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The Beauty Ideal in Relation to Women Within the Media

The definition of beauty in relation to gender is significant in how we view

women in today's society. It is common among young women to be hung up on their

appearance or physical features. A woman's physical beauty reinforces gender

stereotypes, holding societal importance. A comment of being "beautiful" may be held

higher than a compliment on a women's intelligence, or diligence in today's society.

Some women strive to look like the women who are commercialized because they are

what society considers "beautiful." Someone who does not meet these societal standards

is considered ugly, or unattractive. Individuals judge others outer beauty based on gender

stereotypes insinuating how one is supposed to look, act, or dress based on their gender.

In society, women are forced to wear business attire to be taken seriously, or persuaded to

conform to the attitudes of a man to be qualified to take on difficult assignments. In a

world where women should feel free to dress however they want, and be taken seriously

without switching gender roles, they cannot freely express their individuality. The depth

and diversity of beauty goes beyond appearance and physical features. It is up to each

individual to recognize that beauty is skin deep.

Women's bodies are often viewed as deviant and inferior. Throughout the media,

women's bodies are used as a marketing strategy to sell products. A woman is used in the

advertising industry to sell shampoo, cars, beers and etc. Women of color, women with

disabilities, and LGBT women are underrepresented as being strong and beautiful due to

the media representation of "beauty ideals." In the United States women are often seen as sexual objects and bearers of children. They are expected to live up to these beauty standards, resulting in some still remaining insecure. The media promotes to women and young girls the idea of beauty defined as thin, tall, young, fair skinned and heterosexual. Women of color are similarly forced to conform to this same body type, often being light skinned with flawless skin and well-groomed hair. "This beauty standard is backed by a multi billion-dollar beauty industry that sees women's bodies as a series of problems in need of correction. The aim is to promote insecurity, self-hatred, and distorted perceptions of size, appetite, and attractiveness, so that we will consume the countless products, diet plans, and cosmetic surgeries marketed to remedy out alleged deficiencies" (Women's Lives, 210). A woman's body is objectified as a commodity throughout the media. Women learn to view themselves as multiple body parts, all in need of improvement. The "beauty business" promotes different beauty ideals within society in effort to market a remedy for a woman's alleged defect based on their insecurities.

Women have sought out to resist these beauty stereotypes based on their efforts to ignore the beauty ideals placed by society. Many girls attempt to resist them by refusing to wear makeup or wearing regular attire. Women may feel the need to wear pounds of makeup or stay updated with the latest fashion trends to fit the definition of beautiful constructed by society. "Some breast cancer survivors who have had one or both breasts removed have chosen to go without artificial breasts or have had their mastectomy scars tattooed" (Women Lives, 211). Some women who have had this health issue have chose to accept their reality and display their strength by removing this feature. In the same way, older women have come to accept their reality and display confidence regardless of

younger, more youthful women being portrayed in the media. "Women in their fifties, sixties, or older often feel that they have a new-found confidence and purpose as they age, these years may be a time of self-definition and autonomy when they can resist earlier pressures to conform to dominant beauty standards" (Women's Lives, 211). Mainstream culture defines beauty and power for women, in which women have now reversed by resisting these stereotypes set to weaken them.

Women have been continued to be valued as only commodities and objects due to a number of different marketing strategies. A certain type of women is considered attractive and is commercialized to promote insecurity and self-hatred of other women. Only the women who meet society's standard of beauty are used in advertising as sex symbols or "superior." In the image of Donald Trump standing next to the contestants of Miss Universe, a representation of all white, tall, and young women are shown. Feminist scholars have analyzed the oppressive nature of advertisements that promote beauty ideals of thin, white, tall girls. This image shows proof of women who have made it far in a competition, that is widely commercialized and all represent a specific type of woman. The image shows no diversity, and displays a perfect example of the "beauty ideal." The objectification and commodification of all women make a way for the continued suppression of women. In response to this suppression, women have come to accept their own bodies, and ignore the "beauty ideal."

I conclude that, beauty is in fact in the eye of the beholder. Beauty is a combination of qualities that please the aesthetic senses, which is depicted differently through each individual's eyes. In our society, one is considered beautiful based on preconceived notions of beauty. Personally, I try to stray away from the beauty

imperative because majority of women who are commercialized have their own insecurities and are unhappy about the same features the media continually praises. The influence of social media plays a crucial role in how we now engage and disengage with the beauty imperative. Although women are told to love their own bodies and ignore societal standards, it is difficult to do so because of the huge influence of social media on today's society. Beauty is described and depicted differently through everyone's eyes. Full acceptance of oneself, despite the norms or standards set by society is an effort to disengage from the beauty imperative and resist beauty stereotypes. Recognition of beauty as skin deep, is crucial to creating our appreciation for all types of beauty.

Work Cited

Kirk, Gwyn, and Margo Okazawa-Rey. Women's Lives: Multicultural Perspectives. New
York: McGraw Hill, 2013. Print