So Full of Dreams: The Politics and Ethics of Representing Disability

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"Sometimes I think my head is so big because it is so full of dreams"- Auggie, *Wonder*

What does being disabled mean? A disability may be generally defined as a condition which may restrict a person's mental, sensory, or mobility functions to undertake or perform a task in the same way as a person who does not have a disability. I know what it means to be disabled, or as I like to say, physically challenged. In addition, being disabled does not control a person's life. Living all my life being physically challenged and in a wheelchair has its ups and downs. For example, I was bullied and was pushed into a closet. I also was discriminated against for being in a wheelchair while trying to find a job. So, being disabled or physically challenged is not a stroll in the park. It is harder than you would think. It is almost a full-time job.

Cinematic representations of disability have lagged behind the progress made in other minority categories. The object of the present study is to understand why positive representations of disability have been so few, to examine the history of disability in cinema. According to an article entitled "Disability Community Deserves More Visibility in Hollywood," they were told by an opinion editorial for the Guardian "people with disabilities "have virtually no influence in cinema and the enduring myths that are being created about them are by able-bodied filmmakers" (Nic Novicki and Mark Whitley, 2018). In other words, disabled people have no type of influence in the film industry.

It is like almost saying people that are disabled do not have a right to be in the cinematic world. For example, directing or producing a film. This quote is also saying that people that have a disability cannot work on films. The author of this article, Crystal R. Emery argues that

“Hollywood Needs to Include People With Disabilities on Both Sides of the Camera” said “The number of directors with disabilities was not large enough to earn its own category among unrepresented African-American, Asian, female and LGBTQ directors” (Crystal R. Emery, 2018). This quote is true that there are not enough directors with a disability, and this needs to change. This needs to change because in media, specifically cinema representation of minority groups matter.

People have made hashtags such as “Black Lives Matter” and “Blue Lives Matter,” now somebody should make a hashtag that says “Disabled Lives Matter” in cinema. Disabled people would like to get some type of respect. Most of the time people with a disability get walked all over or gets categorized as a pushover or somebody that will do anything to get accepted in a group of people. People with a disability should receive the same respect as an able-bodied person gets. Sometimes able-bodied people do not get the amount of respect they deserve. They get walked all over too. Most of the time they choose to do nothing about it.

Also, positive representation is very important because if you are not positive, you will start to become depressed. Also, not having a positive outlook for a person who is physically challenged will put a damper on their social life. They might not want to do anything. For example, not wanting to go to parties, trips with a group of friends. On the other hand, people might not want to deal with a person who is in a wheelchair. The reason might be is they think it might be too hard for a person who is in the wheelchair to get into their vehicle. The person who is in a wheelchair might get offended.

According to Will Erickson, C. Lee, and S Von Schrader, in 2016 the overall percentage of people with a disability of all ages in the United States with 12.8 percent. For example, among

the six types of disabilities identified in the American Community Survey, the most common disability somebody lives with is an "Ambulatory Disability" which it at 7.1 percent (“2016 Disability Status Report United States” p 9, 2018). Anna McFarlane was exploring films involving disabilities for the United Kingdom and the United States of America. She mentions 67 percent of British people feel uncomfortable talking and seeing people with disabilities (“Exploring Disability in Film | Medical Humanities,” 2017).

There are a few ways for a person who is physically challenged to feel included with able-bodied people. One way is having able-bodied people treat the physically challenged person the same way you would treat anybody else. Another way is to have the able-bodied person invite the physically challenged person to different social events, like parties. If able-bodied people have friends who are physically challenged and they interact with them, it helps build their self-esteem by being included, and not being on the sideline. It also boosts mutual understanding, respect, and affection.

Positive representations of disability have been scarce to non-existent historically, in film history. The reason is that not enough films and television programs have not involved people with disabilities until the early 2000s. On the other hand, the film The Best Years of Our Lives (1946) which was directed by William Wyler is a great example of positive representation. This film is about three World War II veterans return home to small-town America to discover that they and their families have been irreparably changed. The reason why this film is a great example of positive representation is that it shows us how a person who served in World War II that faces many different obstacles due to him having his hands burned off fighting in the war. This does not stop him from doing anything. For example, at the beginning of the film he is

asked to sign his name, and he does it. Even though the customer service representative insists of signing for him, the serviceman says no.

