Response to the Advertising Standards Authority public consultation: Gender Stereotypes

By Emi Howe of BodEquality

Introduction

This report seeks to address issues surrounding the media and social responsibility. Having read the current literature published by the ASA and CAP, there are a number of reservations regarding entrenched mindsets, refusal to acknowledge issues and willingness to change.

"Our mission is to make every UK ad a responsible ad"– The Advertising Standards Authority.

The report is based on the hypothesis that the media and particularly advertising contribute in a significant way to wide-spread social dissatisfaction, informing people's thoughts, beliefs, decisions, ambitions, behaviours, lives and stress levels.

If advertising is effective in selling products, it is not unreasonable to suggest that it is also effective in selling anything else that is routinely attached to those products, e.g. lifestyle, living standards, beauty and body image. In the case of this report the specific area of focus is body image and how advertising impacts on behaviours relating to it. In the words of Tarryn Brumfitt, film-maker of documentary *Embrace*: "If you don't feel good in your body, you don't feel good". That is an enormous barrier to positive mental health with widespread repercussions when it applies to 90%+ of women and a growing number of men.

The report also endeavours to highlight that due to the nature of the current codes and their choice to "self-regulate" with no minimum industry standards, huge portions of our society are not represented - are virtually invisible. This reflects on an individual's sense of validity, self-worth, self-acceptance, but huge missed markets for advertisers too! This includes the elderly, (18% of our population), disabled (19% of our working age population) and those who don't conform to the ideal body image (95% of our population).

Author

Emi Howe is a Body Image Consultant, Researcher and Speaker. She works with brands, businesses, charities and schools to educate on and reinforce learning surrounding body image reality and the role that the media plays in our relationships with our bodies.

Emi is a body-work therapist of nearly 20 years and knows first-hand that body dissatisfaction in society is rife.

Emi is a cancer survivor, has had four body-changing operations, knows that chemo suits are not full of obese people, but is very concerned regarding the impact and potential harm that unnecessary and often invisible social stress can cause.

Emi has featured in advertising campaigns for Land Rover and Marks and Spencer.

Emi has a "healthy" BMI. She is also mother to two children: a boy of ten and a girl of eight years old.

Current ASA policy: Social Responsibility: Body Image

"Whilst the use of thin models is itself not necessarily problematic, advertisers must ensure that models are not depicted in a way which makes them appear underweight or unhealthy."

"Whilst the ASA does uphold ads which depict models in a way which makes them appear unhealthily thin, the use of thin models itself is not automatically considered socially responsible."

Evidence-Based Policy-Making: How CAP and BCAP assess calls for regulatory change

Section 5: Evidence from academics and interest groups

"… the overwhelming majority of ads do not include gender stereotypes that are likely to cause harm or serious or widespread offence."

"This report assesses the evidence with the intention of isolating the role that advertising **might** play, **if any**, in contributing to harm associated with unequal outcomes for adults and children as a result of their gender."

"It is evident that the overwhelming majority of research and grey literature on this topic is motivated by a reasonable concern to better understand the causes of **real-world indisputable gender inequality**. It is no surprise, therefore, that much of the evidence concludes that the status quo is not acceptable, and changes should be implemented to address evident inequality."

"The literature gathered during this exercise suggests that there is no academic consensus regarding the origin of gender differences, and the differences are likely to be a combination of innate differences determined by nature and those constructed by culture."

Gender Stereotyping: A consultation on CAP and BCAP's proposal for a rule and guidance to address the use of gender stereotypes in advertising.

"The evidence does not demonstrate that… the use of potentially harmful stereotypes in advertising is endemic."

"By practicing self-regulation, the marketing community ensures the integrity of advertising, promotions and direct marketing."

"…in some cases (gender stereotype depictions) can reinforce perceptions about how people should look… which in turn can reinforce real-world harms or inequalities."

"The ASA report makes clear that potentially harmful or seriously offensive depictions of gender stereotypes are not rife within advertising."

"The ASA report concluded that the ASA's existing position on… body image was broadly in the right place."

Advertising guidance on depicting gender stereotypes likely to cause harm or serious widespread offence.

"Scenarios featuring pressure to conform to an idealised gender-stereotypical body shape or physical features:

An ad that depicts a person who was unhappy with multiple aspects of the life, then implies that all their problems were solved by changing their body shape alone to conform to gender-stereotypical norms, without addressing other aspects of their life. This does not prevent responsible ads for weight loss products and services.

Where an ad features a person with a physique that does not match an ideal stereotypically associated with their gender, the ad should not imply that their physique is a significant reason for them not being successful, for example in their romantic or social lives."

BodEquality: While essential to the consideration of the narrative around the body image issue, it is hoped that the consultation will acknowledge that the issue is not present in just such obvious, niche and specific scenarios but that the constant flooding of body-ideal images causes real harm and needs to be addressed across the industry, not just in these specific examples.

