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Let's Take a Selfie! Living in a Snapchat Beauty Filtered World:The Impact it Has on Women's Beauty Perceptions

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LET'S TAKE A SELFIE! LIVING IN A SNAPCHAT BEAUTY FILTERED WORLD: THE
IMPACT IT HAS ON WOMEN'S BEAUTY PERCEPTIONS

by

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ABSTRACT

Snapchat's beauty filters have become a prominent force in the social media realm. It's vital in understanding the impact in how Snapchat's beauty filters shape beauty standards among young women. This became the primary motivation of conducting this qualitative study. Six focus groups were conducted to explore the depths of why female college students between the ages of 18-25 decide to post either selfies with Snapchat's beauty filters applied or natural images. Dialectical tensions theory was used as the foundation for this study to explore both the internal and external discursive struggles young women face when deciding to post natural or filtered selfies on their social media accounts. Integrating impression management, self-objectification, and self-esteem as components of understanding this phenomenon and using a thematic analysis to uncover prevalent and reoccurring themes discussed in the focus groups yielded remarkable results.

Themes of perceptions of attractiveness, presenting a façade, and the power of self-esteem highlighted possible reasons of why women were attracted to utilizing Snapchat's beauty filters or posting natural images. Findings also showed how the internal struggles between perfectionism-reality and external struggles of fitting in-standing out from the crowd became tensions women were often plagued within decision making to post natural or filtered images. This study serves as an epitome for beauty standards imposed in social media especially in HVSM (highly visual social media) sites like Snapchat and Instagram. There's limited research on Snapchat filters and the implications it has on females' overall perceptions of themselves of whether to implement filters on their photos. Understanding the reasons why women feel the

need to use beauty filters or post natural selfies through a discussion-based setting embarked

discoveries of how the media and society should integrate new sets of beauty standards.

This story is dedicated to all of the young women around the world who felt at one point in their lives they felt inadequate of their physical beauty because of what society or the media promoted as ideal beauty. The truth is you are beautiful regardless of what anyone says. You have the power to dedicate your own life choices as a young adult. Love yourself always because you are truly one of a kind.

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I also would like to acknowledge my mother and nana for teaching me the value of life, self-confidence, and how to be an awesome young lady. Growing up in practically a female dominant household, I learned the importance to stand up for myself especially within the career field where at times women's voices are overshadowed by the male dominant market. I have experienced this myself with age discrimination and gender preference for management positions

being a standard in some fields of the industry. I just want to thank them both for being such strong female role models in my life and serving as wonderful mothers to me.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

F2F   Face-to- face

HVSM   Highly Visual Social Media

SNS   Social Networking Sites

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Social media has become a means through which individuals are free to disclose as much information about themselves online as they wish. Sharing information or even content online opens a door to followers, friends, and connections from around the world. One day a user can have 130 followers and then the next month have 1,800 followers (Rudden, 2016).

Social media use has skyrocketed in the United States from just 12% of young adult users in 2005 to 90% in 2015 (Whaite, Shensa, Sidani, Colditz, & Primack, 2017). Reasons for the increase could be the fact that social media satisfies a variety of needs such as self-enhancement, information seeking, and relationship building. For example, when it comes to relationship building, men and women approach social media differently. Women stress attractiveness and are perceived to emphasize the aesthetics of physical beauty in their profile pictures with captivating scenery in the background of their photos or filters hiding their imperfections. Men express strength and power in their online portrayals with descriptions of their career successes, travelling, and professional headshots (Krasnova, Veltri, Eling, & Buxmann, 2017; Manago, Graham, Greenfield, & Salimkhan, 2008). For the purpose of this study, I will focus on women's use of social media, specifically on highly visual social media platforms.

Highly visual social media (HVSM) describes social media that emphasize the visuals (like pictures and videos) as opposed to text (Alena, Kusá, & Záziková, 2016). For example, Instagram users upload a picture that they have selected from the photo album or mobile inventory/gallery. HVSM often include tools that users can use to alter the images they upload or post. Users have the ability to enhance any picture with filters that alter the lighting or color shading. Users can also crop an image to fit their post. Social networking sites (SNS) like

Facebook and Twitter focus more on textual aspects of the message as opposed to the visual aspect like HVSM does. Conversely, HVSM like Snapchat focuses on the users' attention to images and offer customized filters built into the app to augment the pictures to the user's liking (Alena et al., 2016). An additional unique aspect of Snapchat is that the pictures are time sensitive and will disappear after 24 hours.

HVSM depicts images of what the user desires to showcase to their social media audience (impression management). Pictures can include snippets of users' professional or personal lives using "selfies" (images of themselves). Applying filters to selfies alters the way the user appears in pictures; once the selfie is augmented to the users liking it's shared on HVSM platforms to their social media audience (Fardouly, Willburger, & Vartanian, 2017). Selfies can represent users' actual personal lives or highlight the aspects of life users want their audience to believe is their actual life (second self) (Goffman, 1956).

In the context of social media, filters serve as an option for users to apply on their selfie images by changing the lighting quality of their images or their physical appearance. In the case of Instagram, this means airbrushing photos and applying different lighting filters, whereas Snapchat users can alter their images to appear like an animal, fairy, unicorn, or enhance their facial qualities such as appearing to have bigger eyes, a clearer complexion, or a smaller nose. An example would be applying Snapchat's dog or unicorn filter that features abnormally enlarged eyes, horn, dog ears and snout (Willingham, 2018). The fact, that we can alter our images to the point we appear as an animate character or an enhanced version of ourselves can create internal and external conflicts in how the individual views their own image or even how their audience views them. The user might want to appear animated to look like they have a

sense of humor or just wanting social desirability by adding filters that remove their blemishes or imperfections.

When an individual modifies their original photo because they want to change an aspect of their image that they are unhappy with or they perceive society views negatively, they may be subjecting themselves to self-objectification (person's internalization of an observer's view of the body as an object) but also engaging a part in impression management. The rise of HVSM is making it easier for users to construct internal and external conflicts of whether or not to post natural versus filtered images. These conflicts may create dialectical tensions between their self-image and in terms of their desired image for their audience.

This study examines whether female Snapchat users experience dialectical tensions when they choose whether to apply a beauty filter to their selfies and implications of impression management. I will begin with a preview of how social media has become a pervasive media force, and the distinction between SNS and HVSM, objectification theory and self-objectification in HVSM sites like Instagram and Snapchat. Then I will discuss Snapchat's filters and uses, impression management in Snapchat, and conclude with dialectical tensions theory.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The Power of Social Media

Many people are utilizing SNS like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat to connect with other people around the world. As of 2016, over 70% of United States population had at least one social media profile (Rudden, 2016). The use of social media has increased over the years and according to Pew Research in 2018, social media accounts did rise in the U.S. with the largest consumers happening to be young adults between the ages of 18-24 (Smith & Anderson, 2018). The findings showed that:

"Americans ages 18 to 24 are substantially more likely to use platforms such as Snapchat, Instagram and Twitter even when compared with those in their mid- to late-20s. These differences are especially notable when it comes to Snapchat: 78% of 18- to 24-year-olds are Snapchat users, but that share falls to 54% among those ages 25 to 29" (Smith & Anderson, 2018).

Young adults comprise the most prevalent population on these social networks, especially in highly visual social media (HVSM) sites including Instagram and Snapchat which 67% (Instagram) and 62% (Snapchat) of 18-29 years are actively using Instagram and Snapchat (Perrin & Anderson, 2019). However, older people (65 years or more) have increasingly used social media during the last few years at a rate of 11% (Rudden, 2016). Particularly, "Facebook use is relatively common across a range of age groups, with 68% of those ages 50 to 64 and nearly half of those 65 and older saying they use the site (Perrin & Anderson, 2019, p. 1). This ultimately shows the growth and need for social media because it reaches a mass audience of people.

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General Social Media and HVSM

I discussed the frequency of how often people use social media but there is a difference between general social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, and Reddit and highly visual social media. Highly visual social media (HVSM) is defined as social media sites that primarily focus on photos, video, or visual components as opposed to text (Alena, Kusá, & Záziková, 2016). Instagram and Snapchat were built for focusing on those visual components and distinguishes from their competitors like Facebook, Twitter, and Reddit which are platforms for more text-based posting and sharing (Cohen, Newton-John, Slater, 2018).

In previous studies, Instagram users described that sharing photos or videos creates more intimacy between them and their audience since they can view snippets of their life as opposed to reading text on Facebook posts (Hendrickse, Arpan, Clayton, & Ridgeway, 2017). HVSM platforms (like Instagram and Snapchat) enable this selfie behavior even further since most of the images users post are selfies which can further social comparison with other users (Brown & Tiggerman, 2016; Fardouly, Willburger, & Vartanian, 2017; Robinson et al., 2017). This introduces the idea of how Instagram and Snapchat could possibly contribute to the people's inclination to perform behaviors to impress others, self-objectify, and experience internal conflicts that promote dialectical tensions. The first part is understanding impression management, and this need to put on a façade for the public on social media.

Impression Management

SNS like HVSM provide a venue for interacting with others, therefore creating an opportunity for users to engage in impression management. The term impression management was coined by Erving Goffman (1956) who described it as "a conscious decision on the part of the individual to reveal certain aspects of the self and to conceal others, as actors do when performing on stage" (p.1). This means that those individuals are aware of what they are showcasing to the public, whether it's revealing certain aspects of themselves or posting an altered photo on social media.

Impression management encompasses social and cultural factors that influence the way people want to be perceived. In terms of social implications, norms and values are what shape how we interact with others (Brym & Lie, 2006). Impression management goes beyond one's physical appearance and personality traits and incorporates all information about the users that they seek to consciously reveal or conceal. More specifically, impression management includes how individuals would want people in positions of power like bosses or leaders to perceive them as competent and capable. In person, the individual may behave and dress professionally, assist their bosses, stay extra hours (Sinha, 2009).

A person may not be interested in working extra hours or engaging in the desired work behaviors, but they want to convince their officials that they are capable of the job and may dress professionally. Generally, the way people look from how they dress to their body movements through interactions influence how their audience perceives their appearance (Goffman, 1956). Impression management also includes components of how people view beauty through the lens of self-objectification and self-esteem. In the next section, I look into how self-objectification

ties into impression management but before that we must first learn where it derives from which is objectification theory.

Objectification Theory

Objectification theory predicts the outcomes of sexual and self-objectification among women (Cheng, Tran, Miyake, & Kim, 2017; Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Objectification theory is found in several feminist research studies, specifically focusing on body image and eating disorders (Brown et al., 2016; Cohen et al., 2018, Rodriguez, Schwartz, Lahman, & Geist, 2011). Sexual objectification is the premise behind objectification theory and entails "being treated as a body (or collection of body parts) valued predominantly for its use to (or consumption by) others" (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997, p. 174). Sexual objectification in the media depicts women's bodies as objects of desire rather than focusing on any other attributes that constitute a woman like intelligence, achievements, athleticism, and skills (Cheng, et al., 2017).

Objectification theory also discusses how sexual objectification is associated with negative mental health outcomes as extreme as disordered eating through both body surveillance (individual's monitoring their own bodies and images) and self-objectification (Cheng, et al., 2017). This is especially apparent in how women are constantly exposed to media images and sociocultural ideas of beauty which can influence the ideals of both worth and success (Fredrickson, et al., 1997).

The external messages from both the media and other sociocultural influences (such as one's peers, family, and culture) can develop an "internalized observer's perspective which is

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also known as self-objectification" (Davids, Watson, & Gere, 2018, p. 2). Self-objectification derives from concepts like body surveillance, which-

> "...ensures that one's body and appearance conform to sociocultural standards of attractiveness. In turn, such body surveillance may lead to diminished psychological functioning, such as increased appearance and safety anxiety, decreased peak motivational states, diminished awareness of bodily states, and increased body shame." (Fredrickson, et al., 1997, p. 174).

Body surveillance is a portion of what makes objectification theory come to life. Body surveillance entails the individual examining their body to see if it fits the cultural standards enacted by societal constructed norms. The cultural standards are enacted by the internalization of the self stage of objectification theory. In the internalization of self stage, the individual evaluates the cultural and societal standards of what beauty should look like and then they aspire to be more like the idealized standard (Davids et al., 2018).

