Conforming to or confounding the beauty myth: femininity, diversity and chromosomal disorders

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Abstract

Despite being the largest marginalised identity group in the world, disabled people are routinely overlooked or ignored in the world of fashion, beauty and advertising. With this in mind, this article will examine the ways in which a model born with Down syndrome can be seen to reassert both the fragility and fixity of the female beauty myth, opening up broader debates about diversity and inclusivity in fashion and beauty advertising. This article will consider the representation and popular reception of Madeline Stuart, who is a model with Down syndrome, with specific reference to her 2015 appearance during New York Fashion Week. Stuart is an important case study here because she is routinely penned as the world's first professional model with Down syndrome, and her travel down the catwalk in question, which at the time of writing, has been viewed 161,000 times on YouTube, appears front and centre of her official website. I look to examine the ways in which Stuart's career, carefully constructed and circulated by her manager mother in lieu of an agent, both confirms and seeks to challenge existing stereotypes as they relate to femininity, disability, fashion, beauty and body confidence, before concluding that although Stuart can be read as a game-changer in the fashion and beauty industry, the rigid ableist beauty myth still holds sway.

Key Words

Disability, Down syndrome, fashion, beauty, advertising, Madeline Stuart.

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Introduction

Feminism's second wave was seen to be in opposition to femininity and the beauty industry due to the fact that the "beauty myth" (Wolf, *The Beauty Myth*) was said to coerce women into ever more fixed, rigid and stifling iterations of appropriate femininity, based on surface appearance and attractiveness. Such definitions leave little or no space for anything other than normate bodies, bodies that are understood to be "outlined by an array of deviant others whose marked bodies shore up the norm's boundaries" (Garland-Thomson 8 cited in Hall 3). Since the 1990s however, post-feminism, and more recently the third and fourth waves, have re-appropriated fashionable femininity as an accessible site of empowerment and self-confidence rather than animosity or victimisation. Although the turn to female, fashionable, pleasure principles have replaced the earlier hostility to the accoutrements of femininity, it is important that we continue to interrogate "the gendered politics of appearance" (Garland-Thomson 1569). As such, this article will consider the ways in which fashionability is being sold, literally, to and through disabled women who have traditionally "been cast in the collective cultural imagination as inferior" (Garland-Thomson 1567).

Despite being the "largest minority group in the world" (Greiner in O'Brien), disabled people are routinely overlooked or ignored in the world of fashion, beauty and advertising. And yet, if one considers the ways in which "cultural representations have the ability to challenge or support widespread attitudes and beliefs surrounding identity groups" (Houston), then the advertising industry could be said to have the "ability to help shape the way the world defines and views disability" (Novicki and Whitley). With this in mind, this article will examine the ways in which a model born with Down syndrome

can be seen to reassert both the fragility and fixity of the female beauty myth, opening up broader debates about diversity and inclusivity in fashion and beauty advertising. This article will consider the representation and popular reception of Madeline Stuart, who is a model with Down syndrome, with specific reference to her 2015 appearance during New York Fashion Week. Stuart is an important case study here because she is routinely penned as the world's first supermodel with Down syndrome, and the catwalk in question, which at the time of writing, has been viewed 161,000 times on YouTube, appears front and centre of her official website. I look to examine the ways in which Stuart's career, carefully constructed and circulated by her manager mother in lieu of an agent, both confirms and seeks to challenge existing stereotypes as they relate to femininity, disability, fashion, beauty and body confidence, before concluding that although Stuart can be read as a game-changer in the fashion and beauty industry, the rigid ableist beauty myth still holds sway.

Beauty/myth and advertising

Feminist disability studies takes the body and "bodily variety" as a central focus of enquiry (Hall 6) and yet, women today continue to be presented within a hegemonic beauty hierarchy, which depicts white, youthful, tall and slender women with smooth, glowing skin, flowing tresses and normate, able bodies as the zenith of visual pleasure (Redmond, Miller). In an effort to emulate the "flawless beauty" routinely placed before us and played out in advertising and surrounding media, women are said to be trapped in what Naomi Wolf refers to in her foundational work as an "endless spiral of hope, self-consciousness, and self-hatred" (Wolf, *The Beauty Myth Blurb*) as they routinely find their age, weight, height, hair, skin, proportions, not to mention their accoutrements of ever-changing, fashionable femininities, wanting (Gottschall, Redmond, Vigo).

