

Heiss, Sarah N, Locating the Bodies of Women and Disability in Definitions of Beauty - An Analysis

Vol 31, No 1 (2011)

Locating the Bodies of Women and Disability in Definitions of Beauty: An Analysis  
of Dove's Campaign for Real Beauty

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Keywords:

Feminist-Disability Theory, Physical disability, Advertising, Ideology of Naïve Integrations

Abstract

Dove's "Campaign for Real Beauty" aimed to widen cultural understandings of diverse bodies and embodied beauty. In this essay, however, I question the ability of the campaign to confront the limits of our current cultural understandings of embodied beauty and diversity. Drawing on feminist-disability theory, I argue that the campaign represented an ideology of naïve integration. While the acceptance of diverse physical bodies was espoused by the campaign, the textual and visual discourse simultaneously reflected many traditional beauty standards and practices. I draw key examples from the discourse to support my claims that the campaign's discourse (re)inscribed meaning to the normate body and (re)made the body through traditional beauty practices. The subsequent ramifications of societal understandings of the body and the aesthetic value of women with physical disabilities are discussed.

The body is a political site understood and experienced in relation to discursive

productions of what is normal and desirable. Feminist standpoints have identified social systems that serve to reproduce the dominance of white, able-bodied, males. More broadly, however, feminist sensibilities are concerned with how difference is invested with meaning and the oppression that exists due to unequal social arrangements (Mays, 2006). Due to their common investment in exploring the social systems that oppress individuals, feminist sensibilities have been paired with social models of disability to analyze and critique the representation and treatment of people with disabilities. Specifically, feminist-disability theory addresses the complex intersection of gender and disability. The theory challenges and resists existing social relations that shape that normalize particular bodily conjugations (Garland-Thomson, 1997). It interrogates the politics of appearance, representation, and labeling to "forge positive identities" (p. 22).

Because advertisements contribute greatly to public understandings of the body, Gills (2009) argued that "it is not surprising, then, that in the wave of feminist scholarship and activism that swept through western countries in the 1960s and 1970s, advertising was a key target for analysis and critique" (p. 94). Indeed, advertising has become an unavoidable part of our daily routines. It is estimated that the average US citizen, for example, sees or hears 3000 advertisements daily (Kilbourne 1999). Advertisements often rely heavily on stereotypes concerning how the body should look and be performed (Gills, 2009). Analyses of gender (Goffman, 1979; Killbourne, 1994), race (Taylor, Landreth, & Bang, 2005), and disability (Nemeth, 2000) in advertisements have revealed stereotypical representations that privilege white, able-bodied males. Further, the media frequently situates the "normal" female body as the presence of high cheek bones, even skin tones, long legs, and the absence of fat, wrinkles, physical disabilities, and deformities (Kilbourne, 1994; Garland-Thomson, 2002). Kilbourne (1994; 1999)

argued that these narrow representations have led to individual and societal dissatisfaction with the actual lived bodies that comprise most of the public.

Because representations of beauty not only impact what the larger society believes about the body, but also how individuals value and identify with their own bodies, it is important to consider the discourses that contribute to the defining of beauty.

Dove's "Campaign for Real Beauty" is one such contributor. With the goal of broadening women's understandings of beauty and acceptance of bodily differences, the Dove company, known for its skin and beauty products, launched the Campaign for Real Beauty in 2004 (Etcoff, Orbach, Scott, & D'Agostino, 2004). The campaign was marked by various media that aimed to expose the traditional media, offer more realistic depictions of beauty, and stimulate dialogue about new beauty definitions. Short films sought to expose the media's use of digital technology to create images of bodies that appeared flawless and the media's impact on women's body image. Magazine, television, and web-based advertisements reinforced this message and offered new images to consider by depicting "real" women, not models. Further, audiences could connect to articles and workshop materials online for more information and activities. Dove envisioned their campaign as innovative because: (1) their representations of women were unlike the images found in the contemporary media environment; (2) their campaign offered a critique of the images that dominated the media environment; and (3) their campaign encouraged dialogue about alternative forms of beauty.

Drawing on the feminist-disability framework, I explore how the Campaign for Real Beauty's definition of real beauty, as constructed textually and visually, confronted the limits of current cultural understandings of embodied diversity. I argue that the campaign's rendition of real beauty simultaneously challenged and reinforced traditional understandings of beauty and the body. Subsequently, by omitting certain

bodies it excluded the experiences and aesthetic value of many women with very real bodies — primarily those of women with disabilities.

I begin by exploring the intersection of feminist theory and disability theory to highlight the contributions these theories offer to the study of beauty as depicted in advertisements. Then I review some of the traditional concerns about the representation of women and individuals with disabilities in the commercial media to provide a context for my description of the Campaign for Real Beauty. After reviewing the extant literature and the campaign, I use examples from the campaign to thematize its key features and evaluate its contributions toward understanding beauty and embodied diversity.

### Feminist-Disability Theory

According to Morris (1992), "our society is characterized by fundamental inequalities and by ideologies which divide people against each other" (p. 166). The body, for instance, is a site of physical variance that has been politicized throughout history. The body and our knowledge of it is largely, though not wholly, socially constructed (Wendell, 2006). Cultural messages about how the body should look, be maintained, and be experienced contribute to understandings of the ideal body. But, the ideal body is often a far cry from real human bodies (Wendell, 1996).