The internalization of cultural standards has been a predictor or mediating variable in body surveillance⁄body shame and sexual objectification (Watson, Ancis, White, & Nazari, 2013). Internalizing cultural standards means one must adjust the way they look in order to fit the cultural beauty standards that society and the media have constructed, especially towards women. An example would be how Western cultures emphasize the value of thin torsos with large breasts or buttocks or how Eastern cultures value ideal whiteness through beauty practices like plastic surgery or skin bleaching to achieve these ideal beauty standards (Cheng et al., 2017; Fredrickson et al., 1997).

Objectification theory thus leads to the concept of self-objectification, which derives from sexual objectification and body surveillance. Self-objectification is an important component in understanding why HVSM users feel the need to appear a specific way to their social media audience. Self-objectification is reflected in HVSM posts and can be influenced by the internalization of perceived social norms of beauty, filters facilitating as tools for self-objectification, and influencing the perceptions of the users of HVSM.

Self-Objectification in HVSM

Self-objectification is defined as how people view themselves as objects (Cohen, Newton-John, & Slater, 2018). The body also includes the individual's face as a subject of self-objectification. In HVSM sites like Instagram and Snapchat, selfies are vehicles to self-objectification. Vangeel, Vandenbosch, and Eggermont (2018) discuss the link between appearance and self-objectification. They mention "self-objectification can be a response to sociocultural pressures that promote appearance as a defining aspect of a person's worth, whereas the importance of other aspects of the self is downplayed" (p. 64). This is where filtering in social media plays an integral role in how people alter their photos to display an idealized version of themselves.

Self-objectification is not healthy because it leads to a decline in body confidence and a decrease in one's self-esteem, which sometimes produces depressed states (Fredrickson, et al., 1997). Research has also shown that self-objectification leads to greater numbers of female users engaging in body surveillance of their own photos and evaluating them based on their images (Cheng, et al., 2017). Applying filters can facilitate users' self-objectification. Individuals are

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now altering the way they look on HVSM as a way to project a specific appearance (impression management). Users apply filters to selfies as a response to hide certain features while enhancing other qualities like larger eyes and clear complexions. This is why self-objectification is an issue worth studying in HVSM sites. The amount of exposure to these filtered selfie images (like seeing a female with a makeup filter applied on her face) on HVSM sites plays a role in how individuals viewing a friend or a follower perceive their images (Veldhuis, Alleva, Bij de Vaate, Keijer, & Konijn, 2018). However, before moving onto the specifics of filters we must first understand when and where they came about in HVSM,

       Self-objectification in Instagram. Instagram was one of the first social media sites to integrate the use of filters on images when it was launched in 2010 (Kleeman, Daalmans, Carbaat, & Anschutz, 2016). Studies have shown the prevalence of self-objectification in HVSM sites like Instagram (Brown & Tiggerman, 2016; Cohen, Newton-John, & Slater, 2018; Fardouly, Willburger, & Vartanian, 2017; Hendrickse, Arpan, Clayton, & Ridgeway, 2017; Robinson, Prichard, Nikolaidis, Drummond, Drummond, & Tiggerman, 2017). The concern of appearance was one of the biggest factors resulting in self-objectification.

       Hendrickse, Arpan, Clayton, & Ridgeway (2017) analyzed how women using sites like Instagram often compared themselves to other women. They discovered most women felt the need to compare themselves with other women's Instagram profile pictures and selfie images (Hendrickse et al., 2017). The need to compare themselves to others led to higher levels of body surveillance and self-objectification. The women who were exposed to images of other women around their age felt the need to compete with them in terms of posting more attractive natural selfies or applying more filters to hide any imperfections in order to appear more attractive to

their audience. The results showed that women were more likely to apply filters in order to be perceived as more attractive compared to their perceived competition (Hendrickse et al., 2017).

Brown and Tiggerman (2016) found that women often compared their Instagram posts to their peers and similarly aged celebrities. One result of this social comparison was higher levels of body dissatisfaction (Brown & Tiggerman, 2016). The women comparing themselves to the Instagram posts regardless if they were a celebrity or peer not only experienced higher levels of body dissatisfaction but also a greater need to rely on their filtered appearances, and lower levels of self-esteem. These are some of the factors that drive individuals to self-objectify (Vangel, et al., 2018).

Similarly, Robinson et al., (2017) found that women prefer looking like the fit or thin images of women they saw on their Instagram pages and they were willing to do what it took to look like these images. One of the ways women achieved these thin ideals was by altering their images with Instagram filters and photoshopping to make themselves look thinner and to appear more attractive to their Instagram audience. The results of the study also showed women who altered images to achieve thin ideals had higher levels of body dissatisfaction (Robinson, et al., 2017).

The connections between the two studies (Brown & Tiggerman, 2016; Robinson et al., 2017) show how women feel the need to compare themselves to the women they see on Instagram. The more exposure to these thin ideals on Instagram, the higher levels of body dissatisfaction these women experience in the hopes to achieve these thin ideals to the point that they use other tools (like filters) to enhance the quality of their images. Other studies discuss how women seek this selfie-behavior as a means to connect with users but also to display to their

followers their idealized self with the use of filters to enhance these qualities (Cohen, Newton-John, & Slater, 2018 & Fardouly, Willburger, & Vartanian, 2017).

Fardouly, Willburger, and Vartanian's (2017) found that women who were frequent users of Instagram often self-objectified on the platform. One of the ways the women would self-objectify was by posting selfies with their body on display. The results of this study also found that women with more exposure to specifically fitspirational images (fit women posting pictures of themselves working out) correlates to ideals of thinness and body dissatisfaction (Fardouly, Willburger, & Vartanian, 2017). Women who regularly saw fitspirational images on Instagram were more likely to post more selfies and self-objectify.

Cohen, Newton-John and Slater, (2018) also focused on how women who were frequent Instagram users often self-objectified through selfie-behavior. Through the application of Instagram filters, selfie-behavior is prevalent. Women's frequent exposure to selfies with filters applied were more likely to perform selfie behavior since filters enhances the way women look in their selfies by thinning out their faces and torsos. The fact that women thought they looked better with these enhanced qualities encouraged them to post more altered images of themselves, thus influencing the way they are self-objectifying to their audience.

Self-objectification in Snapchat. Similar to self-objectification on Instagram, users also seek out HVSM sites like Snapchat as a way to connect but also to engage in this selfie behavior (Alena Kusá, & Záziková, 2016; Charteris, Gregory, & Masters, 2014; Poltash, 2013). Snapchat is designed for posting selfies and images on the individual's story and to send messages (snaps) to friends. Its design was based exclusively on photo sharing activities. However, there are limited studies on Snapchat correlating to self-objectification compared to studies on Instagram. Yet with the very few studies focused on Snapchat, most have shown that selfie behavior is a

common use of the app (Poltash, 2013). The research about Snapchat so far has primarily examined the demographics of users and how they are using it. Snapchat users predominantly fall within Generation Z for whom technology plays an integral role in their lives (Alena Kusá, & Záziková, 2016). In fact, many of Gen. Z and Millennials use HVSM sites as a way to engage with their peers. Gen. Z also enjoy the idea of intimacy and building more personable connections via social media (Alena Kusa et al., 2016).

Charteris, Gregory, and Masters (2014) reported that young people tend to use Snapchat to perform body surveillance similarly to how women would while viewing images of other women on Instagram. In fact,

"young people who use apps like Snapchat become recognizable to others as a form of self-surveillance…Deploying the notion of the 'panoptic gaze,' we have questioned how social media can be used by young people as surveillance devices, inviting the gaze of others and enabling them to scrutinize themselves-"

(p. 391).

Young individuals have begun conducting self-surveillance in ways that they are beginning to scrutinize the way they look in photographs. What differs Snapchat from Instagram in terms of body surveillance is that Snapchat's app is built around sending selfies to close friends or posting selfies to their public story, whereas on Instagram it is posting an image to your feed. Also, the first thing to appear on the Snapchat app is the camera mode in which the user is directed to a selfie mode facing camera and a vast array of filters and lenses that users can apply. Whereas, in Instagram, users are directed to their friends' posts which can range from selfies, food, travel, or leisure. In Snapchat, ultimately this results in some applying the built-in filters that alter their image (Poltash, 2013). Although the research about Snapchat has not explored self-

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objectification, the described behaviors by youth on this platform mirror those described by researchers studying Instagram user behavior.

Snapchat Filters and Uses

Applying Snapchat filters (like the beauty, silly, brand, or animal filters), serves as a way to enhance the user's image and ultimately alter the way they look to their audience (Poltash, 2013). Appearance plays an important role in HVSM sites because the content consists mostly of photos or selfies. This increases the risk of individuals on HVSM sites to self-objectify because of their awareness of who's watching in their audience (Cohen et al., 2018). However, what differentiates Snapchat from Instagram is the fact that Snapchat has embedded unique filters within their application for users to apply on their faces before they take the photo. Snapchat's unique filters have ultimately paved the way for a new form of online communication (Soffer, 2016).

Soffer (2016) examined Snapchat to investigate how it has changed the way individuals communicate online. Soffer noted that the uniqueness of the "selfie face-detection technology that enables adding real-time graphic effects" alters the way an individual appears to their audience and changes how we visually communicate with others to appear more likeable, entertaining or pretty to our audience (p. 2). An example would be an individual applying the dog or unicorn Snapchat filter (Willingham, 2018). In fact,

"…once the lens is activated the user opens his or her mouth while taking a selfie, at which point a dog's tongue comes out of the user's mouth and licks the screen.

Other filters create images of fire or rainbows coming out of users' mouths"

(Soffer, 2016 p. 2).

Adding these visual graphics changes selfie images significantly. The images users see on Snapchat are no longer still images. Rather, they are animated images coming to life and enhancing the interaction of visual communication. It demonstrates the use of filters and the fact that it can alter one's image drastically. However, the use of filters on Snapchat can also lead individuals to self-objectify more often.

Van Dessel's (2017) studies self-objectification on HVSM sites found that Snapchat filters (like the flower crown or beauty filter) can remove any instances of imperfections by

"…making one's face smooth, forms their complexion to be uniform, enlarges

their eyes, and finally retracts their nose. The result is of course very flattering but

is not a reflection of reality. Moreover, it seems that all these modifications meet

the Western beauty criteria, as if there was only one type of universal beauty"

(Van Dessel, 2017, p. 2).

This ultimately enables users to apply these beauty filters as a way to change the way they look and become more attractive or appealing to themselves and possibly their audience.

The reason why people use these beauty filters has received modest attention. Punyanunt-Carter, De La Cruz, and Wrench (2017) applied uses and gratifications theory and found that people predominantly engage in Snapchat to connect with individuals, for visual entertainment, and excitement.

Although not fully explored, the use of filters to enhance one's image may have implications for how the user wants to influence the perceptions of their audience. It can also reflect something deeper like one's self-esteem.

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Self-Esteem and Snapchat

Another component to consider when examining Snapchat filters is self-esteem. Self-esteem is a broad concept and can be viewed as a separate entity. However, for the purpose of this study it's a valuable component of understanding impression management and its role it plays in Snapchat filters.

Impression management and self-esteem complement each other because the way someone projects their self-image can relate back to their self-esteem (Norris, 2011). Again, impression management focuses on the value of how appearance matters and how the individual wants their audience to perceive them (Goffman, 1956). It is a conscious decision that the individual makes. Snapchat filters act as a means of altering one's attractiveness for potential viewers. The user makes a conscious decision to add a filter with the intention to project an image of themselves they think will enhance the way they are perceived by their audience (Sinha, 2009).

When a person engages in impression management, "they are attempting to manipulate the impression they project onto others" (Norris, 2011, p. 1). Adding filters to selfies, like beauty or silly filters, manipulate the impressions regarding whether the user wants to showcase that they are humorous or try to appear more beautiful in the eyes of their audience. Impression management is usually consistent overtime similar to one's self-esteem. People are persistently exerting effort to manage their appearances in their relationships. This is what Goffman mentions as *performativity* or the use of a mask to conceal one's true self (emotions, feelings, self-esteem) in social interactions (Goffman, 1956).