How advertising changed in the 1920s

During the 1920's a PR guru, Edward Bernayz changed the face of advertising. What had previously been a fairly responsible approach to adverts along the lines of, "here is a product, you might want to buy it" suddenly changed to draw on consumers' insecurities. Taglines such as "To keep a slender figure, no one can deny… reach for a lucky instead of a sweet" began to appear. Advertising took it upon itself to start judging society and didn't look back.

The ASA and wider society can be forgiven for being ignorant about this issue, as it did not happen within our lifetimes. Today it appears to be a norm that just is, rather than something that changed the way we look at bodies, was fundamentally morally wrong, and can and should be changed again.

Is the research on the body image/media connection sufficient and reliable?

"Overall, many well controlled, randomised experiments have demonstrated an effect of the thin-ideal media on women's body image and related concerns in samples of varying ages with a number of different outcome measures. Although some null of conditional outcomes emerge, the majority of evidence from these experiments indicated that brief exposure to media images depicting the thin ideal body often leads to short-term adverse outcomes in women's body image and related concerns." (Grabe 2008)

Over fifteen years ago Stice and Shaw (2002) identified more than a hundred studies whose findings demonstrated links and provided evidence that "body image disturbance" informs and predicts eating pathology. Today the research on this subject is vast; multiple methodologies and experimental designs provide correlational data, enhancing the validity of experimental findings.

Researchers in this field have shown repeatedly, in lab conditions, that women who view thin-ideal body images experience lower body satisfaction than a group viewing neutral images." (Birkeland, Thompson & Herbozo, 2005).

What is the causal link, why is it a problem? It is a problem because, "viewers begin to accept media portrayals as reality." (Grabe, 2008)

"A finding linking media exposure to disordered eating behaviours and beliefs should warrant public attention." (Striegel-Moore & Bulik, 2007)

Does the media impact on body image?

"Mass media are an extremely important source of information and reinforcement in relation to the nature of the thin beauty ideal, it's importance and how to attain it. - Media are among the principle social agents in many societies around the world" (López-Guimerà et al., 2010).

Indeed societies are constructed on a reality that is formed through the ideas, values, norms, attitudes and behaviours transmitted by the mass media (Bryant & Oliver, 2009).

Adolescents are extremely influenced by external factors today. Such factors include, but are not limited to, family, religion, education technology, and media. "Among these, the mass media have been identified as the most pervasive and the most powerful." (Harper, UK Essays, 2008).

"Evidence is accumulating that repeated exposure to media and to both the direct and indirect (via media's effect on peers, parents, physicians, etc.) pressure from media to be thin, constitutes a risk factor for body dissatisfaction, concerns over weight, and disordered eating behaviours in adolescent girls and young women" (López-Guimerà, 2010).

"… initial findings, coupled with the meta-analytical results, strongly suggest that the media are influential in the development of body issues among women." (Grabe et al., 2008)

Powerful, insistent, market-driven media are serious rivals to homelife and peers regarding education and socialisation. It "frequently offers a distorted vision of the world" (Bercedo Sanz et al. 2005)

A large percentage of media content absorbed by children contains unhealthy messages regarding beauty ideal, body size, food, weight control and gender roles. (Greenberg et al. 2009).

"People are often unaware – and mass media work hard to keep it that way – of the extent to which, and just exactly how mass media play an important role in promoting consumerism, body objectification and internalisation of the current beauty ideal." (López-Guimerà et al., 2010).

Two compelling documentaries on the subject *Embrace* and *The Illusionists*, depict the nature and history of advertising and its impact on body image satisfaction, even suggesting it is an intentional dogma to encourage dissatisfaction / insecurity in order to sell more products.

Many body image researchers argue that mass media are one of the major factors behind body dissatisfaction, issues about weight and disordered eating patterns. (Levine & Murnen, 2009)

Does this adversely affect women?

"We can see that the media exposure appears to be related to women's body image negatively regardless of assessment technique, individual difference variables, media type, age, or other idiosyncratic study characteristics.