In The Best Years of Our Lives, there is another example of positive representation from the film: this serviceman feels that his wife is only staying with him because she feels bad for him coming home with no hands and that he is going to need more help to get through the rest of his life and does not want to leave him. David Cox once said "Movies have tended to show disabled people as objects of pity or even comedy, a different breed whose condition subjects them to isolation" ("Disability in Film: Is Cinema Finally Moving with the Times?,"2012) When a director is making a film about a disabled person, they should not treat them like an object, they should treat them like anybody else in the film, and that is what this film is conveying to the audience.

Another example of historic positive representation in cinema is the film Mask (1985) which was directed by Peter Bogdanovich. It is about a teenager named Rocky with a massive facial skull deformity called 'lionitis' and biker gang mother named Rusty attempt to live as normal a life as possible under the circumstances. Lionitis is a rare sclerotic bone disorder with a variable phenotypic expression with massive generalized hyperostosis and sclerosis, particularly of the skull and facial bones, that may lead to severe deformity.

In the film, the main character, Rocky has three goals in life. His first goal is to find a girl who loves him and would spend the rest of their lives together. His second goal is to get his mother, Rusty off drugs because she turns to alcohol and drugs to ease the pain of what she has to go through to get her son what he needs in life. His last goal is to make a motorcycle tour of Europe because he fell in love with motorcycles.

Mask's main character is memorable that you will never forget. Rusty's portrait brought to life by the believable accomplishments of Eric Stoltz as Rusty and Cher as Rocky and his mother. Although this film is largely debatable, it is a remarkable case study that can raise awareness of disability in film. It is debatable because people may not want to recognize having a face deformation is a disability. This film goes to show the audience that personality dominates over appearance. Also, this film is a good lesson to kids and grown-ups, which is never judged a book by its cover. In other words, no matter what a person looks like or disability is they can do anything they put their mind to.

There are some examples of negative and positive effects of media representation on people. Media representations are the ways in which the media represents specific groups, communities, experiences, and ideas. The negative effect of media representation can be shown through film and television. In the article "Media Representations and Impact on the Lives of Black Men and Boys," The Opportunity Agenda says "particularly criminality, unemployment, and poverty" (14) is more influential to younger kids. So, basically, people that are portrayed as poor or not wealthy in the film is a negative effect of media representation on people, main children when watching films or television shows that are about families that struggles that lives check by check. For example, a few films that have the theme of poverty are The Grapes of Wrath (1940), The Pursuit of Happiness (2006), and Bicycle Thieves (1948). These films are a great example of poverty because Although these films might have a positive effect on people to never give up, but it might have a negative effect on people too.

In Sarah's Barton article, she breaks down a few stereotypes to try and make a positive effect on media representation. She mentions that a lot of the crew members would talk and the

sign language interpreter would tell what the crew members were saying. The crew members were making jokes which offended this person (“Disability and Television: Notes from the Field,” 2015). Sometimes people need to think of their surroundings before hurting someone else's feelings.

On the other hand, there are some examples of the positive effect of media representation on people. “Strong and positive representations can help fight and break down stereotypes that can be detrimental to individuals and limiting to society” (“What Exactly Is Media Representation Anyway?,” Yasmina Tawil, 2017). For example, when a family watches a film about a family that has everything they want in life, they will strive harder so that one day they can have the thing they would want. Also, when someone achieves something in life, it shows other people that they can do anything they put their mind to. Some films that give people inspiration after watching are Soul Surfer (2011), The Blind Side (2009), and Wonder (2017).

In the contemporary media landscape, there are an increasing number and variety of positive representations of disability. Douglas Kellner and Tom Hilde said “Culture in the broadest sense is a form of highly participatory activity, in which people create their societies and identities (“Media Culture: Cultural Studies, Identity, and Politics between the Modern and the Postmodern,” 1996). In other words, in order to grab someone's attention, you have to catch their eye with something they like on social media. Also, the advertisements on the media platforms would have to keep showing up on the newsfeed until you click on it to view it. Louie Li said “disability was used in horror films to have a comical side to the film. Now, most Horror films don’t use disabilities to make their movies funny. Horror film directors use chase scenes to try and make it funny” (“Disability in Film,” 2014). So, Li is saying in horror films disabilities in

the film are supposed to be made fun of. It is funny most of the time, but until the directors of these horror films live life as a disabled person they would not understand.

