



what you see is not the same
as what you're looking at

Invisible Visible

REPRESENTATION OF DISABLED PERSONS
WITH CEREBRAL PALSY.

ristique Nulla Massa

Contents

Introduction

Google it

Words of Charities

Talking together (Facebook)

Artistic project

Just because you can see something doesn't mean you can see every thing.

Should we pay more attention to the things we can't see with our eyes

I aim to explore and challenge the Representation of disabled persons in media and advertising. It will explore how perceptions and stereotypes can be reinforced by the nature of the representation and our tendency to rely on visual representation in the form of photos.

Asking the question Does the current representation really aid the integration and social acceptance of disabled persons or is it to narrow and abstracted from the living dynamic experiences of disabled persons?

Stereotypes include: pitiful and pathetic, villonised, super cripple, object of ridicule/hapless fool, own worse enemy, a burden, sexually abnormal, normal/ordinary (BARNES 1992). These stereotypes and representation can reinforce views and barriers which can prevent people with disabilities from achieving their potential.

A closer look at the representation of people with cerebral palsy reveals the truth that it greatly reflects these problematic stereotypes and is alarmingly dated.

Dynamic multi dimensional beings

Whether you have a disability or stereotypes which perpetuate not you can say that you multi images of pity, dependence and layered person with features you flawed. can see and some you can't.

However we can easily fall into a trap of relying heavily on photographs - static 2d images frozen in time - to represent ourselves and others.

The photographs we are most exposed to through digital media maybe only a stereotype or ideal of a population. But even the people who are depicted may be lacking representation due to the static nature of a photograph failing to represent them beyond their appearance.

The complex and nuanced experience of living with a disability is much more than the chair on wheels that we are so often presented with as a representation of disability.

