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The “Other” athletes: Representations of disability in Canadian print media during the London 2012 Paralympic Games

Melinda A. Maika, *The University of Western Ontario*

Supervisor: Dr. Karen Danylchuk, *The University of Western Ontario*

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in Kinesiology

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The “Other” athletes: Representations of disability in Canadian print media during
the London 2012 Paralympic Games

Monograph

by

Melinda Anne Maika

Graduate Program in Kinesiology

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
The University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario, Canada

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Abstract

In our highly mediated society, media culture plays a critical role in socialization and offers a conduit for the naturalization of ideas. By this reasoning, stories told by the media about Paralympic athletes have the potential to influence our understanding of disability. This study reveals the representation of Paralympic athletes in Canada's two national newspapers *The National Post* and *The Globe & Mail* surrounding the London 2012 Paralympic Games. Eighty-eight articles were collected over a 40-day period from August 15, 2012 – September 23, 2012. A critical disability studies lens guided methods of media frames analysis. Results demonstrated that coverage favoured an athletic frame, but medicalization and 'supercrip' stories remained highly pervasive. The presence of these underlying messages indicates that disability is still viewed as a problem to be solved or a situation to be overcome. These ideas are discussed as forms of "Othering," problematizing representations that the media continues to present.

Keywords

Paralympic, Disability, Paraspport, Media, Representation, Framing, Athletes with disabilities, Critical Disability Theory, Newspaper, Canadian Disability Media, Othering, ICF

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Chapter 1

1 Introduction

Historically, disability has been defined in a highly medicalized fashion (Clogston, 1990, 1993; Goggin & Newell, 2003; Norden, 1994). The medical model conceives disability as a biological product, the result of physical and/or mental impairments that exist independent of the wider sociocultural, physical, and political environments (Brittain, 2004). A more contemporary understanding of disability is explained in the social model, which posits that disability is simply the result of an unaccommodating environment and demands a political response. This model is especially valid for advocates, but entirely ignores the contribution of impairment to the experience (Jette, 2006, Shakespeare, 2006). In an attempt to combine merits of both models, the World Health Organization (WHO) has developed a model known as the International Classification of Functioning, Health and Disability (ICF) that adopts a biopsychosocial framework of complex interactions that make up the phenomenon of disability (World Health Organization [WHO], 2001). The definition of disability currently endorsed by the WHO and United Nations such that persons with disabilities are “persons who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments, which, in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others” (UN, 2006).

Disability is not a topic that everyone is comfortable discussing. For many people, disability is not something that they are faced with on a daily basis. They may also not be affected personally by issues of accessibility or discriminating attitudes towards physical impairments. As such, disability becomes an imagined concept, easily pushed to the back of the mind.

Many real societal barriers exist for people living with disabilities. These challenges can include limited interpersonal interactions between disabled and nondisabled people (Haller et al., 2012). As a result, much of the information that the general public receives about disability issues is disseminated by news media rather than directly from people with lived experience of disability (Haller, 2010; Makas, 1988, 1993). For a short period

of time following each Olympic Games, the Paralympic Games (for people with physical disabilities) take the world stage and offer a space for disability and disability issues to be a greater focus of media attention and conversation. This study, therefore, focuses on the messages presented in the media during this time of heightened awareness and implements the definition of disability ascribed by the ICF.

1.1 Study Rationale and Purpose

In our modern and highly mediated society, Kellner (1995) argues that media culture plays a critical role in socialization. He suggests that “media culture continues to be a central organizing force in the economy, politics, culture, and everyday life” (Kellner, 2003, p.vii). Furthermore, Boyle and Haynes (2011) state that “mediated sport can be an important cultural arena in which ideas about various aspects of social relations can become naturalized” (p.147). By this reasoning, the stories that are told by the media about Paralympic athletes have the potential to influence our understanding of disability.

Because discourse and media production occur in social settings, Fowler (1991) and Gamson, Croteau, Hoynes, and Sasson (1992) argue that the construction of meanings in text relate “systematically and predictably to [these] contextual circumstances” (p.36). As a result, they suggest that it is crucial to examine the values and practices that they represent. Ellis (2009) and Haller et al. (2012), in particular, call for more disability studies scholars to analyze media texts to explore the nuanced representations being presented to the public. In reviewing previous media framing studies of the Paralympics, it was observed that findings focused on overall themes without engaging the possible interactions between frames that may exist within the same texts. This study contributes new knowledge by investigating primary and secondary frames that exist in the newspaper articles collected.

To that end, the purpose of this study was to examine the representations of disability and Paralympic athletes by the Canadian national print media surrounding the London 2012 Paralympic Games. The international importance of the Paralympic Games provides incentive for periodic media coverage of parasport, an area of sport generally otherwise absent from mainstream news.

1.2 Defining “Disability”

There are several concepts of disability that are in use at any given time in history. As a precursor to this study, it is important to understand some of the basic models of disablement and their merits and shortcomings.

1.2.1 Medical Model

The medical model of disability is based in biological and physical difference. Disability as defined by the medical model is an observable deviation from biomedical norms of structure or function that directly results from a disease, trauma, or other health condition (Bickenbach, Chatterji, Badley, & Ustun, 1999). This model relies on empirical observations to identify a deficit in a person with a disability (Brittain, 2004). Disability is understood as an attribute of that individual, a characteristic which is intrinsically linked to their being. The medical model does not take into account social, political, or environmental factors that may contribute to disablement of an individual and to their ability to participate fully in all facets of life (Brittain, 2004). Similar to issues of gender, an implicit binary has become naturalized—one is either categorized as able-bodied or disabled (Wendell, 1996).

The diction associated with the medical model is highly technical and focused on abnormality and deficits. As a result, it is not surprising that the medical model may lead to marginalization and stigma (Howe, 2010). Stigma theory (Goffman, 1997) associates disability with a “marked identity” that places the individual at the bottom of social hierarchies. People with disabilities’ bodies fall outside the defined bounds of societal norms and thus are viewed as flawed (Hartnett, 2000). Disability, by the medical model, is deemed pathological. This model conjures images of people with disabilities as “patients” – dependent, victimized, and hopeless as a result of their personal conditions (Howe, 2010). The medical model is the primary reference for many people in our society due largely to the power that the fields of science and medicine have in designating what is “true” in our world. Biological “truths” are legitimized and disability becomes understood as a trait of certain individuals (Brittain, 2004).

1.2.2 Social Constructionism and the Social Model

Post-modern scholars and disability advocates have shown support for an alternative model of understanding disability through the theoretical orientation of social constructionism drawn from the field of sociology (Gergen, 2010). Tenants of social constructionism are that one must take a critical stance toward assumed knowledge, that social understanding is culturally and historically specific, that knowledge is sustained by social processes, and that knowledge and social action go together (Burr, 2003). The social constructionist denies the existence of an objective reality, thus embracing the concept of multiplicity of knowledges that are context-specific (Grenier, 2007).

Social constructionism “reduces the predisposition to identify [a person’s] disability as a fixed entity devoid of social context and cultural expectations” (Grenier, 2006, p. 247). Therefore, what the medical model may understand as a range of deficiencies or disabilities, a social model may simply present as a range of varying abilities. Social constructionists hold that reality is created between individuals, places, and things; an emphasis is placed on language and interactions in the construction of meaning (Gergen, 2010). Crucially, social constructionism implies agency within society and the ability to change the meaning of social constructions, for example, disability:

In our view, it is society which disables physically impaired people. Disability is something imposed on top of our impairments by the way we are unnecessarily isolated and excluded from participation in society. Disabled people are therefore an oppressed group. (Oliver, 1996, p.22)

It is clear that the conceptualization of disability as a social construction stands in stark contrast to the traditional positivist medical model. While it may be difficult to detach disability from impairment, this is the emancipatory approach that supporters of the social model propose (Howe, 2006).

1.2.3 The ICF Framework: A Holistic Approach

The International Classification of Functioning, Health, and Disability (ICF) developed by the WHO and approved in 2001, provides a holistic framework (Figure 1) for

examining the overall health condition of an individual based on the interaction between various dimensions (Ustun, Chatterji, Bickenbach, Kostanjsek & Schneider, 2003). The ICF was published in 2001 as a major revision to its predecessor, the International Classification of Impairment, Disability and Handicap (ICIDH) of the 1980s (Threats & Worrall, 2004a). The ICIDH was primarily focused on consequences of disease and thus had a highly causal and linear framework linking impairment with disability (Hurst, 2003). In moving away from the ICIDH's strictly medical model to a model focusing on the multiple components of health, the ICF allows for incorporation of factors which may have either a positive or negative impact on the overall health state (Hurst, 2003; WHO, 2001). The ICF conceptual model allows one to link the physical impairments with behavioural patterns and to consider them in an individual's environmental and personal context to come to a thorough impression of his/her overall health state (WHO, 2001; Ustun et al., 2003). The components of the ICF framework are explained in Table 1.

Figure 1: The ICF Framework (WHO, 2001)

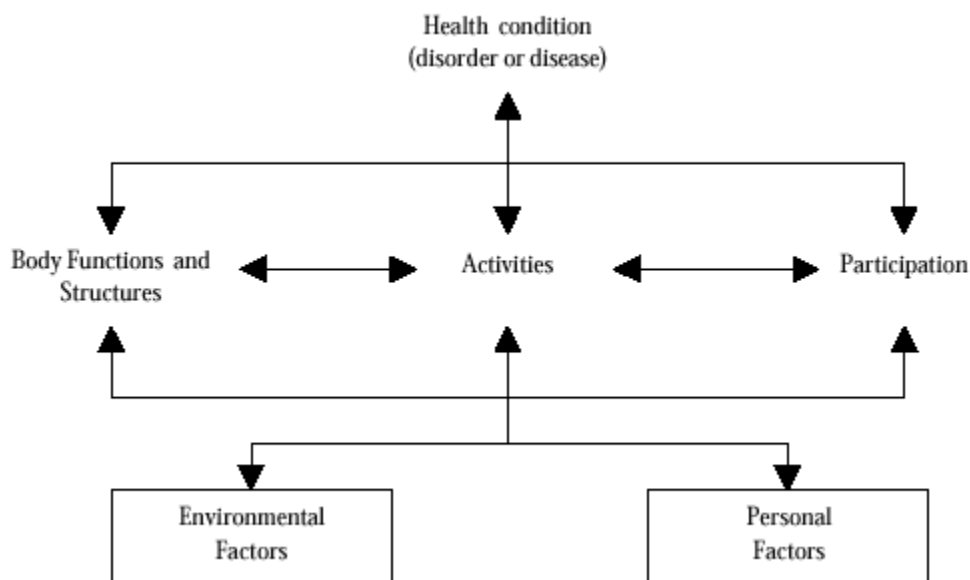


Table 1: Components of the ICF Framework (WHO, 2002)

Health Condition	diseases, disorders, and injuries
Body Functions & Body Structures	physiological functions of body systems, including psychological functions anatomical parts of the body such as organs, limbs and their components
Activities	the execution of a task or action by an individual
Participation	involvement in a life situation
Environmental Factors	make up the physical, social and attitudinal environment in which people live and conduct their lives
Personal Factors	factors that influence how disability is experienced by the individual e.g., gender, age, coping styles, social background, education, profession, past and current experience, overall behaviour pattern, character

According to the World Health Organization (2002):

Disability is always an interaction between features of the person and features of the overall context in which the person lives, but some aspects of disability are almost entirely internal to the person, while another aspect is almost entirely external. In other words, both medical and social responses are appropriate to the problems associated with disability; we cannot wholly reject either kind of intervention. (p.9)

This understanding of disability is known as a biopsychosocial approach (Jette, 2006; Ustun et al., 2003). It combines virtues of both the medical and social models to form a more complete representation of the disability experience (Jette, 2006). The conceptual framework of the ICF demonstrates interactions among components with bi-directional arrows, showing that each component can influence and likewise be influenced by the other (Bickenbach, 2012). Impairments that exist as a result of a health condition can lead to activity limitations and participation restrictions. The extent to which these limitations and restrictions are experienced as disability by an individual are also impacted by contextual factors—both personal and environmental (WHO, 2002). These contextual factors can be categorized as barriers, increasing disability, or facilitators that ameliorate

the lived experience of the individual (Jette, 2006). The disability experience is understood as the entirety of these interactions.

