Queer Immaterial Labor in Beauty Videos
by LGBTQ-Identified YouTubers

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Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender beauty vloggers on YouTube exist at the margins of a historically gender- and sexually normative, white-dominated beauty industry. Through an analysis of six queer beauty vloggers, four of whom are also people of color, we argue that this group leverages the affordances of the media peripheries, here online platforms, and capitalizes queer cultural repertoires, such as camp, coming-out narratives, and reading to assert their expertise and authenticity. We propose a specification of Lazzarato's term with "queer immaterial labor" that (1) recognizes that immaterial labor is not performed in the same way by participants in online spaces but is intersectionally structured through sexuality, race, and gender; and (2) acknowledges the cultural practices that queer people, including queer people of color, have honed over long histories of marginalization and community formation.

Keywords: LGBTQ, media, queer, YouTube, beauty, vlog, immaterial labor, emotional labor, visibility, authenticity, intimacy, surplus

Patrick Simondac (a.k.a. Patrick Starrr) is an openly gay, Filipino beauty vlogger who has amassed 4.3 million subscribers on his YouTube channel since 2013, and has partnered with Sephora and MAC Cosmetics. As with other online beauty gurus, he posts makeup tutorials, "get ready with me" videos, and product sponsorship segments. In 2016, he posted a video "I AM A MAN," where he begins by wearing full makeup and a turban and by hamming in a deep, masculine voice, "Yo! What's up? Welcome back to my channel." He then switches into his familiar, higher voice to discuss what it means for him to be a man who wears makeup. In a moving performance of vulnerability, he concludes the video by removing all his makeup as a cover of "You Are So Beautiful" plays in the background. He wants to "show you that I am human, that

I am a man, my stubble is coming through" (2016, 06:49). In this video, Simondac embodies a range of gender performances, from camping a butch masculinity—"yo!"—in full makeup, to offering a moving performance of sincerity as he removes his makeup and appears in a more masculine code with no makeup, a T-shirt, and a ballcap. Here, Simondac exemplifies how openly lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer online influencers bring a queer sensibility to the generic formats of YouTube. Queer beauty vloggers work at the intersections of digital labor, queer cultural repertoires, and creative production in the spaces of peripheral media to perform "queer immaterial labor."

Beauty vloggers are part of a larger community of influencers, people who "accumulate a relatively large following on blogs and social media" (Abidin, 2016, p. 86) by seeming ordinary and authentic and who monetize their audiences' attention by promoting products and services. Influencers are in search of "microcelebrity" (Senft, 2008, p. 25; see also Marwick, 2013), facilitated by the use of technologies such as videos, blogs, and social networks. Within this larger influencer community, a diverse group of beauty vloggers make videos related to beauty, fashion, and, occasionally, lifestyle topics. As YouTube has become more popular, so have the vloggers, amassing significant followings on other social media platforms, publishing books, and starring in television series produced by traditional media outlets (see Jerslev, 2016). Whereas the most popular YouTubers overall are heterosexual, white men (Wotanis & McMillan, 2014), the beauty vlogosphere was racially diverse from the beginning: Asian American Michelle Phan was the first well-known beauty vlogger.

Various scholars have grappled with the meaning of work and the precarious fortunes of social media influencers, often drawing on Maurizio Lazzarato's (2006 [1996]) concept of "immaterial labor." Writing before the advent of Web 2.0, Lazzarato presciently identified the shift in labor toward, first, a prioritization of information and communication jobs over manufacturing; second, the increasing valuation of cultural content, including "fashions, tastes, [and] consumer norms" (p. 132); and third, the production of "a 'social relationship' (a relationship of innovation, production, and consumption)" (p. 137). Mark Coté and Jennifer Pybus (2011) observe that the boundaries between work-for-pay and leisure-as-work become blurred in social media, where immaterial labor increasingly extends into what we would consider our leisure time. More recently, both social media platforms and some of the people who use them have developed sophisticated strategies for monetizing this leisure-labor, turning cultural capital (taste) and social capital (friends, fans, followers, subscribers) into economic capital. They do this through "visibility labor": "the work individuals do when they self-posture and curate their self-presentations so as to be noticeable and positively prominent among prospective employers, clients, the press, or followers and fans" (Abidin, 2016, p. 90). As with other online influencers, queer beauty vloggers make themselves hyper-visible on YouTube and other social media platforms to build social capital and bring attention to the brands they promote.

Where Lazzarato and some of his followers have emphasized class in emerging structures of immaterial labor, scholars of online economies have risen to Angela McRobbie's (2011) call to also pay attention to gender and race. The ruthless economy of social media metrics depends on vloggers' emotional labor: the kinds of feeling work women and people of color, especially, are expected to perform. Emotional labor has increasingly become part of the commercial sphere, as feeling work and economic rationales become further intertwined in workplaces, domestic spheres, and online. And although women have traditionally carried the burden of emotional labor in makeover media as elsewhere, gay men, too, have

also done their shift—for example, in the reality TV show *Queer Eye* (Sender, 2006). Successful queer beauty vloggers, as with all online influencers, must become highly skilled emotional workers, expressing both their own feelings and care for their imagined community of viewers (Duffy, 2017).