Because the media presentations of women's bodies are so skewed, showcasing an ideal that is out of reach to most, adopting this reality may lead to decreased satisfaction with one's own body." (Levine & Harrison 2004, Grabe et al. 2008). **An impossible standard has been set.**

"A study of mass media magazines discovered that women's magazines had 10.5 times more ads and articles promoting weight loss than men's magazines did. By failing to present a diverse range of body types, fashion magazines promote thinness as both the desired, and more insidiously, the prevailing norm for women." (Mayo Clinic, UK Essays, 2010)

"Negative body image is common among women and can have serious consequences across key areas of living including psychological and physical health (e.g. disordered eating, physical inactivity), social life and relationships (e.g. social anxiety, avoidance of social activities), and education and work (e.g. curtailed academic achievements and career aspirations. **For these reasons, negative body image has been considered a public health concern**." (Alleva, 2018 – also Cash and Jakatdar,& Williams 2004; Cooley &Toray, 2001; Grogan, 2006, Halliweell, Diedrichs, & Orbach, 2014; Paxton, Neumark-Sztainer, Hannan, & Eisenberg, 2006)

"The results show consistent associations, across multiple measures of women's body image and eating behaviours and beliefs. Thus these findings provide strong support for the notion that **exposure to mass media depicting the thin-ideal body is related to women's vulnerability to disturbances related to body image."** (Grabe et al., 2008)

Bodequality: during the course of promoting a recent petition, through contact with a women's section of a national newspaper, the response given was "The men in charge of this decision aren't interested in this story."

It is also disheartening to note that of the ASA Senior Management, "our executive decision-making team", all of the directors are men.

Statistics and Social Cost

"50% of girls report being dissatisfied with their bodies, regardless of size." (Grabe et al., 2008)

"81% of 10 year olds are afraid of being fat." (Mellin et al., 1997)

Approximately 91% of women are not happy with their bodies. (Neighbors, 2007)

"The current media ideal of thinness for women is achievable by less than 5% of the female population (Social Issues Research Centre)

"The average woman sees 400 to 500 advertisements per day, and by the time she is 17-years old, she has received over 250,000 commercial messages through the media." (Eating Disorders: Body, 2008).

"Eating disorders are among the 10 leading sources of disability among young women, and anorexia nervosa has the highest mortality rate of all mental disorders." (Striegel-Moore & Bulik, 2007)

"Awareness of the thin ideal and the ways of achieving this thin ideal occurs at early ages: 6 years old age was identified as the likely ago of onset for the desire for thinness" (Dohnt and Tiggemann, 2006)

55% of children have been bullied about their appearance 40% of these experienced bullying at least once a week (Be Real, 2018)

Eating disorders cost the economy £16.8bn per year, including £4.6bn to the NHS. (Beat – the UK's leading eating disorder charity)

Further findings

"Feelings of body dissatisfaction have been linked to critical physical and mental health problems and form a significant predictor of low self-esteem, depression and obesity" (Grabe et al. 2007 – also Johnson & Wardle, 2005; Numark et al., 2006; Paxton et al., 2006;Tiggeman, 2005)

"… frequent viewing of appearance-focussed television among girls predicts lower levels of appearance satisfaction one year later (Dohnt & Tiggeman, 2006b); and that frequent magazine and television exposure among teenage girls each predict higher levels of internalisation, core beliefs about appearance value, and drive for thinness one year later (Tiggeman, 2006)."

"…specifically, and consistent with our expectations, we found relationships between media and internalisation of the thin ideal as well as between media and women's eating behaviours and beliefs." And it's getting worse not better: "…we found that the effects were stronger in the 2000s compared with the 1990s." Specifically, "the effect sizes for the relation between media exposure

and eating behaviours and beliefs were also consistent with the hypothesis that women exposed to thin-ideal media would score higher on measures that **assess bulimia, purging, and anorexic attitudes and behaviours**." (Grabe, 2008)

"It makes you feel disheartened. As if you're not going to be good enough until you're like anorexically thin" Age 15 from Devon, (Be Real, 2018)

Pro-Ana (anorexia) blogs

ProAna Skiny Blog – Starving for Perfection

Wisdom Teeth

Got my wisdom teeth out!! It's great because no one is expecting me to eat and if I do, I can just have fat free yogurt, egg whites, or fat free cottage cheese. Can't really eat anything else for about a week. I had one bowl of egg whites yesterday. It sucks though because there's no gym :(I had been on a great workout kick, working out twice a day to sitting on the couch is making me feel like a fat ass.

Comments
"Could you possibly help me or guide me to starve myself to lose at least ten pounds?"

"I really want to be thin but I cant seem to (sic)"

"I would die to be thin I would do anything. I hate the way I look and I want to see results now!! I can't wait any longer someone plz help"

http://proanaskinnyblog.blogspot.com/

Getting thin soon – Doing it any way we can

Two bestfriends journey to thin (sic)

Safe Tips and tricks

Calculate how much money you're saving by not eating and add this up until you have enough to buy something you like (but not food). Or, put a penny (dollar, marble) in a jar for every small goal you keep and treat yourself with something (not food) once you reach a certain amount. Remember that these rewards will last longer and give more pleasure than food you would just eat, process, and discard.