Saunders and Eaton (2018) observed that young female adolescents who were exposed to Snapchat, Instagram, and Facebook selfies were more likely to develop an eating disorder. The filtered selfie images that the young girls in the study were exposed to had negative effects on their body image and self-esteem. In this case, the girls began to react negatively toward themselves due to the fact that they felt inadequate compared to their filtered selfies (Saunders & Eaton, 2018). It demonstrates the powerful impact that impression management and self-esteem can have on its audience.

Kleeman, Daalmans, Carbaat, and Anschutz (2016) studied Instagram filtered images and young girls' body image. They found that girls exposed to filtered or altered images on Instagram had lower levels of self-esteem and body satisfaction. In fact, most girls reported that the filtered images of women's bodies looked better than the untouched version of the photo. This was because the filtered Instagram selfies that the participants were exposed to appeared to be real as opposed to previous altered images, they have seen in the past with bad photoshopping or obvious lighting differences. The fact that altered images were a reality to the participants shows how impression management again is affecting its audience and their self-esteem.

Women in these previous studies outlined above used filters as tools to hide any insecurities or imperfections from their audience in order to project a "second self" or the use of the mask (Goffman, 1956). Lower levels of self-esteem were an outcome in these studies which helps explains the relationship between impression management and self-esteem. However, it seems reasonable to wonder if users experience some conflicting decisions of whether to integrate filters of their selfies. Also, if they possibly add filters in the sake of hiding self-esteem issues, thus creating the potential for dialectical tensions.

Dialectical Tensions Theory

The theory of dialectical tensions is often applied in interpersonal relationships. The theory suggests that "contradictions or discursive struggles are oppositions that affect or constitute relating" (Baxter & Scharp, 2015, p.1). The theory describes components of contradiction, which include both internal and external conditions, process, and interconnection.

Contradictions play an integral role in dialectical tensions because the theory explores internal and external forces like "autonomy-connection, openness-closedness, prediction novelty, inclusion-seclusion, conventionality-uniqueness, and revelation-concealment" (Pawlowski, 1999, p. 13). Contradictions are a normal phenomenon, which can have both positive and negative ramifications for the relationship. Internal factors include connection and autonomy, openness and closedness, and predictability and novelty (Pawlowski, 1999). Connectedness and autonomy are at opposite ends of the spectrum yet human beings desire to have both, especially in terms of relationships. Autonomy involves the idea that individuals seek independence from each other whereas, in connectedness they seek comfort in bonding (Erhardt & Gibbs, 2014). Openness and closedness is another example of an internal contradiction in which individuals feel the need to share personal information yet also feel the need to withhold that information. Finally, predictability and novelty point to the ways in which we seek predictive patterns to achieve comfort and routine, yet also desire novelty or change within the relationship (this also gets termed by some scholars as "spontaneity"; see for example, Pawloski, 1995). Novelty can also be viewed as the uncertainty of a relationship in which one is left unknowing what someone's true intention may be or not sure how the other individual might react.

There are also external forces like inclusion and seclusion; conventionality and uniqueness; and revelation and concealment (Pawloski, 1999). Inclusion and seclusion occur

when a dyad feels the need to exclude or isolate themselves from others while also experiencing the need for inclusion in social groups. Inclusion and seclusion also encompass environmental and social factors. Conventionality and uniqueness determine if in a dyadic relationship one must conform to societal norms or standards versus establishing their own unique identity. Revelation and concealment tensions occur when dyads feel the competing needs to reveal or hide personal information about their relationships.

Contradictions can mainly be viewed as "contradictory forces pulling in opposite directions. Rather than being negative or something that's eliminated from a relationship, dialectics are inherent in social life'' (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, p. 7).

Dialectical tensions also consist of a process which involves "opposing forces that are dynamic, ever changing, and continuous" (Pawlowski, 1999, p. 16). This is the second stage in the theory known as the process stage. During the process stage, individuals begin forming relationships and managing their behavior and responses. The actions we perform through conversation may not be accurate reflections of our true selves. The process stage is a continuous and developmental stage because relationships are consistently evolving every day. Performativity is one of the key factors in the process stage of dialectical tensions (Putnam, 2004). The words we use or how we react in situations affects not only people's perceptions of us (impression management) but also how we battle with our inner thoughts of trying to stay true to ourselves. This is where the interconnection stage comes in.

The interconnection stage is the last stage of dialectical tensions. This is when all the contradictions are connected with one another in some way (Rawlins, 1989). Interconnections embrace "both-and" choice and the "either-or" choice (Putnam, 2004). The contradictions are distinct from one another; however, they are inextricably tied together as a continuous

connection. Similar to the idea of a rubber band, contradictions are on opposite poles of the spectrum and are physically distinct from one another, yet they are bounded together in the sense that they are connected together by a constant pull; intertwined together creating this continuous connection. In this stage, the individual assumes the task of reframing practices in a more meaningful way.

Research Questions

RQ 1: How do young women between the ages of 18- 25 use Snapchat filters for impression management?

RQ 2: What dialectical tensions are evident in the discourse of young women between the ages of 18-25 about deciding whether to use filters on Snapchat?

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

A qualitative approach was used to discover the possible intrapersonal conflicts women face when deciding to post Snapchat filtered selfies versus natural ones and to learn about how women perceive the filtered selfies of others. A qualitative study was appropriate because a qualitative approach is advantageous for exploring a topic that is not well understood (Brandl, Rabadia, Chang, & Mandel, 2018). Understanding the reasons why women apply social media filters, the social implications of peer pressure they might feel, sociocultural influences, possible contradictions women may face are topics that qualitative research would be better suited to address. Qualitative research helps collect those rich details and personal anecdotes from participants that surveys tend to overlook (Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson, Leech, & Zoran, 2009).

For the purpose of this study I conducted focus groups. Focus groups are beneficial because they are cost effective, encourage disclosure of specific details that surveys cannot answer, and help collect attitudes' and opinions (Brandl et al., 2018; Onwuedgbuzie et al., 2009; Rodriguez, Schwartz, Lahman, & Geist, 2011). Focus groups:

> "provide space for clarifying questions and allow a face-to-face dialogue between students and faculty. In addition, focus groups can encourage student interactions that reveal issues not addressed in online evaluations and promote discussion of practical solutions" (Brandl et al., 2018, p. 2).

Focus groups are also an economical, fast, and efficient method for obtaining information from multiple participants compared to interviews that are more time consuming and costly (Kruger & Casey, 2002). Another advantage of focus groups is that they are a socially oriented environment, which helps create discussion amongst participants. Discussions can instill a sense

of cohesiveness, feeling of belonging, and a welcoming environment, which is beneficial for participants to reveal personal anecdotes or opinions (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009). Focus groups are also effective when trying to create an open discussion about a topic.

Handyside and Ringrose (2017), conducted a focus group to investigate how Snapchat mediates memory and intimacy in youth sexual and relationship cultures. Handyside and Ringrose (2017) used focus groups because "individual storytelling helped shed light on subjective experiences of duration through Snapchat, the contrasting psychic states at play as power dynamics shift and the most personally significant intimacies experienced within and through the app" (p. 351). In the case of this study, focus groups were implemented to create an open discussion where individual storytelling could occur.

Focus groups "have been noted as a method compatible with a feminist epistemological frame as it allows researchers to minimize the distance between themselves and the participants" (Rodriguez et al., 2011, p. 3). Feminist studies include a wide range of practices, which make them dynamic, diversifying, and challenging (Olsen, 2005). Feminist research also includes studying marginalized groups, understanding cultural experiences of women, and advocacy (Rodriguez et al., 2011).

For the purpose of this study, focus groups were the most appropriate method to employ in understanding the possible social implications or reasoning behind why women post filtered selfies versus natural selfies on Snapchat. Focus groups are beneficial for exploring social implications, attitudes, and opinions because they allow multiple voices to be heard in a controlled social setting (Rodriguez et al., 2011). It also helps researchers "interpret the meanings and contradictions of narratives, understanding the subjects' context and reasons and the internal logic of the group" (Silva, Taquette & Coutinho, 2014, p. 438).

I also employed a thematic analysis to investigate the themes found within the transcriptions of the focus groups. A thematic analysis was used for the purpose of understanding the underlying themes of impression management and women's views on Snapchat beauty filters (Owen, 1984). In addition, the richness and descriptive details found within the transcriptions of the focus groups can help highlight the themes why women felt the need to add a filter to their selfies or post natural selfies (Weick, 2007). This helps visualize what similar themes occurred within the focus group discussions and interpret their overall reasons why they prefer filtered selfies versus posting the natural images on their stories or snaps.

Participants

For this study, female participants from a Southeastern university volunteered to participate in the focus group for class credit. A sample size of 33 female college students ranging from ages 18- 25 were selected for this study. The average age of participants was around 19-20 years old. The women selected came from diverse backgrounds and ethnicities. Approximately 52.9 % identified as Caucasian, 11.8% identified as African American, 20.6% Hispanic, 14.7% Asian, 0.003% as African, 0.003% as Indian, and 0.006% as other.

Around 7% identified they rarely use Snapchat, 15% identified they somewhat often use Snapchat, 36% said they used it often, while 42% stated they used it very often. When it came to the usage of Snapchat filters, 24% of participants stated they rarely used them, 36% somewhat often used filters, 16% often, and 24% very often.

Prior to participating in the focus group participants had to sign up via a Sign-up Genius link to reserve a spot on a selected day. Only active female Snapchat users between the ages of 18-25 users were invited to participate in focus groups.

Research Team

The facilitator of the focus group was I. I distributed demographic questionnaires for the participants and collected them prior to the focus group beginning. I also arranged and recorded all six focus groups, facilitated a Sign-up Genius for participants to sign up and used audio recorders to record audio for the focus groups. I also transcribed all the data with a transcription software *Otter AI* and some by hand.

Procedure

Before beginning data collection, the researcher obtained approval from the Institutional Review Board to ensure that the study adhered to ethical guidelines (See Appendix A: IRB Approval). The primary investigator (also the facilitator of the focus group) rehearsed asking questions prior to the focus groups, made sure to provide refreshments as compensation to all participants, and printed enough demographic sheets to hand out prior to focus group discussion.

In order to establish focus group sessions, participants were recruited through faculty members who were willing to offer credit to their students for participating in this study via an invitation email (See Appendix B: Recruitment Email). In the email, participants were given a brief introduction of the study and were eligible to participate if they were a female between the ages of 18-25 and used Snapchat and Snapchat filters. If interested they were to sign-up for one

of the six focus group sessions via the Sign-up Genius link at the end of the email. In the invitation, potential participants were provided with an informed consent (See Appendix C: Informed Consent) and were provided options to choose a date/time slot when they could participate (See Appendix F: Schedule Slots).

Once they chose a date/time slot they were expected to arrive at the location of the study on campus at the designated date/time they signed up for. Upon arrival, participants were greeted and were provided a short demographic questionnaire (See Appendix D: Demographic Questionnaire). This questionnaire solicited specific information regarding demographics such as age, ethnicity, how often they used Snapchat and Snapchat filters.

The primary investigator/facilitator also acted as the focus group leader. Questions were developed based on an exploratory study which allowed the group facilitator to explore other topic areas in relation to social media if it seemed more relevant (Burnette et al., 2017). Some probing questions were asked when necessary to keep participants on track with the study. Participants were also shown images of the diversity of Snapchat's beauty filters in order to put in perspective what the researcher meant by beauty filters and that there was a clear understanding of what was being discussed when referring beauty filters. The focus groups were approximately 75 mins each. The shortest focus group was around 32 minutes with three participants with the longest being close to 75 minutes exactly with nine participants.

The researcher explained the study and procedure to each set of focus group participants. Participants were asked a set of questions relating to their appearance, social media and filter use, and reflections (See Appendix E: Focus Group Script).

At the end of the study, participants were reminded once again that all their data would remain confidential and stored in a password protected laptop. All of the audio would be deleted

once all of the audio was transcribed. None of their names would be used in the study and the researcher would use pseudonyms. A total of six focus groups were held, all on separate dates. On average each session was comprised of around six to eight females. The smallest focus group had around two female participants while the largest focus group had about thirteen participants. Sessions were held in separate, private rooms within the school and were audio-recorded using battery operated audio recorders. Each group had one facilitator (a graduate level master student) in the room.