As much as the products of immaterial labor are ephemeral, so are the rewards. When fashion bloggers and beauty vloggers provide expertise on products, trends, and techniques, they are often unpaid or underpaid. Duffy (2015) coins the term "aspirational labor" to describe the work that (mostly) female content creators perform. Aspirational labor "highlights the potential for digitally enabled activities to provide female participants with future social and economic capital" while concealing the increasingly "hierarchical, market-driven, and self-promotional" nature of the blogosphere (pp. 49–50). Gender and racial hierarchies determine the likelihood of success, because "YouTube's algorithm ultimately rewards hegemonic and normative performances of femininity, in line with the desires and needs of brand advertisers" (Bishop, 2018, p. 81). Although online platforms such as YouTube appear to offer more flexible and democratic spaces than do legacy media, do nonnormative beauty experts interpret the labor demands of online spaces in gender- and sexuality-specific ways to stake a claim in a crowded marketplace?

Queer immaterial labor brings together this productive scholarship on visibility, emotional, and aspirational work with the affordances of social media platforms and the logics of social capital. Materials distributed on YouTube, Tumblr, and other digital platforms are characterized by interactivity and highly invested niche audiences looking for media content, including queer, racially diverse, and intersectional material (Christian, 2018; Sender, 2011). Queer beauty vloggers take advantage of the opportunities of online platforms where YouTube's low barriers to entry and lack of overbearing regulation on content allows for increased "vernacular creativity" (Burgess & Green, 2009, p. 6) and a wider array of representations than we see in legacy media such as film or television. Queer beauty experts have access to resources both in terms of newly opened spaces for self-representation at the peripheries of mainstream media and in terms of a long history of LGBTQ cultural repertoires developed to survive marginalization.

It may seem surprising that beauty vlogging offers a space for nonnormative self-representations. Discussing the rise of the mass cosmetics market, historian Kathy Peiss (2011) introduces the term "beauty culture" as a way of understanding the formation and impact of this market that has primarily been targeted toward women. However, not all women were equally welcomed into the world of industrial beauty culture. Since its earliest days, the mass cosmetics market for women was dominated by white, traditionally feminine women, and "cosmetics were never far removed from the fact of white supremacy" (Peiss, 2011, p. 203). Black women entrepreneurs such as Madame C. J. Walker created an entirely new cosmetics sector dedicated to their interests and concerns. Although the rise of the "lipstick lesbian" in the 1990s promised a shift away from stereotypes of lesbians as antifashion, antimakeup, and anticonsumption (Sender, 2004), lesbians, bisexual, and queer women have still not wholeheartedly been accepted as representatives of ideal beauty. And with the exceptions of shaving and hair-care products, bronzers, and concealers, heterosexual men's uses of cosmetics have traditionally been clandestine.

Parallel to this heteronormative beauty industry have been thriving subcultures of gay men and trans women as beauty experts and performers. Men employed in the style industries as hairdressers and make-up artists have often been assumed to be gay and to perform their expertise on women (Peiss, 2011).

And there is also a history of camp and queer fabulousness performed by queer and trans people of color in drag and vogue balls, on the streets, and in nightclubs, documented by Esther Newton (1972) and by Madison Moore (2018) as cultures of survival, pleasure, and resistance. Moore describes fabulousness as creative performances by queer people of color who use their bodies and their ingenuity to style a look that is both a form of survival—"I exist"—and resistance. These queer beauty repertoires have been adapted in legacy media, perhaps most famously in VH1's *RuPaul's Drag Race* (Strings & Bui, 2013) that drew more than half a million viewers to its season 10 finale in 2018. Some of the queer beauty vloggers discussed here reproduce performative repertoires from drag and ballroom contexts, queering both the beauty industry and the commercial space of YouTube.

Thus, the six queer beauty vloggers we study here make a place for themselves at the periphery of the media industries, bringing queer cultural resources to their roles. Our use of the term "queer" expands beyond an umbrella term for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and gender nonbinary that flattens important intersectional dimensions of queer identity. We draw on queer-of-color critiques to broaden an understanding of queer beyond referencing a dichotomized sexuality (gay versus straight) and instead to consider how sexuality intersects with race, gender, and class to position some subjects as sexually nonnormative (see Cohen, 1997; Ferguson, 2004; Keeling, 2007; Snorton; 2014). Roderick Ferguson considers how a Marxist-informed materialist theory of surplus helps us understand racialized sexualities in a capitalist context. He suggests, first, that nonnormative sexualities are an inevitable outcome of surplus populations: the reserve army of potential labor required to meet the flexible demands of capital and to keep wages low, who forge alternative domestic and erotic arrangements outside the productive heteronuclear family. Second, queers, women, and people of color have historically been unpaid, underpaid, unprotected by labor laws, and lacking in benefits, making their surplus labor—the extra work they must do to survive—even greater than for other laboring groups. Third, queer and people of color surplus values goes largely unrecognized. In the case of Hollywood cinema, as Kara Keeling (2007) argues, Black queer audiences have to expend extra surplus labor to find places for themselves in texts not produced for them. At the same time, Hollywood producers nevertheless expect Black queer audiences' attention and ticket purchases without rewarding them with truly satisfying characters and narratives. A queer of color identification refers to more than racialized sexual and romantic attraction to specify a set of labor relations in the generation of capital.