In these messages, Garland-Thomson (1997; 2002) has shown that both the female body and the disabled body are commonly devalued. Feminine and disabled bodies are both considered deviant, inferior, and in opposition to societal norms. For example, historically both female and disabled bodies have been positioned in opposition to the norm, a male able-body, and have been ignored in the development civil rights and medical discourses. Indeed, Morris (1992) suggested that both women and individuals with disabilities are believed to represent negative, less valuable figures in society.

Subsequently, they participate in cultures they have not fully helped to co-construct.

Recently, feminist-disability theory has become a framework to describe, analyze and critique social systems and material practices that stigmatize certain kinds of bodily variations (Garland-Thomson, 2002). Feminist-disability theory emerged from coupling of material feminist standpoint and social models of disability. Underlying feminist-disability theory are basic assumptions shared by both feminist and disability frameworks. Both frameworks hold that the body is invested with social meanings developed through discursive, ideological practices (Meyer, 2002). Further, these socially derived meanings are political in nature (Garland-Thomson, 1997). Feminist-disability theory, specifically, assumes that the corporeal body does not lead to oppression, but rather, dominant social practices privilege able-bodied males and marginalize females with disabilities. Finally, both seek to create positive identities for those who have been oppressed. Feminist-disability theory seeks to recognize the interconnected and evolving identities that emerge from femaleness and disability.

In 2002, Garland-Thomson provided four overlapping domains that can be explored through feminist-disability theory: representation, the body, identity, and activism. First, Western representations have framed females as weak creatures and people with disabilities as monsters. These "representations ultimately portray subjugated bodies not only as inadequate or unrestrainable but at the same time as redundant and expendable" (p. 9). Feminist-disability theory illuminates portrayals of women with disabilities and the cultural practices that give rise to these representations. The second domain focuses on the politics and identities that arise from the body's materiality. The integration of disability into feminist theorizing contributes to current critiques of cultural practices to alter the body's appearance through medicalization or consumerism. Next, the third domain of feminist-disability theory recognizes the multiple interconnected identities of women, including identities related to (dis)ability. Researchers are

able to explore how the performance of gendered identities is shaped by and informs social beliefs and expectations related to disability. The final domain of feminist-disability theory expands activism on behalf of the oppressed. Activism can range from protests to alternative forms of representation to academic efforts that bring "disability as a human experience out of the closet and into the normative public's eyes" (p. 25).

Many parallels exist between the social experiences of women and individuals with disabilities due to the politics of embodied diversity. While feminist and disability theories have illuminated experiences related to gender and disability separately, more complex analyses of gender's intersection with disability could further "confront the limits of the ways we understand human diversity" (Garland-Thomson, 2002, p. 3).

#### Ideological Approaches to Diversity

Through comparisons to cultural ideals we acquire social identities — both those that claim us and those we claim for ourselves — that limit our ability to celebrate human diversity and to identify with or love our bodies (Wendell, 2006). Those who do not fit within constructions of the ideal body "are subordinated, others, and considered less than inferior to the ideal" (Do & Giest, 2000, p. 53). Not only does this oppression influence individuals' abilities to access resources and participate in society, but it also influences how they make sense of their own experiences.

According to Kreps and Kunimoto (1994), three major ideologies frame how individuals and organizations respond to diversity: segregation, naïve integration, and pluralism.

Ideologies of segregation emphasize differences between dominant groups and marginal cultural groups to maintain separation between the groups (Kreps & Kunimoto, 1994).

For example, historically dominant culture has been often represented by white, male,

educated, wealthy, and able-bodied individuals (Kreps, 2000). Within this system, individuals with disabilities have been labeled deviant and subsequently separated from society through group homes, special schools, and rehabilitation centers. For example, Garland-Thomson's (1996) description of how individuals labeled as freaks due to their visually deviant bodies have been historically been made spectacles of in dominant discourses, such as women with disabilities, reflects an ideology of segregation.

Ideologies of naïve integration, on the other hand, espouse respect for diversity, yet in key decisions they parallel dominant prejudices (Kreps and Kunimoto, 1994). Kreps (2000) said that many organizations claim to value diversity in hiring practices; however, while people with disabilities are hired into visible positions in the organization, few accommodations are made for those applying for less visible jobs. An ideology of naïve integration can be "more sinister than the ideology of segregation because it falsely purports to respect cultural diversity, giving the handicapped [and others in marginal groups] the false expectation of equality and opportunity" (p. 184-185). Garland-Thomson's (2002) description of recent efforts to integrate people with physical differences into advertising reflects an ideology of naïve integration. For instance, she claims that advertisements often "cast disabled consumers as simply one of the many variations that compose the market to which they appeal" (p. 25)

Finally, an ideology of pluralism reflects cultural respect for diversity and desires integration that allows people to maintain their unique subjectivities. The goals of feminist-disability theory — to forge positive identities and to promote the inclusion of women with disabilities in mainstream society — would be made possible through an ideology of pluralism. Many organizations, however, have adopted ideologies of segregation or naïve integration (Kreps, 2000).

