CONSTRUCTING THE IDEAL FACE: THE JAPANESE HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS' MAKEUP

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While at least half of Japanese high school girls wear makeup, the reasons why they do so have remained understudied. Having reviewed perspectives of feminist authors and other studies on makeup use, this study interviewed 32 female high school girls in a private co-ed high school in Japan to investigate why they engage in the practice. Many reasons mentioned by the students indicate that they feel pleasure in using makeup to move toward their "imagined self." Some girls, however, engage in makeup because they accept the norm that makeup is a form of etiquette for adult women. This study, therefore, also considers this norm's effects on those girls who cannot use makeup for physiological reasons and those who do not want to wear makeup at all.

Keywords: makeup, female high school students, body, grooming, beauty, Japan, Japanese society

1. Introduction[1]

This research focuses on the makeup practices of Japanese high school girls. However, it first reviews several previous studies conducted in Anglophone countries because research on the adolescent female body began earlier there than in Japan.

Since the late 1990s, studies of women's bodies in Anglophone countries have pointed out a variety of issues regarding adolescent girls' body construction. For

1 Some parts of this chapter have been previously published in Japanese as part of the article "Keshō jissen ni yoru joshikōsei no shintai kōchiku [Makeup usage in Japanese female high school students as a tactic for appearance alternation]," published in *Kokusaigaku kenkyū* 63 (October 2023). I appreciate that the Faculty of International Studies, Meiji Gakuin University, allows me to use the article's contents. I also appreciate anonymous reviewers and Dr. Halina Zawiszová who gave me very important and valuable comments.

example, based on counseling adolescent girls, Pipher (1996) pointed out that compared with the early 1960s, when she went through puberty, in the late 1990s, American adolescent girls faced more substantial pressure to be beautiful. Brumberg (1998, xxi) also observed that "girls [in the 1990s were] concerned with the shape and appearance of their bodies as a primary expression of their identity" and that this preoccupation began soon after the onset of secondary sexual characteristics. This trend continued into the 2000s. Aapola et al. (2005, 4, 132), for example, stated that adolescent girls and young women in Australasia, Europe, and North America constantly struggled to gain social acceptance of their bodies.

Having reviewed many studies on body image and body dissatisfaction among people in Western societies, Grogan (2017, 173) notes that women's body dissatisfaction begins at age 8, with young girls considering a thin body similar to adult women's as ideal. Girlguiding (2016) conducted a survey that captured the perceptions and experiences of girls and young women in the United Kingdom regarding various issues, targeting 1,627 girls and young women aged 7 to 21. The author showed that the percentage of those who were satisfied with their appearance fell from 73% in 2011 to 61% in 2016 (Girlguiding 2016, 5). In addition, the percentage of those who felt embarrassed about their appearance increased with age, from 15% for those aged 7 to 10 to as high as 50% for those aged 17 to 21 (Girlguiding 2016, 6). These findings indicate that the older girls become less confident in their appearance.

With the rise of social media, many studies have investigated their various influences on adolescents' body image. Thompson and Lougheed (2012, 93–94), for example, surveyed 268 college students in the United States and found a correlation between exposure to pictures on Facebook and body image dissatisfaction for young women. Based on a survey of about 1,000 adolescents in Singapore, Ho et al. (2016, 6) found that social comparison with friends on social media was significantly associated with adolescent girls' body image dissatisfaction.

Previous research conducted by Japanese scholars on adolescent girls' bodies in Japan has focused primarily on body shape and has mostly not considered other forms of body construction. Alarmingly, researchers have suggested a strong tendency for female university students with a thin or normal body shape according to their body mass index (BMI) to perceive themselves as overweight (Mizumura and Hashimoto 2002; Handō and Kawashima 2009; Kōda 2014).

The desire to lose weight leads to dieting: 61% of Japanese female university students in a 2006 survey of 298 participants (Handō and Kawashima 2009, 57) and about 46% of Japanese female high school students in a 2010 survey of 515 participants (Japan Youth Research Institute 2011, 14) had experienced dieting. A 2017 survey of male and female high school students in Japan, the United States, China, and South Korea showed that 23% of Japanese girls were satisfied with

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their body shape, which was the lowest of the eight groups surveyed (National Institution For Youth Education 2018, 22).[2] These findings indicate a trend toward body dissatisfaction among young Japanese women.

In addition, adolescent girls in Japan also frequently use social media. In 2022, for example, teenagers in Japan spent more than 60 minutes browsing and posting on social media on both weekdays and weekends, second only to people in their 20s (Institute for Information and Communications Policy 2023, 31). Although some studies (e.g., Katō 2013; Nakayama 2018) researched negative experiences of high school students caused by social media use, the relationship between social media use and body image among Japanese teenagers has not yet been investigated.

Several studies have pointed out increases in the number of female high school girls who wear makeup in Japan nowadays compared to several years ago. According to a survey of 150 girls in their late teens by the POLA Research Institute of Beauty & Culture (2018,1), between 2015 and 2018, the percentage of girls in their late teens applying makeup grew by about 17 percentage points within four years to reach about 71% in 2018. A survey conducted in 2020 by LINE Corporation (2020) found that of 317 high school girls, about 57% used makeup. These findings indicate that the body construction of makeup is widely carried out among Japanese high school girls.

Kawakami (2016) studied attitudes toward makeup among male and female students (i.e., what they thought about makeup in general). The article showed that regardless of gender, "the more the students feel self-acceptance, the more they expect that makeup will cause exhilarated conditions or feelings such as a 'change in appearance' or 'impression management'" (Kawakami 2016, 60). However, Kawakami (2016) did not clarify why they did or did not wear it.