Ferguson was writing about queer-of-color cultural production in the 20th century, but we understand the proliferation of nonnormative sexual and gender identifications online as consistent with the proliferation of capital in the contemporary digital environment. Social media sites have proven adept at generating surplus labor and value from the largely unpaid activities of people who generate content for fun or with the aspiration of future gain. But histories of queer and Black cultural production demonstrate an additional way in which "surplus" has been central to marginalized productivity, describing an excess of meaning that brings pleasure and solidarity even if less often than monetary gain. Fabulousness exceeds what is required, practical, or even safe for recognition and survival. Matthew Tinkcom (2002), for example, documents how directors such as Vincent Minelli brought a camp sensibility to their movies to offer a breadcrumb trail to alternative outcomes for queer audiences to follow. Tinkcom argues that the excesses of mid-20th century Hollywood movies distinguish their producers' labor (in the Marxist sense of generating capital) from work that includes all sorts of practices that exceed the precise demands of production.

Queer and people-of-color cultural producers have seized on new media technologies to produce representations that mainstream media outlets don't include (Christian, 2018). Sometimes these new forms are picked up by the mainstream, as in the case of young Black hip hop artists who "carve out small entrepreneurial enclaves while still practicing, in their unique way, 'small acts' of opposition" (Watkins, 1999, p. 71). Christian discusses those instances when well-resourced legacy media producers tap independent Web series creators to bring new representations to the media center (e.g., HBO with Issa Rae). Lisa Henderson (2013) discusses "queer relay" to describe how media makers—queers and their allies—tack back and forth between underfunded media peripheries and paid work when they can get it, creating communities of care, skills, and resources in the process that sustain independent media production. These studies represent queer and people-of-color cultural production as an economy of creative surplus, consisting of practices performed in excess of survival toward pleasure, even thriving.

As Moore notes, the importance of the compliment "Werk!" in vogue ball culture describes "the distance between the stuff we don't want to do but have to in order to live and pay our bills (work) and the love and labor we do because we want to (werk)" (p. 26). Queers and people of color create excess, innovation, and relay to differentiate queer immaterial labor from its dominant forms and give us a context to understand queer beauty vlogging. Queer immaterial labor is produced by populations considered to be surplus to heteronormative family arrangements, and, in turn, produces a surplus of labor and value. Some of this surplus becomes economic capital for YouTube, advertisers, and sponsors; some of it exists in excess of these forms of exchange to offer creative possibilities for producers and welcome iterations of nonnormative representations online.

Our project explores how beauty vloggers leverage both the affordances of peripheral media and how the histories of queer identity work to expand the range of what is imaginable as a beauty expert. How do queer vloggers establish themselves as beauty experts, especially given the cisgender, heterosexual, hyperfeminine norms of mainstream beauty culture? What queer cultural resources do these queer beauty vloggers access to generate social and cultural capital? And, given that queer cultural repertoires are not the exclusive resource for LGBTQ-identified people, can we look to beauty vlogging as a genre that transcends identitarian approaches to queer resources? Through a comparative critical discourse analysis of a selection of videos and viewers' comments from six gender and racially diverse queer beauty vloggers and five heterosexual cisgender women vloggers, also racially diverse, we explore queer immaterial labor and the generation of capital.

Understanding Queer Beauty Expertise Online

To understand queer beauty vloggers' labor and the queer cultural resources they draw on, we watched dozens of vlogs from Gigi Gorgeous (a white transgender lesbian), Manny Gutierrez (a.k.a. Manny MUA, a Latinx gay man), Vanessa Martinez (a.k.a. SimplyNessa15, a Latinx and African American bisexual woman), Ingrid Nilsen (an Asian and Caucasian lesbian), Jeffree Star (a white gender nonbinary and sexually nonidentifying person), and Patrick Simondac (a.k.a. Patrick Starrr, an Asian gay man). All these queer beauty vloggers are in their twenties or early thirties and are based in the US. From this corpus we chose three genres of vlogs to analyze using critical discourse analysis and viewer comments: get ready with me (GRWM), paid sponsorship, and personal disclosure. We scraped all the comments from each of these videos

using Philip Klosterman's YouTube Comment Scraper and selected the first 100 and most recent 100 comments on each vlog (200 per vlog, 600 per vlogger, and 3,600 for the group of queer beauty vloggers). In the videos, we focused on how vloggers talked about queer identity, expertise, authenticity, and products (both sponsored and not). In the comments, we looked for discussions about the YouTuber's queerness and queer identity; their perceived authenticity and level of expertise; and perceptions of product promotion, including paid sponsorships. To assess the consistency of each YouTuber's brand across social media, we also reviewed their most recent 100 tweets and Instagram posts.[3]

To compare self-branding strategies, cultural resources, and forms of personal disclosure, we watched dozens of vlogs posted by five heterosexually identified cisgender women beauty vloggers: Nikkie de Jager (a.k.a. NikkieTutorials, White, Dutch), Huda Kattan (a.k.a. Huda Beauty, middle eastern), Bethany Mota (southern European and American), Michelle Phan (Asian American), and Whitney White (a.k.a. Naptural85, African American). All these women are in their 20s or early 30s, and all but one (de Jager) are based in the US. For this group, we chose a comparable set of videos on which to focus: GRWM, sponsorship, and personal disclosure. In addition to undertaking a critical discourse analysis of these videos, we also scraped their comments and analyzed the first and most recent 100 posts for each (200 for each video, 600 for each vlogger, and 3,000 for this comparison group). These analyses offered us rich data to compare the strategies and cultural resources of queer and cisgender heterosexual beauty vloggers and their reception by viewers on YouTube.