Wonder (2017) which was directed by Stephen Chbosky. This is not a horror film, but the main characters face might surprise you. This film is about a young boy with facial differences who enters the fifth grade, attending a mainstream elementary school for the first time. The main character Auggie was born with a physical disability. Auggie's physical disability is called Treacher Collins syndrome. It is a condition that affects the development of bones and other tissues of the face. The signs and symptoms of this disorder vary greatly, ranging from almost unnoticeable to severe. This syndrome mostly affects individuals that have underdeveloped facial bones, particularly the cheekbones, and a very small jaw and chin. Auggie has had over 20 surgeries to try to make his face normal. This film is a great example of representation of physically disabled or challenged because Auggie's features are not normal, he is physically different due to his face.

Wonder is singular in the fact that widely released, the big budget film with A-list Hollywood stars that brings such a story to life. The film A-list stars in this film was a big help and contribution to the disability world. This film contributed to the disability world by showing anybody that has a disability can do anything you put your mind to. Also, this film was a huge help by showing the audience in the theater that it is okay to be different.

This film also shows the daily routine and struggles Auggie has at school that he overcomes. His routine is to get up and get ready for school. Then, Auggie would put his space helmet on before leaving the house. The space helmet is to hide his face because he does not like the way he looks. One of Auggie's struggles is that he is worrying if the teachers and kids at his

new school will accept him for the way he looks. Another struggle Auggie overcomes by the end of this film is taking off the mask and accept that he looks different from others by his father hiding the space helmet in his office. In the article "Nick Astor Settles into Purchase after a Chaotic Summer," the author Brian Ponte said "Nicholas was having a hard time getting the accommodations so his aide can have a shared room with Nicholas. It took the Mayor of NYC and Governor Cuomo to get him the right accommodations" (Brian Ponte, 2018). So, it took a much higher authority to get what Astor needs for him to attend the college he decided to attend which was SUNY Purchase College. It should have never come to the point where the Mayor of NYC and the Governor of New York State to get what Nicholas Astor. This article is a great representation of disabilities by having a student fight for what he needs in order to get an education like the rest of his friends.

Wonder (2017) helped the ratings by having well-known stars everybody knows which brought people to the theaters. One of those stars is Julia Roberts who played in films like Pretty Woman (1990) and Money Monster (2016). Another well-known star is Owen Wilson who played in Armageddon (1989) and The Internship (2013). So, having just these two A-list Hollywood made this film have so much positive talk in the media. This film also brings friends and families together and talk to each other about the importance of kindness, tolerance, and acceptance. We all do not look the same and we just have to accept it and keep our heads up and be positive no matter what or who comes in the way. Also, sometimes you have to look from the inside out and not judge a book by its cover.

Me Before You (2016) which was directed by Thea Sharrock is a romantic drama film. It was also adapted from a novel written by Jojo Moyes. One of the main characters is named Lou

and she moves from one job to the next to help her family make ends meet. Her cheerful attitude is put to the test when she becomes a caregiver for another main character named Will. Will is a wealthy young banker that was left paralyzed from a motorcycle accident two years earlier. Will's doubtful outlook on life starts to change because Lou shows him that life is worth living.

This film is not a good example of positive representation. It is not a good example because it is promoting it is okay to hurt yourself if you do not like the way you look. On the other hand, this film gives you a different point of view of what a person who is newly physically disabled feels about it after years being able to do things without counting on anybody for help. Some people who are disabled let their family or friends feel bad for them and acts like they cannot do anything for themselves.

Me Before You also romanticizes Will's wish. His wish is to go to Dignitas in Switzerland for euthanasia or assisted suicide. It romanticizes it by the way Sharrock chooses how the film starts to the very end of the film. It starts out with Will already being paralyzed and him giving his parents an ultimatum. His ultimatum was to make his life worthwhile or he will start the paperwork to get assisted suicide. So, Will's mother tries her best to make his life worthwhile but does not succeed.

