

from several race categories before and during the apartheid times. The author of this book managed to present the differences in access to education among people with various racial background and their achievements. Taken together, these findings highlight a remarkable role for getting to know better undersides of the apartheid policy in education in the Republic of South Africa. What is more important, the book shows many aspects of apartheid policy in terms of teachers education, gender inequality and social stratification.

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Renee Engeln, *Beauty Sick. How the Cultural Obsession with Appearance Hurts Girls and Women*. Warszawa 2018: Buchmann. Pp. 416.

Sometimes think I could take on the world but first... Oh my God, my eyebrows need plucking, and, oh my God, my legs need shaving; and my pores need cleansing and my skin needs toning; and my boobs need padding and my hair needs combing. These words are the lyrics of Siwan Clark, who expresses in this way how oppressive and restrictive our culture is. It concerns especially girls and women, who are often assessed for their appearance and not achievements. The cited lyrics open the book, titled *Beauty Sick: How the Cultural Obsession with Appearance Hurts Girls and Women*, written by Renee Engeln.

Renee Engeln is a professor of psychology at Northwestern University. Her articles have appeared in many academic journals, such as “Journal of Health Psychology”, “Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology” or “Psychology of Women Quarterly” (Northwestern, 2019). She directs The Body and Media Lab, which focuses on issues surrounding women’s body images, such as negative body talk and media images of women. The impulse to write the book were her students, who put their looks above other obligations such as work or studies. On the basis of scientific findings and interviews with many women Engeln has evaluated the role of beauty in our life and in her book gives advice on how to resist the beauty obsession.

The publication consists of an introduction, five chapters, a separate part with notes, index, acknowledgments and a note about the author. Each chapter is divided into smaller sections. Every chapter presents a woman’s story, centered around her attitude toward her own body. The author emphasizes that interlocutresses do not constitute a representative sample of all women. She has interviewed predominantly white Americans, but also non-white ones including

Latino, Asians and Portuguese women whose ages range from seven to almost sixties.

The first part of the work explains what the beauty obsession is. Engeln presents research which shows that one-third of five-year-old girls want to look like a lady from television, and forty percent of girls aged 5–9 wish to be slimmer. This demonstrates that beauty sickness develops very early, when girls discover that their major asset is attractiveness. We can blame our culture: concentrated more on woman's appearance than her words, acts or personality. The obsession with beauty deprives women of time, energy and money, and causes anxiety and depression. Thanks to this chapter a reader can assess if the described problem concerns her, if she is also in the habit of treating herself as an object, confined just to a body.

The following chapter shows how the beauty sickness impacts women. Engeln gives readers a sense of what self-objectification is, when a woman becomes a supervisor of her own body, looking critically at it. At this point, the author dispels a myth that criticism of weight, called "fat talk" and body shaming are a motivation for healthy behavior. Actually, this kind of shame leads to mental disorders such as depression, anorexia or bulimia. I agree with Engeln that since the ideal of beauty is elusive, embarrassing whomsoever because they are unable to reach it, is unfair and unreasonable.

The third part concentrates on the relationship between the beauty obsession and the media. The author notes that we are surrounded by unrepresentative and unrealistic pictures of objectified women from the internet, television and magazines, carrying a message that good looks guarantee a success and happiness. They increase body dissatisfaction in women and the focus on appearance reduces the perceptions of women's competence. Moreover, the popularity of social networks and digital photography, make women feel constantly observed which translates into endless self-control of appearance.

After knowledgeable description of the beauty sickness, the author goes on to the strategies of dealing with this phenomenon. She begins with ineffective ones. Engeln refers to researches showing that neither a critical attitude towards media, nor affirmation of own beauty, are helpful—they draw women's attention to their looks. It is worth remembering that we are biologically and culturally sensitive to the beauty, but we can diminish the importance of it, for instance, not discussing an appearance. An answer to the problem of body objectification can be focusing on body functionality. Looking at body from the viewpoint of its usefulness can increase the body acceptance.

The book raises an important issue of the role of beauty in our culture. According to CBOS research report 2017, 87 percent of Poles attach great importance to own appearance and 20 percent are not satisfied with the reflection in the mirror (CBOS, 2017). Other study shows that over 80 percent of polish teenagers want to be prettier. Moreover, the vast majority of them find the ide-

als of beauty in popular culture (2013). In my opinion, the purpose of the book has been achieved—Renee Engeln both has explained the notion of beauty obsession and has presented a few strategies to deal with this problem.

The undeniable strength of the publication are the researches cited by the author to support her arguments. Part of them was conducted by Engeln or her associates, which makes the author an expert on this subject and a trustworthy person. In addition, Engeln refers to many works, especially articles from scientific journals. The evidence provided in the book has convinced me it is better to not say anything about someone's appearance than to pay compliments. The author's passion and anecdotal stories from her life enrich the work with authenticity and a lightness, despite the importance of raising issue.

Renee Engeln has dedicated presented book to all girls and women who are fighting for better future. I will recommend this work not only to women and girls but to everyone who cares for others, in particular to parents and teachers. They raise the younger generations and have the power to contain the beauty sickness. The interesting narration and excellent writing style make reviewed publication an inspiring, eye-opening and thought-provoking reading.

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