Data Reduction

All of the audio collected from the six focus groups was transcribed. The audio was transferred from an audio recorder into a password protected laptop. Once audio files were extracted, they were converted to text files using the transcription software *Otter AI*. The text was separated by each speaker's response from the focus group. After all the text appeared on the document, I went back and renamed each speaker with pseudonyms. On the side of each of the pseudonyms is a marking labelled (F#). Each number represents the focus group session the speaker was in. For example, Sheena (F6) represents that this speaker was in focus group session 6. I then downloaded each of the text files into a Word document and created a key for coding.

While reading through the transcriptions, I adjusted some of the wording because the software transcribed some of the words incorrectly. Also, there were some errors of voice recognition and overlaps of talking mismatching speakers. I went back and listened to all six audio tracks and adjusted speakers and accounted for speaker overlaps. Some incorrect statements were deleted and replaced by the correct statements mentioned in the audio. Overlaps

were also added within the text. Once all the text was inputted correctly matching as closely to the audio file the text was further analyzed with coding themes and instances of external and internal dialectical tensions were marked.

Thematic analysis revealed reoccurring impression management strategies: attractiveness, presenting the façade, and self-esteem. Themes were coded in colors: attractiveness (blue), presenting façade (green), and self-esteem (orange) to distinguish the different themes found in the transcriptions. Dialectical tensions were marked with an E for external and an I for internal to note that there were internal or external contradictions among speakers.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANAYLSIS

The first research question asked was:

> **RQ 1:** How do young women between the ages of 18- 25 use Snapchat filters for
>
> impression management?

Thematic analysis served as a tool to identify some of the themes that answer this question. One of the most prevalent themes addressed in the focus groups was discussions of perceptions of attractiveness. Discussions of this issue indicates that physical attractiveness played a crucial role in regard to impression management.

Perceptions of Attractiveness

Members of the focus groups frequently mentioned that attractiveness was one of the reasons they felt the need to use beauty filters. The theme of perceptions of attractiveness is divided into two opposing subthemes. One subtheme is fixing those flaws with Snapchat's beauty filters while the second one embraces the natural beauty by showcasing your true and natural self.

Fixing those flaws. Many participants mentioned that the beauty filters enhanced their looks, cleared away any imperfections, thinned out their face or made their skin glow. Filters in this sense served as a correctional tool to hide any perceived imperfections they might have. It also aided in enhancing qualities they already appreciated among themselves. Below are some excerpts of what the participants discussed about how they felt about Snapchat's beauty filters:

Maci (F1):

Now I think what most people go for is like the filter that smooths out your skin and makes your eyes bright and gives you like longer lashes. Yeah, it makes you look not as pale and actually just like alters your appearance kind of completely.

Trina (F2): Because it makes it makes me look prettier. Honestly. Like, the skin and like the flowers and stuff.

Lisa (F3): No, no blemishes. Nothing is just like, perfect. All right.

Storm (F5):

I that's why I've stopped because it's just like, every time I was taking a picture, I was like, looking for some way to change it. I wasn't like looking at the picture. I was like, Okay, how can I make it better? It wasn't like, Oh, this is a nice picture. It was okay. It's awful. Let me change it. Every single picture.

Phoebe (F6): …look a certain way that enhances what you want to.

Lila (F6): Covers pimples. Dark circles.

In these instances, we see how Snapchat beauty filters enhanced their looks or how these females wanted to be perceived as more attractive or beautiful to their audience and themselves. Many of the participants emphasized that these beauty filters brightened up their skin, made their eyes bigger, and removed blemishes with just a swipe to a beauty filter. This sums up the idea of how the females wanted to perfect themselves in order to be viewed as what they believed was attractive to their audience. Thus, putting their face on display to become an object of observation to the public reinforcing the idea of self-objectification and how beauty filters serve as accessible correction tools for females.

Getting real. Even though some of the female participants praised the idea of how Snapchat beauty filters were a great integration within the app to hide their flaws and enhance certain facial qualities, some of the participants begged to disagree. The perception of attractiveness was also emphasized when women spoke about natural beauty. Natural beauty is all about embracing your true form and showcasing those pimples, scars, wrinkles, chunks, and all the imperfections that beauty filters wash away.

Cinderella (F4):

> I posted natural photos; my skin actually used to be very clear. And then I got on the *Nexx* one which is like an implant. ----Worst skin like 10 out of 10 worst acne of my life. So, I didn't really cover it up with makeup unless I was like going to my boyfriend and I didn't want to look or feel horrible by myself. But now I don't cover it up. I just wear mascara and lipstick so people can get distract from my acne over here.

Suzie (F6):

> And like, my face is just like, not, it's clear. It's like, yeah, I've like pimples like everywhere, and that's natural, but it's just only like the certain few but nowadays, I'm like, man, like, who cares, I if I feel good about it, I'm gonna post it, it just---just little, that little part of me that like, that's from like, all these years of like, like the media and everything, like affecting the way I think of how I look.

Lil (F6):

> I don't think they care. There's like, Oh, look, you actually posted something on a while. It's kind of like what you said earlier, like, my friends know what I look like. So, like if

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even if I posted something like super crazy filtered, it wouldn't make a difference,

because it's not changing that perception of me because they know who I am.

Nadine (F6): Mostly just natural filters just because like, for my friends, I don't really care. They already know what I look like.

When discussing natural beauty, many women felt that their imperfections are often disguised in beauty filters. However, when imperfections are shown, most of the women found it beautiful because it's quite rare to see women expose themselves in their most natural form. It also showcases how they are being vulnerable, confident, and being real to their audience and friends when deciding to post those natural images of themselves. The filter-free selfies were also placed in opposition to media-created ideals for beauty. Authenticity and empowerment are what some women felt that natural selfies promoted because they wanted to see more images like that on their social media feeds and Snapchat stories.

Perception of attractiveness is a component of impression management. Some of the reasons why someone cares so much to attain beauty standards is to keep up with the societal view of beauty standards or to completely change and set a new standard of natural beauty. Many of the beauty filters within the Snapchat app often makes females have clearer skin rounder faces, defined cheekbones, larger lips and eyes, and smaller noses which emphasizes more of the ideal beauty standards enacted in society via media. Conversely, posting natural selfies showcasing the imperfections like acne, bruises, beauty marks, scars, extra layers of skin, are promoting a new stance of beauty standards.

Yet, women expressed how they still feel this need to keep up with their social media appearance regardless of how they feel about beauty filters. The theme of presenting the façade

was another theme prominent within the discussions. It discusses how presenting a façade becomes a crucial component in why women feel the need to utilize beauty filters in their photos and how their social media persona is an idealized reflection of their character.

Presenting the Façade

Even though the perceptions of attractiveness are a part of impression management, the actual concept of keeping up appearances or maintaining the "second self" identity is largely just as important. Many of the female participants discussed that maintaining appearances was important in the sake of keeping their social media persona intact even though they didn't always agree with using beauty filters, some felt that for the sake of their social media persona it mattered.

Maci (F1):

> I think [filter use] it's really damaging on most girls' appearances.

> I know most my friends, their bodies and their social media. And I think if we take a step back, and like realize we're all individuals, we're not like competing for this like,

> like fame on Instagram or this like item that, you know, I'll be good. And I think it's like really like, impactful on Earth, like self-judgment and appearance.

Trina (F2): It's not real. Like you try to build an image that it's really like not you sometimes, like, --- You don't look like on photos, like with all the filters going on, then you look like in person.

Tori (F2):

A lot of people aren't who they truly are on like, their social media, like compared to like, they are in reality. And like, a lot of people use the term like catfish. Because like, they'll see them like on Instagram and like think like, wow, they're beautiful. And then like, you see them in person. And it's just like a totally different.

Lisa (F3): A lot. ---It's really important. Really Why? Like, -- you have to look good. Your pictures up to be like, the best quality, and you have to look good.

Maggie (F3):

Personally, I only have like one thing to have enough. Oh, it's not even a picture of me. But from what I see outside, I feel like Yeah, you do have to kind of keep image up. Like look nice. Like, even to your friends and family. Even. Mm.

Hope (F5):

Like it's people that you don't know and like you don't actually like here but then you really are like looking through the validation and like you want their approval even though they're people you don't know.

Storm (F5):

Yeah, still like yeah, it's weird.

It's a weird like girls will take the beautiful pictures and then not post them because they're like, Oh, my hair like this one hair is out of place or Oh my God, my chin looks got a double chin or my knee looks kind of weird. It's like position weird. I literally had a friend who her foot was like, angled weird. And she was like, I'm not posting it. I was like, everything else is fine. But yeah.

Nadine (F6): Yeah. Because some people get so obsessed with it. Yeah, like they just like always on their phone or always on Instagram. And I'm just like, I didn't want to get roped into that.

Rhonda (F6):

I kind of do it in a sense, but at the same time, it's like I could walk out of my apartment like today like no makeup. And I'm just like, you know, I've been up since three something in the morning. Like, I don't care. But like when you put a picture up, I feel like people have the opportunity to go back because I feel like when I'm walking around campus, I'm never going to see these people again. And if I do, I'll probably wear something different, or they probably won't even remember me. But on social media, it's there almost forever. I mean, Snapchat, it's only there for 24 hours. But within those 24 hours, someone else could, you know, access it and say, Oh, why she What does she looks so busted today? What does she look like?

Cat (F2):

With the whole like, comment and like feature literally social media is based off of what other people think. Yeah. How many likes you get how many replies how many buyers hardy no Geez, that's a feature and you sometimes do beat yourself up if maybe you don't get you know, the same amount of likes or things like that------------------------

I kind of put my second self above myself. So, I'm more attached I she said to my second self than I am to my own self, put on this the nice clothes and I'll put make sure my hair looks nice. Just for a picture. I'm all always putting my second self above myself. So

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yeah, I don't know if that makes sense. But you know, the second self and there is a completely second self, your digital self……….

Through these excerpts we see how their social media presence matters. Issues of self-doubt, insecurity, and just maintaining a social media persona played a part in maintaining these façades. Some mentioned that in public places like school or stores didn't matter as much because it wasn't like they were going to see those people again and even didn't seem to care as much about their opinions of them. However, when it came to social media, it was important because it's something that's easily accessible and available at any given time. Also, the people viewing the images mattered. The participants shared how they recognize their audience and regardless of who was watching their social media profiles and feeds, their image could be impacted if they were to post any flawed images of themselves. At the end of the day, how they looked on social media mattered.

Knowing who their audience was made a difference in how they wanted to maintain their façade. Family and friends were often mentioned as people whose opinions seem to matter the most. Others even mentioned how possible employers might preview their SNS pages and that their appearance had to be seen a specific way. Excerpts below discuss how placing the façade mattered in terms of potential employers or outside viewers.

Cat (F2):

---[Referring to second self-] Even for me it just for professional aspect. If someone ever, you know, stumbles upon my---my social media info it is so unrealistic, just the whole professional cultures. We don't act like that. But you just always have to put forth your best self every time. So, if someone comes, though, like I said, with, you know, though I

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may not be there or physically be there. My second self is there always. So, I think that's kind of why social media is important. Because that person is always there. You can log into my social media right now. So that person is always there. So, it's just always wanted to make sure that they look good, especially for a professional aspect. You never know who's coming on your social media doesn't tell you. I mean, unless you pay for the feature, but it is.

Jade (F2):

Actually, I got my job from like, based off of social media so I are was lucky. Okay, so I work at Publix and my boss like our, at the nearest Publix to this university. So, all of us are college students. And so, our boss, like goes through social media, if you have a bad appearance, or you have like, if you're very explicit and stuff like that, obviously, you're not going to get the job. But like, based off based off of what I had on my page, I got my job.

