

# Beauty: analysis of the idea of beauty



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What role, if any, does society play in the views of beauty? Does body modification enhance or detract from a person's beauty? What role does the idea of beauty play in a person's life? The idea of beauty is something that has changed over generations, and is something that is constantly evolving to this day. The idea of beauty is shaped by media interaction, societal views, and also engaged in by body modification whether that modification be piercing, tattooing, extreme dieting, plastic surgery, or otherwise. Do we, as a society, overvalue the idea of beauty? People use various practices to shape their bodies into culturally defined ideal physiques, and media both construct and reinforce beauty ideals. " (Jackson & Lyons, 2012) Beauty is defined by the culture a person lives in, grew up in, and is shaped by throughout life. The idea of beauty is never the same for any person, but can have similar characteristics. The media, which is a conduit of the social norm, defines beauty everyday and many feel the need to change themselves in order to fit this idea. " Within contemporary Westernized cultures there is a pervasive interest in practices aimed at altering the human physique.

Such practices, which include cosmetic surgery, bodybuilding, dietary modification, exercise regimes, and eating disorders, signify a cultural fascination with (a pursuit of) the ' perfect' body. " (Jackson & Lyons, 2012) Some people dedicate their entire lives for the quest to find their ideal of beauty, to become that ideal and to fall into what is deemed as beautiful by societal standards set in place. But is this correct? Is the ideal of beauty presented by the media, and interpreted by the viewer, correct? Are people motivated to modify their bodies because they are dissatisfied with the

image of their body? Body image dissatisfaction is pervasive in America. We believe this dissatisfaction may motivate many persons to undergo cosmetic surgery," indicates David Sarwer, assistant professor of psychology in psychiatry and surgery at the Center for Human Appearance. " Many persons hope that cosmetic surgery will help them feel better about their appearance, which, in turn, may promote other psychological benefits, such as improved self-esteem. " (USA, 1999) Many people turn to plastic surgery to modify their bodies because they want to be thought of as beautiful, whether it be by themselves, another person, or society as a whole.

Some people can even take drastic measures and develop unhealthy mental conditions which would make them undergo plastic surgery in a desperate attempt to " fix" themselves. " Extreme body image dissatisfaction can be a symptom of body dysmorphic disorder, a psychiatric condition defined as a preoccupation with a slight defect in appearance that leads to excessive concern and interruption in daily functioning. " (USA, 1999) But by going through such extremes, is a person really gaining beauty or are they really demolishing what was already beautiful in the first place?

Is being dissatisfied with their body, because of the ideals of beauty pressured onto individuals by society, really a reason to change their image through such a drastic measure as plastic surgery? If body modification through plastic surgery is used to capture that " ideal beauty", then what about other forms such as piercing, tattooing, carving, or otherwise? Are those deemed acceptable ways to encompass that idea of beauty presented by society? " Rumbling through the biker culture and punk, piercing gradually shed its outlaw image and was mass marketed to the

impressionable by music videos, rock stars and models. (Leo, 1995) Such extreme forms of body modification are presented by the media and societal pressures to be acceptable, fashionable, and “in style”. As such, many people leap at the idea to become beautiful through such extreme measures. “Fashions and fetishes. [...]Some ask for dramatic piercings to enhance sexual pleasure, to seem daring or fashionable, to express rage, or to forge a group identity. [...]Piercing is part of the broader “body modification” movement, which includes tattooing, corsetry, branding and scarring by knife. It's a sign of the times that the more bizarre expressions of this movement keep pushing into the mainstream. (Leo, 1995) But is that all there is to it? Media has deemed such body modification to be acceptable, and society has agreed that it is an idea of beauty. The arguments for, and against, the idea of beauty presented by the media, accepted and enforced by society, and the extremes at which people can go to gain that ideal beauty can be found everywhere. Is beauty only skin deep? Do we, as a society, overvalue the idea of beauty? Media can incite people to what ideal beauty is. Society enforces these views and pressure people into fitting it.

Body modification is used by many to gain that idea beauty. But in the end, is that ideal beauty of the skin and body correct or even worth it?

## References

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