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Disability in Advertising

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DISABILITY IN ADVERTISING

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Abstract

Despite the potency of advertising to influence behavior and cultural memes, it has been unusual until recently to see people with impairments featured in commercials that market mainstream products, ideas, and services. To the contrary, people with obvious impairments typically appear as deficient and only cured or improved by the medical devices, pharmaceuticals and other products that they market. However, over the past decade, efforts to elicit social change, although nascent, are making inroads into marketing and advertising. This presentation analyzes a recent Nike ad in which men with visible impairments are featured as robust athletes. The potential for such efforts to change perceptions of disability from human deficiency to human diversity are discussed.

Definitions

Social Model of Disability: views disability as a consequence of environmental, social and attitudinal barriers that prevent people with impairments from maximum participation in society.

Medical Model of Disability: holds that disability results from an individual person's physical or mental limitations, and is largely unconnected to the social or geographical environments.

Disjuncture: disability is a product of the interaction between characteristics of the individual and the characteristics of the natural, built, cultural, and social environments.

Extreme Disjuncture — Body ↔ Environment

Juncture — Environment / Body

Moderate Disjuncture — Body / Environment
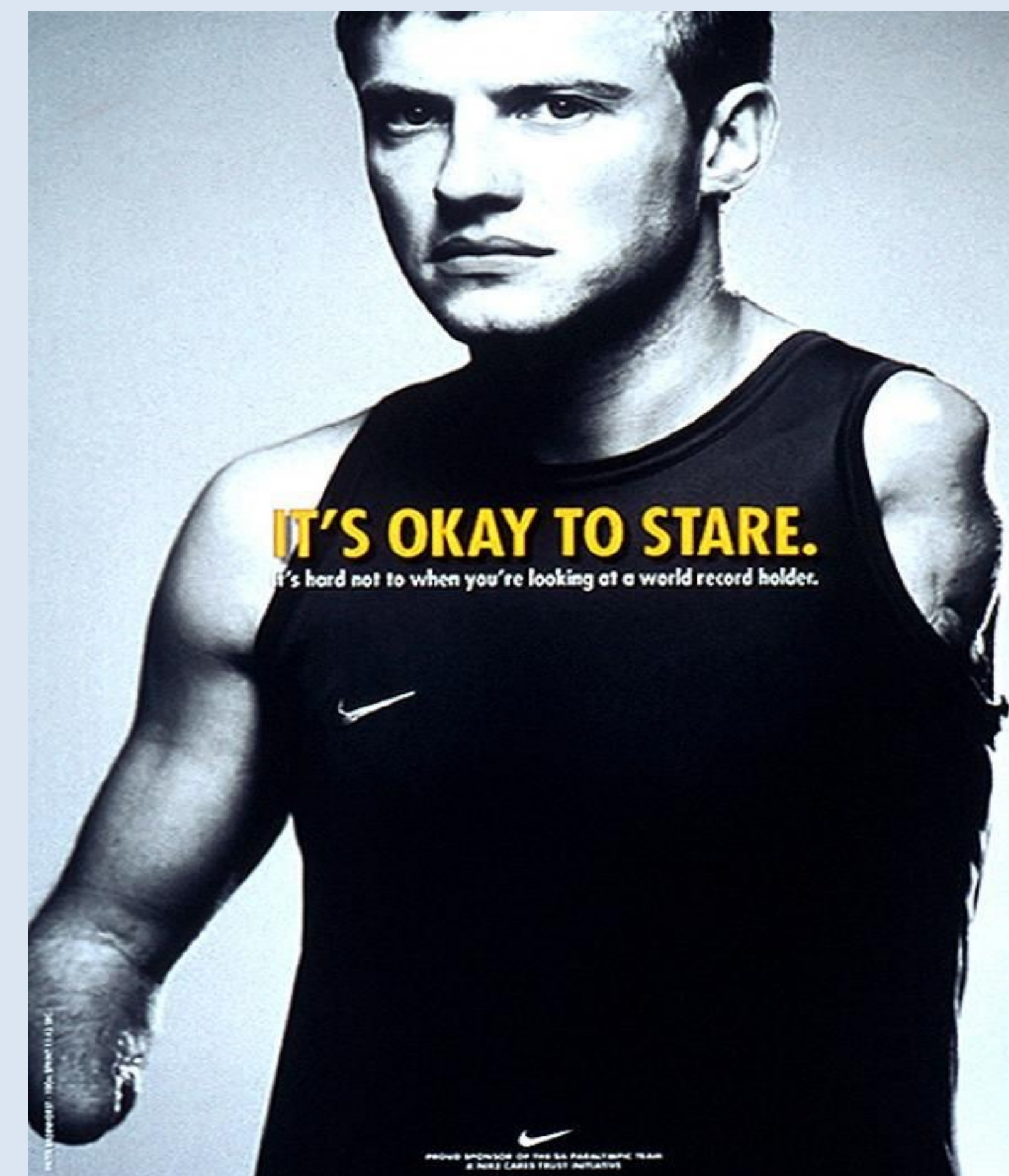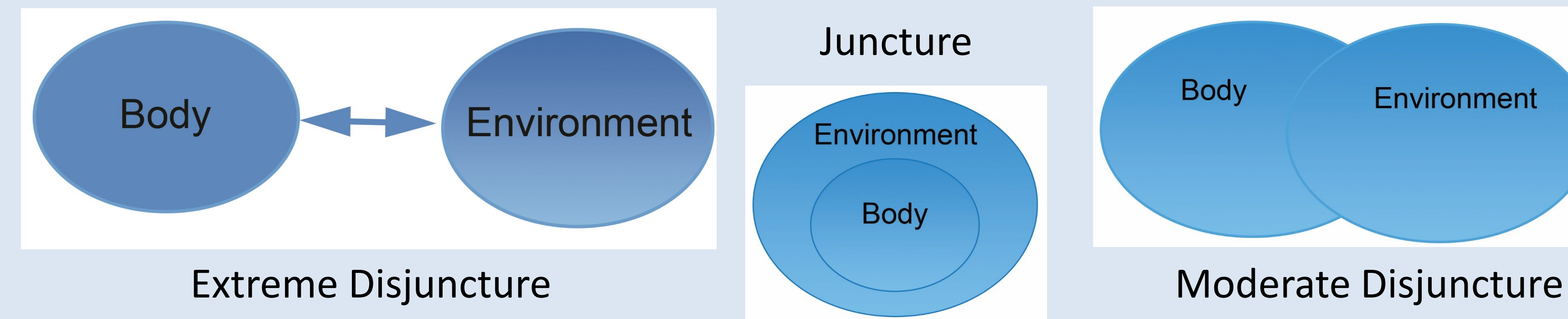
Findings

Medical Model of Disability:
The medical model, shows more obvious physical characteristic of disability, based on the man's appearance you can tell that he is disabled. Although you can detect his disability, this advertisement is embracing the man's abilities as a amputee.

Social Model of Disability:
The social model in this advertisement is based on the stigma this man faces as an amputee. Society may not think of an amputee as a world record holder, so this advertisement challenges the way people think about disabled individuals as athletes.

Disjuncture

- In regards to the disjuncture theory on the medical model of disability, this man's physical disability is not causing him disjuncture, in this context.
- In another context, this man may be experiencing the medical model of disjuncture such as if he was trying to grasp a cup but here disjuncture does not need to be healed.
- This ad shows that this man is experiencing disjuncture by people in his environment staring at him because he is disabled instead of for his accomplishments.
- The ad helps to heal this disjuncture because it is forcing people to see him as a world record holder instead of as someone who is disabled.
- Sometimes the medical model applies to a disability but people are not experiencing disjuncture.
- Social disjuncture can be healed by forcing people to see that people with disabilities can have accomplishments too.

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168 Submission No.

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