



## BLUSHED! MAKE-UP AND SONG NARRATIVE COHERENCE IN THE MUSIC VIDEOS OF TAYLOR SWIFT AND OLIVIO RODRIGO

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### Abstract

This study explores the role of make-up as a narrative device in the music videos of Taylor Swift and Olivia Rodrigo, emphasizing its contribution to narrative coherence within Walter Fisher's Narrative Paradigm framework. Using a qualitative descriptive approach and multimodal discourse analysis, the research examines how make-up interacts with lyrics, visuals, and emotional tone to construct structural, material, and characterological coherence. The findings reveal that make-up functions not merely as an aesthetic element but as a visual code that reinforces emotional authenticity, character transformation, and thematic unity. In Taylor Swift's videos, make-up signifies shifts in identity, emotion, and empowerment, while in Olivia Rodrigo's works, it mirrors emotional evolution and self-awareness. Through this interplay, make-up emerges as a key multimodal element that bridges visual aesthetics and narrative meaning, enhancing audience engagement and sustaining coherence in contemporary pop music storytelling. Building on these insights, future research could further explore the symbolic and cultural dimensions of make-up across visual media, examining how make-up, costume, and lighting shape identity representation, emotional expression, and social commentary in digital and participatory environments.

**Keywords:** narrative coherence, make-up, music video, Walter Fisher, Taylor Swift, Olivia Rodrigo

### Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi peran make-up sebagai alat naratif dalam video musik Taylor Swift dan Olivia Rodrigo, dengan menekankan kontribusinya terhadap kohesi naratif dalam kerangka Paradigma Naratif Walter Fisher. Menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif dan analisis wacana multimodal, penelitian ini menganalisis bagaimana make-up berinteraksi dengan lirik, visual, dan nada emosional untuk membangun kohesi struktural, material, dan karakterologis. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa makeup tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai elemen estetika, tetapi juga sebagai kode visual yang memperkuat keaslian emosional, transformasi karakter, dan kesatuan tematik. Dalam video Taylor Swift, makeup menandakan pergeseran identitas, emosi, dan pemberdayaan, sementara dalam karya Olivia Rodrigo, makeup mencerminkan evolusi emosional dan kesadaran diri. Melalui interaksi ini,

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*make-up muncul sebagai elemen multimodal kunci yang menjembatani estetika visual dan makna naratif, meningkatkan keterlibatan penonton dan mempertahankan kohesi dalam narasi musik pop kontemporer. Berdasarkan wawasan ini, penelitian masa depan dapat lebih jauh mengeksplorasi dimensi simbolis dan budaya make-up di media visual, menganalisis bagaimana make-up, kostum, dan pencahayaan membentuk representasi identitas, ekspresi emosional, dan komentar sosial dalam lingkungan digital dan partisipatif.*

**Kata kunci:** koherensi naratif, riasan, video musik, Walter Fisher, Taylor Swift, Olivia Rodrigo

## INTRODUCTION

Music videos have evolved beyond mere entertainment into complex form of storytelling that integrate visual and auditory elements to construct emotional and narrative meaning (Puspitasari et al., 2025). In this format, visual elements such as facial make-up do not function solely as aesthetic components, but serve as significant narrative devices that support the delivery of the song's story (Kristian Mantiri, Priowidodo, & Wijayanti, 2022). This is evident in the works of renowned musicians such as Taylor Swift and Olivia Rodrigo, each of whom conveys personal and emotional narratives through songs like *You Belong With Me*, *All Too Well*, and *Look What You Made Me Do* (Taylor Swift); *Vampire*, *Driver's License*, and *Good 4 U* (Olivia Rodrigo) (Schindler, 2023).

Despite the growing academic interest in music videos as multimodal texts, limited studies have specifically examined how make-up functions as a narrative device in establishing narrative coherence and emotional representation (Pusparini, 2025; Brady, 2015). Taylor Swift and Olivia Rodrigo are ideal subjects for this study because their music videos frequently feature transformative visual design, emotionally driven storytelling, and character-centered narrative that deeply connect with today's audiences (Schindler, 2023). As a result, investigating the role of make-up as a narrative element in their music videos helps to better understand how visual appearance influences meaning creation in contemporary popular culture.

This study explores how the use of make-up in music videos by these three artists can be viewed as a visual code that not only strengthens the narrative but also influences how the audience perceives and understands the story within the song (Puspitasari et al., 2025). For example, changes in make-up styles in several music videos by Taylor Swift and Olivia Rodrigo visually reflect emotional transitions and character development within the narrative (Schindler, 2023). Similar patterns appear in the works of Olivia Rodrigo, where make-up not only expresses internal feelings but also becomes a key narrative structure that connects lyrics, visuals, and overall messaging (Kristian Mantiri et al., 2022).