This research considers reasons why high school girls wear or do not wear makeup. Why high school girls? This is because nearly half of all adult women in Japan nowadays start using makeup after entering high school. A 2006 survey of 190 Japanese female university students found that their start of makeup use was concentrated between the first year of junior high school (i.e., when they were around 13 years old) and the first year of high school (i.e., when they were around 16 years old) (Ishida 2009, 49). According to the POLA Research Institute of Beauty & Culture (2019, 3), of 750 women aged 40–64, about 50% began doing their makeup when they were 18, i.e., after they graduated from high school. In

[2] The survey included 1,706 respondents from Japan,1,519 from the United States, 3,240 from the People's Republic of China, and 2,015 from South Korea. The group with the lowest percentage of satisfaction with their body shape was Japanese girls (23%), followed by Korean girls (31.6%). The group with the highest percentage of satisfaction with their body shape was American boys (74%), followed by Chinese boys (54.8%).

contrast, among 450 women aged 20–34, who participated in the survey, nearly half began using makeup by 17. This indicates that Japanese women have started wearing makeup at an earlier age. I, therefore, focus on their high school years to discover their reasons for starting wearing makeup or not doing so.

Why focus on wearing makeup? While at least half of Japanese high school girls wear makeup, questions such as why they do so, what kinds of cosmetics they use, and how they perceive the benefits of their makeup or its costs have remained understudied. The present study will address the first question, while I intend to tackle others in a separate article.

In this chapter, applying makeup to one's face is considered "makeup practice." This is because already the second-wave feminism in the 1970s identified actions women performed to beautify their bodies (e.g., dieting, removing body hair, applying makeup, etc.) as "beauty practices" (Jeffreys 2015, 1) and criticized them. The second reason is that, according to Widdows (2018, 2–3), the beauty ideal is becoming an ethical one globally, which means that beauty is what is desired for itself and the good. The beauty ideal is related to the creation of a moral framework. This framework provides shared standards for judging one as success/failure or good/bad by types of appearances (Widdows 2018, 26). These standards set goals for our efforts to fulfill and the direction of our habits and practices in daily life. In other words, based on the moral framework of the beauty ideal, many people practice bringing their bodies closer to that ideal. Because *jissen* (実践, "a practice") means "making a belief or theory a reality for oneself" (*Dejitaru daijisen* 2020a), bringing one's body closer to the beauty ideal can be called a "beauty practice." Consequently, of these practices, those related to makeup can be called "makeup practices" and the term will be used here when considering makeup in relation to beauty practices.

2. Previous studies

Previous research related to this study is examined from two directions: studies on the makeup of adult women and the makeup of high school girls.

2.1 Reasons why women engage in beauty practices

Even in Anglophone countries, few studies have examined why adult women engage in makeup (Jeffreys 2015, 101). Let us, therefore, first overview four feminist perspectives on women's beauty practices, including makeup.

Second-wave feminists argue that beauty practices, including makeup, are oppressive toward women (e.g., Bartky 1991; Wolf 2002; Jeffreys 2015).[3] Adhering to

[3] I start my discussion from the second wave feminism, because I consider it important to know how it tried to construct its arguments against beauty norms for women.

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the second-wave feminist viewpoint, Jeffreys (2015, 28) argues that beauty practices, including makeup practices, are carried out by women to transform and adorn their bodies to show that they belong to a class subordinate to men. Moreover, in cultures where men have the power to coerce women to carry out beauty practices, women have no choice but to participate even though many beauty practices are harmful to them (Jeffreys 2015, 112). Jeffreys (2015, 115–116) points out, for example, that some makeup products include harmful synthetic chemicals that cause damage to women's physical health and encourages women to reject such harmful beauty practices and have the strength to oppose their negative effects (Jeffreys 2015, 163). I call this perspective "makeup as coercion."

Third-wave feminism, however, emerged in the 1990s with a different perspective. It promoted a variety of "girl" cultures (Takahashi 2020, 31). While items and practices that exhibit femininity (e.g., playing with Barbie dolls, applying makeup, wearing high heels, etc.) are considered by second-wave feminism as oppressive to women and taboo, they are affirmed by "girl" cultures (Baumgardner and Richards 2000, 136–137). Third-wave feminists thus argue that femininity constructed by beauty and other practices is not opposed to but compatible with femininity (Tanaka 2012, 60).

Studies analyzing the situation called "postfeminism" appeared in the 2000s (Kikuchi 2019, 71). Postfeminism is not an evolution of feminism that has overtaken second or third-wave feminism but the endorsement of beauty practices to allow women to feel good about themselves and please themselves, which is conceptualized as a "sensibility" (Gill 2007, 147). Thus, like third-wave feminism, postfeminism does not critically examine the social and cultural influences on women's beauty practice choices or the consequences of beauty practices.

According to McCann (2018, 67–70), since the 2010s, Moran (2011) and Valenti (2014) presented alternative views toward beauty practices. On the one hand, unlike third-wave feminism, they criticized beauty norms that influence women to conduct beauty practices. On the other hand, unlike second-wave feminism, both affirmed women's pleasure attached to beauty practices—e.g., paying attention to fashion and wearing high heels (Moran 2011) and wearing high heels and makeup (Valenti 2014, 203–218)—and did not criticize individual women who engage in beauty practices. McCann (2018, 79) argues that both see beauty norms, not individual women, as something that should be changed.

Their arguments, however, have some weaknesses. Neither explains the mechanism of the structure that encourages women to engage in beauty practices. Moran (2011) does not explain it at all and Valenti (2014, 214) simply blames consumerism as the heart of beauty standards. In addition, the reason why they and some women enjoy certain beauty practices is not examined. In contrast, Widdows (2018)

explains it rather convincingly by introducing the concept of an "imagined self," which I will discuss later.