Queering Online Beauty Culture

Queer beauty vlogging is a site through which we can make larger claims about queer immaterial labor: queer work exceeds LGBTQ identifications, extending through race, class, and nonnormative practices; queer beauty vloggers work alongside their nonqueer counterparts to leverage capital from and for online social media sites; and queer cultural practices are well suited to the types of labor demanded of online influencers—specifically to be authentic and intimate with subscribers. In what follows, we compare queer and nonqueer beauty vloggers' measures of success, their claims to authenticity, their seemingly intimate relationships with their followers, and their navigation of queer visibility.

Capitalizing Expertise

We went into this project wondering whether gender and sexually nonnormative beauty vloggers faced a harder struggle to become successful in what has traditionally been the highly normative beauty industry. Determining success and accessing reliable data by which to estimate differing struggles experienced by queer beauty vloggers proved to be challenging, however. We consider the available data on beauty vloggers' incomes and the lists of the highest-paid 10 YouTubers for the past three years to consider whether queer beauty vloggers faced a tougher time "making it" in this consumer realm.

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[3] Although Instagram may now be a more popular platform for beauty influencers, when we began this research in early 2016, the app did not have functionalities such as Stories or Instagram Live.

YouTube success is measured in both economic and social capital. In terms of remuneration, vloggers can receive money from impressions on preroll advertising, being part of the YouTube Partner Program, paid partnerships with sponsors, and celebrity appearances at marketing events. They earn social capital by having many subscribers and viewers' hits on their videos, by generating buzz around their self-brand, and by having many active comments (Duffy, 2015). However, estimating influencers' worth is extremely difficult. Rates of pay are opaque to those outside the influencer economy and vary among influencers based on factors such as their number of subscribers, fan engagement, and the nature of the brand partnership. Table 1 ranks the six queer beauty vloggers and the five heterosexual cisgender women beauty vloggers according to their annual YouTube income, estimated in spring 2019.

Table 1. Top YouTube Beauty Vloggers Ranked by Estimated Income.

	Estimated income (2018)	Number of subscribers (in millions)	Total channel views
Jeffree Star	$4,000,000	13.7	1.5 billion
Nikkie de Jager	$510,000	11.0	1 billion
Manny MUA	$256,000	4.8	445 million
Patrick Starrr	$216,000	4.3	2.9 million
Huda Kattan	$161,000	3.0	122 million
Gigi Gorgeous	$105,000	2.7	4.6 million
Vanessa Martinez	$87,000	2.5	241 million
Whitney White	$54,000	1.0	104 million
Bethany Mota	$51,000	10.0	990 million
Michelle Phan	$49,000	9.0	1 billion
Ingrid Nilsen	$40,000	3.7	3.7 million

Source. Socialblade.com, March 16, 2019.

These estimates are based only on CPMs from YouTube and do not include revenues from celebrity appearances, other social media platforms, cosmetics lines and collaborations, or advertising campaigns, and thus are likely to significantly undervalue these vloggers. For example, Forbes estimates Jeffree Star's income in 2018 at $18 million, significantly larger than the $4 million estimated from his YouTube earnings, and probably resulting from more than $100 million in sales from his cosmetics line, Jeffree Star Cosmetics. Nevertheless, as a crude measure of success, this table demonstrates that heterosexual women vloggers are not necessarily likely to make more money, have more subscribers, or yield more channel views than are queer beauty vloggers, and neither is race a determinant of success.

Another indicator of whether there are structural barriers against queer beauty vloggers is the demographics of Forbes' annual top 10 highest-paid YouTubers. In 2018, the top 10 YouTubers appear to be male, mostly White, and heterosexual, with the exception of Jeffree Star (O'Kane, 2018). The absence of more beauty vloggers may be in part to do with the genre not garnering the largest audiences—the highest-paid YouTubers are live video game players—but the fact that Star makes it to this list suggests that the barriers to entry for queer beauty vloggers are not insurmountable.

The data are also mixed on the impact of coming out on a queer beauty vlogger's success. When Nilsen came out midcareer in 2015, while under contract with high-profile partners including Covergirl, she not only retained her partnerships, but her coming out video contributed to a significant increase in subscribers and views on other videos, and later that summer she was nominated for a Streamy Award for Best Beauty Program. In contrast, after Vanessa Martinez came out in 2016, she reported losing 2,000 subscribers, which impacted her YouTube metrics.