Several previous studies have highlighted the importance of visual elements in constructing narrative meaning in music videos, especially through a multimodal approach. Pusparini (2025), in her study titled *A Multimodal Discourse Analysis of 'Willow' Music Video by Taylor Swift*, explains how visual aspects such as gesture, symbol, and scene arrangement contribute to the coherence between

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lyrics and visuals. The findings show that various modes of communication work in unison to convey strong emotional and narrative messages. A similar study was conducted by Brady (2015), who analyzed K-pop music videos through a multimodal semiotic lens and found that visual elements such as costumes, facial expressions, and make-up styles help construct character identity and shape audience interpretation of the narrative. While these studies offer valuable insights into music videos as multimodal texts, none have specifically examined make-up as a visual element with a narrative function in establishing story coherence. Therefore, the present study investigates how make-up is used as a visual code that supports narrative structure in the music videos of Taylor Swift and Olivia Rodrigo.

Previous research on music videos has generally focused on cinematography, costume design, and the use of other visual symbols to construct artistic meaning and identity representation. However, the narrative function of make-up as a visual element has received little scholarly attention. Make-up serves not only an aesthetic role but also holds significant potential in representing emotion, shaping character, and illustrating narrative dynamics. This research gap indicates the need for further exploration. Accordingly, this study seeks to contribute theoretically by analyzing make-up as an integral part of narrative coherence in music videos. The research questions addressed in this study are:

1. What coherences are found between make-ups and song narratives of Taylor Swift?
2. What coherences are found between make-ups and song narratives of Olivia Rodrigo?

To strengthen the analytical foundation, this study draws on Walter Fisher's Narrative Paradigm theory, which emphasizes the role of coherence in storytelling. This coherence can be categorized into three main types: structural, material, and characterological coherence (Ryan, 2006). In the context of music videos, make-up supports structural coherence by visually tracking narrative progression, as seen in *All Too Well*. Material coherence appears in the alignment between make-up and other visual elements such as color and lighting, exemplified in *Look What You Made Me Do*. Meanwhile, characterological coherence is reflected when make-up expresses the character's emotion and personality, such as vampire by Olivia Rodrigo. These three forms of coherence highlight the essential role of make-up in reinforcing visual and emotional unity within the narrative.

This article employs a narrative approach that emphasizes the importance of narrative rationality, particularly the aspect of coherence. According to the Narrative Paradigm theory developed by Walter Fisher, coherence refers to how logically and consistently the elements of a story, such as characters, plot, and setting, are woven together to form a meaningful and acceptable whole for the audience (Fisher, 1987; Millendaru, 2024). In the context of music videos, this coherence appears not only in the song lyrics but also in the use of make-up, which contributes to shaping characters, expressing emotions, and reflecting the narrative progression of the main subject (Smith, 2022).

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This study examines how make-up and narrative elements in music videos intertwine to create a coherent and compelling storytelling experience for viewers. Furthermore, this study illustrates how these three artists creatively utilize visual aesthetics to deepen the narrative impact of their musical works.

## METHOD

This research adopted a qualitative descriptive design by integrating Walter Fisher's Narrative Paradigm theory with James P. Spradley's (1980) ethnographic analysis framework. These complementary approaches were employed to investigate make-up as both a storytelling device and a cultural signifier within the music videos of Taylor Swift and Olivia Rodrigo. Narrative Paradigm theory guided the analysis of narrative coherence and fidelity expressed through visual and lyrical elements, while Spradley's framework facilitated the interpretation of cultural meanings embedded in those representations.

The research objects consist of six music videos by Taylor Swift and Olivia Rodrigo, namely *You belong with me* (2009), *All too well: The short film* (2021), *Look what you made me do* (2017), *Driver's License* (2021), *Good 4 U* (2021), and *Vampire* (2023). The videos were selected using purposive sampling because they prominently feature make-up as a narrative and symbolic element that contributes to character portrayal, emotional expression, and identity construction.

Data collection and analysis were conducted from October to December 2025. Primary data were obtained through repeated viewing and observation of the selected videos, with particular attention to make-up styles, color schemes, lighting, facial expressions, and narrative progression. Additional data were gathered from song lyrics, artist interviews, critical reviews, and relevant academic literature to provide broader social, cultural, and aesthetic contexts. Observation sheets and coding tables were utilized to organize and classify the collected data systematically.