According to Morris (1992), feminist-disability theory creates space for individuals from diverse backgrounds whose experiences have been isolated and ignored by mainstream society. The domains of feminist-disability theory provide tools for recognizing dominant ideologies, but also for eliciting shifts in ideologies (Gallagher & Pecot-Hébert, 2007). Garland-Thomson (2002) has described the complex role of representation and activism in the acceptance of woman with disabilities. Activists can promote the adoption of an ideology of pluralism by increasing the representation of individuals with physical differences in contexts that do not portray the individuals as sensational or deserving of pity. However, she also warned that portrayals of impairment "as a mundane experience in the lives of seemingly successful, happy, well-adjusted people...are at once liberatory and oppressive" (p. 25). Activism through media representation must adopt images that normalize the unique experiences of people with physical differences. Images must be sensational enough to gain the attention, but routine enough to position disability s as everyday and commonplace.

#### Visual Representations of Bodies

Goffman (1979) argued that the visual imagery in advertisements contain implicit messages that influence our self-concepts, how we view right and wrong, how we conceive of living a good life, and how we perform and affirm identity. In addition to affecting our understandings of what it means to be human, visual representations of bodies can impact the allocation of social resources and the meanings we assign to public policy and civil rights (Fugh-Berman et al, 2002; Millett, 2005; Rose, 2007). Because the images in marketing communication "shape, our understandings of the world, including the identities of its people and places" (Borgerson & Schroeder, 2005, p. 578), it is important that research explore how women and physical disabilities have been depicted in advertisements. Traditionally, research has explored the representation

of females and people with disabilities as distinct units of analysis.

### Women and Advertising

Scholars have found that images of the body often present idealized versions of feminine beauty — thin, tall, long legged, and always young (Kilbourne, 1998; Garland-Thomson, 2002) Not only do advertisements establish a body type for society to use as a marker of normalcy, they also create expectations, self- and other- imposed, that women should strive to achieve a normative body. However, these standards are nearly impossible for the average viewer to ever achieve. For example, in 1999, Kilbourne reported that in 1979 models weighed about 8% less than the average female; two decades later, models weighed 23% less than the average female. She concluded that cultural conditions were becoming less favorable of diverse female bodies.

Kilbourne (1998) blamed advertising for many apparently gender specific problems, such as eating disorders and poor self-esteem. Empirical research supports this assertion.

Harrison (2003), for instance, showed that the greater the amount of television college-aged women reported viewing, the thinner their ideal waist and hip size. Similarly, Lavine, Sweeney, and Wagner (1999) found that adult women who were exposed to TV advertisements that portrayed women as sex objects revealed a larger discrepancy between their actual and ideal body sizes (preferring a thinner body) than women exposed to the nonsexist or no advertisement conditions.

### Disabilities and Advertising

Just as advertisements contribute to the construction and reification of norms surrounding a woman's body, they also serve to reify dominant cultural understandings of the (dis)abled body (Haller, 2000). Traditionally, individuals with physical disabilities and deformities have been presented as flawed able-bodied people, not as people with their own identities (Barnes, 1992). These ascribed flaws disconfirmed the social

status of individuals with disabilities, reducing them to objects of stigma (Goffman, 1963). Farnall (2000) concluded that it is only within the past twenty years that disabilities have been depicted favorably in advertisements. Before the 1980s, there were two types of advertisements depicting disability and deformity. The first group was comprised of line drawings that magnified the disfigurement of the body. The second group provided images of children using braces or wheelchairs to elicit pity and donations. These advertisements contributed to public fear of disabled bodies (Garland-Thomson, 2002). Images that depicted people with disabilities as deserving of pity created a stigmatizing system that is only now being questioned and replaced (Nelson, 1996).

The presence of disabilities in advertisements has been met with varying degrees of acceptance. For example, because women are often depicted as sexual objects (Kilbourne, 1998) and people with disabilities are traditionally understood to be asexual (Nemeth, 2000), viewers' expectations are violated when women with disfigurements or disabilities are sexualized in the media. For instance, the Breast Cancer Fund chose to raise cancer awareness by parodying commercial media which "routinely represent women's breasts as only sexual in nature" (Garland-Thomson, 2002, p. 12). One poster depicted a woman in her bra and underwear pulling at one cup of the bra to expose a mastectomy scar. While Garland-Thomson felt the realistic image of the woman's amputated breast was likely to make people consider their attitudes, Barnes (1992) pointed to a tension that lies between the rights of those with disabilities to have accurate portrayals, yet the temporarily able-bodied audience's inability to identify with the disabled model. He warned that the general public might not be ready for too realistic depictions of disabled and disfigured bodies and the associated challenges.

The public's readiness to accept images of diverse bodies in the media reflects their

ability to negotiate the meanings associated with diversity (Garland-Thomson, 2002).

Advertisements are carefully constructed for rhetorical effects beyond product endorsement (Schroeder, 2007). Borgerson and Schroeder (2002) argued that, because marketing communication has a global reach and contributes to audiences' understandings of the groups of people, scholars and marketers should consider the "intersection of ethics, aesthetics, and representation" (p. 570).

Because pictures of people make up a large part of marketing imagery, it is important to explore the meanings that are inscribed on the body through their visual representation.