Current debates about the ICF are centered on specific issues that are seen as weaknesses by various stakeholders. Clinicians and researchers are concerned about the fact that the ICF is not an assessment tool (Threats & Worrall, 2004b). As such they must work to create new tools or to adapt current validated tools to work within the new philosophical framework (Simmons-Mackie, 2004). Secondly, the sheer magnitude and complexity of the coding schema is daunting, as is to be expected from a system designed to account for “all” possible health states (Hurst, 2003; Threats & Worrall, 2004a). Thus, it is important that the ICF be incorporated into professional training such that the framework and the nuances of the codes are fully understood by the users (Threats & Worrall, 2004a).

Disability activists applaud the ICF for showing the possibility that “major negative aspects of a disabled person’s life are socially induced” (Hurst, 2003, p.576). However, the contextual factors (Environmental and Personal) are the two areas of the ICF that are most lacking in clarity. Environmental factors have been enhanced by the work of a specific task force and can now be shown as either facilitators or barriers across several categories, but these elements still lack a code that demonstrates magnitude. Personal factors (i.e., race, gender, age, coping styles) have yet to be developed due to the understanding that these aspects are not readily reduced to a code (Duchan, 2004; Threats & Worrall, 2004b). As a result, the inclusion of personal factors in the application of the ICF is at the discretion of the service provider or medical professional. Duchan (2004) suggests the use of personal narratives as a method to incorporate learning about personal factors and lived experience in order to fully embrace the principles of the ICF model.

Clearly, the issues that are being discussed in scholarly literature about the ICF are focused on the practical application of the ICF in the field as a tool. The biopsychosocial approach appears to be a model that incorporates enough from the medical and social models to temporarily suspend the debate in favour of more pressing questions. In its earliest form, the ICF has been tentatively accepted by a wide range of stakeholders,

particularly in its capacity as an overarching theoretical framework (Simmons-Mackie, 2004).

It is the theoretical framework of the ICF that underlies my understanding of disability throughout this study. I agree that impairment should be acknowledged in discussions of disability; however, I also find it unrealistic for disability to be conceptualized in the absence of contextual factors. The ICF allows room for the interface of both concepts and is therefore the model that I have chosen to adopt.

As Simmons-Mackie (2004) points out, one of the most positive aspects of the ICF “is the provision of a ‘language’” (p.67) that helps us clearly communicate concepts and components of one’s health state. The language from the ICIDH had become outdated particularly with respect to the disability rights movement and the use of person-first language. Terms such as “handicap” are no longer commonly acceptable. Instead, the ICF’s distinct definitions of impairment versus disability as a construct allow for a more politicized identity. The use of these terms in the media is an important indicator of the models of disability being reproduced and the level of understanding of the Paralympic ideals and values.

1.3 Personal Interest and Positionality

Growing up I was always involved in sport. Over the years through school and in my community I played softball, basketball, hockey, soccer, and volleyball, participated in track and field, and also paddled dragonboat and war canoe. My fascination with the human body continued as I pursued my undergraduate degree in Kinesiology at Western University. During my time at Western, I had the opportunity to work and volunteer at events for athletes with disabilities from the local to international levels. These events drew my attention to the lack of awareness about disabilities in the general population as we faced challenges with accessibility, attitudes, and availability of specialized equipment. They also opened my heart to the idea that sporting events have the potential to bring change in the world by teaching others about true ability and possibilities.

On a more personal front, my father was injured in a work-related accident when I was a baby and has since had ongoing health concerns. At his best, he walks with a single cane; at his worst he uses a wheelchair. He also has extensive pain and neurological symptoms that limit his participation in a typical adult lifestyle. As a family we have had to advocate for his continued care and for improvements in accessibility for our home. In 2009 I was also in a car accident and sustained a concussion and soft tissue injuries. Over five years later, these injuries persist daily with pain and fatigue. I continue to attend multiple treatments including physiotherapy, chiropractic, and psychology in order to cope. While I do not equate my experience with that of my father, or someone else who may be facing much more severe circumstances, it has given me great insight into the concept of the social construction of disability.

During my graduate studies at Western, my focus has been on learning more about different meanings and models of disability as well as the history of disability in sport. In reading through volumes of material, I have found a personal interest in the discourse of disability and how word selection can affect the tone of a piece and my attitude towards it. I have chosen to adopt a critical disability theory lens for this study as I position myself as an ally to people with disabilities; this theoretical underpinning specifically calls for the politicization of the disabled identity and to question common assumptions. My hope is that this research in media representation of Paralympic athletes shines a light on a small portion of the social environment for people with disabilities in Canada. The Paralympics are a time when disability in sport has the spotlight, but it is important to critically examine the messages that are portrayed by the media and to question how they might impact our personal understandings of disability.

Chapter 2

2 Review of Literature

The Paralympic Games are a parallel competition to the Olympic Games that exist for athletes with physical disabilities. Despite the term “para” meaning “alongside” in Latin, the Paralympics are often overshadowed by their able-bodied counterpart (Bertling, 2012; Schantz & Gilbert, 2001). People question whether or not sport for people with disabilities can be “elite,” particularly as it stems from a background in medicine and rehabilitation.

Disability, particularly in sport, has traditionally been excluded or poorly represented in the media (Haller, 2010). This marginalization has been deemed “discrimination by omission” by disability scholars (Goggin & Newell, 2000, p.77). As the field of critical disability studies has grown, so too has the interest of scholars in examining the intersections between disability, sport, and the media. When Goggin and Newell (2000) set out to examine the media representations leading up to the 2000 Paralympic Games in Sydney, they reported finding only one previous study specifically addressing the Paralympics in the media (Schell & Duncan, 1999). However, since the turn of the century we have seen a surge of related studies focusing on representations of disability in sport both in print (e.g., Golden, 2003; Howe, 2008; Peers, 2009; Smith & Thomas, 2005; Thomas & Smith, 2003) and on television (e.g., Ellis, 2009; Pereira & Montero, 2009; Quinn, 2007).

2.1 Historical Overview of the Paralympic Games

While the Modern Olympic Games have a long history beginning in 1896, the Paralympic Movement began decades later, shortly after WWII (Legg & Steadward, 2011a). Doctor Ludwig Guttman is credited as being the founding father of the Paralympic Movement (Lomi, Geroulanis & Kekatos, 2004; Wedgwood, 2014). Guttman introduced sport as a form of rehabilitation for veterans with spinal cord injuries at the Stoke Mandeville Hospital in Aylesbury, England. What began as simple participation in rehabilitative exercises evolved into competition. As a result, modified

sports (e.g., wheelchair basketball) were conceived to accommodate the needs of athletes (DePauw & Gavron, 2005). The inaugural Stoke Mandeville Games held July 28th, 1948, consisted of an archery competition among 16 patients and coincided with the opening ceremonies of the London Olympic Games (Guttman, 1964).

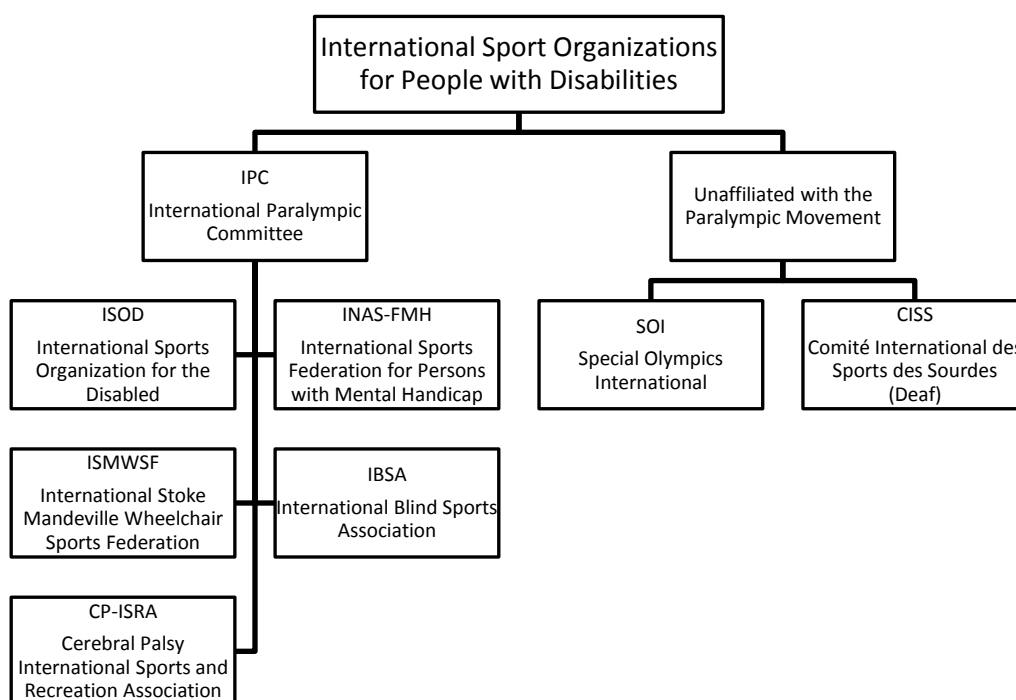
The Stoke Mandeville Games were held annually and grew to an international competition in 1952 with the addition of ex-servicemen from the Netherlands. By 1957 the Stoke Games boasted 360 athletes from 24 countries (Legg & Steadward, 2011a). Guttman reached out to the International Olympic Committee, and with their permission the Stoke Games were hosted in Rome in 1960 following the Olympics with 400 athletes from 23 countries competing in wheelchair events (Legg & Steadward, 2011a). These Games are considered by many the formal founding of the Paralympic Games (Howe, 2008). Since 1960 the Paralympic Games have been held paralleling the Summer and Winter Olympic Games schedule, although it would be another 24 years before athletes competed again in an Olympic City (Gold & Gold, 2007).

The breadth of Paralympic competitors has grown over time. In 1972 in Heidelberg, Germany, goalball and running events for athletes with visual impairments were included demonstration events. Those sports, as well as events for amputees, were subsequently adopted into formal competition for the Olympiad for the Physically Disabled held in Toronto, Canada in 1976 (Howe, 2008). Categories for athletes with cerebral palsy and intellectual impairments were added in 1980 and 1996 respectively (Legg & Steadward, 2011a).

During this time of growth, several international organizations specific to disability groupings formed including the International Sport Organization for the Disabled (ISOD, 1968), the Cerebral Palsy-International Sport Recreation Society (CP-ISRA, 1978), the International Blind Sports Association (IBSA, 1981), and the International Sports Federation for Persons with Mental Handicap (INAS-FMH, 1986) (Doll-Tepper, 2004; Gold & Gold, 2007; Howe, 2008). To facilitate coordination for the Games, the International Coordinating Committee Sports for the Disabled (ICC) was created in 1982. The ICC evolved into what is now known as the International Paralympic Committee

(IPC) in 1989 following the Arnheim Seminars in 1987 (Howe, 2008; Legg & Steadward, 2011a) The IPC is situated in Bonn, Germany. Figure 2 shows the current structure of international sports organizations for persons with a disability.

