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HEALTH AND BEAUTY PORTRAYALS IN YOUTH-TARGETED PRINT MAGAZINE ADVERTISING: WHERE DOES THE DISABLED BODY FIT?

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CHAPTER 1:

Introduction and Overview

“Are you hot enough to be on our cover? ...would you consider plastic surgery? ...do you have what it takes to be a model?” Seventeen

“Whoever said ‘what’s on the inside that counts’ got it all wrong” Maxim

“One of the most challenging powers against which the disabled constantly strives is that of attitudes. The image of physical perfection portrayed by the media; society’s emphasis of the work ethic as a criteria for usefulness to society; and the public’s concentration on disability rather than the ability are destructive.” Obstacles Report, “Government of Canada”

The body. We are constantly bombarded with images of the appropriate way to present our bodies—how we can manipulate our faces, cover up what we dislike and flatter what we like. Youths in particular are encouraged to engage in radical means to alter or accentuate their bodies through clothing choices, diets and skin products. But in recognizing the messages that barrage us, specifically in print images, do we ever stop to reflect what is *not* seen in advertising media and how this is significant?

In considering aspects of social desirability and the body, people with blemished faces, people of various body types, diversity in race, age, people of every gender, and income bracket are represented—but what is glaringly absent are images of disabled and “abnormal” bodies. It becomes important to examine the role of the media and its influence in constructing and disseminating dominant ideas regarding what bodily differences are acceptable while considering the life experiences of physically disabled individuals in relation to socially-constructed aesthetic standards in “Western” society.

The study presented here aims to identify some of the patterns of representations of beauty and, in contrast, the under-representation of disability—which the media casts

as synonymous with unattractiveness—within youth-targeted print magazine advertising. The study questions what is seen and what is not seen through a visual semiotic analysis, and asks whether these patterns construct ideals of beauty at the expense of young readers. What are the consequences of these stereotypes? This inquiry explains how media images define beauty, while introducing the socio-psychological outcomes of “unattractiveness.” It questions why individuals either avoid “unattractiveness” or attempt to enhance their “beauty.” As such, this paper presents the role of print advertisements in communicating social values and the ways these values are reflected in the exclusion of the physically disabled in daily life.

While there have been numerous studies on the social and cultural effects of advertising, few have addressed disability. This study uses interviews with physically disabled individuals to connect the importance of cultural portrayals of the body in print advertisement to the individual experiences of those who are excluded or included in these depictions. The emphasis is on the social limitations imposed on differently-abled individuals by ideologies disseminated in the media. How the experiences of these individuals differentiate from what is portrayed provides insight into how successful or unsuccessful print advertisements are at disseminating cultural mores.

I based my analysis on existing knowledge in disability, psychological theories regarding body and social acceptance, and feminist theories surrounding the body and physical appearance. So far, it is clear that studies concerning *both* disability and commercial print media are limited (Cavanagh 2005). Studies have documented the portrayals of disability in film, television and charity-based advertisements, but have generally neglected the commercial aspect of selling products. Many studies have been

conducted on the significance of aesthetic appeal and the ideal body in print media (Featherstone, Hepworth 1991, Bordo 1993, Ballentine 2005), but few studies have turned towards what commercial images do *not* portray. Lastly, the majority of the target market for commercial products is youth, but again there are few North American studies concerning the attitudes of disabled youth towards these portrayals.

This study provides a means of understanding how advertising contributes to cultural standards and the effects of advertising images on human behavior and appearance, but it also considers *why* these images are chosen. That is, not only is the reception standpoint considered, but the study also asks the question, “how does the process of creating advertising, and selling a product result in disregard for the disabled as a minority group?” The study deals with the market realities of how disability is used in advertising considering the role of current trends in marketing, consumerism and advertising, and how this knowledge can be used for improvements rather than excuses.

While the study takes into account the production side of advertising, the emphasis is largely on the patterns resulting from reception. I understand that the author and the reader work together to create meaning. Therefore, I do not disregard the objectives of the advertiser, even as I take on an analysis that is primarily from the point of reception. Thus, it is those theories like Foucault’s concept of the body as a site of politicization (Foucault 1977) that provide grounds for a media based investigation. An overview of advertising production is provided in the literature review, but branches into suggestions of production methods and considerations in the concluding chapters.

In addressing existing studies about production and reception, I bring the reader to my own analysis that draws together disability and the media. The model I use can be

broken down into a triangular relationship between author, audience and critical interpreter (O'Barr 1994). I consider:

- Production: the motives of the advertising producers
- The audience: readers of youth magazines and audience based interviews
- Critical interpreter: existing secondary sources and myself

My analysis points only to possibilities and interpretations that my informants and I, (as readers and typical consumers of media messages) have come to understand—and thus other readers may come to understand as well. Again, the study is meant to reveal ideologies and possible messages within the media. It is not plausible to assert my analysis or my informants as fully representative of the readers of the magazines used in the analysis, but it is also not possible to assert that these interpretations are invalid, since every individual who consumes media has differing perceptions. It is these perceptions, the transmission of these messages that create understanding for the receiver. As such, for the analysis of the ads, I bring an interdisciplinary approach encompassing sociological, psychological and textual analysis to identify idealized images of beauty, and to ask how these relate to constructions of disability. Are there inconsistencies with representations? How do similarities and differences within disabled/able-bodied groups portray what is acceptable? How do similarities and differences within disabled/able-bodied groups portray what is unacceptable? Given these questions, how do social relationships found in advertisements depict inequalities and constructions of power? Who is weak, who is powerful, who is in charge?

The final dimension, the interviews, link theory to application by providing a subjective facet to the visual analysis. Different people will interpret ads differently—

which places importance on the interviews. I also recognize other individuals can provide useful insight for or against my own interpretations. The study, then, addresses the gap between disabled and non disabled groups not only in advertising itself, but by attempting to set an example of the importance of communication between these two groups, to arrive at a more accurate understanding of subjective experiences rather than mere portrayals. With these realizations, it becomes possible to make advertising more inclusive, and to alter the negative effects of inaccurate messages.

These findings are meant to provide a compass for navigating advertisements, especially in the context of diversity and inclusion of minority groups. There is no question that the media is responsible for creating tropes of acceptability and unacceptability for these minorities. This investigation addresses the media's power in propagating messages, and how this power can be used to foster acceptance and improve disabled-able-bodied relations through media education. While the study may not prove in numbers absences and misrepresentations, it provides a framework and media-oriented educational alternatives to advocate for these changes. Thus, this study attempts to deal with disability as a diversity issue rather than a social stigma while informing the audience of the "real life" aspects involved in the disabled experience. The hope is to provide material that can change cultural attitudes towards the disabled, and particularly disabled youth, in one of the most mainstream and important forms of communication, magazines.

Problem Definition and Research Objective

The influence of media images, the significance of the physical body in these portrayals, together with the lack of representation of physically disabled individuals provide grounds for an unique area of inquiry: the under representation of physically disabled youth in print media, and the social implications of marginalization in the lives of these individuals. While this study seeks to examine the visual messages print advertisements disseminate, it also attempts to address the cultural significance of these representations by obtaining the subjective responses of disabled youth to these ads.

As a result, the goals of this study are two fold: to identify the role of print advertisements in communicating social values, and to discuss how the exclusion of the physically disabled reflect these values. Thus, what is of interest is how the disabled individual's experience differentiates from what is portrayed and, given these answers, how successful print advertisements are at disseminating cultural realities.

Research Questions

These questions aim to examine the visual messages that are disseminated by print advertisement media and how these messages work in conjunction with the text to create meaning.

1. How do print advertisements communicate and/or represent the significance of achieving cultural norms of beauty and health? Particularly, what are the roles of the images portraying these ideals?

2. In contrast to these “perfections,” and particularly in representations of the “perfect body,” what is absent in the selling of products and experiences to youth in print media?

Specifically:

- If disabled bodies are absent, how do these absences construct cultural ideologies of what is acceptable and what is unacceptable?
- If disabled bodies are represented, how are “abnormal” bodies dealt with? How are they figured into the rhetoric of beauty?

CHAPTER 2:

Background and Literature Review on Disability

Defining Disability: Specific Use of Disability in the Context of the Study

Disability is a broad and controversial term that refers to many areas, whether physical, social or psychological. Often, attempts to define disability result in approaches geared towards a medical, legal or social standpoint, or distinctions between disability and impairment. The Encyclopedia of Disability and Rehabilitation describes disability as a condition that “impairs or imposes restrictions on a person’s ability to function at normal or expected levels of mental or physical activity” (Nagler, Wilson, 1995). The World Health Organization provides the International Classification of Disability, Function and Health and separates the definition of disability and impairment. Disability is defined as “the outcome or result of a complex relationship between an individual’s health condition and personal factors, and of the external factors that represent the circumstances in which the individual lives,” and impairment is a “[problem] in body function or structure such as significant deviation or loss” (2006). Definitions by both the WHO and the Encyclopedia imply that there is a limitation in the individual’s ability to participate in activities or bodily functions.

For the purposes of narrowing the scope of this investigation, but certainly not to discount other forms of disability such as cognitive, psychological and invisible disabilities such as illnesses, only physical or visibly identifiable impairments will be considered. Moreover, disability in the context of this study will be addressed in relation to *social* exclusion. Indeed, there are many barriers to access and inclusion, including

housing, education, employment and medical care. However, the ways an individual or group approaches and works with those with disabilities in each of these contexts is based on conceptions of disability that are culturally constructed and pervade the lines of ethnicity, class, age and gender. Lastly, while disability in this study is expressed and described with multiple terms, I address disability as a *minority* group, in a way that is similar to feminist, gender, multi ethnic or cross cultural discourse.

History of the Social Meaning of Disability: Resulting Social Treatment of Differently-abled Bodies

How has disability traditionally been viewed in the “Western” context? In the past, attitudes towards disabled have shifted from celebrity status such as “freak shows” (Thompson 1997, Bogdan, 1988), to institutionalization. The definition of a “deviant” body has changed through time, and continues to change. The body itself has long been used as a physical indicator of social status (Vlahogiannis 1998). Before the advent of commercial advertising, advertising came in the form of visual art reflecting social mores and religious propaganda. Disability in Western Europe was vested in the mythology of superstitions, evil omens and the indication of spiritual failure. In ancient Greece, bodies that were cut or burned were portrayed as shameful, a suggestion of the person’s internal disposition (Major, Eccleston 2005). Images of acceptable bodies from the past, much like current images of ideal bodies in the media, pointed towards upper class, healthy or socially-adjusted individuals (Albrecht 2006), while those with differences were stigmatized as social misfits in poverty, an embarrassment to society to be hidden away.

Disabilities were often seen as an impediment to functioning as a “whole,” and were paired with weakness of willpower and character (Vlahogiannis 1998). In addition to the myriad of stereotypes and cultural myths instilled in the “west,” disabled individuals were also viewed as unfit as a result of their supposed inability to fulfill imperatives of production and procreation.

Today, images of differing bodies are still presented as objects to be “normalized” or “cured,” functioning as stigmas that, according to Goffman, reduce the individual from “a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one” (1969). Even as recently as 1975, the “Ugly Law” in the United States dictated that physical disabilities were to be hidden from view (Whittington-Walsh 2006) to respect those who were not disabled, emphasizing the social and psychological consequences of being visibly impaired. Prejudices towards disability continue to this day and, in extreme cases, place stigmatized bodies into categories where individuals supposedly “lack” human characteristics. While bodily stigma can be distinguished from “low” status such as poverty, those who are classified by others as physically different are still situated in positions in which they do not have social power. These attitudes towards bodies are present in the ads that are analyzed for the study.

What the “West” Considers Beautiful

“We are only aware of our bodies through the medium of others” Ellis Cashmore 2004

This section raises some of the problems with standards when it comes to assessing “beauty,” as they come largely through the comparison of one’s self to other examples of physical desirability, and tend to change over time and context. To consider “beauty” or “normality,” it is necessary to determine social standards and values that are widely held by society, or prevalent social groups within that society. Although established concepts of beauty are affected by the styles, preferences, and media saturation of each era, these values are often generalized into common criteria promoted by medical, legal, religious, political and visual-based media that then become guidelines of behavior. The greater degree of ideological agreement between differing social groups, the more likely the public is to accept the prescribed standards of beauty (Beuf 1991). An example of this cultural consistency and its persuasive effect is reflected in the drive towards bodily “perfection” such as thinness—which, like physical disability, is measured by appearance. Medically, individuals are told body weight is an indication of health, and that overweight people are “impaired,” “incomplete” or could develop disease and illnesses. Able-bodied-ness, like thinness, is also supposedly a sign of physical attractiveness, according to various media sources: television, magazines, and movies collectively flaunt images of waif-like girls in the hopes of increasing profitability. Thinness, again, like being able-bodied, is viewed as a moral choice, and an indication of how a person cares for their body. In fact, an individual can be considered socially disabled by their physical appearance if he or she does not fit into this specific standard

of beauty. Controlling one's bodily appearance, be it through therapy, gyms, dentistry, diet, creams, or clothing, then, is a dominant trope of "Western" society. The body is treated as a personal project where individuals become both the subject and object of their critique, working towards "perfection," and those who do not at least attempt to fit into these standards are seen to have not taken the necessary social measure to "fit in" (Beuf 1991).

Standards of beauty can also change based on the availability of medical treatment and surgery. People can change their bodies through these treatments to meet accepted beauty ideals. These advancements have made physical differences less pervasive in the contemporary context, changing disabilities, whether acquired or not into a "condition" that "can be treated"—or "normalized" medically (Whittington-Walsh 2006). However, these treatments function as more than just a means to treat facial and bodily "imperfections," but also serve to reposition the standard of "normality." In societies where these treatments are not as readily available, physical differences do not draw as much attention (Beuf 1991).

When restorative surgery in the West arose following World War I, injured individuals could restore their "normal" appearance and function. Nowadays, utilitarian surgery has shifted to cosmetic procedures affordable only to the privileged. Plastic surgery to sculpt faces and liposuction to suck out fat serve to further redefine an "attractive" body. When these constructed images of able-bodied, smooth skinned, toned bodies, with sets of sparkling teeth and flowing hair are placed on display, the public is told this appearance is now the "norm" by which individuals, particularly youth, are to

follow. As Cashmore asserts, conceptions of beauty and ugliness “are shaped” by the media, and change through time (2004). Similarly, this study examines the media as an overtly present force in defining beauty and bodily “normality,” where the thin able-bodied females and tanned muscular able-bodied men become commercial commodities.

Social Rejection of Differently-abled Bodies

The following section outlines the array of socio-cultural responses to physical disability, and provides an explanation of how groups and individuals form and perpetuate these attitudes. It also touches on some of the outcomes of these types of marginalization, which I will later draw against actual experiences of differently-abled people in the context of stereotypes created by the media.

1. Psychological Responses to Differently-abled Bodies

The Presence of the Public Gaze

The reaction of today’s able-bodied people to disabilities is similar to historical accounts. Strangers, acquaintances and peers still stare at disabilities for prolonged lengths of time (Langer 1976). Often, this “attitudinal violence” (Galtung 1990) is accompanied by pointing or inappropriate comments in the presence of the individual. The public operates in response to the “undesirable” or “ugly” disability, revealing the social importance of possessing “beauty.” Many psychological studies show the significance of beauty in determining the treatment of the individual. When asked to

rate a suspect's guilt in constructed crime scenes, studies show that an attractive face is more likely to be seen as innocent, regardless of whether the subject committed the crime (Darby, Jeffers 1988). This was not only consistent in crime-based situations, but also within studies that involved teachers, peers, rape victims, and those who were ill. These people were all likely to be blamed for their condition if they were unattractive, but given help if they were perceived as attractive (Benson 1970, Best, Demmin, 1982). Attractiveness is linked to positive emotional responses as well as beliefs (Dion Miller 1970). Honesty, likeability, happiness, intelligence and trustworthiness are linked to "beauty"; dishonesty, depression and stupidity are linked to "ugliness." Furthermore, "physically attractive" individuals are perceived to have more fulfilling romantic and social lives, with an abundance of intimacy and affection. These studies are certainly consistent with the assumptions of advertisers, which are discussed in a later chapter. Sociologist Ann Beuf (1991) outlines physiological factors that determine how others perceive physical disabilities. How visible the disability is to others, how widespread the impairment is, and whether there is a medical alternative for the disability each affect the social desirability of the individual. These are factors that are instrumental in establishing the distance between what psychologists call the ingroup, the socially-desirable group, and the outgroup, the "social outcasts." In these specific examples it is the able-bodied who are considered desirable, while the disabled are marginalized.

Social Distancing from Disability

Another common response to physical differences is to establish a social distance where the able-bodied public avoids eye contact with the disabled, or refuses to be involved in the same social space, such as sitting at the same cafeteria table as a differently-abled individual. These actions generally result from the abled-bodied group's beliefs about stigmatized group (Beuf 1991). However, what is important to note is that the able-bodied individual may not harbor the beliefs that reflect their actions against the physically disabled. That is, the able-bodied may have nothing against differently-abled individuals, but may still exclude the differently-abled from their inner social circles.

Objectification: Structural and Cultural Violence Towards Disability

Objectification, where individuals are treated as inanimate objects rather than as separate people, is another consequence of visually present disabilities. Such treatment devalues individuals and places emphasis on the disability rather than the ability and individual characteristics of the person (Galtung 1990). As in the past, the able-bodied continue to attribute physical appearance to disabled individuals' interior state (Bordo 1996). Physical differences have been, and continue to be, associated with mental illness or mental incapacity. Often, those who have different appearances are spoken to in such a manner that reflects this. Operating under the assumption that the individual is unable to respond of his or her own accord, the public often address the individual's companion, treating the physically disabled as if they were invisible, or an object. An interviewee from the study outlines her

experience with objectification resulting from what she believes are media portrayals:

“When you go out for dinner, and [you give] the able-bodied person the bill [instead of the disabled person], but the disabled person may want to take it.”

2. Social Formations Determining the Inclusion/Exclusion of Disability

This section addresses the social psychology of inclusion/exclusion (Abrams, Hogg, Marques 2005), the levels of exclusion, the types of exclusion, and the dynamics of exclusion within relationships.

Individual Exclusion in a Social Context

Individuals become outsiders when they do not fit the characteristics of the more prevalent ingroup. As a result, they are usually subjected to social rejection or teasing, and relegated to the less desirable (by the standards of the dominant group) outgroup. Within the “Western” context, there is a narrow view of what is considered “acceptable.” While the media provides an exaggeration and polarization of what is acceptable, the consequences of not at least *attempting* to meet the dominant social cultural standards independent of the media can result in discrimination. Further stigmas that can result in individual exclusion are physical assistive devices such as wheelchairs and canes, which have become cultural symbols of weakness. As such, they influence how the able-bodied perceive and exclude the disabled. While impressions are created by individuals to “assist them in understanding” another’s motives for interaction (Kaiser 1997), impressions based on misunderstood symbols again serve to fulfill stereotypes of social ineptitude. Once more, it is assumed that there is a link between the interior identity and

personality of the wearer or user of the accessibility devices. The public also takes into account the user's gait or "bodily schema" (Schilder 1935) as a result of the use of these devices, and utilizes them as a cue to assign disabled individuals with negative social traits. Each of these is instrumental in the exclusion of the differently-abled from the public and social context.

