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Sociology 101

October 18 2021

<div align="center">Analysis of The Beauty Myth</div>

Every girl's favorite thing to do when they wake up in the morning is look at themselves in the mirror and see this wonderful thing called the "morning skinny". I promise you I could ask 100 girls and almost all of them would agree with me that they do this every morning. Then, if they are not as skinny as usual in the morning they would be very upset. I know that, at least, this is the case for me. It will encapsulate my mind all day until I wake up again the next day and see if it has changed at all. But, if I asked a group of guys could they say the same? Do men have these worries like women do to constantly look perfect? The societal pressures put on women to look impossibly perfect is something that has only gotten worse with time and social media. Girls are constantly working to perfect their bodies to a standard men have set that is unobtainable by most women simply due to their genetic makeup. These standards have created a sociological concept studied by many professors and people of higher intelligence around the world. This is called the "beauty myth".

Now, I am not saying that this is caused by the male population at all because women can be just as harsh to other women as men can be. But, women tend to feel more pressure for men to impress because they want to be attractive in their eyes. Over time beauty standards have changed but it has not been until the recent 1900's when it started to define a woman's value in men's eyes. This is how men have started to identify women. With the addition of social media

unachievable for women. There have been plenty of times where famous women have been called out for editing their body, facial structure, smile, skin tone, and much more just to make themselves look "perfect". Little girls look up to this. They see these beautiful women thinking it is real when really it is normally naturally beautiful women hidden behind hours of work and layers of editing. This can seriously cause a toxic environment for them to grow up in if they are not taught that beauty comes from the inside out. These societal pressures along with the pressure women automatically put on themselves can be very harmful and I have learned this from personal experience.

The beauty myth resonates so deeply with me because around a year and a half ago I went from overweight (around one hundred and fourty eight pounds for a teenage girl) to underweight (less than one hundred pounds) in less than four months. Obviously, this was done in a very unhealthy way. My daily routine consisted of going to bed starving, waking up at noon with no energy and refusing to eat until I would have a small salad for dinner. I would force myself to go for five mile runs every day no matter how tired I was. When I would wake up in the morning I would be so lightheaded and dizzy that it would take me forever to get up and I fainted regularly. The scariest thing was that I thought I looked the best with my ribcage popping out and sleeping all day. Then if I ate more than I thought was "normal" I would go upstairs, turn up my music really loud, and force myself to throw up for hours until I couldn't anymore. I thought this was the only way I could get any attention from a boy but that was far from the truth. I did not know I was sick until I was walking downstairs one day and fainted and could not wake up. My mom had to take me to the hospital and I woke up to my mom crying talking to a nutritionist. It was then I knew I really needed help. I was later diagnosed with not only anorexia

the amount of girls my age who can say they have experienced the exact same hardships or still are experiencing these struggles to this day. It is a mental disease that has only gained popularity as the beauty myth has skyrocketed in these past fifty years.

It is still a journey I am on. I am constantly wanting to count calories and keep a track of what I am eating. I still feel guilty if I do not workout every day. I still think about what I am going to eat everyday constantly. It is exhausting having it constantly run through my head but I cannot help it because I want to be pretty in everyone's eyes. But, I have realized that weight does not define beauty and I need to love myself like I love others. I have started to exercise when I want to and do workouts I enjoy as well as appreciate some off days. In addition to this I luckily have gained a lot of weight back in a healthy way and I hope to keep practicing eating intuitively. But, other girls can not say the same and I have heard of many instances where girls do not wake up to see their parents. I know that I got lucky. This is why I would love to raise awareness on this topic to inform the community of how important mental health and taking care of your body really is. A lot of people do not realize their relatives or close friends might be struggling because they do their best to hide these things from the people they care about.

There are so many negative conflicts that come out of this baseline beauty standard that has been created that I see affect women so heavily. Things like eating disorders, increased depression and anxiety, and lowered self-esteem. These standards are only creating hostile and dangerous environments for our younger generations because the gap between realistic beauty and the standards being created is only growing larger. But, can you really say that the standards being made for men are pushed nearly as aggressive?

men but I am confident in arguing that men are not held to nearly as unreachable standards as women. In addition to this I would go as far to say that these standards are also not as aggressively pushed in mens faces by other men and social media posts like it is for women on social media.

There is the standard of the six-pack abs, tan, and tall. Of course, these are attractive traits in men and no one can deny that but women tend to be much more open to men who do not look like this as opposed to vice versa. Some women even like men that may look the exact opposite as this. There are a plethora of types for women and they tend not to care as much what men look like because they know the pressures they deal with to look perfect. They are more likely to go for a man if they have a good personality and are less likely to ride them off based on their looks. This is often because women are hopeless romantics and looking for something more long-term and this tends not to be the case for men.

I am not trying to give into a stereotype but this is the general trend especially for the freshman boys at University of North Carolina Wilmington. A lot of them are looking for quick gratification and one time hook-ups. When looking for this personality is not as important because their goal is not necessarily to form a genuine relationship. This can be understandable to a lot of people because they want their focus to be school and having fun as well as making friends. This hook-up culture only puts more strain on the beauty standard for women because this is what men judge them on and whether or not they want to hook-up with that girl or not. So, when girls are not being judged on their personality they have those added pressures to have a perfect body so that men show interest in them.

today's society. Then, you add in the fact that famous peoples' social media posts that have been edited twelve times over are being seen by little girls. You create a toxic environment that is bound to give them insecurities. These standards that have been set by society are a recipe for disaster for our future generations. This is why I think it is important to raise awareness about the unachievable beauty myth and end it as soon as possible.