Teenage Beauty Pageants vs. Child Beauty Pageants

Jefferson Mateo

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Dr. Kimberly Bunts- Anderson

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Teenage Beauty Pageants vs. Children’s Beauty Pageant

The mind of a teenager is much more developed and improved than a child’s. Sharing one concept, a beauty pageant impacts both age-group’s view of themselves and the world. Both age groups’ perspective on beauty pageants differ in multiple ways. There are positive outcomes when joining beauty pageants, however pageants also reflect a few negative.

Competing in a pageant at a young age can be harmful to children. Their minds are not fully developed at this stage of their growth. They go through many complications with having to look mature. From wearing hair extensions, to smiling with flippers, these participants go through so much pain. One common example that showcases the trials participants undergo is TLC’s, Toddlers and Tiaras. An episode where a 5-year old’s mother wanted to get her daughter’s eyebrows waxed off, showcases the fear that the child has had from a bad experience. In the process of waxing, the child cries of fear that her skin might get ripped off again (abdlmagid1, 2011). In addition, pageants can affect a child’s health. One essential tool that most contestants use in pageants is hair spray. According to Travis Stork of CBS, hair spray contains phthalates and plasticizers. When children are exposed to these harmful chemicals by the excessive use of hair spray, it could lead to stunted growth, a condition that affects the development of children, and lung cancer (The Week Staff, 2). Children and their parents are too focused on trying to attract the judges’ eyes that they forget the little things.

A teen who joins in a beauty pageant differs from the thoughts that a child may formulate during a pageant. A teenager’s way of thinking becomes much more mature and they think differently. Teens who join beauty pageants may interfere with their social life. An interview conducted with a past participant of Miss Teen Marianas 2008, stresses that because she joined a pageant, it controlled her life. She mentions that she would stress about leaving school to go practice for the big day. It became a daily activity for her to do every day. In addition, her relationship with her friends became distant. She says that all she wanted to do was have time to be with friends, but because of endless practicing, she did not have the chance to do so. Also, she mentions that a remedy she used to relive stress was through the use of drugs. She also mentions that she became dependent on drugs to cope with the stress she was experiencing (Appendix A). Furthermore, teens who compete in beauty pageants emphasize the importance of beauty standards. In reference to a survey that was conducted to the public, about 19/20 people say that the negative influence of beauty pageants is focused on self-worth and feeling insecure around other contestants. Teenagers are influenced by society to agonize over not meeting certain expectations in regards to body image, personality, etc. (Appendix 2).

Although children and teens differentiate the perceptions of a beauty pageant, they contribute a few similarities. Girls who join in beauty pageants have a high risk of being sexually objectified. A news article from CNN reported that a three-year-old contestant was sexualize to dress as a prostitute, imitating Julia Roberts from the film Pretty Woman. In this episode of Toddlers and Tiaras, the act of dressing as a prostitute emanated a negative message, and caught the attention of the audience. With regards to sexualization, a past Miss Teen Marianas 2014 participant agreed that teenage girls are sexualized for their physical features. She also mentions that with her experience in joining a beauty pageant, it was costly and was not sponsored whatsoever (Appenix 2). In addition, the estimated cost of pageants calculated to $3,500. If a contestant wins, she would have the tendency to compete the following years. As winning can be so addictive, a total of six pageants in one year would cost a participant about $10,000 (Sandberg 1.)

Finally, while children’s beauty pageants become new to a child, it allows the participants to stress about looking mature and not noticing the harmful effects of the extreme uses of beauty products. Also, as teenagers grow interest in beauty pageants, pageants give stress and set standards for young woman. Both age groups are similar in ways like feeling the sense of being sexualized and coming across financial crisis. A way to manage pageants effectively is by organizing campaigns that promote new ideas of beauty to deconstruct the "perfect girl image" that pageants tend to create (Appendix 2). In the future, the community may portray pageants as a way to discover new personalities and skills rather than just beauty.

References

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APPENDIX A

1. If you can recall, what were some emotional, physical, social, and/or financial challenges that you’ve encountered joining a pageant?

Definitely! I was so stressed out from practicing and trying to focus on my school work. I was dependent on drugs to help my cope with the stress. For financial trials, I was sponsored during the time so, I didn’t spend a lot. My aunty did my hair and makeup.

1. How did joining a pageant impact your life? How did it affect you after?

When I joined the pageant, I didn’t win, but I was called for several photoshoot taking at DFS. My aunty would always bug me to go and focus on doing the photoshoots. Sure, I was making money from it, but it did hold me back from my friends and I. I didn’t spend a lot of time with them. In the end, I decided to be fat and overweight so that companies would stop calling me.

1. Do you think beauty pageants have a negative impact on young woman?

Yes. During my time, when girls didn’t win, they make it such a big deal. They take it so negatively. One time, one girl fell to the ground crying about it. It also changed the way most of us looked at ourselves. We wanted to be skinny.

APPENDIX B

1. Do you think that pageants have a negative impact to contestants? If so, please provide a brief explanation to your answer.

Because pageants are usually associated with beauty and society's perceptions of beauty it can go two very different ways. The girls can feel empowered by one another, or feel the need to compare themselves to one another. It has its negative impact of highlighting the physical aspects of a young girl who is still developing their sense of self-love and self-worth. Under pageant pressure, young contestants can agonize over not meeting certain expectations in regards to body image, personality, etc.

2. What have you encountered during the process of a beauty pageant (emotional issues, social interaction, financial crisis)?

It was definitely costly. I was only introduced to the idea of sponsorship and even that was challenging because I didn't have too many family members on island. Also, the means to get around and collect resources was a bit difficult. It was all worth it, the confidence I gained after the pageant allowed me to practice my social skills towards girls of my age. Also, I sought a lot of great mentorship from the pageant community.

3. Do you think participating in beauty pageants put young women at risk for sexual objectification?

Absolutely. Beauty pageants highlight the physical features of these young women. I think in turn, there just needs to be more diverse pageants on the island; pageants that highlight more on talents and the women's social values. I think moving the spotlight from the conventional "grace" and "beauty" will allow younger women who watch these pageants understand that there is more to life than showcasing your body and having a perfect photo-ready face.

4. What do you think you can do to raise awareness on the effects of teenage beauty pageants?

A short film documentary would help girls relate to the pressures of society. School campaigns that promote new ideas of beauty to deconstruct the "perfect girl image" that pageants tend to create.