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YouTube As A Net"work": A Media Analysis of the YouTube Beauty Community

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YOUTUBE AS A NET”WORK”: A MEDIA ANALYSIS OF THE YOUTUBE BEAUTY COMMUNITY

by

BARBARA CASABIANCA

A master’s thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, The City University of New York

2016
This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies satisfying the thesis requirement for the degree of Master of Arts.

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THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
Abstract

YOUTUBE AS A NET"WORK": A MEDIA ANALYSIS OF THE YOUTUBE BEAUTY COMMUNITY

by

BARBARA CASABIANCA

Advisor: Professor Barbara Katz-Rothman

This paper looks at the YouTube beauty community and how this presentation of beauty gurus and subscribers expresses ideas about femininity and work family balance. Through a media analysis of YouTube videos and commentary, the content of this online community space is discussed to further explore the representations of women in various working roles as YouTubers. The ways select women including Anna Saccone, Michelle Phan, Jewel Sha’ree, and Dani Meza-Hung portray their lives through YouTube videos and speak about their YouTube experience is analyzed to express potential meaning within this unique media presentation. Following the content analysis of these specific YouTube channels is a discussion of how beauty gurus representations may relate to feminist ideas and work-family balance theories.
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Introduction

“Aggressive and hard-charging women violate unwritten rules about acceptable social conduct. Men are continually applauded for being ambitious and powerful and successful, but women who display these same traits often pay a social penalty. Female accomplishments come at a cost.” (Sandberg)

“Good Luck!” This phrase is the last wish of good fortune for Michelle Phan’s subscribers on her YouTube channel. It has become her tradition to conclude her self-recorded short films of beauty wisdom with this phrase. The beauty community on YouTube includes millions of gurus and subscribers who intermingle through common interests in beauty, fashion, and lifestyle. Some women who actively participate in frequent video uploads and interaction on the video hosting site will experience a great deal of attention and gain large fan bases called subscribers. While females largely populate this community, men and other genders have also joined this growing group of Internet vloggers.

With this boundless, digital neighborhood of beauty fanatics, it is often argued that Michelle Phan was the pioneer beauty guru who most likely inspired the later generations of female, self-starting, business women on YouTube (Fred 2). Since Michelle Phan’s emergence as a beauty guru, the YouTube beauty community has expanded to millions of people who subscribe, like, share, and create content for various reasons and interests that stretch beyond beauty. These videos vary in topic including tutorials and how-to’s, product reviews, “Get Ready With Me,” and other TAG (#) videos, makeup budget challenges, and do-it-yourself videos for home décor and other crafty products. The nature of these videos will be analyzed in relation to conceptions of
femininity and work-family balance issues. These women have created content to share their beauty knowledge and present a form of work-family balance through vlogging and video content sharing. The content of beauty videos exhibit new social roles among women and their presentation will be used to emulate, debate, and discuss women’s and other social issues.

This project will analyze various beauty community YouTube channels and their video content in order to discuss concepts related to work and family psychology, women’s and gender issues, and ideas about community. Following a literature review of both canonical and modern academic work on diversified topics related to women, work-family balance, and media representations, a content analysis will reduce specific YouTube channels into relatable ideas to existing theories and understandings of these topics. The goal of this project is to use media representations of women to formulate a discussion about work and family issues in relation to gender. Utilizing YouTube video content and commentary as a means to discuss these issues may inspire future projects relating to Internet work and women.
Chapter 1: Literature Review

Introduction

For the scope of this project, it is important to consider and review existing work surrounding feminism and work and family psychology. Because this project consists of an investigation utilizing media analysis and social theory application, this literature review serves to present important empirical and observational studies that help inform this project’s main interest. In regard to feminism, a majority of literature will interpret the specific challenges women have faced in work and family circumstances. Specifically, the work focusing on the later half of the 20th century, when the feminist movement intercepted issues of labor. Additionally, due to the lack of research conducted on the cross studies of gender, YouTube, and work, other sources regarding Internet and work-from-home literature will be useful to this project.

As a media host, YouTube is an experiential source where the phenomenon of viewing and seeing is essential to this project’s central inquiry. Therefore, this project will employ a content analysis of several YouTube channels and their inhabiting beauty gurus to achieve and understanding of how the viewer/contributor relationship may be an essential and unique aspect of working for YouTube. Because a content analysis is, by definition, “a wide and heterogeneous set of manual or computer-assisted techniques for contextualized interpretations of documents produce by communication processes in the strict sense of that phrase (any kind of text, written, iconic, multimedia, etc.) or signification processes (traces and artifacts), having as ultimate goal the production of valid and trustworthy inferences,” a literature survey of various content viewing
perspectives are applicable to the scope of this project (Tipaldo 42). Essentially, the interdisciplinary nature of this project will employ a range of literature that can later be intersected to advise the interest of studying women who work on YouTube.

Women and Work in Feminist Literature

The canons of feminist thought can be dated back to the work of Mary Wollstonecraft and Betty Friedan, who were highly involved feminists before they even knew they were feminists. Both women wrote extensive bodies of literature that paint the portrait of the important women’s issues of their time during the late 1700s and 1960s. While history has progressed and the politics around gender and labor have changed greatly, some of the struggles Wollstonecraft and Friedan experienced are still highly relevant to modern discussions of women and work issues.

In 1792, Mary Wollstonecraft wrote A Vindication of the Rights of Woman. As an early form of feminist literature, this long essay does not follow a traditional argumentative style of writing, but rather raises topics that are constantly referred to throughout the length of the work. This report suggested women should only be educated in domestic matters rather than to obtain a profession and job due to high sensibility (Wollstonecraft 31). Her concept of sensibility relates to the widely believed understanding that women are more emotional and sensitive (Wollstonecraft 47). As a returning theme in many of her later works, sensibility is important when discussing women in mediated forms, specifically film and visual art forms. Wollstonecraft supported the claim that women become weak when they give into their feelings and emotions. This is still relevant to modern understandings of gender and perceptions of
Additionally, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* suggests that education among women is important because they serve as the primary caretakers and teachers of children (Wollstonecraft 55). Therefore, their education will determine the outcome of the new generation (Wollstonecraft 10). In the introduction she states, “The conduct and manners of women, in fact, evidently prove that their minds are not in a healthy state; for, like flowers which are planted in too rich a soil, strength state; usefulness are sacrificed to beauty; and the flaunting leaves, after having pleased a fastidious eye, fade, disregarded on the stalk, long before the season when they ought to have arrived at maturity” (Wollstonecraft 7). Essentially, she argues that education and sensibility among women can be used as a means to gain equality to her male counterpart.

Additionally, Wollstonecraft suggests educated women can maintain a companionship with their husbands rather than strictly being ornamental wives (Wollstonecraft 4). This concept moved the female social role into a model of family living because it suggested equality between husband and wives. The issues that Wollstonecraft discussed in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* have proven to persist through the consistent interests of modern work and family literature that will be reviewed.

While Wollstonecraft served as a pioneer feminist in the 18th century, later thinkers used *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* as inspiration for other writing regarding women and work issues. The spawn of Wollstonecraft’s and other early feminist writers would eventually result in what we now know as the second-wave feminist movement. While utilizing the revolutionary and intellectual approach of
Wollstonecraft, second-wave feminists continued to the challenging discussions regarding issues of women and work.

Betty Friedan’s 1963 publication, The Feminist Mystique, served as a launch into the second wave feminist movement. Similarly to Wollstonecraft, Friedan attacked the idea that women could only find fulfillment as child bearers, homemakers, and wives (Friedan 27). Due to the historical context of this work, Friedan dedicated the first few chapters to the discussion of women’s unhappiness within the home and the false representations of women in the media. The first chapter, “The Problem that Has No Name,” encompasses the idea that women might “want something more than my husband and my children and my home” (Friedan 20). Ultimately, The Feminist Mystique coins this title as a form of terminology to discuss the generalized unhappiness of the 1950s era of the United States.

Friedan’s work is of particular interest to this project because she goes in depth in Chapter 3 and 4 in discussing the sacrifices women make to bare and raise children. Because of the social roles they are expected to make as mother and wife, Friedan illustrates her own experience when she forfeit her career in psychology to take care of her children (Friedan 32). Although over 50 years have passed since the publication of this book, Friedan’s concerns are still relevant to current gender and work issues. It is evident in the literature in the work and family section of this review that the same issues Friedan discusses are still existent in women’s lives today.