With such judgements in mind, contemporary feminism encourages body positivity over body shaming, because flawless beauty and ideal bodies are routinely "a far cry from real human bodies" (Heiss), a far cry, even before we consider those bodies that are marked as different or disabled. And yet, the most recent feminist waves can be said to have a "fractured and complex" relationship with the beauty myth, as playing with hair, make-up, sartorial styles and surgery adhere to a patriarchal construct while simultaneously speaking the language of choice, accessibility, agency and empowerment (Negra and Hamad).

Christina Tsaousi talks about the ways in which women, fully aware of the patriarchal power of the beauty myth, are nonetheless spending time, money and energy on their appearance, attractiveness, physiques and facial features. They seek to foreground the inclusivity of contemporary feminism when they speak of makeovers granting "universal access to beauty," with little consideration of disability or bodies that cannot easily be aligned with flawless femininity (Tsaousi). If one considers the ways in which the media in general, and advertising in particular, routinely situate “the 'normal' female body as the presence of high cheek bones, even skin tones, long legs, and the absence of fat [and] wrinkles" (Heiss), then there is little room for normate bodies who defy the beauty myth, and no visible space for those "whose looks or comportment depart from social expectations" (Garland-Thomson 1579). In short, the boundaries of appropriate feminine beauty, appearance and attractiveness are routinely fixed, strict, narrow and limited.

Irrespective of the fact that about 1.5 billion of the world's population are disabled (UN), statistics suggest that only a tiny percentage of the 100 top-grossing Hollywood movies, of U.S. primetime programming, and U.S. television advertisements include regular disabled characters (Heumann, Farnall and Lyons). UK-based Zebedee Management reports that less than 1% of people featured in advertising in Britain have a disability, and that drops even

more when looking at fashion and beauty advertising (Bakar). Indeed, advertising can be understood as a "fun house mirror" because rather than represent people, communities and societies as they really are, it tends to present a partial, distorted and limited depiction of the population (Pollay, Timke). Advertising has routinely been understood as a conservative medium more interested in maintaining the status quo than proposing a change or challenge, for fear of alienating clients, customers and consumers (Haller and Ralph). Only "attractive people with flawless bodies" have tended to exist in the world of advertising (Timke); after all, we are reminded that the power of advertising lies in its ability to incite emulation and envy in the models shown, who in turn confer status on a range of beauty products and services (Redmond). In short, advertising and public relations recruiters are not equal opportunity employers and those with a visible difference or disability need not apply.

The hegemonic hierarchy of feminine beauty makes it clear that disabled bodies are either overlooked or marked as inferior (Garland-Thomson 1557-1558). Eschewing visible differences and impairments from the entertainment, media and advertising sector leaves those women who do not present with a normate body to be "inscribed as unnatural, undesirable, and unmanageable" (Heiss). The normate body in this regard can be understood as attempting to emulate the rigid standards of the beauty myth. That said, there is a small, slow, but growing acknowledgement of disability within the advertising sector, and by extension, representations of disabled individuals and communities in our magazines and on our screens. Such inclusive representations exist in part because individual companies are looking to new markets and demographics for clients, customers and sales, and in part because brands are looking to present a more altruistic framing for their otherwise commercial enterprises. If one considers that "88% of marketers believe that using inclusive images helps a brand's reputation" then it is evident that accessibility and inclusion remain an

astute marketing strategy for some companies (Parsons, 2020; see also Silverman, 2018).

Desire, disability and advertising

Before the 1980s, the depiction of disabled individuals as pitiable victims in need of help and support from their able-bodied counterparts was a common trope in the charity and campaigning sector (Timke, Heiss). More recently however, a range of brands and sectors are looking to more inclusive and progressive representations of disability and diversity in their campaigns, and in each case these inclusions have helped both the brand value and commercial sales of the companies in question. By way of an example, Mars' 2016 Maltesers adverts in the UK featuring disabled actors have proved to be the "most successful … for the brand in 10 years" (Mortimer). The ways in which these short form media texts presented women with visible disabilities as desirable and desiring was ground-breaking, because disabled people in general and disabled women in particular, are routinely denied agency as sexual beings (McRuer and Mollow 1, Hall 4, Garland-Thomson 30).

Cassandra Phillips makes the point that media audiences "never see a woman with a visual disability holding up a bottle of Chanel perfume or a can of Pantene hair spray" (Phillips); which functions to validate and reinforce cultural understandings that the disabled body is aesthetically deviant and outside the limits of normal and beaut[iful]" (Heiss). Writing for *Grazia*, the weekly women's magazine that originated in Italy, Anna Silverman makes the point that "[d]isabled models are rarely seen on catwalks, on billboards or in the pages of glossy magazines" (Silverman).