Food associations. Find something that makes you feel vaguely ill or unpleasant, get a picture of it, and put the picture beside your food. Switch pictures frequently and make sure to look at the pictu res while you eat. After a while you may began to associate food itself with unpleasantness, which will make you less inclined to eat.

https://gettingthinsoon.wordpress.com/tag/pro-mia/

My Pro Ana

Your first ever pro ana site

I remember my inaugural thinspo site was called "Ana's Thinspiration- Thin is beautiful" or something like that. I was ADDICTED to it. I read it like the damn bible. I was also 12, don't judge. It's gone off the face of the planet, though, or at least that's what google indicates. I actually managed to find it again just now with the wayback machine- the site has been frozen by the host.

Comments
"Just googling "pro ana tips and tricks" (I was 15 and hella dumb please don't judge me I've changed a lot) and eventually I ended up here. I do use tumblr a lot though and a lot of what I look at on tumblr is triggering."

https://www.myproana.com/index.php/

Skinny Please - Pro Ana Blog

<u>**Thin Commandments**</u>

1.   If you aren't thin, you aren't attractive.

2.   Being thin is more important than being healthy.

3.   You must buy clothes, cut your hair, take laxatives, starve yourself, and do anything to make yourself look thinner.

4.   Thou shall not eat without feeling guilty.

5.   Thou shall not eat fattening food without punishing oneself afterwards.

6.   Thou shall count calories and restrict intake accordingly.

7.   What the scale says is the most important thing.

8.   Losing weight is good/ gaining weight is bad.

9.   You can never be too thin.

10.   Being thin and not eating are signs of true will power and success.

11.   If you are thin, you will be loved and accepted

http://skinnyplease123.blogspot.com/p/thin-commandments.html

Other considerations - Is Media Smart fit for purpose?

Correspondence with government on this issue has resulted in three MPs replying with their confidence in Media Smart, a "media literacy" effort to redress the balance. The fact that *Media Smart* exists in itself is acknowledgement that something must be done to offset the harmful coding, programming and messaging of media and advertising.

Unfortunately *Media Smart* is extremely underfunded, has not been rolled out into schools and public awareness of the scheme does not exist.

Not to undermine or in any way take away from the good work being done by Media Smart and the Advertising Association with limited means, however research finds such initiatives to be largely ineffective in their objective:

"Several studies have found limited evidence of the effectiveness of media literacy, suggesting that the pervasiveness of the media's promotion of the thin-ideal is far greater than the pro-active messages offered in one-time interventions. Thus short-term media literacy interventions alone may not suffice to counteract massive media exposure to the thin ideal. Perhaps of greater benefit would be to reduce the emphasis on an unrealistically thin ideal that is perpetrated through the objectification of women's bodies in the media." (Grabe et al., 2008 – also Irving & Berel, 2001; McVey & Davis, 2002).

Furthermore the term "media literacy" is a misnomer. Literacy relates to reading and writing. What schemes such as Media Smart and Dove's *Self Esteem Project* require, is for the learner to decode, translate and put ideas, concepts and images of a warped media, through a reality filter.

What would Change look like?

Change would require a shift, "a culture change across industry" (British Youth Council, 2017). It would mean advertisers would need to get creative around how to sell products using a different narrative. Sample sizes and mannequins would need to be more diverse. Some models would get less work and some would get more. Attitudes and norms would need to adjust as the public consciousness around this issue is raised.

"Interestingly, Dittmar and Howard (2004) found that women reported less body-focused anxiety after exposure to attractive, average-sized models than after exposure to no models; the lowered anxiety, in a sense, demonstrates a relief effect due to exposure to "average" models**. Importantly for the advertising industry, research in this area has also demonstrated that when average-sized models and ultra-thin models are equally attractive, they are also perceived as equally effective in advertising a product** (Dittmar & Howard, 2004, Halliwell and Dittmar, 2004; Dittmar and Howe, 2005).

Brands *are* already shifting

Bodequality: Brands are definitely already making moves in the right direction, however it is often piecemeal, the odd post on social media, it rarely translates to online listings or in-store branding (the exception being ASOS who are leaders with online diversity). The shift, which really does only pay lip-service to the issue, indicates that it is incentivised by current trends rather than a responsibility to social health and wellbeing, or moral awareness and could easily shift again in the absence of minimum industry standards. What is does show is that a much-increased level of diversity is possible, is still sellable and useful in the world of sales and marketing.

What about the Obesity Crisis?

An issue receiving a lot of public focus and not one that can be over-looked when talking about increasing diversity in advertising. Would showing a range of body shapes not discourage people from losing or attempting to lose weight? There are a number of issues relating to this: firstly the links between being thin and healthy are starting to be questioned widely through research; secondly there is a large variety of body shapes that are healthy that do not align with the "ideal body image", thirdly, a range of body shapes would provide more people with a realistic target and a varied depiction of what is classed as "beautiful", making efforts more achievable and finally, what is being most over-looked is how the current norm is actually contributing to obesity, kick-starting a diet mind-set in girls at a young age which has been linked through research, with obesity in later life.

