

What people perceive as beautiful and desirable is deeply rooted in culture and social norms. This perception creates a scale of normality, where bodies which are labeled as most normal are also most desirable. Said normality scale pushes disabled people, regardless of true intention, into the categories of the undesirable. These cultural ideals reach so deep that people, usually heterosexual men, who find disabled people attractive are labeled as fetishists. The author poses “If we define the attractive... as deviant, what does that say about the social desirability of women with disabilities?” (80)

Even so, these relationships do not exist in a vacuum. It would be remiss to ignore the existence of power dynamics in relationships which could lead to power imbalances in certain abled / disabled romances. Disabled children are 70% more likely to experience childhood abuse—it sadly not uncommon for abuse cycles to continue into adulthood.

Furthermore, ability is not a permanent condition. As we age, the likelihood of developing disabilities grows exponentially. While the approach to elderly sexuality has changed during post-Viagra times, these changes have been focused most on heterosexual men. Some elderly women criticize the reliance and creation of pills like Viagra, while others desire a similar medication for women. Very little research has been put into this topic, which is likely to be influenced by the desexualization of women and the perception of women as an object of pleasure rather than as people who experience pleasure the same way men do. This includes the self-image of some women, as they have been brought up in a culture that has informed this perception as truth.