Historically representation of disability has reflected

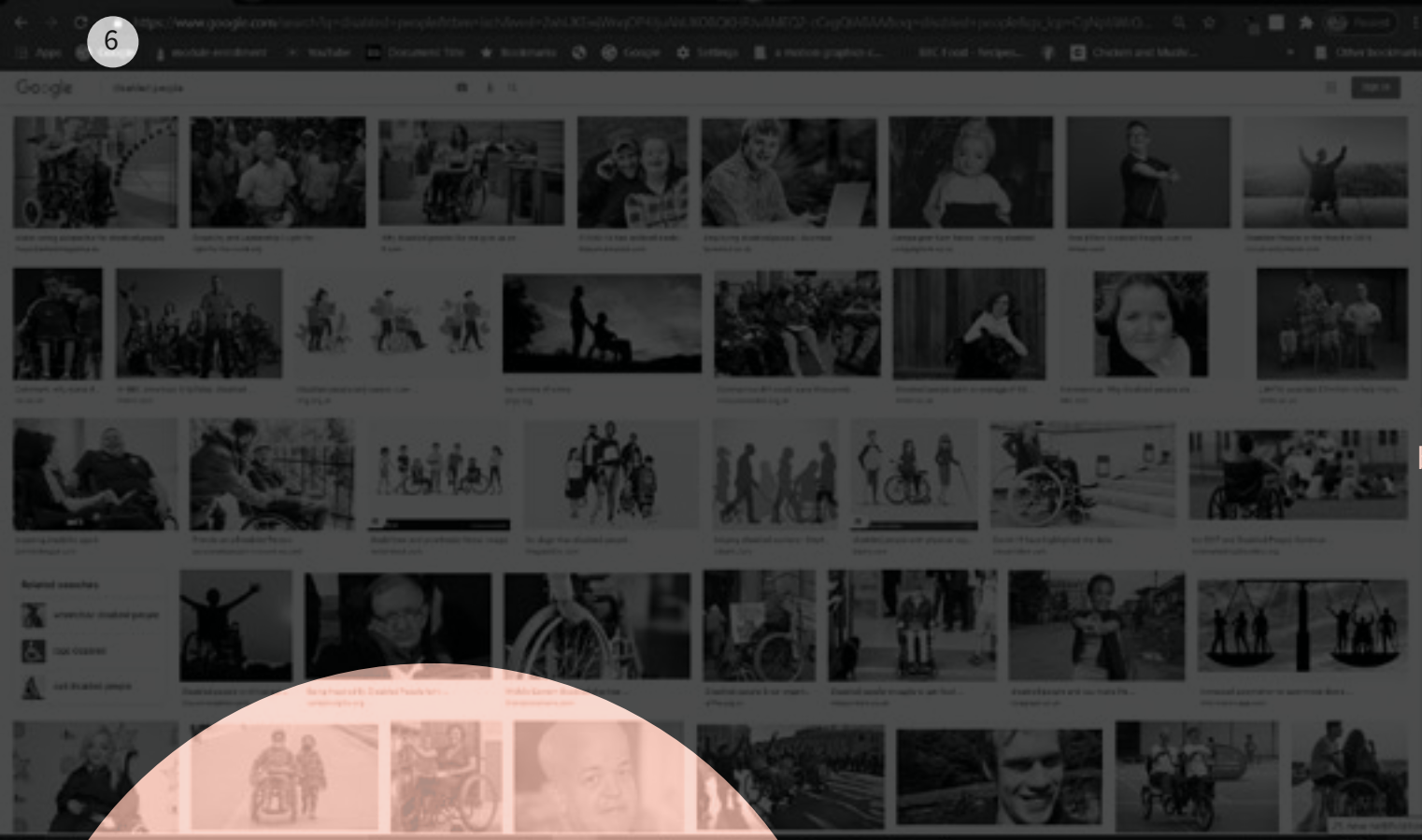
Cerebral Palsy is a physical

“a group of permanent disorders of movement and posture causing activity limitation that are attributed to non-progressive disturbances that occurred in the developing fetal or infant brain. The motor disorders of cerebral palsy are often accompanied by disturbances of sensation, perception, cognition, communication and behavior, by epilepsy, and by secondary musculoskeletal disorders.”

Rosenbaum P, et al. 2007

neurological disability which also has associated 'invisible' symptoms such as cognition and behavior.

It can also effect a persons vision hearing, proprioception and perception. The severity and type of cerebral palsy can vary greatly between different people. This seemingly visible disability is at the seem time vary much an invisible disability.



GOOGLE SEARCH FOR:

‘Disabled People’

97% of the images feature wheelchairs.

Over 14% of images showed a wheelchair with no person or at least the persons head being cropped out.

Half did not show any facial features.

People with different disabilities can experience similar difficulties and barriers so I looked at disabilities in general to get a fuller picture of the issues that people with cerebral palsy may face

A mistaken connection

‘Unfortunately the access sign, which actually refers to wheelchair access, and shows a person in a wheelchair, has become synonymous with the word “disabled” and that connection is continually stamped into people’s minds.’

MICHELINE MASON IN (SUTHERLAND, 1981).



GOOGLE SEARCH FOR:

‘Cerebral Palsy’



85% of the images were of children

Over half the photographs featured a wheelchair or frame

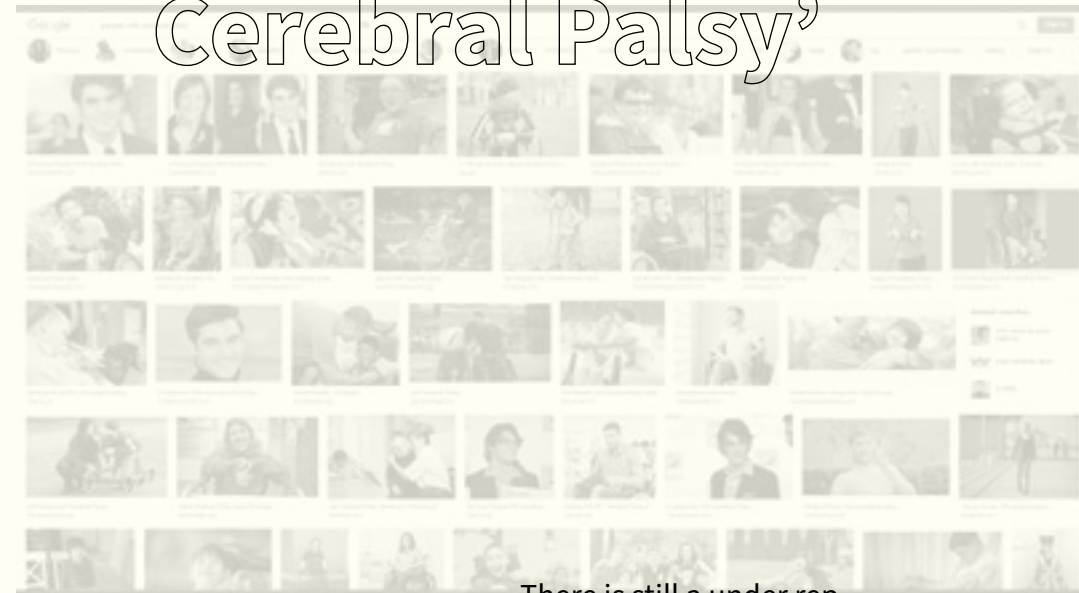
15% did not feature mobility aids

OUTWIT SCRAPE RESULTS

Cerebral palsy is not usually life limiting. The lack of adults omits existence and experiences of a huge amount of people with cerebral palsy. The dependent and innocent disability stereotypes are perpetuated. This can present challenges for children as they move into adulthood and may feel ‘forgotten’, and ‘lost’.

