

What I will be doing is repurposing a paper I wrote for English 125 about Beyoncé's music video for her song "Pretty Hurts". I was really interested in analyzing the content of the video (the physical and emotional toll of trying to achieve the female beauty standard), but the assignment forced me to focus on imagery and mood in that one specific video, which left me feeling a little constrained. As a result, I will be repurposing that paper as an essay on how unrealistic expectations for how women should look are created.

Repurposing Essay (actual title TBD)

"Perfection is the disease of a nation" is not only one of many lyrics that has helped Beyoncé become one of the most successful musicians in the past few decades, but also a summation of how American women are constantly encouraged to strive for a standard of beauty that is unattainable to almost everyone. The "disease" is both physical and mental, as the desire to be the ideal female body type can lead to both physical and mental illness. These pressures don't come from nowhere- the fashion, beauty, and food industries have all shaped not only how women view themselves currently, but also the idealized versions of themselves they wish to become.

(Ok so formatting wise...I'm going to organize it by talking about industries individually- the fashion industry, the beauty industry, and the food industry and how they all impact female beauty standards...but I was also considering organizing the paper by moving through the last few decades and talking about how all three industries have changed over time (like the paper would work in chronological order from the 60s to the present) which I think could be really interesting but maybe too all over the place for the reader?)

"Vogue says thinner is better". Fashion magazines like Vogue, as well as designers and runway shows during "fashion month" not only tell the world what clothes are in style, but what body types as well. In the 40s and 50s, the desired body type had a big bust, a tiny waist, and big hips. When Twiggy came along in the 60s, a new standard for models was set- and that was to be *extremely* thin (Twiggy herself weighed less than 100 pounds). In the 70s and 80s, it was less about extremely thin models, and more about "Amazonian" models with sharp jawlines and high cheekbones. In the 90s and early 2000s, the ridiculously thin models were back, creating a culture that many said glorified eating disorders and caused the average runway size to drop from a 4-6 to a 00-2 (Issues and Controversies, 2007).

While designers and editors can choose what kind of body types they want for their clothes based on what's "in", women do not have that luxury. Women can't make themselves taller, or thinner, or have more prominent bone structures just because that's what's popular. The fashion industry treats body types as inanimate objects that go in and out of style, rather than the human beings that they are.

Does this sound too preachy???

"South Beach, sugar free". This can lead to women going to extremes to try and make their bodies match what they are shown they should want to be. In 2006, when multiple models died from causes related to being extremely underweight, multiple sets of guidelines were put out trying to combat the issue of extreme dieting. While stopping women from risking their lives in an attempt to be thin seems like something everyone should agree with, this idea was still met with criticisms. Milan and Madrid set out guidelines stating models must have a certain BMI to walk in shows, but critics said that models need to be particularly thin as it "[allows] them to show off clothes better...and fabrics tend to look better when draped over thin forms" (Issues and Controversies, 2007). As a result, the Council of Fashion Designers of America refused to set a specific BMI for models walking in New York Fashion Week. Whether intentional or not, this sends a message that the way the clothes look on the runway is more important than the ramifications these images have on women.

Again...too preachy??

"Blonder hair, flat chest, TV says bigger is better". What you can change about your body though, the beauty industry wants to be sure that you do. "The truth is, many of our expectations of feminine beauty [are] shaped in large part by modern advertisers" (Scherker). Hair dyes tell us "your natural hair color isn't pretty enough", cosmetic companies tell us "your eyelashes aren't long enough" and skin care companies are saying both "your skin is too light" and "actually your skin is too dark" (Scherker). The beauty industry is making obscene amounts of money by telling women how they should look. If women all woke up one day decided they like the way they look, hundreds of companies would go out of business. However, that likely won't happen any time in the near future, because undoing the decades long assault of what women should look like is going to take time.

(Conclusion coming later because 1. The paper isn't done and 2. I hate writing conclusions.)

So obviously much more detail is coming, but this is how I basically wanted to structure the paper. I guess my biggest concern would be that it's too boring?? I enjoy it as it's a topic I find very interesting, but to anyone else it pretty much reads as a research paper...should I take this opportunity of not being required to write a research paper to write it in a more "fun" way??