Figure 2: International sports organizations for individuals with disabilities
(Adapted from Doll-Tepper, 2004)



One might note that the international body governing sport for the Deaf remains independent of the IPC. The Deaf community in fact has a long history of sport that predates the Paralympic Movement. The first World Games for the Deaf were held in Paris, France in 1924 (Doll-Tepper, 2004). However, these Games existed as an entirely separate movement from that which led to the birth of the Paralympic Games (Gold & Gold, 2007). The Special Olympics Movement has also existed since the 1960s for athletes with intellectual disabilities but differs from the INAS-FMH and Paralympics with a greater focus on recreational participation and personal growth (Doll-Tepper, 2004).

Legg and Steadward (2011b) describe an important attitudinal change in the history of the Paralympic Movement around the 1980s when there was a shift from viewing

competitors in disabled sport primarily as patients in rehabilitation to viewing them as athletes. Despite this supposed shift, terminology and practice in Paralympic sport, particularly in the classification process, continue to reflect their medical and scientific background (Brittain, 2004).

The “modern” Paralympic Games are said to be recognized in 1988 in Seoul, Korea. For the first time the Paralympic Games were held in the same venues as the Olympic Games and with a marked increase in professionalism (Howe, 2008; Jeon & Legg, 2011a). This was the first Olympic Games organizing committee (OCOG) to have a Paralympic Games Department. Additionally, “Olympic style” opening and closing ceremonies were held for the Paralympic Games and attended by prominent political figures (Jeon & Legg, 2011). The Seoul Games also differed in their focus on sporting excellence, some say delineating the end of disabled sport as rehabilitation (Howe, 2008; Jeon & Legg, 2011). The original logo of the Paralympic Movement, five tae geuks in alignment similar to the Olympic Rings, was a legacy of the 1988 Games. The tae geuks were reduced to three in 1994 at the request of the IOC who feared the logos were too similar; they were then replaced by the three agitos of the current logo in a 2003 rebranding exercise (Gold & Gold, 2007).

Barcelona 1992 is also viewed as a success, having followed Seoul’s initiatives (Gold & Gold, 2007). The 1996 Paralympics held in Atlanta are viewed as a stain on the Paralympic record. A distinct lack of coordination between organizing committees led to a poorly executed Paralympic competition (Legg & Steadward, 2011a).

Sydney 2000 had a significant increase in the number of athletes and spectators and a dramatic rise in the organization of the Games. Marketing, branding, and media presence for the Paralympic Games came to light (Darcy & Appleby, 2011). An organizational partnership between the Sydney Olympic Games Organizing Committee (SOGOC) and the Sydney Paralympic Organizing Committee (SPOC) effectively created a single administration to deliver the sport and cultural festivals. This partnership lessened many of the transitional problems that had plagued past Games by way of organizational continuity (Darcy & Appleby, 2011). Following Sydney, contracts positioning the

Paralympics as part of the Olympic City Bid process were signed, a move that provided status and security for the Paralympic Movement (Gold & Gold, 2007; Purdue, 2013).

Table 2 summarizes the major points of four memorandums signed between the IOC and the IPC since the turn of the millennium.

Table 2: Formal Agreements between the IOC and the IPC

Memorandum Date	Agreements
October 2000	IPC representation on IOC Commissions IOC to provide financial support for IPC
June 2001	Formalized requirement where cities had to bid to host both Games Integration of organizing committees
August 2003	Revenues for broadcasting and marketing Paralympics paid to IOC
June 2006	Extended current arrangements through 2014 and 2016

Vancouver 2010 marked many firsts among organizing committees. VANOC was the first OCOG to include Paralympic Games in its official name, the first to include an NPC member on the Board of Directors, and the first to include a Paralympian on subcommittees (Coward & Legg, 2011). Vancouver 2010 was the first iteration to activate a joint marketing initiative with the host NPC (Legg & Steadward, 2011a). In alignment with marketing initiatives, VANOC was also the first to have separate Olympic and Paralympic countdown clocks, the first to fly Olympic and Paralympic flags side by side, the first to create and implement a Paralympic School Day program, the first to depict Paralympic sports on circulation coins, and the first to integrate design and roll-out of the Paralympic and Olympic mascots (Coward & Legg, 2011).

Other important developments include technological advancements such as specialized wheelchairs for racing and sport, specifically designed prosthetics to enable athletic participation, and the inclusion of multiple disability classes in the Games (Legg & Steadward, 2011b). With this growth there has been increased regulation of parasport through partnerships of the International Sport Federations, International Sports Organizations for the Disabled, and the International Paralympic Committee. Exhaustive documentation of sport rules and regulations, policies and penalties exist for each sport and classification protocols have been painstakingly developed in the hope of ensuring fair contests (IPC, 2007).

The Paralympic Games have faced many issues in establishing themselves as a valid and elite sporting competition with aspirations of being recognized at the level of the Olympic Games (Howe, 2008). However, with each iteration, the Paralympics continue to approach the level of spectacle of the Olympic Games (Gold & Gold, 2007). The Paralympic Games in London 2012 have been dubbed “the greatest Paralympic Games ever” by Sir Philip Craven, President of the IPC. Records were set across the board for sport performance, attendance, media attention, and overall support of the Paralympic Games (Paralympics GB, 2012). The Paralympic Movement currently includes athletes with disabilities ranging from mild visual impairment to quadriplegia competing in twenty-nine sports through winter and summer (International Paralympic Committee, 2014).

Moving forward, three distinct visions exist for the relations between the disability sports movement and the able-bodied sports movement: (a) complete inclusion of the Paralympics in the Olympics, (b) independence of the Paralympics from the Olympics, and (c) continued co-operation between the Paralympics and Olympics (Doll-Tepper, 2004).

The historical development of the Paralympic Movement is relevant to understanding media representations. Clearly the development of sport for people with disabilities is rooted in a rehabilitation and medical setting. This sets the stage for a history of medicalized framing of Paralympic athletes. It was not until the late 1980s that parasport began to see increased formalization, structure, and institutionalization. At this point the concept of people with disabilities as athletes in their own right began to emerge. However, athletic representations of Paralympians did not make their way into the media sphere until the turn of the millennium. At that point in history the IOC and IPC began working together to stage more coherent Games, and marketing efforts including branding made the Paralympics more visible to the public. Current day, joint marketing agreements and the “One Bid, One City” agreement ensures that the Paralympic Games are a legitimized part of the Games experience in a variety of aspects that extend to media coverage. Therefore, there has been growth in the amount of media coverage and the

extent to which that coverage is in mainstream media versus alternate delivery as was the case in the past.

2.2 Common Framing of Disability in the Media

Negative stereotypes and ableism have long tended to characterize the dominant framing of disability in media (Phillips, 1990). In the early 1990s, John Clogston's work on media and disability raised the issue that media commonly portrayed disability with the use of a medical or welfare lens (1990, 1993). These frames are strongly based on a historical understanding of disability that situates "disability" as an individual impairment that must be overcome in order to achieve happiness or success (Brittain, 2004; Hardin & Hardin, 2001, 2004). Major frames commonly used to talk about people with disabilities in the media can be described as the passive victim, the supercrip, and the cyborg (Thomas & Smith, 2003; Silva & Howe, 2012). These frames have been found in television shows and books and are further supported by media studies in the area of Paralympic sport.

2.2.1 Passive Victim

The passive victim frame is intimately linked with the medical model of understanding disability. This frame is constructed when language such as "suffers from", "afflicted by", or "stricken with" is used to describe an individual's condition (Blaska, 1993). This language positions disability as an inevitable truth imposed upon poor victims. Visually, the passive victim frame is represented by images of people with disabilities who do not fully participate in social activities. For example, media may show a person with a visible disability on the sidelines, sitting in a wheelchair, being pushed by or cared for by an able-bodied companion, and otherwise not actively participating in various activities (Brittain, 2004; Bourgeois, 2011). This frame is damaging as it represents people with disabilities as liabilities to society. It promotes ideas of dependence and a drain on society by portraying people with disabilities as less than fully active citizens (Bourgeois, 2011).

2.2.2 Supercrip

The supercrip model frames the person with a disability as heroic because of his/her ability to overcome disability and perform feats normally considered not possible for

people with disabilities (Hardin & Hardin, 2004; Peers, 2012; Silva & Howe, 2012). The story of a “supercrip” is phenomenal and resonates with disabled and able-bodied audiences to attract attention (Hardin & Hardin, 2004). This frame portrays “exceptional people with disabilities surmounting the impossible” (Goggin & Newell, 2000, p.79). However, in showing these great personal achievements, the media is inadvertently providing an impractical point of reference against which many will judge the everyday person with a disability. Since it appears that the supercrip is able to overcome his/her disability with spirit and determination, people attribute lower performance in individuals with disabilities to a lack of character and other internal characteristics. The supercrip frame communicates the underlying story of rising ‘above’ disability to ‘achieve normalcy’ with the end goal of being happy and accepted (Hartnett, 2000). The supercrip frame fits well with ideas of meritocracy. The individual’s achievements are represented as a reward for hard work.

2.2.3 Cyborg

Where the supercrip frame focuses on internal strength of character, the cyborg frame is interested in the application of technology with the human body for the purpose of “physical augmentation” (Cromby & Standen, 1999). The possibilities that exist with genetic engineering and biotechnology are leading to fundamental questions of what it means to be an individual human being. To what extent does a dependency on assistive devices or prosthesis render an athlete inhuman or, in fact, super-human? The cyborg frame is common in discussions relating to technology in parasport competition. The case of Oscar Pistorius, a South African sprinter with a double-leg amputation nicknamed “Blade Runner”, is a prime example. When the opportunity arose for him to race against able-bodied competitors in the Olympic Games, he was met with surprising outcry. Questions regarding his carbon fibre prostheses providing him with an “unfair advantage” over able-bodied runners and being a hazard if he were to fall were hotly debated. The cyborg frame was used to position Pistorius as “different” and to exclude him, despite his athletic abilities and achievements, by virtue of his prostheses. His exclusion maintained the validity of the normative ideal of the perfect body in sport (Swartz & Watermeyer, 2007). American runner, Aimee Mullins, speaks to the cyborg

frame when she talks about her twelve pairs of prosthetic legs and how they can be conceived and engineered for any combination of form, function, and fashion (Mullins, 2009). The cyborg frame is also present whenever a oneness with assistive devices is emphasized; for example, with a wheelchair or the sledge in hockey. A cyborg is a combination of man and machine (Hartnett, 2000).

A variation on the cyborg frame is that of the “evil avenger” (coined by Norden, 1994). Often antagonists in dramatic stories, including comic book representations and James Bond movies, are shown as disfigured, disabled, and mechanical super-villains. In this case, physical disability is used for effect as a personification of evil (Hartnett, 2000).

These stereotypical portrayals of disability are cause for concern because of the statements that they make to both able-bodied and disabled audiences. The question remains how we can reposition disability in the media in order to lessen the stigmatization of physical difference in our social worlds within and beyond the context of sport.

2.3 Media and the Paralympic Games

The collection of studies that examine Paralympic media coverage address the issue of representation at various points in time (1996-2012) and cross-culturally (Australia, UK, North America, Portugal, Germany, and France). It is now more widely accepted that media and other cultural representations play a constitutive role in the social definition and reproduction of disability (Goodley, 2012). The results of studies of Paralympic media representations are summarized in Appendix A.

