

SOC105

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An Analysis of the Beauty Myth

Why do women's products cost so much more than men's? On average women pay more than men 42% of the time for the exact same products. Looking at razors, for example, the exact same plastic one-blade cheap razors are packaged in both blue and pink. Even though the only difference in the product is color, the pink razors cost more than the blue. What is it about women's products that makes them cost more? Why do women end up paying about 1,300 dollars more a year in extra costs than men do?

People have been so focused on the pay gap that they don't see that even if men and women are getting paid almost the same, women still pay significantly more than men for everyday products. Clothing, hygiene, toys, and health care are just some categories women are subjected to paying more. Women are expected to uphold a certain appearance to appease men but in order to do that they must spend most of their already unequal pay. Women are expected to work harder than men just to be seen as equal and competent but no matter what they will be oppressed due to the unrealistic beauty standards and overpriced costs that come with being a woman.

It is very uncommon today to meet a girl that doesn't wear makeup or have a skincare routine or does some kind of beauty routine. It is so expected for all girls and women to look and dress a certain way to be liked and fit in. Many times in order to achieve these unrealistic goals it takes a significant amount of money. It is a common

able to get one or two products. This is because women's products are marketed at a much higher cost than their male counterparts. Products every woman is pressured to buy or even has to buy for their health cost more simply due to the fact that they are made for women. Even using cheaper end products it can still cost over 50 dollars just to buy hygiene products like shampoos, conditioners, and body washes. This price discrimination all boils back down to a concept called the beauty myth.

When the United States was going through the second wave feminist movement and women were gaining more power and rights in the world men needed a new way to gain their power back. In comes the beauty myth. A term coined by Naomi Wolf the beauty myth is “a social construct that uses images of female beauty as a political weapon to combat female advancement”. Even though women had entered the workforce they were not taken seriously and were only judged based on their appearance. Over time these expectations were reinforced by society until it was so ingrained people didn't question them anymore. Women were viewed as weak and just objects to be used by men. When the news wave of feminism movements were starting in the US women were objecting to their unequal pay and the unfair standards that had been set for them. While women have made progress in decreasing the pay gap and gaining more respect in the workforce, there has not been a proper acknowledgment of the unequal cost of female products in the market.

No matter how hard women push back at the beauty standards that are perpetuated on them by men it is impossible to escape until men and women become equal as consumers in the market. Women are forced to compete with each other to be

part in the market. The increased prices of female products only add to the competition enforced upon women. There becomes a hierarchy in products and the girls that can afford it become “it” girls while the ones that can't are left trying to meet those standards. As time develops society keeps reinforcing new ways to keep women from advancing as much as they could.

In Charlotte Perkins Gilman's “The Yellow Wallpaper” she reflects upon her anger towards the wallpaper in her bedroom because to her it represents the oppression she feels from her husband. Gilman helped push the first wave of feminism because she helped create the language for women to understand their oppression. Women couldn't stand up for themselves because they didn't know what was happening to them, they were told they were ill and sick. In order for women to make any advancements they have to acknowledge what is holding them back. Gilman helped women understand that they were not ill or melancholy they were simply being held back by the power their husbands had over them. Women have always been held back by society and unless they understand how the harmful standards the beauty myth enforces effects them they cannot make any changes against it.

We are in a new age now where women do not understand how the beauty myth is oppressing them. Women, myself included are too busy playing into the stereotypes and competitions to meet the beauty standard men expect from us. In order to overcome the beauty myth we need to once again create a new language for women to understand how this myth is bringing them down. There has been a start but it is a much more difficult process in today's society where everything is connected and the

can be reached.

Women are able to see the inequality they are faced with but they don't see how deep the difference between men and women is. In order to reject the beauty myth one must understand exactly how they play into it. From how they interact with the workforce in reference to gaining respect, equal treatment, and pay; but also how they interact with the consumer market. Women need to begin advocating for more equal treatment as consumers. There is no reason that the exact same product should cost more on the sole fact that it is marketed to females. Product marketing and cost should not change based on gender. As a society, we need to point out these price discriminations so that women can start to find their voices again and reject the beauty myth completely.

All throughout history women have been unable to see the power that men had over them until they were able to create a new language to understand it. As women started moving out of the household men started creating unrealistic standards of beauty that kept women in competition with each other rather than continuing to advocate for more fair and equal treatment. We are now in a new wave of feminism where women need to create a new language to truly understand how the beauty myth is holding women down to be able to fully reject it. Women need to acknowledge the discrimination they face in the market and reject buying and spending more on products that are no different than men's. This is the only way to be able to effectively work to undo the stereotypes that have been reinforced by society for decades.

