

Does Society Impose Unnatural Standards of Women with Regards to Body Hair

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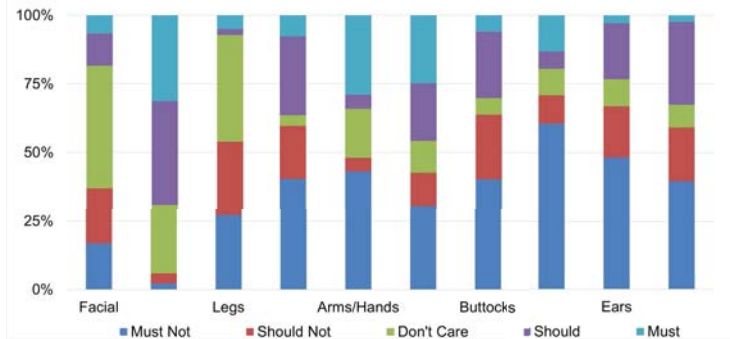
Introduction

In many non-western cultures, body hair is seen as a sign of maturity for both men and women. As proof of the natural cycle of growth, it shouldn't be altered. Historically, western cultures, however, have held a different perspective on body hair. According to Rosenberg, women in ancient Egypt, Greece, and the Roman Empire removed all the hair from their bodies. In the United States, removing hair from the body became yet another norm for women to feel "socially attractive." Hair is seen as something disgusting and there is widespread support that it should be removed from women's bodies. This trend of hair removal suggests that women do not accept their bodies naturally in the western world. Women have developed a sense of looking like the "perfect woman" and hair removal has become a factor that contributes to this image. In 2015 the "perfect" woman is tall, skinny, hairless in appearance. This is most evident in the well known brand name American Apparel. But are women really buying uniformly into the images of beauty portrayed by the media and accepted in various studies and surveys? Can we say that hair removal is used to enhance women's physical appearance, not only so they could feel more "attractive" but also to be accepted by society?

Methods

- Conducted an online survey about sexuality among youth in NYC, which included data about hair removal, sexual orientation, and bodily preference in partners (Body Hair Removal).
- Analyzed the survey's data and organized the data based on gender and the different types of body hair eliminated by using a pivot table in Excel.
- Conducted a literature research focusing on articles on the change in American Apparel Models, and how western cultures view body hair on women.

Hair Removal Females



American Apparel And Unnatural Beauty

American Apparel is a company that advocates for natural beauty, with models having little to no makeup and visible body hair. Ella Feldman recently suggested that American Apparel has adjusted its beauty standard. American Apparel has filtered out models' nipples and wants them to go hairless. This change suggests that in contemporary US "natural" beauty is in reality socially constructed. Therefore, the standards of beauty have changed in relation to social changes. Despite American Apparel's reputation as a company that supports social values, including being sweatshop free, the unnatural beauty promoted by AA's campaigns continues to create a double standard for women that limits their freedom of bodily expression.



Data Analysis and Conclusions

In the Hair Removal Females chart, we can see that an overwhelming majority of the women surveyed declared to be against the removal of armpit hair. The data for facial, pubic, and leg hair showed that women were in favor of removing such body hair (Must). However, for facial hair, only 85 additional women were reported to have a "Must" when compared to the "Don't Care" response in that column. In the Hair Removal Males data, we found that only 10 additional men marked "Must Not" for shaving armpit hair when compared to the men who marked "Must," which was 45 people. Fifty two men stated that they "Must" remove their arm/hand hair while only 9 said "Should Not." The results for facial and leg hair were expected. Overall, most women are concerned with removing body hair compared to men, which may be the result of societal expectations of beauty set upon women.

Reference

- Feldman, Ella. "Not Barbies: American Apparel Contributes to Unrealistic Beauty Standards." <<http://thewilsonbeacon.com/not-barbies-american-apparel-contributes-to-unrealistic-beauty-standards/>>. The Wilson Beacon Online, 23 Apr. 2015. Web. 23 Nov. 2015.
- Tiggemann, Marika, and Christine Lewis. "ATTITUDES TOWARD WOMEN'S BODY HAIR: RELATIONSHIP WITH DISGUST SENSITIVITY." *Psychology Of Women Quarterly* 28.4 (2004): 381-387. SocINDEX with Full Text. Web. 23 Nov. 2015.