"At the moment, media use is assumed to connect to obesity via exposure to repeated advertisements of unhealthy foods and via the inactivity that comes with viewing (Haines & Neumark-Sztianer, 2006). But it is **also likely that media exposure which means exposure to the thin ideal, contributes to obesity through its promotion of body dissatisfaction, binging behaviours, and unhealthy attitudes and practices, such as meal skipping.** Evidence that dieting is a significant predictor of obesity, which characterises 30% of women (Centres for Disease Control, 2006) continues to build."

Results from Neumark-Sztianer and colleagues (2007) prospective longitudinal sample, indicate that young people who reported dieting were at almost twice at risk of being over-weight five years later, that jumps to three times at risk for those who using weight control such as meal skipping and diet pills.

Is body image dissatisfaction just a "real-world indisputable gender inequality".

While it is impossible to test, as very few in the developed world haven't been exposed to the hundreds of thousands of adverts over their lifetime, we *can* know that women from indigenous tribes, low on tech and media, do not have the same issues around body confidence.

However up-to-date research indicates that there are experiences that both limit and expand a person's body-concept. Alleva's 2018 study using the *Expand Your Horizon's* programme - a study programme where participants are taught how to develop body complexity. This means re-aligning their focus away from their body as an image and acknowledge the many functions it provides.

Alleva proved that in line with *objectification theory* (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997), focussing on body functionality could improve body image by counteracting the harmful tendency to view one's own body based predominantly on its physical appearance rather than its functioning.

 "The findings showed that the women in the *Expand Your Horizon* programme, who focussed on their body functionality, experienced improved trait appearance satisfaction, and body appreciation at post-test, and these effects persisted to both 1 week and 1 month Follow-Up."

However "**Further exposure to beauty-ideal media imagery at one week follow-up led to reductions in women's state body satisfaction**, but neither body complexity nor body-self integration nor taking part in the intervention programme buffered these effects."

"Body complexity did not mediate the impact of focussing on body functionality on women's body image. Yet the fact that women in the *Expand Your Horizon* programme did experience increased body complexity supports the idea that **focusing on body functionality can help women to recognise and appreciate the greater complexity of their body-concept. That is, that their body-concept can compromise aspects that are <u>not limited to appearance </u>or to any one particular domain of body functionality or specific functions.** It could be that integrating the body and the self might require more time and practice (it being) a perspective that likely developed over a long period of time." (Alleva, 2018)

The results show that even a programme of re-training isn't enough to buffer the effects of a lifetime of media.

BodEquality Petition – why it did and didn't work

The Bodequality petition ran for six months and finished on the 9th July 2018. The subject was: "**Require in law that branding/ads must show a variety of real body shapes".** The aim was to

achieve 10,000 signatures in order for the subject to be discussed in parliament. In fact it achieved 968. While this fell well short of the mark, it does show a large support for and belief in the vision.

In addition, when questioned and in the comments on social media, it appears that the overwhelming feeling is that such a concept would be impossible; that it can't / will never change. Further, the lack of awareness of the social impact the media has, is endemic; as already highlighted, many are not aware of the impact and influence that the media has over our thoughts, beliefs, behaviours and lives. While movement may be happening in this area, as described in a reassuring letter received by BodEquality from Margot James MP, Minister for Digital and Creative Industries, it is certainly not filtering through to social awareness.

This is highlighted in the diversity policy of AMV BBDO – the biggest ad agency in the UK:

"To us, diversity means a variety of difference among people relating to factors such as age, employee level, gender, marital status, national origin, physical/mental ability, race, religious beliefs, sexual orientation and thinking style." A great attempt to cover all issues of diversity, yet no reference is made to body image at all. It is still an invisible issue.

A further petition, lead by model Rosie Nelson entitled "*Create a law to protect models from getting dangerously skinny!*" has great support with over 181,000 signatures. Rosie was moved to create the petition after losing weight and still being told that she was too fat to model, they wanted her "down to the bone". Change in policy surrounding minimum model weight would follow countries such as France, Spain, Italy and Israel in similar legislation. Rosie says: "We need a law to protect young girls, and boys, who are put under pressure to be dangerously thin. Earlier this year (2015) France became the latest country to vote to criminalise the use of models who are dangerously thin. Those breaking the law face fines and up to six months in jail. And there is growing momentum for change in the UK. The time is now for us all to come together."

"New policies adopted in Spain and Italy, and more tentatively by the Council of Fashion Designers of America, that exclude hyperthin women from modelling may be helpful not only to the models themselves but also to millions of girls and women who view these images." (Grabe et al., 2008)

Rosie's petition has been running for three years, with enormous support. Still it appears there is no protection for models. Internationally changes have been happening for ten years. Why are we so far behind on this?

Recommendations - How to create s shift in mindsets at every level?