This film fabricated Will's wish too. It fabricates it by showing the audience after going on life adventures to concerts, family and friends dinner parties, and extravagant trip. Lou had to twist Will arm so she can get him out of the house to get a change of scenery. Will finally gave into going to classical concerts and to Lou's house for her Birthday dinner party. Since Will appreciates Lou encouraging him to get out of the house, he brings her on a once in a lifetime

extravagant trip to an island called Mauritius located off the Southeast coast of Africa. After all of this, Will still decides to go ahead with his plan on getting killed legally.

In the article "Exploring Disability in Film | Medical Humanities" Anna McFarlane mentions explains in any country you name, people from those countries do not feel comfortable around them. Sometimes in other countries, people jump to conclusion and just start doing a thing for people who are disabled. Sometimes, people with a disability appreciates the help, and some people just do not want help or to be bothered with. The best way to know if they need help is to just ask. Some will say yes, and some will say no.

The Diving Bell and the Butterfly (2007) which was directed by Julian Schnabel. Also, this film was based on a true life story. This film is about a 43-year-old man named Jean-Dominique Bauby who suffers from a devastating stroke. Before his stroke, he was the editor-in-chief of a French fashion bible called Elle magazine. This stroke brought damage to his brain stems which gives him a diagnosis of locked-in syndrome. Locked-in syndrome is a medical condition that usually results from a stroke that damages part of the brain stem. This stroke makes him almost completely paralyzed from head to toe. The only way Jean-Dominique is able to communicate is by blinking his left eye. Due to him living with this stroke, this encouraged him to write a memoir about his experience becoming paralyzed.

This film is a great example of a positive representation of disability in cinema because it is a point of view film. In other words, we see what Jean-Dominique. For example, seeing the doctors come in to examine him and washing him up. The director shows us how it feels to be woken up from a coma or a deep sleep and finding out Jean-Dominique will be paralyzed for the rest of his life. Also, this film can encourage the audience that whatever ups and downs you go

through in a day, a week, or a lifetime to never give up. Jean-Dominique had a goal which was to write a memoir or book about his life before and after his coma and becoming paralyzed.

The author of the article “Disability in Film: Is Cinema Finally Moving with the Times?” says some films do not care about the disabled character, they care about the film brings out the characteristics. The Diving Bell and the Butterfly did indeed care about both, the disabled character and how this film brought out the characteristics of the film. This film cared about the disabled character by getting every detail right about the character, Jean-Dominique Bauby. Also, the director, Julian Schnabel shows the audience of this film realistic characteristics of everything. For example, how the nurses try and help Jean-Dominique with his speech by having him blink for different letters of the alphabet and blinking for yes and no questions. That was the only way for him to communicate. One sentence he had the nurse spell out was “I want death.” He wants to die because he figures he is no good for his family and has no purpose in life on earth. Also, how the director showed the audience how the team nurses would bathe him and take turns feeding him.

There is one quote that Jean-Dominique said in the film: “A poet once said, ‘Only a fool laughs when nothing's funny.’" This quote means if the only person who said the joke it is not funny. For example, when the two men came in to install a new phone in Jean-Dominique’s room, one of the guys said: “what use is a phone if he can’t talk?” The other guy said, “Maybe he’s a heavy breather!” The things these two guys say is very wrong and unprofessional. It is none of their business why Jean-Dominique needs a phone. Jean-Dominique thought it was funny, and the nurse did not think it was funny.

In the film The Diving Bell and the Butterfly, the director is trying to show the audience what it is like to now be Jean-Dominique. The director shows us how it feels to be trapped in his body. This film would be considered as a metaphor. The metaphor is Jean-Dominique is seen as being within an old-fashioned deep-sea diving suit with a brass helmet. Then, the people around him see his spirit, still alive, as a "Butterfly."