Kimi (F6):

I kind of have like a similar standpoint, like, ---

the more I care probably like, the more you have, like an effect on me. Like I care a lot about like what coworkers think of me, because I know that if I want to drop a shift or something like that, they depend on me. But if it's somebody that I'm walking by, and for some reason, they have like a negative perspective of me like, it's the same thing. Like I'm not going to see them again. So, I care more about it when people I think when all end up caring more about their opinion in the long run, made a bigger effect on me.

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Helga (F6):

> I wish it didn't matter so much. But it's kind of necessary, especially on the person professional spectrum. First impressions do matter, if possible, employers are looking at any kind of pictures, and then going over to like Snapchat or something, you don't want any bad pictures of yourself out in that spectrum. So overall, you don't want anything to make you look poorly.

From these discussions it shows how much a social media image showcases impression management and keeping up the façade, especially when it comes to marketing your "second-self" (social media self in this instance) to your audience. The participants described how their potential employers or even what their co-workers thought of them were motivating components of why they felt the need to keep up with their second self. Filters were also important in this sense because they perfect the way they look in order to maintain that perfect image online which led to discussions more about the importance of the second self. When some of the participants were referring to their "second self" they were ultimately describing the social media image they portray online beyond Snapchat. Many mentioned that they use Snapchat filters to maintain a pristine image and share that image across their other SNS. They mentioned how their profile pictures on LinkedIn or Facebook were enhanced by the Snapchat beauty filters. Using the beauty filters for them helped them hide their perceived imperfections and maintain their second self. To some participants, their second self to some was more important than their actual self. This begins to introduce the concept of how self-esteem can also be a factor why people feel the need to maintain these façades.

The Power of Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is a complex theme; therefore, it is examined as a separate entity. However, this is also a vital component of why females between the ages of 18-25 might use Snapchat filters for impression management. Self-esteem was the second most prevalent theme found in the transcriptions. It can be examined by two subthemes: concern for others' well-being and the poster's self-esteem (the one posting the filtered image).

Concern for others. Many of the female participants expressed concern towards women posting filtered images across multiple social media platforms. Some of the females expressed how they hoped that the girl underneath that filter was alright or curious of how it affected their self-esteem when deciding to post a beauty filter selfie. Below are some excerpts of women's views when seeing filtered images on Snapchat or their social media feeds.

Maci (F1):

> I think I'm like filters like, people kind of get made fun of because on Snapchat, like we can see when something is super filtered. And you're like super orange. And like, it's just not real. So, to me, it's like, I don't know what people are like thinking when they're posting it. Like, let me put on this persona or let me --I mean, I think it's great. But um, I just hope they're secure. After everything is gone. Like when you make us gone, the filters are gone and not available. I hope they feel good rooted in themselves. And whether that requires makeup or not.

Jade (F2):

The more unrealistic the filter is, the less likely I would be to like, comment and hype them up. Like if my friend posters up something with like, showing maybe they were sorry, I want to say insecure, maybe they're proud of it. I don't know, blemishes like if they post up their blemishes like I'll be more likely to comment and say like, hey, like, go you like you look great, and hype them up. Just to boost your confidence.

Women discussed concern for the females underneath the filter. Some were worried if the woman posting the image was alright or insecure about themselves. When exposed to those images many women didn't feel the need to comment or "hype them up" (Jade, F2) in avoidance to enable or invoke a response from the woman or friend. Not knowing the exact reason why their friends or seeing other females post with a filtered image was quite a concern and they didn't feel the need to question or even ask in case it did stem from self-esteem issues. However, they hoped to know if the females under those beauty filters were alright with themselves at the end of the day, which then led to them to question about their own self-esteem and insecurities.

The poster's self-esteem. Women also discussed their previous insecurities and how they began to love themselves with or without the filtered images. The accessibility of beauty filters played a part of how the female participants felt about their own level of self-esteem. Some expressed how beauty filters helped hide their insecurities in order to mask their self-esteem, which introduces the idea that the using the beauty filters serves is a motive to hide lower levels of self-esteem. These were some of their outcomes when using the beauty filters:

Lisa (F3): No, I debated I still debate whenever I pull it up. Sometimes it's just that you just gotta just do it. Just I don't think about it. But sometimes I do stop. Should I go natural or not?

Snow (F4): Yeah, it almost gets to a point where like, you see yourself with the filter. And then you see yourself without filtering really, really look like.

Ariel (F4): I like what I look like.

Aurora (F4):

> The filter on it. Like maybe smaller. It was like, Oh my God. I didn't think my forehead was huge. But---maybe now I'm really wrong, or all these things like why would you make a filter that does that? Like, I don't know, -----I just don't notice those things. And the fact that somebody was so self-conscious that they made a filter to like, change it. I don't know, I just thought that was crazy–

> Yeah, popped up is like it was like recommended. I was like, okay, because I thought it was just gonna be like a color. And then I'll put the filter on it. Like you just saw your forehead shrink. And I was like, okay, stay away from that one. I feel.

Angelica (F6):

> I agree with the fact that like it's fun to use every once in a while, when your just kind of messing around with like filters and stuff. But if you're like dependent on it to make yourself look a certain way then that's an issue in itself.

Sheena (F6):

> I feel like when Instagram first came out, I was like in middle school. And I would like post selfies and like, edit the crap out of them. And then, like a while after, like, I was caring so much about it. And then I was like, I was like so insecure about seeing people in person, because I was like, they're gonna think I look nothing like my actual photo. I

mean, I was like, 14, but like, I don't know, it became like an issue. And then I stopped

posting, like selfies. And then I stopped like editing my photos. And like, it's kind of like

solve that problem. But like, yeah, it was like an issue when I was growing up. Now not

an issue.

Insecurities, questioning of self-worth or having a sense of self-love are all components

of self-esteem. However, self-esteem is also part of how the women felt the need to portray

themselves online. The choice of whether to post a natural selfie versus a filtered selfie was

dependent on the individual's overall mood or how they felt about themselves. Some women on

the other hand felt beautiful and they didn't feel that a beauty filter was a necessity since they

already felt confident about the way they looked. Others thought the filters not only enhanced

their physical appearance, but it helped boost their self-confidence when they post those images.

Regardless, self-esteem is a part of how women feel the need to keep up with their appearances.

Therefore, impression management plays an integral role in beauty perceptions and

understanding why women between the ages of 18-25 use Snapchat beauty filters in the first

place.

For my second research question, I wanted to examine the possible dialectical tensions of

why women choose to post a filtered image.

RQ 2: What dialectical tensions are evident in the discourse of young women between

the ages of 18-25 about deciding whether to use filters on Snapchat?

In order to examine further of how dialectical tensions are evident in deciding whether

young women between the ages of 18-25 decide to use filters on Snapchat, I coded instances

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when women felt any internal and external contradictions. Dialectical tensions were coded as I for any internal contradictions they faced and E for any external contradictions.

Internal Contradictions

One of the components of dialectical tensions is the external and internal contradictions people face in everyday life. The internal contradictions focus on connectedness-autonomy, predictability-uniqueness, and openness-closedness of a given scenario. One internal contradiction many women discussed was the idea of achieving perfection versus portraying a dose of reality.

Achieving perfection. Perfectionism was an obtainable goal most women felt the need to achieve. With the accessibility and convenience to Snapchat beauty filters with a quick swipe, many women felt that the filters provided a sense of comfort to sculpt their idealized versions of themselves. Due to the platform's built-in beauty filters women can effortlessly add the filters to reinforce their ideals of perfectionism (like thinning out their faces, enlarging their eyes, and removing blemishes).

Mulan (F4): Yeah, I could snap it for Wow. Because of that because I was like all had like filters all the time. And if I didn't have filters, I was like, Oh, this is gross.

Lisa (F3):

> It makes it look like you have makeup on. So, it works me too lazy to do it… No, no blemishes. Nothing is just like, perfect. All right…

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What's so addicting about the filter, you think it looks perfect. It just makes you look

perfect is like--it makes you look like the version of yourself that you want to go to the

gym to get to. But you don't go to the gym to get through it. So, you just use it.

Cat (F2):

I personally do love [filters] them. Obviously, I think that you know, you have them, they

don't really look like yourself. You know, sometimes they glitch and go off and come

back. So that's me personally, I honestly love Snapchat filters.

Trina (F2): It makes it makes me looks prettier. Honestly. Like, the skin and like the flowers and

stuff.

Betty (F1):

I like -like filters because, like, I'll put it on like a Snapchat or something or take a video

of like the ocean and I'll put the beach by, like such an honor that I look at my Snapchat

story a little later. To go like, so good. Like impacts my, the memory I had of actually

being out there.

Jean (F5):

I look better, but like it's like every single story I post on my camera without using a

photo. I don't know why. Just like, I automatically take the picture and start swiping.

Yeah--- it's kind of like program now. Yeah, that's why.

In these quotes, they discuss how they feel the need to apply these Snapchat filters onto

their images or selfies in order to feel prettier or sometimes more confident about themselves. It

also highlights themes of self-esteem and beauty in a sense because these Snapchat filters have

provided a tool to alter their physical image in order to make the females have smoother skin or bigger eyes.

Helga (F6): With the like bigger eyes. I mean, these big sexy eyes. But I've noticed that on that animated filters that that's always a thing.

Aurora (F4): A lot of filters. It's easy to be pretty without having the money for it. Yeah, like the Kardashians. They're like, that's like the ultimate beauty.

Storm (F5): All for darkness has been like, smooth down her lines. Everything more saturated. Her eyes are brighter. Her eyes don't even look at the same color.

Sheena (F6):

> Yeah. Although they are nice for like, a scenario like I'm not wearing any makeup. But I feel like I look like crap. And if I want to send something to someone and not look like absolute crap, those that's when it comes in handy. But like, I agree, I don't necessarily do it to like, post something about me, you know?

Words like smooth skin, brighter or bigger eyes, or perfection were constantly highlighted in reasons why women prefer to use the Snapchat filters. These physical enhancements that the beauty filters specifically provided were the main contributors of why women liked using the Snapchat beauty filters. Also, the mentioning of how convenient they were made it easier for them to add the filter to the point that some felt like adding the filters were an automatic response. In the end, the filters became an effortless way to obtain perfection.

This also explores the idea of connectedness, predictability, and closedness. It's almost expected to apply a beauty filter because it so accessible to the user. Also, most participants

expressed that it was not uncommon to see beauty filters posted on their friend's selfies. In way it creates a sense of connectedness with the viewers and poster of the filtered image and predictability that they will continue to post selfies with beauty filters applied in their stories or share on their various social media accounts. Yet, at the same time choosing to use a beauty filter to enhance a selfie instead of posting a natural one creates the tension of closedness because some women felt that they were hiding their flaws under the filter. The idea of using the beauty filters also opened the discussion of how it alters a sense of one's reality of what is real or fake.

A dose of reality. When women favored less of the beauty filters and the standards of achieving ideal perfectionism in their selfies, they viewed beauty filters as more of a problematic issue when it comes to deciphering fantasy (idealized perfectionism) versus the reality. Many females shared that beauty filters aren't realistic and promote standards that harm their self-confidence. A few of the responses include:

Maggie (F3): She looks a little bit more. Dare I say it's like animated in a way. Because of her--- especially it's the eyes mostly because it's a little bit bigger issue.

Black Widow (F5): People want to look like that. In real life. Yeah, but like no, not possible cuz it's just unrealistic.

Nadine (F6): Like, for these photos, I just feel like it's very, it's unrealistic. Like it's, it's, you know, you're looking at a picture that's not even like yourself.

Angelica (F6):

> -- just so fake, like…She was covering half her face. Like, I know, she doesn't look like
> that. And for me with the whole filter thing. It's a little bit different because I did

photography lot in high school. So, I'm more into Photoshop of like, fixing the contrast changing the saturation, not covering my whole face, like that.

Belle (F4):

That's why I don't like using them at all because I feel like I want to look fake on a picture. And then like, they look at me, they're like, opening your pictures. Like, she's perfect. Really nice eyelashes and everything. And I don't know, I feel like I don't want to be that like whenever I am Snapchatting or like doing something. I just like funny videos.

Storm (F5):

And instead of posting a selfie that is completely them. They're posting one that has been slightly altered, whether it's coloring or, or face structure or anything like that people nowadays can even I think on Snapchat, you can have ones that like put makeup on your face if you have no makeup on there is like an eyeliner one.