While feminist-disability theory provides a framework for complex analyses and evaluations of ideologies of diversity and for prescribing effective avenues for social changes, few scholars have actually taken up the theory to explore visual representations of women with disabilities. Garland-Thomson (2002) has provided case studies to demonstrate the utility and application feminist-disability theory, yet research focused on analyzing advertising campaigns as social discourses that contribute to ideological approaches to diversity is limited. In the current analysis, I seek to address this gap in the literature by exploring the intersection of disability and gender as visually represented in an advertising campaign, but also within a campaign that positioned as a challenge to dominant understandings of beauty — Dove's Campaign for Real Beauty.

#### Dove's Campaign for Real Beauty

Known for its skincare products, the Dove brand was developed by Unilever in 1957 ("Dove<sup>®</sup>", 2010). Since its inception, Dove has targeted female consumers seeking to improve or maintain their bodies through moisturizing products. Dove's first product, the beauty bar, was the first cleansing products to add moisturizer to help dry skin. New products, such as moisturizing lotions, hair products, and deodorants, and global marketing have also contributed to the Dove brand's success.

In 2004, Dove launched the Campaign for Real Beauty in reaction to

The Real Truth About Beauty

study (Etcoff, Orbach, Scott, & D'Agostino, 2004). This project was commissioned by Dove to develop a better understanding of women's attitudes and beliefs about their beauty and well-being ("Mission," 2008). The study, which reviewed literature from 118 countries and conducted 3,000 interviews across ten countries, discovered that very few women see themselves as above average in appearance and only 2% claim to be beautiful.

Although the Campaign for Real Beauty, guided by a board of experts in the areas of body image, self esteem, fashion ("Meet our experts," 2008), recognized that "a mix of factors — consumerism, health, the fashion and diet industries, cultural conditioning — have all contributed in cultivating this ridiculous and exclusionary aesthetic" ("Stop Sizism", 2008), the campaign blamed the media as the primary source of body dissatisfaction. To counter dominant beauty definitions, the campaign developed a series of messages aimed at helping young women develop healthier understandings of their bodies and levels of self-esteem through education and discussion ("About the Dove," 2008). For example, the Campaign for Real Beauty was first comprised of a series of advertisements called "Real Women Have Curves" promoting Dove's skin firming lotion. The advertisements depicted women aged 22 to 96 who were wearing only a pair of plain-white underwear and a bra (Hoggard, 2005). They were displayed in television spots, magazines, and on billboards in urban markets globally. Each advertisement focused on one physical trait traditionally considered a flaw, such as flat chests, short stature, and freckled skin. In addition to the image of a woman, the advertisements begged a question of the viewer. For example, a photograph of a woman with small breasts asked, "Does sexiness depend on how full your cups are?"

In another advertisement, the text "Fat? Fabulous? Can true beauty only squeeze into size 8?" was placed next to a slightly overweight woman (Lagnado, 2004).

Audiences were encouraged to answer the questions in these advertisements on the campaign's website,

<http://campaignforrealbeauty.com>

. According to the marketing director for Dove in North America, the new website was intended to provide resources that met the needs of the global female audience, yet also to help each individual meet her own unique needs (Pitman, 2008). At the website, audiences could see additional pictures and biographies of the women in the advertisements. Audiences could also find information about the Self Esteem Fund, articles related to esteem and beauty, and resources to aid discussions between women and girls including workshop information, discussion starters, and self esteem measures ("the self," 2009). The website was also the primary location for audiences to view the campaign's web-films, which address issues such as low esteem, media pressures on young women, and digital editing.

With the ambition of challenging traditional definitions of feminized beauty by promoting conversations and providing alternative visual representations of women and the body, Dove's Campaign for Real Beauty positions itself as a cultural location where women could (re)configure their understandings of the female body. Because the Dove brand targets female audiences and the campaign exemplifies and participates in the contested nature of feminine beauty, the Dove brand and the campaign is good case to analyze for this study. Analysis of this campaign contributes to feminist-disability theory's domains of representation and activism.

According to Schneider and Foot (2005) websites and their connective links are "inscriptions

of communicative practices on the part of the site sponsors and/or users, and methods of discursive or rhetorical analysis can help illuminate social action" (p. 164).

In the current essay, I analyze the rhetorical constitution of the documents posted on the campaign's U.S. May 2008 and February 2009, including four web-films, seven web-based articles and quizzes, the website's pages about the campaign's goals, history, and biographies, the advertisements associated with the Real Women have Real Curves campaign, and the workshop booklets. Many of these documents were available to audiences since 2003. Rose (2007) asserted that though images and words co-construct an overall message, "images and words should be read on their own terms; only occasionally is an image used to illustrate the text" (p. 238). I adopt a feminist-disability standpoint to analyze and evaluate the campaign's images and texts separately and in concert with one another. In the next section, I argue that the campaign's texts and images (re)inscribe and (re)make the body in such a way that it represents an ideology of naïve integrations. I use key examples to support my claims and then conclude the paper with a discussion of the implications of the campaign on constructions of women with disabilities and the possibility of social change.

#### Discussion: Dove's Campaign as an Ideology of Naïve Integration

I argue that Dove's Campaign for Real Beauty represents an ideology of naïve integration. Textually the campaign was committed to co-constructing a more inclusive, real definition of beauty. For example, the campaign's mission statement claimed that the campaign was to "serve as a starting point for societal change and act as a catalyst for widening the definition and discussion of beauty" ("Mission," 2008, para. 1). Similarly, another page stated that Dove wanted to help "free ourselves and the next generation from beauty stereotypes... that 's why we continue to create thought-provoking ads, confidence-building programs and messages that embrace all definitions of beauty" ("We see beauty," 2008,

para. 1). The images present on campaign materials reflected Dove's vision of embodied beauty and served as a reference point for audiences re-conceptualizing their own definitions and bodies.