Far From The Tree (2017) was directed by Rachel Dretzin is based on a book written by Andrew Solomon. This film is about many parents of children who have Down Syndrome, Dwarfism and Autism. Far From the Tree also examines the experiences of families in which parents and children are profoundly different from one another in a variety of ways. Each child and parents share intimate stories of the challenges they face. For example, communicating with their children who have a hard time communicating. Another example is trying to understand what their child goes through on a daily basis. Sometimes, people, even your own family does not know what a person with a disability goes through on a daily basis. If the person with the disability explains what is going on in their life, the other person still would not understand what this person goes through on a daily basis dealing with their disability.

The director, Rachel Dretzin and Andrew Solomon did not want to focus on just gay people because Andrew is gay. They wanted to broaden their view by investigating how families go about dealing with children who are very different from them. Sometimes it is very difficult for parents to reconcile with a child that is different from their other children. Each story that Andrew is told was very alien at the beginning, but as Andrew continued this journey it became very real and intimate to him.

We follow Jason who has Down Syndrome. Down Syndrome is a genetic disorder caused when abnormal cell division results in an extra full or partial copy of chromosome 21. This extra genetic material causes the developmental changes and physical features of Down Syndrome. Jason's parents were told to give him up when he was a baby by his doctors. His parents did not do it. Doctors also told Jason's parents that he would not amount up to anything. The doctors also told his parents is not going to be able to read, write, walk, or talk. How can a doctor say that to parents? They want encouragement, and not something to bring down their spirits.

Currently, Jason lives in a halfway house with other people with Down Syndrome. This was his choice because he wanted to try and live on his own. Anybody with a disability should be able to try and live on their own. Even if they live with roommates in a halfway house they are not in their parents' house. His mother does take him out a few times during the week. They go out to lunch and museums. This allows Jason to branch out and get to see and know different people that are like him and not like him. Jason is able to do anything he wants to do to a certain extent. He also has proved his doctors wrong because, in this film, the director and Andrew show the audience evidence that he is able to anything he puts his mind to. He also knows not to let anyone tell him he cannot do anything because of him having Down Syndrome. He knows how to talk, walk, read, and write. He even has a job.

We follow Jack who has Autism. His parents figured something was up with his son. His mother was telling him to look up in the sky to see a plane. He was not talking. So, his parents brought him to many different doctors to see why he is not communicating with them normally. They brought him to a psychotherapist. Jack's parents found he has Autism. Autism refers to a broad range of conditions characterized by challenges with social skills, repetitive behaviors,

speech, and nonverbal communication. According to the Centers for Disease Control, autism affects an estimated 1 in 59 children in the United States today (Speaks, Autism, 2018).

His mother blames herself for Jack becoming Autistic. The type of medicine she was taking could be a factor of Jack becoming Autistic. She also blames it on the bed rest. She blames it on her health because she could have been healthier during her pregnancy too. Jack's mother never thought it could have come from an ancestor who has Autism. Her husband always told her do not blame yourself for Jack being Autistic. Jack's parents, in general, cannot or should not blame themselves for the outcome of their child.

Jack's parents brought him to Texas to see a different doctor who helped him spell out words. So, now his parents started to ask him questions. For example, do you like sports? This doctor tells Jack's parents his body is taking over him. He was having a tantrum while he was with the doctor. So, the doctor asked him what is wrong? He spelled out "I am trying, and I am really smart." When Jack was going to school a camera was following him around. Two other kids asked his aide does he know that the cameras are following him. His aide said yes. They asked him how and his aide said he is very smart. Then, the camera captured some kids asking "how since he has Autism?" This teaches people to not judge a book by its cover. People with a disability can do anything they put their mind to.

We follow Loini who has Dwarfism. Dwarfism is generally defined as an adult height of four feet 10 inches or less. The average adult height in dwarfism is four feet. Common complications include bowing of the legs, hunching of the back, and crowded teeth. People might look at Loini differently but she is not different at all. She is just shorter. She does not feel like an adult because of her size and people treat her like a kid. Her brother and sister are very

protective of her but do not know what it is like being here. Loini always wanted to know is there anybody like her. So, she and her mother go to an annual convention for the first time called "Little People of America." This was the first place Loini found a friend that could understand her. It boosted her confidence because she thought she was the only person who could understand what she goes through on a daily basis until she met her friend Mads at the convention. This convention was to help people who have Dwarfism find people that are just like them. It was also a way to escape the life they live at home because nobody understands how or what a person feels is a Dwarf.