Some of the queer beauty vloggers in our sample have mentioned how hard it is to get sponsorships. Gutierrez ends his sponsored video with Beauty Bay with the following:

> I don't get to do sponsorships very often [. . .] I just want to say thank you so much to
> BeautyBay for letting me be who I am. . . . You have no idea how much it really means to
> me because, you fight so hard online to be who you are and come across as who you want
> to be, so when brands try to take that away from you and tell you to be in a box and be
> this person, you don't want to do it—at least, I don't want to do it. (2016b, 09:14)

Gutierrez's campy, unapologetic persona is not amenable to some brands and hinders him from getting partnerships and, by extension, making money. But whether the challenges he faces getting sponsorships is connected to his being a Latinx gay man is unclear. In comparison, Patrick Simondac recently signed a major partnership with MAC cosmetics, suggesting that being a queer man of color has not hindered his potential as a spokesperson for a major cosmetics company—albeit one with a history of hiring edgy spokespeople.

Thus, in our small sample, there were no clear indicators of structural barriers to entry into the beauty vlogging sphere in terms of gender, sexuality, or race. Without interviewing the vloggers, it is hard to know whether they experienced such impediments. That said, the latitude for more diverse representations at the media periphery and the expansiveness of the beauty vlogging genre reflect the work of queer beauty vloggers and beauty vloggers of color who bring queer people and people of color strategies of survival and thriving to this sphere.

Performing Authenticity

Queer beauty vloggers bring cultural resources developed by queer people and people of color that are highly compatible with the relational and commercial logics of YouTube that privilege authenticity and intimacy. Sarah Banet-Weiser (2012) posits that "authenticity itself is a brand" (p. 14), one that has becoming increasingly interwoven into contemporary marketing discourses with the rise of self-branding. The six queer beauty vloggers we consider here demonstrate a wide range of authenticity, from naturalness, to queer realness, to sincerity, to reading and throwing shade.

As do some of the heterosexual cisgender women beauty vloggers, such as Bethany Mota in our comparative sample, the two cisgender women in our set of queer beauty vloggers, Nilsen and Martinez, construct their authenticity as "natural." In a GRWM video, Nilsen explains, "If my pimples show through, I'm a human being. Breakouts happen" (2017a, 03:43). In contrast, Jeffree Star and Patrick Simondac draw on high glamor and camp to construct their authenticity. Camp is an aesthetic that emphasizes "style as a form of

consciousness; it is never 'natural,' always acquired" (Babuscio, 1999, p. 122). Camp subverts traditional rules and roles, pointing out the superficiality of everyday life and, in particular, sex roles: no performance is inherently more authentic than another because they are all constructed. Both Star and Simondac draw on camp logics in their videos, creating makeup looks with dramatic, unnatural colors. With his iconic pink hair, Star applies red and gold eyeshadow, joking that, "I don't know what the hell I'm doing, but, *come on*, red crease!" (2016a, 09:35). Simondac has a similar makeup aesthetic, though not as exaggerated as Star's: he uses multiple heavy layers of face makeup, almost always wears false eyelashes and bright lipstick, and wears his hair under a turban.

Camp strategies are not exclusive to the queer beauty vloggers in this sample. In our analysis of straight women beauty vloggers, we noted that de Jager creates complex makeup looks that are similar to some of Star and Simondac's styles. She also often appears with men in makeup, including Miss Fame, a contestant from *RuPaul's Drag Race*, and Jeffree Star himself (before one of his many falling outs with this former BFF). This suggests the extent to which camp culture is no longer the sole province of queer communities but has become available as a performance resource more generally.

Camp sensibility asserts a unique definition of "realness," which "is not exactly performance, not exactly an imitation; it is the way that people, minorities, excluded from the domain of the real, appropriate the real and its effects" (Halberstam, 2005, p. 51). This sense of realness has its roots in vogue balls (Bailey, 2011), where competitors attempt to undermine the authenticity of another's performance. "Reading is an artfully delivered insult, while shade refers to disrespectful behaviors or gestures, which can be subtly or not so subtly communicated" (McGlotten, 2016, p. 265). Some of the queer vloggers use reading and shade to extend the camp principle of revealing artifice to point out a quality or behavior that another person wishes to hide, forcing them into a position of unwilling authenticity. Gutierrez and Star, in particular, make use of these practices as methods of humor and self-defense in their videos and comments. A public enactment of reading in the beauty vlogging community was the feud that broke out in 2018 between Star and Gutierrez and less-well-known YouTubers Nikita Dragun, Laura Lee, and Gabriel Zamora. In 2018, an Instagram post from Zamora, featuring Dragun, Lee, and Gutierrez, made fans speculate that the four were throwing shade at Star for racist comments. In response, Star's fans rose to his defense, digging up old, racist tweets from the four other vloggers, resulting in a loss of their subscribers and brand deals. We can see these reading practices as a strategy to demand authenticity of online celebrities, where the hidden fact to be unearthed is another's racism.

