

(this was an assignment for an online class, wherein which i had to write a response to the following advert; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=litXW91UauE>. it reeks of how i would write opinion articles in highschool and decided to post it here to showcase my... journalistic side, i guess?)

bugshuh

Professor B\*\*\*\*\*

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### Women's Beauty Standards and the Misogyny Of It All

Before writing this I really struggled over what angle I wanted to take when analyzing this advertisement. As it is, in fact, an advertisement, the message behind it felt sour, and ingenuine; I can't help but feel, when watching it, that this is all a ploy to get me to spend money on a product that I otherwise would not even consider. I am choosing, for the sake of this paper, to put that feeling aside and instead analyze the message as it is presented, in dull hope that it does actually have an earnest core. Nevermind that we see companies play to our feelings of empathy constantly, I will simply assume that Dove Body Care really does care about the perception of women in our society, and how women perceive themselves.

I do think it's true that women tend to have a harsher view of themselves when in reality there is nothing to criticize— this stems from multiple causes, some from the constant marketing that we receive telling us what product we should buy to make ourselves look better, some from the beauty standards held up in society wherein which women who do not fit a certain body weight, height, hair type, skin colour, are demonized and mistreated. These facets in our modern

society work hand in hand to create insecurities for the many women who don't appear as models in commercials might. This leads to, as was said in the Dove advertisement, women judging aspects of their own appearance significantly more than they would with someone else's; as evidenced in the second segment, where, when asked to describe other participants, they were much kinder.

I also do think it's true that women generally experience heavier expectations for what they should look like, as opposed to men. This is not to say that men don't have certain expectations placed on them as well— particularly men of colour, disabled men, fat men, etc.— but these expectations are significantly more voiced when it comes to women. For every one fat man who gets told to hit the gym, there's easily five fat women being told to go on a diet. This is because of a issue that we largely face all over the world, in that due to centuries of patriarchal rule and way of living, we are more willing to tear down and harass women for not fitting society's expectations than we are to do so to men. This is what I meant by titling this paper "...the Misogyny Of It All," because there is a certain amount of internalized misogyny that exists when a woman demeans herself. Realistically, why would she care if her chin was a bit narrow or her eyebrows a bit high? She wouldn't, generally, and most people certainly don't notice it anyway. The reason she does is because she has been told, throughout her life, that that is not how a real woman is supposed to look, and that if she does not embrace being a real woman, she is not (and might never be) beautiful.

This way of thinking is not only rooted in bigoted sexist belief, but it's also extremely damaging to the people who surround a woman who demeans herself in such a way. When you constantly go out of your way to demean yourself— be it your looks or your actions— this can wind up hurting the people around you and contributing to their insecurities as well, thus

perpetuating the cycle that beauty companies love to profit from. And that's the thing— it's not the women who are necessarily at fault for perpetuating the cycle, but rather the fault of the society they've been raised in and the advertising they've been subjected to, which forces them to criticize every aspect of themselves to become the so-called perfect woman.

When Dove shows you an advertisement about how you're actually very beautiful, why do you think they're doing that? Are they doing that because they hate the standards set for women and want to speak out against them? Or are they doing it because it nets them a hefty profit to pander to women who have spent their whole lives feeling unfulfilled in their appearance? I'll give you a hint; it's not the first one. They're, at the end of the day, relying on the same tactics that beauty companies use to make women insecure, except rather than making you feel unhappy or unsafe, they're trying to say “oh no, don't worry, we accept you here, you belong with us.”

This is pandering. This is gross.

While the core message at the center of the advertisement is certainly pleasant to hear in the age of “your 20s are your twilight years” and “I had to buy a million products because of my dry skin,” it's horribly shallow when you examine it for more than a few minutes. Women deserve better than to be pandered to, and we deserve better than a company playing to our insecurities. We deserve a change in the system that creates those insecurities in the first place.