Group Exclusion in a Social Context

People tend to group together based on common traits, and exclude individuals based on traits different to the self. Stereotyping is the human means of categorizing the world into manageable components of information. Psychologists acknowledge that, in interacting with others, people are selective as to whom they want to develop relationships with, as spending time with one person prevents the opportunity of spending time with others (Major, Eccleston 2005). Interpersonal attachments are necessary to form a sense of security, safety and support, and result in a type of equilibrium where psychological needs are met. As an extension of individual values, feelings of similarity and closeness are harbored through group interaction, and further differences between the group and those not belonging are accentuated. Comparing "downwards" against groups different from your own serves to enhance a positive view of the self as well as making one more positive and confident of his or her own group. This comparison also serves to ease any distress and discomfort experienced by the non-stigmatized individual.

This psychological theory can be applied to representations of disability in the media, in that there is a lack of representation, and those representations that *do* exist often serve to contrast the able-bodied and build the myth of disability as a tragedy. As

the more dominant cultural group (in numbers), the able-bodied have turned to the media to propagate their ideology, thus placing the disabled into the outgroup.

Outcomes of Social Exclusion

Baumeister and Leary (1995) assert that being with other people and interacting socially is a human need and one of the strongest human motivators. To be excluded from such a process can have profoundly negative psychological effects. The outcomes of exclusion can range from aggression towards innocent parties, to risky and self-defeating behavior, withdrawal, depression, overcompensation and “defensive denial of emotion” (Abrams, Hogg, Marques 2005). Exclusion can also result in feelings of rejection, loneliness and low self-esteem. Studies by the same psychologists find that those who are excluded can become more antisocial, as they do not feel the need to be prosocial. Coping strategies for exclusion based on physical stigma can be “attributing the exclusion to prejudice rather than personal characteristic” (Major, Eccleston 2005). Based on these facts, it becomes important to identify and resolve the stereotypes that are prevalent within the media by addressing the subjective effects of these inaccurate portrayals and reconsidering the concept of “beauty.” The interviews, found in the later chapters, describe outcomes of social marginalization.

CHAPTER 3:

Background and Literature Review on Advertising

Part 1: A Focus on the Reception Side

What is Advertising?

Advertising has long been a substantial force in sociological interaction, providing guidelines for acceptable human behavior and creating both individual and collective roles for human interaction and cultural norms. It has shifted from the utilitarian function of the past, where products were only purchased out of need, to a function that has become driven by glamour, appearance and desire. The task of advertising is to transmit messages to influence the viewer into taking action and consuming commodity and non-commodity based material (Fowles 1996), and to buy into a lifestyle, image or solution, rather than simply a product. Therefore, it is advertising's intention to alter the attitudes of the audience to increase the audience's consumptive potential, to crave "the things we haven't got" (Cashmore 2006), and to create new demands from the consumer. Of course, these "things" include the appearance-centered ideals that accentuate the advertised product, appearances that seem to enforce a sense of individualism, and an external means to define success. In fact, the influence of advertising on human behavior functions as a form of social control, working to reinforce values, even "creating values and norms" (Singer 1994). Ample psychological studies and textual analyses have examined effects of print advertisement, while addressing their effects in constructing idyllic identities for both the product and the audience. Barthes posits that advertisements are constantly in a live dialogue with the

audience, serving to “[unsettle] the reader's historical, cultural, psychological assumptions” (1975). Further studies also demonstrate that ads are capable of constructing ideals of health and beauty, whether realistic or not, by forming an intimacy with the readers (Kress Van Leeuwen 1993, Silverstone 1999, Culler 1975). Adorno and Horkheimer suggest that mass culture not only produces needs but controls them, with ads functioning as a “[representation of] social power” (1993) to regulate the status quo. Particularly, social groups and their representation in advertisements (Hall 1997) are placed in relation to the importance of ads in reflecting social values of what is acceptable and who is appropriate to associate with (Phillips 2001).

Of the many means of advertising, television, Web, live campaigns and promotions, and radio, the focus of this particular study is print advertising. While I do acknowledge the importance of consumption in the drive for ad production, it is the social messages I am largely concerned with in my analysis.

What is print advertising? Simply stated, it is still images in ads that appear in magazines, newspapers, catalogs, billboards, posters, subways, bus stops, and any printed surface. This study addresses magazines, specifically, where the spot is usually brief, rarely more than a one to two page spread, making its presentation and message very particular. Accordingly, the image must be focused and bear a greater impact than a full length television commercial. The style of presentation is carefully construed and refined on digital computer-based technology. The work creates an image-reality link, while placing importance on the audience's interpretation. There is a certain set of signs assumed in visual and media literacy that serves as a silent understanding between the

text producer and the audience. For example, beautiful, thin women are associated with social acceptance and desirability. Numerous and more specific examples can be found in Chapter 4. Effective communication, which is what ads strive for, results in products that are meant to be transparent or easily interpreted (with the least effort involved) by the individual receiving the message. As semiologists Kress and Van Leeuwen put it, representation “requires that the sign-makers choose...forms which they see as most apt and plausible in the given context...for the expression of what they have in mind” (1995). As such, the means of production are carefully selected to express their specific message.

Absence of Disability in Advertising

Numerous disability studies, whether funded by the government or not, have resulted in statistics that point towards the advocacy of the disabled as full citizens (Government of Canada 2004, Crawford 2004). While there is a trend where the *technology* related aspects of physical accessibility are emphasized, few studies focus on the *social* acceptance of physically disabled individuals (Finkelstein, 1980). However, it is the social aspect that determines the cultural acceptance of disability, and this study attempts to address the gap. Existing studies on disability function as rhetoric for inducing social political changes in the form of government policy, accessibility and social inclusion (Bryan 2002, Butler and Parr 1999, Stiker 1999, Waldschmidt 2005) but disregard the role of the mass media in inducing social changes.

As Beuf argues, it is the context of the disability and stigma that determine the severity of exclusion (1991) and one thing that this study makes clear is that it is indeed the context that the media produces—the lack of consideration of diversity—that determines this exclusion. Despite statistics about disability available from the United

Nations Statistics Division (2006) that say approximately one in every five people in the world has a disability, representation within print advertising media has not reflected such proportions. Analyses of advertisements consider inequalities in the representation of race, gender, sexual orientation and class, whereas work concerning the disabled has at best been a “hit and miss affair” (Obstacles 1981). Particularly, the visual aspect of commercial-based media displays an overall absence of physical disability and illness in favor of images of beauty and “perfection.”

How has the media created, changed or propagated the views of disability in Western society? Further still, what is the idealized image of “people in a particular social category?” (O’Barr 1994). Disability representations in print advertising can be split significantly between those of charity ads, where media is produced specifically for disability organizations such as Easter Seals and the Multiple Sclerosis Society, and commercial ads, whose primary objectives are to sell products. The former focuses on political agendas, potentially involving government agencies, associations and societies and does not have an immediate money-making agenda (but still bend towards extracting funds for philanthropic causes), while the latter ordinarily involves a commodity or service based agenda, primarily commercial in nature. This study deals exclusively with those that are commercial-based.

It is the deliberate nature of the construction of a commercial ad that places a greater significance on the absence of asymmetrical bodies, bodies with missing limbs, or curvaceous bodies (to name a few). David Hevey, a commercial photographer specifically for disability, notes that when the disabled *are* addressed in commercial based print advertisement it is often in an exaggerated statement marked by stark imagery

and visual cues such as wheelchairs, canes and leg braces. The media produces a social barrier against the differently-abled by preventing the means for elevating the social status of these individuals.

As psychologists Major and Eccleston (2005) state, “there is a general agreement within a culture that certain types of people should be excluded,” and among these are people with disabilities. Exclusion, they conclude, is a result of this culturally constructed social identity and not individual identities. Within the media, there is a presumption that this exclusion, keeping disability from the public eye, is acceptable. This illusion can be attributed to an attempt at creating a “cultural worldview,” such as through advertising, where the individual can believe that beautiful and “perfect” bodies can result in happiness and a sense of immortality.

Advertisers are more likely to display what people want to see rather than how things actually are. This is reflected in the magazines used in the study. In TeenVogue, for example, arrays of smiling able-bodied women bounce about, scantily clad and carefree, while emphasizing the myth of perfection. Similarly, in Maxim, a large breasted woman with plump and shiny lips beckons the male reader with positive social relationships and heterosexual fulfillment by simply purchasing their product. As an interviewee stated, “[Ads] just perpetuate the systemic chatter that people hear—it makes it okay for them to judge.” The media’s responsibility in producing these fantasies and alternately producing negative stereotypes is magnified by the attitudinal barriers they serve to propagate between what is touted as culturally acceptable and culturally revolting.

The Role of Advertising in Constructing Standards of Acceptable/Unacceptable Behavior and Appearance

The limited studies that have been done bridging the disability-media gap indicate that “depictions of disability have remained largely unchanged since the 1920’s” and that coverage of differences have been portrayed in prejudiced and pity driven means (Riley 2005). There is a large degree of polarization in the representation of disabled individuals in advertising, where on the one hand there is a notable absence in mainstream commercial based pictures, but on the other hand, where charity ads are involved, there is a “hyper presence” (Hevey 1992). Past content analyses have shown that minority groups members are “rarely seen” (Singer 1994), and, when they *are* present, they are typically portrayed in a negative or stereotypical manner. These are addressed in more detail later in this section. It is important to note that these past studies referred primarily to women, elderly and ethnic minorities in their definition of “minorities” (Aronoff 1974, Berelson and Salter 1946). However, it is precisely the social acceptance of physical difference—and the lack of it within public discourse—that is touted by numerous disabled individuals as the leading step towards political change (Zola 1982, Wendell 1996, Davis 1995, Thomson 1997).

Studies affirm that the media constructs exaggerated dichotomies of acceptable values (Drotner 2001), where ideal images are presented as an opportunity to “modify [our bodies] accordingly” (Cashmore 2004). The images in ads function as a standard for individuals to decide “what is and isn’t” beautiful (Cashmore 2004). Beauty is represented as an ideal synonymous with social acceptance while “normality” and

“abnormal” bodies are placed in accordance with social rejection (Vlahogiannis, 1998). As a result, various analyses of prevalent themes in advertisement bend towards producing, achieving and maintaining an ideal body. A fear of disabled bodies and their “inability” to fit in with “normal” bodies has meant a lack of consideration of the disabled by companies as viable consumers and, consequently, an absence of these bodies (Hahn 1987) in print media. It is the images of health and beauty in the media that transmit ideals of desire, while disability is associated with fear (Radley, 2002). Thus, it is important to consider the physical body and the role of ads in offering, claiming and challenging a reader’s perception of “normality” through the visual portrayals of body and health.

Since print ads must present an influential message involving both image and text within a page or two page spread, it is often the site of visual “shorthand” (Scott 1978) resulting in intentional generalization and stereotyping on the part of ad producers. The ensuing responses to the ads, then, also operate on social “myths” stemming from the generalizations—ones that are present in popular literature and folklore such as children’s stories.

Disability Stereotypes in Advertising and Problems They Raise

To date, there have only been a few significant commercial-based advertising campaigns (ones that exclude institutional or charity based ads) that have included the disabled in North America (Cavanagh 2005). The integration of physical disability into commercial advertising began in television in the 1980s, when Levi’s jeans became one of the first companies to show an individual using a wheelchair. This campaign, like

subsequent ones in the same decade such as McDonald's and a groundbreaking set of print ads by Target in 1991, were effective and received positive responses (Haller 2001). However, disability was still presented as an affliction to be "normalized" or cured as opposed to being presented through the social model of disability, which endorses acceptance of diversity over tolerance or elimination of differences.

In 2004, Dove skincare released an international campaign to represent "real beauty" using women differing in size, ethnic backgrounds and age to show the beauty of diversity. While this campaign enjoyed a great amount of success in portraying "real" bodies, and indeed, a large amount of diversity, physical disability was not represented at all. As one of the women interviewed for this thesis stated, "It's like people with disabilities don't really care what they look like—or at least that's the assumption across the media. I personally care about what I look like all the time, or else I wouldn't be eating salad all the time!"

Ad images tend to portray disability as consequences, tragedies or downfalls (Phillips 2001) or place an extremely present marker of disability such as a wheelchair to emphasize the marginalization (Haller 2001). Further stereotypes include the physically disabled as "freaks of nature, objects of pity, and burdens to society" (Phillips 2001), where bodies are compared to standards or norms. In his study of the portrayals of visible minorities in advertising and the resulting effects, Benjamin Singer identifies three problems that can be directly applied to representations of physical disability:

1. Minorities are associated with "products thought to represent alleged physical problems" (1994). This is certainly true of portrayals of individuals with

disabilities, where their presence only indicates the advertising of a specific product such as a piece of assistive or rehabilitative equipment. Outside this context, there are few examples of physical disabilities represented as part of a diverse population. Rather, the disabilities are emphasized when they are present, and invisible or not considered at all in most other cases.

2. Minorities “are portrayed as caricatures” (1994). This is consistent with the emphasis of the disability when it is present. For example, with individuals who use wheelchairs, the chair itself becomes the identifying factor in the person, rather than any specific personality trait. Any “accomplishment” that is represented is ordinarily a feat of “overcoming” the disability, rather than the individual being considered on equal grounds as other differently-abled individuals.
3. Minorities are shown as “unimportant people without individuality” (1994). Since minorities are represented on the basis of stereotypes, there is a limited range in the portrayal of physical disability, despite the range of abilities. For example, while the wheelchair is the most commonly portrayed disability, it only comprises a small percentage of visually indicative (for the purposes of the visual impact of print advertisements) physical disabilities. Depictions of disabled individuals as having an identity only after having accomplished something or “overcome” a barrier, as previously stated, also serves to usurp them of an individual identity.

As stated previously, there have been two distinct forms of advertising that exemplify Singer's examples. Charity based advertising, reflecting a "hyper-presence" of disability imagery (Hevey 1992), has constructed those with physical disabilities as "pity" cases, associating them with altruism and good will towards the "weak." These have historically dominated the advertising milieu. Conversely, commercial based advertising reflects a severe under representation of disability imagery, even in contrast to other groups of difference such as racial minority, gender, class, age. Ads that do exist have had a tendency to represent the "least" physically disabled individuals while enforcing the medical model of disability.

In anthropologist William O'Barr's analysis of "otherness" in advertising, he studies problems of representation that are common in cultural minority groups. However, it is interesting to see how these can directly apply to disability. He postulates that the "other" can be construed as a threat, where there is fear of the unknown. Disabled individuals are often constructed as "dangerous" or "mentally ill" as a result of what was mentioned earlier: people's tendency to attribute external appearance to the internal states. Often, there is an "us and them" (O'Barr 1994) mentality, where a space is created between the mainstream audience and the "other." There is also the depiction of the "other" as a needy "child" (O'Barr 1994)—depictions that can be applied directly to not only charity based advertising but also commercial advertising. These cases position the reader as superior, paternalistic, capable of caring, and the disabled individual as needy, child-like, requiring assistance from friends, relief, or even donations. Where the "other" is thought of as a market—which is rarely, in the case of disability—similarities are emphasized between the able-bodied and disabled. However,

when disability is not considered a market—which is commonly the case, as exemplified in the study—differences are emphasized and thus they are avoided.

Disability has been presented as a “melodramatic device...[associated] with malevolence” (Longmore 1987), negatively affecting both the disabled person and the able-bodied person. Psychologist Willie Bryan classifies the stereotypes into four categories: the demonic cripple, the charity cripple, the realistic cripple, and the survivor cripple (2002). In each of these, he cites the media’s emphasis on the disability as the main problem in social exclusion. These can be elaborated further, where the amplified stereotypes function as moulds to fit, and “angry misfits or poignant heroes” are paired with “love and redemption” (Riley 2005) to sell products. While rare in commercial advertising, when they *are* present, these portrayals become offensive and patronizing to individuals with a disability as they focus solely on the disability rather than considering it as a factor of diversity. Furthermore, disability is often presented as a consequence of poor choices and neglect, becoming the tragedy and fear of an able-bodied individual, and serving to perpetuate the gap between able-bodied and differently-abled: by being neglectful of your surroundings, you can lose fingers or become scarred (Government of Canada 2005); by neglecting to take care of your body you can acquire debilitating illnesses.

While these examples exist outside of the commercial context, they still serve to induce a fear of disability based heavily on stereotypes, while constructing the bodily differences as aspects that can be controlled in each case as opposed to only some cases. The result is these perceptions spill into the minds of the discerning public and the cycle of marginalization is rejuvenated, regardless of the advertisement’s agenda. For the

purpose of this study, the focus is primarily on commercial print texts. However, the presence of other means of media dissemination cannot be disregarded in the analysis, as the connotations between different intentions—as in charity, government or commercial—remain strikingly similar.

On one end of the spectrum, bodies that adhere to certain ideals of “normality” are extensively represented, while on the other end, those that induce fear, disgust and shock are erased. The producers of the images serve not only to provide guidelines for “correct” and “incorrect” standards of behavior and physical appearance, but also to transmit ideologies of this binary and remove inequalities arising from differently-abled bodies. While bodies themselves prove to be diverse, modern visual culture does not accurately represent these variations, choosing to reflect, instead, an average “status quo” (Thomson 1996).

Youth Reception of Advertising

Research on teens shows that they are in fact most vulnerable to peer and media pressure, the pop culture displayed in the ads are effective as a means for socializing young people (Berger 2004). Young people are the most powerful consumer group, developing brand loyalties that last well into their lives (Kilbourne 1999). While research on ad strategies specifically targeting teens is scarce, nonconformity advertising, where teens are encouraged to be “original” and “unique” has proven to be an effective ad strategy towards teens. Using that strategy, ads play on youth’s anxieties of gender specific behavior and “appropriate” bodily appearance by focusing specifically on sexuality, “self-presentation” and “physical display” (Kaiser, Cook 2004). By creating

desire for products, lifestyles and beautiful bodies, and feeding young adult desires and needs, marketing “turns teens into adults” (Quart 2003). However, campaigns can also be used to address prevalent social issues such as reducing smoking and teen pregnancy (Berger 2004, Keillor, Parker, Schaefer 1996)—or in this case, raising disability awareness. In fact, teens respond most overtly to their peers in both cases, whether commercial or social, making teenage spokespersons in ads more effective.

Surprisingly, teens prove that they are particularly resistant and skeptical towards commercial ads, thinking on their feet, recognizing the motives of the advertisers, and becoming headstrong in resisting their messages (Mangleburg and Bristol 1998).