The works of Wollstonecraft and Friedan, among many others, are considered the pioneer work of the feminist movements. The feminist radicalism that both writers used to push their thoughts and philosophies has proved to be of great significance in western
Although Wollstonecraft was unaware of the term “feminist” at the time of her publications, these classics took bold steps into thinking about women and the common perceptions of women and work. These canonical works prove that women and work have a vast history that should be revisited. Because the history of women and work are linked to modern theories and studies surrounding gender and work and family issues, many of the concepts Wollstonecraft and Friedan discuss can be applied to later literature in the psychology and gender studies disciplines.

*Psychology of Work and Family*

The social restrictions of women during Wollstonecraft and Friedan’s time were most directly related to societies expectations of women. Because much of this project considers the challenges of social expectations in regard to women and work, ideas about perception are important to the purview of this project as a whole. With perceptions and gender, it is essential to discuss the literature surrounding stereotypes and gender. Alice Eagly describes gender roles as stereotypes “like other social stereotypes, reflect perceivers’ observations of what people do in daily life” (Eagly, Koenig 158). The work of Eagly in *Social Role Theory of Sex Differences and Similarities: Implications for Prosocial Behavior* was published in 2006 and speaks greatly to the ways we understand and perceive appropriate roles for the different genders. This section will survey some key literature that address issues in work and family relationships.

Eagly’s Social Role Theory describes the traditional division of labor and how sex-differentiated behaviors are linked to stereotypes about men and women (Eagly, Koenig 158). This study projects the theory that social roles are determined by physical
The common behavior stereotypes of men are discussed as: aggressive, dominant, direct, act as a leader, independent, never cries, active, and not emotional (Eagly, Koenig 159). For women, some of the stereotypical behaviors are: gentle, tactful, quiet, nurturing, neat, aware of others’ feelings, and emotionally expressive (Eagly, Koenig 161). Eagly suggests that men often obtain higher roles in the work force because of their dominating physical characteristics (Eagly, Koenig 164). Therefore, if women were to express these characteristics, they would be better able to perform and feel the confidence of a male, allowing them to pursue a higher status role in a workplace situation (Eagly, Koenig 149). According the Eagly, “agentic qualities are manifested by self-assertion, self-expansion, and the urge to master, whereas communal qualities are manifested by selflessness, concern with others, and a desire to be at one with others” (Eagly, Koenig 158). To better understand why these stereotypes exist, Eagly considers the differences in status among the sexes. For example, women are often in lower hierarchal roles than men and are also “more likely to be homemakers rather than being employed in the paid workforce” (Eagly, Koenig 152). Because women are more commonly found in lower status roles, Eagly believes perceivers see women as more communal and men more agentic.

Overall, this study shows that status difference contributes to common stereotypes about female and male personalities, which ultimately dictates roles in labor forces. Innate personality differences are less linked to the stereotypes regarding women and men. Eagly and Koenig found that people in high-status roles, whether male or female, were perceived to be more assertive, independent, and dominant than those who are in
lower-status roles. This theory shows that gender is not the dictator of work relations and hierarchies, but rather the hierarchical attributes are linked to the positions women and men are most commonly placed in (Eagly, Koenig 160).

While stereotypes and workplace hierarchies have played an important role in social understandings of women in the workforce, authors consider the other structures that involve issues with work and family. Patriarchal society has preserved many of the previously discussed stereotypes that influence gender and workplace issues. Some authors see the transition of women into the workforce to be a disguise for corrupt schemes. Hester Eisenstein's work, *Feminism Seduced: How Global Elites Use Women's Labor and Ideas to Exploit the World*, mainstream feminism is discussed in regard to developed countries. Eisenstein argues that mainstream feminism is being used as a tool for developed countries, like the United States, to empower themselves and to maintain control over women (Eisenstein 48). The women's liberation movement is essentially used as an ideological weapon in the war on terrorism and beyond, according to Eisenstein (Eisenstein 71).

Eisenstein is primarily concerned with globalization and sees it as the growing inequality, attacks on welfare, weakening of trade unions, tax breaks for the rich and corporations, privatization and deregulation (Eisenstein 38). As women became more active in labor outside of the home, these issues within unions and other labor forces were also on the rise (Eisenstein 38). Therefore, women were entering the labor market at a high disadvantage as jobs were more likely to make women work harder and for longer hours. Eisenstein also locates the specific traditions of “women’s jobs” and how they have created their own line of service work due to their physically being out of the house
(Eisenstein 44). Jobs such as childcare, restaurants, and housekeeping have been created due to the lack of women being within their home (Eisenstein 44). Eisenstein’s research and commentary serves as a in-depth critical look at the United State’s history of women’s work. In discussing capitalization and the economic and industrial changes in the United States, Eisenstein’s work as a feminist helps digest the circumstances women have faced since their involvement in the work force. Eisenstein’s insights give context to the current state of working women in the United States.

Much of the literature discussed thus far considers the involvement of women in female dominated job fields. Many of the women who Eisenstein refers to are women who find employment as schoolteachers, nurses, and secretaries – jobs that essentially employ many of the commonly associated personality traits of women. Due to variations and shifts in the economy as well as other social policies, academic researchers have delved into the changing norms of gendered labor relations and the involvement of family and work issues. With changing society, technology has become an important aspect of work and family issues because it is more frequently being used for work purposes. Technology advancement has changed the norms of “work” and our conceptions of typical or normal work expectations. These expectations include work environment and scheduling, specifically. Noelle Chesley explores the changing dynamics of women and men working, especially within family relationships in her article, *Gender, Couple Dynamics, and Social Change*.

This article is important because it surveys stay-at-home parents and the ways couples make decisions about working arrangements (Chesley 642). Chesley arranged 42 interviews among 21 married couples in 2008 to test the influence of economic
conditions on gender-atypical and work/family arrangements (Chesley 642). Chesley looks primarily at couples with children and draws upon interviews to look at the dynamics of families who have a stay-at-home father. Chesley suggests men who stay at home are heavily influenced by job instability and the concern with financial conditions (Chesley 650). However, despite the economic issues, Chesley found that most stay-at-home father’s create better equality within their marriage (Chesley 656). Similarly, stay-at-home fathers develop a deeper appreciation and higher involvement in childcare activities and parenting (Chesley 643). Additionally, fathers who stay at home often provide support for their wives and help produce better work behavior (Chesley 660).

What is particularly interesting about Gender, Couple Dynamics, and Social Change is that this study is primarily focused on stay-at-home fathers because this sort of family compromise is considered atypical (Chesley 642). This study concluded that stay-at-home fathers are often criticized for their choice to stay home. There is a great stigma around men conducting “women’s work” or domestic labor. Because the traditions of work and gender prescribe men to be the breadwinners in the relationship, it makes it difficult for men to choose to be in the stay-at-home role. Chesley’s approach to studying fathers who stay at home is important because it contributes to the conversation that Eagly and Koenig have discussed regarding stereotypes. While women are heavily stereotyped and have a strict social expectation surrounding their gender, Chesley proves that this is also relevant to the lives of men. This study allows feminists to reflect on the expectations of masculinity to better understand issues with patriarchal societies. Additionally, this scope brings into question the generalized perspectives of parents who stay at home.
Elizabeth Paré and Heather Dillaway consider several family arrangements that are made unique by the position the woman chooses in *Locating Mothers: How Cultural Debates About Stay-at-Home Versus Working Mothers Define Women and Home*. The authors consider work-at-home mothers who engage in paid work from home. First, they consider the initial decision to stay home while having and raising children and explore the severe separation of paid work and the concept of “working motherhood” (Paré, Dillaway 437). Paré and Dillaway conceptualize the stay-at-home phenomenon and begin to investigate how mothers perceive their home space (Paré, Dillaway 440). Additionally, the authors consider the developing attitudes toward stay-at-home mothers.

While some women are able to telecommute for professional jobs, many have to find other forms of labor at home due to the prioritized responsibility of their own children (Paré, Dillaway 440). Paré and Dillaway note that these mothers are often caregiving for income by running in-house daycare facilities or babysitting other children while simultaneously caring for their own children (Paré, Dillaway 456). Admitting, this is not the only arrangement made for women, but their obligations are more vast and spread out than stay-at-home or work-from-home fathers (Paré, Dillaway 456). Paré and Dillaway note, “These mothers maintain their duties as primary caregiver and public worker all from the private sphere of their homes” (Paré, Dillaway 455). These discussions are important because telecommuting and opportunities to work from home and increasing due to technological advancements. Therefore, discussing the options women have in relation to the expectations and attitudes society has toward these arrangements are increasingly important to consider.