"The findings from this study can inform prevention and intervention efforts particularly in the areas of education and advertising." (Grabe et al., 2008).

The fact that many adverts don't currently breach the code indicates, given the wealth of research proving harmful links between advertising and body image dissatisfaction, that the codes need to be changed. They currently reflect a society-wide entrenched fattist attitude.

Acknowledgement and awareness raising of the issue through: new codes, government initiatives and press, filtering through industry-wide.

The Advertising Standards Authority to hold brands accountable for portraying a greater range of healthy / diverse bodies, if they are to fulfil their mission that "every UK ad a responsible ad".

The ASA needs to be mindful of representation: "Committees (CAP and BCAP) are made up of representatives of advertisers, agencies, media owners and other industry groups, all of which are committed to upholding the highest standards in non-broadcast and broadcast advertising."

An improvement would be that CAP and the ASA were informed through their committees by a demographic of society that can comment on the salient issues with specific knowledge and experience. In this case: academics and ambassadors in the fields of women, gender, equality, body image; counsellors for eating disorders, doctors, teachers, social workers, social commentators, physios, body-workers, teachers, parents of those with eating disorders and especially **young people**.

To promote an equal proportion of women into executive roles at Director level at the ASA.

Focus groups featuring government offices for: education; equalities; women; media, digital and sport, alongside major brands, to educate and encourage body image equality uptake.

Public health adverts reminding people that what they're seeing in advertising isn't real.

Media literacy and body image learning to form part of the National Curriculum, every term from key stage two.

Linking through schools to parents with awareness raising leaflets as in the "5 a day campaign".

Conclusion

It is the position of BodEquality that body image by far outruns the other concerns surrounding gender stereotyping, occurring so pervasively, yet it takes its place as sixth on the list of concerns. This should be the main concern, not the after-thought. Not because the issue is more important, purely on the prevalence of the warped nature of body image in advertising.

While clearly wider society has taken the wrong path for too long on this issue and perhaps isn't aware the harm it causes, the limiting thinking it influences and the ensuing stress and unhealthful practices it creates, maybe it is not the fault of ASA/CAP. Changes happened so gradually and not within our lifetimes, it therefore appears to be a norm that just is; rather than something that changed the way we looked at bodies, was wrong, and can be changed again.

BodEquality's talks with the Advertising Association inform that the existence of themselves and Media Smart, makes ours a "World Class Advertising Industry". That may be, however being "world class" is not the same as being adequate in the face of the social and individual cost outlined in this report. The agencies involved can do better, be "smarter"!

On the ASA's website, of the 2017 Ten Most Complained About Adverts, two weren't investigated and eight weren't upheld. The same reasoning repeatedly being used that the advert: "would not cause serious or widespread offence". That's not the same as "making every UK ad responsible" though, so which purpose are they working to? "Responsible" surely means ethical, not inoffensive. Either way, by the ASA's own definition, you could argue that the exhaustive use of thin models is "causing serious and widespread…" not offence but actual harm. The term "serious widespread offence" indicates a reactive rule on what is decent or morally right. This is also not the same as being socially responsible.

Further from CAP: "By practicing self-regulation, the marketing community ensures the integrity of advertising, promotions and direct marketing." This is specious logic and not one that is implemented throughout society. While the benefits of free speech and creativity are clear, in cases

where constructs are harming wider society, self-regulation is never implemented as an adequate solution. From an onlooker's perspective, it is a rather convenient strategy for an industry which, historically has appeared very reluctant to tackle this issue. What's more, it seems to enable the industry's self-interest, especially in the face of claims that manipulations in an individual's insecurities is a driving force in advertising, as laid out in documentaries *Embrace* and *The Illusionists*.

As in the case of smoking adverts of the past, the time is now to acknowledge the harmful effects of thin-ideal body image adverts, accept that even minimal exposure causes harm and more than "self-regulation" is required.

If CAP want to keep using their tag-line, "legal, decent, honest and truthful", and the ASA want "Every UK ad to be a responsible ad", they need to consider how the values of support, inclusivity and compassion fit into their code and ask themselves why they aren't modelling a society that reflects those "decent" values. If they really do care about "unequal or harmful outcomes for adults and children", CAP and ASA cannot ignore this issue any further.

A personal note from author, Emi Howe

"Why should the vested interests of advertisers come before the well-being of children and young people?" Melinda Tankard Reist in the Embrace documentary.

I totally agree. If an advert is manipulative, it should not be allowed to trickle into my senses or those of my kids. I'm *so* tired of reality checking ads with my kids, dealing with their disappointment and having to work hard all the time to remember not to feel inadequate.

I believe yes, consumers should have protection from constant, harmful messages. Businesses *need* to invest in a supportive, compassionate, equality narrative and that is definitely not what we have got.

