

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT
English Department
English 203- Final Exam
Fall 2005- 2006

DIRECTIONS: Read the following passage and write a well-organized and well-developed summary-analysis essay of 5-6 paragraphs. Your essay should have a clear thesis statement, solid arguments, and supporting evidence. Throughout, you are required to use direct quotes and paraphrases from the passage itself.

The Globalization of Eating Disorders
by
Susan Bordo
2003

1. The young girl stands in
on a no-fat diet for a couple of weeks and has reached her goal weight: 115 lb., at
5'4
eyes she still looks dumpy. She
a, Pink, L'il Kim, and
Mya, each one perfect in her own way: every curve smooth and sleek, lean-sexy,
nothing to spare. Self-hatred and shame start to burn in the girl, and envy tears at
how much weight she loses. Look at that stomach of hers, see how it sticks out?
Those thighs gross, a
dough girl.
2. As you read the imaginary scenario above, whom did you picture standing in front
of the mirror? If your images of girls with eating and body image problems have
been shaped by *People*,
North American, and economically secure. A child whose parents have never had
to worry about putting food on the family table. A girl with money to spare for
fashion magazines and trendy clothing, probably college -
familiar with the classic psychological literature on eating disorders, you may also
-
perceptual and cognitive problems tha
3. Read the description again, but this time imagine twenty-something Tenisha
Williamson standing in front of the mirror. Tenisha is black, suffers from

anorexia, a

-American

t ever want to be fat

no longer an **anomaly**. Eating and body image problems are now not only crossing racial and class lines, but gender lines. They have also become a global phenomenon.

4. Fiji is a striking example. Because of their remote location, the Fiji islands did not have access to television until 1995, when a single station was introduced. It broadcasts programs from the United States, Great Britain, and Australia. Until that time, Fiji had no reported cases of eating disorders, and a study conducted by anthropologist Anne Becker showed that most Fijian girls and women, no matter how large, were comfortable with their bodies. In 1998, just three years after the station began broadcasting, 11 percent of girls reported vomiting to control weight, and 62 percent of the girls surveyed reported dieting during the previous months.

5. Becker was surprised by the change; she had thought that Fijian cultural

empire of images, and that there are no protective borders.

6. In Central Africa, for example, traditional cultures will celebrate voluptuous women. In some regions, brides are sent to fattening farms, to be plumped and massaged into shape for their wedding night. In a country plagued by AIDS, the skinny body has meant as it used to among Italian, Jewish, and Black Americans poverty, sickness, and death

in

ss World

Competition. The contestants did very poorly. Then a **savvy entrepreneur** went against local ideals and entered Agbani Darego, a light-skinned, hyper-skinny beauty. (He got his inspiration from MNet, the South African network seen across Africa on satellite television, which broadcasts mostly American movies and television shows.) Agbani Darego won the Miss World Pageant, the first Black African to do so. Now, Nigerian teenagers fast and exercise, trying to a popular slang phrase

- 7.

disingenuously) in their defense. They speak to young people not just about how to be beautiful but also about how to become what the dominant culture admires, values, rewards. They

have been abused they may offer a fantasy of control and invulnerability, immunity from pain and hurt. For racial and ethnic groups whose bodies have

Anglo-Saxon norms, they may cast dominant culture.

8. much more than parents, teachers, or clergy that we are taught how to be. And it is images, too, that teach us how to see, that educate our vision in models against which our own bodies and the bodies of others are measured. Perceptual **pedagogy** requirement.

9. I was intrigued, for example, when my articles on eating disorders began to be translated, over the past few years, into Japanese and Chinese. Among the members of audiences at my talks, Asian women had been among the most le, and indeed, my initial research showed that eating disorders were virtually unknown in Asia. But when, this year, a Korean translation of *Unbearable Weight* was published, I felt I needed to revisit the situation. I discovered multiple reports on dram many Asian countries become Westernized and infused with the Western **aesthetic** of a tall, thin, lean body, a virtual tsunami of eating disorders has swamped Asian Eunice Park in *Asian Week* magazine. Older people can still remember when it was very different. In China, for example, where revolutionary ideals once condemned any focus on appearance and there term of endearment for children. Now, with fast food on every corner, child obesity is on the rise and the

re

most of us see a fat per

10. Clearly, body insecurity can be exported, imported, and marketed __just like any profitable commodity. In this res illustrative. Ten years ago men tended, if anything, to see themselves as better looking than they (perhaps) actually were. And then (as I chronicle in detail in my book *The Male Body*) the menswear manufacturers, the diet industries, and looking in the mirrors, finding themselves soft and ill defined, no matter how muscular they are. Now they are developing the eating and body image disorders that we once thought only girls had. Now they are abusing steroids, measuring their own muscularity against the oiled and perfected images of professional athletes, body-builders, and models. Now the industries in body-enhancement cosmetic surgeons, manufacturers of anti-aging creams, spas and salons are making huge bucks off men, too.

11. What is to be done? I have no easy answers. But I do know that we need to acknowledge, finally and decisively, that we are dealing here with a cultural problem. If eating disorders were biochemical, as some claim, how can we

and those of children around the globe how can we blame families? Families matter, of course, and so do racial and ethnic traditions. But families exist in cultural time and space and so do racial groups. In the empire of images, no one lives in a bubble of self-immunity. The sooner we recognize that and start paying attention to the culture around us and what it is teaching our children the sooner we can begin developing some strategies for change.

Taken from the McGraw Hill Reader. 9th edition, 2006.

*Susan Bordo is an American feminist philosopher and interdisciplinary scholar who
rsity of Kentucky.*

Glossary

Anomaly (paragraph 3) an exception

Savvy entrepreneur (paragraph 6) skillful businessman

Disingenuously (paragraph 7) insincerely

Pedagogy (paragraph 8) method of teaching

Aesthetic (paragraph 9) standards of beauty