The analytical process followed Spradley's four stages of ethnographic analysis. Domain analysis was used to identify broad categories associated with the symbolic functions of make-up. Taxonomic analysis examined the relationships between visual elements and narrative developments. Componential analysis explored similarities and differences in meaning across the artists' visual representations. Finally, cultural theme analysis was conducted to uncover broader cultural values and messages related to beauty, emotion, femininity, and identity.

To strengthen the credibility of the findings, theory triangulation was employed by comparing interpretations generated from Narrative Paradigm theory, Spradley's ethnographic framework, and previous studies in visual communication, popular culture, and music video research. This procedure helped improve the consistency and reliability of the analysis.

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Through this methodological framework enabled a systematic examination of make-up as a visual and cultural sign within contemporary music video narratives, particularly in relation to storytelling, emotional representation, and identity construction.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Research Finding

The data analysis in this study was conducted through a qualitative and interpretative process using Walter Fisher's Narrative Paradigm Theory, which focuses on the concept of narrative coherence. The analysis aimed to identify how make-up functions as a visual code that contributes to three dimensions of coherence such as structural, material, and characterological within the selected music videos.

Each music video was observed repeatedly to examine the relationship between visual elements, lyrical narratives, and emotional tone. The process began with identifying significant make-up appearances or transformations that mark shifts in narrative or emotion. These observations were then categorized according to Fisher's (1987) coherence framework, which consists of three main types of coherence.

First, structural coherence examines how make-up visually supports the development or structure of the narrative, such as through transformation scenes or changes in the storyline. Second, material coherence focuses on how make-up aligns with other visual modes, such as color tone, lighting, costume, and cinematography to maintain consistency in meaning and mood. Third, characterological coherence explores how make-up reflects the character's inner state, personality, and emotional journey throughout the music video.

The results of this analysis are summarized in a table to show how each type of coherence manifests in the selected videos by Taylor Swift (You Belong With Me, All Too Well, Look What You Made Me Do) and Olivia Rodrigo (Vampire, Driver's License, Good 4 U). This table serves as a comparative framework to highlight the similarities and differences in how both artists use make-up to enhance narrative unity and emotional depth in their visual storytelling.

Table 1. Analysis of Make-Up Coherence in Selected Music Videos by Taylor Swift and Olivia Rodrigo

| Element | Structural coherence | Material coherence | Characterological coherence |
|---------|----------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|
|---------|----------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|

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|                             |   |   |   |
|-----------------------------|---|---|---|
| MV you belong with me       | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| MV all to well              | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| MV look what you made me do | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| MV Vampire                  | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| MV Driver's License         | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| MV Good 4u                  | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

Based on the results in the table, it can be seen that the use of makeup in Taylor Swift and Olivia Rodrigo's music videos plays an important role in maintaining three forms of narrative coherence, namely structural, material, and characterological, as explained in Walter Fisher's Narrative Paradigm Theory. Makeup does not merely serve as a visual decoration, but also as a symbol that helps build emotional realism, strengthen story continuity, and emphasize character development.

Across Taylor Swift's music videos, coherence is achieved through a combination of visual elements, emotions, and narrative. In "You Belong With Me," different makeup styles are used to mark changes in character and storyline, from innocence to self-acceptance. In "All Too Well: The Short Film," the use of soft colors and makeup depicts the authenticity of emotions and maturity of characters. Meanwhile, in "Look What You Made Me Do," bold and dramatic makeup shows transformation and inner strength. Overall, makeup becomes part of the narrative structure that explains character changes, reinforces themes, and maintains emotional continuity.

Meanwhile, in Olivia Rodrigo's music videos, similar coherence is evident through the alignment of make-up with the narrative and emotional flow. Structurally, each video illustrates a clear emotional journey: from grief and reflection (*Driver's License*), to anger and empowerment (*Good 4 U*), to awareness and healing (*Vampire*). Material coherence appears through the harmony of lighting, color, costume, and make-up with the lyrical and emotional tone of each song. Characterological coherence is achieved through Rodrigo's expressive yet consistent portrayal, where shifts in make-up reflect her emotional transformation, from gentle vulnerability to strength and self-awareness.

Overall, the analysis indicates that make-up functions as a narrative mechanism connecting visual and emotional dimensions in both singers' music videos. Through the depiction of identity, transformation, and empowerment, make-up enhances narrative integrity and deepens both interpretive meaning and emotional impact for viewers.