We follow Joe who also has Dwarfism. He lives his life like everyone else. He is married to Leah who also has Dwarfism. She is against doctors trying to research medicine to cured Dwarfism all together. She is against it because she is now in her 30s and does not want any changes to her body. She is happy with the way that she is. Joe has gone to school and received his Ph.D. in Philosophy. He is a professor at a college in his town where he is living.

Leah and Joe have tried to have a baby a year ago and had a miscarriage at 7 weeks. All they want in their life is to have a child they can call their own. If they have a normal size person child, they would be okay with it because they grew up being different from their other family members. They would love and care for them either way. 9 months later, they have a girl. They were in shock because of their predicament. This is what parents should do anyway. No matter what their child looks like or as they should love them as much as they love their other family members.

There is one quote that really sticks out and summarizes the entire film. A stranger came up to Joe who is a Dwarf and in a wheelchair and told him "Man if I was you, I'd probably kill

myself." Joe thinks the reason why the stranger said that to him because he thought that he must be miserable since he is in a wheelchair and a Dwarf. Well, if Joe was miserable or ashamed of himself he would not go out in public. He would also not be a professor at his local college who teaches in front of a class. Sometimes people make assumptions and those assumptions hurt the disabled person because after a while of dealing with a disability becomes natural to a person and they accept it. If somebody says something like that to somebody with a disability, the disabled person should feel bothered because it is rude, offensive and politically incorrect.

If somebody that has Dwarfism should feel they are different. Not because of their height or the way they look. They should feel different because they are very unique. They should not let anyone tell them differently. If their doctors tell them there is a special surgery or medicine and that they should do it, this person should follow their heart, mind, and conscientious. Only they should make the decision. Doctors should not be forceful and tell them they have to do it. If they are used to being a Dwarf, then they should be able to live a life they want to as a Dwarf and not a person their doctor wants them to be.

A doctor should never tell a disabled child's parents that their child will never amount up to anything. A doctor should also never say your child will always need your help for the rest of their lives and will never move out on their own. The last thing a doctor should never tell any parents with a disabled child is to give them away because it will be easier to deal with them, not in your house. If any parents want to give up their child it is their choice.

Sometimes a disabled child will live with their parents for the rest of their lives because depending on the disability they would need help doing some things. For example, getting to doctor appointments because they are not able to drive. On the other hand, if a disabled person

who is in a wheelchair can do anything they want after doctors told their parents they will not amount up to anything is a blessing.

Since all of these people have a disability, they are entitled to a Handicapped Parking Placard for when their family members or spouse brings them places. If the person with a disability can drive, they can get a Handicapped Parking Placard. This placard allows them to park in designated parking spots in front of the store. These parking spots have a parking spot either on one side or both sides which are empty and has blue stripes so nobody can park in the spot. Sometimes people that have a placard needs nobody to park next to them because they could be in a wheelchair. So, they need the extra space so they can let the ramp come out of the van easier and safer. Anybody can use this, no matter what their situation is.

The article called "A Symbol for 'Nobody' That's Really for Everybody" written by Elizabeth Guffey. This article is about how Elizabeth Guffey who is a professor from SUNY Purchase deals with her disability and going through her life not knowing what the wheelchair symbol meant until she got a little older to understand what it is for. Elizabeth grew up with a disability called Cerebral Palsy. Cerebral Palsy is a congenital disorder of movement, muscle tone, or posture. She thought the cars were parked in the wrong places. She fought not using a wheelchair as she got older. Today, she does not use a wheelchair to get around. She uses her rolling backpack while she is at work. At home, she gets help from her husband. The only time she would use a wheelchair is when she goes down to Manhattan because it is really crowded.

The article closes with a quote by Elizabeth Guffey saying "The wheelchair symbol is not a design for nobody. It actually belongs to all of us" (Elizabeth Guffey, 2018). She is saying that the Handicapped Parking Symbol is not just for people in wheelchairs. It is for everybody who

has a disability. For example, if a person has Autism, Down Syndrome, or Dwarfism they are eligible for a Handicapped Parking Placard. Even if somebody is blind they can get one too.

