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Position Synthesis and Annotated Bibliography



You are beautiful

Pros and Cons of beauty pageants for kids

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Beauty pageants are becoming more and more popular all around the world. They are celebrated at high schools, there are many TV shows about them, like for example *Toddlers and Tiaras*, etc. In fact, beauty pageants have always been a very controversial topic, but even more if we talk about beauty pageants for children and teenagers. Moreover, in many countries beauty pageants for kids and young adults are very popular and socially accepted for the majority of the population. The reason why they are popular is because the people who support those beauty pageants believe that they have many benefits for kids and teenagers. On the other hand, there are many other people who support that beauty pageants are very harmful and that they should be banned or at least much more controlled. So, are beauty pageants for children good, harmful or both?

What people exactly think about those beauty pageants for children and teenagers? Many people from different countries, cultures, etc. think that beauty pageants don't contribute on anything good to kids nor teen adults for many different reasons. Moreover, the main reasons why these beauty pageants are harmful for kids and teenagers is first of all, because they may lead into serious

problems like anorexia, exploitation, depression, or even prostitution. Second of all, as the article *Could Child Beauty Pageants Be Banned in the USA?* published at Asbury Park Press defends, a beauty pageant competition "(...)requires girls to dress up and perform like pint-size adults, complete with fake hair, spray tans, full makeup, ornate costumes and even artificial teeth (known as flippers)." ("Could Children Pageants Be Banned in the USA? ¶13). Those requirements force kids and teenagers to act like if they were adults and also force those kids to grow up faster instead of letting them be kids. Because of those harmful consequences, many countries are thinking or have already banned this kind of competitions for kids. What the article *Does This Fit Our "Values"?*, written by the journalist and mom Celine Cooper explains is that Quebec, as France did, is trying to prohibit child beauty pageants because of "(...) fears over the rise of pornography and the use of underage models in fashion magazines (...)." (Cooper ¶2)

In addition, the Parliamentary reporter of the *Irish Times*, Maria O'Halloran defends in her article *Child Beauty Pageants "Steal Childhood"*, "that childhood is a time-specific and unique period in a person's development, and that participation for financial gain by others in a competition for minors, judged on attractiveness and physical attributes, rather than any sort of discernible skill, is hugely problematic and contrary to protecting childhood". (O'Halloran ¶10). What M. O'Hallora means and many parents, psychologist, doctors, etc. agree with is that kids should be playing, going to school, and enjoying their time instead of participating on those pageants, which require a lot of training and time and just focus on beauty. As a result of those hard and long training sessions, kids get extremely tired. They don't get enough sleep

because they have to practice and after go to school and study. Also, their diet gets reduced, which can dramatically affect their growth, their mental health and happiness. In addition, beauty pageants mostly focus on external beauty, instead of skills or personality. This fact teaches negative and unrealistic values that may lead into superficial kids who believe that beauty is all that matters and that is not true.

But really are beauty pageants completely harmful, or they also offer positive effects to the kids and teen adults that participate on them? Alli Buettner, a beauty pageant queen, explains in her article *Pageants Promote Self-Development* that “(...) most pageants have dropped "beauty" from their names and are instead calling themselves "scholarship programs.” (Buettner ¶5). Beauty pageants offer many benefits to those kids. As A. Buettner said, beauty pageants are a good opportunity for these young girls to earn scholarships for their education. Another benefit is that these “Platforms can range from simply promoting volunteerism among youth to something as complex as starting one's own charity.” (Buettner ¶11). Participants are encouraged to join different charity associations in order to help other people, which teaches great values to them. Moreover, A. Buettner says that “The pageant is won more often in the interview portion of competition, not while she is wearing a swimsuit.” (Buettner ¶12) What A. Buettner means is that those beauty pageants not only judge women by their appearance, but by their skills, talents, personality, etc. Developing some of those skills will help those kids and teenagers in the future finding a career, a good job, etc. Now, about the hard training, most kids do it because they love to. They see it as a game. Actually, most of them practice with their own mothers, family, friends, which also help

developing a good relationship between the family members. Lastly, those trainings will help children and teenagers to be more prepared for life, especially for studies at universities, succeeding in their future jobs, etc.

My opinion about beauty pageants for kids and teen adults is not completely against them but nor for them either, even though I see many more negative points than positive ones. It is true that beauty pageants, as many people said before, benefit their participants in different ways. Some of their benefits are that they help kids find and develop their skills faster than if they were just on a regular school. For example drawing, dancing, singing, etc. Like A. Buettner said, "I went from unconfident, shy and generally nervous to poised, well-spoken and collected through" (Buettner ¶19) So beauty pageants also can help increase kids' self-esteem and socialize better. But my questions are, do kids really need to spend their childhood practicing and competing? How can we know if those kids really like to participate on beauty pageants or if they are being forced by their parents to do it? What I have realized by watching TV shows like *Toddlers and Tiaras* is that the majority of those kids would rather be playing with their friends or going to school than spending their whole day practicing. I have also seen how many of those kids were crying because of their tiredness, but their parents were still pushing them to practice. So, how can we protect those kids? I believe that everybody should have the right and opportunity to participate on those beauty pageants if they want to, but there must be a set of laws, agreements, and control in order to protect the participants' childhood. As it is said in the article *Could Child Beauty Pageants Be Banned in the USA?*, pageants should be regulated. By doing that, kids would have the opportunity to get profit of the benefits that beauty pageants

offer (skills development, socialization, have fun, increase of self-esteem, etc.), but with the guarantee that those kids or teenagers won't be exploited or treated as adults.

So as a conclusion and as Celine Cooper said, "Remember that children don't have the ability to choose. A 2-year-old girl-child is not capable of giving informed consent." (Cooper ¶12) That is why society should protect the rights and childhood of the children who participate on those beauty pageants, in order to let those kids and teenagers beneficiate from the different opportunities that these beauty pageants offer.

Annotated Bibliography

Beauty Pageants

Does competing in beauty pageants have negative effects on child's development? Some people think that beauty pageants are very prejudicial for kids, but many others believe that they are beneficial in many aspects. The reason why I wanted to write and search about beauty pageants for kids and young adults is because last week I watched a reality-show on the TV about this topic. After couple minutes watching this reality show, I was shocked by the different reaction of the kids that were participating. Some of them were really happy and enjoying the moment, but others were crying, so I couldn't figure out if those beauty pageants were beneficial for them as I thought, or were more prejudicial. So by doing this research, I will learn more about the good and the bad of beauty pageants because I will read what professionals like psychologists, doctors, feminists, etc. think about it and its consequences.

Buettner, Alli. "Pageants Promote Self-Development." *University Wire*. 23 Sep.2014: n.p. *SIRS Issues Researcher*. Web. 02 Apr. 2015.

Pageants Promote Self-Development

Summary: The article “Pageants Promote Self-Development”

was written by Alli Buettner, a beauty pageant queen, who believes beauty pageants are more than just contests about appearance. Many pageants provide scholarships and opportunities for women and support charities. Women are not only judged on appearance, but on their platforms, charity work, personality, and skills and talents. Interviews help them think quickly and respond to pressure, and winning can help them raise awareness for causes they are passionate about. Participants also are able to represent their community and learn skills for the real world. Pageants aren’t just about winning. They are about learning to prepare for the world with confidence.

Analysis: Alli Buettner is an author that can be trusted because she was a beauty pageant queen some time ago. What that means is that by having that experience, she has enough knowledge to write about beauty pageants. On her article, we can see ethos when she states the point that “The side of pageants that the public rarely gets to see is the side that I love. A major component of pageantry is the championing of a cause that is close to the contestant's heart, or what her "platform" is. Platforms can range from simply promoting volunteerism among youth to something as complex as starting one's own charity.” There she is stating a point to support her idea of beauty pageants being beneficial.

Reflection: This article helped me support my idea of beauty pageants being somehow beneficial for kids. What the article says that it convinced me the most is that beauty pageants help kids develop their skills and their self-confidence. This article, by saying that beauty pageants have

many benefits for kids and teens, goes against “Child Beauty Pageants ‘Steal Childhood’” ideas, because this article strongly agrees that beauty pageants steal childhood and don’t have any benefits for kids or teens.

Cooper, Celine. "Does This Fit Our 'Values'?" *Gazette (Montreal, Canada)*. 30

Sep. 2013: A.15. *SIRS Issues Researcher*. Web. 02 Apr. 2015.

Does This Fit Our 'Values'?

Summary: This article was written by Celine Cooper, a mom in Quebec in opposition to beauty pageants for kids. France is developing laws that ban beauty contests for girls under the age of 16, so Quebec is considering doing this also. Many are afraid that beauty pageants can lead to pornography, underage models, and exploitation like in shows like *Toddlers and Tiaras*. Despite this, Quebec’s minister for women’s status Agnes Maltais will not ban pageants because as she said, it is too complicated to tell parents what to do in this subject. The author feels that because children cannot make their own decisions, parents should encourage skills and not outer beauty.

Rhetorical Analysis: The author Celine Cooper has credibility because she is a journalist whose specialty is social and feminist issues. That means that she has knowledge about the topic she is writing about. In addition, she is a mom, which means that she feels attached and concerned to the topic of beauty pageants for kids. The rhetorical appeals she uses to make her article convincing are, first of all, logos. She mentions the French Senate to support and give more credibility to

the data of her article. She also mentions credible people's opinions, like for example the feminist Lea Clermont-Dion. On the other hand, she uses pathos. Even though most of the article is informative, she appeals to the readers emotions when she says "Remember that children don't have the ability to choose. A 2-yearold girl-child is not capable of giving informed consent. As adults, we have a responsibility to insist on a society where girls are taught that their worth is not determined by their appearance, or by what others wish to project onto them." By saying this, she wants to make the reader understand that she is writing about an important topic that needs people's attention.

Reflection: This article has also changed made me to think more against beauty pageants for kids and young adults by showing me how some of them support the hyper-sexualization of kids. On the other hand, it has also supported my idea that Social Media is somehow guilty of that hyper-sexualization, especially with TV shows like those mentioned on the article, "Toddlers and Tiaras," or the one I saw from Spain. This article shares the same ideas as the article "Child Beauty Pageants 'Steal Childhood'." Both articles support each other by supporting the points that beauty pageants for kids or young teens are bad for their development and go against childhood that is why they should be banned or more controlled.

"Could Child Beauty Pageants Be Banned in the USA?." *Asbury Park Press*. 22

Sep. 2013: n.p. *SIRS Issues Researcher*. Web. 02 Apr. 2015.

Could Child Beauty Pageants Be Banned in the USA?

Summary: Child beauty pageants are a controversial topic and many countries want to ban them. They can teach children that appearance is the most important thing and expose them to sexual topics, and inspire unhealthy attitudes and habits. This supports that banning pageants isn't the best thing to do, and that it is better to change how people think and increase safety of pageants. Parents need to understand the effects of pageants on their children, and teach children that appearance and fame are not everything. Pageants should be regulated, making sure they are run by a legitimate business and address issues of health and safety. This way pageants can promote and encourage children to be confident and compete in a healthy way.

Analysis: In this case, there is not a clear author for this article. We just know that it was published at Asbury Park Press, which is worthy webpage of news. The article uses logos to sound more convincing by for example quoting a mental health professional and a participant of beauty pageants, K. Kataline to support its point that beauty pageants the best solution is not to ban beauty pageants but "The problem "is not just the pageants, but also it's the parents" who support and encourage the sexualization of their children, Kataline says."

Reflection: This article has affected my thinking by making me realize that banning those pageants is not the solution. The solution is to support the development of personal skills and not the physical beauty of kids. Again, respecting childhood is the most important, and parents must understand it. The position of this article, which is positive about controlled beauty pageants and against the banned of them as a solution

of the problems, opposes the article "*Child Beauty Pageants 'Steal Childhood'*", which supports that beauty pageants go against childhood and that's why they should be banned, as they are already doing in some countries.

O'Halloran, Marie. "Child Beauty Pageants 'Steal Childhood'." *Irish Times*. 06

Mar. 2014: 8. *SIRS Issues Researcher*. Web. 02 Apr. 2015.

