

Response



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Beauty and Self-Image Development from a Cultural Perspective Perceptions of beauty and the development of one's self-image are almost always linked with each other: an individual's perception of himself/herself is based mainly on how s/he and others perceive his/her physical attractiveness. In addition to this relationship between beauty and development of the self-image, perceptions of beauty are also culture-based. In the three articles analyzed in this discussion—"The ugly truth about beauty," "The scar," and "My hips, my caderas"—beauty is perceived based on gender, racial, and individual differences. In the analysis provided below, it is posited that perceived beauty or physical attractiveness is influenced by the individual's culture, which means that self-images formed from these perceptions of beauty are also culture-based.

"The ugly truth about beauty" by Dave Barry is an example of the cultural differences between men and women when talking about beauty or physical attractiveness. Evident in Barry's discussion is the greater attention to detail that women give in assessing their beauty as compared to men, who seem to have a rather shallow or simple criteria in assessing their physical attractiveness to the opposite sex. Inherent in Barry's analysis of the female perception of beauty is the influence of popular culture in the formation of females' standard of beauty or attractiveness. Referring to this as the "Barbie" culture, the author implied how Barbie, as an icon of beauty in the early childhood among females, has provided the "ideal" yet unrealistic standards of beauty. A woman's inability to meet these 'Barbie standards' would then feel inadequate and incomplete, as explicated in women's attitude (generally) to being dissatisfied about a man's assessment of her beauty—whether this assessment is a positive one or not.

“ The Scar” by Cynthia Audet, meanwhile, provides a thought-provoking and implicit interpretation of beauty, as perceived by a ‘ scarred’ woman. The author had not only expressed pride in having the scar in her left cheek, but she also felt uniqueness in her personality in that her scar made her feel proud “ as a reaction to the assumption that I should feel embarrassed.” Her scar functioned not as a source of embarrassment, but instead as a source of pride and courage to assert her individuality. The scar became Audet’s reason to become different from the people in her society—simply because she is different because of her scar. Like Barry’s analysis of beauty perception differences between males and females, “ The scar” provides an in-depth look at how the author’s self-image had been strengthened as a result of her feelings of defiance for being physically different or ‘ deformed.’

Lastly, “ My hips, my caderas” by Alisa Valdes reflects the cultural differences between Latin and American cultures when developing perceptions of a woman’s beauty and attractiveness, focusing on a woman’s hips as the gauge or measure of these differences. Valdes discussed how her wide hips has both been a source of pride and embarrassment: in Latino culture, wide hips are considered a sign of sensuality and attractiveness, while in American culture, wide hips meant not having the ‘ ideal, thin’ body image most women aspired for. Like Audet’s feelings of pride and embarrassment in having a scar, Valdes’s wide hips reflected the different ways in which different societies perceive an individual’s attractiveness, which, in the author’s case, is assessed based on her wide hips.