At first glance, the campaign's mission to develop a more inclusive definition of beauty that all women can embrace seems to represent an ideology of pluralism. I argue, however, that the campaign's portrayal of bodies situates real bodies in a manner that is just as limiting as contemporary cultural norms. I argue that the inconsistencies between the images and texts represent an ideology of naïve integration which (re)inscribed meaning on the normate body and (re)made the body through beauty practices.

#### (Re)Inscribing Normate Bodies

Social practices and discourses inscribe meaning onto the body (Wendell, 1996). Traditionally, marketing communication reflected ideologies of separation by using models whose bodies fit within cultural constructions of the "normate" body. Through their exclusion or unequal representation, women with physical attributes considered deviant have been inscribed as unnatural, undesirable, and unmanageable (Garland-Thomson, 1997, 2002). Though intending to confront dominant inscriptions on the female body, the Campaign for Real Beauty (re)inscribes these traditional meanings.

The Campaign for Real beauty sought to challenge dominant constructions of beauty by depicting "real" women with "real" curves in their advertisements. The Real Women have Real Curves advertisements featured "candid and confident images of curvy, full-bodied, real women — not traditional models" (Howard, 2005, para. 11). There are many versions of the basic ad, all consisting of a stark white background with one woman facing the camera. Most of the advertisements depict the women in a white bra and underwear. In others, the women are clothed in dresses or shirts that are low cut, exposing

the chest and neck. The women in the advertisements appeared different than those represented in major ad campaigns. Not only did the resolution of the images appear clearer than most advertisements, but each woman had some attribute that would fall outside dominant definitions of beauty, such as freckles, very dark or pale skin tone, wrinkles, excess weight, or small breasts. For example, in one advertisement a young red haired woman was photographed from the chest up facing the camera. Because just the very top of her white top and its clear straps were visible in the photograph, much of the model's heavily freckled skin is revealed.

Though the bodies depicted were not typical of fashion models, many of the differences were close enough to pre-existing ideals that they would be accepted by most beauty standards. The "fat" model, Crisanti, for example, hardly looked overweight. She was actually rather toned, and there was not a dimple or spot of cellulite on her body. Though Crisanti's weight was never reported, Dove did release that Crisanti wore a size 6 pants (Howard, 2005). Crisanti's body was not representative of the bodies of 34 percent of adult female Americans who are categorized as being obese ("AOA fact Sheet," 2002). Another advertisement questioned dominant beliefs about the aging body. A woman, who appeared to be naked, was seated on the floor with one leg tucked under her and the other drawn in toward her chin and wrapped in her arms. The woman had grey hair and a few wrinkles on her face, but, from the neck down, her body appeared "perfect" — no wrinkles, rolls, or blemishes. While the campaign challenged dominant notions of beauty as a feature attached to youthful faces, the body of the woman could have been that of any typical fashion model and is likely unrepresentative of many women. The campaign's failure to depict bodies more representative of their audience, more deviant from dominant constructions of beauty, seemed to fit well with Kilbourne's (1998) claim that all "beautiful women in advertisements,

regardless of product or audience, conform to this norm [traditional beauty norms]" (p. 129).

Although the campaign could be praised for its inclusion of bodies that were more representative of real women than traditional fashion models, the word 'real' coupled with these nearly "normate" bodies is cause for concern because 'real' connotes 'natural' or 'authentic'. For example, the visual contrast between the women and the crisp white background made the women appear unpolished, untouched, 'real', yet, in advertisements challenging notions of beauty and youth, the woman's legs were fore-grounded and in focus. The legs appeared smooth and without hair. Blood (2005) wrote that "it seems 'normal' that women should have hairless legs and flat stomachs — although women have 'naturally' hairy legs and most have not-flat stomachs, these things are seen as unusual (and 'unnatural')" (p. 65). Indeed, the campaign's visual representations situated hairless, firm, proportionate bodies as "real" and normal. Further, the title of the advertisement campaign,

Real Women have Real

Curves, positions extremely feminine representation of the female body — curvy and sexual — as the normate body, thus, reinforcing dominant beauty standards. Ascribing sexuality to the female body represents cultural and societal signifying practices rather than biology. Drawing on connotations associated with real

, the campaign contributed to societal beliefs about the authenticity of individual's very real, yet deviant bodies.

By not including bodies that significantly deviate from cultural norms, Dove's representations of beauty contributed to the societal attitudes that marginalize those with bodies that do not fall within cultural standards (see also Do & Geist, 2000). However,

though the images may be limited in their ability to represent the authentic bodies of many women, discursively the campaign does support women with diverse bodies due to wrinkles, body size, skin color, and breast size. On the other hand, while "more than half of disabled people are women and approximately 16% of women are disabled" (Wendell, 2006, p. 243), the campaign did not include images representative of their physical bodies, nor did it address these women's bodies textually. So while the campaign attempted to provide a safe site for women to explore the authenticity of their bodies and appearances, the absence of bodies with visible disabilities, deformities, or marks reflected and reified dominant preferences for the able body.