Kimi (F6): I use [filters] them very rarely, if at all.

In these excerpts we see themes of how the women felt that Snapchat filters were something they didn't feel the need to use. Women were shown images of both animated filters with the fire and heart emojis appearing above the head, makeup filters, flower crowns and decorated headpieces, and the subtle beauty filters. Regardless of the type of filter, they felt that these images were portraying unrealistic beauty expectations or coming off as artificial. Some of them explicitly stated that the beauty filters alter the face to the point where it becomes unrecognizable or too animated. Filters shy away from the realistic aspect that makes a female authentic.

Women instead valued the idea of other women posting more natural selfies. The natural selfies, to them, were a depiction of reality and revealing their "true" identity of who they are as a woman instead of hiding under the comfort of a beauty filter. Some females even disclosed that they personally post or share natural images of themselves to represent their true physical form rather the idealized version they commonly see online.

Tori (F2): I post natural selfies. I don't wear makeup too often.

Jasmine (F4): But you also look really good, natural. And I was like, Oh, I don't really hear that often. So that's nice. That's nice. Really sweet.

Raven (F5): I have a lot of respect for like natural beauty though. So, when people post pictures or videos with nothing, I feel like I can relate to them. I'm like, -- yeah, that's how.

Cinderella (F4): Yeah, so young. And the women who look up to that are beautiful. Even without makeup. It's like, oh, they're naturally beautiful.

Jade (F2):

> Personally, I've worked hard to like gain confidence, I feel like would be a setback. If I just like this always covered. My blemishes like I know I'm not perfect at all. And I had to work on that. So, like just to like always hide it. Just feel like I'd be lying to myself.

Ariel (F4):

> So, like I literally barely posted my story and then people I Snapchat like I don't keep up with streaks or anything. Like I just Snapchat the people I care about if I do then doesn't matter when it clicks. I don't add a filter. I stick with it.

Through these discussions there's a presence of uniqueness or novelty that natural selfies present themselves as. Unlike the common filtered beauty images, they see on regular basis, natural selfies are often rare to find on someone's social media page or Snapchat story (novelty). However, they are also promoting something new to their audience that not many women are able to relate to since most tend to post with the beauty filters implemented on their selfies (autonomy). It also highlights authenticity and openness from the woman posting the natural image. She's revealing to her audience her true self (reality). However, all these excerpts showcase the internal tensions women face in whether to decide to post a beauty filter image or natural selfie. There's also the matter of dealing with the external factors that contribute just as crucial to the internal tensions' women face.

External Contradictions

Like internal contradictions, external contradictions focus on the outside forces like societal standards and expectations that contribute to the possible tensions people face in given scenarios. External tensions can include inclusion-seclusion, conventionality-uniqueness, and revelation-concealment. The most notable external tensions discussed among participants was the idea of fitting in with the crowd and standing out against the beauty standards enacted by society.

Fitting in with crowd. Many of the participants expressed that adding filters to selfies was just a norm. Filters are described as being expected and socially acceptable and applicable to anyone including social media influencers and celebrities. Many of the participants shared how it's not something new or surprising to see filters applied to photos:

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Maci (F1): I rarely use Snapchat filters. But I mean, I see them every day. I'm constantly on Snapchat, I see them being used constantly.

Hope (F5): People don't post pictures that much anymore without like editing. It's the norm.

Suzie (F6): Yeah. So, it's like, it's kind of like, you understand why guys will be confused in a sense, because a lot of people use filters...

Cat (F2): And I think filters have become normalized. I mean, it's shocking. It's not like Oh, yeah. I mean, everyone does. Yeah, everyone. Usually--

Belle (F4):

> Yes, actually, like a good point. Like [filters] it's a really international thing, I have like friends, like--- live in Europe and South America and anywhere. And they all use same filter. So, like I've never had anybody come in like Oh, nice filter or something like that.

Many expressed how common it was to see a beauty filter planted on their friends', family, or peers' faces. One even mentioned that beauty filters are international and pretty much the same in other countries outside the United States which shows how common and prevalent they are in society. It introduces how filters are quite conventional and unoriginal since anyone has access to them if they have the Snapchat app (conventionality).

Interestingly, enough many females also shared how it's so normal that celebrities even use them which reinforces the idea of how it's socially acceptable to anyone (inclusion). It also reinforces how it's inclusive to anyone who uses Snapchat.

Raven (F5): Their people, these celebrities literally are normal people. It's just their job is on TV. Or they do music, or they act? They're literally normal people.

MJ (F5):

Like I don't even know like that whole thing was like Kylie Jenner no Kendall Jenner having acne I don't even know she had acne. Like everyone. Yeah, I think Yeah, but like in pictures like I would never see it was always like photoshopped out like when she like opened up about it and like how it affected her life. I was like, like, I never knew that.

Lil (F6):

It's almost like having like a brand that you have to sell. Yeah, absolutely hired and you have to, like, maintain like your brand. And do what you put out represents you. And so like, the content you post, like, like you said, can really influence like you, your career, which is like a big deal. You know, -it's like how you survive.

Betty (F1):

I think its sort of like expectations, like you're expected to like, look gorgeous and put filters on so that when they don't buy, nobody's with you, and you don't have any support.

Jade (F2):

I think on a daily basis, or like, whenever we step outside, we're set up to or set up to these beauty standards that are because we don't look like aesthetically pleasing or what, like, for example, I see this like Kylie Jenner, the Kardashians are like, these are all like, aesthetically pleasing standards that are set up, like higher standards that unfortunately, many of us can't reach. That makes sense. I think.

It highlights how beauty filters are common even among celebrities and social media influencers who represent idealized beauty standards. Seeing celebrities and social media influencers adding

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beauty filters showcased how normalized these filters are but also made the celebrities and influencers relatable to other women. It showed that even though they may be in the public eye, beauty standards still affect them and their brand and they, too, face issues of insecurity and feeling the need to conceal their flaws just like anyone else (concealment). This introduces an external issue because beauty filters are not affecting just the individuals but affecting women around the world. Women are recognizing how influential societal beauty standards are to the point that apps like Snapchat have beauty filters installed within its platform, so users have easy access to. Some filters are now reforming how beauty standards should be using natural images.

Standing out from the crowd. Some women expressed how they like to fit in with the crowd while others beg to differ. Many participants who post regularly without filters found that it was better to promote individuality and natural beauty as opposed to doing what everyone else was doing (uniqueness). Natural selfies were viewed as empowering to women because it's taking a stance against the norms of society's view on beauty and putting to the forefront what should be deemed as beautiful according to the female participants.

Jade (F2):

> I feel like posting more natural selfies, just it's like a rebellious act towards the new state, or the beauty standards that are set up against us. So like, if you just post how you look, you just you're shown that you don't care what everyone else is made, like you don't have the wide eyes, the perfect skin. And that's okay.

Maggie (F3):

---beauty marks because I have a beauty mark. And then that was the one thing also like, I mean, I'm not ashamed that my beauty mark. What is it? But like I don't like having it kind of just more actually a bit because sometimes it was a certain filter that wash it away. And I'm like so like I see that with her here right here. I don't know if that's too, but that's just something to hear. But yeah, they look very different.

Mulan (F4):

Because like when at least for me, like taking photos of like me with the filter and the without a filter. And I'm like I look completely different. Yeah, like a different person on my skin. My skin lightens. You know, my face like my cheeks lifted like eyes done. And I'm just like, Oh, no, I don't. I don't look at this. Excuse me. I have bags under the bus.

Storm (F5):

You know, that's the justification that is made in social media…. And so much has been like, it just keeps building and building and like, the more people are trying to fix it, I feel like the worse it gets. Like, the more people are like, let's be natural more, the more people push back against it sometimes and like try to come up with something different.

Rhonda (F6):

Nowadays, it's more accepted to be natural compared to let's say, 10…15 years ago. I feel like a lot of celebrities are now campaigning natural beauty compared to filters or Photoshop or anything like that. I mean, obviously, people are still going to Photoshop because everyone wants to look a certain way. But I feel like these days, it's more celebrated and more appreciated to embrace your back rolls, your stretch marks, little

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fluff here, a little fluff, there some blemishes here dark circles, because you're realistic, and a lot of people are going to more Oh, I'm all natural, or no makeup Monday and stuff like that.

In these instances, women express how natural selfies defy society's view of beauty standards. They embrace the idea of how imperfections are beautiful and shows the real person behind the screen they are viewing them on (openness). It's not just about owning your flawless rather showcasing them to the world and spreading a message across that it's okay to own imperfections and break the beauty standards society instills (seclusion).

Women even described how beauty filters have become problematic towards children and society through the constant exposure to these filtered images. They described how filters are marketed to attract viewers and promote social desirability to their audience.

Captain Marvel (F5):

It's still like exploitative to the children. Just like me like, yeah, I'm not sure that they'd be like, able to consent to making all this entertainment media that like takes up so much time out of your day.

Lila (F6):

I don't know if you guys heard that man like the beauty filter for it would like lighten your skin, slim your nose.--- Wow, do all these things that kind of make you look like whiter and they gotten a lot of trouble for like being racist. So, I feel like some of these filters actually. ---Low-key are like kind of subtly racist. And that can be dangerous for like little kids who haven't really developed like self-confidence yet. And, you know, like

when you first put the filter on and you take it off, you're like whoa. Like that. And it can

kind--- of --make you develop some self-confidence issues.

Storm (F5):

Which is why I don't like media influencers, like social media influencers. I hate that

because they create this perfect world of I get to travel and I'm beautiful, and I get to do

whatever I want with all the money--- I have just because you follow me and it's like,

what's the point? Like you're just creating more, more expectations more. You're like

disabling the youth of America by putting false hopes and false expectations in their

heads?

Jean (F5):

I think the filters themselves are fine. It's not really the filters. That's the mindset people

have. And it's not just like Snapchat filters being the problem. It's what they see

everywhere else with celebrities and influencers like she said, like the Instagram ones. It's

mainly based on you see them and you want to be like them to go to Snapchat and filters

were never made for like me, like, Oh, I looked down when you put it on. It was just for

fun. But because like everyone who started changing themselves doing plastic surgery, all

of this other stuff that now they use it for something different. It's the mindset start really.

Suzie (F6):

It's just I'm just more concerned now for like the younger generations, because I don't

want them to all their things in like, to compare themselves to how other like, influencers

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are on Instagram, because they're super young influencers. So, they kind of look up to

that, and they kind of copy what they do who are like 25, 26, 27-year olds.

The participants showed concern for the youth and the general public exposed to these

reoccurring messages of beauty filters plastered on almost every image they see from celebrities

and social media influencers. Concerns regarding the youth seeing these images related back to

concerns of one's self-esteem. Many of the participants mentioned that seeing these beauty filters

on a regular basis is harming the youth because they felt they could develop self-confidence,

self-esteem, or begin to compare themselves to what they see online. Others divulged how it's

setting up more beauty expectations as a need to fit in rather than promoting solutions of

changing the mindset of what beauty standards should be. This brings upon the impact beauty

filters have on the public.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

Overall, Snapchat's beauty filters have created an impact in the social media realm. In the focus groups, many women found them to be quite useful in hiding flaws or imperfections, maintaining their second self, making them appear more attractive or socially desirable to their audience, and convenient to add with just a swipe. Others found that the beauty filters were problematic to the point that they are affecting the youth and how they perceive beauty, promoting unrealistic expectations, getting used as a tool to hide lower levels of the user's self-esteem, and taking away what makes women look unique by hiding imperfections. It ultimately opened a discussion of how important it is to promote natural beauty and recognize how much a simple beauty filter can be detrimental in promoting an industry of beauty and perfectionism and beauty standards set by the media and society (Hendrickse et al., 2017).

One of the research questions asked how young women between the ages of 18-25 use Snapchat filters for impression management. Through a thematic analysis, themes such as perceptions of attractiveness, presenting the façade, and the power of self-esteem emerged from the depths of the rich data found within the transcriptions (Weick, 2007).