GOOGLE SEARCH FOR:

‘People with Cerebral Palsy’



over half the images were of children

Over half featured a wheelchair or frame

22% did not feature mobility aids

OUTWIT SCRAPE RESULTS

There is still a under representation of adults (who make up more like 80% of the population)

Many people with cerebral palsy can walk with no or minimal walking aids.

Mobility aids are not worn or used 100% of the time, much like a pair of shoes .

STUCK IN THE PAST?

‘The natural course of CP has changed greatly during the past 50 years. If appropriate healthcare is available, affected children without significant comorbidities have actuarial survival approaching that of the general population.’

(Donkervoort et al., 2009).

“Cerebral palsy (CP) is often seen as a disorder involving children only. But children with CP nearly always grow up to become adults with CP, and with continuing improvements in survival...” (Haak et al., 2009).

Searching ‘people’ brings up images of nearly all adults, but when searching ‘people with cerebral palsy’ half the images are of children...

Support, research and charities focus on children with cerebral palsy (CP), but this is also reflected the representation of people with CP causing a further division between people with CP and the ‘general population’ where there is actually a similarity.

(TOM SHAKESPEARE 2013)

“Stereotypes influence the ways that people without disabilities react to people with disabilities. For example, people with disabilities are sometimes considered to be **childlike and innocent**, and are spoken down to. People with disabilities are thought of as **dependent and incompetent**.”

BARNES 1992

‘Pitiful’

‘Innocent’

‘Childish’

‘Ignored’

‘Vulnerable’

‘Dependent’

‘Dependent’

‘Dependent’

Both the underrepresentation of adults and of people with mild CP are an issue.

‘Dependent’

The image search results reflect many problematic stereotypes. They also highlight a issue where support and awareness of adults with cerebral palsy is lacking. Much of the advice given addresses the parents and carers of children; more rarely are the people with cerebral palsy addressed directly. A lack of support and awareness of adults with cerebral palsy is apparent. Medical and therapeutic support often reduces for adults with CP and “further research into how CP changes over the lifetime” is needed (Haak et al., 2009): they are not just invisible to the media.

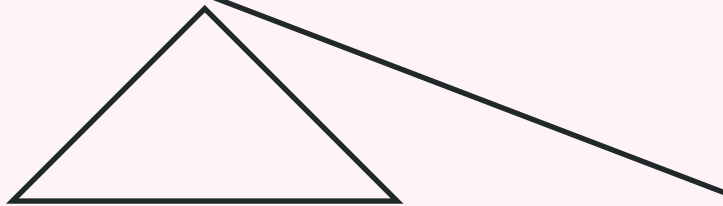
A more ballanced representation of people with cerebral palsy is needed; the representation of age and severity of people with CP are significantly distorted.

There is also a need for continued support for adults with cerebral palsy beyond their childhood.

Even if a disabled person needs continued assistance, their independence and intuition can still be and should be reconisid.

Images are incapable of representing even part of a full lived experience. This along with the stigma and preconceptions around disability means that awareness needs to be brought to the subtleties, variety and blurriness of disability.

Looking and being exposed to a wider variety of representation may help people see beyond the obvious differences to the 'norm'.



A balancing act



People behind the image

“Disability is an inescapable element of human existence and experience. Although it is rarely acknowledged as such, it is also a fundamental aspect of human diversity.” COUSER 2005

Barnes, C. 1992. *Disabling imagery and the media: an exploration of the principles for media representations of disabled people: the first in a series of reports*. Ryburn Publishing.

Couser, G, t,. 2005. *Disability, Life Narrative, and Representation*, PMLA , **120(2)**, pp. 602-606

Donkervoort, M., Roebroek, M., Wiegerink, D., van der Heijden-Maessen, H., Stam, H., & The Transition Research Group South West Netherlands. 2007. Determinants of functioning of adolescents and young adults with cerebral palsy. *Disability and Rehabilitation*, 29(6), 453–463. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09638280600836018>

Haak, P., Lenski, M., Hidecker, M. J., Li, M., & Paneth, N. 2009. Cerebral palsy and aging. *Developmental medicine and child neurology*, 51 Suppl 4(0 4), 16–23. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-8749.2009.03428.x>

Shakespeare T. 2013. Facing up to disability. *Community eye health*, 26(81), 1–3.

Sutherland, A. (1981). *Disabled we stand*. Souvenir. <https://disability-studies.leeds.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/40/library/Sutherland-CHAPTER6.pdf>

