

Make-up as an Arena for Inter-generation Conflict in Contemporary Cairo: A Case Study on Consuming Make-up and the Transformation of the Body Norm.

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This study aims at revealing the ways how the make-up culture in contemporary Cairo shapes and reshapes female body in the region. By considering make-up as an everyday practice that curves the notion of body and the consumer act that shapes the story of self, the study seeks a platform to examine bodily practice, make-up in particular, that connects the individual reasoning with the social situation. Female body in the Middle East has a history of being an icon for its cultural essence. Female body or the absence of female body from the public was considered to be the proof of the "suppression of women by men" that represents the area's backwardness. As such, symbolic, as well as physical absence of female body has gathered the academic attention, and many studies were conducted on veiling. However, by closely examining the previous studies, it became apparent that they have common problems: relying solely on ideologies such as Islam and patriarchy, and the bias of viewing female bodies that only considers its sexuality. Such cognitive framework places make-up as oppose to veiling, that prevents to understand the current phenomenon in which more and more women wear heavy make-up and Islamic veiling at the same time. Instead of deploying problematic frameworks from the past, the study examines the phenomenon by grounding on the empirical data gathered by the author from the interviews and participant observations.

The findings from the life history of female teachers in their 20's working in outskirts of Cairo indicate that those women did not problematized their make-up activities, despite the fact that they have been reported as a "social problem" in many mass medias. They were well recognized the negative connotation of make-up, and they were well aware of the Islamic logic that believed to condemn the act of make-up. But they did not relate those negative discourses to their own behaviors. Instead, they and their parents both recognized make-up as a sign of progressed and wealthier lifestyle that those women have acquired through succeeding in the school education. It suggests that they have embodied a particular modernization ideology that had been advocated by the government to mobilize its citizens and represented act of make-up as a sign of modernity.