

Profitability, Diversity, and Disability Images in Advertising in the United States and Great Britain

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The disabled consumer is coming of age. Companies in the United States and Great Britain are seeing the profitability of including disabled people in their advertising. But what are the implications of the images produced in these advertisements? Are they moving away from the pity narratives of charity? Are they creating acceptance and integration of disabled people?

The two countries have slightly different histories of inclusion of disabled people in advertisements, but what we are considering in this article are the cultural implications of the current trend of the more prevalent use of disabled models in print and broadcast ads. We argue that although many businesses are learning to use disabled models in advertising due to capitalistic motivation for profits, this crass commercialism is actually producing some good disability images in advertising. As one British marketing official explained, good disability images and well-done advertisements are designed to promote brand loyalty and make a product more popular (VisABLE video, 2000). In addition, we are arguing that companies are understanding that diversity in advertising images enhance audience reception to their products.

Advocates for disabled people in US have long known the importance of the "disabled consumer market." Carmen Jones of EKA Marketing (1997) says: "Few companies have enjoyed the profitability that results in targeting the consumer who happens to have a disability. . . . I believe if the business community were educated about the size and potential of the market, then advertising programs with the disabled consumer in mind" would be created (p. 4). In the new millennium, advertisers are realizing that disabled people buy soap, milk, socks, jewelry, makeup, home improvement goods, use travel services, live in houses, and enjoy nice home furnishings. There is some evidence that the disabled consumer is very much more brand loyal than other consumers. (Quinn, 1995). For example, the hotel chain Embassy Suites found out that becoming sensitive to the needs of disabled people lead to more business. And a study by the National Captioning Institute found that 73 percent of deaf people switched to a brand that had TV ad captioning (Quinn, 1995).

British companies are still more hesitant in including disabled people in their advertisements due to both different advertising methods and societal attitudes. Although print ads are just as frequent in British publications, ads on British television are much less prevalent and more restricted than in the US where about 12 minutes of each half hour of commercial TV are advertisements. In the UK "the total amount of spot advertising in any one day must not exceed an average of nine minutes per hour of broadcasting" (ITC, 1998, p.1).

However, some companies in both countries were slow to learn what accurate and non-stigmatizing advertising images were. For example, in 1990 a Fuji TV ad for film on British television that featured a man with learning disabilities being "improved" by a

photograph of him smiling at the end was criticized by disabilities scholar Michael Oliver for its "medical model" approach (Deakin, 1996, Sept. 20, p. 37). The TV ad was interpreted as the Fuji film offering a type of "cosmetic surgery" on the disabled man through the advertisement. Ironically, the ad agency that created the Fuji ad consulted the British charity Mencap, but as Scott-Parker pointed out, "the perceptions and interests of a disability charity are not always synonymous with those of the disabled consumer" (Dourado, 1990, p. 27). Because of early faux pas like this, "disability is still an area in which few advertisers dare to deal" in Great Britain (Deakin, 1996, p. 37).

In both countries, new disability rights legislation - the US Americans with Disability Act (ADA) and Work Incentives Improvement Act (WIIA) and the UK Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) - made the business community more aware of disabled consumers and that there are large numbers of them. These legislative acts have also given businesses an understanding that disabled people want to find more and better employment and in turn purchase more consumer goods. Some policy analysts actually called the ADA a mandate for marketers to begin to recognize the formerly invisible disabled market (Stephens and Bergman, 1995). In addition, the WIIA would provide a \$1,000 tax credit to help people with severe disabilities cover work-related expenses. President Clinton pushed for the Act with an inclusive society perspective: "As anyone with a disability can tell you, it takes more than a job to enter the work force. Often, it takes successful transportation, specialized technology or personal assistance" (Clinton, 1999).

These types of legislative acts have made the US and the UK more receptive to accommodating disabled people in terms of architecture and communication so more will have the ability to make purchases and become part of each society's "consumer culture." For example, in the US, 48.5 million disabled people who are age 15 and over had an estimated total discretionary income of \$175 billion (Prager, 1999, Dec. 15). In the UK, there are 6.5 million disabled people who represent a 33 billion pound market, which will increase (Deakin, 1996).

History of advertising use of disabled people

A distinction must be made between community specific advertising campaigns and general campaigns. For example, when the black community or the gay community advocates for better advertising representation they are hoping for more accurate images in advertising to the general public, rather than to specialty group publications. The same is true of disabled people. Most disability-related magazines and other media already have numerous images so the advocacy currently is for more inclusion in advertising to the general population. This is where the disabled community hopes attitudes will be changed through inclusion.