2.2 Reasons for wearing makeup among adult women

Several empirical studies from Anglophone countries analyze women's experiences to dispute the abovementioned idea of "makeup as coercion."[4] Lakoff and Scherr (1984, 143) found that many of the female university students in North America[5] they surveyed enjoyed makeup. On the one hand, they used it to enhance self-esteem and confidence and, on the other hand, to avoid being regarded as rude to those around them because they believed that no makeup indicated their carelessness in appearance. This finding suggests that some women wear makeup because they are conscious of the norm that women should wear makeup when presenting their appearance to others. According to Dellinger and Williams (1997), American women in the workplace wear makeup to be seen as healthy, heterosexual, and competent. They do so because the workplace implicitly demands these qualities from women, and fulfilling these qualities may lead to success at work. In her study of urban American women, Beausoleil (1994, 55) insists: "Women indeed use appearance to express who they are."

Widdows (2018) discussed beauty practices as a whole. Because makeup practices are a part of beauty practices, we can apply her arguments to examine makeup practices. Unlike Jeffreys (2015), Widdows (2018, 231–232) argues that women do not engage in beauty practices, such as using makeup, because of coercion from men. Widdows (2018, 234) finds that "men too are beautifying and becoming 'to be looked' at, and increasingly falling under the beauty ideal," therefore, she concludes that the view that beauty practices are methods by men to subordinate women is incorrect.

Based on the review of previous research, Widdows (2018, 39) points out that the main reason why women engage in beauty practices is because they believe that they can obtain certain benefits by following the beauty ideal as a moral framework. Widdows examines previous research and gives several examples of such benefits as being beautiful and increasing employability and pay. In addition, attractive individuals are regarded as having positive personality traits, such as friendliness, competence, or intelligence (Widdows 2018, 41). This reason is consistent with the explanation mentioned above by Dellinger and Williams (1997, 165) that some women wear makeup because they want to look competent.

Widdows (2018, 112) argues that another reason why women engage in beauty practices is to satisfy the minimum standards of the beauty ideal. Beauty practices

4 While these studies are not recent, I am not aware of any more current studies that would address the issue at hand.

5 The authors did not disclose the location. I presumed it from the contents.

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tend to be first approved by society and then, in many cases, demanded as minimum standards of the beauty ideal. These practices thus become customary to satisfy the criteria. The author gives makeup as an example of these for many women. When minimum beauty standards spread and become almost entirely dominant, they become invisible (Widdows 2018, 120). They are no longer considered norms about beauty; they are considered the minimum grooming practices necessary for looking healthy and natural. Therefore, wearing makeup to appear healthy is interpreted as grooming, even as the beauty ideal requires it.

Widdows (2018, 120) further argues that when minimum standards of the beauty ideal become grooming practices, it becomes challenging for individuals to choose not to engage in those beauty practices, as not engaging in them would be considered abnormal. As mentioned above, Lakoff and Scherr (1984, 143) found that some female university students wore makeup to avoid being regarded as rude to those around them. Since the prime function of grooming is to benefit others (Ishida 2009, 31), it can be interpreted that these women considered wearing makeup to be a minimum form of grooming. In short, the second reason for doing makeup that I can propose based on Widdows (2018) is that it is carried out as a grooming practice.

The fourth reason why women engage in beauty practices is related to the "imagined self," constructed to achieve the beauty ideal as a moral framework (Widdows 2018, 158). The "imagined self" is identified with a specific body. This body is not only one's body in reality but also one that can or may be achieved in the future or has been achieved only through participation in beauty practices one engages in (Widdows 2018, 159). As Widdows (2018, 38–39, 189–191) argues, continuing the beauty practices to realize the "imagined self," even if we know that we can never achieve it or that there are various costs (e.g., investment of time and effort) to be paid to continue the practices, gives us feelings of confidence, power, and pleasure. Beausoleil's (1994) view of makeup as a means of self-expression and Lakoff and Scherr's (1984) finding that some female university students use makeup to enhance self-esteem and confidence can be interpreted as an attempt to achieve the "imagined self."

Regarding makeup in Japan, Ishida (2009, 20–25) argues that the idea of makeup as part of the personal grooming and etiquette of adult women was dominant from the late Edo era until the 1990s, because the guidebook for skincare and makeup *Joshi aikyō miyako fūzoku kewai den* (女子愛嬌都風俗化粧伝, "Traditions of Fashion and Cosmetics in the Capital") promoted the idea that it is the etiquette for adult women to wear makeup. This book was continuously published from 1813 until the Great Kanto Earthquake in 1923, but remained influential until the late 1990s. In this period, makeup was something that one did for other people, that is, for society. However, according to Ishida (2009, 25), this idea collapsed

in the late 1990s, and makeup became something that one did to achieve one's beautiful appearance and mental and physical health. Ishida (2009, 31) claims this was a shift towards makeup having a meaning as a practice undertaken for the user's own benefit. Applying Widdows's (2018) framework to Ishida's arguments results in the interpretation of makeup practices among Japanese women before the late 1990s as a form of grooming and after the late 1990s as a means to create the "imagined self."

Unlike Ishida (2009, 31), Suzuki (2006, 155) argues that although the idea is fading, women's makeup is still considered etiquette in Japan even today.[6] Additionally, she posits that women engage in makeup mainly because they enjoy doing so rather than for any other reason. She states that "from the meaning of makeup as literally making one's face to its meaning as caring for one's skin to make it more beautiful, the makeup process is enjoyable while also bothersome in some respects" (Suzuki 2006, 17–18). She argues that when one can create a preferable face using makeup, one's mood improves (Suzuki 2006, 19). However, she also admits that she sometimes personally felt the pressure that it brings because there is "the belief that in modern Japanese society, pursuing beauty is a virtue" (Suzuki 2006, 43), which gives rise to what she calls the *kirei ideorogī* (きれいイデオロギー, "the ideology of beautiful") that states that women must always strive to achieve beauty (Suzuki 2006, 49).

