

# Female power awakening—My grandmother enlightens me with her personal experience

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**Abstract.** In the eyes of many young girls, Barbie is the symbol of the perfect woman. She is like an excellent mirror, not only showing the not real female image, but also reflecting the deep aesthetic gaze of the traditional gender discipline of the society behind the current female's crazy pursuit of beauty -- having a slim figure and a beautiful face is the embodiment of the greatest value of women. Many women believe that external elements, such as beauty and sex appeal, are a way for them to build close relationships and seek social approval, thus fuelling anxiety about their body shape and appearance. When I was younger, I had the same idea that short hair made a woman less of a woman, but my grandmother, a district attorney, took action to break that stereotype. Starting from her, I also see the emergence of various female forces in the society. They do not limit their lives to the pursuit of external beauty, but carry out a continuous struggle for women's freedom from stereotypes and expectations with their actions.

**Keywords:** Barbie; Gender discrimination; Feminism.

## 1. Introduction

When I was a child, like most girls, I loved all kinds of Barbie dolls. Most of them have pretty faces, excessively thin figures, and long, bushy hair. Barbie is the ideal female image in my childhood, but at the same time, it has deepened my stereotypic impression of female gender and strengthened my desire for beauty. However, in fact, the beauty of a woman is not only reflected on the outside, but also on the inside. Whether in politics, art, science or culture, women have never been absent. They may be gifted, they may be accumulated, they may be caused by circumstances, they may be bold innovators, and they, in their own unique way, leave a name in history, break through the barriers of gender stereotypes and continue to show us true female power. Of these, my grandmother is a prime example of a woman who gave up her long hair and elaborate makeup to devote her time as a district attorney to fighting crime, advocating for the law, fighting domestic violence, and fighting fraud, all of which greatly benefit our local community. As a result, my grandmother became a lifelong female role model for me. It also freed me from the recurring questions and anxieties about whether I was beautiful enough to focus more on the fulfillment of true female power and worth.

## 2. Organization of the Text

### 2.1 The root cause of women's pursuit of beauty

#### 2.1.1 Aesthetic gaze under social traditional gender discipline

First of all, what is the aesthetic gaze? With the heated discussion of feminism in recent years, the word "gaze" has been used more and more frequently from the field of literature and art criticism to the scene of daily conversation. As a concept and keyword that accompanies the rise of visual culture, "gaze" has actually been extended to its connotation as a theoretical term in the use of it in many current scenes—the method of viewing that carries power or desires. It is usually a product of visual centrism, in which the viewer is given the privilege of "seeing" by power, and establishes his own subjective position through "seeing". and the person being watched becomes the object of "seeing" at the same time, he experiences the power pressure brought by the viewer's vision, and self-objectifies by internalizing the viewer's value judgment.

Therefore, from this level, women's fanatical pursuit of their own beauty also comes from this self-objectification. Many women believe that physical beauty helps them build close relationships and seek social approval. Beauty will give them more preferential treatment in study and work, and it will help them attract more eyes of the opposite sex. When they have this kind of thinking, they have already unconsciously imagined themselves as a commodity to be judged and examined, constantly experiencing the critical eyes of society on their appearance, which leads to the crazy pursuit of beauty. But in fact, this anxiety about appearance comes from the gender discrimination and spiritual shackled by the patriarchal culture. Returning to women themselves, whether they are beautiful or not does not have so much significance. Only by actively exploring and achieving achievements in different fields of society can women truly realize their value and significance.

### **2.1.2 Gender stereotypes from generation to generation**

As I experienced in my childhood, I love all kinds of Barbie dolls. these dolls with beautiful faces, To some extent, Barbie is also a mirror, reflecting society's fixed views and appearance requirements for women [1]. Fifty years ago, Mattel, the maker of Barbie dolls, ran a talk show with teenagers about Barbie that included the tagline "Girls find math class hard!" . The quote revealed that the brand was spreading gender stereotypes against women while producing Barbie. At the same time, some studies have shown that exposure to Barbie dolls will also make girls have higher requirements for their appearance and figure, and are more prone to appearance anxiety. This is because Barbie's beautiful and slender external image creates the stereotype that women must be thin enough, beautiful enough, and have long hair and big eyes. So that girls in childhood will develop a deformed aesthetic tendency and the pursuit of beauty fanatical. The study selected 160 girls (5-8 years old) from Adelaide, South Australia [2]. They will be randomly asked to engage in three different interaction states with Barbie (body participation, body observation, and print observation). The results showed that compared with a control group, girls exposed to Barbie in any form were more likely to have a desire for a slim figure and a delicate face, and to have an earlier sense of appearance anxiety. But in fact, girls spend too much time on improving their appearance, which is not good for their physical and mental health growth. Excessive weight loss may lead to anorexia and sub-health of their mental state. However, society has higher physical requirements for women compared with men, which is also the result of the cumulative gender stereotypes from generation to generation.

These stereotypes limit the potential of women's development in many industries and fields in the society, but encourage them to focus more on how to make themselves more beautiful, which is one of the reasons why women are generally anxious about appearance.[4]

## **2.2 How to reject appearance anxiety to achieve female power**

### **2.2.1 Draw on the power of examples**

On this topic, my grandmother inspired me by her own experience. During my childhood, Barbie dolls adorned my playtime. They flaunted long hairs and exquisite dress, becoming my idealized embodiment of female beauty. I would mimic Barbie's hairstyles and fashion choices, believing they epitomized beauty. However, a conversation with my grandmother reshaped my beliefs. My grandmother's busy life as a district attorney drove her to opt for short hair. Her role involved extensive interaction with grassroots governments, cadre cooperation, and leading colleagues on rural assignments. In these challenging rural environments, maintaining long hair was impractical. Despite forgoing elaborate grooming, she devoted her time to battling crime, advocating for the law, combatting domestic violence, and countering fraud, all of which greatly benefited our local community. My grandmother has been my lifelong female role model. Even after her passing a few years ago, her words continue to resonate within me. I now recognize that a woman's beauty transcends the superficial notion of "long hair" to encompass education, career, influence, and more. Although she is no longer with us, I find strength and companionship in my memories of her, symbolised by my short hair, which mirrors hers.