Historically, most images of disability in advertising have been from charity organizations. For example, in the UK in the 1980s charity advertising was "a growing competitive industry," according the classic report on disability advertising by Susan Scott-Parker (1989). At this time, disabled people were the largest minority group in Great Britain and the top 18 spending disability-related charities got advertising worth more than 4.24 million pounds in 1988 (Scott-Parker, 1989). Similar to the kind of demographic research done for commercial advertising, the charities undertook copious amounts of research to create profiles of the people most likely to give to the disability

charities (Lonsdale, 1994). This set the current research standard for today's charities which employ professional advertising agencies such as BMP DDB Needham, who produced the award-winning multiple sclerosis campaigns (BMP DDB Needham, 1993). The reason charity advertising was expected to grow even more as an industry was because charity advertising became legal on British television in 1990 (IBA, March 1988).

Images of disabled people in British advertising were located mainly in the realm of charity from the days of the Victorian philanthropists (Sampson Low, 1850; Owen, 1965) to the late 1980s when disabled people finally began making a few appearances in commercial advertisements. Religion has been a major influence in providing for disabled people and creating organizations to assist them. Many bishops and archbishops, as well as wealthy philanthropists, began charities in the UK. This start made disabled people segregated as a group that needed to be looked after and pitied with Christian charity. Then during the 1880s charities gave high priority to keeping "cripples" gainfully employed (Lane, 1886 and 1887). Much of this was a result of the industrial revolution in which poorer people moved from farms to cities and disabled people sank into a less valued work status and had to work hard at being seen as doing their share.

The message of charity advertising in the British past was similar to buying "good karma" with donations to the charities, i.e. the advertising's overt goal was to tell people they could "ward off" disability in themselves if they would help the "unfortunate" disabled people among them. The promotion of the fear of becoming disabled has continued even in the modern era of professionally produced charity ads (Hevey, 1992). This perspective of charity advertising has been overlaid on disabled people in Britain since before the Victorian era. We argue that this attitude still informs British business' reluctance to use disabled people in commercial advertising for fear they will be seen as a charity. As Rupert Howell, of the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising, said on British TV's "Tonight" program (2000) when asked about incorporating disabled people into British advertising: "In the end you have to remember that our job is to sell products for our clients, not to put right the wrongs of the world."

In the US, charity advertising was a separate entity from commercial advertising and included programs such as telethons and promotional ads from "helping" societies such as Easter Seals, the Multiple Sclerosis Society, and Paralyzed Veterans of America. American consumers seemed to more readily distinguish between the use of disabled people in charity advertising from commercial advertising; however, in the early days of commercial advertising's use of disabled models there was concern about exploitation because disabled people had been associated with charity only. However, after numerous years of criticism by disability rights advocates, telethons have fallen in numbers and many stations have even dropped the most famous telethon - Jerry Lewis' MDA telethon - from their Labor Day line-up. And other charity organizations have re-tooled their promotions to be less stigmatizing. One charity, Easter Seals, now makes it part of its mission to promote better media images through its EDI awards which stands for Equality, Dignity and Independence. But it should be noted that there is still an underlying sense of altruism when commercial companies used disabled people to advertise products. Advertising researchers Burnett and Paul advocate that trying to attract disabled customers helps companies "meet important social responsibilities" as well enhance the consumer base (1996, p. 15).

In the US, the business community began recognizing the disabled consumer in advertising images early in the 1980s. Early disability rights legislation such as the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which required all federal programs and structures to be accessible and was finally being enforced by the early 1980s, began to build awareness of the disability community. Also, the disability rights movement began about this time in response to the lack of regulations to enforce the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 when activists staged protests about it (Shapiro, 1993). In addition, the independent living movement, which gave disabled people educational and employment opportunities, also began in the early 1970s and gave disabled people more visibility in society (Shapiro, 1993). Longmore says that when TV ads with disabled people began, it illustrated that advertisers no longer feared that "nondisabled consumers will be distressed or offended" (1987, p. 77). Finally, in 1980 closed captioning began on television and the medium became more accessible to deaf people (Lipman, 1990 Feb. 28). All these factors converged to give businesses slightly more awareness of disabled people and their potential as consumers.