The supercrip frame is consistently supported in studies of sport media, particularly in coverage prior to 2004 (Ellis, 2009; Schell & Duncan, 1999; Silva & Howe, 2012; Smith & Thomas, 2005; Thomas & Smith, 2003). It is common for the media to “draw on stock stereotypes of 'brave, elite athletes', 'special people', 'remarkable achievers'” (Goggin & Newell, 2000, p.78). Another common theme is the inferiority of the Paralympics when compared to the Olympics. Golden (2003), Schell and Duncan (1999), and Thomas & Smith (2003) describe how Paralympic athletes and competition are contrasted with

Olympic performances, regularly coming up short and confirming the status of sport for people with disabilities as second rate.

Howe (2008) and Quinn (2007) both found evidence for a change in media portrayals of Paralympic athletes at the time of the 2004 Paralympic Games in Athens. In her study of the CBC's television coverage, Quinn (2007) determined that Paralympic athletes were primarily framed as athletic. However, despite the relatively desirable frame, the portrayal was seen as highly uni-dimensional which could be problematic for those people with impairments who have no desire to be athletic. Howe's (2008) investigation of the production of media stories from inside the newsroom also suggested a shift away from headlines that celebrate the triumph over adversity to a more sport focused format. Pereira and Montero's (2009) longitudinal study of Portuguese newspaper coverage between 1996 and 2008 showed improvement over time in the media's use of correct terminology relating to disability and parasport as well as less reliance on negative stereotypes (i.e., supercrip) in their stories.

Interestingly, changes that these studies appeared to signal have not been strongly demonstrated in subsequent research. Ellis (2009) and Silva and Howe (2012) are critical of recent media representations that have reverted to the supercrip frame for marketing purposes. Ellis' research examines human interest stories of Paralympic athletes on Australian television prior to the 2008 Paralympic Games in Beijing. The show was entitled "Beating the Odds," which in and of itself is expressive of the supercrip frame. Disability was shown as personal tragedy that the athletes overcame with strength and determination to earn their chance to compete at the highest level (Ellis, 2009). The use of the supercrip ideal to market Paralympic sport was strongly criticized in Silva and Howe's 2012 paper "The (In)validity of *Supercrip* Representation of Paralympian Athletes." Despite research a decade old, national Paralympic committees and broadcasters continue to use supercrip iconography in promotional campaigns. The authors discuss multiple campaigns including "Superatleta" (Portugal, 2000-2008) and "Freaks of Nature" (UK, 2012). They warn that implying that Paralympic athletes are "super" contribute to Othering and reinforce a dichotomy between people with and without disabilities. These images may also create social expectations of people with

impairments to overcome their own disabilities. Conversely, Silva and Howe suggest that “the images of “Super” might be interpreted as “an alternative response to the view of disability as a limitation and to Paralympic sport as second-rate competition” (Silva & Howe, 2012, p.189) and that in this way the superathlete concept could actually be understood as positive and progressive.

“Reporting on the Paralympics has tended to safely remain a restricted, special case of marginalised sport which need not upset the enduring general economy of ableist media representations of disability” (Goggin & Newell, 2000, p. 80). However, continued attention in this area is warranted as hosting committees are making promises about legacy and suggesting that Paralympics can change the way we understand disability (Misener, 2012). Because the vast majority of Olympic and Paralympic spectators do not physically attend the events, we continue to rely on the mediated experiences for our information.

2.4 Critical Disability Studies

Critical disability studies has largely come about in recent years and is aligning itself with a postmodern theoretical approach (Shildrick, 2012) in a time of complex identity politics (Goodley, 2012). At the heart of critical disability studies is the politicization of people with disabilities (Goodley, 2012). The aim of critical disability studies is to question assumptions about disability “by employing critique, not just as a way of challenging external forces, but as a method that contests the apparent verities of disability studies itself” (Shildrick, 2012, p.31). The theory contends that people with disabilities remain targets of widespread discrimination and oppression, suggesting that the relations between disabled and non-disabled designations need to be rethought not just in terms of ethics, but also in terms of ontology (Shildrick, 2012; Thomas, C., 2007).

Critical disability studies can be characterized by three main components – intersections of ideas, a focus on the body, and the tension between the self and the Other (Goodley, 2012).

2.4.1 The Body

Critical disability studies puts the body at the heart of the issues it examines and considers the body as a significant element of the experience of disability. The importance of the body has been conceptualized by several contributors to critical disability studies. Shildrick (2009) considered the body to be a complex site of cultural and corporeal production. Others, such as Michalko (2002) and Titchkoksy (2003, 2006), suggest that the body is a source of self and of society. Braidotti (2003) had an interactionist perspective and conceptualized the body as “an interface, a threshold, a field where intersecting material and symbolic forces converge” (Goodley, 2012, p.36). Overboe (2007) reflects on the non-normative or disabled body as a point of comparison and contrast through which we can imagine how bodies should be. As Goodley summarizes it, “a ‘carnal sociology’ has emerged, theorizing the body as the place where self and society interact” (Goodley 2011, p.56).

2.4.2 Intersectionality

As is true with feminism and critical race theory, “the attraction of standpoint theory is that it openly privileges the lived experience and knowledge of those at the centre of a specific problematic, and gives a voice to those who may previously have been unheard” (Shildrick, 2012, p36). Goodley (2011) points out that while critical disability studies start with disability, studies often reflect questions about other social structures such as gender, race, sexuality, and class (Goodley 2012). As Shildrick (2012) explains, “what is required is both a recognition of just why disability appears so threatening to the normative majority, and a re-imagining of the potentialities of bodily difference” (p.35).

2.4.3 The self and the “Other”

The concept of the “Other” is not unique to disability studies. In contrast, the Other exists in many arenas of social research including particularly studies of gender, race, and sexuality (Griffin, 1981; Wendell, 1996). Campbell (2009) is one of the most recognized scholars in terms of examining this idea. Her work states that “disabled people, women, children, queer, people of colour and poor people share an Other space to that of the dominant same that is founded upon ableist, heteronormative, adult, white European and

North American, high-income nation's values" (Goodley, 2012, p. 38). Resultantly, she calls researchers in the field of critical disability studies to examine power relationships and conditions of dominance "that promote values and, simultaneously, justify forms of oppression such as disablism, racism, homophobia and orientalism that negate the existence of Others" (Goodley, 2012, p.637). A poststructural alignment "deconstructs the binary, privileges the Other (e.g., woman, black, passion, irrational, disabled) and opens up the in-betweenness of binaries. There might, then, be spaces for resistance" (Goodley, 2011, p. 100). Critical disability studies problematizes the idea of what is "normal". Goodley states "a key site of the oppression of disabled people pertains to those moments when they are judged to fail to match up to the ideal individual" (2012, p.40).

Shildrick points out the role that discourse can play in the continued oppression of people with disabilities when she says,

What is striking... is that the continuing discursive and material exclusion of disability coexists with concerted—and often effective—programmes of change that move towards the formal integration of disabled people into the standard rights, obligations and expectation of normative citizenship. To be perceived as differently embodied, however, is still to occupy a place defined as exceptional, rather than to simply be a part of a multiplicity of possibilities. Despite the endlessly differential forms of human embodiment, the dominant discourse continues to mark some people—but not others—as inherently excessive to normative boundaries" (Shildrick, 2012, p.31). Ultimately, the goal of critical disability studies is "to unsettle entrenched ways of thinking on both sides of the putative divide between disabled and non-disabled, and to offer an analysis of how and why certain definitions are constructed and maintained. (Shildrick, 2012, p.35)

Taking up critical disability studies represents a desire to deconstruct the seemingly stable and bounded categories that surround disability theory. Critical disability studies provide the theoretical background that informs this study. This theoretical orientation

provides a lens through which the author can advocate on behalf of people with disabilities and examine sport media with regard to power relationships and constructed meanings of the “disabled athlete.” In particular, it is important to focus on the three key components of critical disability studies in this project. This study will examine representations of the bodies of athletes with disabilities at the intersection of elite sport, disability, and media with the goal of understanding implications to our understanding of the self and Other.

Chapter 3

3 Methodology

The aim of this study design was to discern how the Canadian national print media framed Paralympic athletes at the London 2012 Paralympic Games. Framing is said to play a major role in the exertion of political power (Entman, 1993, p.55). The conflict between the dominant and “adversarial” themes demonstrates the power struggle that is “at the epistemological heart of framing, and, namely of the preservation of dominant power” (Reese, Gandy & Grant, 2001, p.126).

3.1 Framing Theory

Framing refers to the process whereby as producers and consumers of media we organize information. It is rare that all facts related to an event are shared. Rather, media producers “frame” stories by highlighting particular information (Kitzinger, 2007, p.135). Framing focuses on the primary elements of selection and salience. As Entman (1993) states, framing is to “select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described” (p.52). Text and speech contain these frames that are “manifested by the presence or absence of certain keywords, stock phrases, stereotyped images, sources of information, and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgments” (Entman, 1993, p.52). Researchers may choose to examine the production of media coverage, to analyze content of media, or to explore the implications for audiences and how frames influence people's reactions (Kitzinger, 2007). For the purpose of this study, the focus will be on the content of the articles collected from Canadian national print media.

Ontologically, media frames analysis relies on a constructivist world view (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This is to say that reality is not independent and measurable beyond individual interactions and perceptions (Matthes & Kohring, 2008). Epistemologically, media frames analysis aligns with critical realist or relativist ideals (Finlay & Ballinger,

2006). In either case, the importance of language as the point of access to meaningful understanding of realities is emphasized.

A multi-paradigmatic approach combining critical and constructionist paradigms is appropriate for discussion of media framing around issues of disability in sport (D'Angelo, 2002). The critical paradigm is concerned with issues of power and political and economic hierarchy. This paradigm suggests that dominant news frames are the outcome of reporting designed to reproduce existing hegemonic social structures (D'Angelo, 2002). Goffman (1997) theorizes that social inequality is reproduced and sustained by the media, suggesting that changes in societal attitudes will be followed by new media representations. Proponents of this paradigm argue that particular information is intentionally selected or omitted to promote frames supportive of the status quo (Entman, 1993).

The constructionist paradigm suggests that journalists serve to produce interpretive packages that represent the positions of their primary sources. However, this approach suggests that opportunities to be heard are not equal among citizens. Thus, media frames may restrict access to information and construct political awareness of individuals (D'Angelo, 2002).

3.2 Sample

This study focuses on representations of Paralympic athletes by the Canadian print media. Therefore, the primary source for this study consists of articles about the Paralympic Games drawn from *The National Post* with a weekly circulation of 1.0 million copies and *The Globe and Mail* with a weekly circulation of 1.8 million copies (Newspapers Canada, 2012). These two newspapers were chosen for the sample because they are Canada's two national daily newspapers. According to the Newspaper Audience Databank (NADbank) 2012 readership study, nearly 8 in 10 Canadians read a newspaper each week and, while 57% of readers still read print only, digital content has become quite popular. Almost a third of readers consume both print and online content and 11% read only digital content. In terms of preferred content, sports is the leading category

behind news for adults aged 18-49 (NADbank, 2012). Therefore, it can be concluded that the sample is coming from a confirmed source of valued public information.

3.3 Data Collection Procedure

The timeframe for data collection was two weeks prior to the London 2012 Paralympic Games through two weeks post-Games (August 15, 2012 – September 23, 2012). This six-week timeframe was also used in Schantz and Gilbert's (2001) framing study. It was selected to capture articles in the lead-up to the Paralympic Games, as well as articles that would be reflecting on the Games following the Closing Ceremonies. This timeframe was also confirmed in practice by researcher observation checking for related articles outside the stated time and finding that the discussion was limited to able-bodied sport.