The Body and the “Normal/Abnormal” Dichotomy in Advertising

Many brands and images seek to target youth (Klein 1999), and more specifically youth body image, making the under representation of disability and illness significant in constructing personal and social youth identity. In this context, there is a narrow concept of what is considered an acceptable body. In advertising, ideals of health and “normality” are presented, and serve to underscore the differences between abled and non-abled bodies. The body is a site of struggle.

Semioticians claim the visual aspects of print ads offer a pictorial reflection of “truth” (Chandler 1994). It is this truth, particularly in the context of the body, that is important. Both disability and feminist studies overlap, pointing towards the body as a social indicator of the mental state of the individual (Crandall 1994, Bordo 1993), a reflection of cultural position, a place of investment and cultural capital (Kaiser, Cook 2004), a site of politicization and control (Foucault 1979), and a vehicle for approval.

According to sociologist Brian Turner, it is “presenting, monitoring and interpreting [bodies]” (1992) successfully that becomes both the product and catalyst of social life. Many of these standards are shaped and monitored through the media, dictating a specific cultural ideology for acceptable appearance. The necessary conduits to arrive at these ideals are typically through socially approved activities such as fashion, diet, or exercise. As a dissemination of information to youth, the media teaches society the ideal body, constructing it as a “receptor of social meaning and a symbol of society” (Douglas 1970). These theories go even further by treating the body not only as a representation of values, but also as an organism with “potentiality” (Turner 1992). What images in commercial print media fail to take into account, however, is the fluidity of a changing body. An able body can become impaired, an impaired body can be treated, yet consumers stay transfixed on extreme ideals.

Youth targeted advertising, particularly in magazines, often accentuates the role the face plays in determining social acceptance, associating attractiveness with positive social and professional prospects. Psychological studies have found that an “unattractive” face can operate as a “severe social handicap” (Bull and Rumsey 1988). Studies confirm that people with visually present deviations in their bodies are considered socially inferior, making it difficult for them to form or join social groups (Clifford 1973 Strauss 1980). Even adults who are asked to rate physical characteristics as an indicator of character tend to give those who have “negative” traits “abnormal” features (Kleck and Strenta 1985). Studies support that attractive individuals are more likely to sell, influence and elicit positive treatment from others. Viewers assume they possess positive

characteristics that reflect in “important [exchanges of] power” (Rudd Lennon 1999), such as those between the viewer and the advertisement. It is then not only the advertisement itself that is important, but also how the advertisement interacts with the consumer. This is where the interviews with disabled consumers become significant.

Social Identity, Self-Identity and the Body

To understand the absence of disability in advertising, we must examine the link between social identity, the body, and self identity. Studies concerning subjectivities and the body claim the body functions “as a construct for understanding human experience” (Cooley 1994) and a “lived experience” (Turner 1992) itself. Anthropologist Mary Douglas emphasizes the difference between how a physical body is perceived—in this case by able-bodied magazine producers—to how a body is experienced. There is an overall lack in the body of research concerning attitudes and responses to those with visually present disabilities, but many past studies affirm that upon being seen, they have been met with “[pity, subordination and ignoring]” (Barker 1948, Goffman, 1963, Wright 1960). Disability studies figure heavily in narratives and experiences of living with impairment, the rhetorical power of these writings grounded in the authority of the writer, usually a disabled person. It is important to link these experiences to both the reality of media saturation and the role of the media in producing dominant and subordinate cultural meaning.

Part 2: A Focus on the Production Side

Advertising and Brand Production: From Conception to Final Product

It is impossible to consider the effects of advertisements without recognizing some of the economic reasons for their structure, especially in youth magazines. To understand why disability is so under represented, it is important to learn what motivates media to produce these advertisements.

Audience consumption demographics drive the media business. In the US, \$300 billion is spent on advertising a year (Farnall 2006). Of this, \$29 billion promotes the beauty industry, as beauty “aspires to be all things” (Gavenas 2002). Brand advertising itself has specific targets (Hall 2002). Branding aims to create a “sense of anticipation” of an experience, and wherever possible, to “enhance the sensory experience” of consumers. As a result, ads are often highly edited, showing the texture and shape of the body portrayed, and exaggerating the ideals of “perfection.” The company also aims to “emphasize the sense of trust and satisfaction” with the brand, and thus link it to positive imagery. Lastly, the brand must be memorable, so that the consumer purchases the product or service and remembers the characteristics of the brand itself. How is this linked to bodily portrayals? These aspects are vital in the construction of a brand’s image. The brand wants to be associated with beauty and social desirability. Thus, where bodies are used, they must represent brand values and ultimately neglect values perceived as negative, such as differently-abled bodies.

The actual production of advertising is an involved process. Advertising agencies purchase the space for print advertisement in various publications. These ads are honed

towards the target demographic, lifestyles and values of a particular group. In the study in this paper, the ads discussed target youth around the ages of 18-35. The goals of the advertisements are to motivate the consumer to desire and purchase the product. The departments within the agency can be broken down into human resources, accounting, client management services, production and management. The agency works to generate profit, the creative production team and the account sales team strive to create print ads for the client, and much of the effort is devoted to entertaining the needs of all the parties involved in production, sales, and consuming the media. The account executives in the agency are responsible for selling accounts (ie, their ad production services) to clients, who hire the agency to create and place the advertising in an appropriate publication. It is the goal of the agency to increase the clients' sales through the ads by a combined means of research and creativity. The creative department in an agency consists of creative directors, art directors, copywriters and graphic designers who consider research into the effectiveness of past campaigns and the target consumer, and create new messages to tempt the consumer. These ads are then placed in billboards, magazines, newspapers, and other outlets they believe will provide the most exposure, response, and profit for the client. In the case of magazines, advertisers take into account the psychological relationship between brands and magazine ads: that there are similar values between advertiser and reader.

A few more factors are considered by the ad's producers, according to Jib Fowles, a Media Studies professor at the University of Houston. The product in contrast to its appeal is a large issue, as there is no guarantee that the appeal of the advertisement will

translate to the product's appeal. That is, an ad may be memorable and creative, but if the consumer does not remember the product, then the advertisement campaign fails. Furthermore, delivering the brand to the target audience does not necessarily mean that it hits the audience. There is a clear divide between exposure to advertising and absorption of the actual message (Kusumoto 2002). However, it is important to note that lack of transferability between the appeal of, say, beauty and bodily "perfection" and the product, does not necessarily halt the transfer of cultural values, ideals and bodily messages, regardless of the product's forgettable nature. Another specific factor ad producers take into account is the balance between images and text. As we have moved away from illustration and towards photography as a means of advertising in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, the weight of communication has likewise moved from textual towards the visual. As a result, the emphasis on *appearances* has become significant in the selling of a product. The ad's producers also take into account intertextual relationships, because they understand their ad may only have meaning in relation to another ad put out by the same client, or in contrast to competing products. There is a strain to make the product stand out from competitors, be it through stylistic or image choices. Finally, the producers attempt to appeal to two areas of the human mind: the individual as "a social creature" and the individual as "housing basic instincts, impulses, drives and needs" (Fowles 1996).

Why is Disability Excluded?

Excluding disabilities is often an act of precaution committed by all involved.

Advertising Age identifies three main reasons why advertisers avoid incorporating

disabilities in advertising (Vogel 2006). The first is that people are “generally uncomfortable with disabilities.” It is not something people are fully familiar with, and, as a result, disabilities are constructed as state of abnormality and “otherness” from which people attempt to distance themselves. Secondly, like many minority groups, the special needs community has come to be seen as a “niche,” where advertising for disabilities only becomes applicable for disability specific products. Finally, there is the constant fear and pressure that the ads would be done “wrong,” or politically incorrect. This fear of offending the audience could, according to ad producers, result in lost sales.

However, in excluding the percentage of people who *do* have disabilities, advertisers also distance themselves from millions of young people with disabilities. According to the US Census Bureau, about 20 percent of the US population has a disability (Farnall 2006). Statistics Canada states that 12-15 percent of the Canadian population (PALS 2001, 2006) has a disability, the heaviest distribution being in the physical disability category. Thus, there is a large and existing market to access, including both disability and non-disability specific products. The lack of consideration for disability also assumes that caregivers make the primary spending decisions, or that disabled individuals do not have money. This is reflective of the objectification of disabled people and the assumption that disabled individuals have no sovereignty over their own needs.

Some arguments also encompass the fear that realistic portrayals of disabled people may contrast established standards of beauty and hurt sales. This is based on a notion that “like [looking individuals] can sell to like [looking individuals]” (Singer 1983). Conversely, disability has more traditionally been part of “cause marketing”

where the branding strategy relies on consumers identifying themselves with not only similar individuals, but also a political cause, to “push the product” (Riley 2005). As a result, approaches that were used in charity advertising have been employed in commercial agendas. However, this approach does not take into account the inclusion of disability as a diversity issue rather than simply a social political one. The potential of “alienating majority markets” (Singer 1994) may also appear unappealing to those who depend on the majority market, the large percentage of able-bodied youth with disposable incomes.

Consequences of Excluding Disability from the Bracket of "Traditional Consumers"

On the surface, the exclusion of disability from mainstream advertising may seem to have numerous advantages to ad producers, but there are consequences that affect the *producers* negatively. There is a constant attempt to sell more products, even at the expense of excluding minorities. However, while studies show the role of market penetration and consumer loyalty through advertising, they conclude that a larger market must be secured to ensure both brand health and product loyalty. Increased penetration, such as the inclusion of disability, can drive brand growth, and bring new customers to the brand (Baldinger, Blair, Echambadi 2002) to achieve increased sales. Time, money and effort in executing marketing strategies such as advertising, are typically put forward to the most “valuable consumers,” but disregard the so-called “less valuable”—or unconventional—consumers (Anscheutz 2002), such as those with a physical disability. Even some advertisers admit that it is the “next consumer the brand adds [that] will be its

most valuable,” and that by limiting the target market and not considering diversity, the company reduces itself to a “narrow exclusive” focus that results in stagnation and decline (Anscheutz 2002). In this case, why is there a gross disregard for disability when advertising? There is still a perception that physical disabilities are unattractive and unappealing, and that physical disabilities are unable to sell products.

CHAPTER 4:

My Study

Choice of Method

I chose a qualitative approach because I accept mathematics psychologist Anatol Rapoport's position that knowledge must be obtained by achieving a middle ground between theoretical/methodological "realist" perception and the human element involved (Littlejohn, Foss 2005). Rapoport identifies the difference between quantifiable "hard" data and qualitative "soft" data, but takes an approach that accounts for *both* types of data. He asserts that "subjective beliefs are certainly data relevant to human behavioral science and as such are objective facts" (1973). The subjective beliefs of my informants, then, can be assessed as objective truths that serve to substantiate my analysis. However, Rapoport also says "the road to self-knowledge bypasses the well-beaten path of conventional scientific inquiry, solidly based on publicly verifiable facts, on statistical inference"(1973). Instead, he suggests both must be taken into account, and that "both the word 'human' and the word 'science'" (1973) must remain relevant in any inquiry. As such, this study is meant to examine trends in advertising media, and show how these trends communicate socio-cultural values of beauty. It identifies the factors that lead to these messages, and the results of the messages. While the study does not produce quantitative numbers in terms of statistical evidence, it produces verifiable facts through identifying patterns in analysis, and is meant to reveal truths of both media dissemination and truths of dominating ideologies. The inquiry draws on a social-constructionist

methodology where individuals' realities are produced through social and cultural interactions in a "Western" context.

In my initial analysis of the advertisements under study, I use semiotics, the study of signs, to distinguish specific visual and textual signifiers within the advertisements themselves and to evaluate their ability to generate and transfer meaning to the reader. The semiotic mode plays "a dominant role in public communication" (Kress and Van Leeuwen 1995) and is dictated by rules that are passed through "social sanctions," education, institutions (Foucault 1979) or, in this case, the media. Excessive representation of certain groups in the media can reflect structures of power and dominance, while a lack of presence suggests particular groups are less powerful or influential. As such, I consider who or what is represented or not represented, and the possible values associated with the representations or their lack thereof. The potential interpretation or "hidden meaning" (Kress and Van Leeuwen 1995) of these messages, then, is where my interest lies.

Traditional semiotics, developed by Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, involved the analysis of linguistics and sign systems. Particularly, the making of signs and how they are understood by the sign receiver are of interest to a semiotician (Saussure 1983). The more contemporary use of semiotics involves the analysis of situational contexts and cultural practices that, in this case, result from media interpretation. My concern is largely with the meanings generated by the ads and how they "move out from the page...to shape and lend significance to our experience or reality" (Bignell 1997). As a result of the visual nature of my study, I utilize a branch of semiotics loosely termed visual semiotics (Barthes 1977, Kress, Van Leeuwen 1996) to

interpret the messages communicated in advertising. I emphasize the importance of audience-advertisement interaction and the impact of the image, regardless of its artistic or realistic (photographic) form.

Lastly, I acknowledge that my social position, my able-bodied-ness, race, class and gender have an effect on my readings of the ads. I realize that I bring prior knowledge to my analysis and that this knowledge may also affect my interpretations. The interviews are meant to provide a differently-abled viewpoint to the analysis and to shed light on specific details regarding socio-cultural attitudes involving disability—ones that move beyond those that are depicted or absent from print magazine advertising. The aim is to balance the interviewees' points of views with my analysis, taking into account the differing context of reception.. Context, according to Sebeok is “often the crucial factor in resolving the significance of a message” (1985). Thus, the differing contexts of individuals who have experienced differing means of able-bodied-ness are considered. A more contemporary model used to determine the effectiveness of advertising takes into account psychological components of how consumers perceive, experience, and remember advertising (Hall 2002). The analysis of subjective experiences of individuals with physical disabilities follows a psychological approach similar to this model, where the individuals' processing of experiences is understood as an “interpretation of reality”(Hall 2002), or in this case a social reality.

Sample and Time Frame

Both the demographic and the medium are specifically defined. My study focuses on youth and youth representations in print advertising, particularly those in four youth targeted magazines from 2004-2006. Two are targeted towards a female demographic, two towards a male demographic. The magazines I chose are four months' worth of 18-25 year old female-targeted magazines TeenVogue and Seventeen, and four months' worth for 18-35 year old male targeted magazines Maxim and FHM. All of the magazines chosen had similar content, focusing on lifestyle, fashion, grooming, trends in popular culture and music, relationships and interviews with celebrities. Four months within a two year range was enough time, given the scope and resources of the study, to locate definite patterns, but not so much so that the research became excessively repetitive—as most magazines I found reused advertisements from month to month.

To recruit the individuals for my Ryerson Ethics Board approved interviews, I distributed a flyer advertising the study and its purpose to the student group RyeAccess, as well as a separate disability group at Ryerson, the Access Centre (Please see Appendix III). It should be emphasized here that the Access Centre's purpose is to provide academic support and services for students with disabilities, while RyeAccess is a student run advocacy group providing peer support for students at the University. Thus, advertising through both groups, it was possible to reach two different audiences, as a student who used one service may not have used the other.

My response pool initially consisted of ten individuals, who, through the course of the months I ran the study (from January until June) replied with great interest. Appendix

IV, the questionnaire, represented the questions that were asked to filter the potential interviewees towards an approximately equal male and female youth demographic who read or have read magazines. Upon the individuals' response to my study, I sent them the consent form (see Appendix VI), which outlined, according to the approval of the ethics board, the procedures, confidentiality, potential risks and discomforts of the study, and potential benefits. The potential interviewees' reading the consent form narrowed down the pool further into a total of six differently-abled student participants, three male and three female. Due to travel and timing restrictions, I interviewed four individuals in person, and two by email and telephone.

At the interviews themselves, I reiterated the areas outlined in the consent form to the individuals in person, and had them sign in agreement. I had copies of advertising images which I gave the interviewees the option to respond to. These images are presented throughout the analysis section of the study. A copy of the interview questions that were used can also be found in Appendix V. Lastly, for detailed transcripts of the interviews, please refer to Appendix VII.

Inclusion Criteria

For the purposes of narrowing the analysis, the ads selected in each magazine were based on specific criteria. The following factors determined the selection.

- Advertisements relating directly to the physical body.
 - Actual images showing a body or bodies.
 - Images making a reference towards bodies without showing them.
- Full-page ads, either one or two-page spreads.

Half-page ads were excluded because they often focused primarily on the product, without including a social context for the product. In addition, they were not highly detailed or refined in their portrayal, often featuring words rather than images, and were thus not considered. Furthermore, ads by the same company in the same magazine used the same themes and ideologies regarding the branding and the lifestyle and were usually selling the same product. Thus, they were considered once, and not subsequently, within the context of the same magazine.

Explanation of Analysis Criteria

From a semiotic standpoint, my analysis takes into account three major areas:

- images portrayed
- stylization and composition of the entire work
- significance of the accompanying text

The analysis also considers the meanings these areas generate.

Kress and Van Leeuwen emphasize that as a primarily visually based society, a set of visual literacy rules (1995) are necessary to understand and interpret messages that images convey, and many of these rules, drawing from various semiotic models are employed in my analysis. Specifically, I deal with what is literal, what is implied, and what is metaphoric (Chandler 1994) within the advertisements and possible narratives generated from the image-text interaction (Barthes 1977). I assume that the audience has preconceived notions of stereotypical “archetypes” within the media context. These archetypes are embedded in “characters” that range from the slim, smooth skinned, able-bodied female who is socially and sexually desirable, to the socially rejected individual

who does not follow the cultural norms of body alteration/presentation through a regime of skin cleansing, makeup wearing, odor masking and “proper” and “stylish” dressing. Thus, the images portrayed in advertising are, in semiotic terms, *iconic* elements, or those that “[resemble]...some agent of the real world to which it refers” (Sebeok 1985). Furthermore, the images function in an indexical manner, where their presence signifies a meaning by pointing “to an object or sample of it” (Sebeok 1985). So an image of a wheelchair, for example, can be associated with disability, just as an image of used sports gear lying on the beach in a sports clothing ad is associated with an able-bodied, active lifestyle. For example, Figure 1 below shows how a product can be linked to athletic performance, and thus perpetuate able-bodied ideals. A detailed analysis is provided in Appendix II

Fig 1. An image of an ad portraying an active lifestyle (Maxim 2006)

All of these factors, the ads, the metaphors and the understandings, Sebeok argues, are context bound, meaning that the audience who receives it and their social situation affects their interpretation of the messages.

I have constructed a set of working principles for my own analysis by drawing from several visual semiotic models (Barthes 1979, Sebeok 1985, Hall 1980, Kress and Van Leeuwen 1995, Berger 1991). As a result, I have created a chart documenting the specific components of the ad analyses, and whether they included factors regarding disability, appearance and social acceptance (see Appendix I). The components of the analysis criteria are broken down in detail in the following section.