With Paré and Dillaway, Sheryl Sandberg’s book, *Lean In: Women, Work, and*
the Will to Lead was written in 2013 and speaks greatly to the issues women face at work. All while suggesting women and men to “lean in” to the conversation about women and workplace issues, Sandberg sifts through several common held ideas about women who work or stay at home. More specifically, she addresses the concept of “doing it all” as a woman who works and has children. The main issue with this concept is that is assumes women who work also do not have time to spend with their family. Sandberg suggests that women simply cannot do it all and must prioritize to find peace (Sandberg). This issue is also tied to her discussion of maternity and family leaves at work and how women are often hesitant to pursue family affairs because they are scared of the ramifications (Sandberg). Women often opt out of career advancement opportunities because they feel that their family life development will not be fully realized. Sandberg supports her discussion with examples from employees who have worked at large corporations such as Facebook, as well as celebrities like Tiny Fey and even examples from her own experience as a mother and corporate employee.

The literature discussed thus far shows various perspectives and considerations when discussing women and work and family issues. Varying family arrangements between husband and wife marriages can greatly affect the sense of equality perceived by the couple while possible supporting females in the workplace. Both stay-at-home mothers and fathers must adjust to the attitudes surrounding their decision to work at or from home. Connectively, the state of the United States and the long history of women and workplace issues continue to frame the discussion of gender stereotypes and the traditions of women working. Leading from this discussion of women and work will be an address of the experience of viewing media. Media is an important aspect of this
project because perception is essential to the success of YouTube beauty gurus. The following section will look at the phenomenon of viewing media in relation to women, which will ultimately inform the proceeding media content analysis.

Ways of Seeing

Because this project focuses on media representations and the production of media through technological means, it is important to survey existing literature surrounding media analysis. Throughout the evolution of media forms, several film and art critics have deconstructed these forms to better understand their implication in relation to society as a whole. As a dominant force in our society, media plays a huge role in the spread and consumption of ideas. Media analysis is highly relevant to the study of women and work because media may shed light on the perception of women. This is especially relevant to film because film may depict women in a certain way that speaks to stereotypes regarding gender and other social implications. Without addressing media as an art form and a social product, this analysis would lack an essential component of true understanding of social norms.

Media studies is an evolving area of academic interest due to the various ways it has arranged within the casual backdrop of everyday living. The long history of media forms and the exponential rate of accessibility is often traced by authors because accessibility of locative media has drastically changed our world and has created a whole new platform for interacting and being social. This section of the review focuses on literature that finds interest in media forms that are perceived to have strong cultural implications.
Anne Galloway discusses locative media as developing technologies that are changing our understandings of culture in *Locative Media As Socialising and Spatializing Practice: Learning from Archaeology* (Galloway). While Galloway is primarily interested in material culture, her quest to understand the way locative media is changing our conceptions of space and time (Galloway). The term “locative media” was first coined by Karlis Klanins in *A Geneaology of Locative Media* in 2003. Galloway refers to Klanin’s term when she discusses media artifacts to be representations of a past life or a way of being (Galloway). Similarly, this work addresses the connection locative media has to “development and availability of material devices, applications and services, as well as to the private and public policies and laws regulating their use” (Galloway). This is especially relevant to modern forms of locative media that have easy accessibility from the average person, including YouTube and other blogging tools such as cell phones and portable cameras. Because locative media has been argued to have strong social implications and to be a form of communication, it is important to review its potential in issues of work and family.

It can be argued that the most revolutionary change in media creation and circulation was the 1990s invention of the Internet. While this important technological development, along with it’s corresponding locative media tools such as the cell phone and laptops, these media forms can be analyzed and considered much like historical forms of media such as film and art. The method in which we view and consume media is still very much similar to the way we engage in traditional forms of media. Therefore, the work done by John Berger are meaningful in a later discussion about YouTube as a media form that contributes to issues of gender, work, and family arrangements.
Ways of Seeing was written by John Berger and consists of seven essays that discuss imagery and words while reflecting on works of art to understand the ways we perceive and consume media (Berger 10). Ways of Seeing was transcribed into text form after it aired on BBC as a four-part television series in 1972. Despite its publication date, this book is of great importance because it coincides with the entrance of the feminist movement and has since contributed to feminist content analyses and other studies of visual culture.

Much of Berger’s focus is on the female nude painting and how her representation subjects her to the idealization of a man (Berger 101). This concept is interesting when applied to several different forms of media. While Berger speaks mostly to European art and its linkage to Biblical tales of Adam and Eve, his ideas about female subjects are noteworthy in this project because it serves to inform the way in which YouTube videos may be consumed in the scope of work and gender issues. Essentially, this work is timeless and continues to apply to modern media publications that involve women and female bodies.

Overall, Berger’s main premise is to discuss the various ways we consume art in relation to previously known knowledge and beliefs (Berger 139). Berger traces the way men and women have a presence with affiliation to power and attitudes respectively (Berger 13). A man’s presence is strictly in relationship to his power while a women is a display of her gestures, surroundings, taste, and physical appearance. This, in essence, gives women more reason to be aware of their physicality, which lends to the origins of conceitedness and vanity among females (Berger 50). This can later be discussed in great detail when considering the presentation and representation of women who work on the
Internet. While Berger suggests women lack power and are purely objects of desire and viewing, this assertion will be challenged in an analysis of beauty gurus on YouTube and how the female body and presentation may actually be able to promote agency and levels of power. Berger continues this discussion by commenting on the way females are objects of male desire and interest, while women find themselves being looked at (Berger 47). Therefore, the woman is subject to being an object of vision, which touches upon the conception of objectification.

Objectification is a term most commonly used in feminist theory, sociology, and media studies. It is “a notion central to feminist theory. It can be roughly defined as the seeing and/or treating a person, usually a woman, as an object.” Martha Nussman indicates seven features that involve the objectification of a person:

1. Instrumentality,
2. Denial of autonomy,
3. Inertness,
4. Fungibility,
5. Violability,
6. Ownership,
7. Denial of subjectivity (Nussman 257).

With Nussman, many feminists have found objectification to be a morally problematic in society. As an object, most women attribute this to feelings of undermining or belittlement in relation to men. Therefore, the projection of a woman in media forms is problematic because it most likely is curated for the pleasure of a man’s eyes. While this may be true, Nussman’s discussion will be directly linked to an opposing argument where objectification and female presentation can be used to help women navigate different roles in society and as a result, feel more empowered. Those who have developed anti-pornography stances and view objectification as a social issue most
commonly cite the work of philosopher, Immanuel Kant, who famously coined the term “object of appetite” in *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals* (Kant).

Along with the ways of seeing, Laura Mulvey is a feminist film theorist who wrote, *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*. Published in 1975, this work still stands to be important when discussing women and media because it intersects the disciplines of film theory, psychoanalysis, and feminism. Mulvey considers the patriarchal subconscious of society and how it shapes the way we view films, specifically (Mulvey 838). Like Berger, Mulvey is interested in the cultural affects of patriarchy and gender differences in art consumption. She questions subjectivity through psychoanalytic means to understand the popularity of Hollywood films (Mulvey 840). In this work, Mulvey coins the term, the “male gaze,” which has echoed in feminist media studies ever since (Mulvey 841). The male gaze is the positioning of film audiences into the eyes of a heterosexual male (Mulvey 841). This sort of film practice denies women of their human identity, resulting in their status as an object. Also, the male gaze only allows women to view themselves from a male perspective, giving viewing privilege and purpose to the male audience. Mulvey asserts preexisting social constructs reinforce the viewing experience (Mulvey 843). Overall, Hollywood films utilize women as sexual objects to please men through visual experience.