Articles for analysis were found using manual hand-searching technique of hard-copy newspapers purchased daily during the data collection period. This search was augmented by conducting a search of online news source databases through the Western Libraries collections and of the newspapers' webpages. The Canadian Newsstand Major Dailies and Factiva databases were searched using a list of targeted keywords (i.e., "Paralympic" and "Paralympian") and limiting the publication dates to the data collection period. Articles found in the online databases for the publications in question were cross referenced with hard copies to ensure that all of the relevant content was captured. In the case of duplicates, the hardcopy was preserved. In the case of partial duplicates, the article with the most content was preserved.

In total, the sample size was 88 articles consisting of 47 articles from The National Post and 41 articles from The Globe & Mail. The content was contributed by a total of 37 authors and news agencies (20 in The Globe & Mail and 17 in The National Post). A full listing of articles by publication date and headline can be found in Appendices B and C. To simplify citations in-text, articles will be referred to by their reference numbers (also listed in Appendices B & C). All data used for this study is publically available.

3.4 Data Analysis Procedure

The 88 texts were analyzed using techniques of media frames analysis through the lens of critical disability theory with the goal to determine contemporary representations of disability in sport. Qualitative analysis was performed to discover emergent frames in the text. In the interest of examining broader social patterns rather than dissecting word counts, this study adopted a macro-discourse or linguistic analysis approach. Macro-discourse analysis focuses on what is talked about, by whom, where, and why (Johnston, 1995). In this approach, frames are emergent with focus placed on the use of linguistic devices and the role they play in the presentation of frames (Pan & Kosicki, 1993).

All of the articles collected were transcribed and imported into Nvivo 10 software for analysis. Kitzinger offers a list of elements that can act as key “cues” to signify the presence of a frame in a text. These cues are listed in Appendix D (Kitzinger, 2007). These types of cues were manually coded to 85 various nodes of meaning and then studied to reveal major themes or frames. The unit of analysis was not limited to a specific linguistic unit, rather, this study followed Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell, and Alexander (1990) who use theme as the coding unit. Thus, it is each instance where an important idea is expressed where a code is assigned, and it may be assigned to a text chunk of variable sizes.

3.5 Trustworthiness

Due to the differences between quantitative and qualitative research, the same criteria of validity and reliability do not readily apply to this study design (Bradley, 1993). Rather, Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposes four criteria that can be used for evaluating interpretive research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Bradley (1993) defines these concepts as follows: (a) credibility – adequate representation of the constructions of the social world under study; (b) transferability – the extent to which the researcher’s working hypothesis can be applied to another context; (c) dependability – the coherence of the internal process and the way the researcher accounts for changing conditions in the phenomena; and (d) confirmability – the extent to which the characteristics of the data, as posited by the researcher, can be

confirmed by others who read or review the research results. Careful attention was paid to these criteria during the design phase of the study.

To address issues of credibility, debriefing with co-investigators and an advisory committee along with a coding dictionary were used (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The constant comparative method (Glaser, 1965) was also used as new ideas arose and were added to the coding dictionary. Coding was completed by the primary researcher as well as a secondary coder. The secondary coder underwent project-specific training prior to participation (Weber, 1990). Training consisted of assigned readings, a prepared and supervised session about the project and the use of NVivo 10, and a review of early work to ensure accuracy. Patton (2002) also stressed the importance of the qualifications of the researcher. In this case, the primary researcher had completed courses in both qualitative methods and ICF framework as well as other courses with relevant material concerning disability and/or mega-events. In addition, a thorough literature review was completed prior to data collection and analysis to ensure that the researcher was current with published works in the area of study (Silverman, 2000).

Due to the nature of qualitative work and its specificity to the social environment at the time in question, it is not possible to demonstrate transferability of the findings in this study (Shenton, 2004). Rather, an effort has been made to provide sufficient contextual information about the project to allow readers to make inferences about such transfers (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Firestone, 1993). The processes for data collection and analysis have been outlined such that a future researcher might “repeat the work, if not necessarily to gain the same results” for dependability (Shenton, 2004, pp.71).

Confirmability is comparable to the positivist concept of objectivity (Patton, 2002). In recognizing that the human elements in qualitative research prevent true objectivity, the goal is to do one’s utmost to ensure that the findings are the result of the ideas found in the texts rather than preferences of the researcher (Shenton, 2004). Credibility and confirmability were the driving forces behind the decision to employ a second coder. Additionally, as a researcher with a personal connection to the subject area, I employed reflexivity throughout the research process in an attempt to limit personal bias from

affecting the results (Finlay, 2002; Watt, 2007). Specifically, I explicitly detailed my positionality at the outset and consulted with advisory committee members who were able to provide advice and propose alternative interpretations (Morrow, 2005). Miles and Huberman (1994) consider that a key criterion for confirmability is the extent to which the researcher admits his or her own predispositions.

Ultimately, each article was assigned a primary and secondary thematic code by the researchers that were used to calculate basic quantitative results. Initial agreement between researchers was 85% calculated as a “percentage of all coding decisions made by pairs of coders on which the coders agree” (Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken, 2002, p. 590). The data analysis was thus deemed acceptable as concluded by Neuendorf (2002) in a review of several methodologists. All articles where the researchers initially disagreed were subjected to a review and discussion during which themes were decided prior to final data analysis. Both descriptive quantitative results and in depth qualitative analysis are reported.

3.6 Limitations and Delimitations

This study is limited in the ability to generalize the findings across cultures. As framing relies on a constructionist view, the findings are limited to the social context (both location and time) from which they originate. As a Master’s thesis project, this research also had inherent time limitations that prevented the researcher from using a wider sample and adding more content to the analysis. As in any research involving qualitative work, the subjective nature of the methods used can be viewed as a limitation. To increase the validity of the findings in this study, an independent second coder was used during data analysis. The findings of both coders were compared and compiled to achieve the final results and conclusions.

The delimitations set for this project were primarily a result of the timeline for completing a Master’s thesis as well as access to relevant materials. Firstly, the focus of the study was on the content portion of the media cycle (as opposed to a holistic view, a focus on production, or a focus on audience impact). This decision was made to facilitate the study design and to choose one set of methods. The study was gender-neutral as the

goal was to determine overarching representations of athletes with disabilities rather than to begin a discussion of gender politics. The sources for the sample (The Globe and Mail and The National Post) were chosen because of their status as major Canadian National dailies and because of their ready availability to the researcher both in print and online. Lastly, the timeframe for data collection in the sample was based on previous research by Schantz and Gilbert (2001) as well as observation by the researcher of article frequency in the times leading up to and following the London 2012 Paralympic Games.

Chapter 4

4 Findings and Discussion

The results in this section were established through extensive analysis of the sample data collected. Descriptive statistics are used to provide the reader with a cursory overview of the analytical frames and their frequencies before exploring the qualitative findings.

A qualitative approach was used to deconstruct the various themes presented by The Globe and Mail and The National Post's coverage of the 2012 Paralympic Games. This chapter provides examples from the texts in the context of existing literature, and discusses implications of each frame. Through qualitative analysis, 85 original nodes were sorted into broader categories of meaning. The most frequent and relevant themes reflect the messages communicated in the sample as well as many historically important frames in disability sport coverage.

4.1 Defining the Frames

The final analysis of the texts resulted in the use of six frames: athletic, medical/patient, supercrip, charity/victim, cyborg, and little brother. Additionally, a category was included for times that there was no discernable frame of importance ("n/a"). The terminology of the analytical frames was selected as a result of emergent patterns in the texts as well as from their presence in previous studies of disability representation in media (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Athletic, supercrip, charity/victim, and cyborg themes have all been found in previous disability framing studies by researchers including Hardin and Hardin (2004), Mason (2013), Schell and Duncan (1999), and Silva and Howe (2012). "Little brother" is a term created by the primary researcher in this study to represent the hierarchical relationship between able-bodied sport and sport for people with disabilities. Table 3 provides descriptions of the analytical frames used for final analysis.

Table 3: Analytical Frames and Their Meanings

Frame	Code	Meaning / Cues
Athletic	A	competition results, sport performance, training, coaching, ability
Medical / Patient	B	injuries, diagnosis, prognosis, medical staff, assistive devices
Supercrip	C	tragic hero, overcoming, character, emotional strength
Charity / Victim	D	pity, unable, burden, in need of saving, damaged
Cyborg	E	technology, more than human, super-ability
“Little Brother”	F	less than able bodied sport, less than Olympic
N/A	G	no discernable frame

To distinguish between primary and secondary frames within an article, the researchers relied on saturation and frequency in the coded material of nodes associated with the various themes in question. Some subjectivity remained as nodes could relate to multiple themes. In the event that results did not match between coders, a decision was made through discussion and consensus on the final code(s).

4.2 Descriptive Statistics

Qualitative coding in NVivo 10 by both coders was compiled and ultimately each sample article was assigned a primary and a secondary code. These results have been summarized into quantitative descriptive statistics. Table 4 displays the primary findings.

Table 4: Primary Thematic Distribution of Disability Representations (N = 88)

Theme	N	%
A = athletic	54	61.4
B = medical / patient	8	9.1
C = supercrip	8	9.1
D = charity / victim	1	1.1
E = cyborg	9	10.2
F = little brother	7	8.0
G = n/a	1	1.1

The athletic narrative was obviously very prominent as a primary theme comprising over 60% of the articles. The cyborg, medical, supercrip, and little brother themes split the remainder of the articles relatively evenly, representing 8-10% respectively.

To gain a deeper understanding of the narratives communicated in the newspapers, this study also took secondary themes of each text into account. The frequency of secondary themes is displayed in Table 5.

Table 5: Secondary Thematic Distribution of Disability Representations (N = 88)

Theme	N	%
A = athletic	15	17.0
B = medical / patient	13	14.8
C = supercrip	13	14.8
D = charity / victim	3	3.4
E = cyborg	3	3.4
F = little brother	3	3.4
G = n/a	38	43.2

Researchers found that 43% of the articles did not feature prominent secondary themes. However; the athletic frame had a strong presence again, represented by one sixth of the articles. Importantly, the medical and supercrip frames dominated among the remaining articles at approximately 15% each, while the outstanding frames had minimal occurrences.

4.3 Dominant Frame: Athletic

The Athletic frame was most prominent in Canadian coverage of the 2012 Paralympic Games. This finding supports Quinn (2007) and Howe (2008) and Haller et al. (2012) who suggest a paradigm shift in representation of athletes with disabilities is occurring. Specifically, Chang et al. (2011), Haller et al. (2012), and Quinn (2007) have noted that Canadian media has supported the athletic frame in several instances over the past decade. An athletic representation also aligns with the placement of the articles in the Sports section of each respective newspaper (with the exception of one feature in the front section of The National Post covering the Opening Ceremonies). Concepts that comprised the Athletic frame included coaching, competition results, competitive field, fairness, medal standings/count, Paralympic/World records, performance, physicality,

rivalry, skill, strategy, and training; these are topics that are common in mainstream mass media sports coverage (Coakley, 1994).

One of the most salient passages demonstrating the Athletic frame is a depiction of Canadian wheelchair basketball player Patrick Anderson. In an article from The National Post, Anderson's skill and prowess in his sport was described:

The double-leg amputee from Fergus, Ont., has long been considered the best wheelchair basketball player in the world, his instincts and vision often compared favourably to that of another Canadian basketball icon, two-time NBA MVP Steve Nash. And yet, after leading the Canadian men to gold medals in 2000 and 2004 and a silver in 2008, the 33-year-old Anderson has, unbelievably, stepped his game up another notch.