Analysis Criteria

Please refer to Appendix I while reading this section

1. Prevalent themes

In the first section I identify prevalent themes, and evidence of bodies that have been altered to achieve “perfection.” I ask if the ads prompt the audience to seek these alterations through means such as exercise, diet, beauty products, or fragrances (to name a few). If the ads did suggest body alteration, what was the implied result of such a body alteration? I question if social acceptance came with using the product, or if the ads suggest that people who don’t use the product suffer negative social consequences.

2. What is shown

The next aspect I address is the dominant or prevalent imagery in the ad and what exactly is represented: an object, a person, or both? Is disability present or absent? I identify if certain modes of representation, such as the way a body is exhibited in the ad, are used to influence the meaning (Chandler 1994). If a body is shown, I consider the posture and the emotion the model depicts. I also search for metaphors in relation to these bodily portrayals, asking whether they are present or absent.

3. Mode of address

The way the ads create a relationship between the addresser and addressee is called the mode of address (Hall 1980, Chandler 1994). I ask if the eye gaze is direct or indirect and (Berger 1991) if the subject addresses the camera with eye contact. In his piece Media Analysis Techniques, Berger elaborates on the significance of camera angles and shots using a chart describing the specific meanings of each angle (see Fig 2).

Fig 2: Camera angles/shots and significance in photos (Berger 1991):

Signifier	Definition	Signified (meaning)
Close-up	Face only	Intimacy
Medium shot	Most of body	Person relationship
Long shot	Setting and characters	Context, scope, public distance
Full shot	Full body of person	Social relationship
Camera aimed from top	Camera looking down	Power, authority
Camera aimed up	Camera looks up	Smallness, weakness

4. Distance between viewer and ad

The next aspect to analyze is the metaphorical distance between viewer and ad (Kress, Leeuwen 1995). That is, what boundary is constructed between the perceiver and perceived (Romanyshyn 1989), and if the represented ideologies in the image is meant to be accessible through the use of the product. For example, a make up ad where there is direct address, eye contact and an intimate image of the woman's face may "allow" the reader to see the results of the product's use, such as smooth skin. Since ads are carefully constructed, they are made with certain assumptions about the audience (Barthes 1977, Chandler 1994). I attempt to identify these assumptions by asking how the ad addresses the reader and how this is significant. If all the people shown in the ad do not address the camera, and clearly the viewer is observing a scene as a third party, the viewer is the spectator, but, if an ad model directly addresses the reader as if "sizing the reader up," then the model is considered to be addressing the spectator. As a result, it is necessary to consider the degree of trust or intimacy that can attributed to the model who addresses the reader. That is, will the audience trust a specific celebrity endorsing a product, and does this change the reader's perceived boundary between the ad? And if the readers trust the celebrity, will they change their behavior?

5. Degree of naturalization

The degree of naturalization or how realistic the image is (Barthes 1977) questions why an illustration or design is used instead of a photo, and if this is significant to the

meaning of the message. I also examine what claims the image makes to reality, and whether it makes references to the everyday world (Chandler 1994).

6. Use of text

How does the text serve to “[load] the image”(Barthes 1977), substantiate the meaning, or extend it (Bauer, Gaskell 2000)? Barthes coins the term “denotation,” which describes the literal meaning of the writing, and the term “connotation,” which describes the implied meaning of the text. The relationship between what is connoted and what is denoted, then, is examined. Barthes (1977) argues the two can be separated in photographic representations. I question which carries more weight in the context of the ad, and how this carries the message.

7. Presence of myths

Lastly, I question how myths, or “extended metaphors” (Chandler 1994) are represented or fabricated by the ad (Barthes 1972) to help make sense of the viewer’s experiences beyond the context of the image. That is, does the ad, regardless of whether disability is portrayed, generate fears concerning disablement, the degenerative consequences of disability and the social consequences of disability as “failure,” “rejection” or “uselessness?”

CHAPTER 5:

Analysis of Findings

“Everything is geared towards this stereotypical image of what perfection is... it becomes what everyone strives for.” Interviewee 2

“In terms of wanting to see myself in ads, I know that it’s not there.” Interviewee 3

“Media portrayal? What media portrayal? ...anything mainstream [portraying disability] I’ve never really seen... I’m so used to not being included in the beauty spectrum I don’t expect to be anymore. ” Interviewee 5

“A lot of people are afraid and [the absence of disability in advertising] taps into the fear.” Interviewee 6

Analysis Overview: Prevalent Categories and Prevalent Themes

By applying my specific selection criteria to the inclusion and exclusion of information in ads, two prevalent categories of ads arose:

- Bodies present: physical bodies are often presented as points of reference against which to compare standards of “perfection” including models and celebrities; and
- Bodies absent: ads without physical bodies make an inference to bodily “perfection” or myths surrounding the consequences of disability.

Assessing the presence and absence of bodies proved to be vital in locating the areas where the disabled were undermined or portrayed negatively. There were numerous problems evident in the themes of both visible and invisible bodily alteration, as well as the ads’ emphasizing the necessity of these means to “fit in.” The ads themselves were found to focus primarily on brand images over the products being sold, and tended to generate able-bodied values.

Perceptions of others are derived from a range of sources, and these perceptions “become our realities” (Bryan 2002). Ellis Cashmore refers to ads as representing an “endless supply of commodities,” (2006) a means of narcissistically paying close attention to one’s physical self. Ads, he argues, strive to change the way consumers visualize themselves, while providing a means of “exhibiting” these displays of physical alterations. They “help us make up our minds about what is and isn’t [acceptable]” (Cashmore 2006). Consistent with his findings, the advertisements in both male and female demographics contained themes of becoming aware of one’s physical appearance, and improving and enhancing it through visible and invisible bodily alteration, a type of “self mastery” (Foucault 1979). The ads disseminated this message in a number of ways: through celebrity or athlete figures as “heroes” to provide a body template for the audience to mimic; through sexual fulfillment and attraction resulting from suggestive and able-bodied individuals; and through humor. The result of “becoming beautiful,” according to the ads, pointed towards success and rewards such as social acceptance, trendiness, enjoyment, confidence, fulfilled heterosexual relationships, and (though it was not emphasized by the ads quite as much) the benefit of the product itself. Thus, the “normal” individual was constructed as a position of cultural authority, a “definitive human [being]” (Thomson 1997). While physical disability was itself absent, the fear of becoming disabled or “ugly” was implied by most of the ads, and unattractiveness functioned as a social disability where the non conforming individual became the deviant “other.” “Corporeal departures from dominant expectations” were consequently punished and bodily conformities, “almost always rewarded” (Thomson 1997). The ads inferred that these choices in manipulating appearance were to provide a sense of

sovereignty to the readers: if the consumer was unattractive, it was the consumer's own fault. The images used in each case functioned as able-bodied ideals against which youth could assess their bodies and change accordingly. The ads, an interviewee asserts, "[give] the idea that there is a perfection, and in order to be perfect you have to come from something perfect"—or, in these cases, attempt to achieve it by altering the so-called "imperfections."

Categorization of the Themes

The two categories of ads (bodies present and bodies absent) can be broken down further into particular categories with specific examples to substantiate these differences:

1. Visible bodily alteration products linked to beauty and health;
2. Invisible bodily alteration linked to social acceptance;
3. Products inducing social acceptance that do not involve bodily modification and do not use bodies to sell the product, but make references to acceptable bodily ideals;
4. Products inducing social acceptance that do not involve bodily modification, but still use bodies to sell the product.

1. Visible Bodily Alteration Linked to Beauty and Health

"... I realized that normal doesn't exist. There is a variety of people, a diversity of people, and unfortunately, magazines don't reflect that." Interviewee 6

Figure 3 below shows the range of products involving visible body alteration that were present in each respective category of ads.

Fig 3: Chart of products involving visible body alteration

Product	Description
<i>Clothing</i>	Shirts, pants, shoes, dresses, skirts, coats, undergarments
<i>Makeup</i>	Mascara, lipstick, blush, eye shadow, eyebrow products
<i>Shaving/hair removal products</i>	Razors, shaving cream, waxing products
<i>Accessories</i>	Jewelry: bracelets, earrings, purses, hair clips, watches, scarves, sunglasses
<i>Hair products</i>	Hair gel, hair spray

These products are marketed to predict the reasons why beautification is necessary while creating a need or desire for getting the product “of the moment.” The products play into both genders’ insecurities, positioning themselves as a means to “treat yourself” to “feel good” and “yearn for what you don’t have” (Gavenas 2002). Time and time again within the ads, bodies were put on display, becoming politicized and “forced to emit signs” (Foucault 1979) through beautification practices.

In the female targeted magazines, there was a repetitive format for ad presentation.

Characteristics were:

- single girl, full body shot
- single girl, close up, two page spread
- long shot: a pair or group of friends partying or hanging out

Similarly, within the male magazines, characteristics included:

- single male full body shot
- long shot: a male-female couple or group of friends partying or hanging out
- picture of the product only

The majority of the ads were represented with photography, with only a few using illustration to portray the product or the brand's ideologies. As a result, the degree of naturalization (Barthes 1977) was high. Even ads that were clearly refined and airbrushed in post production or showed an unlikely pose or situation attempted to achieve a degree of reality. Similar to dramatic devices used in fiction writing, theatre performance, film, or television, the ads strived towards "suspension of disbelief" and demand the viewer to, for a moment, take the meaning suggested by the ad, whether or not it was believable.

More often in the female magazines than the male magazines there was direct eye contact and address. There were many more full face close-ups in the female magazines, signifying intimacy (Berger 1991) and encouraging the viewer to trust the model or celebrity. Mostly, the close-up shots were selling makeup or products such as shavers, and endorsed themes of personal choice and confidence through this trust.

The close up and direct address with eye contact and a life sized image speaks to the human tendency to “look back at someone when they look at us” (Berger 2004) or respond to what the ad is offering. Socially, the face is perceived as the “most important” (Beuf 1991) body part. This is certainly present in the ads of this category, where many head shots emphasized specific facial features.

In both full shot and long shot type ads in magazines of both genders, the companies made direct references to the brands’ ideologies, and communicated the “unique” style of the brand. Since most of the ads of this type were selling the ideology of social relationships and acceptance, the setting, characters, and context of the situation created a narrative or a “secret” that the reader was invited in on. Narratives, such as voiceovers in a television commercial, are often used to describe a sequence that tells a story (Fiske 1978). However, in print advertisements and photographic images, these narratives are depicted spatially, and function as “orientational metaphors” (Lakoff and Johnson 1980). As such, the sequence of pictorial representation, such as the relationship between the actors, the setting, the product and the written copy of the ad were instrumental in creating a storyline to guide the reader’s interpretation. For example (see Fig 4), a single page ad shows two girls powdering themselves and putting on makeup together—largely concerned with their physical appearance—in preparation for a night out probably with their friends or boyfriends. The image itself emphasizes that there is a story involving the ritual of body alteration beyond what appears in the ad. This “hidden storyline” was consistent in a number of ads involving body modification.

Fig 4: TYTE clothing ad demonstrating a narrative story arising from a single page spread (Seventeen 2006)

The photographs in both sets of ads had the camera aimed directly at the model, neither aiming down nor up towards the subject, indicating the spokesperson was on the same level as the reader (Berger 1991). The ad's producer employs these tactics to emphasize to the reader that they can trust the convictions of the models.

Products presented in female targeted magazines emphasized the need to conceal “imperfections,” placing imperfections on the same level as social disability. Some ads even went so far as to use the words “perfection” (Seventeen 2006, TeenVogue 2006) to describe the result. Concealers, for example were advertised as tools to brighten the face, and smooth the face, and emphasized the “need” to mend flaws. There was a call for flawless skin, smoother complexions, and skin free of oiliness and dryness. Makeup products such as mascara and lipstick were presented as tools to accentuate what was considered vital for “beauty” and subsequent social desirability: large, bright and noticeable eyes; rosy naturally glowing cheeks; and shiny, luscious lips. Men's close-ups, by contrast, reflected pores and stubble, which

were often deemed acceptable, even amongst “attractive” men. It seems, then, the standards for women’s beauty are more specific—while ads in both genders still portray a disregard of the disabled body. Even more contemporary ad campaigns such as Dove’s “real beauty” campaign (described in Chapter 2) “do not consider *real* beauty” such as differently-abled bodies, according to an interviewee.

Although the ads differed from brand to brand, the themes remained consistent: that the girls were to purchase “hot” new products each season and follow the trends, while giving the trends a personal twist on it to “make it their own.” The ads also encouraged girls to establish their own “beauty style” (Brown 1997), taking the individualistic twist further. In effect, they were presented with an array of products to reshape their bodies, and thus their lives. Girls were encouraged to look good for themselves, but ironically, to earn compliments from their peers.

Many of the ads also relied on written text to take the meaning of the visual images further (Barthes 1977). Ads targeting girls used stories, nostalgia, atmospheric descriptions and adjectives to engage the readers. The written text in the female targeted magazines also communicated ideas of freedom and independence by encouraging girls to “change your hair as often as you change your mind” and purchase makeup that is “leading, dynamic,” and brings “confidence” (Seventeen 2006). Magazines targeting both genders pointed to the ease of achieving these body alterations through an “effortless appeal,” “visible results” (Seventeen 2006) and “flexible long-lasting” hair products (Maxim 2006). Both magazine types also displayed the value of clothing’s performance to substantiate an active lifestyle, as well as suggesting messages of the freedom to “live your life” (Maxim, TeenVogue

2006) by being able-bodied. The men's magazines involved words reflecting their supposed interest in "breakthrough technology" (FHM 2006) such as precise shavers. An interviewee identified one of the major problems with the advertisements as illustrating that "you need to be 'able-bodied' to show [your body] off."

Another consistent pattern was the constant urging of the ad's producers to associate visible body alteration or the product inducing this alteration as a reflection of the person's "self." Some products ventured so far as to make bold statements that the product "tells [the] most about who you are" (Maxim 2006). Again, this stresses the importance of physical appearance in projecting the internal state. In many cases the words used in the ads to describe the products were paralleled with the potential consumer. To be well dressed was to be socially well received, "stylish," "trendy," "hot" (Maxim 2006, Seventeen 2006)—but to be poorly dressed resulted in social rejection. Again, the lack of different bodies pointed to a lack of social reception of any body deviating from the "one model type" the interviewees agreed on: able-bodied, thin white women. "I'd love to see an ad like that with a person in a wheelchair wearing really pretty sexy clothing—you don't see that!" an interviewee said, acknowledging that there is not only a lack of disability imagery, but a lack of positive imagery directed towards having a different body. The same interviewee also pinpointed that the internal state of the differently-abled individual, regardless of their appearance may also reflect notions of sexiness and "beauty" despite the rigid dichotomies constructed by advertising.

What was surprising about both male and female targeted magazines was the absence of ads selling health and exercise products even though the models were thin, toned, and athletic. The ads showed an active, able-bodied lifestyle in pictures of men running, girls surfing or bicycling—but only in relation to the brand’s image, and not as the main focus of the message. Interestingly, the men’s magazines featured an abundance of beer and cigarette ads, none of which contribute to a healthy lifestyle or appearance. As one of the interviewees stated, the models shown in Maxim ads are “very attractive, nothing there that may connote the fact that they may or may not have a disability. From a photography point of view, I think [they are beautiful pictures], but who is this going to be geared to?” He indicates that the ads may be aesthetically pleasing, but do not target or take into account the disabled population, who are also equally concerned with their appearance and health. Cultural theorist Richard Johnson suggests that “images always imply or construct a position or positions from which they are to be read or viewed” (1996). This observation places a great importance on whether such ads could be understood from a disabled bodied as well as an able-bodied perspective. On a whole, the ads’ producers clearly did not consider targeting different bodies in this way.

One pattern that proved that ad producers were on the right path towards inclusion was the presence of unconventional “beauty.” It has become the current trend of advertising: emphasizing “flaws” or what was formerly considered undesirable looks by accentuating them. Makeup artist Bobbi Brown identifies a few flaws (1997) that were found in abundance in the ads. Features such as freckles, strong noses, round

faces, irregular teeth, birthmarks and moles, large curly hair and large brows which used to be hidden from the media were exhibited as defining features again and again. If these factors, which were meant to both take up diversity and create a rebellious statement against the cultural norms of beauty, were taken a step further to include disability, a fuller picture of diversity would emerge.

2. Invisible Bodily Alteration Linked to Social Acceptance

The chart below exemplifies the products found in advertisements endorsing invisible body alteration.

Fig 5: Chart of products involving invisible body alteration

Product	Description
<i>Perfume</i>	Eau de toilet, sprays
<i>Deodorant</i>	Sprays, stick deodorants
<i>Body cleansers</i>	Soap, shower gel, scrubs
<i>Skin care</i>	Lotions, moisturizers, sun care, masks, scrubs, acne cream, cold sore medication

In this section, there were three significant categories of male and female arrangements in the magazines:

- single male or female
- male-female interaction
- social situation

Similar to the ads selling visible bodily alteration, there were close ups of women and men who had engaged in the use of the products and had moved a step closer to “perfection.” Hygiene products were advertised as effective in eliminating “imperfections” associated with filthiness and unattractiveness, factors that determine social acceptance. There was an implication that the social disability resulting from unpleasant smell and improper skincare (resulting in blemishes), in addition to being associated with unpleasantness, was also a reflection of dirtiness. As Mary Douglas asserts, dirt can be applied to cultural constructions of disability where dirt is “matter out of place,” (2002) much like rejected bodies. The aversion to dirt as something that contrasts with stability and recognizable elements in social interaction functions as “a cultural contaminant” (Thomson 1997).

The ads in this section were much more homogeneous, where the models, both male and female, were similar in different ads. While the previous section acknowledged “imperfections” and bodily variations, this section did not. Many perfume ads were sexually charged and often showed a scantily clad able-bodied model, suggesting that “imperfections” were excluded from consideration when sexuality was involved. Ads involving males and females pointed towards sexual fulfillment with the use of the perfume, because subjects in the ads usually embraced one another, absorbed in an intimate moment. Although the situations were intimate,

unlike ads selling products for visible bodily alteration, the viewer is placed as a third party spectator, and is not invited to join or trust the subjects. Instead, the readers desire to become consumers of the intimate relations. Again, the ad's producers suggest that a different body cannot be associated with sexuality and attractive appearance, rendering the different body "asexual" (Travis, Meginnis, Bardari 2000). Feminist theorists assert that equating physical appearance with sexuality forces women into a passive role (Travis, Meginnis, Bardari 2000, Wendell 1996, Bordo 1993). However, in this case, appearance and sexuality contain the differently-abled in socially prescribed sexual identities and social roles that are passive and invisible.

Contrary to the messages found in ads, female interviewees said that they take their appearance and visibility seriously. "I personally care about what I look like all the time," stated an interviewee, adding, "I think there *needs* to be ads where we're selling cologne or perfume or clothes." Another interviewee came to our interview clad in an outfit with matching accessories, earrings, and purse, and with her wheelchair covered in trendy stickers. She said that she reads fashion magazines and acknowledges that disability is not represented in those magazines. However, her way of dress indicated she was concerned with style just as much as an able-bodied individual.