That said, 2019 was presented as "a landmark year for disabled fashion" (Jackson, Landmark Year). While the British online fashion and cosmetic retailer ASOS was applauded for quietly including a visibly disabled model (Ekall), the company has been joined by brand names such as Nike and Tommy

Hilfiger, who are not just featuring models with impairments in their advertising, but designing their clothes specifically for disabled people and those with chronic conditions (Jackson, Landmark Year). Likewise, British brands such as Kohl Kreatives and Grace Beauty have enabled those with impaired motor skills to apply makeup, coiff their hair and maintain a fashionable sense of style, and the accompanying advertising of these products foreground the inclusivity and accessibility of the brands in question (Jackson, Rise of Disability Friendly). However, although wheelchairs and prosthetic limbs are seen to abound in such advertising campaigns (Perry, 'Disability Advertising' see also Perry, 'Inspiration Porn,' Haller and Ralph), it is the American lingerie brand Aerie that should be applauded as the first company to represent "true diversity of age, ethnicity, ability, and size" (cited in Petter). Although the brand "is known for its inclusive campaigns" (Petter), its recent depiction of models with vitiligo, arm crutches, colostomy bags, insulin pumps and Down syndrome can be read as a genuine turning point for representation (Callahan). Beth Haller and Sue Ralph noted that diversity can be profitable for businesses, (Haller and Ralph), and Aerie is a case in point. Aerie's ground-breaking series of adverts coincided with "record revenue growth for the company" in question (Lashbrook).

The inclusion of models with Down syndrome in the fashion and beauty industry

These days, millennial consumers, clients and customers are keen to see a "broad cross-section of families, couples and individuals" as a sign of "authenticity" in advertising (Bonner). And yet, at the time of writing, it remains rare to see professional models with Down syndrome at the forefront of fashion and beauty campaigns, even with some adverts in the US, UK, and Australia including children with Down syndrome (Bonner).

Due to the fact that individuals with Down syndrome make up a minority population (an estimated 1 in 1,100 babies with Down syndrome are born worldwide, according to the UN), audiences, readers, and consumers may not know anyone with the condition, which makes media representations incredibly important to our understanding of the genetic disorder.

Those diagnosed with the extra chromosome that comes with Down syndrome have a characteristic appearance, including a flat face, small ears, almond-shaped eyes, a small mouth and a stocky build with short neck, arms and legs (Genetics Home Reference). My point here is that the inclusion of professional models with Down syndrome demonstrates a meaningful positive step in fashion and beauty advertising due to the fact that the facial and physical characteristics of models with Down syndrome do not adhere to the rigid beauty myth more commonly associated with professional catwalk shows, features and editorials. With this in mind, it is important to look at the companies who are currently employing models with Down syndrome, and the representation of those models chosen to front contemporary fashion and beauty brand campaigns.

Rather than single out individual models or performers, *The Mighty*, "a digital health community created to empower and connect people facing health challenges and disabilities" (The Mighty) draws attention to a listicle of "43 Models with Down syndrome," which reads as a casting catalogue of toddlers and infants, children and teenagers, men and women of diverse race and ethnicities written in collaboration with Zebedee Management, an agency representing diverse models in the U.K (Stumbo).

The aforementioned listicle stems from disability publication, and as such, it is imbued with a sense of uplift, optimism and agency, and yet, it is as if we are being asked to look to these professional models as something different or "other" than their supposedly normate counterparts. After all, the models are signed to diversity departments in large talent agencies who are looking to

increase the representation of disabled people, who have until recently been excluded in the media (KMR Diversity Department). These actors, models and performers are not routinely showcased alongside normate models, and that could be read as exclusionary rather than inclusive here.

Gail Williamson, an agent for KMR Diversity Los Angeles who has been honoured with a Lifetime Achievement Award from Media Access for advancing disability awareness and inclusion, makes this point when she states that "it is her ultimate goal that the need for specialty agents is eliminated" (Campbell). Society and by extension, the media industries should be looking to "accommodate disabled bodies" (Garland-Thomson 1583) and yet, genuine diversity of representation can only exist when *mainstream* agents and agencies are signing disabled models, actors and entertainers, when these performers are valued as professionals and paid in line with their normate counterparts (madameactivist, Purcell).

