
3. An annual application for renewal of ethics certification must be submitted and approved by the above expiry date.
4. A closure request must be sent to the CFREB when the research is complete or terminated.

Approval by the REB does not necessarily constitute authorization to initiate the conduct of this research. The Principal Investigator is responsible for ensuring required approvals from other involved organizations (e.g., Alberta Health Services, community organizations, school boards) are obtained.

Approved By:

Date:

Adam McCrimmon, Ph.D., Vice Chair , CFREB

23-Sep-2020

Appendix B: Interview guide

Interview questions (This is in a separate sheet that participants fill)

1. Demographic information:

- a. Your name
- b. Your phone number/email address
- c. Your age
- d. Your gender
- e. Your marital status
- f. Your income
- g. Your level of education
- h. Your ethnicity
- i. (If not Canadian) how long have you been in Canada for?
- j. How long you've been working in this organization for?

Emotion/aesthetic work

1. How did you get this job?
2. What do you think made you eligible for this job?
3. Did you need to have any license or certificate?
4. How do you prepare to go to work?
5. Do you need to wear any uniform? Or do any makeup?
6. Tell me about your daily work/ the tasks that you need to do every day at work? your job responsibilities?
 - a) How these tasks have changed during lock down and pandemic?
 - b) How pandemic has changed the interaction with clients?
 - c) How have you adapted these changes?
7. As a beauty advisor, what advice do you give people on products?
8. Can you tell me how you learned about this?
9. Can you remember any challenges you faced learning these?
10. Tell me about your experience of working with customers.
11. Can you think of a time or times that you had a positive experience with clients?
12. Can you think of a time/times that you had negative experience with clients?
13. Have you ever felt like putting on an act to make customer feel appreciated? Can you think of a specific time?
14. Since you've been in this company, have you had any men or non-straight colleagues doing the same job?
15. Why in your opinion more women than are hired in your department?
16. On a daily basis, how many men come to your store?
17. How about non-straight identified people?
18. In your opinion, how comfortable men or non-straight identified people may feel like coming to your store?
19. As an immigrant (or non-white) Do you think you needed to make any extra effort to adjust with what the company expected you to look like and behave? Build up for the questions about race. Or as an immigrant, what part of those requirements do you find more challenging?

- a) Have you ever, in any circumstances, felt like you need to cover or change your racial identity? (like the way you need to talk, do make up, dress code, expression of feelings, interaction with coworkers or clients) (if yes, can you give me examples of those situations and how that make you feel) how many of your coworkers are from your ethnicity? Give them an anecdote about yourself.

The organization

1. What are the gender and race of your colleagues?
2. How about your managers?
3. When you look at the design and the decoration in your store,
4. How do you think about working in an environment that are mostly surrounded by women as either as coworkers or clients? How comfortable do you feel?

Job satisfaction

1. How do you like working here?
2. What are the best and worst things about your job?
3. How do you see your future career in this organization? do you see yourself staying in this organization/occupation?
4. Have you seen many of your colleagues get fired or laid off? Like during pandemic
5. How does that make you feel?
6. How do you think you survived this period?
7. In your opinion, what does it take for you to reach management positions? How long do you think you need to work here to go up the ladder?
8. What are different opportunities that being in this job provides you?
9. Does it provide you the chance to network with new companies and self- promote?
10. a. to what extent do you think your gender and your ethnicity will affect that?

Appendix C: Consent form

Name of Researcher, Faculty, Department, Telephone & Email:

Sepideh Borzoo
Faculty of Social Sciences
Department of Sociology
sepideh.borzoo@ucalgary.ca

(403) 220-3214

Supervisor:

Dr. Pallavi Banerjee, Department of Sociology

Title:

Feminization of beauty work: Embodied and emotional labour of service workers in cosmetic store

This consent form, a copy of which has been given to you, is only part of the process of informed consent. If you want more details about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

The University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board has approved this research study.

Participation is completely voluntary and all your identifying information will be removed at the time of transcription. Participants and persons mentioned in the interviews will have their names replaced by a pseudonym and their relation to the participant.

Purpose of the Study

This research is being conducted for my Ph.D. thesis. The focus of this research project is the work experience of those working in cosmetics/ beauty stores in Canada. My goal is to identify the challenges and difficulties of working in cosmetic store, the interaction with clients, the skills required for this job, their work routine, job satisfaction, their work/life balance, and their future career plan. I hope to highlight the challenges experienced by those working in beauty industry so we can improve working condition for women working in the beauty industry.

What Will I Be Asked To Do?

You will be asked to answer questions from an interview schedule regarding your experience of interacting with clients, challenges and difficulties of the job, your everyday tasks at work, the required skills, work/life balance, job satisfaction/dissatisfaction, how pandemic has changed their interactions with clients and the strategies they need to use to adapt these changes. The interview will last between 45 minutes and 90 minutes. I will ask for permission to record the interviews through audiotape so that information shared is accurately received. Participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you may refuse to participate and decline to answer any and all questions, and you may withdraw from the study at any time. There will also be a token of my immense appreciation involved for the participants in the interviews.

