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Response to Toxic Beauty

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Response Paper – Toxic Beauty Documentary

Prior to watching this film I had heard about harmful chemicals such as parabens being used in beauty products and that they were causing medical issues for millions of women.

Although I had heard about the issue I wouldn't say that I was well versed on the matter and the specific harmful chemicals. The film speaks about parabens and explains that it is an endocrine disrupter that is linked to reproductive issues, developmental disorders, and cancer (Ellis, 2019).

Parabens are in products such as deodorants, antiperspirants, soaps, hair products, shaving products, and fragrances. Phthalates are also discussed and this is a chemical and is also an endocrine disrupter that has been connected to developmental disorders. Phthalates can be found in fragranced lotions, body wash, hair, skin, and baby products, nail polish, perfume, and color cosmetics (Ellis, 2019). Learning about these harmful chemicals and how many different types of products they are put in has really made me think about the products I use. The list of products that could potentially have harmful chemicals are all products I use and have been using from a young age. Something as basic as a fragranced soap which regardless of gender or age everyone uses can be harmful to humans. It seems almost impossible to avoid because harmful chemicals can be found in practically every product such as, skin care, nail polish, lotions, hair products, soaps, and color cosmetics.

The film focuses a main portion on the Johnson & Johnson talcum powder that had given countless numbers of women ovarian cancer. This was a case that I was familiar with because I

know that there are lawsuits currently in progress against Johnson & Johnson for not warning women of the potential cancer risk. It was shocking to hear the women speak about how much they would use the talcum powder, they would use on various parts of their bodies, loved the scent, and loved the way it made them feel. Most of the women even said that they would use the talcum powder every single day from when they were young girls. For me it was shocking to hear how a product that these women were applying to themselves daily could be so harmful, how that decision to purchase a product completely altered their lives. It made me think about the products I have which I use daily and wonder if years from now I will find out I was applying something onto myself that was detrimental to my health.

A product that I use everyday as a face wash is “CeraVe Hydrating Cream to Foam Cleanser.” I purchased this product because the bottle said that it was unscented, gentle on skin, pH balanced, and “cleanses, hydrates & removes makeup without disrupting the protective skin barrier.” This led me to believe that the product was safe and would be safe for my skin. When I turned the bottle over to look at the ingredients I saw an extremely long list of ingredients. Some of those ingredients included “aqua/water/eau, glycerin, sodium methyl cocoyl taurate, coco-betaine, sodium cocoyl isethionate etc.” After researching several of the ingredients it appears that this cleanser is fairly safe to use. What I found interesting is that none of the ingredients are guaranteed to be completely safe, various articles will state that the ingredient is “mild” or “less damaging”. Which has given me the impression that maybe it is impossible to find a product that is completely safe.

After watching this film I do think I will change my buying habits. I always search for brands that claim to be all natural and good for you yet this film has made me question whether brands just stating that is enough. I think even if a brand claims to be “healthy” I will now do

some research to see if the statements are true. Not only will my buying habits change but I now want to look through any products I currently have and see exactly what is in them and if they are harming me. One would assume that if a brand is claiming to be good for you it can be trusted and that if a product is being sold across the country it's safe, yet this film has made it clear that as consumers we really have to look out for ourselves.

To conclude, I don't believe that this film was overly dramatic. I think it was instead extremely effective in showing just how dangerous the beauty industry is. In my opinion the film was not being dramatic or exaggerating anything, they were simply providing the facts and personal stories of the women who were impacted by harmful chemicals in their beauty products. I think the film is made in a way that really emphasizes how serious of an issue these chemicals in beauty products are, and I think it had to be done in such a serious manner because oftentimes people see an issue concerning makeup and brush it off as unimportant and not a serious matter. Yet, something as simple as makeup is destroying people's lives and little is being done to fix the issue.

Bibliography

Ellis, Phyllis, director. Toxic Beauty. Released 28 April 2019, Accessed 19 April 2023.

https://tubitv.com/movies/610391/toxic-beauty?start=true&tracking=google-feed&utm_source=google-feed