## Discussion

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## **Narrative Coherence between Make-Up and the Music Videos of Taylor Swift and Olivia Rodrigo**

This research employs Walter Fisher's Narrative Paradigm Theory to investigate the ways in which cosmetics enhance narrative consistency in the music videos of Taylor Swift and Olivia Rodrigo. Through a comprehensive examination of the visual aspects of both artists' creations, the research pinpoints how coherence in structure, material, and character is created and communicated through visual storytelling techniques.

In the context of both Swift's and Rodrigo's work, make-up serves as more than just an aesthetic detail; it acts as a symbolic device that influences character identification, emotional atmosphere, and consistency in themes. Structural coherence explores how make-up visually reinforces the development of the narrative, highlighting scenes like transformations, conflicts, or conclusions. Material coherence is concerned with how make-up aligns with additional visual components such as color schemes, lighting, outfits, and camera work, aiming to maintain a unified atmosphere and significance. Characterological coherence delves into how make-up mirrors the internal feelings, personality, and progression of emotions of each performer throughout the unfolding story.

Through the analysis of how these three aspects are woven together within the music videos of both artists, this research illustrates how make-up acts as a narrative tool that strengthens genuine emotional expression, aesthetic consistency, and audience participation in modern pop-based storytelling.

## **Narrative Coherence between Make-Up and Taylor Swift Music Videos**

### **Narrative Coherence in "You Belong With Me"**

The storyline of *You Belong With Me* tells of a shy, bookish girl secretly in love with her male friend. They communicate nightly by exchanging handwritten notes through their bedroom windows, as they live next door to each other. The girl later discovers that her crush is dating a popular cheerleader, who ultimately betrays him after a performance. During the school prom, the boy invites the bookish girl, and he is mesmerized by her simple yet elegant appearance. In the final scene, they both reveal their feelings through the message "I love you," symbolizing the realization of their long-suppressed affection.

### **Structural coherence**

In this video, make-up functions not just as visual decoration but as a narrative marker that indicates transitions between characters and story phases. Taylor Swift portrays two contrasting personas, the modest bookish girl and the glamorous popular girl. As the bookish girl, she wears natural make-up and glasses, emphasizing innocence and humility. When playing the popular girl, she adopts

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heavier make-up, striking eyeliner, curly hair, and red lipstick, creating a clear visual contrast that supports the storyline.

At the beginning, the protagonist's minimal make-up communicates simplicity and sincerity. In the cheerleader scenes, her glamorous look signifies status, confidence, and competition. Finally, at the prom, Taylor appears with soft natural make-up and no glasses, showing a transformation toward maturity and self-acceptance. This progression in make-up use helps the audience distinguish between the two roles and follow the emotional and structural flow of the story. Without such visual differentiation, the narrative would lose clarity and structural coherence.

### **Material coherence**

In "You Belong With Me," material coherence is achieved through a genuine depiction of teenage life and shared emotional experiences. The makeup complements other visual features, such as lighting, costumes, and color tones to preserve authenticity and emotional harmony. Taylor Swift's understated makeup as the "bookish girl" embodies innocence and sincerity, helping audiences connect with her as a typical teenager. In contrast, the "popular girl" sports bold makeup, including red lipstick and sharp eyeliner, which represents confidence and social power.

These visual differences reflect real high school dynamics that resonate with viewers, adding to the story's believability and emotional authenticity. This alignment between makeup and overall visual tone gives the video a cohesive material quality, effectively conveying a narrative that echoes viewers' daily realities of love, insecurity, and self-acceptance.

### **Characterological coherence**

In "You Belong With Me," character coherence is maintained through the alignment of the characters' attributes, personalities, and behaviors. Taylor Swift embodies two contrasting roles: the introverted, sweet "bookish girl" and the self-assured, extroverted "popular girl." The bookish girl's natural look and modest style reflect her sincere and humble nature, whereas the popular girl's bold makeup and striking fashion symbolize her confidence and social status.

Throughout the music video, both characters act in ways that are consistent with their established traits. The bookish girl is portrayed as gentle and authentic, and her subtle change at the prom, while still understated, she appears more self-assured that demonstrates her emotional development while preserving her core identity. This visual and behavioral consistency upholds character coherence, making the characters relatable and morally distinct within the emotional context of the narrative.

### **Narrative coherence in "All Too Well: The Short Film"**

The Short Film tells the story of a young woman's relationship with an older man. What begins as a warm and affectionate romance gradually turns distant and painful. After the breakup, the woman

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experiences deep heartbreak but eventually finds strength and independence. These emotional transitions are visually expressed through shifts in tone and make-up, from soft, warm hues during moments of love to pale, natural looks during scenes of sorrow.