In this way, Suzuki (2006) points out various reasons why women in Japan wear makeup. The perspective that makeup is a way of demonstrating etiquette by women implies that makeup is a form of grooming, and not engaging in makeup shows a lack of etiquette. This view is, therefore, consistent with Widdows's (2018) second reason: makeup as a form of grooming. The feeling that wearing makeup is enjoyable while also bothersome matches Widdows's (2018) third reason that while many women feel pleasure in striving to achieve their "imagined self" as constructed in the moral framework of the beauty ideal, they must pay a cost in doing so. Finally, the notion of the *kirei ideorogī* that women must always aim to achieve beauty coincides with Widdows's (2018) argument that the beauty ideal is the ethical ideal.

In summary, based on my review of previous studies, I identified four reasons why adult women wear makeup: (1) coercion by men, (2) the practical benefits obtained from makeup, (3) the idea that makeup is a form of grooming, and (4) the feelings of confidence, empowerment, and joy in achieving one's "imagined self" through makeup. I, however, will exclude the first reason from this study's analysis because some studies undermine the "makeup as coercion" perspective.

6 The author constructs her arguments based on her observations of other women's practices and her own experiences.

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2.3 Makeup of *kogyaru*

In the 1990s, high school girls called *kogyaru* (コギャル), or *kogal* in English, made their appearance, and they stood out with their dyed brown hair, thin eyebrows, tanned skin, and heavy mascara emphasizing their eyes (Yonezawa 2008, 36). *Kogyaru* first appeared in printed media in 1993, in an article in the weekly magazine *SPA!*. The article describes *kogyaru* as young girls between the ages 14 and 18 with "wheat-colored" skin and brown-dyed hair who dress in clothes with "fluorescent tropical patterns" and spend time in nightclubs (*SPA!* 1993, 13).

Yonezawa (2008, 41) argues that *kogyaru* influenced non-*kogyaru* high school girls and made using makeup a common practice among them. However, an article titled "I'm a girl, so I love makeup!!" published in *Puchisebun* (プチセブン, *Petite Seven*), a magazine targeting high school girls, on April 1, 1990, reveals that that was not the case. The article states that their survey of 5,000 high school girls (who seemed to be their readers) found that the respondents often wear makeup when going out for fun, such as to discos and dates. In addition, it reveals that some high school girls also wore inconspicuous makeup to school. The findings published in that article, in other words, suggest that makeup among high school girls, regardless of whether they were *kogyaru* or not, was already rather widespread around at least 1990, that is, before *kogyaru* was recognized by the media in 1993.

While Yonezawa (2008) explicitly states that *kogyaru* are only a part of high school girls, Ishida (2009) describes them as if all high school girls were *kogyaru*. Ishida (2009, 29) further notes that *kogyaru*'s makeup style began influencing women of other generations, and mascara, false eyelashes, eyelid glue, lip gloss, and shimmer powder—cosmetic products initially used only by a few women in exceptional cases—were embraced for daily use by more women than ever before. These products have made women's faces appear to be well made up to others.

3. Research

Do Japanese high school girls wear makeup for the same reasons as adult women? This study addresses this question while referencing three reasons mentioned above. Previous studies have also failed to consider why some women do not wear makeup.[7] In this study, I ask high school girls who do not wear makeup to explain their reasons for not doing so, which allows me to examine the multifaceted nature of makeup a step further.

7 Dellinger and Williams (1997) also interviewed women who did not wear makeup but did not specify their reasons for not doing so.

3.1 Data collection

This study was conducted at Minamikaze High School (pseudonym), a private, coeducational high school in Kanagawa Prefecture, from 2018 to 2019.[8] The school offers three tracks: Tracks A and B,[9] which seek to prepare students for admittance to competitive four-year universities, and Track C for students intending to enter less competitive four-year universities. The female students interviewed for this study came from all three tracks. According to the school official, approximately 85% of this high school's 2017 academic year graduates advanced to higher education (including junior colleges and vocational schools).

At Minamikaze High School, besides a set uniform, there are no school rules regarding how students should dress and make the appropriate appearance. According to the simple statement in the section "Student Guidance" in the student handbook, students are to dress neatly and wear their hair appropriately; perming or dyeing hair is prohibited, as is wearing accessories. The handbook does not state that wearing makeup is prohibited. However, the teacher's student guidance manual states that "makeup must be removed immediately," indicating the school's ban on makeup. According to a female student I interviewed, when teachers discover a student wearing makeup, they bring makeup remover to the student and ask her to remove her makeup on the spot.

At the school, I conducted interviews with female students as well as participant observation in their classrooms. The purpose of participant observation was to help me understand the meaning of the interviewed students' narratives in the context of Minamikaze High School. Being in the classrooms also helped familiarize the students with my presence, encouraging their cooperation in the interviews.

Participant observation was carried out from April 2018, the beginning of the new school year, until the end of February 2019. Second-year students were divided into six Groups. First, I observed P.E. classes for a separate study on exercise practices. These classes were conducted with the joint participation of Groups 1 and 2 and Groups 5 and 6. I also observed these Groups' classes during which I believed interactions between students and teachers and speaking up by students would be frequent, namely periods that taught English, modern literature, and classical literature. One reason was that if thoughts about the body, appearance, and beauty practices were mentioned in conversations between students and

8 I chose this particular school because I knew the school official, who understood the importance of my research.

9 Students in Track A can receive a reduction of the admission fee and tuition if they meet specific academic performance standards. This is not the case for students in Track B. At the time of the data collection, in each school year, two tracks had one class each.