With this lack of inclusion in mind, I would like to draw attention to Madeline Stuart walking the runway during New York Fashion Week 2015. Stuart is an Australian model with Down syndrome who has appeared on the catwalk at New York, Paris and London fashion week to name but a few (Madeline Stuart Management). Stuart's career is heavily monitored and marketed by her manager mother, Rosanne, and most media interviews with the model are set up so that Stuart's mother answers questions about health, inspiration, and travelling on behalf of her daughter. In evaluating media coverage of Madeline Stuart, it becomes clear that her mother constructs and maintains her daughter's image. Rosanne Stuart has her own TEDxHSG talk in which she calls her daughter "loud and proud", but Madeline appears in person in only two minutes of the 14-minute talk and says three words (Stuart, Rosanne 2018). A question arises about how much of written interviews with Maddy, attributed to the model herself, may actually be spoken and scripted by her mother (Purcell 2020). This dynamic is due in part to what Stuart's mother

refers to as a ‘language barrier’ between Stuart and her fanbase and in part due to her lack of confidence in interview/press situations (Amplify 2017). And yet a reluctance to take centre stage at press junkets has not held the model back from success or quashed her ambitions. After all, alongside her professional modelling career, Stuart has set up a specialist dance school and her own fashion line while lending her time, face and energies to support numerous non-profit diversity and disability organisations. At 25 years of age Stuart has a wealth of modelling experience, a self-titled documentary (*Maddy the Model*), and her website reports more than 1 million followers across her social media platforms (madelinestuartmodel.com), with each one being said to play its part in "challenging our perception of identity, beauty and disability" (IMDB).

Even a cursory glance at Stuart's Instagram account makes it clear that the woman in question is a working model spanning travel magazine editorials to haute couture fashion shows. As is routine in the world of fashion, her make-up, hair, expressions, clothing, props and posing are chameleon-like in line with the client brief, but there is rarely any doubt that the model in question is Madeline Stuart or that Stuart has Down syndrome. Indeed, the front covers and editorial routinely draw attention to her status as the world's first supermodel with Down syndrome and/or questions of diversity and difference in fashion, beauty and advertising (madelinesmodelling_). Indeed, the posts are peppered with headline statements about Stuart's prominent role in changing disability from a site of oppression to one of empowerment, most notably in relation to the Inspiration and Achievement award that she received from Runway of Dreams, a non-profit foundation that "works toward a future of inclusion, acceptance and opportunity in the fashion industry for people with disabilities" (Runway of Dreams). Posts are routinely seen as sites of inspiration for those with Down syndrome, their friends or family members; and as an informative/uplifting site for those with limited knowledge of the condition. By

way of a random sample of comments on Stuart's Instagram page:

> You are absolutely beautiful and such a role model (inabra72)

> Thank you for all of the advocating you do! I have the most amazing 11-year-old girl who has special needs. You are such a role model for her! She loves to see your modeling. Please keep being you!! (rachelg5887)

> Respect for you Madeline for saying yes I can when many say you can not! Thxs for being an advocate for diversity & changing the way the world looks at people with Down syndrom[e] ♥♡(Grevictoryismine)

What is presented as a return to modeling post-Covid and post heart surgery in a 2020 *Sunday Mail* feature has been read and received by over 13,000 people at the time of writing (Madelinesmodelling_). The feature and accompanying fashion photography find fans and followers praising the model for bringing hope, optimism and opportunity to their own lives, by way of examples:

> This is stunning. You are such and inspiration x 🔥❤️ (betsyboo_15)

> You are an inspiration! We can't wait to see what you will do next! So glad you are well. 🙏💖💙💛 (notyourordinarysam)

One might suggest that there exists a fine line between being an inspiring role model and "inspiration porn" (Young), but either way, Stuart is working hard to

build her modelling career and to break down negative stereotypes that present disabled bodies as "inferior, lacking, excessive, incapable, unfit, and useless" (Garland-Thomson 1567). Stuart's appearance during New York Fashion Week 2015 takes centre stage on her official website, and it is this short text that I would like to draw further attention to, for the ways in which it can be read as inspiration or inspiration porn respectively.

As evidence of Stuart's position as a role model within and beyond the Down syndrome and broader disability community, one can look to Instagram as the comments relating to the aforementioned fashion show posting are unanimously positive:

> Good job showing the world that having Down's syndrome only makes you more beautiful and strong. I have a friend with Down's and one day she was saying how she felt bad about herself because a boy at school was mean to her. She was saying how she didn't feel beautiful and important, it broke my heart. Luckily I showed her your account, and when she saw how lovely you were, she felt better! Keep it up darling ♥ (s.copeland99)

One must however remember that we are living at a time when individuals with Down syndrome are struggling to find paid employment, even after appropriate training and support to prepare them for the workplace (Eley) and therefore the life of a supermodel, actress or content creator seems a step removed for many. Thus, while the model-come-celebrity narrative might be seen to offer hope and encouragement for some, for others it falls into the category of inspiration porn whereby the media's frequent reporting of an individual's "admirable, charming, high-achieving" career could be seen to "create misplaced pressures on other disabled people" (Pulrang).

