

Have you ever been worried about going into your place of employment and having sexual comments made toward you by a boss or coworker? Have you ever been scared to wear a particular work attire because of thoughts it may provoke from men? At least 38% of women would have answered yes. 38% of women have reported and experienced sexual harassment in the professional work environment. Western society is based on the idea that a woman is inferior and should be there to support a man. Women were not meant for hard labor and mentally demanding activities; they should take more pride in how they look and what their husband wants for dinner. Another misconception ingrained in Western society is that women are emotional, so there is less intelligence in what they say. These misconceptions lead to injustices and belittling in a woman's everyday life. Women in America may enjoy equality in the same laws as men, but there are still many injustices and biases that lay within the groundings of our Western society and its judicial processes.

When I was 15 years old, I decided to apply for my first official job as a swim instructor/lifeguard at Goldfish Swim School. I ended up working there for a total of 3 years, and the amount of belittling and sexualizing I felt there as a woman is indescribable. Overall the course of 3 years, I was never given a raise or promotion. I applied to be a pool supervisor over five times throughout my employment and was never given the job. My resume had way more qualifications than my fellow candidates, and I had been with the company for way longer, but somehow I never got the promotion. Each of those five times I applied, the less qualified male candidate was chosen over me. On top of that, the other male candidates that didn't get the job would still get some type of promotion. My last day on the job was when I applied for the 5th time to be the pool supervisor. The other candidate, this dude named Micheal, who had just

point, I had worked for the company for three years, swam competitively my whole life, and had babysat in the past. Once again, they gave the job to the male candidate, but I had something to ask this time. Why am I not getting the job when the males are? My boss said, “You would get too emotional with the parents, and you need to work on showing that beautiful smile more. You don’t seem like you would be able to stand up to the parents.” My boss was a white male with a typical Western view of women. The first part of the comment shows that he believes as a female, I can’t control my emotions and handle myself. Then he made it a point to validate my physical appearance because this is what he feels women value in themselves. Even through the physical appearance validation, he manages to try and control what I do with my face. The last part of the comment is the icing on the cake when he tells me I wouldn’t be able to stand up to the parents. As a person, I am known for being independent, confident, and a leader. I have never been told that I can’t handle my own until now.

During my time at the swim school, I made many different friends of both genders. One day while walking out with one of my guy friends, he let me know that the boss has a nickname for me. Out of curiosity, I asked what it was. My boss had started the nickname for me “Work Whore”. For months after, the men at the swim school would call me this, and I even overheard my boss saying it. Not a single thing was done to stop these comments towards me, and if anything, they were encouraged.

After deciding to leave this job, I applied to work at an event staffing company in hopes that the discrimination and injustices in the workplace would stop. This was absolutely not the case. When I went in for an interview with the boss of the company, he was a white male around the age of 50. Everything seemed normal, except for how much he talked about my appearance.

which I had worked hard to make. He asked one or two questions total about my work experience and qualifications. The few comments I remember from the interview were, “You are quite a beautiful young lady.” or “You seem smart for how pretty you are.”. At the time of the interview, I assumed he was just thinking of me as one of his daughters because he had a wife and three younger girls. After getting the job, these comments did not stop and became increasingly worse. The comments and actions got so bad to the point where I can not write them on this paper. One of the less sexual and more belittling comments I remember was when we were moving tables for an event. I went to pick one of the tables up, and he said, “A woman like you shouldn’t have to do anything hard; stand there.” This comment has stuck with me to this day. He clearly has a view that conventional pretty women are trophies/objects that are there to look at. Women don’t serve their purpose through hard work and intelligence; it’s through their looks. Finally, it got so bad that he asked me to be his sugar baby. For those who don’t know what that is, he was asking me to do sexual actions/comments for money. After the endless harassment, my family decided it was time to get a lawyer involved. During my consultation with the lawyer, he pretty much said: “You have enough evidence to go to court and win, but it will take an emotional toll on you. You are young and don’t want that emotional stress. Just stay at the job till you leave for college next week”. That is precisely what I did, and excepted the harassment till I left for college.