Media serve as cultural locations where temporarily able- and disable-bodied audiences create, learn, and reify understandings of normalcy/deviance and real/invalid (Snyder & Mitchell, 2006). Though Garland-Thomson (2002) argued that experiences of (dis)ability are one of the most fundamental human experiences, images and explicit discussions of disability were excluded from the campaign. Reconsidering normalcy is vital to the reconfiguration of beauty definitions; the campaign never challenged audiences to question the seeming normalcy, beauty, of the physically able-body. The exclusion of the disabled body from Dove's rendition of 'real' beauty was significant because by doing so the campaign inadvertently contributed to cultural stereotypes that situate "disabled women as asexual, unfit to reproduce, overly dependent, unattractive — as generally removed from the sphere of true womanhood and feminine beauty" (Garland-Thomson, 2002, p. 17). I argue that the exclusion of women with disabilities may be considered more significant than the under-representing other bodily variations, such as weight or breast size, because by depicting even marginal variations in other attributes, the campaign at least provided a space for audiences to consider dominant evaluations of these attributes. By ignoring disability the campaign functioned to

validate and reinforce cultural understandings that the disabled body is aesthetically deviant and outside the limits of normal and beauty. Audiences are not challenged to consider or reconfigure the social structures that exclude women with disabilities. Synnott (1993) said that the physical body is "the prime constituent of personal and social identity; yet also the deepest prejudices and discriminations for and against, accrue to the body" (p. 3). By disconfirming the aesthetic value of the disabled body the campaign devalued not only the disabled body, but also the social status of those living with disability. Though wrapped in a blanket of inclusive discourse, the campaign's exclusion of the disabled body from a definition of real beauty reflected historical understandings of disabled bodies as inhabitable and de-authorized bodies that should be feared, ignored, and/or rejected (also see Erevelles, 2001). The experiences and knowledge of people living with a physical disability were not accepted as reasonable in comparison to that of those living in able bodies. Further, the campaign was built on the premise that through interaction and dialogue women can participate in co-constructing new definitions of beauty. The alienation of individuals with disabilities from the campaign could further constrain these women's agency in beauty definition practices.

#### (Re)Making Normate Bodies

In addition to (re)inscribing normate bodies as beautiful, the campaign (re)made the normate body. The campaign reflected an ideology of naive integrations by placing messages that encourage women to objectify, control, and evaluate the body alongside messages that promote acceptance and naturalness. Inconsistencies created a double bind paralleling dominant understandings of the body.

The manner in which Dove highlighted attributes of bodies perpetuated traditional objectified and disembodied experiences of the body. A short text was often situated

beside the women depicted in the advertisements. Though some provided a short narrative, most posed a pair of questions about an attribute of the woman's body that audiences were supposed to go online to answer. For example, alongside the 'fat' model were the questions "Overweight? Outstanding?" and near the 'old' model were the questions "Wrinkled? Wonderful?". By asking these questions, the advertisements dismembered women's bodies by separating them into parts to be examined.

Can this fit?

, the viewer was encouraged to ask. The campaign did not ask, can this

whole

person fit into old or reconfigured definitions of beauty? By ignoring this question, the campaign not only disembodied the body, but it also contributed to dominant notions that "the body is simply a material receptacle that houses the mind or spirit" (Sullivan, 2003, p. 41). Such practices parallel dominant ways of understanding the body, as mere parts or separate from the mind (Cortese, 1999). Mind-body dualisms limit a person's subjectivity and situate the body as an unruly object possible to control (Bordo, 1993).

I ask, why must we focus on embodiment or define the aesthetic of woman in terms of embodied beauty? And if we must, can beauty be embodied by both the mind and body? For example, cannot real beauty also include the ways we relate with others, how we experience self-respect for our intellectual and creative pursuits, or how we develop and apply our skills and talents in ways that enrich our own and others' lives?

Through their questions, the campaign also situated the body as a site of evaluation. Synnott (1993) provided that binary labeling systems dominate understandings of the body and exclude many individual's lived experiences of the body. By pinpointing

a physical trait and asking viewers to evaluate the body part with a binary system, the Campaign for Real Beauty reinforced traditional body practices that Grosz (1994) argued "necessarily hierarchizes and ranks the two polarized terms so that one becomes the privileged term and the other is suppressed, subordinates, negative counterpart" (p.3). By positioning the body as a site of dichotomous evaluations, the campaign inadvertently perpetuated notions that beauty standards are rigid, not all inclusive or at least more accepting. Can't a woman be both wrinkled and wonderful at the same time? Can't a woman be pale and perfect?

As dismembered sites of evaluation, under the Campaign for Real Beauty, women's bodies were also presented as objects to gaze upon and modify. Garland-Thomson (2009) claimed that audiences stare when they encounter novelty. The crisp and seemingly untouched style of the photographs stood out against dominant marketing media. Indeed, the apparently unmodified and undisciplined bodies of the women were novel in mainstream media (Garland-Thomson, 2002). Audiences were not only enticed to stare due to the novelty of the images, but invited to do so by the questions positioned beside the model. In addition to objectifying the body by inviting audience's stare, the campaign literally turned the body into an object for audiences to use to navigate through their website. For example, the Real Women have Real Curves' webpage suggested that audiences should "meet the women, read their stories and see their beautiful curves" ("Real women," 2006, para. 3). Below the text were images of six practically naked females standing beside one another. If I wanted to learn more about the woman, her career, her family, or her thoughts, I had to click on the image of her body. The women were quite literally transformed into objects to gaze upon and to use to navigate through the website.