### **Structural coherence**

In *You Belong With Me*, structural coherence is expressed through the way make-up visually supports the narrative flow and emphasizes character transitions. The story follows a quiet, bookish girl who harbors feelings for her male friend. They share late-night conversations through written notes between their bedroom windows until she learns that he is dating a popular cheerleader. After moments of conflict and emotional tension, the story culminates at the school prom, where the girl's inner transformation becomes visible, and both characters finally confess their feelings.

Make-up serves as a visual cue that helps define the story's structure and distinguish between characters. Taylor Swift portrays both the modest girl and her glamorous rival. As the bookish girl, she wears light, natural make-up with glasses to highlight her innocence and sincerity. In contrast, the popular girl is characterized by bold make-up like bright lipstick, heavy eyeliner, and styled hair that represents confidence and social power.

By the final scene, the protagonist's look remains natural but more polished, symbolizing self-assurance and emotional maturity. These deliberate shifts in make-up reflect the evolution of the story and make the transitions between scenes clear and cohesive. Through this visual consistency, *You Belong With Me* achieves structural coherence, ensuring that the narrative unfolds logically and remains emotionally engaging for the audience.

### **Material Coherence**

According to Walter Fisher (1984), material coherence refers to the degree to which a narrative aligns with the audience's experiences, values, and understanding of reality, rather than merely reflecting the creator's personal experience. A story achieves material coherence when it feels relatable, believable, and emotionally authentic to viewers. In music videos, this coherence is established when make-up and other visual components reinforce realism and maintain the emotional tone of the narrative. Make-up thus operates as a visual cue that deepens the audience's connection to the emotional and social context of the story.

In *All Too Well: The Short Film*, make-up plays a crucial role in enhancing emotional realism. During scenes of happiness, the use of soft, warm-toned make-up communicates love, intimacy, and nostalgia. In contrast, during scenes of conflict and heartbreak, the make-up becomes almost invisible, highlighting the raw emotion and vulnerability of the character. This visual shift mirrors real human experiences of love and loss, allowing the audience to empathize deeply with the narrative. Therefore,

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make-up in this context is not merely an aesthetic tool but a medium of emotional authenticity that bridges fictional storytelling with the viewer's lived reality.

### **Characterological coherence**

In *All Too Well: The Short Film*, characterological coherence is demonstrated through the alignment between the protagonist's emotional development and her visual presentation. At the start of the film, her gentle make-up and warm color tones represent youthful love, openness, and vulnerability. As the relationship begins to fall apart, her make-up becomes increasingly minimal, exposing the rawness of heartbreak and emotional fatigue.

In the final scenes, when the older version of the character (portrayed by Taylor Swift) appears, her appearance is more composed yet remains natural, symbolizing emotional maturity and self-recovery. This visual evolution parallels her psychological growth, from affection and dependency to loss and eventual empowerment. The consistency between her emotional states, behaviors, and appearance ensures strong characterological coherence, making the character's transformation believable and emotionally resonant to the audience.

### **Narrative coherence in "Look What You Made Me Do"**

*Look What You Made Me Do* portrays Taylor Swift's symbolic reinvention and empowerment following years of public scrutiny and media controversy. The video opens with the image of the "Old Taylor" emerging from a grave, representing the end of her former identity. Throughout the narrative, Taylor appears as multiple versions of herself from different stages of her career, each reflecting a distinct facet of her public persona. The use of darker tones, dramatic styling, and bold make-up underscores her transformation into the confident and assertive "Reputation" Taylor, who ultimately proclaims that "the old Taylor is dead."

### **Structural coherence**

In "Look What You Made Me Do," the structure remains coherent as make-up and visual imagery lead the audience through Taylor Swift's transformation. The video follows a distinct narrative arc of death, rebirth, and empowerment, starting with the "Old Taylor" emerging from her grave and culminating in the assertive "Reputation" Taylor.

Make-up serves as a visual marker of this narrative evolution. The softer, natural appearance of Taylor's earlier versions symbolizes innocence and fragility, while the darker, more dramatic make-up in later scenes conveys anger, control, and renewal. Each stylistic change signifies a narrative shift, helping viewers track her transformation both visually and thematically.

These intentional visual transitions ensure structural coherence throughout the video, with each stage of Taylor's transformation logically connecting to the next, creating a cohesive story of self-destruction, reinvention, and empowerment.

