REPRESENTATION OF STUDENTS WHO USE AAC: WHY DOES IT MATTER?

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Why Do These Persist?

Representation: A Definition

1) The action of standing for, or in the place of, a person, group, or thing, and related senses
   a. *Something which stands for or denotes another symbolically; an image a symbol, a sign*
2) Senses relating to depiction or portrayal
   a. *A depiction or portrayal of a person or thing, typically one produced in an artistic medium; an image, a model, a picture*
   b. *The action of putting forward an account of something discursively; a spoken or written statement, esp. one which conveys or intends to create a particular view or impression*

Oxford English Dictionary

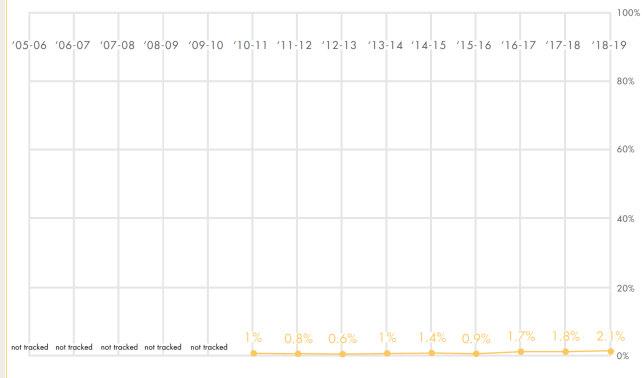## Current Statistics from GLAAD's Where We Are on TV 2018-2019

2.1% of series regulars on primetime broadcast programming are people with disabilities
   • That's only 18 characters

- NBC
  - *Cancer (4)*
  - *wheelchair user (1)*
  - *Anne from Trial & Error*
- CW
  - *Blind (1)*
  - *Borderline Personality Disorder (1)*
  - *Mobility issues (2)*
- ABC
  - Autism (1)
  - HIV-Positive (1)
  - Cerebral Palsy (1)
- CBS
  - Mobility Issues (3)
- Fox
  - Bipolar Disorder (1)
  - Myasthenia Gravis and missing limb (1-same character)

GLAAD Media Institute. (2019). *2018-2019 Where We Are on TV.*

Broadcast Represention of Characters with Disabilities Over Time, Series Regulars

GLAAD Media Institute. (2019). *2018-2019 Where We Are on TV.*

Stephen Hawking

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Stephen Hawking

Slide 1

THE GOAL IS THAT EVERYONE SHOULD GET TO TURN ON THE TV AND SEE SOMEONE WHO LOOKS LIKE THEM AND LOVES LIKE THEM. AND JUST AS IMPORTANT, EVERYONE SHOULD TURN ON THE TV AND SEE SOMEONE WHO DOESN'T LOOK LIKE THEM AND LOVE LIKE THEM. BECAUSE PERHAPS THEN THEY WILL LEARN FROM THEM. PERHAPS THEN THEY WILL NOT ISOLATE THEM. MARGINALIZE THEM. ERASE THEM. PERHAPS THEY WILL EVEN COME TO RECOGNIZE THEMSELVES IN THEM. PERHAPS THEY WILL EVEN LEARN TO LOVE THEM.

-Shonda Rhimes, Year of Yes

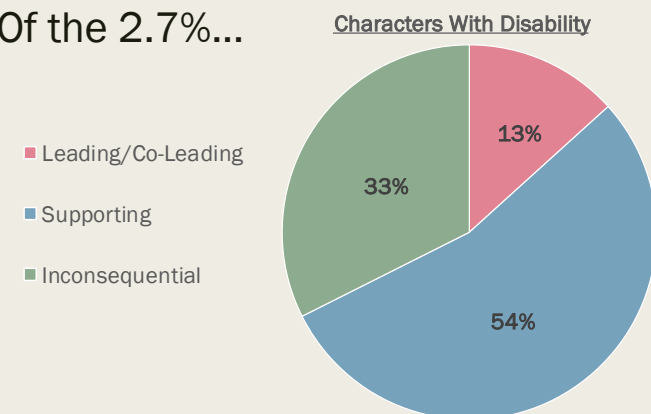## Slide 2

Speechless

Slide 3

Across the 100 Top-Grossing Movies of 2016

- 2.7% of characters were depicted with a disability
- 38 films did NOT include a single character with a disability
- Only 1 movie in 2016 depicted characters with disabilities in proportion to the U.S. population
- 15 films featured a lead or co-lead portrayed with a disability
- 64% were coded as physically disabled (nerve damage, cancer, leprosy, missing limbs)
- 31.5% with a mental disability (PTSD, memory loss, anxiety)
- 21.8% with a communicative disability (blind, deaf, speech impediments)

Smith, S. L., Choueiti, M. & Pieper, K. (2017). *Inequality in 900 popular films: Examining portrayals of gender, race/ethnicity, lgbt, and disability from 2007-2016.*

Slide 4

Of the 2.7%...

Characters With Disability

- Leading/Co-Leading — 13%
- Supporting — 54%
- Inconsequential — 33%

Smith, S. L., Choueiti, M. & Pieper, K. (2017). *Inequality in 900 popular films: Examining portrayals of gender, race/ethnicity, lgbt, and disability from 2007-2016.*

WHY DOES THIS MATTER TO EDUCATION?

Societal Curriculum
Carlos E. Cortes (1979)

- "It is that massive ongoing, informal curriculum of family, peer groups, neighborhoods, mass media, and other socializing forces that 'educate' us throughout our lives."
- In other words, it's how the values and beliefs of a culture are continued and spread through everyday images, language, and practices.
- Many students have already developed well-formed prejudices, attitudes, and stereotypes by the time they reach school
- Offers 4 recommendations related to the societal curriculum

Cortes, C. E. (1979). Societal curriculum and the school curriculum: Allies or antagonists? *Educational Leadership, 36*, 475-479.

McDougal-Littell Materials

Professional Development

Field of Education

- Not only is it important to talk about "societal curriculum" in terms of media but also in terms of pedagogical culture
- "Giving Everyone a Voice" or "Giving a Voice to the Voiceless" (Whitmer 2018)
- Conflating ability with communication (Ruppar 2017)

Ruppar, A. L. (2017). "Without being able to read, what's literacy mean to them?: Situated beliefs about literacy for students with significant disabilities. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 67,* 114-124.

Whitmer, B. (2019). Why aac isn't 'giving' someone a voice. Retrieved from https://themighty.com/2018/11/aac-isnt-giving-someone-voice/

Future Research

- How does ableist rhetoric (both visual and discourse) within societal depictions of individuals with complex communication needs affect teacher's decisions about curriculum and placement?
- How does ableist rhetoric (both visual and discourse) of individuals with complex communication needs within teacher preparation and/or professional development affect teacher's decisions about curriculum and placement?

Research Discussion

- How have you seen problematic/ableist stereotypes affecting decisions (teaching, therapy, access to devices) for individuals who use AAC?
- What are the most pressing concerns you have about how assumptions or beliefs about people based on communication ability affect their access to education?
- How do you integrate/make connections about knowledge from the humanities (non-science based) into your research? How do you get people to recognize its importance?
- When considering representation, how does/can one person do a large document, policy, media, etc analysis in a timely and efficient manner?
- How do you recruit individuals for studies when you have no funding?