Collectively, the literature surrounding media analysis and consumption within society shows several linkages to issues in women and workplace issues. Using these studies and theories, a discussion about YouTube as a labor option for women will be conducted to better explore and understand the potential this website platform has for women’s issues regarding media representation and workplace issues. The literature
focusing on media accessibility and the experience of viewing imagery serves to encourage and awareness in viewing modern forms of social media, including YouTube videos. Through discussing the various media studies literature, this review aims to inform a way of seeing and digesting media content to, in turn, address the phenomenon as a legitimate form of work for women.
Chapter 2: YouTube Content Analysis

Since 2005, YouTube has served as a video-broadcasting platform for people to upload different forms of video media. It quickly became a popular host site for video uploads that can be viewed by millions of people all over the world. (Cheng, Dale, Liu). With YouTube, video media is no longer restricted to television, physical tapes, film or discs. Instead, a quick Internet search inquiry can yield a plethora of uploaded video footage to watch for free. YouTube essentially provides its users with their own channel to upload video content while having interactive abilities such as subscribing to and liking other users content. It is noted, “with a free account, one can create personalized playlists, subscribe to favorite videographer submissions, share videos on Facebook, embed them in blogs and other applications, and write comments about the videos” (Ariew 2057). In a short amount of time, YouTube became the #1 video host with over 30 million visitors each month (Ariew 2057). Currently, YouTube is still the most popular site for video watching and posting on the Internet (Brouwer). With its vast user population comes a variety of video content.

Since 2007, YouTube has been the platform of an ever-growing community of individuals who are particularly interested in beauty, in regard to makeup and other forms of visual enhancement using skincare and beauty products (REFERENCE). This community has been formed around the various "beauty gurus" who have emerged through specific channels that dedicate its content to all things beauty related. As one of the largest communities on YouTube, this segment of the Internet was of complete interest to me after stumbling upon it several years ago. I was researching a product
review at the time and came across several videos of young girls talking in depth about an eyebrow beauty product. At this point in my discovery, there were already a plethora of videos channels contributing content that presented beauty-obsessed women. I became completely enchanted by all sorts of reviews and videos about daily routines. I immediately noticed the different styles of filming and the production behind each concealer review or special release eye shadow palette tutorial. The guru’s Internet personality and media presentation of herself was expressed through different types of lighting, subtitle fonts, and background music choices.

This section will survey two popular beauty guru channels along with their video content. Michelle Phan and Anna Saccone are discussed in detail because their channels present different work and family obligations that are relatable to ideas about femininity and work-family balance issues. However, other beauty guru channels that depict issues of work, family, and feminist issues in their videos are also discussed to exhibit other ways this beauty community presents feminist, work, and family ideas through media presentations. The goal of this chapter is to reduce these existing channels into more simple terms for a clear discussion in relation to feminist, work and family issues. Additionally, this chapter provides supplemental information to help provide context for the topics and media discussed.

*Michelle Phan*

For many of the YouTube beauty guru channels, including Michelle Phan (MichellePhan), Ingrid Nilsen (missglamorazzi), Zoe Sugg (Zoella), Tanya Burr (pixi2woo), and Bethany Mota (Macbarbie07), their first videos were uploaded in the late
00s and were mostly simple makeup tutorials that were slightly edited to create step-by-step instructional videos. Michelle Phan's pilot video was posted on May 20, 2007 and shows a laptop camera quality video of Phan applying concealer, powder, eyeliner, and other makeup essentials with a softly spoken voiceover, which describes the products and techniques used to achieve her natural makeup look (“Natural Looking Makeup”). The video has a very serene aesthetic, with natural window lighting, soft music, and Phan’s placid face (shoulders up), and narrated by Phan’s gentle voice. Since then, her videos have expanded to over 350 videos, 8 million subscribers, and 1.1 billion lifetime views (Brouwer).

When analyzing Phan’s more current video content and overall aesthetic of her YouTube channel, there is no doubt her repertoire of makeup and beauty tutorials has evolved into a zen, psychedelic, pop cultured sanctuary for deep questioning of life, goal setting, and d.i.y. (do-it-yourself) lifestyle tutorials. Throughout her channel, Phan maintains her calm, spa-like demeanor and speaks very poetically in her videos. Her earlier videos are step-by-step tutorials that describe the products and technique of application for makeup looks and skin care processes. For the first few years of her YouTube engagement, Phan utilized artistic knowledge to use makeup as a medium, while uploading new content every few months. Having graduated from Ringling College of Art and Design and receiving an honorary Doctorate of Arts Degree, Phan’s video content is oriented toward teaching and spreading knowledge (Brouwer).
Little is depicted about Phan’s Internet personality within her channel’s earlier videos. Instead, they are strictly focused on the tutorial process. It was not until her “Skin Care Review at CVS” video series that more is revealed about Phan’s Internet personality and presented personal taste. Phan’s channel focused more on tutorials until the channel gained subscribers and more attention overall. Upon comments asking Phan personal questions and other inquiries about beauty products and techniques, Phan began sharing more about her personal life. However, it is important to note that the information shared through Phan’s media presentations are strictly being viewed as such and are not being analyzed as factual information about her real life. With the presentation of a more personal style of filming came intricate video edits, sharing of intimate spaces (her car and home), and talking to the camera with a more casual tone (“Skin Care Review at CVS”).

A shift in content and overall aesthetic is seen approximately 1 year into Phan’s YouTube presence. After a year, the quality of the channel videos improved with a high-
resolution video quality and new video editing techniques. Her channel soon became a space for Halloween and costume makeup tutorials. Phan’s videos began depicting artistic methods with makeup to transform her face into other people and characters. Her first costume tutorial, “Geisha Halloween Tutorial,” began a series of videos including a Barbie, Seductive Vampire, Snow White, and Sailor Moon tutorials. It was not until the website, Buzzfeed featured Phan’s “How To Get Lady Gaga’s Eyes” tutorial that her channel became populated with over 1 million subscribers (Ricapito).

One of Phan’s most recent tags is the “Pillow Talk” tag where she answers questions from her “dreamers” (a.k.a. fans and subscribers). As of December 2015, there are five Pillow Talk videos that present Phan sitting down on a bed while having a girl-to-girl chat about life’s problems and concerns. Questions regarding jealousy of other girls, social media, and careers are popular in these videos. The most interesting part of this series is that Phan presents seemingly sincere and very personal answer to her dreamers’ questions. However, it is not certain who is actually backing these answers or submitting these questions. It is merely a media presentation that depicts these realistic answers. In the video, Phan states, “there’s a lot of things coming into my head and I’m trying my best to articulate them” (“Pillow Talk”). Despite this, Phan gives advice and let’s girls know that jealousy is “normal” and social media presents people in unrealistic ways. She offers empowering suggestions like doing the same and curating your own representation of yourself. While she also suggests this may not be the only way you want to portray yourself on the Internet and it is better to be valued rather than wanted (“Pillow Talk”).

While the Pillow Talk series is mostly focused on life issues rather than makeup,
Phan’s commitment to beauty tutorials is notable when surveying her channel. While her first videos had a keen focus on instruction and technique, her later videos show more of an artistic presentation of her Internet personality. “Summer Sunset Glow + Bonfire Party Ideas” is a highly edited video of a summertime makeup look. She makes notes, “I really like using a brush with primer” and “I’m all about that glow” to show personal preference and current interests. Similarly, she presents a passion for beauty products when she states, “I know when my brows are set, I feel so much more confident and my face feels complete. Oh my dear brow pencil, how you complete me” (“Summer Sunset Glow…”). While Phan is depicted drawing on perfect cat-eye eyeliner and giving herself an effortless glowing complexion, she is also encouraging and ensures her viewers that, “You don’t have to draw a perfect line in one take” and to “just be bold” (“Summer Sunset Glow…”). Phan admits that makeup application doesn’t always have to be perfect to get the point across (“Summer Sunset Glow…”).

Figure 2: Phan utilizes artistic camera angles and perspective to showcase her personality and creativity in her video, “Summer Sunset Glow + Bonfire Party Ideas.”
Along with this video, Phan incorporates a montage of film from a bonfire outing with a group of other individuals that may be representative of friends. The film footage is presented in an artistic way with quick cuts and candid shots of Phan roasting marshmallows and eating finger foods on the beach. These elements give a new perspective on Phan’s Internet presentation because we are able to see her from different angles and viewpoints. We see an outside perspective of Phan as she spends times with her friends, displaying her confidence, and fun personality, all while giving helpful and encouraging advice. This style of tutorial/short film became a common type of video on Phan’s channel. It can be seen in, “Detox With Me ASMR Style,” where Phan uses her hypnotic voice to discuss practices for detoxification of the mind, body, and soul, and “Let’s Go GLAMPING,” where she talks about the different ways girls can remain glamorous while on a camping trip. These videos are very unique to Phan’s channel. Not many gurus produce these types of videos because they involve a larger production crew and more sophisticated editing skill sets. Overall, Phan’s channel shows an evolution of video content style and her media presentations of life situations and makeup tutorials. Her channel encompasses different film styles and tutorial techniques that depict different perspectives, ideas about advice and support, and artistic presentations of makeup how-to’s.