Perceptions of attractiveness. In my findings, perceptions of attractiveness were divided into two subthemes: fixing those flaws and getting real. Women discussed how beauty filters were used for the purpose of hiding their flaws and enhancing other facial qualities to the point where they become unrecognizable (Soffer, 2016; Van Dessel, 2017). This introduces the issue of how women feel the need to be perceived in a specific manner by hiding their flaws in case of public scrutiny (self-objectification). Snapchat's beauty filters begin to serve as a catalyst to self-objectification. Their faces became a subject of objectification because the beauty filters were

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serving as correction tools to hide every pimple, dark circle, and misplaced hair they could find on their face. The reasoning behind why participants felt the need to hide these imperfections stemmed from issues of wanting to be viewed as socially attractive or desirable to their audience (Brown & Tiggerman, 2016; Robinson et al., 2017), self-esteem (Kleeman et al., 2016; Saunders & Eaton, 2018), and avoiding any possible negative perceptions of what their audience might view them as. The way women described their flaws and how these beauty filters hid everything from a pimple to a beauty mark and how they enhanced their facial features emphasized how they were conducting a form of self-surveillance. The participants mentioned how they would not post any selfies until the images were corrected to their liking. The participants were scrutinizing every detail regarding what exactly the filters were hiding and what they were enhancing on their face (Charteris, Gregory, & Masters, 2014). This becomes problematic because women are using these beauty filters as correctional tools which can lead to issues such as eating disorders or plastic surgery to look like these beauty filters (Fardouly et al., 2017). It ultimately harms the way women perceive themselves as they go to great lengths just to achieve this idealized perfection that the media and society has established over the years. The fact that women would go to such drastic measures provides concerns to other women.

Women argued how getting real and owning their flaws by showing their pimples, dark circles, wrinkles, and double chins through natural selfies was more empowering than hiding behind the mask of a beauty filter (Goffman, 1956; Van Dessel, 2017). Participants discussed how natural selfies are showcasing vulnerability and self-confidence. It also reveals the idea of authenticity of the person behind the screen because too often the public sees filtered or altered images of women depicting idealized standards of beauty rather than showcasing the empowerment of natural beauty. It's no wonder why it remains uncommon for women to go

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outside the norm and post natural selfies possibly because women actually care how they appear online and thoughts of being socially accepted or desirable do matter (Brown & Tiggerman, 2016; Robinson et al., 2017). Posting natural selfies could possibly open the door to criticism which might explain the reason why women prefer to post with filters rather than in their natural form. It also opened the discussion of how people feel this need to put a façade through the usage of beauty filters referring back to the idea of impression management and the second self (Goffman, 1956).

Presenting the façade. The desire to present a façade emerges in the analysis and involves how perceptions of appearance and performativity are crucial. Some women expressed the need to put on a façade towards a social media audience (employers, friends, family, romantic interests and peers). The idea of needing one's approval or validation served as a driving force to maintain their social media image (Sinha, 2009). Social media is no longer viewed as just a social outlet to connect with friends or meet people, rather has manifested as a second reality where women are maintaining their second self identity because accounts are virtually accessible to anyone at any given time (Rudden, 2016). The second self becomes an identity that must be consistently groomed and maintained like Goffman's concept of performativity and wearing multiple masks (Goffman, 1956). It's also referenced as the digital identity which can always be traced back at any given time. This also raised concerns that having a second self is important to maintain especially, because of the audience watching their profiles like prospective employers.

Social media is constantly growing and HVSM accounts and usage is expanding, especially among young adults between the ages of 18-24 (Smith & Anderson, 2018). The

growth of social media accounts gives access to anyone, including potential employers, to see images or profiles of people. Some of the women acknowledged the reasons why they maintained their second self so much was out of a fear of prospective employers seeing their SNS accounts (mainly Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram). Again, this reinforces how important impression management is and preserving the face image (Norris, 2011). Their social identity online is crucial since it reflects how outside viewers, like employers, perceives their character. Having unfavorable characters or identities online could affect their actual identity in the real world like judgement from friends and family or missed job opportunities (Brym & Lie, 2006). Knowing the consequences of failing to maintain a specific digital image can affect women's overall self-esteem.

The power of self-esteem. The last prevalent theme within the analysis dealt with expressed concerns regarding self-esteem. Previous research has shown that exposure to filtered images or perceived perfectionism in the media has led to lower levels of self-esteem among young women (Kleeman et al., 2016; Saunders & Eaton, 2018). In this study, self-esteem was viewed as a concern for many of the participants. Self-esteem was divided into two subthemes; concern for others and poster's self-esteem.

In these discussions, women described how, when they saw beauty filters applied onto their friends or peers' selfies, they were concerned about their state of mind and self-confidence. Some expressed how their friends were beautiful without the filters, while others were unsure what to think. Concerns for their friends' or peers' self-esteem also highlights the topic of self-objectification once again. Even though these women might not know the exact reason of why their friends or peers post filtered images of themselves, they expressed concern about how their

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friends or peers might be insecure with themselves. Perceptions of their friends' and peers' possible insecurities thus puts their friends/peers in the position of their images being objectified because they are portraying idealized beauty to compensate how they feel about their own self-worth. Questioning how filters could imply how their friends or peers might be feeling (like hiding lower levels of self-esteem or any insecurity) led to a discussion of their own self-worth when they post filtered or natural selfies on their social media accounts.

When women described their insecurities in the past, they felt that the beauty filters were useful tools to hide their imperfections, but also used to hide what they were truly feeling about themselves. Their use of beauty filters reflected issues of insecurities, lack of confidence, and lower levels of self-esteem they experienced in the past. However, as they grew older, they shared how they began to embrace their imperfections by posting natural images instead. Embracing their true forms and appreciating who they were reflected their overall self-worth and self-esteem they had developed. It highlighted the idea of self-love and how important it was to love yourself in the process. The discussion of self-love brought upon the discussions of why more women should post natural selfies. Natural beauty reflects self-love. Owning the flaws rather than hiding them promotes self-confidence and self-worth to their audience. Instead of hiding behind the filter and maintaining an unrealistic second self identity for their audience most women felt that other women should adopt natural beauty. The participants shared how natural selfies showcased their sense of self-love, which again reiterates the importance of promoting natural beauty, especially in the social media world.

However, many did share how posting natural selfies became somewhat conflicting at times because of the availability and presence of beauty filters installed within the apps made it

difficult to avoid old habits and utilize filters on photos (Poltash, 2013). These conflicting views highlight why dialectical tensions were integrated in this study. Understanding the possible internal and external contradictions women were faced with when deciding to post a natural image versus using a filtered image became the epitome of seeing the issues, both internal values among the individual and external forces like society and the media, play in how women perceive beauty standards.

  Dialectical tensions. In order to investigate the internal and external tensions among women of whether to post a natural versus filtered selfie, I had to look at both tensions separately. In my findings, Snapchat's beauty filters were correction tools serving as an aid to achieve a goal of idealized perfection (internal) thus demonstrating the connectedness between the female and filter. Thus, women began to seek comfort and reliance with the beauty filters because of their omniscient presence within the app, similarly to how people bond with others who they can rely on (Erhardt & Gibbs, 2014). The fact that filters are also effortless to place on the photos draws even more concerns, like how women begin to establish a routine of applying the filters on a regular basis. The filters are enabling women to hide behind the mask in order to be perceived as achieving perceived perfection (Putnam, 2004) thus closing them off to showcase their true selves to the public (Pawlowski, 1999). This might be a probable cause of why natural selfies are uncommon to see online. Yet, some women disagree with the whole idea of using these beauty filters. Thinking about having fire or heart emojis floating above their heads and applying the flower crown felt unrealistic to them (Van Dessel, 2017). It shows that filters are extensions of beauty norms imposed by society rather than an aid towards a movement of empowerment reflected by natural selfies.

Debating on whether to apply the filter or not become an internal discursive struggle among most participants because they liked the fact that the filters were always present but felt that using them created unrealistic portrayals of them (Baxter & Scharp, 2015). Other external factors, like the beauty standard norms inflicted by the media and society, contributed to their decisions of whether to decide to post natural versus filtered images of themselves. Therefore, external tensions may be viewed as an important subset of including the possible contradictions women face when posting selfies of themselves because the public opinion does matter to women of whether to fit in with the crowd or stand out (Norris, 2011).

The need to fit in with the crowd (external) stems from the idea of belonging to society with the norms, values, and social implications by societal standards impacting one's decisions (Brym & Lie, 2006). The societal beauty standards of promoting idealistic beauty was a huge determinant of why some women felt the need to post with filters applied on their images in order to achieve the beauty goals imposed by society and the media. It reinforces the issue of how society's beauty standards are impacting women's view of their own beauty, placing them in positions of self-objectification and maintaining these second self-identities. Even seeing celebrities and social media influencers integrating beauty filters on a regular basis to maintain their social media image (Cohen et al., 2018) demonstrates how influential the beauty standards imposed by society can be (Pawlowski, 1999).

Women also expressed that natural beauty was a rebellious act towards defying what society has set up to be deemed as beautiful. Showcasing imperfections to them was unique since unlike beauty filters, natural beauty isn't quite normalized in society as much as the media promotes idealized beauty. Natural beauty promotes not just empowerment but vulnerability.

However, being vulnerable meant compensating their faces or bodies to be scrutinized by the public (self-objectification). Knowing that other people might scrutinize or critique their flaws pushed some women away from promoting natural selfies, thus emphasizing the discursive struggles they face of whether to post natural or not (Baxter & Scharp, 2015). This might help explain why we see women so focused on upkeeping appearances, utilizing filters, and perfecting their flaws in avoidance of public backlash (external tensions) or fear because of insecurities and judgement (internal tensions). Yet, at the same time we see women do the exact opposite by posting natural selfies to defy the norms imposed by society and the media and advocate for change (external) or just feel comfortable enough with themselves and don't let others' opinions affect their self-esteem (internal). It's no wonder why it's an uphill battle for women deciding to post a natural versus filtered image because of the internal and external tensions they face every single day.

Therefore, dialectical tensions serve as the foundation for this study because it yields new discoveries of the possible implications of why women face discursive struggles or whether to post natural selfies or filtered images. Introducing struggles of perfectionism-reality and fitting in-standing out emphasizes the importance of how idealized beauty through filters matters to someone's second self identity (impression management) and how their social media audience perceives their character through their appearance (self-objectification). Factors like impression management and self-objectification serve as reasons why women feel the need to use or abstain from posting images with beauty filters applied. It also provides background information for why women possibly experience internal struggles due their insecurities and fear of opinions of others by maintaining their appearances (Goffman, 1956; Norris, 2011), putting a façade on, and hiding any instances of low self-esteem (Kleeman et al., 2016; Saunders & Eaton, 2018). Through

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dialectical tensions it helps visualize how women often faced the discursive struggles of choosing to go with the beauty norms or defy them. Beauty norms are constantly enforced through media outlets and manifested in these beauty filters. Defying the pervasive force of media's dissemination of idealized beauty standards puts into question a woman's self-worth. The choice of whether to post filtered images versus natural images becomes the dichotomy of what is right or wrong which shows how detrimental these struggles are that women face on a regular basis.

However, with great findings comes limitations within any study. Even though I was able to enhance our understanding of the impression management strategies and possible internal and external struggles women face whether to post natural selfies versus filtered images, there were limitations.

Limitations

One of the biggest limitations involved the occurrence of many no shows in the first few focus group sessions. Many slots were filled online for the first three sessions, however, when it came to the actual date and time of the focus group session, there were many no shows or last-minute cancellations in the first three sessions. Also, many people who did not qualify for the study would sign up and then cancel last minute making it difficult for potential qualifying candidates to sign up and attend a session. The numerous no shows primarily in the first three focus groups created an imbalance for later focus groups since those had around eight to thirteen participants. This leads into the problem of having too little or too many participants in one setting. My smallest focus group had two participants whereas my largest had around thirteen participants. Having a large group of thirteen participants made it challenging to hear multiple

opinions at once and made it difficult to ensure that everyone had the opportunity to express her

thoughts or opinions in the matter. Whereas, in the smaller focus group sessions, participants had

ample opportunity to share. The smaller the session, the more likely the females were likely to

disclose information. However, in the smaller discussions, as a facilitator, I had to keep the

conversation going by asking many questions. This is where the larger focus groups become

more beneficial because discussions were led by the participants themselves. It became more of a

discussion-based setting as opposed to a group interview in the smaller sessions. However,

groups with four to nine participants seem to have the most discussions and each participant had

an equal say of what they thought of specific topics. Most women seem to disclose more intimate

details about their experiences in those focus groups as opposed to the larger and smaller focus

groups.