The last category in this section, social situations, showed the results of the products. Often, the ads used humorous situations such as hundreds of women avoiding one man who did not use his deodorant, with the copy reading "if you stink, it wouldn't matter if you were the last guy on earth" (Maxim 2006) (See Fig 6 below;

a detailed analysis is provided in Appendix II). Another ad showed women security guards strip searching a man who was wearing a certain brand of deodorant at an airport, with the copy reading “consider yourself warned” (FHM 2006). Ads such as these connect invisible aspects such as smell to physical desirability, while equating vile odors with unattractiveness and thus the social consequences mentioned in the literature review: social distance and exclusion resulting from disability.

Fig 6: Social results of not engaging in prescribed invisible body alteration (Maxim 2006).

3. Products Inducing Social Acceptance that Do Not Involve Bodily Modification and Do Not Use Bodies to Sell the Product, but Make References to Acceptable Bodily Ideals

The chart below in Figure 5 exhibits the range of products sold in magazines excluding the use of, or reference to, a physical body.

Fig.7: Chart of products involving excluding bodies

Product	Description
<i>Technology</i>	Mp3 players, cars, cell phones, video games
<i>Alcohol</i>	Beer, spirits

This section and the next are more relevant to the male targeted magazines. There were very few ads in TeenVogue and Seventeen that showed only the product and did not reference a body. However, advertisements in men's magazines made the assumption that female bodies or references to female bodies would sell. Many ads drew parallels of the products with sexual acts. Ads for mp3 players featured patterns emulating men and women kissing, while gum ads showed two apples side by side in bed together. A phone ad featured the copy (see Fig 8), written in dark shades of red and black, reading "push me, touch me, slip me, slide me, pull me close and whisper to me, grip me, grab me, hold me, stroke me." These ads, sexual as they were, had positive aspects. While disability was absent, so was bodily "perfection." The ads did not make a specific reference to body types or "imperfections." Rather, it was the feeling surrounding the use of the product that was the focus. However, this does not

account for all of the ads that did not use physical bodies. There were ads where beer was arranged in designs that articulated the thin hourglass shape of a woman, and even ink splatters that reflected similar silhouettes. In the section covering specific ad analyses, I include an example of how the absence of bodies can be misused.

Fig 8: Verizon wireless ad referencing bodies without showing them (Maxim 2006)

4. Products Inducing Social Acceptance that Do Not Involve Bodily Modification but Still Use Bodies to Sell the Product

This section involves the use of models or celebrities to sell products that are irrelevant to appearance, such as such as cell phones, mp3 players, video games, cars and contests. The ads, again, functioned on the assumption that purchasing and using the product would result in positive social or sexual relations with the type of women or men (often athletes) exhibited. There were ads with scantily clad women standing

beside the product or engaging in the use of the product, once more, emphasizing the importance of “beauty” and the need for consumers to associate themselves with hypersexual able-bodied models. An interviewee notices that in these types of ads “[the] women are practically naked—they’re being showed off for their body parts,” while another interviewee questions, “Is it a product, an image, sex, what is it?” Some ads featured male athletes holding the product, signifying again that an active able-bodied lifestyle that included satisfying social relations was a necessity to enjoy the product fully.

Further Male-Female Magazine Differences

There were further differences between the male and female demographic and the products and values being advertised, than what was mentioned previously. These variations, however, were less visually present than those of attractive people and able-bodied ideals within the analysis. Overall, the target demographic was slightly younger for the female magazines than the male magazines, with a stronger focus on the physical body for the female readers. In general, all the ads used in the analysis were well-constructed and polished, with matching colors in the picture, and the text. However, the ads in the male targeted magazines were more action oriented, focusing on sports and active “masculine” functions rather than passive activities such as “hanging out.” As a result, men’s magazines involved more technology based advertising such as cars, mp3 players and video games. These did not necessarily make references to physical bodies, and were therefore excluded. However, as a whole, the female targeted ads still endorsed

the idea of freedom and independence, choices and individuality, while giving girls the illusion that they choose their own cultural and bodily values. Using phrases like “because you’re worth it” emphasized the fact that the girls were supposedly in charge of their own appearance based ideals, and if they believed they were “worth it,” then they would purchase and use the product to prove it. The female magazines were heavily vested in the reader’s awareness of her own body, while the male magazines, less so.

The female targeted magazines also featured more text, while the male targeted ads focused primarily on bodies and overtly heterosexual relationships. There were, overall, less sexual and relationship oriented ads in the female targeted magazines, but the female targeted ads made more references to and showed more physical bodies. While all ads used models, the female magazines used more celebrities to promote products, emphasizing the fact that celebrities represent bodily ideals that are created out of consumers’ reverence of “two-dimensional” (Cashmore 2006) images. The use of celebrities to endorse products can, according to Fraser and Brown, “develop self-defining relationships” for the ad’s receiver, as they “seek to adopt their perceived attributes” (2002) physically. The consumer may feel that by achieving their desired appearance, they may become, socially, as desirable as the celebrities.

A Detailed Analysis of Select Ads

“The reality is that a lot of us fall out of those margins of that [beauty] ideal...and then you put my disability in there, and I’m not even existent, never mind outside.”

Interviewee 6

In this section, I engage in a more specific analysis of selected ads based on the thematic categories that frame the overall analysis. These are the ads that I showed the interviewees for their opinion and response. Interviewees were free to choose which ones to respond to. While most interviewees responded with strongly negative opinions about the ads, one interviewee asserted that it was not possible to have an opinion regarding any of the ads: “you can’t really have an opinion, because it is the way that it is.”

1. American Eagle (Maxim 2006, TeenVogue 2006, Seventeen 2006, FHM 2006): Representing Ads with Bodies Present, Selling Products Involving Visible Bodily Modification

Fig 9: American Eagle ad

This ad, shown in two versions here, is a two page spread (refer to Fig 9), that features a full body shot of two able-bodied individuals, one male, one female,

laughing out loud, heads thrown back, clutching one another and wearing American Eagle clothes. Beneath, the copy reads, in a bold emphatic font scrawled across both pages, “Live your life.” (The ad that includes more of the girl’s legs in the picture could conceivably be taken to be a man holding a female with a disability and enjoying life regardless. However, I, as well as the interviewees, chose a different reading of the image and text—the more likely originally intended by the ad’s producers.)

The two, the ad signifies, are engaging in a real-life situation in which they have a fulfilling relationship and a wonderful time, and are stylish and happy as a result of wearing American Eagle. The couple does not address the camera directly, but the closeness of the full body shot allows the reader in on their moment, and encourages the audience to trust the models’ conviction that visible bodily alteration such as clothing results in good style. It also suggests that the companionship and friendship they experience in the picture is the direct effect of being concerned about their physical appearance and having attracted one another. Enjoying each others’ company and finding emotional fulfillment, the ad implies, relates directly to appearance. Lastly, the ad suggests this appearance centered able-bodied ideal provides individuals freedom to live their lives.

This portrayal begs the question, according to an interviewee, of “whose life...” the models are living, and if it is only able-bodied and stylish individuals who are able to live their lives meaningfully. One interviewee responded that in its silences and absences regarding disability, the ad “only perpetuates that disability is a negative thing, something that’s not normal, it’s something ‘out there.’” She also identifies

that the ads implies that this “moment” the couple is having and the “freedom” that comes with it is something that the differently-abled cannot have.

2. L'Oréal Moisturizer (Teen Vogue 2006, Seventeen 2006): Representing Ads with Bodies Present, Selling Products Involving Invisible Bodily Modification

Fig 10: L'Oréal moisturizer ad

This photo shows a full body shot of a famous actress (refer to Fig 10) directly addressing the camera and sprawled seductively on a couch, with the product located in the bottom left corner of the ad. The actress looks up at the camera, providing the authority to the readers as viewers. Her seductive expression indicates she is engrossed in an intimate moment that she allows the readers to access. The image is highly refined and carefully constructed, but still makes claim to give users “perfect”

skin. The copy demonstrates the themes the picture signifies, claiming the product is “the new body language” and results in a “sublime glow” as well as “glowing perfection.” Not only does the ad explain what the product does, it describes how it creates an appeal and how the readers can achieve “perfection.” The ad asserts that the body is vital in communicating this “glow,” and that it can result in social and sexual attractiveness. Consequently, the myths of fear towards disability and “imperfections” are present, where less than perfect skin will result in social and sexual undesirability.

3. Silver Patron Tequila (Maxim 2006): Representing Ads That Are Absent of Bodies, but Make References to Them

Fig 11: Silver Patron Tequila ad

This ad is a two page spread (refer to Fig 11) that shows on the first page, three separate boxes encompassing the words “Blondes, Brunettes, Redheads” and below, copy reading “some perfection is debatable.” On the opposite page, the ad shows a

bottle of the tequila, and underneath the words “some is not.” The image is simple and direct, on an entirely white background, and depends largely on the text to bring out the meaning. The most noticeable aspect is the overt and direct comparison of the alcohol to “physical perfection”—implying that this perfection somehow exists.

Blondes, brunettes and redheads are a representation of women, which men are—according to social standards—to appreciate or admire, especially in contexts where alcohol, functioning to loosen social inhibitions, is used. However, according to the ad, even these do not reach the debatable standards of “perfection” in comparison to the “perfect” alcohol, which stands starkly in contrast to the women represented.

While physical disability is clearly absent, there is an insinuation that “imperfection” is undesirable, and an assumption that the readers prefer “perfect” alcohol as well as “perfect” women—except that in this case, the tequila outdoes the women proving the point that the tequila is of superior quality. Even if the analysis overlooks the fact that dark haired women are not included in the ideal of perfection, and that the ad is clearly sexist, above all it ignores the differently-abled. While one male interviewee thought this ad was positive in that it “*hinted* at least that beauty was in the eyes of the beholder,” another female interviewee exclaimed, “I don’t know what people would do if someone who was blonde, redhead or brunette came in a wheelchair!”

4. St. Pauli Girl Beer: Representative of Products Inducing Social Acceptance That Do Not Involve Bodily Modification, but Still Use Bodies to Sell the Product (Maxim 2006)

Fig 12: St. Pauli Girl Beer ad

This ad features a woman turned away from the viewer, comprised entirely of beer. Beneath, the copy reads, “you’ll never forget your first girl,” referring to both the beer itself and an actual female relationship. While there are no themes of bodily alteration, the image signifies themes and “rewards” of associating beer with the female body and positive memories of events involving beer, such as partying and female companionship. Though the figure does not address the reader directly, she has an able-body, flowing hair and an hourglass figure on display, which one interviewee asserts is “a really normalized image.” The assumptions about the audience, then, are that they are able-bodied, take pleasure in drinking, and engage in relations with “beautiful” able-bodied individuals because they drink. These aspects, the ad suggests, can only be enjoyed by the able-bodied. Ads such as these, according to an interviewee, imply that women who are, “different from [the mainstream] are still somehow flawed.”

Problems the Portrayals Raise

"Representation is the organization of the perception of [actual bodily differences] into comprehensibility, a comprehensibility that is always frail, coded, in other words, human." Richard Dyer

"[The under representation of disability in ads] angers me but it more saddens me"
Interviewee 2

The advertisements present numerous problems. Firstly, the dominance of able-bodied images constructs misconceptions of "perfect" and "beautiful" bodies, by "[buttressing] an embodied version of normative identity" and misleading the readers into "narratives of corporeal differences [excluding] bodies that do not conform" (Thomson 1997). The portrayals attribute negativity to differences, while reinforcing the dominant group's images as legitimate. The ads, then, teach the readers what is valued in a "hierarchy" of bodily standards where normality reigns. They also reinforce a very "narrow" (Interviewee 6) idea of what beauty is. An interviewee suggests that if disability were included, advertisers would have to "expose it and they would have to stop and explain 'why are we suddenly including this as an ideal of beauty,'" something that would prove to be uncomfortable within the constraints of social norms.

Although the audience may not emulate the idealized practices represented in the ads, they may form beliefs based on the practices, whether the beliefs are translated into real life situations or not. In an experiment concerning advertisement response, results found that "beliefs about product attributes were a major mediator of the advertising content effect on attitudes, but not behavioral intentions" (Mitchell, Olsen 1981). That is, qualities associated with the advertised products, such as beauty and able-bodied-ness, could influence individuals' beliefs concerning bodily differences in a negative manner

by turning able-bodied norms into rigid ideals and encouraging conformity to these ideals. While the study asserts that such beliefs may not influence actions, an interviewee argues that advertisements have had a definite impact on how others view him as a disabled individual, and provide grounds for the way others treat him. He says others instantly assume, and have assumed in response to him “that a person with [a disability] means that they’re automatically someone mentally deficient, or someone lesser, [someone] who must obviously have lower standards of life or no moral standards whatsoever, [someone who is therefore] an axe murderer...deviant...[uses] chainsaws to kill people ...” In addition, he elaborates that “people with disabilities make up a significant part of the population. There is fifteen percent of the population being totally ignored, or if they aren’t being ignored, they’re being put down to such a low level that they are almost non-existent.¹” Another interviewee expresses that the media “influences how visible groups of people are to the common audience.” When a group is absent or portrayed inaccurately, it makes impairments socially unacceptable, and he asserts that as a result of the media, “it is not currently well-accepted that some people have speech impediments or mild physical challenges.” Another interviewee concludes that views of beauty have “a lot to do with these ads and the media in general, because it basically sends the message that if you do certain things...you’ll look like the people in the ads. But if you’re a person with a disability and ...you can’t do those things...suddenly you’re just off the map. You don’t really exist.”

¹ It should be noted that the individual being interviewed here elaborated prior to the interview that he was told these stereotypes in response to his memory loss as well as minor physical impairment, and that they are not his own negative reactions to disability of any type. The anecdote he described is the response of an employer and the ensuing array of stereotypes as a result. In fact, he is not devaluing any disability more than others, but he attempted to focus on the stereotypes he has experienced in response to disability for the sake of the interview. Please see Appendix VII for a contextualization of the quote.

The ads also serve to “brainwash” (Interviewee 5) differently-abled consumers into adopting able bodied ideals. An interviewee suggests “perhaps I’ve even come to believe the same way. I say beauty is on the inside, but really feel it is on the outside [as a result of the media].”

The depictions also maintain and deepen the social barriers between differently-abled and able-bodied groups by making “social interaction difficult for anyone who is unable to conform” (Barnes 1992). Judith Butler says that when individuals are categorized into roles, they will tend to “perform” the characteristics of the stipulated identity, in this case “normality” and “abnormality.” The culturally prescribed role of disabled individuals, then, is established by the media as passive, needy or invisible—and, as the analysis suggests, unattractive. Assuming and promoting an able body, advertising images construct the disabled body as the site of the “other” by perpetuating the idea that disability and illness is something to be fought against (“join the fight [against AIDS]”(Seventeen 2006)) or something that inhibits individuals from an active, and therefore, a “fulfilling” life. This is also problematic in that those who see themselves as “normal” will also tend to perform and emphasize their “normality” by contrasting themselves with what is viewed as “undesirable.” This again deepens the trench between the groups. One interviewee asserts, “some people will consider disability a tragedy, and that’s because they haven’t had the experience of what that life is like, and [disabled individuals] *can* function. If they have the right equipment and support in their lives, they can get jobs, and volunteer...perhaps people have forgotten that at one point regardless of whether or not [someone] has a disability...life can be good.” Demonstrative of this are the interviewees’ active involvement in various facets

of living. One interviewee is committed to disability advocacy, film production and digital art, while still another is a member development specialist for an international student run organization.

As feminist Susan Wendell asserts, the kinds of ideals we create may change slightly for each era, but ideals for bodies always exist (1996). A question that arises from Wendell's observation is why can a minority group of individuals, such as models, depict the beauty standards for all of the "west," but actual, realistic and significant minority groups such as disability are not taken into account? An interviewee adamantly states that "mainstream advertising is very black and white, there's *one* representation that they're trying to bring across, they're white, middle class, heterosexual, able-bodied; those other than what they're trying to get across are hypersexual, and are represented as Other—white women, large breasted, skinny, and no variation at all."

Commodity images, according to Sut Jhally, who addresses media ownership and representations of diversity within advertising, are exhibited through or on bodies, and function as both a means of self-validation and a "means of satisfaction" (1995). The way to achieve personal fulfillment as suggested by advertisement is reflected in the control of life, self esteem, and familial or social relations. Jhally asserts that the image based "Western" society attempts to teach these needs through products, visions of "perfection" and a strong emphasis on *both* the products and image ideals. However, unlike Jhally's argument, these advertisements show that the emphasis is placed on branding and ideologies of beautification, attractiveness, and an able-bodied lifestyle rather than the products themselves. The ideologies presented in the analysis prove to be more crucial in reshaping the concerns of an audience than the actual commodities. It is

evident that advertisers attempt to induce an unnecessary desire for products in these ads and the producers are more concerned with presenting an ideal lifestyle wrought with ideal social relations that exclude disability *rather* than addressing it as a minority case and an aspect of diversity. However, the illusion resulting from the combination of commodities and their images—with the image the only factor sustaining the relationship with the goods—does indeed provide a type of self-validation for the able-bodied but *not* the disabled community. The media images function as an ingroup where disability becomes the downward comparison, that “happy” able-bodied people must ignore. As the analysis shows, advertisements are not a reflection of how people behave and look, but how people *think* they should behave and look. An interviewee, referring to the exclusion of disability in mainstream advertising sums it up quite adequately: “Hi I’m over here, I have a mouth, I can talk too!”

CHAPTER 6:

Conclusions, Suggestions for Future Action

“Ways are just guidelines, they can be changed.” Interviewee 2

“The entertainment industry is so guilty [for people’s perceptions of disability]! Don’t even file an appeal. You’re guilty. Just deal with it.” Interviewee 2

The results of the analyses are sobering, and only emphasize the necessity of media literacy to “...offer models of progress and behavior...” rather than “[seducing] with promises of perfection” (Sobieszek 1988). Educative responses are necessary to replace ignorance with knowledge (Beuf 1991). The precise problem that is communicated by the idealizations of bodily perfection in advertisement imagery is that these established boundaries are immutable. Culturally constructed images fabricate a media fantasy that propagates the illusion of perfection and the myth of disability as tragedy. Although images make meaning, these meanings are mediated through interpretation. People pick responses to suit individual purposes. Thus, an audience well informed of what disability encompasses and the significance of disability’s absence is more likely to challenge advertisers’ portrayals. As Foucault would argue, where there is power, there is resistance (2001). It is necessary for viewers to become literate in all areas of the media to loosen the bonds of social ideologies.

While I cannot and do not expect the average reader to engage in such detailed analyses as shown in this study, it is important that readers realize that for every interpretation there is an option. Taking an educative approach to understanding diversity can figure into individuals’ interpretations and reception of ads and can thus

serve to renounce the rigid dichotomy presented by both media dissemination and media consumption.