*Anna Saccone*

Anna Saccone is depicted as an Irish-American vlogger who currently lives in the United Kingdom. Saccone’s channel is interesting because her YouTube history is vast and contains a great deal of video content. Through viewing her channel presentations,
Saccone vlogs the daily lives and her husband, Jonathan Joly. Between the two of them, they have three YouTube channels – Anna’s, Jonathan’s, and the SACCONEJOLY’s. Since 2009, both Saccone and Joly have posted videos on a daily basis, tracing their everyday outings and projects. It is important to note that the final uploaded products are edited and curated according the preference of Saccone and Joly. The information exhibited and the presentation of these recorded events will not be considered factual, but rather a media presentation of possible life situations for the purpose of this project. These videos are in the form of daily vlogs that are similar to video diaries and often involve the perspective of Saccone or Joly. What is so interesting about this channel is that the media presentation of Anna Saccone is highly personal and seems to have few boundaries. In essence, the SACCONEJOLYs channel is articulated like a reality show that you can watch everyday. Some of the events in the show include, Jonathan’s proposal to Anna, their wedding, pregnancy announcements, and the birth of their children.

On Anna’s personal channel, however, you can expect vlogs, tutorials, and reviews on beauty and baby/mommy products. When analyzing Saccone’s personal channel (separate from her families daily vlog channel), her video topics vary from beauty tutorials, pregnancy vlogs, baking and recipe tutorials, clothing hauls, and motherly advice videos. Because her channel has been running for several years, you can see the topics and video quality change with each stage of Saccone’s depicted life. Anna Saccone’s channel is particularly interesting because she is presented as a mother and has been posting video content related to her presented mothering life. This aspect of Saccone’s channel is important because this content may speak to specific feminist and
work-family balance issues.

The evolution of her presented interests and style is clearly visible when scrolling through her channel thumbnails. Prior to the episodes focusing on her marriage and at the beginning of her channel startup, Saccone posted primarily fashion reviews, advice videos, makeup tutorials, and how-to’s. These videos depicts a rather timid side of Saccone as she speaks slowly and seemingly uncomfortable in front of the camera. However, until her Maltese puppy, Albi, came into her life, her video style changed and became more of a lifestyle vlog that presented her daily life rather than highly focused video tutorials. Along with her puppy’s appearance in “Real Life: My Maltese Puppy!” “Real Life: Albi’s Bathtime,” and “Real Life: Albi the Maltese Puppy” we also see Saccone’s romantic life as she features her then boyfriend, Jonathan, in select videos for comedic relief between videos about body image and beauty.

Saccone’s “Real Life” series of videos lived on throughout the first two years of her channel as she documented hiking trips, beach days, and New Years. These videos were different for her channel at the time because they were unscripted documentaries of her personal life that her subscribers could watch and become more knowledgeable about Saccone as a person rather than just a beauty guru. Again, these “Real Life” videos serve as presentations of a life that Saccone may or may not have lived, but their real life aesthetic is important when thinking about how this media presentation can communicate ideas about femininity and work-family balance issues. Other videos like “I’m Moving!” “Make-Up Storage & Collection,” “Welcome to My Wardrobe!” and “13 Personal Questions TAG!” show Saccone’s creation of her Internet personality and the devotion she has to contributing content that seems realistic and honest.
Similarly to Phan, Saccone’s videos discuss her family and personal life in a very lighthearted manner. Her Internet personality admits that she is not perfect as a mother and tries to avoid sugarcoating her presentation of motherhood (“Our Morning Routine”). This may or may not be true, but the expression about not being perfect is what is important here. Saccone’s video presentations suggest that you do not have to be a perfect mother to be successful in a mothering role.

Figure 3: Anna Saccone films her morning routine with her two children in, "Our Morning Routine."

Overall, Saccone’s channel is unique for its frequency of posts and the various styles it includes. From daily vlogs to tutorials and mommy product reviews, Saccone is willing to share all sorts of content that present very personal details about a woman’s life as a mother and beauty vlogger. Aspects of her channel such as Saccone bare face, the messy state of her house, and the one-to-one dialogue of her vlogs depict a seemingly personal diary of Saccone’s life. The intimate style of filming and editing gives viewers a feeling like they know Saccone and make her presented life relatable.
Dani Meza-Hung and Jewel Sha’ree

While Saccone and Phan are among the most popular beauty guru channels on YouTube, there are several other women who have used YouTube as a platform to upload media presentations of their lives and other creative content. There are several amateur gurus and beauty vloggers who produce similar video content material that touch upon the various topics of beauty and lifestyles. As stated before, the beauty community on YouTube is very large and involves video content of women (and some men) who depict different lifestyles and interests. In particular however, women like Dani Meza-Hung, who goes by the YouTube username, “CoffeeBreakWithDani” and Jewel Sha’ree are using YouTube to contribute creative content that are meaningful in relation to feminist and work-family balance issues.

“Coffee break with me! Woo!” is Dani Meza-Hung’s opening line to nearly all of her beauty tutorial and review videos. She and Jewel Sha’ree are presented as mothers and beauty fanatics through their YouTube channels. Meza-Hung, however, posts far more frequently than Sha’ree, but has a much narrower area of content interest. Meza-Hung primarily discusses makeup and will post several videos per week either demonstrating new products or giving a first-impressions review. Meza-Hung’s channel is beneficial to the beauty subscriber who wants to hear the review of a highly seasoned makeup guru before spending money on an expensive lip product. Meza-Hung also incorporates a few lifestyle videos such as her “PawPack” unveiling, where she opens a monthly subscription box for her pet dogs or her “How I Save $$$ Shopping!” video that describes her wisdom in the financial department of budgeting and family spending. It is
important to note that these lifestyle videos are merely presentations of Meza-Hung and are not credited as factual or truthful. These lifestyle video presentations are important to consider in the overall curatorial nature of her channel and how these media presentations can be related to feminist and work-family balance issues.

Similarly, Jewel Sha’ree identifies herself as a wife and mommy of two on her YouTube channel profile. She states in her about section, “I made this channel to express myself and make everyone watching feel beautiful because you all are! This channel will mostly be about beauty, DIY’s, hauls, tutorials, nail art, mommy related things, and a lot of other girly things with some random videos thrown in for fun!” (“Jewel Sha’ree”). Sha’ree is another unique beauty guru because of her style. While she still encompasses the classic girly fashion of other beauty gurus, she also has some edginess as she is heavily tattooed and has other interests outside of makeup and beauty.

One of her distinct hobbies is crafting and being creative. She uploads videos such as, “DIY Midi Rings!” “Last Minute DIY Halloween Costumes!” “DIY Home Décor: Wall Art + Accent Pillow!” and “DIY Yummy Halloween Treats!” All of these videos
depict Sha’ree using simple products and ideas to create festive decorations, costumes, and jewelry. Another important aspect of Sha’ree’s channel is the affordability of the products she uses. Both her makeup tutorials and crafts often use drugstore brand and inexpensive materials, therefore appealing to subscribers with different financial situations. Like other gurus, Sha’ree also presents her Internet personality and interests in her video content through her background and fashion choices and bloopers at the ends of her videos. These editing techniques and the mindful presentations of Sha’ree and Meza-Hung are important to consider when applying their media content to feminist work and family balance issues. Both Meza-Hung and Sha’ree are examples of gurus who have used YouTube to share presentations of beauty wisdom, fashion, crafts, and motherhood.