I also wonder how this thin culture also impacts on the #metoo and #timesup campaigns when society's object of desire is so often depicted in a mould best achieved by a teenage girl…

If we'd been asked, at the beginning of adverts, "What kind of body shapes should we use in these… advertisements?" the sensible decision would surely be, "Well… all of them! A healthy representation of society". Sometimes that might look fat, as in the case of Megan Jayne Crabbe A.K.A. Bodiposipanda, whose eating disorder recovery has made her an inspiring ambassador, proving beauty comes in all shapes - she has over 1 million followers on Instagram. Sometimes positive *mental* health might look fat and our gaze needs to shift to accommodate that.

I see a future where all bodies are valid *and* valued, because in real life, they are! When I think of my circle of friends they are a gorgeous range of diverse people and not better or worse, more or less valued based on their bodies. The idea that some bodies/people are intrinsically, based on their looks, inferior to others is such nonsense… such a damaging construct and a wholly judgemental narrative that I wish did not inform our society!

I feel very grateful to have had the opportunity to get down on paper twenty-five years of frustrations and inner conflict surrounding this issue. I have never had an eating disorder; I had cancer at thirty-three. It was on looking back at a pre-surgery photo of my body that I realised: the problem wasn't me. The decades of shaming, criticising and objectifying my body, wasn't natural, didn't come from me and *is* a problem. For almost every woman and a lot of men.

References

Advertising Standards Authority (n.d.) About the ASA and CAP - https://www.asa.org.uk/about-asa-and-cap/about-regulation/about-the-asa-and-cap.html

Advertising Standards Authority (n.d.) ASA senior management -Find out about the ASA senior management - our executive decision making team. https://www.asa.org.uk/about-asa-and-cap/people/asa-senior-management.html

Advertising Standards Authority (n.d.) CAP Panels and Committees - https://www.asa.org.uk/about-asa-and-cap/people/cap-panels-and-committees.html#CAP

Advertising Standards Authority (18th Jan 2018) Evidence-Based Policy-Making: How CAP and BCAP assess calls for regulatory change (Legal, decent, honest, truthful) https://www.asa.org.uk/resource/evidence-based-policy-making.html

Advertising Standards Authority (17th July 2017) Social Responsibility: Body Image. https://www.asa.org.uk/advice-online/social-responsibility-body-image.html

Alleva, J. M et al. (2018) *A randomised -controlled trial investigating potential underlying mechanisms of a functionality-based approach to improving women's body image. (Using British Women)* From The Department of Clinical Psychological Science, Maastricht University, Maastricht, The Netherlands, Centre for Appearance Research, University of the West of England, Bristol, UK, Jean Golding Institute, University of Bristol, Bristol, UK. In Journal: Body Image – 25 (2018) 85 – 96

Barcedo Sanz, A., Redondo Figuero, C., Pelayo Alonso, R., Gomez del Rio, Z., Hernandez Herrero, M., & Cadenas Gonzalez, N. (2005) Consumo do los medios de communicacion en la adolescencia. (Use of mass media on adolescence), Anales de Pediatria, 63.

Beat. (2018) The UK's leading charity supporting those effected by eating disorders https://www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk/

Be Real (Feb 2018) In Your Face: A report investigating young people's experiences of appearance-based bullying. *Body Confidence for everyone* In partnership with YMCA and Dove

Birkeland, R. et al. (2005) *Media exposure, mood, and body image dissatisfaction: An experimental test of person vs. product priming* in Psychology Faculty Publications, University of South Florida.

British Youth Counci (2017) A Body Confident Future – Youth Select Committee.

Bryant, J. Oliver, M. (2009) *Media Effects: Advances in Theory and Research.* Routledge.

CAP (n.d.) (Advertising guidance on depicting gender stereotypes likely to cause harm or serious or widespread offence.

CAP (17.5.18-26.07.18) Gender Stereotyping: A consultation on CAP and BCAP's proposal for a rule and guidance to address the use of gender stereotypes in advertising.

Cash, T. F., Jakatdar, T.A. and Williams, E. F. (2004) The Body Image Quality of Life Invevntory: Further validation with college men and women. Body Image, 1.

Cooley, E. and Toray, T. (2001) Body Image and personality predictors of eating disorder symptoms during the college years. International Journal of Eating Disorders, 30.

Dittmar, H., & Howard, S. (2004) Thin-ideal internalisation and social comparison tendency as moderators of media models' impact on women's body-focussed anxiety. Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 23.

Dohnt, H., Tiggeman, M. (2006b) *Body Image Concerns in Young Girls: The Role of Peers and Media Prior to Adolescence*. Journal of Youth and Adolescence, Vol. 35, No. 2

Eating Disorders: Body, Healthy Place (2008) Author unknown, https://www.healthyplace.com/eating-disorders/articles/eating-disorders-body-image-and-advertising.

