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## The Issue With The Modeling Industry's Nepotistic Culture



BY LIBERTY IMHOFF · AUGUST 27, 2019



Gigi Hadid (left) and Bella Hadid (right)

Let's try an exercise: Name five fashion models that are well-known right now.

It wouldn't be all that unexpected if your answer went something along the lines of "Gigi Hadid, Bella Hadid, Kendall Jenner....wait, who *are* the other models? Does Kylie count?" Or maybe if you watch fashion more closely than the casual observer, you could name Kaia Gerber or Lottie Moss. Okay, we've got five names. Let's think, "What do they all have in common?"

They all have prominent family members that are/were very famous in the industry and hold high levels of clout.

Gigi and Bella Hadid are the offspring of Yolanda Hadid, a Dutch-American model that was discovered by Ford Models co-founder Eileen Ford and modeled for about a decade and a half. Kendall Jenner almost needs no introduction at this point, with her mother Kris Jenner being the matriarch of the sprawling Kardashian empire. Kaia Gerber is the daughter of supermodel Cindy Crawford, of whom she is a teenage clone. And Lottie Moss? Well, she's the sister of Kate Moss, one of the most controversial models of our time.



Kendall Jenner

Nepotism has run so rampantly through the modeling industry in recent times that we should perhaps ask ourselves how we have gotten to this point. Fashion – especially modeling – has always been a tough industry in which to enter, certainly. But, one can't look past that crushing feeling that models must feel when a celebrity offspring such as Kendall comes in and receives a lion's share of the plum work that models have on offer – the high-fashion runway shows, the magazine covers and spreads, the beauty deals, the ad campaigns, and the accompanying fortune that come with having those. It especially hurts when a Kendall-type says something along the lines of "I was never one of those girls who would do like 30 shows a season or whatever the f–k those girls do. More power to 'em." Though Jenner clarified her comments in the following days, the damage had already been done.



Cindy Crawford

Many models have had to work their way up throughout history to be rewarded and respected for their talent and skill. That includes models like Kate Moss, Naomi Campbell, Shalom Harlow, Natalia Vodianova, and Cindy Crawford. Modeling can be extremely rewarding, but it can also be entirely exhausting. It takes effort to eat correctly, keep your body in tip-top shape so that you won't make your agency angry, attend go-sees that may or may not turn into anything positive for your career, and take on as many jobs as you can in order to support yourself and your family (if you have one). Keep in mind that this is all done under the guise of no industry regulation of which to speak. Models that work their way up deserve every ounce of respect that we have. They also deserve the work to go with that respect.

But they are often passed over in favor of the nepotistic offspring that the industry believes will bring them more attention and thus, more money. Now, this is not to say that models with no famous family name backing them will never find work. There aren't enough nepotistic offspring to cover every single ad, spread, or show that needs to be filled. Hilary Rhoda gets plenty of work in the industry. So does Karlie Kloss. So does Coco Rocha. So does Joan Smalls. Their success (and that of other models at similar spots in their careers), however, is due in no small part to an unmatched work ethic while having no prominent name backing them. You know, the way that the industry should work.

Even with the extraordinary work that the above-mentioned models have done, it is still all too common to pick up a fashion magazine and see, say, Gigi Hadid on the cover (if there is a model on the cover at all, but that's another story). Then, if one opened said magazine, you'd see ad after ad featuring Kaia Gerber. Maybe you'd throw in Hailey Bieber, niece of actor Alec Baldwin, for good measure. One thing is clear. There is simply no excuse for these lazy casting practices when there are numerous talented models out there that would be overjoyed to get their shot at being featured.

Nepotism has led the modeling industry's culture to a particularly aristocratic place. While royalty has always played some part in the fashion world, the rate at which we are seeing regular models tossed aside in favor of those with already privileged backgrounds is dismaying and is a true cause for concern. Even though the rise of streetwear has democratized fashion as a whole in many ways, these nepotistic practices that the industry employs of bringing in models put a long-term career out of reach for the majority of models that don't have those family connections. Being a successful model for a significant period of time is now, for the most part, reserved for those born into the most beneficial lineage.

Nepotism hurts the industry immensely in the long run. While going for the quick thrill of casting a model with a famous pedigree might get brands short-term attention from social media and from the industry heavyweights at large, it will dilute the well of new, creative, and diverse talent that fashion has to draw from. We are all made artistically poorer from this blatantly exclusionary practice being allowed to persist.

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