In *The Beauty Myth*, Naomi Wolf writes about the correlation between a woman's beauty and her value. During the time that she wrote this, women were gaining more political rights, like abortion laws, and men needed something to control women still. To push against all of the new political rights that women obtained, men started to use forms of psychological control by

plastic surgery, and eating disorders. Naomi then explains that this beauty standard was made to put women against each other and give men more control over us because they lack it politically. This plays into the Western myth that men should be able to protect the beautiful woman and “own” her in a sense.

In her book, she talks about how women in the workplace are discriminated against and put into “gender-specific” roles. The workplace provides an environment for the beauty myth to thrive and continue in society. When I was 18, I started working at Applebees as a server. During one of my shifts, my female manager asked me to move a couple of tables to the other side of the restaurant. As I went to pick up the table, my male manager stopped me and said, “You aren’t strong enough to move that across the restaurant; let me get a man to do it.” He then proceeded to call over my fellow coworker, who was two inches shorter than me and was extremely lean. The coworker tried to move the tables, but couldn’t, so I ended up moving them when my male manager went to the back. This is an example of the beauty myth because my boss didn’t believe I was strong enough to move the tables as a woman. He thought that any man, even one smaller than me, was stronger because of their gender.

The stigmas around women in Western society has a massive impact on their experience in the workplace and any social environment. The feeling of being inferior in the workplace but having the same rights is a feeling that Naomi explained perfectly. The amount of value placed into my appearance at the swim school and the event staffing company was obvious looking back at it. The lack of interest in my intellectual abilities and the demeaning of my emotions and strength were prominent in those two work environments. The beauty myth is thriving through work environments like this. There was a blatant abuse of male power in both of these work

never given the role of pool supervisor; I was better as a teacher. This places me in a “gender-specific role” because women are known to be nurturing and caring. The males at my work were put in authoritative and leadership positions, which makes the beauty myth thrive.

At the event staffing company, I only got the job because of my appearance. He never even took the time to pretend to open my resume. The constant praising of my appearance shows that the only value he thought of me as was the way I looked. He was only able to make these comments on my looks because he knew that a male boss would have more power than a young girl. When I talked to the lawyer, it emphasized the issue in our society today. Women are believed to be emotional, so the lawyer said, “It would be too much emotionally on me.” After reading Naomi, I realized that I should have stood up against my boss and said something. By me accepting that this is how the way things are in the workplace pushes the beauty myth even further. Looking back, I wish I would have pressed charges and not accepted that it would be too much emotionally for me. I am a strong independent woman who can handle hard emotional things.

Women in America are still suffering from discrimination in settings like the workplace because of the stigmas and biases made by Western culture, and the unwillingness to attempt there is a problem. There is still a strong belief in this country that women are valued through their beauty and shouldn't be placed in roles with authoritative positioning. Through my work experience, I have felt the backlash of the beauty myth and why this is such a prominent issue in today's society. The consumption of a woman's appearance in the community has negative repercussions on women's psychological and physical health. If we, as a society, don't start changing the idea of “beauty”, then the beauty myth will grow and thrive.

over most social environments. I was not only impacted by the beauty myth in my workplace but also in the judicial system. There needs to be more of a platform for women in the judicial system. Lawyers need to stand up against men like my bosses and push women to take action. Lawyers should not be telling women that “it would be too much emotional” when they are being sexualized in the workplace. It doesn’t matter if I get emotional; there needs to be justice. No one should be allowed to discriminate in the workplace without repercussion. Women need to empower each other and change the standards for “beauty”. There also needs to be more of a platform for women to speak up about discrimination in the workplace. The “Me Too” movement was an impactful change for women everywhere, and more movements need to be like this for workplace equality.