

# “Pride is here 🏳️‍🌈!!! Want a FREE month of coaching?!”: Health-Focused LGBTQ+ Influencers’ Rhetorical and Authenticity Strategies



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## Introduction:

- LGBTQ+ youth are at increased risk for nicotine use<sup>1</sup> and face unique stressors<sup>2-3</sup>
- Social media popular amongst LGBTQ+ youth<sup>4</sup>, more likely to engage with LGBTQ+ influencers<sup>5</sup>
- Follows similar logical basis to ongoing HCEL study (Project SMART, R01 3UL1TR002541-01S1)

## Question:

- Existing literature covers health-focused influencers and LGBTQ+ influencers, but not the intersection
- What rhetorical, authenticity, and other content-creation strategies are used by health-focused LGBTQ+ influencers?**

## Methods:

- Purposive sampling model, 6 influencers
- Qualitative coding; Content analysis of 60 most recent Instagram posts from each
- Codes based in different frameworks:
  - Source credibility theory in context of LGBTQ+ community<sup>6</sup>, serves as basis for rhetorical appeals (to ethos, pathos, and logos) and LGBTQ+ specificity in posts
  - Health promotion strategies of fitness influencers<sup>7</sup>
  - Authenticity in brand partnerships measured through passion and transparency<sup>8</sup>
- Identified and defined overarching themes

## Themes:

### #Words Of Affirmation

“Happy Pride month, my friends ❤️ In case no one has told you today, you’re a superstar 🏳️‍🌈”  
-@jaim91



“But what matters the most is willing to love yourself enough not to stay stuck in the dark place.” -@gayfitnesscoach

“Having an STI doesn’t make you less worthy of love, dignity, and respect.” -@sexedwithlydia`

### #Fairytale Authenticity

“Swap out the 78 grams of SUGGGA from the Sour Patch and get yourself the 3 grams of SUGGGA from @smartsweets 🍬”  
-@gayfitnesscoach



“Join me on this fun-filled, educational journey as we explore the impact of the Amgen Foundation.” -@blackforager

“@pineapplehealthcare delivers EXACTLY what I think our community needs [...]!”  
-@doctorcarlton

### # Words of Affirmation

- Acknowledging audience directly, providing them with agency and confidence to engage in healthy behaviors
- Combination of rhetoric (appeals to pathos) and health promotion strategies (self-efficacy)

### # Fairytale Authenticity

- Heavy enthusiasm, few details regarding nature of paid partnership
- Combination of passionate authenticity and rhetoric (appeals to pathos) in sponsored posts

### # The Hero’s Journey

- Challenges overcome by the influencer because of/related to identity, proving the effectiveness of the changes they made
- Combination of rhetoric (appeals to ethos, mention of identity), health promotion strategies (response efficacy), and vulnerability

### # The Routine

- Influencers develop their own post formulas, unique taglines/catchphrases
- Every influencer’s formula has unique traits

### #The Hero’s Journey

“The praise and attention seemed fulfilling [...] Was I truly healthy or trapped in the clutches of body dysmorphia?”  
-@alionsfear



“As a teenager growing up in the middle of the 80s, I was terrified [...] because so many of our community were dying!!”  
-@doctorcarlton

“My struggles developed my strengths... but it was a process. I worked every day on it. I STILL work every day.” -@jaim91

“Happy snacking, don’t die!”  
-@blackforager

### #The Routine



“As a lesbian with anxiety...”  
-@jaim91

“The more you know!”  
-@doctorcarlton

## Future Research:

- Codebook and findings will inform upcoming HCEL research
- Measuring audience demographic, engagement, and parasocial interaction<sup>5</sup>
- Adhering to these themes in anti-vaping health communication campaigns, testing with an LGBTQ+ audience

References & More Info

