

Student Essay on The Role of Beauty in U.S. Society

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Essay

Although many children learn the maxim "beauty is only skin deep" and that only character matters, Ruane and Cerulo use real life scenarios, research findings, and sociological thinking to prove that this motto is not actuality due to differences in real and ideal culture. They present examples of this cultural imbalance in stories, artificial beauty enhancements, and the rise of social status linked with physical appearance.

First the authors present the stories of Cinderella and Snow White where children are bombarded with associations between beauty and good; and ugliness and evilness. Additionally the beauty industry proves the conventional wisdom "beauty is only skin deep" is a nice idea, not reality. Every year Americans spend billions of dollars on beauty augmentations from make-up to plastic surgery. The authors use this evidence to make a connection between appearance and a person's self-worth. The media tells us beauty is identity; without physical beauty, we have nothing.

The authors claim because celebrities are rarely ugly, people try to reach a preconceived notion of physical perfection due to the common belief that a person's social status improves with beauty. Media images would not be so powerful, if the message was not reinforced in every day life. In a situation such as a job hiring, often the more attractive person will be hired if qualifications between two job candidates are equitable, and this will affect the rest of a person's life. So we are telling people that looks are as important as intelligence, and this can determine someone's self-image.

I agree with the authors completely. They proved with solid facts and statistics that from a young age society teaches children that although some say "beauty is only skin deep" there is an unspoken rule that appearances really do matter.