

Pretty Privilege

Is so-called pretty privilege a legitimate concept? Although people may not realize or do not do it on purpose, it is believed that people who fit the more conventional beauty standards of society are generally treated better, get more attention, and even get special treatment sometimes. Despite how good or smart a person is on the inside, they are primarily judged based on how they look on the outside. In many settings in America, from coffee shops to places of work, women are judged first on their beauty. Despite women having little to no control over how they look naturally, it is still most people's first line of judgment. It encourages competition between women, which hinders their ability to gain power in a society which favors men. The basis of this lies in the fact that women are expected to be beautiful and fit into cookie cutter standards, and the fact they are judged mostly on their appearance.

Subtle examples of women receiving special treatment because they are traditionally considered beautiful in American society can be seen everywhere. I personally have seen women with blonde hair and a happy expression on their face get free discounts at stores or help carrying something from a stranger, for no apparent reason other than they are beautiful. Even though somebody who might have darker hair or look less put together, but was just as kind to the person at the counter would not get the same treatment. I also can say I have experienced this firsthand. I can notice that people will treat me just slightly differently when I am wearing makeup and dressed nicely compared to when I am not and am wearing more relaxed clothing. A specific incident I can recall of my experience happened at a coffee shop in my hometown. One day when I went in wearing a put together outfit and wearing makeup, the man behind the counter told me I was too beautiful to pay. The next day I went in wearing no makeup and just a

fitting society's beauty standards, the rules no longer applied to me because of that. Nothing about the interaction had been different, other than the fact I no longer fit whatever he viewed as the perfect beauty standard.

Throughout American culture, the women who often play the protagonists in movies or shows are almost always a perfect image of what society deems as attractive. Even in movies, the exact example of being exempt from paying for something small, such as a coffee is seen on numerous occasions. Generally in Hollywood, you don't even see actresses who do not fit the beauty myth because they never make it into the public eye. Just by being perceived in the casting room as beautiful, they are automatically given a leg up. In video games, music videos, television, and essentially all public forums that are specifically designed for some purpose, the women are always perceived to be beautiful. Even though this may be achieved through editing real women, or just creating an ideal version through animations, women and even young girls are told that they have to look like this ideal, unrealistic, version of women. No matter where it can be seen, it is always projected to look like the same traditional vision of beauty.

Naomi Wolf's concept of the beauty myth states that women should be beautiful, and men should have access to beautiful women. It is the backlash of second wave feminism to prevent women from gaining power through groups, and instead keep them pitted against each other. The beauty myth keeps society so that it is still favored against women, who are now in constant competition with each other. This ideal image of a woman is created of women, but not for them as a result of the power structure. Ultimately, men created the idea of the beauty myth to cause women to focus more on being in competition than gaining power back from men.

maintains the idea that women need to be beautiful, which in turn creates the culture that beautiful women are rewarded. People are given a leg up in society if they spend time trying to fit these specific standards. Since they are then viewed as beautiful and have spent time being in competition with other women, they are rewarded by society. In the example pertaining to the coffee shop, everybody involved, including the men, have been conditioned to think women have to be beautiful. In my personal experience, by not receiving a free coffee when I was not done up, it spread the idea that I always need to be perceived as beautiful. The reward of being pretty, in this instance free coffee, keeps women striving to continue to be better and viewed as the most beautiful.

Throughout media and public displays, women are not even allowed to be seen as anything but beautiful. This very public image continues to spread and cause women to want to be as beautiful as the edited women on their screen, who have a hair stylist, makeup artist, dietician, and plastic surgeon to make them look a certain way. The reason women are only shown in the public eye this way is to perpetuate the beauty myth, and make sure women are not gaining power. The only way the beauty myth would be able to cease to exist is if all women recognized the issues that stem from it, and refused to continue to fall victim to it. By embracing the fact that all women look different, and there is no right or wrong way, it would stop the constant competition between women. However, American society continues to make women victim to the beauty myth through many different ways, and pretty privilege is only one of the few that can be seen all throughout our culture.

Even if women were to recognize this and make an effort to combat the beauty myth. It is so embedded in society that it would be nearly impossible to completely erase. Between women

beauty myth is here to stay. Even though it is widely known that a person's worth is not placed on how attractive they are perceived, and beauty is in the eye of the beholder, the beauty myth has been a persistent part of society since the beginning of second wave feminism. Subtle pretty privilege is a clear sign of the fact that the beauty myth is an extremely present part of our western world. Because of the huge role the beauty myth plays in our society, people's first line of judgment is frequently how well somebody fits into these beauty standards. Conventional beauty can play a huge role in how somebody's life is famed. Whether they get a certain job or opportunity based on their ability to fit beauty standards can essentially change somebody's life. The most effective way to combat the beauty myth is to stop judging somebody because of how they look, but rather who they are as a person. By doing this, society can put a stop to pretty privilege, and slowly try to reverse the effects the beauty myth has had.