Performing authenticity is especially important in sponsored videos. As Abidin (2016) and Banet-Weiser (2012) observe, sponsorship deals threaten influencers' perceived authenticity through having to balance two often-contradictory requirements for success: being real and making money. Gutierrez's claim that he gets very few sponsored videos because of how he talks and acts in his vlogs is an assertion of authenticity; Gutierrez is "truly" himself online, and he refuses to compromise this to gain sponsors. When vloggers do make sponsored videos, viewers are highly attuned to whether it appears that the vloggers are authentically endorsing a product or whether they are doing sponsorships solely to make money. Several of the vloggers in this sample take time in their sponsored videos to validate the authenticity of a sponsorship and to vouch that they actually use the products they are promoting. For example, in Simondac's sponsored video with Morphe, he shows viewers his own, heavily used Morphe brushes, rather than new ones from the

company. This strategy was much appreciated by commenters as a mark of Simondac's authentic support for the product. In contrast, when Gigi Gorgeous partnered with Revlon to demonstrate a makeup look comprised entirely of Revlon products, viewers questioned whether she would actually recommend or use these products outside of the context of this video. One wrote, "Mkay. We got it that you've been payed by Revlon to do that, don't call them 'favorites' . . . You cannot say that you've been 'obsessed' with a primer when it's actually obvious that the sponge has never been used." Endorsing a brand that the vlogger does not seem to actually use poses a threat to the carefully constructed aura of authenticity that all beauty vloggers must cultivate, whether through "naturalness" or queer strategies of camp, reading, and shade.

Intimacy and Coming Out

This discussion of how queer (as well as nonqueer) beauty vloggers draw on queer cultural repertoires such as camp, reading, and shade demonstrates the value of queer resources in the performance of authenticity as a form of queer immaterial labor. Cunningham and Craig (2017) assert that for YouTubers in general, "authenticity is not established in a monadic relationship but a dialogic relationship with the fan base of the creator . . . Any and all claims to authenticity are tested continuously in a call-and-response rhetorical field" (p. 74). Christian (2010) distinguishes authenticity from sincerity, where being authentic references the fantasy of a person's essential realness and sincerity is relational, inviting a mutual openness among messy, nuanced, contextual, and even contradictory selves. Although all the beauty vloggers we analyzed here employed relational strategies for establishing intimacy, the queer cohort drew on queer cultural repertoires to cultivate a sincere relationship with their many followers.

Queer beauty vloggers have available a powerful strategy for establishing sincerity: the coming-out narrative. Online coming-out videos offer a contemporary example of the principle that sexuality is the abiding truth of the subject, "the explanation for everything" (Foucault, 1976/1990, p. 78). Michael Lovelock (2017) considers Ingrid Nilsen's (2015a) coming-out video, concluding, "Coming out online is construed as the ultimate evidence of Nilsen's closeness, openness and loyalty to those who consume her image" (p. 95). Coming out suits the generic expectations of influencer genres that demand "communicative intimacies" (Duffy 2017), signaled by vloggers as being "genuine, raw" (p. 134) as a form of emotional labor. Most of the queer beauty vloggers we studied expressed emotional "rawness" in the process of narrating their queer and gender identifications.

Sedgwick (1990) claims that the closet was a metaphor for the primary structure of knowing a person in the 20th century, not only for homosexuals who navigated its interior spaces, but also for broader society that needed to shore up heterosexual privilege. Riley Snorton (2014) takes Sedgwick to task for privileging white, gay, male sexuality as the mark of truth over an intersectional analysis that would include gender, race, and class. He develops the metaphor of the "glass closet" to describe the conditions of Black sexuality that is always both invisible and hypervisible, spectacular, and the source of speculation, both known and mysterious. The closet is not a space of secrecy and conditional safety; neither is there a valorized Black sexuality outside the closet. If we deprivilege sexuality as the singular truth of the person and consider gender, race, religion, and class as intersecting with sexuality in complex ways, how might queer beauty vloggers employ the coming-out narrative to construct intimacy with their followers? And how do they capitalize this narrative when they

are already openly gay? Our group of gender and racially heterogeneous queer beauty vloggers demonstrates very different strategies of occupying the coming-out genre as a means to establish intimacy.

Neither Nilsen nor Martinez identified as lesbian or bisexual, respectively, at the beginning of their careers on YouTube, and came out after they had risen to success on the platform. Both of their videos are classic examples of the coming-out genre. Nilsen says, "There's something that I want you to know: I'm gay [starts to cry]. It feels so good to say that! I'm shaking right now because this moment is real, and it's here" (2015a, 00:24). Lovelock (2017) notes that the YouTube coming-out genre both endorses vloggers' authenticity and also "speaks to a decades-long history in which the invitation to uncover celebrities' 'real' selves has been central to the commercial logic of stardom" (p. 94). Within this logic, Nilsen's coming-out video was successful: it increased her subscriber base and her sponsorship. For Martinez, her coming-out is framed by her upbringing in a strongly Christian family and her fear of rejection by family members. Responses to her coming out were less positive; she lost subscribers and was harassed in comments. The articulation by and responses to Martinez and the other queer people of color beauty vloggers in this group demonstrates that Lovelock's assumption that coming out, and the authenticity it produces for economic gain, needs to be understood through an intersectional analysis.