As Canada has gone 5-0 in the round robin at London, the long-limbed, ridiculously gifted Anderson has recorded two triple doubles and fallen just an assist short of a third.

His ball and chair skills are incomparable, his reach and power dangerous weapons... "Everybody wants to model their game after Pat," said Canadian sharp-shooter Dave Durepos. "He's the most complete player in the world."

(NP24)

Aside from quick mentions of Anderson's impairment and wheelchair, this excerpt sounds much like what one might expect of able-bodied or mainstream sports coverage of a highly talented player. Anderson is described as highly competent and skilful in his sport of basketball, a pattern that Chang et al. also observed in their Canadian work. He is compared to renowned NBA MVP Steve Nash (also Canadian) in an effort to provide context for the readers. A crucial distinction is that the association is made between the two players as colleagues ("another Canadian basketball icon") rather than as a parallel between able-bodied and disabled athletes.

Another way that the athletic frame legitimizes Paralympic sport is through the use of quantifiable aspects of the game/competition in reports. The Globe and Mail focuses on statistics and teamwork in their coverage of the Canadian women's wheelchair basketball

squad:

Cindy Ouellet of Quebec City added 18 points, eight rebounds, and eight assists in her best-ever Paralympic performance. Janet McLachlan of Vancouver had a game-high 15 rebounds. "I think it shows our depth and our strength that when we do get everyone involved and we do stick to our plan we are a very successful team," Hancock said. "We have a lot of people that can pour in points and today was another good example of that." (GM22)

This description places the value on sport performance rather than focusing on whether the athletes are able-bodied.

The athletic frame fulfills the belief that sport journalism traditionally includes performance expectations and results. Schell and Duncan (1999) had noted that these elements had often been excluded from Paralympic coverage. In the samples, there are copious references to past athletic performances and medal hopefuls. Michelle Stillwell is portrayed as a force to be reckoned with in discussion surrounding her past record-setting performances and competitors. Stilwell defended her Paralympic gold in the women's 200-metre handcycling competition in London:

Setting records in the 100, 200 and 400 metres already this calendar year made Stilwell appear untouchable as London approached. She had dominated American rivals Kerry Morgan and Cassie Mitchell at a meet in Windsor, Ont., in July. (GM17)

Finally, following familiar dialogues in sport, coverage of Benoit Huot's successes in the pool highlights motivation and training:

Huot's win marked a return to the gold rush he started in 2000, before Beijing became a blip in the road. "It's what I've been dreaming of for four years," the native of Longueuil, Que., said after winning the men's 200-metre individual medley on Thursday. "I wanted to go to Beijing and win the gold, so it would have been three in a row - Sydney, Athens and Beijing. But it didn't happen. But that's what really motivated me to come back for another four years and do well."

"I had the best four years of training of my life, and tonight we saw the results."
(GM14)

One might also note that in the majority of athletic representations, impairment or disability remain absent or of minimal focus. Perhaps this is an attempt to increase the perceived similarity between mainstream sport coverage and coverage of Paraspport events.

4.4 Reading Deeper: Athletic But...

Previous studies of media framing of the Paralympics have only discussed overarching patterns and narratives. Therefore, this study was designed to probe further and address the gap that exists regarding possible interactions between primary and secondary frames within texts. It would be possible to look at the results from the previous section and to conclude that the media is doing quite an acceptable job of representing Paralympic athletes. The majority of articles demonstrated primarily an athletic frame (61%). However, articles may communicate multiple, and sometimes conflicting, themes.

In this study, researchers also assigned a code to each article for strong secondary themes. As a unique contribution to the current body of knowledge, this section addresses the secondary code analysis of articles that, on the surface, support the athletic frame. This subset was selected to investigate whether or not the dominant athletic theme existed independently or if there were underlying themes that might affect the power of the primary findings. Table 6 represents the distribution of secondary themes in this subset of the sample.

Table 6: Underlying Theme Distribution among Texts Coded as "Athletic" (N = 54)

Theme	N	%
B = medical / patient	10	18.5
C = supercrip	9	16.7
D = charity / victim	0	0.0
E = cyborg	3	5.6
F = little brother	3	5.6
G = n/a	29	53.7

The table above clearly demonstrates that almost half of the texts coded athletic also possess underlying narratives (47.3%), most importantly those that focus on medicalized ideas of Paralympic sport or the propagation of the supercrip stereotype (35.2%). For this reason, it is crucial to avoid taking the initial results strictly at face value.

Stories of Summer Mortimer are a clear example of this type of contrasting coverage in both the medical and supercrip frames. The 19-year old Mortimer of Ancaster, Ontario earned two gold, a silver, and a bronze medal in swimming in London 2012, making her the most successful Canadian athlete in either the Olympics or Paralympics. Coverage of the young swimmer's success was headlined in both papers including titles reading: "Mortimer smashes own world record on way to gold on three-medal day in pool" (GM15), "Mortimer struts after world-record 50-metre swim" (NP16), "Canada's Mortimer sets world record in backstroke to win another gold" (NP29), and "Canada's Mortimer, Huot shining at Paralympics" (NP38). However, these headlines and her most recent results were almost inevitably followed by an account of Mortimer's "tragic accident" and her ongoing medical struggles.

The media is quick to remind readers of Mortimer's status as a former able-bodied athlete:

Mortimer was swimming at age two and began competing at nine, even competing at the 2008 Beijing Olympic trials. After her accident, her father Craig coached her to use her upper body to compensate for the lack of rotation on her feet. (GM14).

Mortimer's Olympic dreams are mentioned again in another article: "As an up-and-coming able-bodied swimmer, Mortimer was once considered a prospect for the 2012 London Olympics, before a trampoline accident in late 2008 shattered most of the bones in her feet." (GM15)

This duality is enhanced by a quote from Mortimer herself when she states, "I haven't been that fast since I was abled bodied. To be able to beat my times from when I was 14-15 years-old is amazing" (GM26). It is unfortunate that the information that can be taken

away from this statement is that a 14 year-old able-bodied swimmer could be as fast as a Paralympic athlete winning gold medals. In this way, the Paralympics are represented as merely a secondary option, one that was forced upon her as a result of her injuries. Athletes themselves might unwittingly make comments are self-perpetuating the marginalization of people with disabilities when they draw comparisons between ‘how I was’ and ‘how I am now.’

Mortimer’s successes are set against the tale of her training accident, her shattered bones, a potential need for amputation or surgery, and severe ongoing pain. I surmise that the attention granted to Mortimer’s medical condition is a function of the need to differentiate what is “normal” from what is “disabled.” It is a reminder to the reader that while she is successful and outwardly might not visually present as disabled, she is a Paralympic athlete (as opposed to an Olympic athlete) because of her impairments.

Furthermore, Mortimer is depicted as heroic for fighting through the pain and refusing to allow it to limit her sport participation. Her attitude is along the lines of ‘grin and bear it’ and she states that the fact that she is walking “is a miracle” (GM30) and that she feels “so incredibly grateful for the experience I’ve had as a result of my accident” (NP12). These feelings might be true for her now after all she has accomplished, but they also paint an overly positive perspective about what it is like to live with a disability.

Mortimer’s case illustrates how the presence of Othering frames can undermine the saliency and power of the athletic frame in the story. These secondary themes transform the overall effect of the story from a sport-focused narrative towards a feature or human interest story that paints the athlete as inspirational or heroic, not for their sporting achievements, but for their ability to persist in the face of his/her impairment. As such, the statistic stating that 61% of articles demonstrated the athletic theme as the primary frame overemphasizes the positive elements of this coverage. The secondary analysis provides a more realistic picture of the full stories as printed in the news.

The content of these secondary themes is an important finding as it relates to framing theory. As previously stated, the two major components of framing are selection and salience. By representing Paralympians in conflicting frames, particularly within a single

article, the salience of the primary frame is decreased (Weaver, 2007). This is especially significant where a historically non-dominant frame is challenging a dominant frame of representation, as is the case with an athletic frame challenging a medical frame in coverage of Paralympic sport.

From framing theory and cognitive psychology we take that readers generally have pre-existing schemata in their minds (Scheufele & Tewsbury, 2007). These schemata are mental templates that represent one's current knowledge about people, situations or objects, and which originate from prior learning or experiences (ETEC 510, 2010). It is an easier process for a text to cue the activation of an existing scheme than it is to transform or establish a new mental pattern. Scheufele (2004) describes this as the activation effect. Repeated activation of an existing schema can lead to a priming effect that makes those ideas highly applicable and accessible for the reader. Transformation or formation effects rely on consonant and cumulative media coverage that challenges the current schema in question to the point where an individual changes their previous understanding or creates a new mental subcategory to explain and organize new information. Thus, a lack of consistency in articles with an athletic frame diminishes the likelihood of a positive framing effect whereby readers would understand Paralympians as legitimate and elite athletes.

4.5 Problematizing: The “Other” vs. the Ideal Athletic Body

At the heart of some of these issues is the difficult task of reconciling the ideal athletic body and elite sport with the disability movement. At the elite level, the focus on top performance is truly the driving factor. Regardless of whether an athlete is able bodied or disabled, elite sporting competition is about out-doing one's opponents—being faster, stronger, and playing with superior strategy. High-performance and elite sport for the able bodied athlete often means striving for perfection. The aim is to execute physical skills flawlessly and to perform to the highest standards (Coakley & Donnelly, 2009). Sport for people with disabilities, Goggin and Newell (2000) suggest, is distinguished by its lack of perfection. Howe (2010) ponders, “Elite sport is concerned with enhanced

bodily performance, yet how do we show this with a collective of impaired bodies?” (p.108).

Unfortunately, the dissonance that exists in comparing a disabled body with the ideal athletic body is emphasized in the media through the use of frames that hold difference as a primary feature. In this case, the athletic narrative is the only frame that aligns with the concept of legitimate elite sport performance. The remaining frames all serve as lenses to make comparisons and point out dissimilarities between athletes with disabilities and what is considered a “normal,” healthy, able-bodied athlete. Resultantly, approximately 66% of the articles analyzed demonstrated either a primary or a secondary theme that serves the purpose of Othering Paralympic athletes.

The construction of the Other can be explained as a type of coping mechanism. The Other elicits a spectrum of emotional responses such as admiration, pity, fear, and fascination that help to place mental distance between the Other and the observer who constructs him/herself as “normal” (Garland-Thomson, 1996).

The norm of the ideal athletic body is characterized as male, tall with defined musculature, and powerful (Coakley & Donnelly, 2009). A large portion of Paralympic athletes have visibly evident impairments which exclude their bodies from the definition of this ideal:

The transformation of sport culture will mean when we are able to “see” sport and athletes with a disability without seeing any contradiction, without assuming a physical liability, stigma or deformity, and without assuming an impaired athletic performance. That is, we will see an athlete, an athletic performance, and a sporting body. (DePauw, 1997, p.428)

In taking the constructivist point of view, sport exists as a product of human interactions. It is the result of an ongoing power struggle and reflective of the hegemonic power held by the able-bodied, white male in society. Mainstream sport media structures serve to reproduce the privileged position of those with power in society by normalizing particular views of masculinity and marginalizing other groups including women and those with

disabilities. By limiting their participation in sport and/or presenting their sporting opportunities as less than legitimate competition, the dominance of the able-bodied male in the sporting realm is maintained (Coakley & Donnelly, 2009).

4.5.1 Medical / Patient

Seymour (1998) suggests that sport is constructed in a way that relegates sport for people with disabilities to the margins. In ascribing the identity of “patient” onto the athlete, Seymour shows how the medical model of understanding disability can be limiting in sport and contributes to designating athletes with disabilities as Others.