Figure 5: Jewel Sha’ree shares the clothing she bought for her children in "Baby girl + Toddler Clothing Haul!"
Collectively, the beauty guru channels of Anna Saccone, Michelle Phan, Dani Meza-Hung, and Jewel Sha’ree are all unique in their general interests, degree of participation, and the personal touches that are presented through Internet video posts. It is evident through the briefing of each channel that these beauty guru channels have evolved over the years and incorporate various styles of video filming and editing to present different content relating to beauty and lifestyle. While some channels depict realistic situations and events, it is important to note that these beauty guru channels are not analyzed for their credibility as gurus, but rather their presentation as gurus is meaningful in this community of women. With this overview of select beauty guru channels, a more in-depth analysis in relation to feminist and work-family balance issues will follow.
Chapter 3: Further Analysis and Discussion

The beauty vloggers discusses thus far use their Internet personalities as a means to speak about issues among women. The presentation of these women as work-from-home mothers is worthy of discussion because it may give new insights to future projects that focus on work-family balance issues, defying stereotypes, and redefining women’s work. Because the presented beauty gurus are not making an income through traditional forms of work, we can question how the presentation of this style of paid labor compares to the traditions of women’s work. Additionally, we can question how these similarities and differences may indicate a change in social understandings of women’s work. This chapter will condense the YouTube channels of Michelle Phan, Anna Saccone, and other beauty gurus into separate themes that relate to these YouTube channels and content. The goal of this chapter is to utilize YouTube beauty guru content to discuss ideas of work-family balance and femininity.

Balance and Control

YouTube provides a platform for people to create and share video content at their own discretion. Additionally, YouTube is a stage for beauty guru personalities to present themselves and their video content. Because these YouTube channels are merely a media presentation, the following analysis does not credit these women for living the lives they speak of. Instead, this analysis looks at the content presented and the ideas at hand. As women, beauty gurus have unlimited control over their presentation and content for their channels. Only a few restrictions are regulated by YouTube and are set in place in cases
of copyright infringement or offensive material and a maximum file upload size. Phan, Saccone, Meza-Hung, and Sha’ree, among the many others that contribute to the community, have complete control over who they present themselves as to their public Internet audience. Before reaching a level of success through subscribers and page views, beauty gurus have to decide on their content, the audience they want to reach, and the overall method of reaching those viewers. In Michelle Phan’s case, her content came first and was later accessed by the masses, propelling her into Internet stardom. Through this process of content creation, sharing, and viewer interaction, beauty bloggers can present ideas about work-family balance and femininity.

Because YouTube is an Internet platform, beauty bloggers are in charge of their own channel including the construction of their videos, when they want to post them, as well as their characterized profile that emanates who they are. Especially in the dawn of their channel creation, gurus like Michelle Phan catered to her audience of young girls who were interested in learning how to concoct home remedies for troubled skin or how to properly apply foundation for an even complexion. Her targeted audience is obvious in her early videos. Some of these videos are titled, “Graduation Tutorial” and “Pretty Prom,” both of which are makeup tutorials for popular high school traditions. However, Phan also indulges a slightly older group of girls who can buy the ingredients for “Champagne Skincare” or benefit from the “Clubbing Makeup Tutorial.” In general, Phan indulges in the interests of girls slightly younger than her, while speaking to those who might be more attracted to makeup tutorials that are appropriate for an adult lifestyle.

It is very clear that Phan takes great care and effort in the presentation of her
video content. Because she has this control, she can manipulate how her audience views her. As her camera quality improved, so did her editing skills. As her makeup application skills improved, so did her video views and subscriptions. While her videos utilize the help of production assistance, Phan’s presented attitude stays fairly consistent. She presents herself as a friendly mentor and maintains her girl-to-girl, best friend tone, while providing a big sister style of advisement. The video content on her channel is usually informative and has the premise of teaching something or sharing knowledge. The video content often incorporates facts that aid in her discussion of beauty. This trend has become more evident in her recent videos. For example, in her video, “The Best Glasses For Your Face Shape,” Phan uses artistic theory and practice to help explain why certain styles flatter specific face shapes. “It’s all about creating balance to your face,” she advises (“The Best Glasses For Your Face Shape”).

The beauty bloggers discussed in this project all have control over their self-presentation. Their presence on the Internet is mostly up to them despite a few rules and regulations in place on YouTube. Women having full and complete control over their presentation, the quality and content of their work, and the methods they choose to complete their work is entirely unorthodox. Beauty gurus like Anna Saccone, Jewel Sha’ree, and Dani Meza-Hung present the idea of fulfilling several roles through their YouTube videos. Saccone, Sha’ree, and Meza-Hung are all presented as mothers and are often seen with their children on film. While some may argue that motherhood should be separated from work, I assert that these women creating video content that suggests that YouTube employment is empowering because it gives control over work-family balance.

As discussed by Jeffrey Greenhaus and Tammy Allen in Work-family balance:
Exploration of a concept, balance is ultimately achieved when an individual feels substantial accomplishment and fulfills roles that contribute to self-identity (Greenhaus, Allen 172). When satisfaction is met in a woman’s mothering, working, and self-righteous roles, she will most likely experience this feeling of balance. In several cases, beauty bloggers present ideas about how thankful they are for having YouTube as their full-time job because it allows them to take care of their children by staying home. These videos suggest that work arrangements through YouTube could give women the opportunity to feel fulfilled in several roles of their lives.

In a video from 2014, Anna Saccone posted a video that discusses some of her first jobs and as a result, touches upon some the work-family balance issues that can arise for some women who are mothers or have family obligations. While these assertions may not be true and may not be factual information about Saccone’s life, the ideas presented are important. The video displays Saccone discussing her life as a teenager when she babysat children and at the age of 18 she applied for her first “proper” job at a local boutique (“My First Jobs!”). She was attracted to the job initially because she thought it would be “glamorous,” but admits it was a “learning curve” because it involved high levels of responsibility, communication, and customer service skills (“My First Jobs!”). According to the video content, her other jobs were a beauty counter salesperson and a Ralph Lauren intern. Also stated in the video, during her internship at age 19, Saccone’s father was battling cancer. She notes, “I just felt this huge emotional guilt for being so far away from home” (“My First Jobs!”). In reflecting on her job as a YouTuber, she states, “This is the best job I’ve ever had. I love my job. I love working. I love what I do. I wouldn’t change it for the world. A huge bonus of that is that I get to stay home and look
after my kids, which is so important to me” (“My First Jobs!”).

This video presentation shows ideas about work-from-home scenarios that would be ideal conditions for a working mother. Saccone’s discussion about her previous jobs and her current position as a full-time YouTuber speaks directly to the benefits of jobs that permit telecommuting. In her 2012 video, “Confessions of a Beauty Guru TAG!” Saccone discusses her schedule and methods for creating and sharing videos on YouTube. She mentions early in the video that her baby daughter, Emilia, is currently sleeping and this is the best time for her to film videos for her channel (“Confessions of a Beauty Guru TAG!”). While this is merely a video presentation, Saccone’s spoken scenario is seemingly ideal and may inspire women to think about other options for work-family balance. This video in particular, is an example of what Saccone manages to achieve in work-family balance relationships as a YouTuber. Her acquisition of a work-family balance is far more doable as an alleged employed beauty guru. She jokingly mentions that finding time to film and take care of errands while Emilia sleeps is “crazy,” but she is relatively happy for the predicament she is in (“Confessions of a Beauty Guru TAG!”). This video shares several ideas that can be applied to relevant ideas in work-family literature.

Ultimately, Saccone’s video presentation is an example of boundary management theory. The presentation of her handling of various roles of mother, wife, and employee shows how she manages and maintains boundaries in an effort to simplify her life (Greenhaus, Allen 173). As discussed by Saccone in several of her videos, she plans her days around the time in which her young daughter is napping. While not knowing much about Saccone herself, her video presentations display this ideal situation of work and
family care. Because a baby needs minimal care during sleep, Saccone can take care of her six dogs, prepare for the day, process her weekly online grocery shop, and film and edit her YouTube videos. However, what is unique about Saccone’s presented lifestyle is that her family life meshes deeply with her work. According to her videos, Saccone is essentially working (with camera in hand), while spending time with her baby, husband, and six dogs.

As an Internet personality, Saccone is subject to great criticism regarding her commitment to her work (daily vlogs) and even the style of parenting she uses that is displayed in her video content. The reality of Internet bullying and opinionated commentary is evident in the comments section of Saccone’s videos. Because YouTube provides a thumbs up and thumbs down button, Saccone and her viewers can see the approval or disapproval of her videos. However, with a quick survey on her channel, there are no video posts that have more thumbs down than thumbs up opinions. It is also important to note that there is no validity in the origin of these comments and it is known that these comments could have been written by Saccone herself or staged by another person on the Internet. Along with negativity in her comments section, there are also several encouraging and supportive points of view. For example, a subscriber posted the following:

![Figure 6: Comment from subscriber ("Confessions of a Beauty Guru TAG!").](image)

With these sorts of comments, Saccone can obtain confidence in her balance apparatus as a beauty guru and mother. This subscriber utilizes Saccone’s video content
to suggest that all moms are victim to this struggle of managing work and family and that doing your best is really all you can do. In this same video, Saccone mentions, “I’m not wearing shoes, I’m wearing slippers” when responding to a question about what she’s wearing in the video (“Confessions of a Beauty Guru TAG!”). This brief comment also speaks to the subscribers comment about doing your best as a mother, even if you do not have enough time in the morning to put on your shoes. This relates to Sheryl Sandberg’s conception of “having it all” from her book, *Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead* (Sandberg).

