

Age & Ableism Reading List

Layla Lusby | 4/22/24

The Representation of Mental and Physical Disabilities in the Media: A Literature Review [Media Study]

This article overlooks and deciphers the representation of disability across different facets of media and discusses prior research done on the topic. It aims to provide examples of proper and improper representation and teach non-disabled people what that should look like. The treatment of disabled people is influenced by our social norms and what the general public sees in the media.

The research found that there is a huge difference between the number of disabled people that exist in the world and the ones that exist on screen. They also found that heavy research and being thorough is what leads to the best and most effective representation. This also sets a precedent for other writers and producers and effectively sets a bar to be reached for the future.

I think this is a really good, comprehensive study that looks at the media itself and the research surrounding it. I especially like that they bring up casting disabled actors to play disabled characters. As an actor, this is something I feel strongly about and have seen mishandled in my own work and shows I've been in.

I am not your metaphor: frames and counter-frames in the representation of disability [Academic Journal]

This journal discusses the idea of framing and how dominant groups make others seem one way or another by how they facilitate their depiction in the media. They use magazines and printed news for their sample. The article scrutinizes and examines the power structure employed that allows the media to be positioned in this way.

They found that the media typically reinforces stereotypes, typically negative or inaccurate, by means of maintaining power. In the end, there are 9 different points they make to describe the frames in which they place disabled people into the media. This includes suffering and fear of denigration, burden of care, and the helpless victim.

I think this is a very well informed and articulated discussion on specific themes and examples of things used against disabled people. It ends with a great list of what not to do and what to avoid, and a brief list of things that are positive and should be implemented when representing disabled people.

‘It’s An Accessible World After All’: Evaluation of Amusement Park Accessibility and Accommodations for Guests with

Disabilities [Case Study]

This study provides an overview of how architecture has left out disabled people and effectively created a form of segregation in our society. This is incredibly true for amusement parks, especially those constructed before the Americans with Disabilities Act was passed. To conduct their research, they interviewed three different disabled participants with their experiences with several different theme parks.

The participants reported that 4 of the 5 theme parks they spoke about were accessible enough for them to enjoy their experience. They also covered research that established that different environments and styles of architecture impacted different kinds and degrees of disability. The final conclusion that if the theme parks were not physically constructed to accommodate them, they would refuse to go.

I think it is a great study that ties real world events and gets real opinions from people. Directly linking theme park architecture and accessibility to success and overall enjoyment from a group of patrons is a great tie to make. Having researchers actually sit down with the group of people they're researching is invaluable.

Discussion

Once again, I think it boils down to allowing people to exist freely in a given piece of media and not framing them as a problem to be solved or an issue to be fixed. Also, theme parks themselves being accessible is infinitely more important than how they advertise. Not doing the work to have an establishment that is accessible to everyone, and then marketing it as such, is false advertisement.

Bibliography

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