In the texts analyzed, the medical/patient frame appeared in variations. First, the history of the Paralympic Games was often mentioned in order to tie sport for people with disabilities to a rehabilitation or a military setting.

The genesis of the Paralympics was a doctor’s determination to use sport in the rehabilitation of injured World War II servicemen, and on Saturday the gold medal in wheelchair tennis quad singles went to Israeli war survivor Noam Gershony. During the 2006 war with Hezbollah, Gershony was left paralyzed in a helicopter crash from which he was the only survivor. (NP42)

Secondly, an emphasis on assistive devices positioned athletes as dependent and/or less capable than their able-bodied counterparts.

The parade took nearly an hour longer than expected, with athletes arriving in dozens of ways. Some came in motorized carts, others wheeled themselves in, still others were pushed by coaches or volunteers. They walked in with canes or crutches, eye patches and sunglasses, prosthetic limbs and walking sticks, determined to make it around the imposing stadium, welcomed by a global music mash-up by local DJs. (NP11)

The opening ceremonies of major events are celebrations and grand displays of nationalism. Athletes enter the stadium and proudly parade to their positions, representing their countries. The description above depicts the parade of nations as a painstaking process for Paralympic athletes during which they struggle to make it around

the ‘imposing stadium’ that their able-bodied counterparts march through with such joy and ease.

Particularly in the case of acquired disability, athletes’ injuries were described in vivid detail for the shock value to the reader.

The crash had severed Zanardi’s right leg at the knee and his left at the thigh some five inches above the knee. The driver’s lower legs had disintegrated like those of land mine victims, said Dr. Steve Olvey, director of medical affairs for CART at the time. He had lost 70% of his blood, his pelvis was fractured in five places and he had a lacerated liver. But Zanardi was alive.

At the hospital, Zanardi’s wife, Daniela, told him he had lost his legs. But that was only part of the problem. He had been in a coma for three days, his heart had stopped at least once, and he was alive only because of the medical response to his injuries. (NP32)

The account of Zanardi’s medical status reads like the script of a television drama. When faced with the graphic details of his injuries, the reader is led to revel in the power of modern medicine to keep the body alive, thus reinforcing the authority that the medical profession holds in society.

Lastly, along similar lines, Paralympians are depicted as survivors who are lucky to be alive, let alone participating in the Games:

He was ultimately the slowest of 18 runners overall but the former soldier, one of just two Nepalese athletes at the Games, is lucky to be in London at all, after nearly losing his life in the forests of central Nepal.

Nine years ago he and his foot patrol triggered two roadside bombs left by Maoist rebels hidden in the forest. The explosion forced Rana, now 31, to the ground, blinded and with blood pouring from an open wound in his neck as he scrambled for his rifle while bullets whizzed past and shrapnel burnt into his face.

His life was saved when his comrades drove the insurgents back into trees. His last memory before losing consciousness was the silence that descended. Doctors battled to save the sight in one of his eyes in the coming days but after two weeks

in an army hospital he was totally blind. (GM22)

These medical narratives show the media's preoccupation with Paralympic athletes' impairments. The story becomes about explaining the injuries they have sustained or illnesses they fight rather than their excellence in elite sport. As Seymour (1998) explained, "achievement in wheelchair sport does not have the power to transform the primary status, that of a patient. Disabled sport remains sport for people with damaged bodies" (p.115).

4.5.2 Supercrip

The supercrip frame is also based in the medical model. It positions disability as an internal quality of the athlete that he/she must aim to overcome in order to achieve happiness and success. The ability to overcome one's disability is strongly attributed to personal factors such as strength of character and determination:

Grand'Maison races the 200 I.M. and 100-metre breaststroke later this week. "It's not over," she declared. "I'm going to fight harder. In the last four years, I've gone through a lot of challenges and right now, it's just one more challenge that I have to overcome and it will make me stronger in four days when I race again, when I show up on that pool deck again, fierce, mean and ready to show what I've got, finally." (GM18)

Martine Wright is a British athlete who was in one of the trains that was part of a terrorist suicide attack in London in 2005. She lost both legs in the explosion. Her journey to the Games is portrayed as a personal decision to overcome her situation and determination not to fall into the role of a passive victim:

Wright will tell you that she had help to get through the seven years since 7/7. It's about Martine's team - what she refers to as "Team Me" - her support group of family and friends. It started in the hospital, with her mother, holding her daughter's face in her hands, telling her she could have died or suffered brain damage. But that didn't happen. Martine was still Martine.

Wright saw the impact of the bombs on so many families. Families grieved. The

city reeled in shock. She ultimately had to decide: What would it be, Martine?

The answer began with small steps on prosthetic legs.

She fell down. But she got back up, again and again.

"When you go through something traumatic in your life... you sometimes lose who you are," she said. "You're thrown in this completely new world."

"When it happened to me, it didn't sort of happen overnight, suddenly in an epiphany - Right. I can live my life now. It's a very gradual process." (NP17)

The supercrip narrative is common because it appeals to readers as a “feel-good” story. Newspapers aim to print content that has the ability to generate the largest audiences (Rother, Oelrichs, & Geske, 2012). It is a popular frame for media campaigns launched by National Paralympic Committees (NPCs) to promote the Games since the turn of the millennium; Portugal (Superatleta), the UK (Super Freaks), and Canada (Super Athletes) have all used similar tactics in their marketing efforts. The supercrip has become a characteristic representation of Paralympic athletes that the public has come to expect—likely without reflection on the potential impacts.

The stories of the athletes who persist through disability to perform feats typically considered impossible for people with disabilities often read as inspirational. They are the stories that follow patterns of a human interest feature, rather than fitting the profile of a sports report. The risk associated with this particular type of representation is that it creates a societal expectation that people with disabilities must adapt to and overcome disability in order to achieve normalcy and be viewed as equals (Rogers & Swadener, 2001). The ‘extraordinary’ becomes the new and unreasonable standard against which the success of people with disabilities is judged.

4.5.3 Charity / Victim

The charity/victim frame paints Paralympic athletes as worthy of pity. Passages like the following depict athletes with physical needs and minimal resources in their struggle to compete:

The romance of the Olympics can be found in athletes from countries with few

resources, who get to the Games through aspiration and perspiration. They may finish well behind the field but they are there, living the dream.

Arguably all Paralympic athletes have had to scale such barrier just to reach the starting line, but for those dependent on mechanical aids the gulf in budgets can lead to them arriving with the most rudimentary of equipment. (GM03)

The charity/victim frame is one of the longest standing representations of disability in media (Thomas, C., 2007; Titchkoksy, 2003). On a positive note, this frame was rarely present in the sample of this study. Perhaps this can be attributed to the rise of the supercrip stereotype in sports coverage. The supercrip incorporates the victim frame but takes things a step further in discussing the active role the athlete's personal qualities play in overcoming the pitiable situation. The time of the 'passive victim' of disability may have passed in media as readers are more interested in uplifting stories. In places where the charity/victim frame still exists, there appears to have been a shift from a personal focus to a more societal focus. This shift mirrors the progression from medical to social models of disability.

4.5.4 Cyborg

The cyborg frame has a focus on the use of technology for the purpose of physical augmentation in sport. A feature on the official technician of the Paralympic Games, Ottobock, describes the workshop where technicians can repair or craft wheelchairs and various prosthetics:

The workshop has a welding area, which is expecting a lot of work once the wheelchair rugby starts, and machines for creating new prosthetic limbs, whether suited for sprinting or more durable, high-tech ones for everyday use. Athletes get their gait measured by lasers and fine adjustments are made before they go away. (GM03)

The cyborg frame was specifically prominent in stories about amputee sprinters. In 2012 the major competition was between the South African 'Blade Runner' Oscar Pistorius, hometown hero Jonnie Peacock, American Jerome Singleton, and Brazilian Alan

Oliveira. The level of competition among these athletes led to an article predicting that Paralympians may soon be out-performing Olympians in sprinting:

Many experts predict Paralympians will soon be out-performing their able-bodied counterparts, thanks in part to future developments in prosthetics. "We're already at the era where prosthetics can outstrip human performance," said David James of the Centre for Sports Engineering Research at Sheffield Hallam University. "With the developments being made in things like powered knee and ankle joints, athletes will soon be flying down the track. "It's possible Paralympic athletes could one day run faster than Usain Bolt." (NP07)

It is interesting to note that as technology in prosthetics improves and athletes are able to achieve quicker times, the discussion immediately jumps to the possibility of prosthetics assisting Paralympic athletes to surpass able-bodied athletes. The use of the term 'powered joints' and 'flying' serve to emphasize that this exceptional capacity would be a result of the technology rather than the natural abilities of the athletes wearing the prosthetics. It is suspicious that the current stance is that (generally) athletes with prosthetics are not able to compete at the level of the able-bodied athletes at the Olympics. However, when technology brings times closer together, the 'cyborg' athletes are likened to machines to once again accentuate their difference. At no point is there ever a conversation about the athletes being on an even playing field.

4.5.5 "Little Brother"

The little brother frame is a very overt pattern of Othering. It occurs where direct comparisons are made between able-bodied athletes and athletes with disabilities. In most cases, the Paralympics are contrasted against the abundantly more popular Olympic Games. Although this frame did not have a high rate of occurrence in this study, the statements made are still of importance, particularly because the audience is highly familiar with the point of reference and might make judgements about the Paralympics based solely on comparative reports.

These evaluations diminish the legitimacy of Paralympic sport by portraying it as

secondary to able-bodied sport. For example, the first article about the London 2012 Paralympics was titled: “Canada's Olympians return home, another crop of athletes is headed to London. The Canadian Paralympic team was officially announced Tuesday during a send-off at Toronto's Pearson Airport.” (GM01) This title reaffirms the position of athletes with disabilities as Others by explicitly using the word ‘another,’ stating that these are not the celebrated Olympians that you know and love.

In another instance, the Paralympics are likened to a festival or celebration rather than an elite sport competition in this comment from the British monarchy: “Queen Elizabeth II said the nation looked forward to ‘celebrating the uplifting spirit which distinguishes the Paralympic Games from other events.’” (NP11)

While the Olympics are lauded as the ultimate arena for sport achievement, the Paralympic Games struggle to gain that status. Instead, the Paralympics are seen as the “feel good” event of the season. Following the sale of the most tickets in Paralympic history, organizers and reporters suggested that there must be a reason for the popularity of tickets beyond interest in the Paralympics:

The success can't entirely be explained by growing interest in the sports, many of which are similar to Olympic sports, say organizers and others involved with ticket sales. They attribute the high level of sales in part to carryover effects from the successful London Olympics; surplus demand from unsuccessful Olympic ticket buyers who want to see the venues; and, for those who did attend, a desire to maintain the good vibes and excitement. (GM04)

Again, the Paralympics are presented as follow-up act to the main event of the Olympics. It is proposed that patrons of the Paralympics might in fact have no interest in the events at all, and that they are simply using the opportunity to bask in the remaining glow of the Olympics.

Lastly, certain comments outright demean Paralympic performances:

Now, there are still issues that will keep the Paralympics in the considerable Olympic shadow. The number of classes required to take into account the myriad

of physical differences, particularly in track and swimming, can make it confusing for the public. And in some of those classes, the depth of field is thin and times or distances thrown are simply too pedestrian to generate much excitement. But is should not diminish the fact that the competitors are still the best at what they do. (NP46)

These comparisons all position the Paralympics negatively. There is a clear ableist hierarchy that consistently places sport for people with disabilities below able-bodied sport in terms of importance, legitimacy, and performance. This type of coverage does nothing to excite readers to become interested in the Paralympic Games, in fact, it likely has the opposite effect.