There is still a long way to go for people with a disability to get recognized for being not only in front of the camera. I am here to change that. I made a film which has interviews with physically challenged people, and they walk me through what they go through on a daily basis. For example, when they are in public what reactions they get from able-bodied when they interact with them. In my film, I also get a perspective from one of my parents, my mother Mona Armstrong. She raised a physically challenged child basically by herself. She tells the audience it was a struggle at first, but she did it and had no choice to. She also tells us the only person that help her was her mother, and that my father did not want anything to do with me because I looked different from the rest of his kids. Today, he still wants nothing to do with me. I also get a medical point of view of disabilities from my Podiatrist, Dr. Maria A. Pici. She gives the parents some reassurance. She tells me "Any child can walk. It depends on how you define walk. For a doctor, a walk would be a walk outside for three miles or a walk in the mall. I define walk like a person able to stand and move around your house. Even a walk with your friends. A walk with crutches and braces is walking. It is still functional."

My film is an example of a representation of disability made by a differently abled director, me. I have lived with a physical disability since I was born. I was born with a diagnosis called Arthrogryposis. According to "A National Support Group for Arthrogryposis Multiplex Congenita | Pamphlet on AMC: 'What It Is and How It Is Treated,'" "Arthrogryposis also known as Arthrogryposis Multiplex Congenita is a term describing the presence of multiple joint contractures at birth. A contracture is a limitation in the range of motion of a joint" (Judith Hall

and Lynn Staheli). During the interview I had with Dr. Maria A. Pici, she told me "There is no cure for Arthrogryposis as of now." People can go for physical therapy to stretch out their joints so they can loosen up; this can help, but it is not a cure for it. I take it that maybe one day that there will be a cure for people like me that would like to walk without assistance from special equipment or from anybody. It would be nice to just get up in the morning and walk to the bathroom or kitchen instead of crawling as I do now; that is how I get around my house.

It is important that there is an increased number of positive representations of disability onscreen, but increasing the representation of disabled people behind the camera is equally important. I am not taking an essential position, but I believe that it is better that only disabled people can make great films about the disabled community. What I am saying is that I am really close to the live experience, so I can validate the reality that is being depicted and thus avoid stereotypes. This also proves once again that people with physical challenges can and should make a contribution to film art as well.

There was one film I really connected to while writing this paper because of the aspects of the film. The one film is called Wonder which was directed by Stephen Chbosky. One aspect of the film I have a connection is that Auggie has had over 20 surgeries and I had 8 major surgeries on my lower extremities. Another aspect is that I was very conscious about the way I looked at school because I thought I would get bullied as Auggie did. An example of Auggie being bullied is when Jack was making jokes about Auggie by saying "If I was him, I think I would kill myself." Jack was being a fake friend towards Auggie because a real friend would have told the other guys to stop and that it is not right to talk about Auggie behind his back. Well, I did get bullied in Middle and High School. Also, I did not have friends in school, I only

had acquaintances. Nobody would interact with me at different school events. For example, I went to my Middle School Prom and nobody would interact with me. Some people would, but then would go back into their clicks. I also attend a Homecoming Game and Dance in High School, the same thing happened; people would interact with me but then would go right back into their clicks. I tried to be a friend to them, but I guess they were ashamed of me and did not want to be around me.

Throughout this paper, I kept saying "You cannot judge a book by its cover." This quote is close to me because people judge me and do not think I am capable of doing things. There was an orthopedic that told my mother and grandmother that I would not be capable of doing anything myself and that I would not amount up to anything. I am capable of doing more thing than able-bodied people. For example, I am capable of talking for myself. I am capable of working out in the gym, which I love to do. Sometimes people act as if I need help in the gym, I always say "Thank you, but not right now. If I need help, I will ask." Another example is I am capable of walking with special equipment which is called Long-Leg Braces. I have proven to that orthopedic that I am capable of doing anything that I put my mind to. This comes to show the media world will have to give people like me a chance to show them what I am capable of doing not only in front of the camera but also behind the camera.

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