Through media scripts girls and women come to anticipate and play into the practice

of objectifying the bodies (Bordo, 1993). Because the campaign was situated as a safe place for social change, when the campaign suggested that women should gaze upon and evaluate the body it reified beliefs that objectifying the body is acceptable and natural. Such practices are dangerous because when a young woman sees her body as other and an object, she is more likely to have lower levels of body satisfaction, self acceptance, and more likely to engage in body modification behaviors (McKinley, 2004). Considering Unilever's interest is to sell body and beauty products to make a profit, this argument is not all that surprising. Howard (2005) suggested that Dove's campaign encouraged "women and girls to celebrate themselves as they are — while using the products, of course" (para. 2). The message was that real beauty is embodied by women's bodies that are only slightly deviant from norms. Those who wish to maintain or attain beauty should not engage in unsafe practices, such as surgery or eating disorders; instead, they should achieve or sustain real beauty using Dove products.

I have argued that while the campaign advocated for women's freedom from rigid beauty standards it simultaneously reinforced many traditional beauty standards. The conflicting messages of self acceptance and self improvement constructed a double bind, a condition in which there is no right solution or satisfactory response (Bateson, 1972). For example, the web-film

Evolution

began by depicting a headshot of an average-looking woman without makeup or kept hair. Maintaining a consistent framing of her face, the film then proceeded to show the transformation of the woman into a billboard-worthy bombshell after professional make-up and digital editing ("Evolution," 2009). The web-film ended with the text, "no wonder our perceptions of beauty are so damaged." Viewers were challenged to

consider personal experiences with the media and to be more content with their own natural physical appearance. Another web-film,

Onslaught,

reinforced similar messages.

Onslaught

began by setting a scene of innocence by depicting an elementary-aged girl near a crosswalk. Her blue eyes stared at the audience, while her light red hair moved in a slight breeze. This scene was followed by a minute long montage of images that quickly flashed across the screen. These images ranged in subject, but they could all be associated with eating disorders, plastic surgery, and dominant media representations of ideal bodies ("Onslaught," 2009). The web-film ended with the image of the same young, innocent girl staring at the audience and a line of text: "talk to your daughter before the beauty industry does." This web-film leads audiences to consider the impact of dominant media images and to intercede on the behalf of young viewers. Both web-films positioned measures to control the body as undesirable acts. However, this message contradicted many of the practices encouraged by the campaign. Most obvious is the contradiction between the campaign's disapproval of disciplining the body, yet their promotion of Dove products.

According to Bateson (1972) double binds become nearly inescapable. The conditions are naturalized over time, and in order to transcend the bind people must recognize the situation and decide to identify with neither side. Indeed, while the campaign provided materials to help women recognize and transcend existing double binds concerning beauty, the campaign simultaneously reflected dominant culture. Young-Eisendrath (2004) claimed that "the double bind of female beauty is a well kept secret or we could not sustain a trillion dollar fashion and cosmetic industry for women" (p.

83).

While beautification practices are used to normalize slight deviations in the female body, disability represents the falsehood of the unchanging, normate body (Garland-Thomson, 1997). Shildrick (2005) argued that "the anomalous body is an uncomfortable reminder that the normative, 'healthy', body, despite its appearance of successful self-determination, is highly vulnerable to disruption and breakdown (p. 757). Indeed, experiences of physical disabilities range in onset, impact, and duration, all of which often falling outside the public's ability to predict or prevent change (Garland-Thomson, 1997). Disabilities also challenge dominant beautification systems, which situate the body as a site of discipline. Many physical disabilities cannot be, and arguably should not be, as easily 'disciplined', 'covered', or 'normalized' with as other physical attributes such as dry skin, under-eye circles, or dry hair. The omission of physical disability was significant because it served to reinforce beliefs that disability falls outside of the realm of widened beauty standards, and even outside the realm of self improvement through commodification of the body (Lupton, 1994). Excluding physical disability from the campaign was also critical because its absence never challenge audiences to question their adherence to false expectations that the body is consistent and predictable.

Conclusions: Disparate But Not Disabled

Garland-Thomson (1997, 2002) argued that visual representations of women with disabilities are potential sites of activism. The current analysis is unique in that it isolated a campaign that sought to be an agent of social change for women, yet, as I have argued, this campaign inadvertently reinforced dominant understandings of the aesthetic worth of women with physical disabilities. I will now consider how we should evaluate the development and maintenance of this campaign, highlighting theoretical and practical

implications for similar marketing communication aimed at social change.

The analysis yielded evidence that male able-bodied systems still dominate the representation of women with disabilities. Farnall (2000) suggested multiple reasons that may explain why commercial campaigns, like Dove's, might not include women with disabilities.

