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Essay: The Perfect Body

Since the dawn of time, human beings have been obsessed with the idea of perfection. Perfection in art, perfection in form and even perfection in nature. Among them, the most revered of all is the possession of the perfect body. The standards of beauty may have changed over time, the pressure and the sway it holds over society has remained the same. People have craved beauty and have been enamored by beautiful people since forever. However, it has only brought doom upon man. Cain killed his own brother, the first murder to take place in the history of mankind. Narcissus, because of his arrogance and pride, was doomed to stare and marvel at his own reflection for the rest of his day. Worst of all, Helen brought doom upon Troy, with a 10-year long war that left Troy in shambles and utterly defeated. Beauty is grace and power. Nonetheless, the present standards of beauty, as reflected on social media, is responsible for several ills prevailing in society, including the concept of the perfect body.

In the age of social media, looking flawless is key. You need to have the perfect skin to go with your perfect hair. You need to have eyes that sparkle, and you need to always look like you are having fun, even if you are breaking down on the inside. While this has been the norm for the past decade or so, body-positive social media influencers have changed the game for the better. One of them is Iskra Lawrence. She is a talented model that breaks down the pursuit of perfection in her brilliant TEDx Talks (TED, 2017). She uses herself as an example and through personal anecdotes expands on her platform about how one can see all the good things about themselves instead of their flaws. She sheds lights on social media’s idea of perfection and how wrapped it is. She says that it makes young minds contemplate the worst about themselves and how they believe that if they could only lose weight, tan their skin and color their hair, would they be accepted by society and be counted as one of their own. This idea is further reflected in a 2010 study where the idea of body image satisfaction was discussed among various individuals and their responses were analyzed. The result showed the negative impacts of social media, even in its infancy and how it was only going to get worse with time. It paves the way towards eating disorders, and even severe depression in certain cases (Martin).

Furthermore, another issue Iskra Lawrence raises is how the industry uses an individual’s personal insecurities to market their products. In her own words, an “insecure individual is a motivated consumer”, which makes a whole lot of sense if we think about it. With social media influencers being paid to market products to their followers, whether that product is good for one’s well-being or not, is deplorable. It preys on the feelings of innocent and insecure individuals with hollow promises. This fact is presented in a study (Cisek et al.), which shows the impact of beauty-enhancers and the behavior of consumers in response.

In a nutshell, the idea of beauty and the perfect body has been badly tainted and malformed by social media. It has raised the standards of beauty to such inconceivable levels, that it is prompting young people to get influenced in the wrong way and adopt behaviors that will only hurt them in the long run. It has affected society as a whole, and it will take a whole lot of time, effort and more people like Iskra to right this wrong.

# Annotated Bibliography

TED. (2017, February 06). Ending the pursuit of perfection - Iskra Lawrence. *2017*. Nevada: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GR\_hq7OVzHU.

A TEDx talk that highlights the negative implications of the perfect body image to society. It was organized by the University of Nevada, USA and presented by Iskra Lawrence, a model, and a body-positive, social media influencer.

Cisek, Sylwia Z., et al. “Narcissism and Consumer Behaviour: A Review and Preliminary Findings.” *Frontiers in Psychology*, vol. 5, 2014, p. 232.

Written by a team of researchers from the Centre for Research on Self and Identity, School of Psychology, University of Southampton, Southampton, UK and published by Frontiers Media, the article reviews the literature on the relationship that exists between narcissistic tendencies and consumer behavior. It shows purchase patterns and the emotional state of such individuals.

Martin, Jeanne B. “The Development of Ideal Body Image Perceptions in the United States.” *Nutrition Today*, vol. 45, no. 3, 2010, pp. 98–110.

Written by Jeanne Martin and published by Nutrition Today, the articles discuss the negative implications of body image. It discusses how it has changed over the ages and has paved the way for teenagers to suffer from body image dissatisfaction and eating disorders, more so than ever before.