Martinez and Nilsen both express their genders in traditionally feminine ways, by wearing makeup and having long hair, meaning that they have to produce their sexualities as legible through coming out. In contrast, Gutierrez has an interesting dilemma: how to use the coming-out genre when he takes for granted that people already know he's gay: "it's kind of hard for me to conceal being gay. I'm not saying I'm super flamboyant all the time . . . but people just know, it's like, I have the gay voice" (2016a, 16:25). He leverages the sincerity of the coming-out video not by the revelation of his sexual identity, but by describing coming out in a religious family, including an intense period of religious rejection and antigay counseling. When Gutierrez's gay identification is already an open secret, his struggles with his religious upbringing and family responses help him establish intimacy with his audience. By framing their coming out within the context of their religious upbringings, both Martinez and Gutierrez show that coming out does not happen in an otherwise culturally neutral context but is shaped by their habitus.

Gigi Gorgeous's coming-out history demonstrates that the dominant narrative of coming out—one appears to the world to be heterosexual and one reveals that one is, in fact, homosexual—is insufficient to encompass sexual and gender identification as a process. Gorgeous has made and posted three coming-out videos. The first one she posted while in high school, coming out as a gay man. In 2013 and already a celebrity, she posted "I Am Transgender" to her YouTube channel, telling her viewers, "this video is me just kind of telling you guys that I want to be female" (2013, 01:35). In 2016, Gorgeous came out online for a third time in her video "I'm a Lesbian," saying, "I never thought that I would be making this video . . . I thought I was done [coming out]" (2016, 01:44). While many comments in response to her most recent coming-out video express love and support for Gorgeous, some reflect both transphobia and an intolerance for an ongoing mutability of gender and sexual identification, for example: "This is really weird. Because technically she's straight. Gigi was born as a MALE and she was attracted to Males, but then she came out as a transgender. And now she coming out as a lesbian?!? I'm confused!" Mutable gender and sexual identifications demonstrate the inadequacy of the closet and the sexual binary it presumes.

Patrick Simondac has never made a coming-out video for his YouTube channel, but does come out as gay on another channel, The Slumber Party. Nevertheless, as his video "I AM A MAN" (described in the introduction) demonstrates on his makeup channel, Simondac leverages the intimacy of the coming-out genre to address his gender identity. We interpreted this video as a response to questions from viewers on earlier posts about Simondac's gender, an effort that was only partly successful. Some comments on this video are very positive, such as "I know you're a guy, but I love you when you're fem. Girl, do what you wish, never mind the haters, xx." Yet some viewers seem to remain confused by Simondac's video, reading him as transgender. Although he does not directly address his sexuality on his channel, Simondac still adopts the coming-out narrative to affirm his gender identity and capitalize the intimacy that the genre affords.

The only queer beauty vlogger in this group who has not posted some version of a coming-out video is Jeffree Star. Star does, however, address questions about his sexuality in another YouTube genre that emphasizes a dialogic intimacy with followers, the Q&A video, in which YouTube celebrities answer viewers' questions. Whereas Star has previously publicly identified as a gay man, in more recent years he has eschewed labels for both his gender and sexuality (although he continues to use the male pronoun). In "Boyfriend Q&A: Part 3" Star and his boyfriend, Nathan Schwandt, address the question "what sexuality are you?" by answering, "I think that's an easy question—we're just us" (2016b, 08:02). They explain to viewers that sexuality and labels are not productive because, "if you like somebody and have a connection with them, that's that" (2016b, 08:26). Although Star resists the rhetorical opportunity of establishing his authenticity through the coming-out genre, he must still perform the identity work of making explicit his gender identification and the terms of his relationship.

Although these queer beauty vloggers account for their sexualities and genders, few of them have videos dedicated to their racial or ethnic backgrounds. Nilsen has made several videos discussing her Southeast Asian and Caucasian background, ranging from talking about what it was like to grow up "mixed," to a broad discussion about the representations of Asian women in the media (Nilsen, 2015b, 2017b). No other vloggers in this group dedicate entire videos to discussing their race or heritage. Gutierrez, Simondac, and Martinez sometimes make casual allusions to their backgrounds, such as speaking Spanish or making culturally specific jokes. And, although commenters have asked some of these queer beauty vloggers to self-identify racially through Q&As, their responses do not share the generic features of the coming-out video.

Although they mostly draw on the queer cultural repertoire of coming out as the paradigmatic assertion of the true self, the differences among them in how they do this demonstrate that the closet functions differently for each vlogger, and the act of coming out is moderated by their religious upbringings, sexualities, and gender identities and performances. Unlike camp, reading, and shade, repertoires that originated in queer communities and communities of color and that heterosexual cisgender women beauty vloggers have adopted, coming out as LGBTQ or nonbinary is a form of queer immaterial labor that only gender- and sexually nonnormative people perform.

Visibility Labor: Value and Costs

Abidin (2016) argues that part of the work that online influencers do involves making themselves hypervisible to their followers, allowing them access to parts of their lives that are unusual (or unchosen)