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## **Material coherence**

In "Look What You Made Me Do," material coherence is achieved through the unification of makeup, costumes, color schemes, and cinematic tone, all of which emphasize the video's key themes of transformation and self-empowerment. These visual components work together to create a consistent atmosphere that reflects Taylor Swift's emotional and psychological renewal.

The use of dark colors, bold makeup, and dramatic lighting conveys themes of strength and defiance, marking a departure from her previous image. These stylistic choices resonate with audiences who are aware of Taylor's journey through criticism and reinvention, making the narrative feel authentic and relatable.

This visual and emotional consistency allows the music video to maintain strong material coherence, as every element which from makeup to the setting, significantly contributes to depicting Taylor's reclamation of power and control over her identity.

## **Characterological Coherence**

Characterological coherence relates to the consistency between a character's actions, values, and appearance throughout the story. Audiences are more likely to find a narrative convincing when characters behave and look in ways that align with their established identities. When a character's behavior or appearance contradicts their personality without narrative justification, coherence weakens.

In Look What You Made Me Do, make-up becomes a symbolic representation of moral and psychological identity, reinforcing Taylor Swift's self-reinvention across different versions of herself. Each version of Taylor carries a unique make-up style that reflects a distinct stage in her personal and artistic evolution. The "Old Taylor" is portrayed with natural make-up and wavy hair, symbolizing innocence and the country-era persona. The "Red Taylor" features red lipstick and subtle eyeliner, marking a period of transition and growing confidence. The "Reputation Taylor," in contrast, uses dark eyeshadow, bold lips, and black clothing to embody power, control, and defiance.

These make-up transformations are intentional narrative choices that visually communicate Taylor's emotional and moral evolution. Each look supports the psychological consistency of her character's journey, ensuring that her actions and appearance remain believable and aligned with her story arc. As a result, Look What You Made Me Do demonstrates strong characterological coherence, as each version of Taylor behaves and appears in ways that reflect her internal transformation.

The three forms of narrative coherence such as structural, material, and characterological. These illustrate that make-up in Taylor Swift's music videos serves as a crucial narrative device rather than a purely decorative feature. Make-up helps articulate character transformation, sustain emotional realism, and maintain moral consistency within the storyline. Drawing from Walter Fisher's Narrative Paradigm, this analysis reveals that make-up functions as a semiotic tool that reinforces the unity of

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visual storytelling, enabling Taylor Swift's videos to achieve not only aesthetic appeal but also narrative depth and coherence across multiple levels of meaning.

### **Narrative Coherence between Make-Up and Olivia Rodrigo Music Videos**

#### **Narrative Coherence in "Driver's License"**

Driver's License narrates the journey of a young woman dealing with the aftermath of a breakup. The video opens with Olivia driving solo through tranquil suburban neighborhoods, representing her emotional solitude. As she reminisces about moments shared with her ex, illustrated through flashbacks and somber visuals and her sadness, confusion, and yearning grow stronger.

The color scheme throughout the video transitions from warm shades to cold, subdued tones, reflecting her emotional downturn. Olivia is seen alone beneath soft street lighting, indicating her acceptance of pain and the beginning of healing. This gradual transformation illustrates the emotional logic that Fisher (West & Turner, 2024) refers to as narrative coherence, where story elements align to form a meaningful human experience.

#### **Structural Coherence**

The storyline of "*Driver's License*" follows a young woman navigating the emotional aftermath of heartbreak. Structurally, the video unfolds chronologically, beginning with scenes of Rodrigo driving through empty suburban streets symbolizing both physical and emotional movement while recalling memories of a lost relationship. The alternation between past and present scenes visually supports the emotional progression of grief, acceptance, and growth.

The narrative coherence is enhanced through recurring visual motifs; headlights, mirrors, and nighttime roads represent confusion, reflection, and eventual clarity. These elements maintain the flow of the story and mirror Rodrigo's emotional state. The slow pacing and transitional shots create a sense of introspection, supporting Fisher's (West & Turner, 2024) claim that effective narratives are those that "resonate with human experience" through coherent structure and meaning.

#### **Material Coherence**

Material coherence is achieved through harmony among visual design, lyrical tone, and emotional atmosphere. The muted blue-gray color palette reflects sadness and nostalgia, while soft lighting highlights Rodrigo's vulnerability. The suburban setting reinforces the song's themes of memory and distance from a familiar environment that enhances realism and emotional identification.

Each visual component, from costume simplicity to car imagery, aligns with the song's melancholic tone. The interplay between sound, lighting, and space strengthens the emotional unity of the video, forming what West and Turner (2024) describe as a coherent audiovisual expression that sustains narrative believability and emotional fidelity.