The first TV ad said to feature a disabled person was in a 1984 Levi's ad in which a wheelchair user popped a wheelie (Kaufman, 1999). See Table 1 for a sample of advertisements that have featured people with disabilities. However, McDonald's claims to have been including wheelchair users in general shots of customers in TV ads since 1980. But its first TV ad to feature a disabled person was in 1986 when it depicted college-age deaf students discussing going to McDonald's in sign language (Dougherty, 1986). However, at this point in commercial advertising images, the company still thought ads with disabled people should be directed to other disabled people and that these type of ads built "good will." As the New York Times wrote: "Apparently aware of the notion that good deeds are best measured by the amount of publicity they amass, McDonald's Corporation is promoting a TV commercial for the deaf and starring the deaf" (Dougherty, 1986, p. D26). The TV also contained captioning, which was actually for the hearing viewers not the deaf viewers, because "regular hearing viewers get confused by the signs" (Dougherty, 1986). Deaf people became a popular disability group to depict in TV ads and by 1990 Crest, Citibank, and Levi's had all used deaf actors. In fact, AT&T capitalized on the Academy Award winning actress Marlee Matlin's fame by using her in some ads. By 1990, the National Captioning Institute reported more than 200 advertisers were captioning their ads resulting in 2,600 closed-captioned TV spots (Lipman, 1990 Feb. 28).

Wheelchair users became the other prominent category of disability in early U.S. commercial advertisements. After Levi's TV ad, companies such as Citicorp, Apple computers, Pacific Telesis, Nissan, and Target had all featured wheelchair users in TV or print ads by 1991. Target became somewhat of a pioneer in print ads using adults and children with disabilities in their sales circulars that went to 30 million households in 32 states (Sagon, 1991 Dec. 19). Target's vice president of marketing said their use of disabled people in their ads was so successful that they can actually point to specific products that sold much better because they were modeled by a disabled person (Goerne, 1992). In addition, the early campaign that depicted children with disabilities lead to 1000 supportive letters and "has been the single most successful consumer response we've ever gotten," according to the VP of marketing, Bob Thacker (Sagon, 1991, p. B10). Target then expanded its disability images past wheelchair use to children and

teens with Down syndrome, leg braces, and artificial limbs.

However, Target's pioneering use of disability images was not easily implemented. Even Target's Bob Thacker, who has a daughter with a disability, worried that the store chain might get complaints that the company was exploiting disabled people (Rabinovitz, 1991 Sept.23, p. D14). Target's public relations department reported that the company's suppliers were concerned: "Some buyers were worried that it would detract from the merchandise. Others felt it would look exploitative" (Sagon, 1991, p. B10.) But it had the opposite effect: "There isn't a single disabled person who will say they feel they're being exploited; they are thrilled and proud that they are being portrayed as just another member of society," according to the Target public relations vice president (Sagon, 1991, p. B10).

From the 1990s on, many of the advertisements featuring disabled people were accepted and considered non-stigmatizing. However, one major controversy arose in 1993 which illustrated how disabled and nondisabled people interpreted the images differently. Dow Chemical's Spray 'N Wash Stain Stick TV ad used a child with Down Syndrome. The ad begins: "Halley has made my life very exciting. She's very affectionate, and she is very active. We use Stain Stick...because the last place we need another challenge is the laundry room" (Goldman, 1993, Sept. 3 p. B8). The ad used no professional actors, but a real mother and daughter from Atlanta, Ga., found through a connection to the National Down Syndrome Congress. The Congress applauded the final ad, which made mention of Down's, and even gave it a media award. However, an Advertising Age writer called the ad exploitative, "appalling," and "the most crassly contrived slice-of-life in advertising history" (Goldman, 1993, Sept. 3, p. B8). Dow's toll-free telephone line contradicted this opinion with 700 calls, all positive except for seven calls.

But Burger King did not have such positive audience response when it ran a TV ad that featured a man with Down syndrome trying to memorize the company's slogan and being helped by his mother. The restaurant chain pulled the ad after some parents of children with Down syndrome complained. One mother called the image of a grown man being helped by his parent "insulting" (Goldman, 1993 Sept. 3, p. B8). In another case, the Alliance for the Mentally Ill in New York complained about an offensive ad from the discount clothing chain, Daffy's, which depicted a straight jacket in a print and TV ads and indicated that someone was insane to pay more money for clothes (Case, 1992 May 2). One Wall Street Journal analysis of these types of cases said Madison Avenue's ad firms were receiving attention from the "Politically Correct Squad" which monitors advertisements for their sensitivity (Goldman, 1994 May 19, p. B1). However, one aspect of this type of "monitoring" by various social groups is that advertisers may become more rigorous in looking at their ads through a sensitivity "filter," just as they have always evaluated ads through a "legal lens," according to a Harvard Business School professor (Goldman, 1994 May 19, p. B1).

