

The Beauty Myth

Perfection. According to society, this is the condition, state, or quality of being free or as free as possible from all flaws or imperfections. Women have been expected to live up to this unrealistic standard for centuries. The “Beauty Myth” that has been placed on women throughout the years has defined women as who they are as people. Leading up to this, the irony is that women are not looked upon such as women, yet they are subjects of man. The “Beauty Myth” is the social power of women that has increased, along with the pressure they feel to adhere to unrealistic social standards of physical beauty that has grown stronger because of commercial influences on the mass media.

“Just as the beauty myth did not really care what women looked like as long as women felt ugly, we must see it does not matter in the least what women look like as long as we feel beautiful.” The “Beauty Myth” is a particular agenda set by men who particularly feel as though women are inferior to men and their dominance reigns over everything. Shaming women for the way they look, feel, dress, act, is all a thought process to keep male dominance intact.

This has all played into a majority of today’s society in our mass media, such as advertisements, magazines, even newspapers. Looking at different things such as advertisements the “Beauty Myth” has been proven to show that women are expected to meet such expectations and always look beautiful no matter the timing. Victoria’s Secret is a good example of supporting the “Beauty Myth” with women.

this entire runway show, even when the models do not feel apt to adhere to these requirements. These models are looked upon from the mass media and society as the “ideal beauty” for any woman. “Smooth skin, a toned body and glossy hair are the minimum requirements for the VS fashion show.” These standards for any woman on this Earth is unrealistic due to the different beautiful body types there are. Not all women have the sleeked, glossy hair, or toned bodies that are so desired upon in today’s age. According to a research article, “The most important part of a Victoria’s Secret model’s appearance is her face.” This is severely hypocritical due to the fact that not all women are the same, yet men put that standard on us expecting us to be beautiful even when it is not genetically possible to look the same as their expected thoughts.

A Victoria’s Secret model regime involves multiple things such as severe, unhealthy dieting, exercising, and even starvation, to complete the accomplished look of “perfection.” Their diets include limiting processed foods, refined grains, sugar, and alcohol. A VS model’s measurements are almost impossible to adhere to by most women. This is shown by the facts given by a study, a Victoria’s Secret models average waist size is 23.6 inches. Whereas an average, non-model woman’s waist size is around 38.2 inches. According to Insider, “Angels tend to have blonde or brown hair while the average woman has brown or black hair. Although Angels have an average income of \$4 million a year, the CNBC reports that the average woman in the U.S. earns between \$21,008 and \$41,600 annually.” The comparison between the two absolutely plainly proves that it is impossible for the average woman to achieve the standard given by society to maintain “beauty.”

the existing gender hierarchy but also reinforces it by promoting the subjugation of women and derogation of their value. This has played a role in today's society and many years leading up to this time, also proven to be found in advertisements stated once before. Dove USA has come out with a particular commercial pertaining to women and the way that they see themselves, rather than how others see them, proving to show that women do not find themselves as beautiful as others may look at them, or living up to the "Beauty Myth." This commercial asked women to describe themselves to an artist and he would draw out what they described. Other people would come in and describe the same exact women the way that they saw them and the artist would draw that as well. In the end, the most beautiful picture of the women would be of the drawing the stranger described to the artist, rather than the woman herself. This proved the twisted version of how women view themselves in society and how they do not see themselves as beautiful when it comes to the set standards there have been placed.

In *The Beauty Myth* by Naomi Wolf, the woman in physical terms has taken the place of the term "woman of valor" who is a housewife in the concept of social supervision, therefore, more and more women in the modern age are preoccupied with external appearance and it has become the main factor guiding women. According to Wolf, "beauty" varies between societies, and overall has become a symbol of fertility and strength. This is a focus of a pursuit for strong men seeking a beautiful woman. Naturally, dominant males tend to be more attracted to beautiful females... But where does that leave the beautiful women who are not wanted by society because of the way they look, dress, or act?

The "Beauty Myth" is an order that dictates behavior and not appearance. This myth of beauty determines the urgency to base the identity and value of a woman on their beauty.

the best way to weaken them is psychologically by setting beauty standards.” This was forced by dominant males more prominently during the 1930s because as the world was progressing, females were starting to gain more power physically, mentally, as well as economically. Women were now progressing into workers such as factory workers, bankers, and more, during the World Wars of the 1900s. During this time period, the men were sent overseas to fight in the battles and women took over factory production, etc., to keep the United States afloat. With this, the women were now not only looked upon as “subjects” but as real people who can put forth something that has worth in society, at the same time, the men did not quite particularly like this.

Toxic masculinity can be traced back in the production of the “Beauty Myth.” According to Oxford Dictionary, toxic masculinity is “a set of attitudes and ways of behaving stereotypically associated with or expected of men, regarding as having a negative impact on men and on society as a whole.” This toxic masculinity is also called hegemonic masculinity. It is defined as “a societal pattern in which stereotypically male traits are idealized as the masculine cultural ideals, explaining how and why men maintain dominant social roles over women and other groups considered to be feminine.” Internally, the male dominance is part of the “self” and the consciousness of men. When women come in with dominance and potentially endangering male dominance, defense comes into play of men trying to bring down women and set the “beauty standard” in order to place their reign over them, hence the term hegemonic masculinity, or toxic masculinity.

After researching and learning about the “Beauty Myth” it has also been brought up to me as “Who do you compare yourself to?” I’ve learned throughout time that women do not just compare themselves to a certain individual, but as a broad spectrum throughout society.

overall variety of women and tend to pick out certain traits, facial features, even behavioral tendencies that I compare myself to and wish that maybe I was a little different and more like them. After catching myself doing that, I attempt to snap out of that mood and realize that, yes, there is a “beauty standard” in society, but I am the most beautiful I will ever be if I just stay the way that I am naturally. More women in society need to understand this and cope with the fact that they will never be “perfect” in society and the mass media’s eyes, but they will be “perfect” in their own, beautiful way.

The “Beauty Myth” is real. Hegemonic masculinity ties into this. However, it is up to the women of society to not let that bring them down and wish they were something that they will never be. Perfection is something every single person strives to achieve, male or female. Yet, perfection is nearly impossible to accomplish in the eyes of the mass media and society. So why not just live the way you are destined to live and be the happiest you can possibly be, by having fun, making friends, getting yourself ready to go out and feel beautiful and having the time of your life while making the best memories you possibly can while you still have the time to do it.