#### **Characterological Coherence**

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Characterological coherence emerges through Rodrigo's authentic portrayal of pain and introspection. Her restrained facial expressions and contemplative demeanor align perfectly with the song's tone of quiet sorrow. The sincerity in her performance fosters credibility supporting Fisher's (West & Turner, 2024) view that believable narratives depend on characters whose emotions and actions align with their reality. Rodrigo's depiction of heartbreak feels genuine and relatable, allowing viewers to connect deeply with her emotional journey.

### **Narrative coherence in "Good 4 U"**

"Good 4 U" depicts a young woman who channels her anger and sarcasm following a breakup. The video starts with Olivia as a cheerful cheerleader, showcasing her smiles and energetic moves. However, as it progresses, her demeanor hints at underlying rage and emotional turmoil. The song builds in intensity, leading her to set things on fire, thrash wildly, and ultimately immerse herself in water, representing the release of her pent-up feelings.

The imagery transitions from bright, high-school scenes to dark, fiery hues, illustrating her journey from heartbreak to anger and freedom. By the conclusion, Olivia reclaims her self-confidence, transforming her pain into empowerment.

### **Structural Coherence**

In contrast, "*Good 4 U*" presents a fast-paced narrative of transformation from heartbreak to anger and empowerment. Structurally, the video mirrors a psychological shift from suppressed emotion to cathartic release. The rapid cuts, chaotic camera movement, and school setting reinforce themes of rage and rebellion.

Each transition from the calm cheerleader façade to scenes of fiery destruction maintains narrative consistency, illustrating Rodrigo's shift from emotional victimhood to self-liberation. The coherence of these visual changes keeps the narrative focused and emotionally compelling, ensuring that the story progresses logically despite its high intensity.

### **Material Coherence**

Material coherence is evident through the video's use of vivid color, costume, and cinematography. The dominant reds, blues, and flashes of fire serve as visual metaphors for anger, jealousy, and empowerment. The punk-inspired aesthetic, sharp lighting, and energetic editing sustain the rebellious tone of the music, forming a cohesive alignment between audio, visuals, and emotion.

Every stylistic choice from Rodrigo's cheerleader uniform to the destruction scene reinforces the song's emotional direction. The video's consistent aesthetic ensures harmony between its visual and thematic messages, exemplifying material coherence through symbolic unity.

### **Characterological Coherence**

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Rodrigo's portrayal in "*Good 4 U*" embodies emotional authenticity despite the exaggerated imagery. Her intense expressions, sharp movements, and assertive gestures convey believable anger and frustration. These actions align with the song's sarcastic and bitter lyrics, maintaining character integrity throughout the video.

Even in scenes of hyperbolic rage, Rodrigo's persona remains relatable: an angry yet self-aware young woman reclaiming control after heartbreak. This psychological realism enhances characterological coherence, ensuring that her transformation appears both credible and cathartic (West & Turner, 2024).

### **Narrative coherence in "Vampire"**

"Vampire" narrates the journey of a young woman who becomes aware of the emotional manipulation by someone she trusted. The video begins with Olivia performing at a sophisticated evening gathering, which embodies success and glamour. However, as her performance progresses, the atmosphere descends into chaos, she experiences betrayal, misunderstanding, and is metaphorically "drained" by those around her, akin to a vampire feeding on her energy.

The dark, cinematic imagery transitions between light and shadow, illustrating her loss of innocence and the unveiling of painful truths. In the end, Olivia breaks free from the crowd, wounded yet enlightened, symbolizing her self-awareness and the reclaiming of control over her own story.

### **Structural coherence**

In "Vampire," structural coherence is achieved through visual and emotional changes that reflect the song's themes of betrayal and realization. The video presents a clear sequence, starting with Olivia's graceful performance under bright lights and moving towards the gradual dismantling of that illusion as chaos ensues around her. This transformation visually conveys the journey from innocence to disillusionment, ending with her departure from the stage, symbolizing freedom and self-awareness.

Make-up and lighting are essential visual indicators of this change. Initially, soft lighting and elegant make-up project an image of perfection and admiration. As the tension escalates, the scene darkens and her appearance becomes more chaotic, visually representing her emotional unraveling.

These intentional transitions create a seamless connection between each phase of the narrative, allowing viewers to track the emotional journey from deception to empowerment. By aligning visual elements with the narrative progression, "Vampire" achieves strong structural coherence, presenting a clear and emotionally impactful storyline.

