

Patrick Rogers

COMD 3504

Professor Matthew Lange

April 23, 2022

Assignment 10A



*advertisement photographed by Patrick Rogers

This advertisement is for a denim brand called Not Your Daughter's Jeans. It is photographed from the print edition of a T New York Times Style magazine from 2009. It's advertising women's jeans.

The advertisement takes up one full spread in the magazine, and it is shown early in the magazine, as is customary of fashion titles to this day (meaning most of the advertisements are in the front of the magazine, or book, in editorial terms). It is quite simple, as the only image is of a woman laying down against a purple background, and all the viewer sees is her butt and legs wearing a pair of Not Your Daughter's jeans. The only additional elements are the copy, which reads, life is graded on a curve. There are also the typical fashion advertisement elements - the brand's logo, website URL, and the store where they are sold (Bloomingdale's). However, the main elements really are the woman's lower body wearing a pair of NYD jeans laying down against a purple background, with the simple copy in all caps, life is graded on a curve, and the brand's logo which is rendered in a feminine looking script font.

The meaning of this advertisement really is quite simple and straightforward and negative, it is that women who adhere to the standard of beauty and have curvy hips get a higher grade in life, meaning they are more valuable as people. That message is completely negative and encourages women to do crazy things to adhere to the standard of beauty, because as the message states loud and clear, they are more valuable that way, even though that is completely untrue. That message also implies that a woman's worth is in her body and how curvy/attractive her body is to men.

There are a few elements that added together communicate that message. First is the linguistic message - the copy, life is graded on a curve. Second is the non-coded iconic message, which is the woman's body laying down for the viewer to gaze at as she wears a pair of the brand's jeans. Third is the coded iconic message, which is in the relationship between the linguistic message (the copy) and the non-coded iconic message (the woman's body wearing the

brand's jeans). The coded iconic message is that NYD jeans will make your hips look curvy, and therefore you will be a better and more valuable person, because "life is graded on a curve", and congratulations, NYD jeans highlighted your curves and as a result you get an A+ in how worthwhile you are as a person according to everyone around you.

Overall, this brand's advertisement is highly effective at reinforcing the standards of beauty and placing a woman's worth on what her body looks like, which is awful, and I am absolutely positive that an advertisement like this would not be shown anywhere today, as we've made a little bit of progress since 2009 in embracing people's differences. I think the advertisement is so effective simply because it's so simple and straightforward, which hammers home the message without any superfluous elements to distract the viewer, and also because it is so simple it's sort of in layman's terms, so almost everyone can understand it.

This advertisement also made me think of how even though a toxic ad like this would not be made today for the most part, I do think that the dominance of the beauty standard and women being judged on their bodies is still pervasive today. And I know that because all you have to do is open up Instagram for five minutes and you will see that posts of women with (huge air quotes here) 'perfect' bodies get tons of likes and views, whereas women who don't look that way or who espouse a message of 'screw the beauty standard' get way less likes and views. Clearly we as a society still have a long way to go to get to a healthier and more inclusive, more positive cultural attitude about the way women look.