As Valois, the Director of the United Nations Office in Geneva argues, the power of role models is crucial in eliminating gender bias. Valois said, "My way to face these biases is to be the best one. Fully demonstrating your abilities and becoming a leader in your professional field is the most effective way to deal with these biases. Your success, for other young girls, is also the best motivation to help them overcome the obstacles of biases more easily." [5]

And in real life, in addition to my grandmother, there are countless women as representatives of female strength, not relying on the external beauty but relying on the internal strength, have achieved outstanding achievements in all walks of life.

For example, the example of Ms. Wu Jianxiong inspires me deeply. Wu Jianxiong is a famous nuclear physicist, known as "Madame Curie of the East", "Queen of nuclear Physics" and "First Lady of Physics". She is the first female president of the American Physical Society in the history, and has made worldwide contributions in the field of beta decay research. [6]

She was born in Liuhe Town, Taicang County, Jiangsu Province, and went to the United States to study in 1936. In 1940, she received a doctor's degree from the University of California, and later received a Doctor's degree from Princeton, Yale, Harvard and other famous universities. During her doctorate, she participated in the "Manhattan Project" to make atomic bombs, and solved the major problem that the chain reaction could not continue, and was known as the "mother of atomic bombs".

She is a true experimental physicist, and her greatest contribution is to prove the "parity nonconservation" proposed by Li Zhengdao and Yang Zhenning, which is regarded as one of the three decisive experiments in the history of physics.

At the same time, there is a famous outstanding woman in history. Many modern people always focus on her love life, but ignore her achievements in her career. Lin Huiyin was one of the designers of the deepening plan for the national emblem of the People's Republic of China and the Monument to the People's Heroes, which also laid a solid scientific foundation for the study of ancient Chinese architecture. From 1930 to 1945, she and her husband Liang Sicheng visited 15 provinces and more than 190 counties in China, surveying and mapping 2,738 ancient buildings. Many ancient buildings were recognized by the world and the whole country through their investigation, and have been protected ever since. She also compiled the National Catalogue of Cultural Relics and Ancient Buildings, which later evolved into the National Catalogue of Cultural Relics Protection. [7]

In 1952, Liang Sicheng and Liu Kaiqi presided over the design of the Monument to the People's Heroes, and Lin Huiyin was appointed as a member of the construction committee of the Monument to the People's Heroes. In spite of illness, he participated in the design work and completed the pattern design of Xumi with his assistant Guan Zhaoye.

these examples tell us that the beauty of a woman is not only reflected on the outside, but also on the inside. Whether in politics, art, science or culture, women have never been absent. They may be gifted, they may be accumulated, they may be caused by circumstances, they may be bold innovators, and they, in their own unique way, leave a name in history, break through the barriers of gender stereotypes and continue to show us true female power.

### **2.2.2 Be independent and self-reliant**

In order to better realize our own value, as women, we should first break the chains in the brain, deny the social and secular stereotype that women are generally inferior to men in intelligence and work ability, seize every opportunity in life, and strive for unlimited growth and rising channels for themselves. Don't set a shackle for yourself because of the female identity, dare to express opinions, dare to be seen. Women have unlimited potential if they don't impose any restrictions on themselves. Nothing is impossible.

While recognizing our own value, we should always make unremitting efforts. Instead of just pursuing the beauty of external appearance, we should focus on the improvement of internal value, master the method of dealing with people, cultivate the ability to live independently, have the courage to be independent, and exercise the indomitable will. These are all qualities that women need to realize their own value and success, compared with mere beauty, which can ultimately lead to disaster.

Appearance is not a necessity for a successful woman, only when a person is completely independent and self-sufficient, no matter how the external image, she can always live proudly with a noble soul.

### 3. Conclusion

To sum up, what people respect is always the upward motivation, the expectation of freedom, the persistence of happiness, the stimulation of inner conscience, the excavation of their own value, and the pursuit of self-esteem, independence and self-improvement. As a child, I saw in my grandmother this strength, this energy, this indomitable energy that can be found in all of us, regardless of gender, regardless of race, if we relentlessly pursue it. My grandmother inspired my sense of femininity. She taught me to be self-reliant at all times and places. She saved me from fairy tales and the dream of Barbie princess, taught me to be my own knight, and she proved to me with her actions that women themselves have a strong ability, can be a prosecutor, can help the justice, punish the evil, for the benefit of the people, also have the ability to make contributions to the society and the country. Unfortunately, she passed away a few years ago. Whenever I think back on the sweet time we had together, I seem to remember Grandma's crisp short hair. When I was a child, I was very naughty. I would joke about braiding my grandmother's hair, a cherished memory that filled me with happiness, warmth, power and meaning.

Finally, I will always remember what my grandmother taught me throughout her life and follow her example to study and work harder and try to be the person I want to be. Because female power is not single, there is no formula, it can be expressed in a thousand ways. We have innovation to break boundaries and change the world. We want to break through the ceiling, lifelong learning and growth; We have the artistic charm that nourishes and deepens people's hearts; We also have a heart of faith and love, creating a colorful tolerant world. Through keen perception and flexible adaptability, play to their own advantages and move towards their goals. In the future, every day, we should always actively explore, forge ahead, not afraid of setbacks, not afraid of hardships, support the family, support the society, support the world. Today, the power of women is rising and expanding without boundaries.

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