in traditional forms of celebrity culture. This concept of "visibility labor" has a special valence for queer beauty vloggers because of the value placed on LGBTQ visibility in media. Social media combines the personal imperative to be "out and proud" with the assumption that LGBTQ media visibility counters a history of "symbolic annihilation" (Gross, 1991) and instead facilitates queer political leverage. Queer beauty vloggers produce themselves as visibly LGBTQ to both perform visibility labor (being real, authentic, sincere) and to align themselves with the political project of LGBTQ visibility. Yet even as they capitalize their nonnormative identities and queer cultural resources, they have to work to absorb or deflect hostility and harassment from online "haters." Although haters are a quotidian component of the life of an online content creator, women, LGBTQ people, and people of color face more online harassment, trolling, and cyberbullying than do white men (Banet-Weiser, 2018; Bliuc, Faulkner, Jakubowicz, & McGarty, 2018; Matamoros-Fernández, 2017; Murthy & Sharma, 2019; Wotanis & McMillan, 2014). A report for GLSEN, formerly the Gay and Lesbian Education Network, found that LGBTQ youth were three times more likely than heterosexual online participants to be bullied or harassed, and were four times more likely to suffer sexual harassment online (GLSEN, CiPHR, & CCRC, 2013). As one trans woman of color describes the double-edged sword of visibility, "I'm stuck between feeling like I need to be beautiful in order to be taken seriously, and feeling like I need to be invisible to be safe" (Denny, 2018, para. 7). Transgender and queer people and people of color must do significant emotional labor to deal with the consequences of being visible in online spaces.

In the comments we collected, there were no racist comments and few sexist comments, although this might be the result of a small sample of comments relative to the corpus of vlogs, as well as the possibility that vloggers deleted racist or sexist comments. We did, however, find numerous instances of hostility framed in terms of homophobia, transphobia, and gender policing. Nilsen mentions receiving rude and abusive comments in a video she made one year after her coming-out announcement; every day she encounters people questioning or invalidating her identity as a queer woman. Gutierrez begins each video with an attempt to ward off people who may be hostile, asserting, "if you don't like this video, if you don't like me, please don't fucking watch." There were a lot of hostile comments on Patrick Simondac's videos that were transphobic or gender policing, for example: "Hindi ka ba nahihiya. [Aren't you ashamed?] God created you as a man and to be a man. Not this monster you've created." The emotional labor that queer beauty vloggers perform goes beyond the feelings involved in coming out in this very public setting to managing hostility directed toward their sexualities and gender performances.

Visibility is a demand made of social media celebrities, yet such visibility brings haters. Is there a way of being visible as a sexually or gender-nonnormative person while also remaining unreadable as a form of resistance? Jessa Lingel (2019) describes how queer people employ forms of "dazzle camouflage"—a military strategy of painting naval ships in bizarre colors and loud patterns developed in World War I to confuse enemy planes—as a form of queer refusal. Drag performances and ballroom practices of reading, for example, deflect scrutiny by drawing attention to surfaces and style. Madison Moore's description of queer fabulousness as queer people of color's high art fits well with this use of dazzle camouflage. Moore (2018) writes, "Fabulousness . . . is an expression of visibility for people who are made invisible," while "tak[ing] control of our own image as a way of returning the gaze" (p. 29). Of the queer beauty vloggers considered here, Jeffree Star most exemplifies dazzle camouflage in his often outrageously nonnatural beauty looks and fabulous style. In a documentary with Shane Dawson (2018), Star discusses his full-body tattoos as a strategy to deflect attention

from scars left by self-cutting in his younger years. Dazzle camouflage is a way to engage the imperatives of visibility labor in the larger context of the assumed value of LGBTQ visibility, while also remaining opaque: demanding to be both seen and invisible.

What's Queer About Queer Immaterial Labor?

Immaterial labor is not performed in the same way by all participants in online spaces; queer-identified people must work to establish and monetize their identifications as queer. As with all influencers, queer beauty vloggers capitalize on the low barriers to entry, vernacular creativity, and interactivity that characterize the media peripheries. They also draw on repertoires of queer expression, including camp, reading, shade, and coming out, to do a distinct form of immaterial labor. Each of Lazzarato's three conditions for immaterial labor are specified through queer practices by beauty vloggers. These vloggers are involved in information and communication work, occupying nonnormative spaces in an otherwise gender- and heteronormative and racially segregated beauty industry and offering diverse representations within these. They are arbiters of fashion and taste, drawing on queer and people of color cultural repertoires to bring fabulousness into the mainstream beauty domain. And they generate value through social relationships, where these queer repertoires are compatible with the social economies of YouTube that demand authenticity and intimacy.

There is something particular to the ways in which queer people produce and are produced as surplus. Surplus populations—those reserve armies of laborers—make themselves visible in peripheral media, but also demonstrate the precarity of their positions. Like other influencers, queer beauty vloggers are working hard for uncertain gains, producing surplus value for YouTube and the companies whose products they sponsor. But they also produce queer excess, bringing their cultural repertoires to mainstream beauty audiences through the pleasures of camp. Queer immaterial labor works to produce representations that are not easily or plentifully found elsewhere, through the queer art of making something spectacular out of scant resources. Queer immaterial labor produces creative excess that falls outside of the obvious demands of the generation of capital. This life-affirming craft sustains queer followers even as it makes these repertoires available to broader audiences. Queer beauty vlogging is only one type of queer immaterial labor, exemplifying how the opportunities and demands of online spaces such as YouTube can be met by existing repertoires of queer practices to generate both conventional and excessive forms of value. Queer immaterial labor involves both work and werk: queer beauty vloggers participate in all the usual demands that online influencers must capitalize their authentic, intimate, and visible selves, as well as repurposing queer cultural repertoires as necessary and pleasurable queer excess.

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