Another limitation related to the clarity of questions. At times, some participants asked

for clarity about questions relating to their overall reflections of whether to post natural or apply

filters on their images. Some were confused by the term "reflections" so at times I had to explain

what I meant was their overall opinions and ideas about posting natural or applying filters to

their images. For future investigations ensuring clarity of topic questions will serve beneficial

outcomes and easier navigation for focus groups.

The availability of scheduling focus groups was another limitation for this study.

Unfortunately, I had scheduled two focus group sessions within the span of three days.

Participants were given three days and six slots to choose from within those three days. I chose

the busiest days of the week where more students would likely be on campus which were

Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. I also chose times they would likely to have a break in

between classes like around 1, 3 or 4 p.m. or after class around 5 p.m. I had one morning session which seemed to yield the smallest number of participants while the 3 p.m. sessions seem to yield the most participants. For future reference I will probably spread the focus groups around the peak times of 3 pm on Tuesdays and Wednesdays within the span on three weeks. Despite these limitations, I was ultimately able to yield some insightful information. Through these transcriptions there was so much data worthy of exploration.

Future Research

In this study I was able to find the internal and external tensions women face when deciding to post natural versus filtered images by examining the idealized perfection-reality (internal) and the idea of fitting in-standing out from the crowd (external) to find insight of what might be the root of these discursive struggles (Baxter & Scharp, 2015). Future research could explore other dialectical tensions people experience when posting to social media.

It would also be interesting to discover how women react towards celebrities and social media influencers integrating beauty filters on their photos. Previous research from Hendrickse et al. (2017) explored intrasexual competition on Instagram among females competing to look more attractive to their peers. It could be interesting to explore in future research the dynamics between the competitiveness and unity when women see these images of people in power using beauty filters. Exploring more about the role social media influencers and celebrities play when seeing them use beauty filters would provide fundamental analysis in this area.

Investigating this study from a quantitative standpoint is also something future research should consider. Possibly creating an experimental design to test if women can decipher

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Snapchat's subtle beauty filters versus natural images and seeing their preferences between the two is worthy of exploration.

It would be also useful to understand how this differs in gender. In this study women were the forefront of understanding the reasons why they might prefer to post natural versus filtered images of themselves. Investigating how males feel about this matter is worthy of exploration. Are they affected just as much as females? Are there any congruencies? Do men feel the same pressures of beauty standards just as women do? Results yielded in a future study like this would be fascinating to explore and to compare between female beauty standards and male beauty standards.

Summary

Snapchat beauty filters aren't just added for the purposes of entertainment. They have manifested themselves as correction tools and another representation of promoting idealized beauty standards that the media has imposed upon society for years. The fact that young adults, especially young women, are utilizing HVSM platforms like Snapchat on a regular basis means that they are being bombarded by filtered images. The integration and expansion of these beauty filters provides access for women to continuously implement these filters within their photos. This creates concerns for women's self-esteem, how their appearance becomes the epitome of their social media account, and how the perceptions from their audience influences their maintenance of their social media identities. Deciding to go with the crowd or defying the odds showcases the daily struggles women face of whether to post a filtered image or not. Therefore, it's important to consider the implications filter use has on young women. Social media has undoubtedly become a pervasive force where people are constantly exposed to perfected images

on a regular basis. Beauty filters are just another tool to achieve these perfected images and will continue to expand as new technology emerges, however, that doesn't mean that people should shy away from posting a natural selfie once awhile. Natural beauty embraces the imperfections that make women unique and is slowly igniting a movement of female empowerment to no longer hide behind the mask. Regardless, it's important to understand that social media will always have that filtered world of idealized perfection but ultimately, it's the woman's decision to decide if they want to join the world or break free from it.

APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL LETTER

Institutional Review Board
FWA00000351
IRB00001138
Office of Research
12201 Research Parkway
Orlando, FL 32826-3246

UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

EXEMPTION DETERMINATION

February 25, 2019

Dear Angelina Cruz:

On 2/25/2019, the IRB determined the following submission to be human subjects research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review:	Initial Study, Exempt Category
Title:	Snapchat Filters and Beauty Perceptions
Investigator:	Angelina Cruz
IRB ID:	STUDY00000141
Funding:	None
Grant ID:	None

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made, and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request so that IRB records will be accurate.

If you have any questions, please contact the UCF IRB at 407-823-2901 or irb@ucf.edu. Please include your project title and IRB number in all correspondence with this office.

Sincerely,

Kamille Chap

Kamille Chaparro
Designated Reviewer

Page 1 of 1

APPENDIX B: RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Recruitment Email

Hello,

My name is Angelina Cruz. I am a graduate student in the Nicholson School of Communication, and Media, looking for participants will to partake in a focus group on Snapchat Filters and Beauty Perceptions for my Master Thesis.

The purpose of this research: is to understand females' perceptions of social media filters and possible conflicts of posting images with filtered images as opposed to natural images in a focus group setting.

Your participation is voluntary. I am seeking undergraduate and graduate females who use Snapchat filters to participate in a focus group. The focus group should not take longer than 1 hr. and 15 mins and will be set up as a discussion style meeting. All information will remain confidential. Attached below is an informed consent document of what the study entails. There are no foreseeable risks in this study.

Participants will be asked: to complete a demographic questionnaire and audio recorded focus group.

In summary, the criteria that will be used to determine eligibility for the study: Female students between 18-25 years of age and have a Snapchat and use Snapchat filters.

The time or other commitment required of the participants: 1 hr. and 15 mins.

The location of the research and the person or office to contact for further information

Location: Room number listed on sign-up.

Address: in the Nicholson School of Communication and Media. Address: 12405 Aquarius Agora Dr., Orlando, FL 32816

Primary Investigator of study: Angelina Cruz. If any questions or information, please contact me at acruz113@knights.ucf.edu. Faculty supervisor Dr. Sally Hastings at sally.hastings@ucf.edu

How you obtained their contact information: Email addresses will be obtained through the Sign-Up Genius Link for any notifications of cancellations or reschedules. Your names will be collected only for the purpose of extra/class credit with your professor's name. We will be emailing your professors that you have completed the focus group. Once we let your professors know we delete both your email and name after the focus group study that same day.

If interested in this study, please sign up with the sign-up link below.

Thanks again,

Angelina Cruz- Primary Investigator

https://www.signupgenius.com/go/70A0545A4A92AA3FA7-snapchat

APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT

Informed Consent

Title of Project: Snapchat Filters and Beauty Perceptions

Principal Investigator: Angelina Cruz

Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Sally Hastings

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Whether you take part is up to you.

The purpose of this research is to understand females' perceptions of social media filters and possible conflicts of posting images with filtered images as opposed to natural images in a focus group setting.

What will you be asked to do in the study: You will partake in a focus group that will be scheduled online where you will choose a date and time slot and come in for about 1 hr. 15 mins. Upon arrival, you will be given a brief demographic questionnaire. The focus group will consist of a series of questions that you will answer. You will answer a series of questions in relation to social media and self-perceptions in an all-female group setting. You do not have to answer every question and will not lose any benefits if choosing not to answer any specific questions.

You will be **audio recorded** during this study. If you do not want to be recorded, you will not be able to be in the study. Discuss this with the researcher or a research team member. If you are recorded, the recording will be kept in a locked, safe place. The recording will be erased or destroyed within 5 months.

Your participation in this study is **voluntary**. You are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation in this study at any time without prejudice or penalty. Your decision to participate or not participate in this study will in no way affect your relationship with UCF, including continued enrollment, grades, employment or your relationship with the individuals who may have an interest in this study.

There is no direct compensation for taking part in this study. It is possible, however, that credit may be offered for your participation, but this is at the discretion of your instructor. If you choose not to participate, you may notify your instructor and ask for an alternative assignment of equal effort for equal credit. There will be no penalty.

You must be between female and between the ages of 18-25 years old to take part in this research study.

Study contact for questions about the study or to report a problem: If you have questions, concerns, or complaints contact Angelina Cruz, Graduate Student, Nicholson School of Communication and Media Program, College of Sciences, acruz113@knights.ucf.edu or Dr. Sally Hastings, Faculty Supervisor, Department of NSCM at by email at sally.hastings@ucf.edu

IRB contact about your rights in this study or to report a complaint: If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or have concerns about the conduct of this study, please contact Institutional Review Board (IRB), University of Central Florida, Office of Research, 12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501, Orlando, FL 32826-3246 or by telephone at (407) 823-2901, or email irb@ucf.edu

APPENDIX D: DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONAIRE

Demographic Data Sheet

Focus Groups

1. Please Circle Your Age Group:

18-19   20-21   22-23   24-25

2. Racial Category/Categories (You may check more than one category):

_____Hispanic   _____African American   _____Pacific Islander   _____Asian   _____African

_____Caucasian   _____ Native American   _____Indian (originating from India) _____Other

3. How often do you use Snapchat?

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Somewhat Often	Often	Very Often

4. How often do you use filters on Snapchat?

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Somewhat Often	Often	Very Often

APPENDIX E: FOCUS GROUP SCRIPT

Focus Group Script

Introduction:
Thank you for helping me with my thesis! You are part of this focus group because you have identified in the pre-questionnaire that you use Snapchat and Snapchat filters. There are no right or wrong answers in this group discussion, I am interested in learning about your opinions. This is simply an open forum to talk about your personal experiences.

Appearance in Everyday Life Related Questions:
1. Alright everyone, let's begin our discussion. Today, we live in a very visual era with lots of social media. How do you think it affects your general thoughts about your appearance? **(Opener)**
2. Wow, some great insight I gathered so far just by listening to your thoughts on this. In terms of presenting yourself in everyday life, do you wear make-up? Why/why not? For those who do wear make-up, when do you wear it and when do you not bother **(Leads to RQ 1)**

Snapchat filters/Selfies Related Questions:
3. What are views of Snapchat filters (this can include silly or beauty filters like the Flower crown, makeup selfie, the dog-face selfie, etc)? **(RQ1)**
4. Do you have preference of which Snapchat filters you like to apply on your own selfies?**(RQ1)**
5.How do you want your friends to perceive you when you post a beauty filter?
6.What do you think your friends think about it when you post a selfie using a beauty filter?
7. Do you post natural selfies on Snapchat?, if so why?
8.Sub-question: If you do not post natural selfies on Snapchat then why not?

Reflection Related Questions:
Interesting thoughts ladies! Now I want to ask about your reflections or thoughts about the process of choosing to post on Snapchat.
13. What kinds of things do you think about when trying to decide whether to post a selfie using filters? **(RQ2)**
    -When do you have reservations about posting selfies with filters? Why?
    (RQ2)
    -When do you have reservations about posting natural selfies? Why?
    (RQ 2)
14. What do you think your friends think when they see these filtered images as opposed to a natural image of yourself?
15.When your friends post on Snapchat using filters, does that make you want to do the same? Why/why not? **(RQ1)**
16. Do their opinions' matter to you? If so, is that one of the reasons why you use filters on Snapchat?

APPENDIX F: SCHEDULE SLOTS

Schedule Slots

Date (MM/DD/YYYY)	Location: Room (RM)	Time (75 min sessions)	Focus Group # slots available (#)
04/01/2019	RM 143D 📍	3:00-4:15 P.M.	F1 (8)
04/01/2019	RM 143D 📍	5:00-6:15 P.M.	F2 (8)
04/02/2019	RM 213 📍	11:00 A.M.- 12:15 P.M.	F3 (8)
04/02/2019	RM 213 📍	4:30-5:45 P.M.	F4 (8)
04/03/2019	RM 143D 📍	1:00 P.M.- 2:15 P.M.	F5 (8)
04/03/2019	RM 143D 📍	3:00 P.M.- 4:15 P.M.	F6 (8)

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