Field, A., & Colditz, G. (2001) *Frequent dieting and the development of obesity among children and adolescents.* Nutrition, 17.

Psychology of Women Quarterly, 21.

Grabe, S. et al. (2008) *The Role of the Media in Body Image Concerns Among Women: A Meta-Analysis of Experimental and Correlational Studies* in American Psychological Association 2008 Vol 134, No 3, 460-476

Greenberg, B. S. et al. (2009) A Portrait of Food and Drink in commercial TV series. Health Communication, 24

Haines, J., & Neumark -Sztianer, D. (2006) *Prevention of obesity and eating disorders: A consideration of shared risk factors.* Health Education Research, 21.

Halliwell, E., Diedrichs, P. C., and Orbach, S. (2014) Costing the invisible: A review of the evidence examining the links between body image, aspirations, education and workplace confidence. Discussion paper. Bristol: Centre for Appearance Research, University of the West of England.

Halliwell, E., & Dittmar, H., (2004) *Does size matter? The impact of models' body size on women's body-focussed anxiety and advertising effectiveness*. Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 23

Halliwell, E., Dittmar, H., & Howe, J. (2005) *The impact of advertisements featuring ultra-thin or average-size models on women with a history of eating disorders*. Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology, 15.

Harrison, K. (2006) Scope of self: Toward a model of television's effects on self-complexity in adolescence. Communication Theory, 16.

Getting Thin Soon Blog (n.d.) https://gettingthinsoon.wordpress.com/tag/pro-mia/

Irving, L.M., & Berel, S. (2001) *Comparison of media literacy programs to strengthen college women's resistance to media images.* Psychology of Women, 6.

Johnson, J. et al. (2005) *Play, Development and Early Education*. Pearson.

Levine, M. P., & Harrison, K. (2004) *Media's role in the perpetuation and prevention of negative body image and disordered eating*. In J. K. Thompson, (Ed.), Handbook of eating disorders and obesity

Levine, M. P., & Murnen, S. K. (2009) "Everybody knows the mass media are / are not (pick one) a cause of eating disorders": A critical review of evidence for a causal link between media, negative body image and disordered eating in femails. Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology.

López-Guimerà et al. (2010) *Influence of Mass Media on Body Image and Eating-Disordered Attitudes and Behaviours in Females: A Review of Effects and Processes.* In Media Psychology, 13: 387-416, Taylor and Francis Group, LLC.

Mental Health Foundation (2018) Mental Health Statistics : Older People https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/statistics/mental-health-statistics-older-people

McVey , G. L., & Davis, R. (2002) A programme to promote positive body image: A 1-year follow-up evaluation. Journal of Early Adolesence, 22.

Mellin, L., McNutt, S., Hu, Y., Schreiber, G. B., Crawford, P., & Obarzanek, E. (1997). *A longitudinal study of the dietary practices of black and white girls 9 and 10 years old at enrollment: The NHLBI growth and health study.* Journal of Adolescent Health, 20(1), 27-37.

My Pro Ana Blog (n.d.) https://www.myproana.com/index.php/topic/2625-mandatory-reading-for-new-members/

Neighbors, L. et al. (2007) Study finds most people dissatisfied with their bodies https://www.news-medical.net/news/2007/11/21/32752.aspx in Eating Behaviours Journal

Nelson, R. (2015) **Create a law to protect models from getting dangerously skinny!** https://www.change.org/p/jackiedp-help-protect-models-from-getting-dangerously-skinny-rosalienelson-modelslaw-lfw

Paxton, S. (2006) New Directions in the Prevention of Body Image Concerns. La Trobe university, Melbourne, Australia

Paxton, S., Neumark-Sztainerr, D., Hannan, P.J. & Eisneberg, M.E. (2006) Body dissatisfaction prospectively predicts depressive mood and low self-esteem in adolescent girls and boys. Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology, 35.

Pro-Ana Skinny Blog (n.d.) http://proanaskinnyblog.blogspot.com/

Scope (2018) Disability facts and figures- https://www.scope.org.uk/media/disability-facts-figures

Social Issues Research Centre http://sirc.org/index.html

Skinny Please Blog (n.d.) http://skinnyplease123.blogspot.com/p/thin-commandments.html

Stice, E., and Shaw, H.E, *Role of body dissatisfaction in the onset and maintenance of eating pathology: A synthesis of research findings*, Journal of psychosomatic research, 53(5). 985-993. Nov.2002.

Striegel-Moore, R. H., & Bulik, C. M. (2007). *Risk Factors for Eating Disorders*. American Psychologist.

Essays, UK. (November 2013). Mass Media Effects On A Girls Body Image Media Essay. Retrieved from https://www.ukessays.com/essays/media/mass-media-effects-on-a-girls-body-image-media-essay.php?vref=1