Instead of setting women up for failure by demanding they fulfill and achieve the perfect balances of work and family, Sandberg believes time is not on women’s side in these cases (Sandberg). There simply is not enough time in one day to fully realize and accomplish every task. Sandberg’s point clearly addresses Saccone’s presented YouTube life and criticism as she advises women to prioritize and not worry about the things that do not matter (Sandberg). Through evidence in her videos, Saccone’s Internet personality seems satisfied with her life and the balance she achieves through beauty vlogging and sharing her projected daily life with the Internet community.

Even in situations where Saccone’s video content is deeply criticized, Saccone reports being able to grow and learn from negative comments (“Confessions of a Beauty Guru TAG!”). In this same video, Saccone discusses that she is a sensitive person and that comments about her parenting style and home life habits are taken lightly. With understanding that any of these statements could be curated responses, much can be taken from the dialogue of this video. Some of her most criticized video contributions, are surrounded around her pregnancy vlogs and post-partum updates. While pregnant with
her first child, Saccone posted a video of her and her husband doing pregnancy exercises in her video, “PREGNANCY WORKOUT ROUTINE! INVADE LONDON.” This video depicts Saccone and her husband who has a pillow stuffed in his t-shirt to mimic his wife’s pregnant belly while attempting to do prenatal stretches and exercises. In her video’s description box, Saccone is sure to indicate that neither of them are professionals or personal trainers, but made the video for fun. Despite their efforts to create a little bit of comedy on her channel, several subscribers critiqued the couple through assumptions derived from the video content regarding their workout habits and lifestyle:

![Figure 7: Comment from viewer (“PREGNANCY WORKOUT ROUTINE...”).](image)

![Figure 8: Comment from viewer (“PREGNANCY WORKOUT ROUTINE...”).](image)

The opinions of these two subscribers speak to the issues of women working from home and the prospect of female employees becoming pregnant. The comment by pinkposion00 personifies a common stereotype about women who stay home – they are lazy. This subscriber’s assumption that Saccone does not workout shows a bitterness toward women who stay at home either for their children or for work. In another video, Saccone addresses the women who actually bully her for her alleged employment on YouTube. While no one is truly sure that Saccone actually gets paid to film videos for YouTube, the commentary and the response that Saccone submits in a video are important to think about in relation to work-family balance issues and femininity. She states, “What people don’t understand is that YouTube as a job is a tough job. It is not a
walk in the park. It may seem that way because we make it seem that way maybe. Obviously it has its advantages and disadvantages” (“Bullied Off YouTube ®”). In some cases, the comments section of Anna Saccone’s YouTube videos can reveal perceived stereotypes held by viewers. However, it is in the beauty guru’s control to address these comments by replying through text or posting new videos to propose new ideas.

Through her channel and her projected lifestyle, Saccone’s romantic relationship is also an important part of this discussion about YouTubers and their potential ability to fulfill their multiple roles. In Saccone’s case, she often incorporates her projected relationship with Jonathan Joly in her video content. However, Saccone answers questions about the management of her relationships in her “Ask Anna” videos where she addresses popular questions from her subscribers. While these questions and answers may not be true, they shed light on other aspects of finding work-family balance. In a video from 2011, Saccone advises that every type or relationship involves fights and disagreements, but “the negatives shouldn’t outweigh the positives” (“Ask Anna: Relationships…”). She also stresses the importance of communication and not being afraid to “talk to your other half, talk to your boyfriend” and counsels her subscribers into the mindset that the right person for you will take your concerns into consideration (“Ask Anna: Relationships…”). The following comment shows how Saccone’s subscribers identify with her projected life through video content:

Figure 9: Comment from viewer (“Ask Anna: Relationships…”).
For the first few years of her channel, Phan provided the content that her young audience desired. She created makeup tutorials for date night, a day out shopping, or a Halloween costume. However, as Phan grew older, so did her audience. While the makeup tutorials persist, the incorporation of domestic or lifestyle blog videos have taken a great deal of space on Phan’s channel. With her incorporation of personal vlogs and video content, she admits through video presentation that the YouTube lifestyle and fame can be difficult because she sometimes feels that she has to censor the things she wants to say. She states, “You definitely pay a price with fame, because you have to give up your freedom to really speak how you really feel” (“Pillow Talk 2”). This statement speaks to how these videos should not be analyzed for fact but rather ideas about work-family balance and femininity. Phan talks about how she used to post dark poetry on the Internet as an artistic outlet before she became famous on YouTube (“Pillow Talk 2”). She later realized that she cannot post the things she feels because she is at risk of offending her global audience.

This situation of YouTube fame and being in the public eye does leave beauty gurus in a position to be critiqued and questioned, which may, in turn, cause them to filter certain aspects of their character and personal traits. It is important to consider the difference women experience when working for YouTube or other work-from home companies rather than working outside of their home. In most cases, a typical outside job would require a female employee to follow a more strict code of conduct and behavior that would be far more restricting and deprived of any sort of personality flare. Most women working in corporate offices will most likely feel like one of several cubicles that are working for the benefit of a company, while lacking the benefits they know they
deserve. On the other hand, the video content presented suggests that YouTubers who gain subscribers, sponsorships, and fame can be recognized for their talents. Phan states, “I’m a creator at heart. I’m an artist. I love creating things and, like any artist, we like having an audience that can appreciate our work” (“Pillow Talk 2”). Essentially, any job requires the sacrifice of something from a person’s personal traits. In the case of beauty gurus, however, their situations are the most ideal.

The reason for Phan’s censorship is because she has a global audience and her Internet personality feels that being sensitive to all people is important in her line of work. This shows that being a YouTuber may yield these luxuries of being honest and having a platform to speak about global audiences and the mission to not offend anyone. Phan’s content projects these ideals that would be beneficial for a work-at-home arrangement for women. The following comment shows another alleged YouTuber who has gained respect and love for Phan’s honesty and address of the issues of Internet fame:

![Comment from viewer](Figure 10: Comment from viewer (“Pillow Talk”).)

Both Saccone and Phan show the ability for women to control their work and personal lives through YouTube. The presentation of working for this video hosting site gives women an outlet to combat negativity and to grow from vast criticisms all while setting an example for their subscribers. While Internet fame is a large consideration in this line of work, Phan, Saccone, and other gurus have projected through video content
that it can be combatted with the creative contributions of video content. Additionally, the flexibility and convenient work arrangements that YouTube may provide may inspire women to seek opportunities that cater to the needs of women who have work-family obligations.

_Youtube as a Net’work’ and Feminine Tradition_

After being sold to Google for $1.65 billion in October 2006, YouTube launched its Partner Program to help its users gain revenue from their original content contributions (Stelter). Essentially, YouTube gave its users the opportunity to make their amateur videos into a business. Within a few years, the most successful YouTubers were bringing in nearly six figure incomes from their video posts (Stelter). With the development of the YouTube Partnership program and the address of companies to beauty gurus like Phan, the YouTube platform is not only a stage for women to express themselves individually, but may serves as a form of work and income. While the initial steps to becoming a beauty guru requires extreme dedication and original content, women have the opportunity to obtain an Internet following through video contributions and consequently spread ideas through video content. After they achieve a following and a large channel of videos, they can apply for partnerships through YouTube or other sponsorship networks.

By analyzing video content, as mentioned before, Saccone claimed to have been employed by a variety of fashion and beauty industry jobs before finding a career as a YouTuber. While most who claim to be YouTubers full-time in their video content, gurus like Saccone, Phan, and others also claim to have branched their efforts outward to
network their content, style, and personality with other companies. By creating content that addresses not only beauty and skincare concerns, but issues like body image, pregnancy, confidence, and social issues, Saccone and Phan, among others, are using YouTube as a means to speak outwardly about these important issues.