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teachers, I could collect their contents as research data. In addition to classroom lessons, I also observed all school events, such as the sports festival, cultural festival, and choir competition.

Interviews were conducted as follows. From June 2018, I visited several classes and after-school clubs I had observed and distributed leaflets inviting male and female students to interviews on various topics, including exercises, uniforms, beauty work, and body image. After obtaining signed consent from their parents, I interviewed 32 first-year to third-year female students after school on campus. The breakdown of the students is as follows: four third-year students, 20 second-year students, and eight first-year students. Each interview took from about 40 minutes to about 1 hour and 20 minutes. If a pair of students wished to be interviewed together, an additional interview was conducted with the same students to allow a similar amount of time per person. Before the interview, the students were asked to complete a questionnaire about their gender identity, sexual orientation, favorite female celebrities and models, etc.

I conducted semi-structured interviews—the questions were predetermined, but their order changed to allow me to follow the flow of conversation with each student. The prime questions used for analysis in this study asked whether students wore makeup in and outside of school. The female students who wore makeup were further asked what led them to start using makeup. I asked those not using makeup for their reasons for not doing so. The interviews were recorded and transcribed by a third-party specialist. I listened to recordings to confirm the accuracy of the transcriptions.

3.2 Data analysis

This study's data analysis adopts a method Kvale (1996, 193) calls "generating meaning through ad hoc methods." This approach is exemplified by Miles and Huberman (1994, 245–262) as a method for generating meaning from qualitative texts. In this study, I used a part of this method. I scrutinized interview contents and grouped significant patterns and themes. I also compared the content of individual statements. Specifically, I used repeated words and phrases in the interviews as clues for grouping meaning in the students' statements and understanding their perceptions of makeup. In many cases, categories extracted by this method are considered mutually exclusive. However, Hodson (1991, 52) shows that overlapping categories can exist. In this study, some extracted categories overlap because some female students gave multiple reasons for wearing makeup.

4. Results

According to Article 2(3) of the Act on Securing Quality, Efficacy, and Safety of Products Including Pharmaceuticals and Medical Devices (医薬品、医療機器等の品質、有効性及び安全性の確保等に関する法律, *Iyakuhin, iryōkikitō no hinshitsu yūkōsei oyobi anzensei no kakuhotō ni kansuru hōritsu*, 1960), "cosmetic" refers to "items which are intended to be used on the human body by rubbing, sprinkling, or other similar means, aiming to clean, beautify, and increase the attractiveness, alter the appearance, or keep the skin or hair in good condition, and which have mild effects on the human body." Makeup can be seen as a visible use of cosmetics. This is because applying skin care products is inconspicuous, whereas makeup adds color to the skin and hair, such as eyelashes, making its use easy to recognize. Accordingly, in interviews with female students at Minamikaze High School, the extent to which cosmetics were used as makeup was analyzed. However, there is a cosmetic product, sunscreen, that can be included in both the skincare category and the makeup category. Sunscreen is usually considered a skincare product, but there are also makeup foundations with sunscreen components, and such products are generally viewed as makeup instead of skincare. Considering this ambiguity, this study emphasized the perception of the interviewed students. If an interviewed student considered applying sunscreen or a makeup foundation with sunscreen as wearing makeup, it was recognized as such; otherwise, it was not.

I also considered the application of *aipuchi* (アイプチ, "eyelid glue," i.e., the general term for products that make mono-lidded eyes appear to be double-lidded) and wearing contact lenses along with makeup by the interviewed students who usually wore glasses as part of makeup practice. The reason students shared was that they applied eyelid glue or wore contact lenses to enhance the effects of their makeup. Because one student also mentioned using an eyelash curler (without reference to an eye makeup product) as makeup, I respect her view and also count this activity as part of makeup practice.

As a result of applying the above criteria to consideration of wearing makeup, the students interviewed could be divided into four groups:

- Group A: those who wore makeup both inside and outside of school (11 students),
- Group B: those who wore makeup outside of school but not inside (15 students),
- Group C: those who wore makeup inside the school but not outside (one student),
- Group D: those who did not wear makeup at all (five students).

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The following students mentioned by name below belonged to:

- Group A: Kanna, Mayu, Renka, Nana, Mirai, Nene, Yumi, Hana, Arisu, and Shoko,
- Group B: Rei, Mei, Seira, Yui, Hinako, Juri, Ai, Yuriko, Tsumugi, Shizuka, and Kaori,
- Group C: Satomi,
- Group D: Hitomi, Megumi, Natsumi, and Kie.[10]

4.1 Why do some female students wear makeup?

While my initial question was what led them to start using makeup, some students also told me what led them to continue to do so. Basow (1991) and Tiggemann and Kenyon (1998) differentiate between women's reasons for starting and continuing hair removal. I applied their framework to this study, revealing several reasons female students started and continued doing makeup.

4.1.1 Reasons for starting makeup

4.1.1.1 Seeing friends' and classmates' use of makeup

Yumi began wearing makeup in the second semester of her first year of high school after seeing other classmates wearing makeup. Hinako did not mention when she started wearing makeup but said she did so because her closest friend was using colored lip balm applied to her lip and she thought it would look good on her. Satomi said that at a camp for her afterschool club activity in her second year of high school, one of the camp members put makeup on her and she enjoyed it. Since then, she has worn lightly red lipstick at school occasionally. All three girls became interested in makeup after seeing their friends and classmates wearing it, tried it themselves, felt its utility, and began using it.

