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29 We All Know Her: The Unattainable Ideal

This box spoke on advertising and how it is used to shape society and the culture we live in. Advertisers create thousands of ads that people see on a daily basis. It is known that each ad is different from the rest but in a sad reality they are all very similar and all included very similar aspects. This aspect of similarity is extremely relevant in the portrayal of women and girls within the advertising industry. The images of the women shown in advertisements are so unrealistic and so far out of reach for the average woman. It seems as though this image is nearly impossible to reach without cosmetic surgeries or digital retouching of photographs. This idea is very hard for me to understand because of the fact that the model being used doesn't even look like the girl in the advertisement after all the digital retouching is done. We are teaching young girls that they must try to reach a goal that not even the women being photographed can reach. This woman that is seen on a daily basis, that is seen as beautiful by society is what young girls and women are told is the ideal image, the women they should strive to look like. This ideal image of a woman that we see almost daily within the advertising industry is a young, white, runway model (petite figure). Which in most cases the same model is used for several different companies' ads. All these advertisements look exactly the same because they all have the same basis in what model they choose. This need for the ideal image for the women in a advertisement has not only affected the advertising industry, but also the design and modelling industries as well, because when all the models look the same, it is much easier for someone to find a girl that already fits the dress rather than altering the dress to fit every model. These girls who are so similar in appearance now represent the idea of perfection, and the standard of what women should look

like, rather than a woman who works a nine to five job, with two children at home. This constant need to look and feel like we are perfect has led to huge health concerns within the modeling industry as well as within girls and women who are not involved in this form of work. In 2006, three models, Luisel Ramos, Eliana Ramos, and Ana Carolina Reston all died of complications due to eating disorders and malnutrition, because they were trying to reach and maintain their weight, to be considered beautiful and perfect in the eyes of the advertising industry and its audiences. After this issue began to cause worry within the industry, many countries implicated rules for models within their countries to ensure that they were still healthy. Spain put into place a rule that every runway model must have a BMI (body mass index) of at least 18 to walk the runway. India removed overly thin models from the runways. This helped to limit the amount of supermodels that were being injured by this excessive need for a slim figure, however this does nothing for the average population that sees these women on billboards looking thin and beautiful, wishing that they looked like them. I think that though many companies have started using more average looking models there will always be companies that go for skinnier models because that is what people have always seen and now expect to see from these companies.

As a woman in today's society I can understand the want to be skinny, because it is seen as beautiful. However in my experience it is impossible to look like a model, because we only see the printed images of these females, we don't see the actual faces of these women. These women have been edited and changed in every way possible, they basically serve as an outline to the camera man, who then sends the image to the editing team, who change the image to make her seem more appealing. In most cases this editing team isn't even made of women, it is mainly a group of men deciding what needs to be changed to create the image that they want to see rather than showing the true beauty of the women in the photo. I think that another reason that so

many people try to become this ideal image is because we are exposed to it everyday thanks to social media. Young girls starting at the age of 10 are exposed to the idea of this perfect woman, which they then strive to look like. Society plays a huge role in how someone sees themselves and this ideal image doesn't help anyone feel better about themselves or how they look when they are constantly being compared to an unattainable ideal. The culture that we are surrounded in pushes us to all be similar. We as a society don't appreciate the people that are different from us, we are not accepting the things we don't understand or the things that don't fit into the box that surrounds us. I think that is why we are all so focused on social media, because we are all so self conscious about what others think of us rather than how we feel about ourselves. This problem with self consciousness is the main cause of eating disorders and low self esteem that plague our society. Teenagers younger than 14 have been caught making themselves throw up to try and keep themselves from gaining weight or getting fat.

I have personally been affected by the disease anorexia and bulimia. My cousin Gianna, who is 3 years younger than me, felt as though she was ugly for weighing over 100 lbs at 13 years old. She would eat with her family and then go to the bathroom and make herself throw up so that she didn't gain the weight from the food. 5 weeks after the start of this Gianna was down to 85 lbs, and was emitted into the intensive care unit at a hospital in Florida, where she stayed for nearly 3 months till her weight was back up to 110lbs. Though she is better, Gianna still struggles with body image problems. She battles with herself constantly telling herself that she is beautiful and that she doesn't need to be a stick figure to possess beautiful features. For me beauty comes from within and if someone is incapable of telling how beautiful someone's soul is then they are the ones who are ugly. Looks don't make a person, their personality makes them

enjoyable. I think that this publication makes a very important statement on the negative effects that advertising using only one form of women creates on society.