Suggestions for Future Research and Media Changes

“It's really simple to say 'put people with disabilities into advertising' but if you look at representations of different ethnic backgrounds [for example]... you still see objectification.” Interviewee 3

“You're not going to hear a lot of discussion about disability [in the media], because too few people are in that category for it to have any significant meaning.” Interviewee 2

“I think the more that people with disabilities show up in media as just part of society the more society will accept them as just average citizens.” Interviewee 5

There are numerous suggestions for research directions within advertisement portrayals. It is necessary that future research encourages an open dialogue between disabled and able-bodied communities to achieve more accurate media representations. Research also indicates that “disablist imagery will only disappear if disabled people are integrated at all levels into the media” (Barnes 1992). As such, hiring and involving differently-abled individuals in all areas of pre-production, production and post-production can enrich diversity and avoid inaccuracies of how different bodies are shown. Media producers should also turn away from the traditional approach where there are assumptions of how the disabled community would like to be seen, and towards understanding other potential representations. This could be done by engaging existing disability groups and movements in approving disability related advertising, turning the focus towards the person, not the disability. “People don't realize how many people there actually are with disabilities in the world,” asserts an interviewee. With twelve to fifteen percent of the population in Canada alone with a physical disability (Government of

Canada 2006), people do not realize that excluding disability in advertising ignores and devalues a large part of the population.

Disabled individuals also make capable spokespersons and promoters, and the focus should turn to their daily life experiences rather than the disability itself. It is also important to bear in mind that “the actual experience of disability is more complex and more dynamic than representation suggests” (Thomson 1997). With further qualitative research, disability being used for the sake of fulfilling stereotypes such as pity, the “supercrip” or the paternalistic role of the able-bodied to care for the disabled as a child can be adjusted in a way disabled individuals find acceptable. Current disability imagery and stereotypes, according to an interviewee, not only “[encourages] a view that being in a wheelchair is “less” than being fully able-bodied,” but also “[encourages] the view of disability as “charity case” which is not how I want to be treated.” Another interviewee asserts that another problem with media portrayals is that, “if there *is* actually a disabled character in any form of movie/TV show/book, etc., they’re rather polar in nature: either a case of someone to be pitied, or an ‘inspiration’ because of their ‘bravery.’” Case studies and focus groups involving disabled individuals’ response to ads can shed further light about how ad messages and reception can affect individuals. This research can also help ad producers realize that positive but realistic situations involving disability should be used to sell commercial products, while implausible situations such as disabled individuals achieving overly unrealistic feats can be avoided.

Research must not only turn towards ad reception and influence, but make an effort at understanding individual experiences of impairment. The interviews in this study, while

representative of differently-abled individuals, were by far too few to represent the entire disability community. Future research should “[acknowledge and explore] the complexity of the experience of disability and a disabled identity” (Barnes 1992) with larger sets of data, in addition to taking into account media production and reception. As one of the interviewees suggested, “once you start getting more and more stories of people with disabilities out there, then [the stories] will start to have a higher quality in production,” as opposed to what is present in the media today. Further research into the subjective experiences of disability will also allow for “ability-integrated advertising” (Farnall 2006) where disabled individuals are used for selling products that are not aimed exclusively towards the disability community. Another interviewee criticized ads in the mainstream that, “never show anything with any sort of disability, unless of course it’s showing something like an ad for a telephone...” or selling “credit [cards], Interac,” but never products involving sexy clothing or perfume. Such research would allow for a movement towards accepting and acknowledging that disabled individuals can lead “normal” lives, and do indeed use consumer products just as the able-bodied, *including* the ones that were discussed in this study: fashionable clothes, makeup, and accessories, to name a few. The opinions of differently-abled individuals, revealed by this research, can show that these individuals *do* observe and involve themselves in processes of beautification. “I’m all about the Oscars...I’ll look at fashion magazines,” said another female interviewee. A male interviewee was concerned with dying his hair and matching his legwarmers with his shirts, which he would often paint and design.

Future studies can encompass a wider scope of magazines and targeted audiences, because references to differently shaped bodies and abilities are scant. With a more

complete picture, specific steps can be taken in ad production that would create a more inclusive and diverse media milieu. As an interviewee suggests, “the media needs to start incorporating disabled people into different roles and not have their disability be their defining characteristic.” To avoid disability as a central focus, for example, a wheelchair user can be placed in an ad showing groups of friends, and address disability as a “matter of fact” depiction rather than one that focuses solely on the chair. If sentiments of enjoyment are shown, such a portrayal will function to dispel the myths of disability as a tragedy.

It is also possible to use similar copywriting similar to that which is used for plus sized clothing ads, such as this ad for Torrid clothing, in Fig. 13. An analysis is included below.

Fig 13: Torrid plus sized clothing ad (Seventeen 2006): An example of positive social change and inclusive advertising

This ad features a full length shot of a plus sized non-white girl throwing her arm in the air and laughing, at a Christmas party. The image is unrefined and shows no signs of airbrushing, and the moment seems candid, a “real” scene. The copy reads “I’m going to party, see my friends, laugh and look great,” and the brand name is scrawled in large bold letters across the front of the ad, consistent with the theme. Some of the themes present in the ad are her ability to have fun and friends despite her “different” body, her confidence, and her ability to “look great.” The ad encourages the acceptance of differing body types, indicating that individuals with different bodies can indeed lead fulfilling lives. The tube dress she is wearing displays her confidence and accentuates her body, while her bare arms and shoulders in an assertive pose emphasize her self-assurance. Her open arms invite the viewer into her personal space to perhaps even party with her, leaving the boundary between the reader and her insignificant. She addresses the reader directly with her eyes, asking the audience to trust her experiences, and encouraging others to accept differences. While the ad does not show a physically disabled individual, it *does* show a body that differs from the norms, or what an interviewee calls the “one model type” that is pervasive throughout magazine advertising: the able-bodied thin, white, heterosexual woman.

Future research must investigate what comprises social barriers and how advertisers can eliminate these barriers. If we are “only aware of our bodies through the medium of others” (Cashmore 2003) such as those portrayed in ads, it is also necessary to make

readers, especially youth, more aware of different bodies and to accept rather than ridicule them. “Maybe if people finally saw more people with disabilities, then they would see that it’s still possible to have a disability and be beautiful” an interviewee suggests, “But until that happens, I think that people are still going to feel ostracized and excluded.” It is only with a greater awareness of diversity that people “become less afraid...and with that decline of fear, they’re likely to engage with different forms of media and have people who reflect [these] diverse backgrounds more present in the media” (Interviewee 6).

While this study found an absence of disabled bodies in print advertisements, future studies could investigate the effect of ads without any bodies or with ambiguous representations of bodies. This study further found that ads using primarily text or product images, whether referring to a physical body or not, can target a wider audience, and as such benefit diverse readers. Such a format does not distinguish between disabled and able-bodied, and can suggest a more inclusive landscape for commercial products, with all body types on board. Figure 14 below exemplifies this.

Fig 14: Samsung ad (Maxim 2006, FHM 2006)

This ad shows the mp3 player encompassed by fantastical digital illustrations of designs and silhouetted patterns including images of speakers, trees, flowers, birds, elephants, a woman, and a heterosexual couple kissing. Solid splashes of colors, rainbow lines and solid colored lines fill the page. At the top of the page the copy reads “mp3freedom is sharing a soundtrack,” and beneath the copy reads “imagine mp3 freedom. Share a soundtrack.” The words extend the meaning of the images, which exemplify the whimsical imagination of Samsung’s users. In addition, the words suggest that there is more to be shared than a soundtrack: the product suggests it enables friendships or sexual relations between men and women, and “anyplace,” too. The copy finishes by asserting that “it’s not that hard to imagine.”

This ad is representative of how bodily inferences, when not heavily emphasized, can positively influence the readers. While the bodies themselves do not address the readers directly, because they are engaged in activities of their own, there is an indication that freedom can come from sharing music rather than focusing on physical appearance. An interviewee responded that ads such as these “[don’t] say anything about disability, and [don’t] divide between disability and able-bodied.”

The indirect address may suggest that the readers cannot participate in sexual or social relationships without the use of the technology, but there is also an emphasis on the mp3 player over bodies themselves. Lastly, the illustrated graphic design and its ambiguity allows for mutable definitions of bodily appearance, while not including the entire body.

Future research, then, can develop many areas of differently-abled portrayals in advertisements, from various production strategies to specific content revision to understanding the effects of the ads in their final reception. In addition, it is important to extend beyond restricting terms such as disability, and to engage in a more accepting means of addressing differences and to determine how to positively incorporate diversity in the media landscape. An interviewee adds that a diversity approach “would be priceless—you wouldn’t be able to put a price on it!” and “the minute you address, and keep on pressing and pressing with the issue, people will start listening.”

Suggestions for Changes in Social Values

“What about all the kids that are reading all these magazines or seeing this stuff on TV, what about the little kids who are learning these things who are disabled or become disabled? How do we expect them to have a good self-image, self esteem?” Interviewee 1

Research and development in various educational areas, too, are essential for informing youths about media penetration, visual literacy, and cultural values. Future research should identify key areas of visual literacy and how these areas can be addressed

specifically through education and learning. As an interviewee asserts, children “have to learn [negative attitudes] from somewhere” and even adults have much to learn: “I am not subscribing to the idea that people are older and they are set in their ways.” The world is full of images, layouts, diagrams, reports—and specifically, in this case, advertisements. In the media saturated landscape, visual literacy becomes necessary as a means for social survival. Kress and Van Leeuwen suggest that only particular groups are permitted to break the rules of public communication, such as teachers and schools, while students and children must follow the established rules. Therefore, it is necessary to identify the most effective way to teach students to interpret visuals. Such interpretation skills as illustrated by the ads, are culturally specific, and only those in positions of power, such as teachers, can provide a framework through which diversity can be understood. Field research to observe students’ interpretations of media messages and understand how these ads reflect their cultural beliefs is important. It is necessary to show diversity to youth, and for teachers to enforce that dominant interpretations can be rejected. Students who are given these tools early on can use visual literacy and interpretation to form their own opinions.

Media literacy and media education are other crucial areas to consider. With more sociological and psychological studies into representations, youth can learn to discern between stereotypical and accurate portrayals of disability. Such research, too, can be put towards developing programs for youths to learn about media production and post production techniques to understand how advertisements are highly refined and generally unrealistic. Such programs can help students identify messages about bodies and beauty that are dominant across the media, what roles these “beautiful bodies”

attempt to depict, and why certain celebrities are used to endorse certain products. Finding biases towards specific audiences, such as able-bodied biases within advertising, is also an effective means of understanding media. With such research and program development, students can be made aware of how much and how often advertisements penetrate their lives, and whether the messages and imagery affect them as consumers. Youths can even learn how an ad sells a product by discerning the components of the ads, both visual and textual. By developing an awareness of how media is created and consumed, youths will have a better understanding of how ads can produce unrealistic expectations and perpetuate negative ideas of certain groups of people.

Outside of image interpretation, research can also address how cultural values instill behaviors in young people. When raising children, it is important to stress character, kindness, creativity above “prettiness”(Beuf 1991), as well as acknowledging the necessity of diversity. An interviewee states that “[kids are] going to learn from example, imitation,” so it is important to set proper examples of acceptance. It is also vital to teach children not to view people who use wheelchairs or other assistive devices as different from others. “My young nephews are starting [to learn about disability]; they’re like [Auntie] has her own ‘car’ (referring to her motorized wheelchair) they say “‘she has a car, we get to drive it!’ ...I try to teach them that it’s ok to come up to a person with a disability, and sort of ask questions—so that eventually when they grow up they say, ‘that’s not a problem, [Auntie] has one and she’s the same as other people.’”

It is necessary, according to an interviewee, to “[target] the actual audience that is going to be affected by these types of ads.” Pushing for more mutable boundaries in defining concepts of “normal” and “abnormal,” and consequently, beauty and ugliness,

are imperative. However, pushing cannot be shoving or forcing. If youth feel they are excessively manipulated they will backlash against the brand and its ideology. Educators cannot be too aggressive with media education, but at the same time, as an interviewee asserted, “if you keep at it and at it and at it, people are going to see the fact that—hey wait a minute—[disability] is not as negative as the way the media made it out to be.”

Closing Remarks

Social attitudes are one of the largest barriers to any minority group. Only by learning to integrate and accept differently-abled individuals socially through media education, visual literacy, youth awareness and rejecting “Western” tropes of beautification and bodily alteration can we move towards the fuller participation of diverse individuals. Wherever the media penetrates, improbable and inaccurate ideas of disability also penetrate the social landscape. Advertising is a powerful tool that not only constructs negative perceptions, but wields the power to reverse them. Disseminating more positive and accurate representation of diversity and differences as well as educating media receivers are only suggestions to create a more inclusive milieu. The real solution lies in people to, as an interviewee stated, “see things for [themselves].”

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Appendix I: Chart for Semiotic Analysis

As shown in Appendix II, additional columns were added to this chart for each product analyzed

Month and year, magazine	
Description of Ad/Product	
Themes	
Themes of body alteration?	
Result of alteration?	
What is shown	
Object?	
Person?	
Disability	
Disability Present?	
Disability Absent?	
Mode of address (Berger 1991)	
Direct?	
Indirect?	
Distance between viewer and ad (Kress, Van Leeuwen 1995)	
Who is spectator (subject)?	
What boundary is constructed between perceiver and perceived?	
Assumptions made of audience?	
How is image constructed as spectacle?	
Degree of	

trust/intimacy/choice/freedom allowed of audience	
Degree of naturalization (Barthes 1977)	
Is it present? y/n	
Degree of reality implied?	
Use of text	
How does text load the image? (Barthes 1977)	
What is connoted?	
What is denoted?	
Myths (fears of disability)?	
Present?	
Absent?	

Appendix II: Sample of Applied Analysis

Seventeen magazine sample: June, July, October, December 2006						
Description of Ad/Product:	"L'Oréal colour juice stick" life sized picture of girl's laughing face, w/ pic of product accompanying	"Pacsun clothes" Group of males and females playing football on beach, laughing	"K Swiss shoes": shows five youth, male and female, differing ethnicities and body sizes, displaying the shoes in differing settings. The pictures are linked together with a picture of a giant shoe	"Target clothing": girl wearing shirt same as bracelet design on opposite page	"Schwarzkopf hair care/Got2B": close up shot of celebrity Carmen Electra, hair done professionally	"Clearasil acne cream": shot of a dalmatian (before) and a dog with a few spots (after)
Themes						
Themes of body alteration?	X beauty product	X clothing	X clothing	X clothing, fashion	X beauty	X acne removal
Result of alteration?	Beauty, genuineness	Social acceptance	"coolness," in crowd, social acceptance	Showing yourself for who you are	Enticement of a potential sexual partner	Social acceptance
What is shown						
Object?			X Shoe	X product		X dogs
Person?	x	X people	X five youth	X person wearing product	X	
Disability						
Disability Present?						X shows "spotted," blemished skin as a social disability
Disability Absent?	x	x	X	x	X	

			however, it shows one youth sitting in a chair, which <i>could</i> be used to portray disability			
Mode of address						
Direct?	X close up in your face		X all medium shots, eye contact, eyes looking down at reader		X medium shot, direct eye contact	
Indirect?		X full shot, group looking away from camera		X close up girl looking away from camera		X dogs facing away reader
Distance between viewer and ad						
Who is spectator (subject)?	model	Reader 3 rd party viewer to group	reader		model	reader
What boundary is constructed between perceiver and perceived?	Minimal—tries to induce intimacy	Large—cannot participate in social discourse w/o proper clothes and 'proper' body	Large—all models have the same smug expression that imply "we are cool because we own the shoe"		Minimal—hail to purchase the product	Some, b/c indirect address, but reconnects w/ text
Assumptions made of audience?	Female, uses makeup, enjoys genuineness, freshness, values self	That readers are able-bodied individuals who will go to the beach	Young, hip, not ultra glamorous, likes comfort	That wearing certain clothes or "great design" (ie emphasis on appearance	That the readers have hair to style or would want to entice partners	Have acne problems and prefer to remove them

		and reveal their bodies in clothes		) will represent who you are		
How is image constructed as spectacle?	Large, life size			Dark colors, contrasting backgrounds; the models frame the shoe image	Up close, detailed	Visual before and after
Degree of trust/intimacy/choice/freedom in ad vs audience	Encourages ad to trust wearer	assumes there is freedom to choose social outcome	Assumes there is freedom to choose social outcome	There is a fair amount of distance between the viewer and the reader, because the readers do not yet own the shoe—but the models encourage the readers to do so	Encourages ad to trust electra	Trust and intimacy thru humor
Degree of naturalization						
Is it present? y/n	Y		n—seems scientific	Y	Y	N
Degree of reality implied?	Low: the image is highly refined. However, it attempts to prop up company's ideology with text	Large: it is implied that the social situation is attainable w/ proper clothes; places large emphasis on physical body to achieve social 'norms'		Large: The background appears to be natural, the clothes are casual the model, ordinary "street chic": attempts to appeal to a "regular" teen	Realistic; wants to make 'the chase' (males chasing females) using the product seem natural	Low—cannot remove spots on dog; uses humor
Use of text How does text load the image?						