The catwalk in question shows Stuart walking down the runway in her designer attire, confident and engaging, clearly relishing the high-profile contract (Stuart). However, although Stuart's hair and sartorial stylings are consistent with the non-disabled models in the show, the movement of her clothes, behaviour, stature and demeanour stand out from the more predictably "flawless" bodies around her. My query here is that if Stuart is being employed as a professional model, it is the clothes that should draw our attention, not the personality, energy or joie de vivre of the individual. Stuart is wearing the clothes, but in this instance the clothes should be wearing her. One gets the impression that the fashion show audience is watching Stuart in the form of an endearing amusement rather than paying attention to the apparel. Stuart's walk finds her shaking hands with the crowd, getting a rowdy cheer during an otherwise quiet event and being given acknowledgement and attention by the male models not offered to her non-disabled peers. Stuart's physical difference is acute when we see her walk past other women on the catwalk, women who maintain a more predictable tall, thin model-esque beauty, walk, posture and pose. If we are in any doubt as to how the crowd are reading Stuart's performance, a muffled voice watching the show is heard saying "Awww, she's done so well …" (Stuart), an aside not directed at non-disabled models on the catwalk.

Although feminist disability studies questions and challenges societal "assumptions that disability is a flaw, lack, or excess' (Garland-Thomson 1557), the positioning of Madeline Stuart in New York Fashion Week could be read precisely as a site of novelty and excess as her playful exuberance disrupts the routinely stoic runway. The novelty stands in opposition to a more meaningful move towards appreciating diverse models in the fashion industry. Stuart was not the only disabled model included in the fashion show for FTL Moda, rather, a number of disabled models were included as part of the event's theme, “Fashion Free from Confines” (Fisher). In short, Stuart is not being positioned

as a professional model in a mainstream fashion event, but included, alongside other disabled bodies in connection with Global Disability Inclusion and the Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation (Waxman, Fisher).

If one considers that work from within the field of feminist disability studies seeks to "challenge norms of bodily appearance and function that have informed feminist stud[ies] of patriarchal oppression, feminine embodiment, and feminist resistance' (Hall ix), then it is clear why I would want to read Stuart's role in New York Fashion Week as trail-blazing, as ground-breaking and game-changing. Feminist disability scholars look to "challenge ableist stereotypes" by drawing attention to "life-writing about their experiences of disability" (Simplican 46), so too, both Madeline and Roseanne Stuart are looking to challenge societal assumptions about individuals who are marked as different, disabled, or diagnosed with Down syndrome. It is hard not to be both moved by and optimistic about such inclusivity in the fashion and beauty sector. Indeed, one might look to the model in question as single-handedly being able to "dislodge the pervasive negative notions we all learn about disability and shake up our assumptions about what constitutes happiness, attractiveness and dignity" (Garland-Thomson 1559). However, the catwalk could also go some way towards reminding us of the stark difference between a model with Down syndrome, albeit a supermodel, and the unrealisable beauty myth employed more routinely and emulated in and beyond the normate bodies that continue to dominate the fashion and beauty industry. The fact that Stuart lost 44 pounds in weight before embarking on her modelling career can be read as inspiration or a further perpetuation of the beauty myth for young women and girls with or without a chromosomal condition (Brar).

Although there are questions around the logistical difficulties of a model living in Australia, at a remove from the fashion capitals of New York, London and Paris, I am left questioning if Stuart's lack of mainstream representation is due more to the fact that she cannot distance herself from her disability. Stuart

is a paradox: a model who does not fit the narrow beauty ideal routinely championed by the industry; a celebrity advocate who struggles to communicate with her fanbase, and a role model for health and fitness although recently having to undergo heart surgery. In short, her modelling performances and online interviews exploit Stuart as an inspiring or possibly intimidating super-crip, whereas the off-screen reality speaks more to Stuart's limitations, and this makes for an uncomfortable reality for an industry routinely centred around escapism, fantasy, desire and transcendence.