Britain has been much slower to incorporate disabled people into their commercial advertising. Susan Scott-Parker reported in 1989 that "the UK commercial advertising is 10 years out of date, with disabled people excluded or, worse, ridiculed and stereotyped in advertising" (Levy, 1990, p. 29). She pointed to the fact that the US was well ahead where major advertisers, for example, McDonald's, IBM, Levi's, had already used disabled people to "reinforce positive images of the disabled" (Levy, 1990, p. 29). A

few companies featured disabled models in past years, but they were rare and usually from a U.S. company. On British TV the first disabled person in a British TV ad was in 1990 - for Fuji film - and later that year, Saatchi and Saatchi produced a Burger King ad for children with a cartoon character who used a wheelchair. In fact, only in 2000 did the Cheshire Fund charity begin a VisABLE campaign to try to find disabled models and encourage British companies to use them.

However, there is a move from charity advertising of the past to a new awareness of "handicapitalism." Businesses are coming to an understanding of the potential power of tapping the disabled market. "People with disabilities shouldn't be viewed as charity cases or regulatory burdens, but rather as profitable marketing targets. Now, mainstream companies, from financial services to cell phone makers, are going beyond what's mandated by law and rapidly tailoring products to attract them" (Prager, 1999, Dec. 15, p. B1, 2).

Cultural meaning of disability images in advertising

Disability studies scholar Harlan Hahn (1987) wrote a seminal article about the role of advertising in culturally defining, or not defining, disabled people. His work creates the framework we will use for analyzing subsequent ads that include disabled people. There is much literature about other societal groups' representation in advertising (Hall, 1997), but we will be focusing specifically on the unique case of advertising's disability images.

Hahn argues generally that advertising's emphasis on beauty and bodily perfection has led to exclusion of disabled people in the images. In addition, the nondisabled audience members' fears of becoming disabled and viewing images of disability meant businesses were hesitant to use disabled people as models.

Apparently the common difficulty of disabled people in gaining acceptance as human beings even permitted the belief that a male seated in a wheelchair was not really a man. Advertising and other forms of mass imagery were not merely designed to increase sales of commodities; they also comprised a cultural force with an influence that has permeated all aspects of American life. From this perspective, issues of causation, such as whether advertising simply reflected widespread sentiments about disability or whether it contributed to implanting such feelings, become less critical than the assessment of contexts and effects (Hahn, 1987, p. 562).

The context Hahn discusses is disabled people's "inability" to ever fit within a context of beautiful bodies and they are therefore rendered invisible. He points out that advertising promotes a specific "acceptable physical appearance" that it then reinforces itself. These advertising images tell society who is acceptable in terms of appearance and that transfers to who is acceptable to employ, associate with, communicate with, and value.

However, Hahn did see signs of hope in changing societal perceptions of disabled people through advertising and other forms of mass communication. He cites many historical examples in which physical appearances/attributes that were once prized were later seen as deviant or unattractive. Bogdan (1988) explained this phenomenon in his study of American freak shows, in which many disabled people were honored as celebrities; however, later people with the same disabilities were institutionalized.

In the modern understanding of diversity as a profitable undertaking for

businesses, we argue that the cultural meaning of disability imagery in advertising is changing for the better. As Hahn predicted, some social attitudes are changing and advertising that features disabled people is being associated with profitability, both because of the new found power of the disabled consumer and general audience's desire to see "real life" in images. As discussed in the example of the Target advertising campaign, they received several thousand letters of positive feedback and sold products modeled by disabled people at a much higher rate.

Another study done in preparation for the 1996 Atlanta Paralympics illustrated that both households with (49%) and without a disabled person (35%) valued accurate advertising images of disabled people and were likely to buy products and services that showed sensitivity to disabled people's needs (Dickinson, 1996).

In terms of demographics, disabled people in the US and the UK are now seen as "consumers able to buy." With 6.4 million disabled people in the UK and about 50 million disabled people in the US, businesses are recognizing the vast consumer potential (Precision Marketing, 1997, p. 15). Therefore, the cultural meanings of disability advertising imagery in the UK and the US are capitalistic profitability from a huge consumer base and a thrust to better represent the general diversity of society, which general audiences want. Although there is still discomfort among some nondisabled people in seeing disability imagery, it seems to have much diminished in the US. With equalizing legislation such as the ADA, which some disability advocates call "Additional Dollars Available" (Arbor, 1995), companies and their advertising agencies are realizing what disability activist and former *Mainstream* magazine publisher Cyndi Jones said in 1992: "Portraying disabled consumers in ads 'is just good business'...because most places people go to work or to play have 'one if not a multitude of people who are disabled'" (Goerne, 1992 Sept. 14, p. 33).

However, the UK has only begun to try to convince British businesses with a campaign about the profitability of the disabled consumer in 2000 with the Cheshire foundation's VisABLE campaign established in May 1999. UK Secretary of State for Education and Employment, David Blunkett, said that VisABLE was "a lead we should all follow" and said government departments would be encouraged to use more disabled people in their advertising (Connect, 1999, p. 5). The campaign was launched to encourage mainstream advertising companies to include more disabled people in their advertising material. The campaign, which coincides with the government initiatives to raise awareness about disability issues and the implementation of the Disability Discrimination Act, was created in conjunction with the National Disability Council (Stirling, 2000).

After an analysis of U.S. advertising practices using disabled people and a National Opinion Poll in the UK, Britain found its citizens open to inclusion of disabled people in advertising. One article in *The Guardian* explained how the VisABLE campaign followed some US companies lead: "there's concrete evidence from the US of the commercial effectiveness of the enlightened approach," mentioning Target stores' pioneering approach to including disabled people in their print ads from 1990 on (Hilton, 1999 May 30). The opinion poll especially confirmed this trend toward a desire for enlightened advertising with its findings that "80 percent of the general public would welcome more disabled people in advertising. Seventy percent said they would not assume an advert featuring disabled people was directed specifically at disabled people

rather than the general public as a whole" (Stirling, 2000, p. 9).

The VisABLE campaign did not ask advertising firms to spend money, but to plan their campaigns to include disabled models. In order to do this businesses needed access to disabled models. Rosemary Hargreaves, press and public relations officer for the Leonard Cheshire Charity for disabled people, which created VisABLE, said, "ad agencies and businesses claim there are no disabled models available, so we set out to challenge this perception by finding a pool of disabled models" (Stirling, 2000, p. 11). A modeling competition was launched as part of the campaign and attracted 500 disabled entrants. The two winners were a deaf woman and a wheelchair using man, who subsequently appeared in Marks and Spencer's chain store print ads selling women's tights and men's casual wear (M&S Magazine, 2000, p. 32, 45). The winners received a modeling contract with VisABLE models, an agency created by Louise Dyson in cooperation with the campaign. The competition is meant to be an annual event and has attracted support from seven leading corporate partners - B&Q, British Telecom, Co-operative Bank, HSBC Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corp., Marks and Spencer, McDonald's, and One2One - all of whom have made a commitment to use disabled models in the future.

One company specifically took its own initiative to use the disabled people already in its employ. B&Q, which is a do-it-yourself home improvement chain store, already used its own employees in adverts and for the VisABLE campaign asked its disabled employees to volunteer to be in its ads. The B&Q diversity coordinator explained the policy of using disabled people in this way "is not only good for promoting B&Q as a diverse employer, but is good for raising the profile of all disabled people" (B&Q Talking Shop, 2000, p. 8).

Similar to the US, the VisABLE campaign is helping businesses recognize the power of the disabled consumer market. With 8 million disabled people with an estimated annual spending power of 40 billion pounds, "yet they are an untapped customer source," according to the VisABLE campaign (Stirling, 2000, p. 9). B&Q Diversity Manager Kay Allen points out that in addition to profit reasons and legal reasons such as the Disability Discrimination Act, businesses have "obvious moral reasons. It's absolutely right that companies should cover disability as a diversity issue" (Stirling, 2000, p. 10).

However, not all businesses or advertising agencies have come on board for the VisABLE campaign. Some still associate images of disabled people with charity concerns and inspiration (Ralph and Lees, 2000). Other business people admit that disabled people in advertising is an "alien concept" and that advertisers are not used to taking those kinds of risks ("Tonight," 2000). One advertising firm surveyed said including disabled people in advertising smacks of "tokenism" (Ralph and Lees, 2000).

As mentioned, the positive cultural meanings of profitability and diversity in advertising images do not solve all potential problems with disability imagery. As with all advertising images, the beautiful and least disfigured disabled people are depicted. As mentioned, many early TV ads in the US used primarily deaf people. Good-looking and sports-minded wheelchair users are another important visual category. But this does not truly represent the diversity within the disability community. As a disability publication editor said: "Not every person with a disability is young and beautiful and athletic, just like all women aren't size 10, and all African Americans don't have degrees from Harvard. . . .I know people with disabilities who aren't pretty. They drool. They scare the

average person. So do we do more harm than good showing this cute little girl with CP?" (McLaughlin, 1993 Aug. 22, p. 31).

Some current disability imagery in advertising

TARGET

As mentioned, Target chain stores began a trend by including disabled children and teens in their print ad circulars in 1990. Though hesitant at first, the advertising was a rousing success and the corporate office received 2000 letters of support early in the campaign.

First, the images are well used because of the way they naturalize disability rather than stigmatize it. In fact, many times it takes several looks at the circulars to actually find the disabled children, whose disabilities are visible, because they are part of scenes of groups of children or a number of images on one page. The way Target uses disabled people in their ads fits squarely within the cultural meaning of diversity in advertising imagery. In fact, in 1994 a circular ad depicted a Latina disabled girl in a wheelchair interacting with a nondisabled Caucasian girls to sell girls pants sets. The ad is even more significant in that it depicts actual interaction between the children, rather than two girls staring at the camera. They are handing something to each other in a kitchen setting. This type of depiction sends several messages: That people of color have disabilities, too, and that interaction between disabled and nondisabled children is quite normal.

Another ad in 1994 for Target, a young blond woman in a wheelchair is used to advertise women's T-shirts. Although she is alone in the picture and is a typical smiling, blond model with a peaches and cream complexion, the interesting aspect to this ad is that she is wearing jeans shorts, which show her legs. As a person with a mobility disability her legs are not as muscular as a nondisabled person's might be and this is apparent in the photo. However, the image is not grotesque or disturbing. Once again, it just shows reality and the natural appearance of a wheelchair user's lower body.

In a 1995 Target ad, two teens are featured in an ad for women's cotton T-shirts. They are both smiling, fresh-faced blondes and one is a wheelchair user. The wheelchair is partially obscured by examples of the T-shirt embroidery at the bottom of the photo so only a corner of a wheelchair peeks out. Again, this very subtle approach erases any stigma and makes the wheelchair using teen the equal of her blonde counterpart in the ad. The nondisabled teen is bent down near to the disabled teen so there is less height difference between the standing and sitting teens.

Finally, Target's ad campaigns realized that wheelchair use is not the only disability or even the most prevalent. In 1995, a circular depicted a boy with a walker in their ad for Power Ranger underwear sets. The walker, however, is placed behind him, possibly so the clothing was not covered in the picture. The boy stands up straight in his walker and is next to a girl modeling Power Ranger underwear for girls. The boy's tanned, smiling appearance is vigorous and healthy and really has little connection to a "medical model" depiction (Clogston, 1990), even with a walker in the scene. Another Target circular in Spanish advertised school uniform wear and featured a young model with a single crutch. She strikes a typical model pose with a sweater slung over her shoulder. She, too, has a healthy appearance and the illustration shows no misshapen extremities. In fact, her only "flaw" is one that normalizes her as a child - she is missing a front tooth. The only possible concern with this image is that it is shot from above her

and looks down upon her completely. Finally, a Target promotional flier on tourist spots in Chicago features a child who appears to be blind interacting with two other children and a large bat at The Field Museum. Again, the interaction among the children and the lack of signification about her blindness normalizes the photo and presents no stigma to viewer.

B&Q AND ONE2ONE

The two British companies took different paths to including disabled people in their advertising but both had similarly well-done results. B&Q is a do-it-yourself home improvement store, similar to the US Home Depot. Paula Wakefield stars in 10-second TV Performance Power Drill ads for B&Q. Her lower left arm is missing, and she is pictured holding in her right hand a 12-volt cordless drill and is standing in front of a variety of drill tool accessories. She is dressed in the usual B&Q uniform as she is employed by the organization as a salesperson. Kay Allen, Diversity Manager for B&Q, explained how they use their advertising campaigns to target customers by using real employees in the advert who will reflect the diverse nature of our customer base. We know customers want to be served by 'people like themselves.' Disability is a natural part of our diverse society. It was therefore a logical step to encourage a disabled employee to take part. We have no criteria over image other than to present disability as a slice of life (Allen, 2000, personal communication).

Paula is an average B&Q employee with no special modeling training. The TV ad is so short that it is difficult to see her disability. Another positive point in this ad is that she is a female advertising what is traditionally seen as a male endeavor. Other employees who are disabled have been invited to take part in similar campaigns, and in May 2000 Alan St. John, who is disabled, starred in a 30-second landscaping commercial.

Home improvement is big business in the UK. B&Q predicts it will have a 19% market share and "the aim of the disability strategy would be to capture a far higher proportion of the available market" (B&Q, "Disability: A Journey to Accessibility," 2000, p.14). The company estimates they will be targeting approximately 5 million adults of working age who are either disabled or act as carers. Allen (2000, personal communication) says, "the business case is evident - we achieved a prominent piece on the 9 o'clock news and the feedback has been tremendous."

In the mobile phone One2One's TV ad, a disabled character is included in the 30-second ad that tells the story of a nondisabled young man trying to reinvent himself to attract a young woman. The ad is a quickly edited narrative in which the young man first tries exercise to attract the woman, then vegetarianism, and then poetry reading. The disabled actor enters the narrative in a library or bookstore in which he turns in his wheelchair to tell the young man that the young woman likes poetry books. He is one of only three to four speaking characters in the advertisement.

He is a hip young wheelchair user with bleached hair and a sporty appearance, yet he is placed in the most intellectual site in the ad's narrative - among books. (This is unlike many U.S. ads that feature young, athletic male wheelchair users, which typically show scenes of their sports activities.) The scene is well shot and the camera angle is eye level and non-stigmatizing. The disabled character plays an incidental, yet important, role in the ad's narrative because he advances the "story" of the ad with the information he

gives. He is just a part of the friendship network in the ad, not the focus, because he is part of a communication process with his peers. What is interesting to note, as well, is that because this is a mobile phone company, the business could have easily focused on his mobile phone needs as a disabled person.

Disabled actor Matt Fraser, in commenting on the ad, was impressed by One2One's use of a disabled model. He emphasized that the company was using disability in the way it should be used, as illustrating the diversity in British society. "It's a slice of life and there within all the slice is a disabled one," Fraser said (VisABLE video, 2000). One2One officials, however, openly noted that using a disabled person in the TV lead to profits and was just good business. "We're not stupid. We know if we get it right it's going to enhance the popularity and the value of our brand," said Tina Harrison, Marketing Communications, One2One (VisABLE video, 2000).

NIKE

The sporting goods company Nike has used disabled athletes in a number of their advertisements. It should be noted that as media researchers of disability images we are concerned that many ads use disabled athletes which we believe to be an extension of the Supercrip image (Clogston, 1990; Covington, 1988). However, because of Nike's product line, all their advertising images are always of superathletes or athlete "wannabes."

Nike's TV ads have a mixture of the incidental use of disabled models and one featured disabled athlete, Craig Blanchette, who held two world records in wheelchair racing in 1989. The Blanchette spot is called "Cross training with Craig Blanchette" and no scene or mention of his disability is made in the first 27 seconds of the 30-second commercial. He is referred to as a 1988 Olympic bronze medalist. The ad seethes with macho images, first of Blanchette lifting weights, then aggressively playing basketball and tennis. The scenes are intensely athletic, and Blanchette is seen reaching for and making difficult shots. Although he is the focus of the ad, he is not alone. Other male athletic types, both young and old, black and white, are depicted in the background of the weight room, and Blanchette smilingly tosses a basketball to another young man in one scene. Blanchette appears muscular with his massive arms and rugged with his scruffy beard. Only in the last few seconds is it revealed that Blanchette is a wheelchair athlete when the camera pans down and he says: "So I never quit" and turns his back to the camera and races down the track in his sports wheelchair.

Nike officials said it was not relevant to them that Blanchette is a wheelchair-using double amputee. Their VP of marketing explained, "He's a great athlete, which ties to our usual strategy...and he's a really motivating guy to be around. The fact that he was handicapped was secondary" (Lipman, 1989 Sept. 7, p. 1). But profitability from disabled athletes or consumers was likely a strong motivation. As a Wall Street Journal article says, the Blanchette Nike ad is an example of commercial advertising becoming "increasingly enchanted with the disabled" (Lipman, 1989 Sept. 7, p. 1). Nike also illustrates general inclusiveness in two other TV ads, one of which, "Heritage U.S. Update" has an image of an African American wheelchair racer and concludes with a triumphant white wheelchair user winning a race with "There is no finish line" superimposed in the background. Another Nike ad called "Hope" focuses almost entirely of men and women athletes of color and includes two fast images of wheelchair races and then a concluding image of a wheelchair racer who pulls open his shirt to reveal the "Superman" emblem.

Conclusion and Discussion

This analysis illustrates that companies in the US and the UK are seeing the profitability of including disabled people in their advertising and understanding the benefits of diverse images in advertising. The implication of the images produced in these advertisements is that advertising not only includes disabled people for capitalistic reasons, but realizes these must be accurate images to earn any profit from their use. This means companies have learned, due to their own desire for profits, to move away from the past pity narratives of charity. Our analyses illustrate that corporate America and Britain can create good disability images in advertising that are sensitive and accurate and just represent disability as another slice of life.

However, we recognize that disability images in advertising are not perfect. There is almost total focus on two disabilities: wheelchair use and deafness. For example, McDonald's admitted early in advertising campaigns to taking the path of ease to show disabled people by just including wheelchair users in shots of "hordes of customers" (Dougherty, 1986, p. D26). Ironically, their "easy way out" actually became the best way to depict disability in ads - an incidental use of disability among a variety of people illustrates diversity in a very salient and accurate way. Although the incidence of wheelchair use is actually quite low when compared to other types of disabilities, it is also understood that advertising is a visual medium which needs the equipment cues such as wheelchairs to denote disability as part of the diversity depicted. Disabled screen writer Marc Moss explained that he was initially concerned about how wheelchair users were used in advertising as "proof of corporate soul." However, he does agree "that with varying degrees of finesse, they (advertisers) juggle two points: Their products or services are worthy, and so are people who can't walk" (Moss, 1992 June 19, p. A8).

Of course, as with all advertising, only "pretty people" can become models. This is the area in which many disabled people still have concern about the images of disability in advertising. "It would be nice to have a severely disabled person depicted instead of your superjock 'crip,'" says David Lewis, a quadriplegic who is community relations coordinator for the Center for Independent Living, a non-profit support group for the disabled based in Berkeley, California. "Usually disabled people in commercials look like able bodied people in wheelchairs" (Lipman, 1989 Sept. 7, p. 1). However, some disabled people applaud finally being visible in ads or being presented as anything other than a charity case. As one disabled actor said, "the Adonis in a wheelchair is better than the whimpering victim in a corner" (McLaughlin, 1993 Aug. 22, p. 31). Therefore, due to the nature of media effects, we believe that these disability advertising images, even if they tend to focus primarily on beautiful deaf people or wheelchair users, can enhance more acceptance and integration of disabled people into society. Several past studies of the potential for attitude changes toward disabled people through use of media images have confirmed this phenomenon (Farnall & Smith, 1999; Panol & McBride, 1999; Farnall, 1996).

Finally, the better and more prevalent use of disabled people in advertising we believe can be tied to important anti-discrimination legislation in the US and the UK. The ADA kicked off a renewed awareness of disability rights which can be seen in the growing number of disabled people in ads from 1990 on (See Table 1) and a better understanding of the disabled consumer market. It can be hoped that the Disability

Discrimination Act 1995 in the UK will lead to the same kind of inclusion of diverse disability in British advertising. The VisABLE campaign is an outgrowth of the consultation around the anti-discrimination legislation.

Historically, this article has documented the changing cultural meanings of disability imagery in advertising. Currently, business concerns see profitability in disability imagery and have found diversity to be good business practice. This is quite a shift from the pre-Rehabilitation Act and pre-ADA days. A National Easter Seals Society executive explained that in the mid-1970s she tried persuade a Minneapolis company to use a disabled person in a promotional photo: "They were horrified at the idea. . . . They told me they would lose sales, it would scare people - they even used the word disgusting" (Sagon, 1991, Dec. 19, p. B10). By 1992 the same Easter Seals spokesperson praised companies like K Mart when they began a new TV ad campaign using a wheelchair-using actress to portray a customer. "Those of us in the nonprofit world have tried for years to change the way disabled people are perceived," Sandra Gordon of Easter Seals said. "Now it seems the for-profit world is finally lending a hand" (Roberts and Miller, 1992, p. 40).

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