

# Beauty contest and young girls



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In today's popular culture, the media as well as society have played a pivotal role in the way individuals not only perceive themselves, but others as well. The pursuit of beauty, for instance, has affected women for some time now. The media, society, and their sub consciousness taunt women day and night. It seems today as if women will stop at nothing towards achieving what the media perceives as beautiful. Pop culture has even begun to affect young girls today. Pageantry has tainted the way young girls perceive themselves as well.

Skip Hollandsworth's "Toddlers in Tiaras" article addresses the impact that pageantry has prevented young girls from experiencing a normal childhood and becoming hyperconscious about their physicality. In addition, pop culture today has taken a toll on the way young girls perceive themselves. Stephanie Hanes's "Little Girls of Little Women? The Disney Princess Effect" addresses the effects that these epitomized fictional characters have on young females. Today the issue of self-image through the influence of pop culture has greatly influenced the way individuals look at themselves, particularly younger women.

This issue has been prevalent for some time now but is now having a bigger impact in young girls today. This deprives them from the opportunity to live a normal childhood and grow as a person of character rather than a person primarily focused on looks. Hollandsworth's article claims that if young girls forcibly participate in pageantry, they will be prone to growing self-conscious and wary of themselves. Hollandsworth uses an ethical approach towards supporting his claim. He compares pageantry to that of sexual exploitation.

These young, frail, girls are being taught to value physique rather than inner beauty, which is morally wrong. Children need to understand the value of feelings and self-worth rather than worry about what the public wants. Hanes claims that idolized fictional characters such as that of the Disney Princess subconsciously influence young girls to become sexualized. She proposes changing the way young girls perceive themselves by educating them about the differences between the importance of physique and self-worth.

I believe both arguments are both fitting because they both attempt to address the same issue: they both argue that society has become an increasingly difficult force to satisfy because of pop culture and as result, individuals fall into stereotypical norms. This has taken a particularly heavier toll on young girls: the sexualization of these girls is starting at an alarming younger age than before. Both articles appeal to readers because the issue of body image has been caused by a multitude of factors including pageantry and media advertisements.

The reasonable person has in some way been affected by pop culture and to read on its origins would attract readers. Hollandsworth's method is much more effective emotionally and ethically because he pinpoints the harming effects that pageantry has had on young girls. It has forced girls as young as five to worry about their image, thus, preventing them the opportunity to grow as individuals. In addition, he provides evidence from credible and authoritative sources.

“ A small 2005 study, published in *Eating Disorders: The Journal of Treatment And Prevention*, that involved 22 women, half of whom had participated in

child beauty pageant, concluded that there were “ no significant differences”, between the two groups on measures of bulimia, body perception, and self-esteem” (Hollandsworth, 493) Hanes’s article shows the ethos and logos rhetoric, but primarily focuses on persuading parents to educate their children against “ market pressure and sexualization. ” (Hanes) Her article contains the ethos rhetoric because her article contains credible and reliable sources.

She provides statistics and well as expert opinions. “ The Women’s Sports Foundation found that 6 girls drop out of sports for every 1 boy by the end of high school, and a recent Girls Scout study found that 23 percent of girls between the ages of 11 and 17 do not play sports because they do not think their bodies look good doing so. ” (Hanes, 485) While Hanes article Skip Hollandsworth’s “ Toddlers in Tiaras” article discusses the impact that pageants have on young girls as well as its influence in the media. Rather than diminishing, pageants have become increasingly more popular.

Girls as young as four are now being consumed into the world of make-up, hair, and nails, things that should not even concern them at that age. Beauty pageants have potentially robbed young girls of the opportunity to experience a normal childhood. Hollandsworth discusses the murder of famous beauty pageant queen, Jon Benet Ramsey, who died at age six and addresses pageantry as one of the possible reasons for her murder. Because of the manner in which pageants are presented, she was a probable target for pedophiles because she “ trained to look and act like sexual bait.” (Hollandsworth)

Most of these girls are in their beginning stages of life and are forcibly forced to participate in pageants. They serve as tools for their mothers. In addition, because they are constantly worrying about hair, make-up, and physical appearance, it deprives them from understanding internal beauty. As a result, these girls learn that their self-esteem and self-worth does not come from natural beauty, but rather from being the most attractive girl in the room.

The media has also played a major role in sexualizing young girls today. Shows like *Toddlers and Tiaras* and *America's Next Top Model* constantly emphasize the importance of appearance, thus, encouraging that physicality overpowers feelings. Pageantry also takes time for a young girl to experience a normal childhood. Pageantry is not only demanding financially, but these girls spend countless hours practicing and are even home schooled in order to travel to these pageants.

Brooke Breedwell finally mustered the courage to quit pageantry after it strained her relationship with her mother, who was obsessed with her daughter competing. Even though it has been many years since she competed, she still has anxiety over feeling like she has to be perfect. Pageantry not only hinders the mind of young girl into thinking they must focus on their physical attributes rather than their talents, hobbies, and feelings, but it strains them emotionally and deprives them from the opportunity to live a normal childhood.

Hollandsworth assumes the role of a reporter; his purpose is to solely inform the reader of the issue while providing his perspective on the issue through

the use of logic. Stephanie Hanes's " Little Girls or Little Women? The Disney Princess Effect" addresses the growing sexual trends that young girls are exposed to by popular enterprises such as Disney. As a result, girls as young as three worry about their physique, girls as young as fourteen send naked pictures, and children as young as seven are buying thongs.

Sexualization, however, can have potential negative effects on young females. " Sexualization, it reported, leads to lower cognitive performance and great body dissatisfaction. " (Hanes) In addition, sexualization was also linked to eating, depression, and physical health problems. " (Hanes) Although there is evidence that girls are still doing well in areas such as education and sports, the idea of sexualization has continue to inhibit young girls.

Stephanie Cootz, co-chair of the nonprofit Council on Contemporary Families argues that "(g)irls no longer feel that there is anything they must not do or cannot do because they're female, but they hold increasingly strong beliefs that if you are going to attempt these other things, you need to look and be sexually hot. " (485) Hanes assumes the role of the advocate: she urges parents as well as peer to teach young girls to value themselves as the ladies they are and not the ladies they feel they should be. In retrospect, both articles deal with problems with self-identity.

While both Hollandsworth's and Hanes's article address the influence of pop culture in young girls, it is Hollandsworth's article that presents stronger connection to its audience and while it is not as relatable as Hanes's article, it is filled with credible and reliable sources. Although both articles present

the claim that young girls are being sexualized by pop culture, it is Hollandsworth's article that shows a mixture of all three rhetoric to support his claim. Regardless they are both a product of society; they have caused individuals to become wary of themselves and struggle to be comfortable with their identities.