First, we should not forget that "it may be naïve to expect advertisers to put social issues before economic potential" (p. 313). However, the Dove Company was already engaged in a campaign with advocacy in mind; they would not have endured much financial hardship incorporating disability. Furthermore, most females in the audiences either already have a physical disability, deformity, and/or mark will experience one in their lifetime (Wendell, 1997). With such a large proportion of their audience being affected by disability, it seems odd that Dove would purposefully adopt an ideology of segregation because the capacity of women with disabilities to identify with the campaign may increase their desire to purchase products.

Perhaps, we can extend grace to the campaign as we develop explanations for why women with disabilities were excluded from Dove's Campaign for Real Beauty. For example, when Dove was brainstorming non-traditional displays of beauty, it is conceivable that no one thought of disabilities. While statistically there were likely women with disabilities involved in the initial interviews for

The Real Truth About Beauty

, the report provided no demographic information to this extent and nothing that suggested disability was a topic discussed during interviews. Such an oversight would reflect a failure to see beyond the seeming naturalness of dominant beauty structures.

This possibility is complicated, however, when I consider those involved in developing the campaign. For example, the experts who collected data for

The Real Truth About Beauty

study (Etcoff, Orbach, Scott, & D'Agostino, 2004) and those committed to the advisory board have dedicated years of professional commitment to exploring issues of stigma and stereotypes as they are related to the body. Further, how is it possible that issues of disability were overlooked when one of the sixteen experts, Zara Hyde-Peters, has worked with people with disabilities, and another, Dr. Carla Rice, has written multiple books on disability and equality ("The fund advisory," 2008)?

In addition to evaluating the rhetorical components of the campaign, it is also valuable to position marketing campaigns within a media environment. For instance, Gillett wrote viewers struggle "to make sense of how Dove can promise to educate girls on a wider definition of beauty while other Unilever ads [for Axe] exhort boys to make 'nice girls naughty'" (Gillett, 2007, para. 5). Unilever responded that they are a really large company that owns a lot of brands that are desired and used by different types of people in the world. Unilever removed its ethical responsibility as the parent company to consider the groups of individuals that its brands may marginalize. Instead, suggesting that the clash in advertising ideologies reflects sections of the consumer population.

The incorporation of social messages into advertising can represent a breadth of corporate objectives, ranging from solely strategic uses for economic outcomes to extraordinary commitments to causes (Drumwright, 1996). Simon (2006) warned that the current goals of market and public relations are to create positive brand images and to prevent litigation against products and policies, not to address issues of social justice. However, Borgerson and Schroeder (2002) argued that companies have the ethical responsibility to develop marketing communication that "resolves society's crises, not causes them" (p. 588). They advised marketers to consider the authenticity and fairness of the images representing identities across simultaneous campaigns.

Borgerson and Schroeder (2004) argued that, to advance marketing ethics, practitioners and academics should offer accounts and critiques of how identities are forged through images. Unilever's concurrent sponsorship of Dove, Slim Fast, and Axe campaigns sent paradoxical messages about women. The conflicting and often oppressive messages that exist within the Campaign for Real Beauty and between the campaigns developed by Dove and Axe serve to situate the Campaign for Real Beauty as a sales promotion clothed in the rhetoric social change. This criticism resembles other scholars' critiques of commercial campaigns with social messages (for review see Drumwright, 1996). Much work is still needed to identify and describe existing marketing endeavors that are successful at contributing to both economic and pro-social outcomes.

Finally, the Campaign for Real Beauty and similar campaigns should be evaluated based on the effectiveness to "serve as a starting point for societal change and act as a catalyst for widening the definition and discussion of beauty ("Mission," 2008, para. 1). Much of the campaign's resources were designed to spark conversations between women and young girls. According to Singhal, Rao, and Pant (2006), social change is more effective when audiences engage in dialogues to develop new understandings that resonate with their existing realities. Similarly, then, we can assume the campaign's activities aimed at sparking dialogue had the potential to reconfigure cultural understandings of the body and beauty. From this standpoint, The Campaign for Real Beauty contributes to other movements in favor of women accepting their bodies, such as the recent emergence of the pro-fat movement (Duenwald, 2003). The pro-fat movement is corporeally marked by increases in plus-size models and clothing lines, but has gained momentum through female initiated dialogue. However, even as I praise the campaign's method of social change, I am aware that, by their textual and visual omission from the campaign, women with physical disabilities were not provided the same support and endorsement

to (re)construct or (re)make their embodied identity. As a location of social change the campaign presented — or failed to present otherwise — the disabled body as less valuable and less natural than the able body.

It is important to remember that women are not simply passive consumers of media messages (Hall, 1982). While the Campaign for Real Beauty sent women mixed messages, it also provided women with resources that teach critical consumption of media and encouraged women to discuss issues of beauty, to challenge traditional standards, and to support one another. Indeed, while the Campaign for Real Beauty has introduced new images, similar is nature, since the images and texts used in the current analysis, women with physical disabilities are still not represented by the campaign. However, as a result of the campaign, social justice groups, such as Feminist Response in Disability Activism (F.R.I.D.A), have emerged, produced commentary, and even held conferences and workshops to provide critiques of beauty representations in the media, including Dove. Through these discussions, there is a potential for reconfiguring a definition of beauty that extends beyond the one represented by the Campaign for Real Beauty — one which actually transcend traditional beauty norms to thinking about "beauty" more holistically. The campaign's effectiveness in the end may be best judged

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