

200 Pounds Beauty

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Abstract

All human beings have ideas and principles that are reflected in their values, body appearance, goals, desires. While some of these principals are handed to us from our parents, and others grow by themselves, are again others influences by the society surrounding us. Especially when it comes to body appearance, media and advertising propagate the ideal of beauty and so influence our behavior. The Korean movie *200 Pounds Beauty* discusses exactly of interplay of self- and societal-driven standards in body appearance by telling the story of an overweight woman undergoing plastic surgery in order to fit Korea's beauty standards. While this dramatic change helps her to finally advance in society and achieve her life goals it also deprives her of her unique identity and values- a that is so bad that it demonstrates the necessity for a change in how standard in society are established and communicated.

*Keywords: ideal of beauty, desire, emotion, fear, human identity and values.*

## Introduction

”Why don’t you wear this?”, “That skirt is too short!”, “I got this mascara from Sephora”, “You need to wear following the school discipline”. Everyone heard one or more of these statements while growing up, going to school, using social media, or watching TV.

Physical appearance is undoubtedly one of the most omnipresent topics in our daily lives. The correct outfit is a prerequisite for certain jobs and job interviews or entry to a night club. Men are considered to be ideal if tall, thin, and at the same time muscular, while women should be skinny, curvy, and delicate. But to what extent is adhering to beauty standards necessary to move in society and where is it discriminating and morbid? Looking at the movie *200 Pounds Beauty*, we try to answer this question.

## Methodology

### *Summary*

*200 Pounds Beauty* has been produced in 2006 and deals with body appearance embedded in Korean society. Main character Hanna Kang is, next to her obesity, a very average Korean woman who wants to become a singer. In fact, she already is a singer. She lends her voice to famous “singer” Ammy. The beautiful, skinny star performs, dances, and screams into a muted microphone in front of large crowds while Hanna is backstage delivering the voice. Although taking a back seat Hanna is content and happy with her role, especially after she falls in love with Ammy’s producer Sangjoon Han. Also the latter seems to have a liking to Hanna and repeatedly complements her on her voice; however, when Hanna overhears him and Ammy during Sangjoon’s birthday party, she learns they only use her and her voice for their success. Especially Sangjoon commenting on her weight and face in a disparaging devastates Hanna. Hanna leaves her job and has a complete plastic surgery makeover: her nose is reshaped, her eyes enlarged, her lips botoxed, her forehead reformed, her cheekbones raised, and her fat sucked up. While she is first very content with the makeover, gets a new wardrobe that is a beautiful apricot colored feather dress she wanted, wins at an audition, becomes famous as singer “Jenny”, gets to work with Sangjoon again, and becomes his girlfriend, she soon realizes that she lost her identity; she was once a very considerate, positive, and likeable person but now became an arrogant know-all. She even denies her mentally ill father who always supported her in public and loses her best friend Jungmin’s friendship. When Sangjoon, who never knew Jenny is actually Hanna, finds out about her identity but excuses Hanna to keep her plastic surgeries in order to not lose his money and fame, Hanna realized her mistakes. During her first major concert, she publicly identifies as Hanna, talks about her plastic surgeries and ideals of beauty,

and discusses her mistakes. Her honesty ultimately makes Hanna even more popular and successful.

### *Discussion*

Hanna is characterized as a woman with a beautiful personality that is plagued by self-doubt due to her face and weight not adhering to Korean beauty standards. Modern society places certain standards on appearance and personality of its members; however, society often fails to communicate these standards effectively so that they are distorted and exaggerated in the media. The latter tend to strongly focus on physical appearance. According to cultivation theory, the repeated exposure to media images may cause the public to accept it as the ideal; at that point the authenticity or justification for that ideal plays a subordinate role and the public self-fulfills and cultivates it (Gerbner, Gross, & Morgan, Signorielli, & Shanahan, 2002).

So although the individual Hanna fulfills all requirements to be an accepted member of society the general public ostracizes her intentionally, as represented by Sangjoon and the music industry who place her backstage only, and also unintentionally, as represented by the crowd in front of the stage who doesn't realize how they cultivate a certain beauty standard personalized by Ammy. Only after her plastic surgeries Hanna's body is accepted by society. She can now buy a beautiful apricot-colored feather dress, which simply did not exist in her original size, and is noticed by men. Like this, Hanna even feels pushed to keep her story and true identity a secret and establishes alter-ego Jenny.

Not without good reason, the movie focuses on beauty standards for women as they more frequently reduced to their physical appearance than men. Pushed by society, they then desire to change and for example do plastic surgery just to be criticized for that shortly after. Also Hanna is never fully accepted by society after her surgery; instead, Sangjoon soon ignores her and

focuses on doing everything possible to hide her past and plastic surgeries. Of course, he ignores the fact that it was also him who never truly respected Hanna because of her overweight when she used to sing backstage. The only time the movie thematizes how also men can be victim to ideals, is when Hanna herself ostracizes her father to keep her secret as he knows her past. When Hanna realizes how society will never stop demanding its allegedly weakest members (women, minorities, people who got plastic surgeries) to fulfill obscure standards, her inner pain overwhelms her and she recalls how there were people like her friends and her father who loved and respected her for everything she was and was not.

### Conclusion

Overall it is important to remark that there is nothing more important to humans' than their own identity, characteristics, and values. Hanna has a positive attitude along with a beautiful voice that cannot be paralleled by artificial images produced by society and distorted by the media. Physical appearance fades with time and also ideals governing them are substituted regularly, while one's character traits and values are permanent. Society must stop imposing standards and letting the media sell them onto people as ideals.

References

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