Prior to the emergence of her baby in her videos, Anna Saccone contributed YouTube content surrounding the topics of body image and beauty. For the first year of her channel, a majority of her videos regarded seasonal fashion and “how-to” style tutorials that instructed subscribers on “How to Wear Chinos” or “Style Tips For The Hour Glass Shape.” In these videos, Saccone helps women find styled clothing to flatter their existing shape. These videos are interesting because Saccone does assert that she is speaking from personal experience. In her “Style Tips for The Pear Shape,” video she states, “If you’re pear shaped, you should be happy” (“Style Tips for the Pear Shape”). While this video is part of a series addressing different body shapes, Saccone does not solely discuss her own shape, but recognizes all different types of women’s bodies. In doing so, Saccone addresses a variety of women within the Internet population. Therefore, in essence, Saccone’s video content supports the embrace of women’s bodies just how they are, instead of encouraging a change or modification to fit popular trends.

Saccone’s video posting history shows video content that chronicles her projected and edited life. You can see her evolution from a bleach blond in her early 20s who did not have many obligations or priorities besides her boyfriend and immediate family to a mother of two who juggles her everyday household tasks, work, and personal hobbies. While this is all a presentation and most likely does not reflect Saccone in real life, it is interesting to view this content material in relation to her projected age. While always
posting beauty and fashion-related videos, Saccone addresses her subscribers questions and needs in her “Ask Anna” episodes. In this series, Saccone braces commentary from her subscribers who question her qualification to answer such questions. She states, “I’m not a dietician, a nutritionist, personal trainer… a teacher. I’m not a doctor, anything like that… I do appreciate those comments” (“Ask Anna: Relationships…”). Instead of claiming professionalism in the areas of relationships, body shapes & weight loss, she mentions this series is more like “girl chat” and that she just wants to give advice based on her personal experiences. “If you don’t have a girlfriend, a big sister, or a mom, maybe I can be that person” (Ask Anna: Relationships…”). It is also important to note for the scope of this project, Saccone’s dialogue is not viewed as factual or legitimate. Instead, it is being analyzed to see the potential women have when working from home and the different avenues women can take in speaking out about these work-family and feminist issues.

Anna’s offering of advice using her alleged personal experience is a radical concept. Not only does Saccone’s Internet personality network with the beauty industry and other platforms to earn a living, but she extends herself to her subscribers and networks with everyday people. While this might not be true to her real life, this idea is interesting and should be studied further. As discussed prior, Saccone posts videos that are girl-to-girl and use her alleged personal experience to give advice about “How to Handle Haters & Bullies!” She states, “if you love yourself with all of your heart and if you can just be your best friend, then that won’t affect you” (“How to Handle Haters & Bullies!”). 2011 was a year where Saccone was constantly commenting on issues of Internet bullying, confidence, and personal appearance. Her video content and advice
dialogue is seemingly unscripted, but edited into a coherent, inspirational video that can be digested in different ways. Essentially, Saccone suggests that she is balancing her personal and work life while addressing important social issues for young women and empowering them to be better people through personal experience and wisdom.

Michelle Phan offers a similar role of big sister or mentor in her “Pillow Talk” series. These videos are similar to the “Ask Anna” videos that Anna Saccone posts, where subscribers submit questions and Phan takes the time to sit on her bed and talk girl-to-girl to give her opinions, reflections, and advice to her subscribers. Phan states in her Pillow Talk video, “I’m actually shooting this video by myself. There’s no one behind the camera. It’s just you and me” (“Pillow Talk 2”). While this may or may not be true, the idea of this sort of personal reflection and chat is interesting for women. In this specific video, Phan talks about her YouTube experience and the way she manages her on and offline self. She argues that she is not much different in person and admits she is “awkward,” “shy,” and an “introvert” (“Pillow Talk 2”). Both Phan and Saccone utilize their fame and attention to address popular issues to speak out to women who may feel shameful about their bodies or feel like they do not have anyone trustworthy to talk to. Phan and Saccone lend their Internet personalities out to the YouTube community as a way to talk about issues and project ideas about work-family balance and femininity. Their mini series of “Pillow Talk” and “Ask Anna” really create a safe space for women to watch and listen to Phan and Saccone talk about their insecurities and speak out about ways that they find management.

Beauty gurus express the level of confidence women need to succeed and to test their boundaries at work. Women in the beauty community on YouTube had to put
themselves on the Internet for strangers to criticize in hopes to pursue their passion and interests. As Sandberg has discussed, most women want to be liked and sometimes success makes others jealous, resulting in dislike (Sandberg 50). This creates the byproduct of women undermining their achievements and advancements in order to not be disapproved by others. Saccone, Phan, and other gurus have noted the intensity of Internet hate and disapproval. Saccone notes, “Can you think of any job where you go to and you’re constantly scrutinized, you’re constantly judged, you get mean comments, you get bullied… no, that just doesn’t exist! (“How to Handle Haters & Bullies!”). It is through Saccone and Phan’s address of these workplace issues that YouTube and other work-from-home arrangements can be used to achieve balance and success as women who work and have family obligations. YouTube serves as a platform for discussions about work-family balance and femininity and may provide a place for women to express themselves while exploring work opportunities.
Chapter 4: Conclusion

Beauty gurus on YouTube have created a community of empowered women who share beauty wisdom while discussing important women’s and gender issues. As a network, the beauty community on YouTube is constructed in a way where women have the ability to find inspiration and advice from other women who are willing to share video content that contributes to ideas of work-family balance and femininity. Through commentary and dialogue, we can see how YouTube serves as a media platform for an important discussion regarding these issues. Through presentations of life situations and the curated channels of select beauty gurus, we can analyze this content for its meaning in the realm of feminist and work and family issues while encouraging women to “lean in” on important discussions about women’s issues.

YouTube channels that introduce ideas about YouTube employment and the possibilities of working from home are worthy of further study because they may be viable options for women with family obligations. For women like Anna Saccone, Dani Meza-Hung, and Jewel Sha’ree, the role of mother and wife are easily fulfilled through their YouTube presentations. Their videos suggest that staying at home allows more time to spend with family, take care of household chores, and film and edit videos for their channels. Additionally, their videos display YouTube work that is flexible and accommodating to personal needs. Because YouTubers can stay at home, they are reducing the costs of childcare. With a job away from home, these women would most likely experience lost time by physically being away from their families.

Ultimately, YouTube moms have the ability to make their own schedule, while
dictating what they produce for their channel content. YouTube may be an option for women who are interested in an entrepreneurial, self-managed type of work. Along with YouTube, women are finding other platforms to contribute to the online world with blogging and freelance Internet work. Through the examples of Anna Saccone, Michelle Phan, and others, we see the alignment of Sheryl Sandberg’s ideas with YouTube employment and the projected lifestyles within the analyzed video content.

Although a majority of beauty gurus delve into the topics of makeup, fashion, and hair, it is important to not generalize their video channel content because these women do not only attract young teenaged girls, but have vast subscribers of all demographics. Some may argue that the foci of beauty and makeup tutorial as a channel premise is falling into the stereotype and tradition of femininity, but there are so many gurus including Saccone, Phan, and Sha’ree who explore other avenues of lifestyle blogging. As discussed, videos that give advice about bullies, how-to’s on coming out about your sexuality, and body confidence talk-through’s are also being consumed by subscribers. Not only do these Internet personalities present the role fulfillment of mother, wife, and employee, but they offer up their advice and time to be someone else’s big sister, mentor, mother, and friend.

Beauty gurus have not only challenged the traditions of work and the constrictions most jobs place on families, but they have created a culture of women who empower each other to challenge social structures. TAG videos such as the “Get Ready With Me!” series is not always about the products and techniques these YouTubers use, but is a place where they can create a dialogue with their subscribers. These videos open up the conversation, whether it comes directly from the video content itself or it prompts a
written discussion in the comments section of the video. Therefore, not only is YouTube a platform for beauty gurus to share their video content, but its multi-media layout allows for subscribers to interact with the guru and other subscribers. The dialogue between guru and subscribers is essential to the convergence of women as social activists in women’s issues. Overall, YouTube stands as an important employment opportunity for women to consider because it has the potential to open several doors for women who wish to work from home. The professional, personal, and community growth that comes from this group of women continues to show the ways the Internet can serve as a platform for convergence and assemblage for women to express themselves fully. Ultimately, beauty gurus and their subscribers are provided with a community culture of supportive and empowering women through participation on YouTube.
References:


