



Impossibly Stupid

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Comments

**Impossibly Stupid**

a year ago

Becca McCharen-Tran: Fashion that celebrates all body types -- boldly and unapologetically

I haven't moved into another area, I'm just trying to approach your comments from the context of this specific TED talk, looking for general principles that explain the observations from a scientific viewpoint. To your first comment, I still see no evidence of "deeply-ingrained societal expectation". There are norms and individual preferences, yes, but I don't see anything indicating that "beauty" is in any way an imposed value. To the contrary, I've seen quite a number of scientific studies that have shown (even in infants) that most people favor interactions with people they (as individuals) consider pretty/attractive. If the TED speaker or you or *anyone* has research that indicates otherwise, I'd love to see it. Barring that, I stand by my point that while it is unquestionably a good thing to use models with body types that reflect the customers of a clothing company, it is misguided to insist everyone's personal definition of beauty can and will change as a result. To your second comment, I think I sufficiently addressed it in my direct response. There was historical sexism, and there is ongoing sexism, and there are men who are just jerks to everyone. It muddies the waters when we conflate them all. So, again, in the context of this talk, I really want some hard evidence of a cabal of men in the fashion industry pushing a skewed view of beauty, such that some other "look" would do a better job of appealing to both men and women clothing buyers, if only they were allowed to see it. My null hypothesis remains that there is no universal standard of beauty, and so we all can neither be pushed towards one by the fashion industry nor can we be pushed into thinking that everyone is equally beautiful.

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It's the general idea that's problematic: turning back the clock to decades-old offenses and expecting current people to address them (especially people who weren't involved in the original incidents). And while "mansplaining" can be an issue you might still experience, there is also the problem that *all* people tend to lose objectivity when they only examine their own experiences. For example, I've had a bunch of managers that treated women poorly, but it wasn't sexism because they treated *everyone* that poorly. It's less about men vs. women than it is about anecdotes vs. data. In the context of this talk, I see no scientific evidence supporting the thesis that the fashion industry has the power to define a universal standard for beauty. I'm not even sure there's any evidence that there *is* any singular human form that everybody finds beautiful all the time. Until that kind of basic research gets done, these sorts of efforts are just so much tilting at windmills.

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The inherent problem with trying to go too far back on the timeline is that it is unfair to people who are not now behaving badly (and perhaps *never* have). I object to being punished for the sins of someone else's grandfather. And I don't say that to be dismissive of the very real abusive behaviors that still exist in some of today's workplaces. It also doesn't help that the hill being defended in this TED talk is the fashion industry, which absolutely *does* treat both women and men as bodies, and that *includes* this fashion designer. I just don't see it as particularly virtuous to use runway models that simply represent the shapes of the customers they're making the clothes for; that act doesn't suddenly make the models all exemplars of "Beauty". Whether or not it's good marketing remains to be seen. I mean, for example, there are *reasons* (very non-sexist ones) why the food you see in an ad for a fast food restaurant looks way better than anything you'll ever get served.

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That's just not accurate. There are plenty of "pretty boys" who are equally disposable when their looks fade, just as there are plenty of smart/capable women that you want around because they get the job done. That applies to *all* industries, too, not just fashion. And I don't know what kind of work environments you find yourself in, but if anyone is wasting their time gossiping about clothing styles, find a less hostile employer. I've been in the workforce for around 30 years, and *never* have I been somewhere that only had women around as "bodies". Although, ironically, I suppose that's *exactly* what the modeling industry is all about: human billboards. Fashion-wise, guys get away with just wearing a suit (in common Western cultures, anyway) because they don't *care* about all the other nonsense that gets pushed. They're not the ones who are going to be going on about lipstick, fingernails, shoes, and handbags not all matching (or whatever). The patriarchy unquestionably does some nasty stuff, but what some women do to *each other* on a daily basis is just as deeply disturbing. So go ahead and start wearing a suit every day (or some other equally bland professional attire), and then laugh/sue if a double standard makes the whole office harassingly unproductive.

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I don't see anything new here that necessitates a TED talk. It's the same diversity/inclusion message that radical conservatives hate too much and radical liberals love too much. And trying to apply it to *fashion* of all things is just misguided. Accepting all body types is not "fashion", it's just selling clothing. I agree with Long Y's comments that the fashion/beauty industry is fundamentally toxic and tries to profit by pushing the idea that nothing you already are/have is good enough. If we must be fools for beauty, we should appreciate that all of the people cannot be fooled all of the time.

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a year ago

Heidi Grant: How to ask for help -- and get a "yes"

Heidi does address that somewhat, pointing out that many people will refuse help when it's offered, even to the point of getting angry about it. I think the best approach is to just make a *general* offer to be helpful with people you know. Don't wait until there's an immediate need. Don't play favorites. Don't expect anything in return. And actually follow through with it when someone takes you up on your offer!

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Heidi Grant: How to ask for help -- and get a "yes"

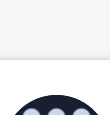
Yes, I was really expecting that one of Heidi's tips would be something along the lines of "Try to be sure that the person you're asking to help you could/would offer you the help you need." It's overly demanding of a relationship to make certain asks. Maybe the underlying issue is that you wait too long to ask for help. Instead of letting some problem build to an emergency that someone feels pressured to act on (and guilty if they can't), try to solicit their help at the first minor roadblock you experience. That puts a lot less pressure on both you and them.

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3 years ago

Drew Philp: My \$500 house in Detroit -- and the neighbors who helped me rebuild it

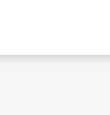
"people trying to live outside of their financial lanes create difficulties" You assume that's the case, but nothing I heard in the talk indicated that. What *I* heard is that the banks that finance the homebuyers were more interested in extracting profits than building the local community. In that kind of environment, it makes a ton of sense to remove that external burden from the neighborhood. It's a lot easier to live in within your means when you're not paying for someone else's luxury sedan and mansion in the suburbs. "you said that because Long Y didn't arrive at your conclusion, she didn't think hard enough" I said nothing of the sort. If you're seeing personal attacks and insults buried in every statement, that's on you. What I fundamentally said is that *all evidence* points to the fact that those old free-market approaches didn't seem to help Detroit, so *we all* need to think about different solutions if we actually want things to get better. It doesn't help anyone to dismiss the speaker's approach without offering a *better* solution of your own.

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3 years ago

Drew Philp: My \$500 house in Detroit -- and the neighbors who helped me rebuild it

What model *does* scale? Not everyone in the world can be rich, and income inequality is only getting worse. People helping each other like this seems like a stronger display of leadership than anything that's coming from the pillars of government or corporate boardrooms. And I don't know where you're trying to go with the economy/efficiency line. The only cold truth is that idle wealth *removes* money from an economy, and is thus a terrible inefficiency. So make up your mind about what you want, because you don't seem to be making a coherent point.

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3 years ago

Danny Hillis: Should we create a solar shade to cool the earth?

The fundamental mistake being made here is that you're treating the symptom rather than curing the disease. The heating is merely a consequence of our burning fossil fuels, which is a consequence of our modern need for energy, so it makes *zero* sense to try to solve that problem by throwing away *any* of our main source of alternative energy. Less solar power is literally the opposite of what we need.

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