### **Material coherence**

In "Vampire," material coherence is established through the alignment of the song's emotional tone with its visual components, such as make-up, lighting, color scheme, and cinematography. The music video opens with warm, glamorous lighting that evokes a sense of illusion and admiration, but

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as the story unfolds, the visuals transition to darker tones and more intense contrasts. This change visually illustrates Olivia's feelings of disillusionment and emotional fatigue.

Make-up acts as a symbolic representation of realism, as her initially flawless appearance becomes smudged and raw, emphasizing the authenticity of her emotional decline. The blend of light and shadow, combined with a haunting soundtrack, creates an emotionally sincere narrative that resonates with viewers who have faced betrayal or emotional manipulation.

By effectively integrating these visual and emotional elements, "Vampire" maintains a strong material coherence, ensuring that every aspect such as sound, imagery, and performance contributes to the overarching themes of vulnerability and self-discovery.

### **Characterological coherence**

Throughout the music video for Vampire, Olivia Rodrigo's emotional expressions, actions, and changes in appearance all work together to show a consistent character. Initially, she seems calm and poised, dressed in a beautiful gown and wearing light, simple make-up, which gives off a vibe of purity and genuineness. As the story progresses and the betrayal becomes clear, her whole attitude changes; she performs with more passion, her movements become wilder, and her make-up gets messy and darker, visually representing her emotional breakdown.

This shift corresponds with her growing understanding that she has been tricked and emotionally used. Even with all the craziness happening, Olivia's responses stay true to the central feelings of the song, like sadness, fury, and dawning understanding. Because her appearance and her true feelings match up so well, the video keeps a solid sense of character consistency, which helps viewers connect with her path from being unsuspecting to becoming aware of herself.

Across all three videos, Rodrigo's use of make-up enhances narrative clarity and emotional depth. Structurally, it supports the progression of each story; materially, it harmonizes with lighting, costume, and color to build emotional realism; and characterologically, it reflects her internal states with authenticity. These layers of coherence allow audiences to connect with Rodrigo's evolving portrayals of heartbreak, anger, and empowerment, demonstrating that make-up operates as a meaningful semiotic tool that unites aesthetic form with emotional truth in contemporary music video storytelling.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study demonstrates that make-up in the music videos of Taylor Swift and Olivia Rodrigo functions as a narrative element that extends beyond aesthetic purposes. Utilizing Walter Fisher's Narrative Paradigm Theory, particularly the idea of narrative coherence, it is evident that Make-up functions as a visual code that supports narrative structure, emotional consistency, and character

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development across structural, material, and characterological dimensions. In this framework, narrative coherence refers to the internal consistency of a narrative, including logical progression, stable character representation, and alignment of symbolic elements across scenes.

In Taylor Swift's music videos, make-up reflects identity shifts, emotional development, and character transformation. In "You Belong With Me," subtle changes in appearance signal a transition from innocence to self-confidence. In "All Too Well," natural tones represent emotional vulnerability and reflection. In "Look What You Made Me Do," bold styling marks transformation and the reclaiming of power. These visual strategies reinforce narrative coherence by maintaining consistent alignment between emotional states and visual representation.

Similarly, Olivia Rodrigo's music videos employ make-up to construct emotional progression and narrative structure. In "Driver's License," soft tones express grief and introspection. In "Good 4 U," intense styling represents anger and emotional release. In "Vampire," pale visuals indicate emotional exhaustion and self-awareness. These consistent visual choices strengthen narrative coherence by aligning emotional expression with lyrical content and scene development.

The findings indicate that make-up functions as a key component of visual storytelling in contemporary music videos. It shapes the audience's interpretation of character emotion, identity, and transformation through a coherent visual framework. Rather than serving as decoration, make-up operates as a communicative device that connects visual form with narrative meaning.

This study contributes to visual communication, multimodal discourse analysis, and popular culture studies by demonstrating that make-up plays a significant role in narrative construction within music videos. Through Fisher's Narrative Paradigm, the analysis shows that visual appearance supports narrative coherence, emotional expression, and character development. It also functions as a medium for communicating identity, emotion, and transformation beyond surface-level aesthetics, encouraging audiences to interpret visual elements as meaningful components of storytelling.

Future research may examine how make-up, costume, and lighting contribute to identity construction and emotional representation across different genres and cultural contexts. Further studies may also explore how visual aesthetics in digital and participatory media influence audience perceptions of gender, authenticity, and self-expression.

Through make-up emerges as a multimodal element that links visual symbolism with narrative meaning, reinforcing its role in sustaining narrative coherence and strengthening the expressive impact of contemporary music videos.

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