

Dying to Be Beautiful: The Effects of Media on Young Women and Girls:

Source Prewriting

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Engeln, R. (2013, October 21). *An Epidemic of Beauty Sickness* | Renee Engeln | TEDxUConn 2013. [Video file]. Retrieved from www.youtube.com/watch?v=63XsokRPV_Y

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Engeln, a psychologist and body image researcher at Northwestern University, admits that her inspiration for her research was brought to fruition after listening to her undergraduate students who would obsess over their appearances and their quest to modify their bodies. In her TED Talk, “An Epidemic of Beauty Sickness,” Engeln (2013) explains that although there is a legitimate scientific perspective of beauty, which is based largely on symmetry, modern perceptions of beauty have changed drastically. A majority of American women today suffer from, what Engeln has termed, “beauty sickness.” It can be described as an obsession with appearance, a persistent lack of self-satisfaction with body image, and a strong and relentless drive to achieve beauty, as it is defined by American society. Engeln notes that beauty sickness is not an affliction specific to women; men are just as susceptible as women, “but women are much more likely to hate their bodies. Women spend more money on beauty, they spend more time on beauty, they are at 10 times greater risk for anorexia and bulimia.” Engeln claims that it is impossible to engage with the world while chronically monitoring one’s body’s appearance: “When you are beauty sick, you cannot engage with the world, because between you and the world is a mirror. And it’s a mirror that travels with you everywhere; you can’t seem to put it down.”

Finally, Engeln’s (2013) suggestion to turn the tide against beauty sickness is to invest less in beauty. For example, if watching shows like *America’s Next Top Model* or reading magazines like *Cosmo* makes people think more about their appearance, stop watching/reading. She also suggests limiting mirror time, much like a parent limits their child’s screen time, and “[s]top worrying about the size of your

thighs, and think about the strength of your thighs, because those legs, after all, are the legs that walk you around in the world. And stop talking about your upper arms as though they are *'diseased'*. Those are the arms that reach out and bring the things you love close to you" (emphasis original). This article provides support for the idea that there is a dark side to the desire for beauty and will be helpful in defining some of the terms and in explaining both what can go wrong as well as ways to combat that. (472 words)

Feng, C. (2002 December 6). Looking Good: The Psychology and Biology of Beauty." *Journal of Young Investigators*, (6). Retrieved from www.legacy.jyi.org/volumes/volume6/issue6/features/feng.html

Commented [KW2]: 4 other sources cited

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Kilbourne, J. (2014, May 8). *The Dangerous Ways Ads See Women* | Jean Kilbourne | TEDxLafayette College. [Video]. Available from www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uy8yLaoWybk.

Komar, M. (2016 January 26). *100 years of shaving ads show how we've been tricked into going hairless – photos*. Retrieved from Bustle website: www.bustle.com/articles/137072-100-years-of-shaving-ads-show-how-weve-been-tricked-into-going-hairless-photos.

Sasso, M. 2016 April 11). *Why the skinny body challenges are harmful*. Retrieved from [Odyssey website: www.theodysseyonline.com/skinny-body-challenges-harmful](http://www.theodysseyonline.com/skinny-body-challenges-harmful).

Commented [KW3]: One more source cited with annotation

That totals 6 sources cited, 2 with annotations.

I'll give you comments on these to use help you as you finish the annotations for the final Annotated Bibliography.

In Sasso's article, "Why The Skinny Body Challenges Are Harmful," published by *Odyssey*, a social media platform which seeks to democratize media by publishing articles that contain multiple viewpoints and perspectives, she briefly highlights a few of the skinny body

challenges, the controversy they have caused, and explains the lack of merit they hold. These skinny body challenges, which are largely aimed at girls through the Internet and social media, are harmful because they have the potential to cause body negativity and self-esteem issues. By accomplishing these challenges, girls can prove their worth and skinniness over the Internet. On the other hand, if girls are not able to accomplish a challenge, they are meant to believe that they have an undesirable body type. Although there are many body challenges, Sasso (2016) explains the three most commonly shared over social media. The first Sasso describes is the belly button challenge, which “is done by trying to wrap your arm around your waist and touching your belly button.” The collarbone challenge “is done by balancing as many coins as you can fit on your collarbone” (Sasso, 2016). Finally, the iPhone challenge is done by “putting an iPhone across your knees to cover them. If the phone covers both knees, then you pass the skinny challenge” (Sasso, 2016). Sasso goes on to explain that being able to accomplish these challenges has nothing to do with skinniness, but some challenges, like the belly button challenge, largely rely on flexibility. Sasso stresses multiple times in her article that “whether you can or can't do these challenges, these have no correlation with body weight, height, muscle mass, etc.” This article points out a number of ways that young women use to measure themselves in terms of beauty that are both unhealthy and often unreachable, and will be helpful as I discuss the impact of social media in terms of this. (314 words)