(Barthes 1977)						
What is denoted?	"never fake"; delicious, fresh, juicy; "because you're worth it"	"wear what you like"—what you wear is your choice	"take charge"—show assertion against "disability" and become "smoother, softer, more beautiful"	N/A	"in control"	"things are going to look a lot clearer"—acne will go
What is connoted?	Beauty—resulting from use of product is natural—or at least seems to be; looks as delicious as it tastes—fresh, youthful—it is worth taking care of physical self no matter what, and if you feel you're worth it, you will take care of yourself with L'Oreal. The visual image is misaligned w/ the verbal msg: they are contradictory	What you wear is your choice in that if you don't align it with what is socially acceptable, you will be excluded	Remove the disability "cell by cell. Pore by pore. Day by day." Get to the root of it, and remove it from every level, because it will ruin your day. It is "healthy" to do so.	N/A	Implies product induces "heart pounding" mysteriousness	Socially, prospects will look clearer
Myths (fears of disability?)						
Present?			X fears of blemishes as a social			X fears of spots (pimples) as social

			rejection that will “ruin your day”; “prevent” any future possibilities of it			inhibitor
Absent?	x	x		X tries to show a diverse crowd of people—but disability could be included if taken a step further		

Maxim magazine sample August, October, November, December, 2006						
Description of Ad/Product:	“IZOD perform” fleece jacket; full shot	“Seiko watches”: half naked man seductively wearing the watch; medium shot	“Garnier Fructis hair style”	“Verizon mp3 player/phone”: close up	“Old spice deodorant: ” man not wearing deodorant avoided by numerous women at ball game; long shot	“Euphoria perfume”: men. Woman lustfully kissing man’s neck Close up w/ settings and characters
Themes						
Themes of body alteration?		X body accentuated with watch (as an accessory, fashion and timepiece)	X		X deodorant	X perfume
Result of alteration?	Warmth, protection, active in the cold	It becomes a reflection of identity	Social desirability		Female approval/attraction	Male-female relationship/attraction
What is shown ()						
Object?		Watch		x		

Person?	x	Man wearing watch	Person w/ before/after picture		x—a crowd of women avoiding a man	X people, product
Disability						
Disability Present?					x—but not visual	
Disability Absent?	X able-bodied man	X	X	x—but ambiguous— involves multiple senses, physical touch and aesthetic (“light me up...turn me on”		X—but ambiguous—only shows their heads
Mode of address						
Direct?		X eye contact with camera	x—close up of man’s face; eye contact w/ the camera in both b4 and after pics.	X text		
Indirect?	Man facing away from camera				Crowd and man looking at ball game, not camera	X man has eyes closed, embroiled in woman’s lust
Distance between viewer and ad						
Who is spectator (subject)?	Man looking into the distance, bent on achieving fitness (mountain hiking?) goal. Carrying pickaxe	Reader	Reader		reader	Reader
What boundary is constructed between		Small—direct	Small; ad direct, in	Direct address,	A panned shot....lar	Small; draws the

perceiver and perceived?		address	the face—both with man and product	but words are far apart, in the background, fading in and out—text invites intimacy	ge; viewer is third party observer	audience in with intimacy of moment
Assumptions made of audience?	Able-bodied, athletic, enjoys physical activity	Able bodied; dress/fashion used to identify social position	Male, able-bodied, interested in physical appearance	Interested in sexual relations, regardless of physical ability	Values cleanliness, sexual attraction and pleasant scent	Heterosexual, values good smell
How is image constructed as spectacle?	More emphasis on clothing in relation to environment vs body as spectacle	Product in color, person more subdued, black and white		Dark colors implying intimacy, desire—red, black	The sheer amount of women in the ad (hundreds)	Similar tones of color used throughout ad—conveys softness, vulnerability
Degree of trust/intimacy/choice/freedom in ad vs audience	Encourages audience to trust wearer	Encourages “time honored” trust for creating something as intimate as identity		b/c of intimacy constructed, implies trust	Encourages audience to trust the opinions of the women	Encourages reader to trust the couple
Degree of naturalization ()						
Is it present? y/n	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Degree of reality implied?	Realistic looking scene, though unlikely; Pictures used to prop values regarding physical performance and athleticism	Photo showing body ideal for men	Photos	Possible situation implied through words; no focus on bodily “imperfections” or achieving “perfection,” but rather on the feelings	Realistic looking scene; Situation creates humor through absurdity	Photo with colors altered

				surrounding intimacy (resulting from product use)		
Use of text How does text load the image? (Barthes 1977)						
What is connoted?	By wearing this fleece product, your performance as a winter athlete will be enhanced	Wearing the watch (external state) is used to reflect your internal self	If you use the product you will be in control, attractive, and brilliant—but flexible at the same time—ie not just the hair but the person themselves	The device can be likened to sexual acts, desires, bodies interacting	If you do not wear Old Spice, you will be socially impaired	Name of product carries message: You will achieve euphoria w/ product use
What is denoted?	“perform x”	“it’s your watch that tells most about who you are” Reflects body alteration ideals	“in-control brilliant style,” “flexible,” “long-lasting hold”	“push me, touch me, slip me, slide me, close, whisper to me, grip me, grab me, hold me, stroke me...”	“If you stink, it wouldn’t matter if you were the last guy on earth”	“euphoria”
Myths (fears of disability?)						
Present?	x—athleticism and able body-ism valued		x—emphasis on bodily alteration to achieve social desirability		x—perfection in smell=able-bodiedness	X—smelling good is rewarded with social/sexual fulfillment; you must be able-bodied to enjoy this; bodies are important

						in achieving physical man- woman relations
Absent?		x— external reflection of internal self=impo rtant (according to ad). Implies without proper fashion/fu nction item, you cannot accurately reflect interior state		X		

Appendix III: Flyer for recruitment

What is missing in this ad?

**What is missing from many ads like this?
Are you being represented in mainstream advertisement discourse?
How have these portrayals personally affected social perceptions of disability
and how does this make you feel?**

A Master's Degree study seeks to answer these questions. If you are 18-25, use Access services at this University based on physical disability needs, and are interested in giving your opinion on the absence or misrepresentation of disability/illness in advertisement please contact 905-846-2619 for an interview.

¹ United Colors of Benetton. <<http://www.benetton.com/html/index.shtml>> Accessed November 25, 2006.

Appendix IV: Questionnaire

What is your name?

How old are you?

What gender are you? M/F

Do you read magazines? Yes/No

If yes, do you read any of the following magazines?

1. Maxim
2. Seventeen
3. FHM
4. TeenVogue

Appendix V: Interview Questions

1. What do you do for fun/leisure (to lead in towards the fact that ads penetrate any aspect of life—which I then bring up)?
2. I have here a selection of commercial based print ads, with physical bodies either present or absent. Can you talk to me a little bit about what you think each ad is trying to communicate? Consider the body and beauty.
3. I have here some ads that show disabled peoples—what are your thoughts on these representations? (after their response, give academic examples of portrayal interpretations e.g. portrayals of disability as a charity pity case, overblown hero, or survivor (Davis 2002, Zola 1982, Wendell 1996))
4. Can you think of any examples where you've felt ads have shown disabled peoples? Do you think those portrayals are accurate? If not, do you think the lack of portrayals are representative of your own experiences?
5. Do you think images in the media such as magazines and ads have an influence on others' opinions of your experiences? What about your *own* experiences as a disabled individual?
6. Should I use aspects of this interview within my study, may I contact you for further information/approval of contextualization of the work? (none of this information will be used without your permission)

Appendix VI: Consent Form

“Beauty and health portrayals in youth targeted magazine advertising: Where does the disabled body fit?”

Consent Form

Ryerson University and York University: Communication and Culture

This study is being conducted by Sabrina Siu, a student in the graduate Communication and Culture program, and supervised by Dr. Jean Mason, of the same program.

I am conducting a study about the under representation of youths with physical disabilities in print advertisement media, and I invite you to participate in this research. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Background and Purpose of Study

The purposes of this study are:

- To determine the role of print advertisements in communicating social values
- To understand how these values are reflected in the exclusion of individuals with physical disabilities in daily life

Thus, what is of interest is how the experiences of individuals living with a physical disability differentiates from what is portrayed and, given these answers, how successful print advertisements are at disseminating realistic cultural values. Ten individuals are to be interviewed.

Procedures

If you agree to participate in this study I will ask you to complete a short questionnaire that you can pick up at your university access centre. Based on your response, you may be requested to participate in an interview where questions regarding your opinion of advertisement portrayals of the disabled will be asked. I may follow up on the telephone for up to three times at a later date in only to clarify information stated in the interview. The interview will be audio recorded within a confidential university setting, and should take approximately twenty minutes.

To summarize, your involvement could entail:

- A short questionnaire
- A possible interview
- Potential (up to three) clarification telephone follow ups

If there is no clarification required, I will be contacting you when your quotes have been incorporated into the thesis for your approval. This should be approximately two months from the date of the interview.

Confidentiality

The records of this study will be kept confidential. I will not include information that will allow you to be identified in any manner. Only I will have access to these records, and the tapes will be destroyed after the thesis is complete. You will be able to review

and edit the quotes chosen for the study, to your satisfaction, and all quotes in the final paper will be direct and non-attributable.

Risks or Discomforts:

There is a risk of social or psychological discomfort should you recall events that have had a negative impact on your life. There is also a risk of physical disability (ie personal health) being linked to social perceptions of disability. This is necessary to determine the role different able-ism plays in constructs of media, and public responses.

I acknowledge these potential risks. You are not obliged to divulge information you are uncomfortable with sharing. You may discontinue the interview at any time.

Benefits of the Study

As the media is vital in shaping views of the disabled body, it is important to locate the areas where individuals with disability are undermined or portrayed negatively in order to alter the potential dissemination of unrealistic cultural values. This study will address the gap between disabled and non disabled groups not only in advertising itself, but also by attempting to set an example of the importance of communication between these two groups in order to arrive at a more accurate understanding of subjective experiences rather than mere portrayals. With these realizations, it becomes possible for this study to stake a claim against the marginalizing effects of current stereotypes. This will make it possible to propose opportunities to move towards more inclusive advertising, and alter the negative effects of inaccurate messages, while considering the much neglected opinions of disabled individuals in shaping these changes for the future.

This study will thus attempt to deal with disability as a diversity issue rather than a social stigma while informing the audience of the “real life” aspects involved in the disabled experience. Consequently, it will provide material aiming to change the cultural attitudes towards disability, and particularly youths with disability, in one of the most mainstream and important forms of communication.

I cannot guarantee, however, that you will receive any benefits from participating in this study.

Voluntary Nature of Participation:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your choice of whether or not to participate will not influence your future relations with Ryerson University. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and to stop your participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are allowed.

At any particular point in the study, should you feel uncomfortable with any of the questions asked, or the outcome of the questions asked you may refuse to answer or stop participation altogether.

Contacts and Questions

My name is Sabrina Siu. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact me at (905)846-2619 and ssiu@ryerson.ca. You may also contact my supervisor, Jean Mason with any questions: 416 979-5000 ext. 6380 or jmason@ryerson.ca. Further concerns can be addressed through the Ryerson University Research Ethics Board:

Research Ethics Board
c/o Office of the Associate Vice President, Academic
Ryerson University
350 Victoria Street
Toronto, ON M5B 2K3
416-979-5042

Agreement:

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this agreement and have had a chance to ask any questions you have about the study. Your signature also indicates that you agree to be in the study and have been told that you can change your mind and withdraw your consent to participate at any time. You have been given a copy of this agreement.

You have been told that by signing this consent agreement you are not giving up any of your legal rights.

Name of Participant (please print)

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

Your signature here indicates you give full consent to be audio taped for the purposes of this study.

Signature of Participant

Date

Appendix VII: The Interviews

Interviewee #1

Gender: Female

Do you read magazines? Yes; Chatelaine, Entertainment, In Touch, Life and Style

What do you do for leisure?

I like to watch hockey, go to the movies, watch American Idol (to make fun of it), watch soap operas; it's a good way to get rid of stress. I also try to read. I have a stress lamp I plug in that has dolphins in it. My girlfriend painted me a dolphin mural too.

When you engage in these activities—such as movie watching, or going to hockey games, one thing that is unavoidable is the advertisements that you are bombarded with. Can you talk to me a little bit about examples of disabled peoples in the ads you've seen?

The 20 minutes before a film is a great amount of ads...I think when I went to the movies last time there was one ad with a person in a wheelchair in it—but just one...it was advertising for buying tickets more easily, such as with credit card or Interac.

I've seen a few around the city such as cancer campaigns and worker's compensation....

The ads are based heavily on the medical model, pity, charity cases—I can't do things for myself.

Do you believe, then, that these ads have an influence on others' opinions of your experiences?

Definitely. They just perpetuate the systemic chatter that people hear—it makes it okay for them to judge--or when you go out for dinner, and giving the able-bodied person the bill, because the disabled person may want to take it.

Definitely, and you can see that these ideas affect the younger generation's attitudes towards the disabled and what is acceptable.

Even my young nephews are starting; they're like Auntie Bobbi has her own "car" (referring to her motorized wheelchair)—[they say] "she has a car, we get to drive it!" I try to teach them that it's ok to come up to a person with a disability, and sort of ask questions—so that eventually when they grow up they say, "that's not a problem, Auntie Bobbi has one and she's the same as other people."

"Same as other people"—that is something that I'd like you to think about as I show you these ads to give you an idea of what is portrayed:

“Live your life”

To me that only perpetuates that disability is a negative thing, something that’s not normal, it’s something ‘out there’

Here are some clothing ads: “to perform” (shows a picture of a man in a jacket, jogging)

It shows that you need to be ‘able-bodied’ to show it off

I find this one interesting, because it does not show any bodies or people, which is the focus here—but only words

It doesn’t say anything about disability, and it doesn’t divide between disability and able-bodied.

If you flip quickly through this you’ll see ideal bodies and a suggested lifestyle...

I’d love to see an ad like that with a person in a wheelchair wearing really pretty sexy clothing—you don’t see that!

I don’t know if you’ve seen the “Dove Real Beauty Campaign” where they show individuals of all different races, ages and sizes

I think I’ve seen a movie of this this past week...no, they do not consider real beauty.

They talk about body images and how it reflects in women

It’s like people with disabilities don’t really care what they look like—or at least that’s the assumption across the media. I personally care about what I look like all the time, or else I wouldn’t be eating salad all the time!

This is another ad that doesn’t show bodies, but just the product, and it says “the definitive argument for cloning,” really emphasizing factors of perfection...there is a similar one that says “blondes, brunettes, redheads....some perfection is debatable” and does the same thing

I don’t know what people would do if someone who was blonde, redhead or brunette came in a wheelchair!

I don’t know, they never show any thing with any sort of disability, unless of course it’s showing something like an ad for a telephone...

Or geared specifically to disability products in a disability magazine...or perhaps charity ads

Exactly. I can see why they're doing it, but I disagree with it. What about all the kids that are reading all these magazines or seeing this stuff on TV, what about the little kids who are learning these things who are disabled or become disabled? How do we expect them to have a good self-image, self esteem?

Do you feel that the ads that do show disabilities reflect on your own experiences at all?

I think there needs to be ads where we're selling cologne or perfume or clothes, we need that.

Interviewee #2

Gender: Male

Do you read magazines?

Yes. Car magazines, technical magazines, I have flipped through Maxim's and FHM's.

What do you like to do for leisure?

Advocacy for disability, ride motorcycles, make art

Can you think of any ads in the magazines that you read that you thought was really memorable?

Well car magazines are geared primarily towards males, and it's done in such a way that regardless of what is being advertised it is being done with exceptionally beautiful females in limited attire. Is it a product, an image, sex, what is it?

So you would agree that ads portray ideologies of society, then?

Oh absolutely! If you look at beer commercials, there's a perfect example, if you're drinking Brand X beer, you will get all the female companionship a guy could want, they will probably be between the ages of 18-25, probably going to have a fashion model physique, athletic, able-bodied, and oh yeah, they drink beer too. And you don't ever see any person who is physically challenged in any of these ads, ever.

Can you think of any examples of ads that have shown disabled peoples?

Who is Disabilities magazine geared towards?

Individuals with disabilities

Exactly

I would like you to think about this as I show you these ads (ads that do not show disabled bodies):

"Live your life"

Yes, you look at the age, some of them 18-25, both of them very attractive, nothing there that may connote the fact that they may or may not have a disability. From a photography point of view, I think it is a beautiful picture, but who is this going to be geared to?

What does it imply about how you have to be in order to live your life?

Exactly

I find this one interesting, because it does not show any bodies or people, which is the focus here—but only words

Again, it's designed to stimulate the senses. It is visually appealing, modern in its appearance, designed as a trendy item to be in the 'in-crowd'; it's not specifically geared towards any sort of body, but there are subliminal things happening.

Here is another ad that does not show bodies, but says “the definitive argument for cloning”

It's giving the idea that there is a perfection and in order to be perfect you have to come from something perfect.

Do you think images in the media such as ads have an influence on other people's opinions of your experiences?

It has enormous effect on me; it is not uncommon at all to go in a chatroom, in a myspace, whatever—15 year old girls will be like “I am fat, my thighs are big, I want to look like that supermodel over there.” Everything is geared towards this stereotypical image of what perfection is. Of course, since young people are being shown, they're being targeted, it becomes what everyone strives for.

If you don't have an ipod you're probably 'not cool'...I don't have one, so I guess I'm out...

What about stereotypes towards your own experiences?

Well, if you look at people with disabilities, I mean that to me is like—I don't know if it was an insult—I'm not really sure what to make of it—to assume that a person with a brain injury means that they're automatically someone mentally deficient, or someone lesser, who must obviously have lower standards of life or no moral standards whatsoever, therefore you're going to be an axe murderer, you're deviant, you use chainsaws to kill people, and things like that—I mean, I've had this happen to me!²

Where do you think people's opinions of these stereotypes come from?

Ahhh boy...I would suggest that they come from a variety of areas. A lot of it is based on upbringing—because you know something, they have to learn it from somewhere, and I am not subscribing to the idea that people are older and they are set in their ways. You know something? Ways are just guidelines, can they can be changed. It's like a person

² The interviewee is referring to an incident which he elaborated on prior to the interview: That is the response of an employer to his memory loss as well as physical impairment. The interviewee was asked if he was an axe murderer. The reference to “mentally deficient” is the assumption of others that someone with any sort of brain injury is “unable to think or operate” to engage in employment. The reference to “chainsaws” is to stereotypes that are seen in the media, specifically the movie The Texas Chainsaw Massacre, which he elaborates on later. The interviewee concentrated on stereotypes and responses to disabilities overall, since I indicated it was the central focus of the study.

who is a wife beater—but if the kids see that, chances are that kid is going to learn from example, imitation.

The entertainment industry has a HUGE, and I mean HUUGE effect—The Texas Chainsaw Massacre—I mean we're talking about this hillbilly who is cutting people up with a chainsaw, not a whole lot of education, therefore must be deviant, an axe murderer. The entertainment industry is SO guilty! Don't even file an appeal. You're guilty. Just deal with it.

I'll give you a really good example of that. Do you remember the show the Xfiles? Look at the main characters—all of them are very attractive, well educated people, all have had stable careers, whether it be good guys or bad guys—but the so-called freaks they have, whether it be human or whatever, lived out in Nohoobitsville underneath the uh...Chevy Caprice—probably not very well educated, not attractive at all. They were portrayed in a monster-esque fashion.

A villain, one of the very common stereotypes of disability in the media. I mean, you have the villain, the hero who triumphs over their disability, or a charity or pity case, in which others must feel sorry for.

Who are YOU to tell me how terrible my life is? How are you to know I don't have a fantastic life?

That's very prevalent specifically in advertisements—How do you feel about the under representation of disability in such a context?

It angers me but it more saddens me, because people with disabilities make up a significant part of the population. There is 15% of the population being totally ignored, or if they aren't being ignored, they're being put down to such a low level that they are almost non-existent. So people are catering to 85% of the population who are probably going to be able to afford to buy the product, as supposedly people with disabilities cannot get a job...

And if you don't have the money to buy the product, why advertise to us to begin with?

People often advertise to able-bodied individuals—

Hi I'm over here, I have a mouth, I can talk too!

Would it help to take on a diversity approach to differences?

Right now the cultural issue is flavour of the month....everyone wants to talk about diversity; next week it may be environmental issue, and people may want to talk about that—but you're right, you're not going to hear a lot of discussion about disability, because too few people are in that category for it to have any significant meaning.

Would it be beneficial if people took on such an approach, then?

