

SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF BEAUTY/IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT

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CHANGING BEAUTY STANDARDS FOR WOMEN

- 16th Century: flat chest, 13-inch waist
- 17th Century: large bust and hips, white complexion
- 19th Century: tiny waist, full hips and bust
- 1920s: slender legs and hips, small bust
- 1940s & 1950s: hourglass shape
- 1960s: lean, youthful body, long hair
- 1970s: thin, tan, sensuous look
- 1980s: slim but also muscular, toned, fit body
- 1990s: thin bodies with large breasts
- 2000s: ???

“WHAT IS BEAUTIFUL IS GOOD”

- Research method: people asked to make judgments about people in photographs
- People judge beautiful people more sexually responsive, warm, sensitive, kind, interesting, strong, poised, modest, sociable, outgoing, curious, complex, perceptive, confident, assertive and happy
- More positive predictions are made about the lives of beautiful people: happier marriages, better jobs
- Some negative traits perceived by women about attractive women: more vain, egotistical, materialistic, snobbish, likely to get divorce, likely to cheat on spouse

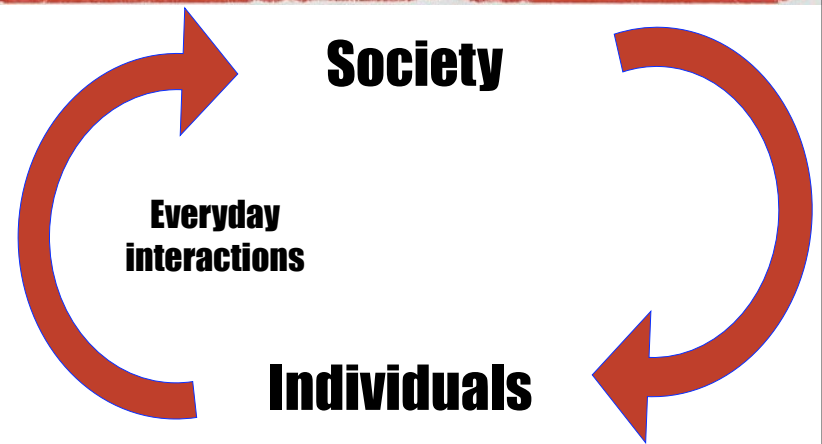
BEAUTY IS STRATIFIED

- Women and men have different beauty standards
- Attractiveness is prerequisite for femininity, not masculinity
- Female beauty standard requires more time and money to achieve
- U.S. beauty standard idealizes Caucasian features and devalues those of other races
- However, black women have more satisfaction with their bodies than white women
- Wealthy can better afford to be beautiful

PERSONAL CONSEQUENCES OF BEAUTY STANDARDS

- Bad first impressions for non-beautiful
- Discrimination in many institutions
- Economic costs
- Time costs
- Medical side effects of achieving beauty
- Dissatisfaction with bodies
- Appearance may play a large role in age discrimination

INDIVIDUALS AND SOCIETY



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DRAMATURGICAL PERSPECTIVE

- Dramaturgy: study of social interaction as theater, in which people (“actors”) project images (“play roles”) in front of others (“audience”) (p. 167)
- Concept developed by Erving Goffman (1922-82), who used concept of drama as metaphor for social life
- Goffman was interested in precarious situations, such as when people are engaging in deceit (e.g., con games)



Erving Goffman

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TWO CON GAMES FROM *THE GRIFTERS* (1990)

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SOME ELEMENTS OF PERFORMANCE

- Front stage: area of social interaction where people perform and work to maintain appropriate impressions (p. 167)
- Back stage: area of social interaction away from the view of an audience, where people can rehearse and rehash their behavior (p. 167)
- Props and costumes should be consistent with performance
- Verbal expression (impressions given) and nonverbal expression (impressions given off) should be consistent with each other
- Performance team: set of individuals who cooperate in staging a performance that leads an audience to form an impression of one or all team members (p. 173)