I would also like to observe the work that goes on in beauty store/department. I will observe the store layout, the interaction between employees and customers, and the daily tasks performed by employees as field notes. I am willing to volunteer in the stores and help employees with customer service and their daily tasks at workplace. In transcriptions, the names will be anonymized to guarantee confidentiality. I will be taking handwritten fieldnotes for the observations which will be later transcribed for

documentation purposes. These transcriptions will be preserved in an encrypted folder with passcode and also in a computer with a password that no one except the researcher and the principal investigator has access to. I won't be noting any observations for anyone under the age of 18 and I will only be observing with the consent of those I am observing.

What Type of Personal Information Will Be Collected?

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to provide your name, age, gender, ethnicity, educational level, and email or phone number. Your name, and any identifying information will be coded and you will not be identifiable. If you agree to be audio recorded only the researcher and her supervisor will have access to the recordings, and the recordings will never be shared with anyone in public. The device that I use to record the interviews with participants will have a passcode that no one except me and my supervisor will have access to that. These audio- recording of the interviews and the transcription of the interviews will also be kept in an encrypted file with a passcode. If you do not agree to be audio recorded, the researcher will take handwritten notes of the interviews, which she will then transcribe later for record keeping. The transcription files will only be accessed by the researcher and her supervisor and these will never be shared with anyone else.

You will be asked for permission so that the researcher can maintain a master list containing your number, pseudonym, name, and contact information. This master list is necessary because in case you decided to withdraw your data from the study, I will need the master list to link your real name to your pseudonym and be able to identify them. The master list will be destroyed one year after the last participant's interview.

“There are several options for you to consider if you decide to take part in this research. You can choose all, some, or none of them. Please review each of these options and choose Yes or No:”

I grant permission to be audio-taped: Yes: ___ No: ___

I grant permission to be video-taped: Yes: ___ No: ___

I grant permission to be observed in my workplace
___ No: ___

Yes:

I grant permission to have my company's name used: Yes: ___ No: ___

I wish to remain anonymous: Yes: ___ No: ___

I wish to remain anonymous, but you may refer to me by a pseudonym: Yes: ___ No: ___

The pseudonym I choose for myself is:

Would you like to receive a summary of the study's results? Yes: ___ No: ___

If yes, please provide your contact information (e-mail address, or phone number)”

Are you interested in being contacted about a follow-up interview, with the understanding that you can always decline the request? Yes:
___ No: ___

Are there Risks or Benefits if I Participate?

The risks associated with this study relate to potential, but minimal risks for emotional stress, as participants will be asked to recapture the moments that they felt certain difficulties in their job and their interactions with the clients. Also participants might feel uncomfortable talking about their job since if the information reveals they might put their jobs in jeopardy. However, it is anticipated that these risks will be minimal since participants will decide what aspects of their experience they wish to speak about. This study by definition will only involve participants who are willing to talk about this experience. To manage the possibility of this minimal risk, the researcher will ensure that participants know they can withdraw from the study at any time as is stated in the informed consent form, as well as take a break whenever it is deemed necessary. Additionally, at the end of each interview, participants will be verbally debriefed by the researcher. Resources will be provided to each participant, which includes places where the participant can seek out help if they choose to, such as through the counseling services that are offered by the University of Calgary or Catholic Family Services – Affordable counselling: (403) 233-2360, Immigrant Services Calgary- Mosaic Multicultural Counselling Program: (403) 444-1508, Distress Centre Calgary – 24-hour crisis support: (403) 266-4357, Eastside Family Centre – Wood’s Homes – walk-in, single-session counselling: (403) 299-9696.

There are no anticipated direct benefits of participating in this study, although participants may gain increased awareness or sense of validation by sharing their experiences. This study attempts to reveal the inequalities in multilayers of organizations. It is hoped that in future working conditions for care workers and service workers will be improved.

What Happens to the Information I Provide?

The information collected will only be available to the researcher and to the advisor, and will be kept safe under lock and key. Your name and email will be changed to avoid identification; your age, gender, level of education, and ethnicity will be kept the same. The information you provide during the interview will be recorded but will not be able to be traced back to you.

If you wish to interrupt the interview, the information you have shared will be destroyed. No one except the researcher and the supervisor will be allowed to see or hear any of the answers to the interview schedule or the interview tape. There are no names on the interview schedule. The recordings of the interviews are kept in a locked cabinet only accessible by the researcher and her supervisor. The data containing pseudonyms of participants will be stored in a secure encrypted hard drive in the faculty supervisor’s office.

Audio files will be encrypted and password-protected and kept on a secure laptop computer. During this study, the raw data will remain confidential and inaccessible to other individuals outside the research team (i.e., recordings, original transcripts, master key linking real names to pseudonyms and notes). This is included in the informed consent form to ensure participants are aware of this. The audio files will be destroyed when transcription and analysis are completed. Documents containing participants' identifying

information (i.e., consent form, demographics information form, transcripts) will be de-identified and kept in a secure and locked filing cabinet for one year after the interviews, at which point will be destroyed permanently. Participants are free to withdraw until 30/05/2022. Withdrawal is no longer possible after that because it will affect the data analysis and the research.