4.1.1.2 At the suggestion of their mothers

4.1.1.2.1 "High school girls should wear lip products"

Hana began wearing makeup because her mother bought her lipstick when she entered high school. Hana's mother did not encourage Hana to wear lipstick to school, but her mother's attitude conveyed that she did not prohibit Hana from doing so. Ai also started wearing makeup outside of school after entering high school. Her mother brought her a colored lip balm from a drugstore. Ai said, "I thought it was nice and I became interested and began wearing it." Yui said, "My mother often said to me, 'You're a high school student now, so you should at least

[10] Note that all names are pseudonyms and any information that might identify a student has been altered to the extent that it does not affect the analysis.

wear a lip product' [*laughs*]." Yui used to wear it but soon found it a hassle despite her mother's encouragement and does not wear it anymore. Interestingly, it is not Yui, but her mother who thinks that high school girls should wear lip products.

4.1.1.2.2 "Even girls who are not pretty can change"

Yuriko had a negative view of makeup, but what her mother said changed her perspective. She recounted:

> I wasn't interested in makeup for the longest time. I wondered why girls wore makeup. It would come off when we sweat, and it is hard to wipe it off [*laughs*]. My mother said makeup could somehow change you. She said any girl could be changed by makeup, no matter how unpretty they were.

After trying lipstick, she discovered she could transform her face with makeup. She was pleased with the change and began wearing lipstick presented by her junior classmate when she went out with her family.

4.1.1.3 Influence from friends, classmates, and mothers

This reason can be seen as an overlap of the categories "Seeing friends' and classmates' use of makeup" and "At the suggestion of their mothers." Tsugumi became interested in makeup in junior high school when her classmates and other girls started wearing makeup. Her mother encouraged her, saying, "You should enjoy it because you're a girl, after all." However, because her close friends did not wear makeup then, she did not wear it either. After entering high school, she started wearing lipstick outside of school because "my friends around me were wearing a little brighter lip products" and "they told me to try it." In Tsumugi's case, along with her friends' influence, her mother's explanation that makeup is a privilege that only girls can enjoy and that she should appreciate that privilege also shows her mother's invitation to wear makeup.

4.1.1.4 Interest in makeup

Arisu had been interested in makeup since she was a child.

> My dream is to be a hair and makeup artist. It has always been my dream since kindergarten, so I've always worn makeup. I don't put on every kind of makeup like foundation, but I've been wearing lip products since I was small.

Among the interviewed students, Arisu, who belongs to Group A, became familiar with makeup at the youngest age. In contrast, none of the female high school students in Group B stated that they started wearing makeup because they had been interested in it since they were small.

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4.1.1.5 Influenced by adults outside of school

Rei wore sunscreen at school, but she did not consider this to be wearing makeup. Outside of school, she wore makeup when she went to live concerts, as there were many older people there. She said, "I thought it would be okay to wear just enough makeup not to feel out of place among them. So, I probably began using makeup around junior high school's second or third year." Mei started wearing makeup in the second year of high school because she was performing on stage at a club outside of school to which she belonged. Because the adult women they saw or interacted with outside of school wore makeup, Rei and Mei also did to become a part of that community.

4.1.2 Reasons for continuing makeup

4.1.2.1 To make the skin appear fairer and smoother

Kanna had been aware since junior high school that her skin was "naturally dark," and she thought to whiten it with makeup. At the time of our interview, she had been trying out different foundation products through "trial and error," thinking, for example, "Do I like this color?", "Does it last long?", "Does it smudge?", and "Does it make my skin look fair?". Mayu started wearing sunscreen in junior high school because, she said, "I want my skin to appear fair and I don't want to get sunburned." After entering high school, besides sunscreen, she began wearing makeup base and colored lip balm. She said she noticed that many of her female classmates had fair skin and disclosed, "I wish I did too. I became a little concerned about my brown skin." As a result, she began using foundation. When I told her that I couldn't tell she was wearing makeup until she had told me, she said, "You can't tell, can you? I'm just doing it for myself [*laughs*]." These accounts by Kanna and Mayu show that they recognize that continuing makeup to achieve their "imagined self," in this case, a self with fair skin, satisfies them.

4.1.2.2 To have a face with a rosy complexion

Renka started wearing colored lip balm in the middle of her first year of high school because her lips lacked color, which, as she put it, gave her an appearance of poor health. Like Renka, Nana said, "I thought my face lacked color [*laughs*]. It really didn't have any color, and I thought, oh no." What Renka and Nana have in common is that they both recognized that their face lacked a rosy complexion and sought to improve this condition by applying colored lip balm. It can be interpreted that some female students carried out this practice as a form of grooming. This is because they considered wearing colored lip balm as the minimum standard necessary to turn a "pale face" (i.e., an unhealthy-looking face) into a "face with a rosy complexion" (i.e., a healthy-looking face). Even though a healthy-looking

face is a beauty-related standard (Widdows 2018, 120), the female students I interviewed did not consider it to be so.

4.1.2.3 To change the impression given by one's face

Mirai said that others have described her face as *usui kao* (薄い顔, "plain face") or *gyaru no suppingao* (ギャルのスッピン顔), that is, a face that emerges when a person who wears heavy makeup removes it, revealing thus a nondescript face. Because she accepted this view and thought her face without makeup was not striking enough, she sought to change that impression with makeup.

4.1.2.4 To create cute double-lidded eyes

Nene applied *aipuchi* only on her mono-lidded left eye to make it appear double-lidded. What led her to start this practice was her thinking when she looked at her face, "The eye with double lids looks cuter [*laughs*], and I prefer it. So, I thought, having double lids on the other eye would probably make my eyes appear larger and give them a better balance." Outside of school, she continued, she would use eyeshadow, because "makeup is easier to put on double-lidded eyes and the eyes appear cuter." While Nene thus regards making mono-lidded eyes double-lidded as makeup, transformed double-lidded eyes become the prerequisites for her further makeup. Satomi had a similar view. She occasionally wore only lightly red lipstick at school but did not wear other types of makeup outside of school. This is because she thought applying makeup, such as eyeshadow, would result in a more attractive appearance *after* turning her mono-lidded eyes to double-lidded. She thought applying makeup without double-lidded eyes was not appealing.

4.1.2.5 To look like their favorite models

Shizuka said that when she saw a model she liked in a magazine, "I would often draw pictures of her or put on makeup thinking, 'I want to look like her, too.'" Among the 32 students that I asked about their favorite female celebrities and models, 22 included appearance, such as what a celebrity's face or body looked like, among the reasons why they liked them. Of the 22 students, three said that they wanted to look like the celebrities they had admired; on the other hand, no interviewed students said that they wanted to look like the female model they liked. Shizuka was the only one who aspired to become like the famous person she admired as a reason for wearing makeup. The thoughts of the majority of the students about specific female celebrities and models, by contrast, can be represented by Shoko's view. She said, "It's just a kind of normal crush and I don't plan to do anything intense to admire them."

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4.1.2.6 Because they like makeup

When Rei went out somewhere besides school, she would put on foundation, eyeliner or eyeshadow, and lipstick in a color that was not too showy. She wore makeup because, as she puts it, "I want to do what I like in my private life. [...] I want others around me to think I'm pretty. [...] But in the end, I want to do what I like." Rei's goal was to construct an "imagined self" that was pretty. However, even if such a goal was not achieved, she enjoyed just engaging in makeup. She said that she did not wear makeup often and had no problems caused by makeup, such as damaged skin. Her responses suggest that she felt the positive aspect and enjoyment of striving toward her "imagined self" without feeling the cost of it.

4.1.2.7 Because makeup is a form of etiquette for adult women

Mei said that she heard from a beautician that "basically wearing makeup is a form of etiquette for a woman." She also said, "I can use makeup as a way of dressing up to look fashionable, but I see makeup as one of the things you must learn when becoming a grown-up woman." Seira shared with me that she did not wear makeup at school but explained her reasons for wearing makeup outside of school as follows:

> When you go to university and start your career, well, it's like, everyone says wearing makeup is a form of etiquette, and I figured it's not like I'd suddenly leave school and suddenly know how to use makeup, and the other girls around me are doing it and I wanted to give it a try. [...] So, I've been practicing, and trying it out.

Seira did not practice wearing makeup to fit the etiquette required in the future reluctantly but positively (i.e., "I wanted to give it a try"). While her narrative seems to overlap with the category "Because they like makeup," she did not clearly express her enjoyment related to makeup like Rei whose reason belongs to the category.

From Mei's and Seira's remarks, it becomes clear that, as Suzuki (2006, 155) points out, the idea that makeup is a form of etiquette for adult women still exists among Japanese female high school students, and some of them engage in makeup because they accept this idea.

4.1.3 Reasons for not engaging in makeup

Female students that I interviewed who do not engage in makeup can be divided into two groups: those interested in makeup and those not interested in makeup.

4.1.3.1 Reasons why high school girls interested in makeup do not wear it

The reason why Hitomi did not wear makeup was because her skin was sensitive. She disclosed, "If I'm not careful about the makeup I use, I'd get severe rashes."

> At school, I don't mind not wearing makeup [...] but when I go to an event or a live concert, I want to wear makeup as much as possible. I want to fit in with the people there. There are many fashionable people there. [...] Many people come to the event well-made-up and I really want to become one of them.

If makeup is considered a form of grooming, women for whom wearing makeup is physiologically difficult, like Hitomi, may suffer. This is because considering makeup as a form of grooming assumes that all women can wear makeup. It is highly likely that women like Hitomi, who wish to wear makeup but cannot physiologically, would be treated as violators of etiquette.

4.1.3.2 Reasons of high school girls who are not interested in makeup

Three students, namely Megumi, Natsumi, and Kie, said they did not engage in makeup and were not interested in it. Like Hitomi, Megumi had sensitive skin, so she did not wear makeup except at the Shichi-Go-San (七五三) Festival.[11] She said that she did not wear makeup because "it's too much trouble [*laughs*]. Plus, I don't look good with makeup on... My face doesn't stand out even if I put on makeup, and my skin is so sensitive I can't put anything on it." Because she had not put on makeup since the Shichi-Go-San Festival, it can be inferred that she did not know whether she looked good with makeup, as she stated. Her comments suggest that she was physiologically unable to wear makeup, so she decided she did not look good with makeup and stopped thinking about using it.

Natsumi said, "Makeup is kind of disgusting." She was the only student with a direct, negative declaration about makeup. She described the time she got made up for her cousin's wedding:

> Having proper makeup done, it was like, I was scared of myself. When I looked at my face [*laughs*], I was a bit surprised at how much of a difference it makes. And, like, I wondered whether maybe makeup doesn't suit my face [*laughs*]? The moment I got home and got it off, like, when all this stuff that had been painted on my face was taken off, it felt refreshing. So, I don't really like makeup.

At the same time, she also said, "When you're an adult, you have to do it [*laughs*] as good manners." When asked why she thought so, she explained that on television, "there were special features about companies where no one wore makeup, so I thought wearing makeup was a form of etiquette [*laughs*]. That's why I've come to think that way." In her view, wearing makeup constitutes good manners. Thus, companies become notable exceptions when their employees do otherwise.

11 This event is held on November 15 for the third and fifth year of a boy's life and the third and seventh year of a girl's life to celebrate the child's growth. The children wear formal kimonos and visit a shrine with their families (*Dejitaru daijisen* 2020b).

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About her reason for not using makeup, Kie said, "I don't use it, but my mom said, ah, basically to stop with all that stuff [because the skin gets damaged], and I don't like the idea of [my skin] getting damaged, so I don't use it." Several other students, including Arisu who belongs to Group A, also expressed their belief that makeup damages the skin. For example, Mei did not wear makeup in school because her cousin worked at a cosmetics company and told her that "[i]f you use it every day, it will be harmful, your skin will get damaged" and that "wearing makeup after you start going to university isn't too late." Yui said, "I often hear my friends talking about how your skin gets damaged [if you use makeup], so I'm, like, scared of makeup." When she went out with friends, she would put on colored lip balm, but that was the extent of her makeup. Yui said, "I don't put on makeup like foundation or eye makeup." Arisu noticed, "I don't wear foundation now, but when I grow up and go to work, if I wear foundation every day, my skin will probably get rough because I have sensitive skin." The difference between Mei and Yui, on the one hand, and Kie, on the other, is that while Mei and Yui were concerned about rough skin and limited the frequency and extent of makeup, Kie chose not to engage in makeup at all.

5. Discussion

Initially, I expected high school girls to begin using makeup primarily because of peer influence. Three students started to wear makeup because of it. On the other hand, four students started to wear makeup because of the influence of their mothers. Two students did so because of the influence of peers and mothers.[12] This study revealed that some students started to wear makeup because of the influence of their mothers. Additionally, there are two reasons. One student started makeup because she had been interested in it since she was a child, and two students did it because adults outside of school influenced them.

I also expected that high school girls' mothers would discourage them from wearing makeup. Except for Kaori, however, no students were prohibited from wearing makeup by their mothers. Kaori's mother, according to Kaori, "has always said, 'You shouldn't be flirtatious!'" by rolling up skirts to shorten them or wearing makeup. Although Kie's mother discouraged her from wearing makeup, she did not prohibit her from doing it.

Why did mothers encourage their daughters to wear makeup? Based on the students' year of birth and the average age of mothers at childbirth by birth order of children (National Institute of Population and Social Security Research 2010), I estimated the age of mothers who suggested makeup use for their daughters.

12 I only introduced one student's case in this study.

Juri's mother is estimated to have been born in 1973 and to have been a second-year high school student in 1990. Ai's and Yui's mothers are estimated to have been born in 1974 and to have been first-year high school students in 1990. Because high school girls seemed to be wearing makeup around 1990, it is possible that Juri's, Ai's, and Yui's mothers encouraged their daughters to do the same based on their own experiences. As an exception, Hana's mother is estimated to have been born in 1970 and was not a high school student in the early 1990s. The reason why Hana's mother facilitated Hana's wearing makeup is not known.

Several reasons that the students give for continuing makeup—such as to make their skin appear lighter and cleaner, to change the impression given by their face, to create cute double-lidded eyes, to look like their favorite models, and because they like makeup—clarify that high school girls consider a face with fair skin, double-lidded eyes, and striking features to be a face embodying the beauty ideal. Those reasons are also interpreted by the fourth reason for beauty practices argued by Widdows (2018, 38–39, 189–191): feeling pleasure in using makeup to continue to move toward their "imagined self," and the sense of empowerment and enjoyment in doing so. This finding may also be related to the frequent use of social media among high school girls because they may try to construct their "imagined selves" by makeup to take photos and present them on social media.

Some female students created a face with a "rosy complexion" by applying colored lip balm as a practice close to grooming. Applying colored lip balm, in this case, is considered the minimum standard necessary to transform an "unhealthy-looking pale face" to a "healthy-looking face with rosy complexion," and thus is not considered a beauty-related norm because, as Widdows (2018) argued, looking healthy as the dominant beauty standard is no longer considered a beauty norm. However, because the use of makeup is prohibited at Minamikaze High School, it can be expected that there are female students, like Rei, who wish to use makeup when going to school to give their face a "rosy complexion," but cannot because of the rules. Thus, it is not wholly a grooming practice, at least not at Minamikaze High School.

Mei's, Seira's, and Natsumi's accounts show that the view of makeup as a form of etiquette for women in Japan still exists and continues to influence younger generations. Mei and Seira engaged in makeup practices because of this belief. Natsumi, on the other hand, seemed to feel pressured and said that in the future, she would have to wear makeup to conform to society's expectations.

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6. Conclusion

Ashikari (2003, 11) argues that wearing makeup is essential to an adult woman's appearance and grooming in Japan. The survey of 127 adult women in the late 1990s shows that about 99% wear lipstick and 94% wear foundation to construct the "right" complexion (Ashikari 2003, 12). If an adult woman does not wear makeup, she will likely be judged and criticized because of her improper grooming—that is, she will be viewed as someone lacking etiquette (Ashikari 2003, 13). Female high school girls who either cannot wear makeup for physiological reasons or who are not interested in it are thus likely to face similar criticism when they become adults. Therefore, people in Japanese society need to consider the negative consequences of this norm that wearing makeup is a part of adult women's appearance and grooming.

Finally, I wish to discuss the contribution of this study to gender studies in Japan. Gender studies scholars in Japan have shown little interest in the question of why women construct bodies that are considered ideal through various beauty practices. Tamaki (2014, 78), for example, points out that in Japan, there are few studies on problems caused by the construction of beauty through beauty practices, including wearing makeup. Therefore, studies that consider the effects of beauty practices on women are urgently needed.

This study has highlighted the importance of this issue by illuminating the makeup practices of female students in Minamikaze High School. Considering their reasons for engaging in makeup practices through the perspectives shown by the previous studies, I demonstrate the significance of considering makeup from the perspective of women's "imagined selves," as Widdows (2018) pointed out. In addition, by focusing on high school girls, my research reveals that the norm of considering makeup essential for Japanese adult women's appearance and grooming continues to influence teenage girls and their choice of beauty practices.

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