Child Beauty Pageants 'Steal Childhood'

Summary: This article believes that childhood is a precious time and is very short. That's why it should be enjoyed. Beauty pageants judge children on physical appearance and makes some people winners and many losers. Parents show off their children for money, rather than being supportive to them and encouraging skills. Being judged on appearance and making children grow up faster also supports the sex industry, and pageants make children wear makeup and wear revealing clothes. Those are some of the reasons why political leaders in Ireland are trying to ban pageants for these reasons, and many places refuse to host kid pageants. Despite this, U.S. child beauty pageants still come to Ireland.

Rhetorical Analysis: The author Marie O'Halloran is credible because she is a *Parliamentary reporter of the Irish Times*. That means that she does researches before writing about a topic, instead of just giving her opinions, which makes the article more credible. In addition, the source is convincing for many reason. First of all, she appeals to logos by quoting some authorities, like for example when the Minister of France when he says "catapulting young girls and young boys into a sexuality for which

they are neither physically nor cognitively ready is a form of theft" By quoting him, she is giving more credibility and supporting her idea of Beauty Pageants stealing childhood. In addition, she uses pathos to express her opinions. An example of pathos is when she says "that childhood is a time-specific and unique period in a person's development, and that participation for financial gain by others in a competition for minors, judged on attractiveness and physical attributes, rather than any sort of discernible skill, is hugely problematic and contrary to protecting childhood."

Reflection: This article has made me realize that beauty pageants have some negative characteristics, like the fact of kids being judged by their exaggerated and fake adult beauty, instead of their skills. In addition, by proving that beauty pageants sexualize children, the article somehow changed my opinion to a most negative one. This article and the article "Does This Fit Our Values?" share similar ideas and the same point of view. They both support that beauty pageants go against childhood and hyper-sexualize kids and young adults. In addition, both articles talk about the idea of banning beauty pageants in different countries.

Yap, Eve. "Dare to Strut." *Straits Times (Singapore)*. 21 Apr. 2013: n.p. *SIRS*

Issues Researcher. Web. 02 Apr. 2015.

Dare to Strut

Summary: This article focuses on how beauty pageants can help build confidence for children and can be fun. There is a lot of concern that child pageants may cause premature vanity and sexualize children. At

the same time, pageants have children show their talents and walk on stage in front of people, boosting their confidence and talent skills. They are also good ways to earn money for and promote charity. For kids, pageants are okay because they are naïve and can just have fun. It is teenage pageants that are harmful because teenagers are learning about their bodies so it isn't good to judge them on their appearance and make them wear revealing clothes. As long as parents are there to supervise the children and give them moral support, pageants can be a good experience for kids.

Analysis: Eve Yap isn't completely credible because even though she is a professional writer, she isn't connected or have much knowledge about beauty pageants. Appealing to logos, the author is writing about other's experiences and opinions to support and give credibility to her ideas. In this case, she is using Tufaylah Norhisyam's experience, a kid who participated in beauty pageants. On the other hand, the tone and style she uses is serious and informative, which makes the article look more important.

Reflection: This article also helped me develop my idea that beauty pageants for kids and young adults are good as long as you protect their childhood and don't sexualize them. They are beneficial because as I mentioned before and it is mentioned in the article, beauty pageants help develop some skills and self-confidence and can also be a beautiful and fun experience for kids. This article supports the article "Could Child Beauty Pageants Be Banned in the USA?" because they both agree that beauty pageants should be more controlled in order to avoid children

sexualization. They also state that parents should respect their kids' childhood and focus more on the development of their skills and not the beauty.

Conclusion: What I've learned from this research is that beauty pageants are a controversial topic nowadays. By reading opinions from professionals and people who have participated in these pageants, I have learned that they can be beneficial for kids and young adults developing social skills among peers, as long as they don't force a young person to grow up before they are ready and don't focus just on beauty, but on personal skills. But, how can we encourage parents and pageant officials that the focus should be more on talents rather than beauty alone? A young person can be below average looking and still have many talents that could and should be appreciated by society.