Stuart's manager mother works to construct and circulate her daughter's image and profile, even when her daughter is unable to work due to ill health,[1] and yet the continued popularity of any star or celebrity relies on promotion, publicity, criticisms and commentaries alongside the star's own labour (Dyer 1979/1998). Without Stuart in the spotlight, star credentials and thus currency can fade, and other girls, teenagers and young women with the same chromosomal difference such as Ellie Goldstein, a British model with Down syndrome featured on Gucci Beauty's official Instagram, take centre stage as and when brands and designers wish to demonstrate their inclusive credentials (Barr 2020).

Stuart's mother has commented that her daughters modelling "is about changing the world, creating inclusion, stopping discrimination and breaking down the walls of confinement" (Werft), but her performances and subsequent reception of her runway appearances leave me questioning if this is genuine inclusivity. The fact that her manager mother is a recurring feature of Stuart's editorials and interviews leans further into the narrative that Stuart's success is based on the help and support from her non-disabled mother, fitness instructor, and public relations counterparts (Young, Pulrang). Stuart has received the Quincy Jones Exceptional Advocacy award for her work on disability, and I do

[1] Maddy had open-heart surgery at the end of 2018 (Free)

not want to be seen to question her work ethic, query her successes or challenge her advocacy efforts here, it is rather that I want to draw attention to the ways in which Stuart is currently "othered" on the catwalk. Representations of disability in the media in general, and the employment of models with Down syndrome in particular, remain a novelty, the fashion and beauty industries desire to single them out, put them on listicles, like and share on social media and offer praise and plaudits for their work sets them apart from non-disabled performers. Only when we stop fawning over their efforts will it constitute actual societal acceptance. And yet, there is the argument that any representation of disability is "better than none at all" (Timke).

Conclusion

Although ostensibly inclusive representations of femininity exist in contemporary advertising, this depiction of a model with Down syndrome remains unusual, exotic and "other/ed", presented as a small minority amidst more predictably beautiful faces and non-disabled bodies. The ways in which customers and consumers respond to such diversity of representation must be a site for future research, but there is evidence to suggest that while some applaud increased inclusivity (Jackson, Landmark Year; Runway of Dreams), others within the disability community have questioned the partial representations on offer (Haller and Ralph, Perry). There are those who are concerned about the emergence and development of "inspiration porn" (Young) and those again that question the distinction between the public and private face of inclusivity.

Kirsty Liddiard makes the point that disabled identities and impaired bodies are commodified, commodifiable and routinely “re-written” for profit in art, entertainment and the media industries (Liddiard). Disability is presented as a tool to be utilised, accessed and exploited in contemporary media culture (Liddiard). In short, campaigns and commercials much like the internet memes studied by Liddiard are likely to gain attention across social media platforms if

they are unique and memorable, but that is not necessarily the same as being inclusive. Although Stuart, via her mother's continued efforts, is ground-breaking on the catwalk and inspiring beyond it, she remains a figure on the fringe of the fashion and modeling industry. Her efforts on designer catwalks and her foray into social media celebrity/activism must be championed, but they mask the fact that Stuart, a young woman routinely referred to in popular media culture as the first Down syndrome supermodel, 'still can't get signed by a high-end agency' (Miller). However, future research could investigate why some disabled performers, such as American Latina model and actor Jillian Mercado, are represented by a mainstream model agency, and why others are signed to diversity departments and specialty agents, and why others again, such as Stewart, struggle to find professional representation.

Female beauty and flawless physiques are inextricably linked to the fashion and beauty industries. At the same time, disability and Down syndrome are routinely presented as undesiring and undesirable. Therefore, to include young female models with Down syndrome in fashion campaigns and catwalk shows is an ostensible sign of inclusion and by extension, acceptance. Models such as Madeline Stuart are game-changers in the fashion and beauty industry - their faces and accompanying campaigning voices are being seen and heard. It is not only individuals who are looking to make changes for themselves, their friends, families and followers, but also non-profit foundations and commercial organisations. Each one, in turn, is debunking negative stereotypes about disability and difference, challenging the beauty myth and looking to encourage and inspire future generations. That said, the example of Madeline Stuart reminds us that these models are not being treated as equals to their non-disabled counterparts. Real change would see all disabled models, including those with Down syndrome, represented by the same agents and agencies as their non-disabled counterparts. Genuine inclusion, in the advertising industry in general and the beauty industry in particular, would mean that models with

Down syndrome, plural, would go without note or notice, and the reception of their work would be challenged along professional rather than personal lines. In short, there remains “a long way to go” before we can talk about the advertising, fashion and beauty industry as inclusive (O’Hagan).

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