“No one except the researcher and her supervisor will be allowed to hear the interview tape. There are no names on the transcriptions. Only group information will be summarized for any presentation or publication of results. The transcriptions are kept in a file with passcode and a computer also secured with the passcode only accessible by the researcher and her supervisor.

Signatures

Your signature on this form indicates that 1) you understand to your satisfaction the information provided to you about your participation in this research project, and 2) you agree to participate in the research project.

In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the investigators, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from this research project at any time. You should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Participant's Name: (please print) _____

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's Name: (please print) _____

Researcher's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Questions/Concerns

If you have any further questions or want clarification regarding this research and/or your participation, please contact:

Sepideh Borzoo

Faculty of Social Sciences

Department of Sociology

sepideh.borzoo@ucalgary.ca

(403) 220-3214

Dr. Pallavi Banerjee

Department of Sociology

Pallavi.banerjee@ucalgary.ca

If you have any concerns about the way you've been treated as a participant, please contact the Research Ethics Analyst, Research Services Office, University of Calgary at 403.220.6289 or 403.220.8640; email cfreb@ucalgary.ca. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference. The investigator has kept a copy of the consent form.

Appendix D: Demographic information of participants

Table 1: Demographic information of participants in Sephora

Pseudonyms	Nationality	Race	Gender	Education	Age	Immigration status	Position in the company	# Years working for the company
Donya	middle eastern	Iranian	Woman	Masters	26	First generation immigrant/ non-permanent	sales associate	6
Shirin	Middle eastern	Iranian	Woman	Masters	36	First generation immigrant/ Citizen of Canada	manager	5+
Fiona	Caucasian	Canadian	Woman	College degree	44	NA	Manager	2
Balkees	Middle eastern	Iraq/Canadian	Woman	Some college degree	25	Second Generation immigrant	associate	3
Rachel	Latina	Mexican Canadian	Woman	College degree	22	Second Generation immigrant	associate	3
Angela	southeast Asian	Filipino/ Canadian	Woman	Bachelor	22	Second Generation immigrant	associate	4
Atiya	South Asian	Afghan/ Canadian	Woman	Masters	24	Second Generation immigrant	associate	7
Huda	South Asian	Afghan/ Canadian	Woman	Masters	27	Second Generation immigrant	Beauty advisor	3+
Armanita	Black Canadian	Canadian	Woman	Bachelor	37	NA	manager	6
Ami	Caucasian	Canadian	Woman	college degree	30	NA	associate	9
Shabina	South Asian	Pakistani /Canadian	Woman	college degree	25	Second Generation immigrant	manager	3+
Nihal	south Asian	Pakistani / Canadian	Woman	Bachelor	23	Second Generation immigrant	Manager	1
Ava	southeast Asian	Vietnamese/ Canadian	Woman	Diploma	24	Second Generation immigrant	Beauty advisor	6+
Parker	Caucasian	Canadian	Non-binary	Diploma	23	NA	associate	3

Mina	Middle eastern	Iranian	Woman	Masters	36	First generation immigrant/ non-permanent	associate	1
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Table 2: Demographic information of participants and the local stores

Company	Location	Race	Education	# of employees	Length of time in business	Pricing range of the products	Occupation prior to business (of the CEO)	Start-up motivation	Race/gender of clientele
Diva Cosmetics	Toronto	Black owned	BA	0/family owned	12 years	\$5-\$55	Bank manager	Not finding her shade in the market	Black women
Beauty Queen Aesthetics	Vancouver	Black owned (diverse employees)	BA	8	6 years	\$50-\$300	NA	Interest in organic skincare	Diverse women
Mighty Beauty	Winnipeg/ Kelowna	White woman owned (diverse employees)	BA	17	9 years	\$4-\$175	NA	Interest in organic skincare	Diverse women
Power Beauty	Calgary	Black owned (diverse employees)	BS	3	8 years	\$5-\$60	Engineer	Interest in Makeup	Diverse women
Holistic Wellness	Yukon	Indigenous owned	BS	3 (casual)	5 years	\$8-\$80	Environmental scientist	Interest in giving back to the community	Diverse women
Feel Beauty	Vancouver	White woman owned	College degree	2 (casual)	5 years		Film Industry	Creating product for those with extreme skin issues	Women with skin cancer
Heal	Vancouver	South Asian	Masters of	1	3 years		pharmaceutical	Creating clean skin	Diverse women

Well Skincare		Owned	science				executive	product for her children	
Black Beauty Cosmetics	Toronto	Black woman - Owned	BA	1	3 years		MBA	-	Diverse women

Table 3: Instagram sample collection

Company	# of Posts (December 2022)	# of followers (December 2022)	# of photos & videos analyzed
Diva Cosmetics	741	12K	30
Beauty Queen Aesthetics	1501	22.2K	15
Mighty Beauty	893	23.3K	10
Power Beauty	2479	94000	7
Holistic Wellness	995	16.8K	20
Feel Beauty	1069	12.5K	3
Healwell Skincare	1703	34.6K	8