Absolutely—it would be priceless—you wouldn't be able to put a price on it! Because the minute you address, and keep on pressing and pressing with the issue, people will start listening. There is something I learned a while back as the vice-president of the motorcycle club—I did some media stuff there—the thing I learned was there's NO such thing as bad press—any publicity is good publicity. As long as there's something out there, at least people are going to pay attention. You just can't have an article every two months: "Oh, someone with a disability climbed Mt. Everest," and it's only a 3 line article. Well good, I want to know more, I want to hear how hard it was, what motivated them, the tragedies, the easy stuff, I want to hear everything, don't give me a 3 line thing.

So any sort of penetration into the mainstream is good publicity?

Sure, because people WILL start to notice it

What if it's a negative portrayal?

That's an interesting question...that's an excellent point—at certain angles, publicity is negative. But inevitably, once you start getting more and more stories of people with disabilities out there, then it will start to have a higher quality in production. It's like taking baby steps. They may take one step and fall fifteen times, but it's ok, they tried. I'm almost wondering whether or not that would be part of the growing pain that goes along with it. Is it negative? Yes, I can see a certain amount of negativity happening, I'm not going to deny that, but at the same time, if you keep at it and at it and at it, people are going to see the fact that—hey wait a minute—it's not as negative as the way the media made it out to be, and hey, 'we can see things for ourselves.'

People will come to their own decisions?

Yes. What do you want to do, tell me the facts, or sell me an item?

There is not demand for disability in selling products—the target demographic is able-bodied.

It's grossly under represented. It's an insult. I can't understand the media can tell themselves with a straight face saying, 'Yes we are trying to represent the people.' Well, what percentage of the people are you trying to represent here?

On Geordi (a blind character in a TV show) in Star Trek:

His disability became less visible. Suddenly in the movie he is not wearing the visor anymore. So they went from portraying a person with a more visible disability to hiding that disability, almost treating it as non existent.

It was supposed to elevate his social status, but at the same time, what it did in my opinion, was it was done to make him more "perfect" to sell the film more? I wonder. It's a rhetorical question.

“Who are you to tell me what I can or cannot do? And what do you know about me to make that determination, to arbitrarily decide what it is that I can or cannot do?”

What about where people are portrayed as treating disability as a tragedy? Do you think it is the media exaggerating or do you think there is some truth to it?

I want to tell you something: there are two answers to that question.

If you are born into this world with a disability, because you don't know anything else, I think you would perceive things a little differently. However, if you are born into the world completely healthily, as you move on in life, you end up acquiring a disability for whatever reason—and I can tell you from my own experience that it ain't pretty. Yeah there are times when you wonder if it is worth going on or not. Yes, I've thought that; but I've decided personally that no, I ain't ready to go yet. So here I am, you can take me with my gazillion brain cells that are cooked or fried, and you have a choice. You either accept everything you see in front of you, and you accept them the way they are, or put one foot in front of the other and walk away and never see that person again, and say 'no I don't have to be around that person anymore because that person does not meet my criteria of what a full life is.' My decision was very simple—I got a LOT to do still—and if that means that people are going to call me names, look at me funny, insult me, call me an idiot, if you're gonna call me an idiot, make sure you spell it right!

It's a lot easier closing your eyes and burying your head in the sand.

Interviewee #3

Gender: Female

Do you read magazines?

Yes. Marie Claire, Vogue, In Style, those with longer text passages: more text based magazines

[discussing the types of ads found in the magazines she reads]

There are ads that do represent disabilities are generally for services and those that do not are for commercial purposes (showing ads portraying disability)

Well I mean those are all commercial--I don't think they market the same way they do for commercial based ads

Commercial ads are targeted to the "mainstream" market now. There are a couple reasons why, specifically--the difference between charity and commercial based advertisements specifically commercialization vs institutionalization

Advertising is provided in circles--advertising circles that exploit the use of people in a wheelchair looking for a kind of specific wheelchair: a [specific] body type, people looking for a supplier for certain [wheelchair needs]

Yes, I was pointing out that this type of advertising is targeted towards those with disabilities.

I am now going to show you a couple of ads that do not represent physical disability, but there are present, ideologies of bodily perfection

All of those represent a type of body--there's only one model type
(showing ad of no bodies present but ideologies perpetuated)

I suppose this gives the opportunity to have an opinion about everything, but for something like this is really black and white--you can't really have an opinion, because it is the way it is. Mainstream advertising is very black and white, there's ONE representation that they're trying to bring across, they're white, middle class, heterosexual, able-bodied; those other than what they're trying to get across are hypersexual, and are represented as Other--white women, large breasted, skinny, and no variation at all

What about the Dove Real Beauty Campaign" where they show individuals of all different races, ages and sizes?

I think there are a lot of positive aspects to that campaign; I'm not familiar with it--but I know it is touring kind of like an art exhibit, actually, [where they] show photographs of "natural bodies" of real women that have evolved into this [project where] several scientists and feminists and all these people are on board; I think there are a lot of

positive aspects to that, like if you look at some of them, showing it to younger girls, it's targeting the actual audience that's going to be affected by these type of ads. No 15 year old girl does that to themselves--it's impossible.

15-35 year olds are the target

Exactly--there's no targeted campaign. There's still a lot of these ads--part of the campaign is on the website where they'll ask you to pose the question in terms of the women's body, so it's implying that even though these women were different from [the mainstream] they are still somehow flawed

Is it through a survey?

Yeah, it's a survey--[for example] a small breasted woman

So again, beauty is put in terms of black and white...I don't think there's a right and wrong in advertising

What you're looking at are pictures of the body and representations of that...you could say--in terms of mainstream advertising, it would not fly-- people from mainstream advertising would never represent someone with a disability, but that's stretching it also; you have to know the disability, you have to know the buyers

[Discussing the TV show House, where the main character has a disability]

It is the whole needing a cure...the medical model

Exactly, but what they emphasized was the idea of as soon as you get better you will be having sex with your wife right away

[On movies where the main character becomes disabled]

I've had a lot of able-bodied friends who have had a lot of experience in jobs with disabilities and they claim that there is a huge outcry

I mean I've met a LOT of people, and I mean a LOT; my friend was saying that literally at the end she couldn't watch it [when a non disabled character becomes disabled]; the client [who is disabled] will see that it's her rationalization--but some people will consider disability a tragedy, and that's because they haven't had the experience of what that life is like, and they can function--if they have the right equipment and support in their lives, they can get jobs, and volunteer, and that's the thing--its kind of like perhaps people have forgotten that at one point regardless of whether or not she has a disability her life can be good

I was wondering if you could talk about your own personal experiences with disability as a result of the media

I'm not sure that I can. I mean I'm all about Oscars and stuff like that; I'll look at fashion

magazines, in terms of that, that's what I look at--but in terms of wanting to see myself in ads, I know that it's not there

Do you think there are actions the ad industry can take to diversify representations?

Well yeah--they do a little bit, it's starting

It's really well selected

It's really simple to say 'put people with disabilities into advertising' but if you look at representations of different ethnic backgrounds, for example a black woman: you still see objectification. It is still a really objectified image—these women are practically naked—they're being showed off for their body parts, but at the same time, they are a really normalized image. This is probably, unfortunately, in a magazine of this kind, in mainstream advertising.

The difference that I've noticed too is that they're cultivating younger readers

Yes, these are white women; they're all pretty much the same. If these were all black women, there would be something else shown. [The white women] are clothed in white colors, they're very angelic almost. But if it were black women in the same clothes, they would be very racialized in what they're wearing, probably something very African....wearing animal prints, there's usually something to connect them with animals. I think that's where the trouble would be in the same way with representations of disability. There's that same sense of Other, the sense of the bodies not being 'normal.' ...Unless ads stop objectifying and racializing women, there never will be a fully accurate representation of disability. The disability stereotypes are just so much stronger [than what is seen in the media].

Interview #4

Gender: Male

Do you read magazines?

I have, but I mostly read technology related, political, or news websites.

I have here a couple of commercial based print ads, with physical bodies either present or absent. Can you talk to me a little bit about what you think each ad is trying to communicate?

The American Eagle is communicating youth, and energy and to "Seize the day"...There's also physical intimacy...not quite the right word...implied too, with the guy carrying the girl.

I don't relate as much to the second one (alcohol ad), as I didn't get the meaning of the ad until after I read the text. I've seen similar ads before and I feel it's trying to make me focus on the product rather than on the "lifestyle" the product conveys.

The Izod ad I wouldn't have appreciated at all/understood if I hadn't already been familiar with the Izod brand, as it conveys quite an active lifestyle which is not really my thing

I have here an ad that makes reference to disability—can you talk to me a little bit about what you see here?

This ad paints a very negative view on being in a wheelchair, albeit understandably.

Representation that being confined to a wheelchair is a bad thing: This is certainly true for a previously able-bodied person, so it's not offensive or anything... but at the same time, it is encouraging a view that being in a wheelchair is "less" than being fully able-bodied.

Can you think of any examples where you've felt ads have shown "disabled" peoples?

The only ads I've seen are similar to the ones you showed me, or are for foundations aimed at serving a specific cause.

So Charity based advertising...where specific stereotypes are shown.

What do you think those portrayals, though—do you think they are painting an accurate picture?

While these cases are certainly good, it encourages the view of disability as "charity case" which is not how I want to be treated.

Do you think advertisement images have an influence on others' opinions of your experiences?

I think that images in magazines and ads certainly have an impact on people's pre-conceptions of me, as not everyone has direct interaction with people who have a disability. It is not currently well-accepted that some people have speech impediments or mild physical challenges, and the media influences how visible groups of people are to the common audience.

Interviewee #5

Gender: Male

Do you read magazines?

I don't really read *too* many magazines but I have

What is your opinion on media portrayals of disability?

Media portrayal? What media portrayal? I remember a few years back that maybe Sears had one or two people in wheelchairs, but in anything mainstream I've never really seen anything. As for TV the only one that comes to mind is Malcolm's friend on Malcolm in the Middle. I'm not really sure how I feel about the character in that actually... But for the most part if there *is* actually a disabled character in any form of movie/TV show/book etc they're rather polar in nature: either a case of someone to be pitied, or an "inspiration" because of their "bravery".

I agree with you on how the media constructs dichotomies or extremes--they try to generalize, to make it "easier" for the public to understand, but they're dealing with here something that 1) caters to "market realities," making sales or 2) something the ad producers know not a whole lot about due to lack of research...or lack of knowledge--what are your thoughts on these portrayals, though?

I think neither helps. I think the media needs to start incorporating disabled people into different roles and not have their disability be their defining characteristic. Perhaps you've felt a similar way with movies etc where the defining characteristic of an Asian character is their Asian-ness?

I am the same about the Asian stereotypes--firstly I am happy to be represented when I see an Asian person in ads, but then, I say to myself, "Wait a minute, why do they have chopsticks in their hair and why are they eating sushi?" Complete stereotypes. Do you think the ideas the media disseminates affect your own personal experiences?

Since these portrayals tend to be so extreme, often the reactions I receive are either "Poor you" or "Wow! You inspire me!" I think the more that people with disabilities show up in media as just part of society the more society will accept them as just average citizens. After all, the world seems to get its view of reality from what it sees on TV!

I have here a selection of ads, some showing disability, some not—I was wondering if I could get your response to them, considering the body and beauty.

Wanna hear something sad? None really offend me or evoke any emotional response. I'm so used to not being included in the beauty spectrum I don't expect to be anymore. Perhaps I've even come to believe the same way. I say beauty is on the inside, but really feel it is on the outside! I'm brainwashed! I actually thought the tequila one was good since it *hinted* at least that beauty was in the eyes of the beholder.

Interview #6

Gender: Female

Do you read magazines? Yes

Before we started the interview, we noticed that there aren't many disabled bodies in mainstream commercial advertising—and there are two branches—I sent you the images: commercial and charity based advertising, I was wondering if I could get some opinions of why you think this is?

I think it's because a lot of people are afraid and it taps into the fear. So if they were to have people with disabilities in print, suddenly it's in your face and you can't really ignore it, whereas if you look at how society is constructed in general, a lot of the elevators, or what have you, are placed to the side, so it's easy for people to put it out of their minds. But since the magazines you've specifically chosen are mainstream, that would be in their face, so they can't ignore it. Suddenly you're overthrowing the balance, because you're suddenly saying, "Well, this image of beauty that you've presented in your magazine, there's suddenly different varieties of it so what do you do with that"

Varying degrees of beauty, you don't think people have come to terms with different types

I think it taps into that fact that the idea of beauty is very narrow, so if you have people of different abilities and even like you were saying the Dove campaign that starts to push the envelope a little bit, because it's going outside that typical image of beauty which is thin and tall and blonde even.

And that campaign was advocating images such as a "curvy body" as not mainstream, or "smaller breasts" in the context of women, and it was saying, no those were away from mainstream beauty, stretching the definition of beauty—but again, not including differently-abled individuals.

I think they started realizing with that campaign that the majority of women reading the magazines were not fitting that narrow ideal of beauty. However, they feel that recognizing—for example, me as a woman with a disability—I have yet to actually see someone in a magazine that *I* can identify with on that level. So finally someone got the importance of having women such as those in the Dove campaign, to have women who look at them identify—so whether you're more curvy; or you have smaller breasts, you're a different race or whatever—that they *started* to, but somewhere along the line they stopped with disability, and I think that it also ties into the fear, because then they would have to expose it and they would have to stop and explain "why are we suddenly including this as an ideal of beauty." I think it also has to do with the fact that people don't realize how many people there actually are with disabilities in the world, whereas with women or men in general, there's still a lot of men and women, so I think they

realize that there needs to be different things for people to identify with—but I don't think that people realize the numbers are that big within the disability community.

Within Canada the most recent census says it's 12-15%--but if you think about the models that they use for these ads, it's such a small percentage of people—probably less than the amount disabled individuals—that are this thin and tall—to represent all of women kind or all of mainstream commercial media, I found this during my research, and I found it to be quite ironic.

And really I think those women or men are supposed to be representations of what society says we should strive for in our definition of beauty, and how we should appear, but the reality is that a lot of us fall out of those margins of that ideal—like no matter how much I try, I'll never be a size 2—like that's just not something that is possible. And in reality, I'm not even that far off from that—but because that number is ideal, I'm seen as outside of that. And then you put my disability in there, and I'm not even existent, never mind outside.

Now you bring up the question of ideals, so I guess you're identifying with these ads and media as coming up with specific ways of presenting yourself. Do you think that advertising is responsible for constructing opinions of how others should be viewed in the context of daily life? Do you think they reflect on your own experiences?

Well just what you were saying in terms of targeting youth, I think that definitely happens—like young girls do take what they see in these magazines and try to live it out in reality, whether it be through dieting or eating disorders, or buying certain clothes or having to have that certain standard...and even in discussions in listening to young girls talk, a lot of it is in designer clothes or designer bags, you know, what they can or cannot eat because they'll gain weight—so they're striving for ideals that are present in these magazines, because it's in their face all the time. I remember being that age myself and going through the same thing, and thinking "this is what I have to do to be normal," and finally I realized that normal doesn't exist. There is a variety of people, a diversity of people, and unfortunately, magazines don't reflect that.

At this point I'm going to address the ads that I showed you. I was wondering if you could consider the body and beauty in discussing the ad that you picked

I picked the beer ad. Well they're picking certain females that are thin and have big breasts and you know, somewhat curvy, but not really. I think that it taps into the ideal that it exists—and if they're targeting males, the women have to be heterosexual—because if they're not, are they going to gravitate towards it in the same way? This ad uses women to sell the product. I was looking at it going, okay, there is this image of a woman clearly, and the beer is off to the side. Okay, so you're selling the *beer* or the *woman*?

Or these idealized bodies?

Yes, and I remember once while talking about the media in general, a lot of the times, these women are used to sell a specific lifestyle, so it almost sends this message that if you use these beautiful women with gi-normous breasts, you know, and you drink this beer, then you're gonna get this woman. So it just taps into people's psyche that you think "okay, I'm going to attain that lifestyle."

And it's not just fear, it's the ideal of perfection in both the text and the refined image—so in order to achieve social acceptance you have to be "perfect" and "perfect" is this idea that's brought across by advertising?

Yeah—essentially, it's if you buy this product you'll look like this person, but no one tells you that she's been airbrushed three times and that's not her real hair color you're looking at...nobody tells you these things and you can't tell by looking at the ads. Take the women out and what are they selling? Just a product. But it's not nearly as interesting without the woman in there.

Can you think of specific instances where individuals have made references to these ideals in your interactions? I'm addressing different-able bodied ism as a minority group, as diversity, here.

I used to hear comments like "you may never be beautiful but you're smart, so don't worry about it" and I'm just like what does that mean? And I've heard many variations of that throughout my adolescence and thinking "okay, what is your definition of beauty, and why do I suddenly not fit within that?" I think it has a lot to do with these ads and the media in general, because it basically sends the message that if you do certain things such as exercise, dieting or what have you, wear certain clothes or bling or whatever, you'll look like the people in the ads. But if you're a person with a disability and for whatever reason you can't do those things, then exercise might be difficult, dieting...why would you want to diet anyways, because you're not able to eat certain things, and suddenly you're just off the map. You don't really exist. I've had people ignore me in interactions, in relationship type interactions, guys only want to hook up with certain girls, which is being reinforced by the media, you're kind of getting erased off the radar. Maybe if people finally saw more people with disabilities, then they would see that it's still possible to have a disability and be beautiful. But until that happens, I think that people are still going to feel ostracized and excluded.

So are you saying in terms of future action, you really think exposure to the general public, education and knowledge is the best way to address diversity?

I definitely think so, because it eliminates the fear that I was talking about earlier. When people have awareness, my hope is that they become less afraid. And with that decline of fear, they're likely to engage with different forms of media and have people who reflect diverse backgrounds more present in the media.

If you see ads now in comparison with decades ago, you'll see ads have groups of different ethnic backgrounds and I think that that's an approach that needs to be taken towards different abled body-ism.

We were just talking about how different groups have come a long way to receive recognition, and you just said different ethnic groups having more exposure and how that's now trickling into the media. But I have yet to see that with people with disabilities, that same exposure. But I also think that's especially necessary, because we need the media to get the message across, because we're all exposed to the media on a daily basis, so once you get more involved in the media, it can help you in your goal of education. But you have to get there. And once you get there, have the right image portrayed.

There are so many generalizations, dichotomies, ranging from pity to superheroes—I have heard people say “I want to be portrayed as real people, I don't want to be seen just for a disability”

That's what I'm hoping for for print, that contradicting thoughts aren't shown. Like you said, you get the pity thing or “oh you're so courageous.” If you look at television, a lot of disability portrayals are based on stereotypes. I would like to see ads that actually portray reality, just people being people regardless of your identity. It's not like you would put people in ads with a stamp on their head saying “I'm bisexual.” Like you can't go through the ads and identify who's gay and who's a lesbian. You can't do that by looking. I would like the same thing to happen for individuals with disabilities. Obviously have their disability *visible*, if you're looking at physical disability, but not have that be the focus of the ad.