4.6 The Way Forward

The athletic frame provides legitimacy to Paralympic athletes and their accomplishments by mirroring elements of traditional sports journalism. However, this type of coverage sometimes tends to ignore disability almost altogether in its attempts to provide “normal” stories. Hiding the disability in disability sport risks reinforcing the impression that sport is for able-bodied, Caucasian, males. Contrastingly, common stereotypes such as the patient and the supercrip diminish the value of Paralympians’ performances by placing too much emphasis on the athletes’ status as different/damaged because of their bodies.

The question becomes: Is there a threshold for what amount of Othering is considered acceptable when it comes to media coverage of Paralympic athletes? Is it enough for the majority of the articles to simply have a primary athletic theme? Or, in fact, do the underlying themes show that there is still considerable progress to be made before Paralympic athletes are deemed well-represented in the media?

Ideally a balance should be achieved where the athletic performances can be praised but enough information about the athlete and event can be provided to maintain the uniqueness of the Paralympic Games. Quinn (2007) highlighted a segment of a CBC broadcast of the 2004 Paralympic Games that exemplifies this recommendation:

What was unique to the construction of the *athletic* representation in this sample segment as compared with other sample segments was the explicit discussion of the impairments of these athletes and the modifications required for competition in this event. For example, the commentator provided contextual information for the viewer, including the following: “The S11 classification is for athletes who are completely blind. Even the most experienced swimmers have problems going straight in the lanes. Tappers are required at each end of the lane for the swimmers in the S11 classification.” The text acknowledged the presence of physical impairment and the role it played in the swim competition. The explanations of physical difference that these athletes have and the modifications made to the venue served to construct a very genuine representation of the person with a disability as an athlete. (p.73)

This example is informative without being overly dramatic or presenting internalized understandings of disability. Rather, it addresses several components of the ICF biopsychosocial framework that impact the event. The impairment in question is visual impairment. The commentator suggests that athletes may have activity limitations in their ability to stay in the lanes; as a result, the competition uses ‘tappers’ as an environmental facilitator to give athletes reference to their position in the pool. For certain events, this additional information may not be necessary (due to their similarities to Olympic competitions), but for events that are unfamiliar to the audience the information could assist readers/viewers in appreciating the challenge of the events and the level of skill required to achieve elite performances.

Chapter 5

5 Conclusion and Recommendations

To summarize, this study incorporated two levels of analysis to engage with the media framing of Paralympic athletes in *The Globe and Mail* and *The National Post* around the London 2012 Paralympic Games. The findings support studies by Chang et al. (2011), Mason (2013), and Quinn (2007) suggesting that the contemporary primary frame for Paralympic coverage in Canadian print media is athletic. Unique to this study, researchers discovered that almost half of the articles that present as athletic contain underlying medical or supercrip narratives that undermine the power of the athletic representation and decrease the saliency of the primary frame. These secondary frames serve to relegate Paralympic athletes to a distinctly different category from able-bodied athletes. Frames of medical/patient, supercrip, cyborg, charity/victim, and little brother all act as Othering narratives.

5.1 Conclusion

The ‘imperfection’ of disability remains a source of social anxiety and discomfort. Mass media perpetuates this notion by printing stories that privilege able-bodied sport over sport for people with disabilities. Despite improvements over the past 30 years, many of the narratives surrounding Paralympic athletes remain highly medicalized. Goggin and Newell (2003) and Garland-Thomson (2000) stress the importance of meaningful media representations in the identity-making process. The construction of people with diverse physical abilities as athletes can assist in breaking down the social barriers that lead to marginalization (Huang & Brittain, 2005). Ideally, a positive shift in representation will mean that athletes and sport media consumers begin to see the spectrum of human ability and difference as part of ‘the natural’ and ‘everyday’ (Goggin & Newell, 2003).

Federal and provincial legislation in Canada for human rights and accessibility demonstrate that an improved quality of life for people with disabilities is part of the national agenda (Canadian Disability Policy Alliance, 2014). However, the findings of this study show that even in a nation where public policies and laws exist to protect their

rights, people with disabilities remain marginalized in several areas, including media representation. Accessibility has reach far beyond the physical construct that is often first to come to mind. As outlined by the Accessibility Act for Ontarians with Disabilities (2005), accessibility is broken into categories of customer service, employment, transportation, information and communications, and the built environment. These are all areas that require improvement for people with disabilities to be fully integrated into normative society. In addition, people with disabilities should not have to seek outside media sources to find stories that are relevant and representative of their lives. The Paralympic Games offer a prime opportunity to showcase people with varying abilities in positive light and in mainstream media. Consistently challenging the medicalized framing of Paralympic athletes is an avenue for transforming pre-existing mental schemata that exist about what it means to “be disabled” or to participate in Paralympic sport. Ideally, the trend toward realistic and meaningful representations of Paralympic athletes (Fong and Katz, 2012) in the press continues as we work to embrace diversity and recognize that human ability exists on a spectrum, regardless of impairment.

5.2 Recommendations for Future Research

The opportunities for future research in the area of media and disability sport are virtually boundless. As popularity and awareness of Paraspport grows, so too does the quantity and reach of media coverage. There are several methods and angles that researchers could use to investigate moving forward. Particularly, a focus on different areas of the media cycle including production (reporters, PR professionals) or audience interpretation would be interesting. In the spirit of critical disability studies, research giving voice to the athletes being portrayed would have great value. Continued monitoring of content and framing is also an important indicator of attitude as the social environment of disability sport is highly dynamic.

5.3 Practical Implications

The findings of this study shine a light on areas requiring improvement with respect to media coverage of Paralympic athletes. Although there has been an improvement in coverage, both in quantity and quality, over time, there is still a long way to go before

Paralympic athletes achieve a status of respect and legitimacy in sport equal to that of Olympic athletes.

The findings of this study can have practical implications moving forward. Firstly, as “media culture continues to arbitrate social and political issues, deciding what is real, important, and vital” (Kellner, 2003, p.viii), media training intervention may be a critical step toward improving representations of disability in the media by empowering athletes and staff to tell the stories they want to hear.

As Golden (2003) and Howe (2008) explained, the reporters covering the Paralympics often have little knowledge or interest in the area. Perhaps it would be prudent to send an entirely new group of reporters to cover the Paralympic Games in order to avoid fatigue and burnout from the Olympic Games. Regardless, improved resources and training for reporters as well as athletes and spokespeople could facilitate communication of more genuine and positive representations. Sensitivity to the different models of disablement and emphasis on treating Paralympians as true athletes rather than as token feel-good stories are important.

In this respect, continued efforts on the behalf of the organizing committees, the IOC, and the IPC are required to improve the status of the Paralympics. These organizations have an agenda setting role to play (Mason, 2013), especially considering the reliance of reporters on their media releases for information (Fong & Katz, 2012).

These are not revolutionary recommendations. In fact, Clogston made suggestions to improve disability coverage in 1994 that hold true to this day and have yet to see implementation. First, he suggested style guides for newsrooms that explicitly give examples of ‘traditional’ versus ‘progressive’ stories (medical model versus social model) so that reporters understand the differences in representation. Secondly, he advocated for the hiring of reporters with disabilities to be integral part of the news teams. He stressed the importance of integration and avoiding the use of ‘token experts.’ We are beginning to see the hints of the latter in television coverage with former Paralympic athletes join the broadcast to provide insight and commentary; however,

whether this trend will carry over to print media is uncertain as journalism is more of an individual endeavour.

Mass media is a well-established social institution. Changes will certainly not be made overnight, but with the concerted effort of advocates and representative governing bodies, hopefully we can continue to see improvements in representations of athletes with disabilities.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Summary of Important Media Framing Studies

Games	Year	Authors	Journal	Media	Major Conclusions About Media Representation
1996 Atlanta Paralympics	1999	Schell & Duncan	APAQ	TV	Supercrip, Paralympic inferiority (vs. Olympics), Hierarchy of acceptability
1996 Atlanta Paralympics	2001	Schantz & Gilbert	Sociology of Sport Journal	Print	Non-sport-specific coverage, Focus on nationalism, Token coverage
2000 Sydney Paralympics	2003	Thomas & Smith	APAQ	Print	Medicalized understanding, Aspiring to able-bodiedness
2002 Manchester Commonwealth	2005	Smith & Thomas	Sport, Education, & Society	Print	Medicalized understanding, End of "Sporting Apartheid", Growing inclusion
2002 Salt Lake City Olympics & Paralympics	2003	Golden	Disability Studies Quarterly	Print	Dichotomy between Olympic/Paralympic reporters: audience interest, value of sport involving those with disabilities
2004 Athens Paralympics	2007	Quinn	Unpublished Thesis	TV (CAN)	Athletic, Unidimensional
2004 Athens Paralympics	2008	Howe	International Review for the Sociology of Sport	Print	Shift away from headlines that celebrate triumph over adversity to more sport focused format, IPC control over information
2008 Beijing Paralympics	2009	Ellis	Asia Pacific Media Educator	TV	Human interest profiles, Individualized disability as a personal tragedy
1996-2008 Paralympics	2009	Pereira & Montero	Unpublished Thesis	Print	Improvement over time with respect to use of correct terminology and fewer stereotypes
2008 Beijing Olympics & Paralympics	2011	Chang, Crossman, Taylor & Walker	International Journal of Sport Communication	Print (CAN)	Game results 38.8% of coverage, Paralympic athletes discussed whether win or lose → patronizing

(Appendix A continued)

1960-2004 Paralympics	2012	Reichhart & Myazhiom	Heroes or Zeroes? (book)	Print (FRA)	Shift from “charity business” to “sport business” around 2000
2000-2002 Paralympics	2012	Bertling	Heroes or Zeroes? (book)	Print (GER)	Deficient in quality and quantity, Journalists focus on history athletes want sport
2008 Beijing Paralympics	2012	Lebersorg & Dinold	Heroes or Zeroes? (book)	Print (AUT/GER)	Neutral report style, National orientation, Report on success more than failure
2008 Beijing Paralympics	2012	Raab & Janda	Heroes or Zeroes? (book)	TV (GER)	51% competition coverage, Informative, Performance related
2008 Beijing Paralympics	2012	Bertschy & Reinhardt	Heroes or Zeroes? (book)	Print (SUI)	3:1 Olympic to Paralympic coverage, Focus on destiny and stereotypes
2004/2008/2010 Paralympics	2012	Fong & Katz	Heroes or Zeroes? (book)	Print (USA/CAN)	2:1 Canada coverage vs. American, Supercrip stereotype used most often in Canadian vs. Pitiable in American
2000-2012 Paralympics	2012	Silva & Howe	Journal of Sport and Social Issues	TV/Print	Supercrip, Super-freak, “Other”
Prior to 2010 Vancouver Paralympics	2013	Mason	Sport in Society	(CAN)	Athletic but ambivalent, Heavy explanatory frame stressing difference from able-bodied hockey
1996-2012 Paralympics	2014	Lefevour	Unpublished Thesis	Print (USA)	Paradoxical: inspirational and courageous participants vs. pitiful sufferers, legitimate sport vs. extreme variance, comparisons with Olympics

Appendix B: The National Post Articles for Analysis

CODES: A–athletic; B–medical/patient; C–supercrip; D–charity/victim; E–cyborg; F–“little brother”; G–n/a

Date	Headline	Ref #	Code
15/08/12	Canadian Paralympic Team off to London: 'Pumped and Ready'	NP01	AF
26/08/12	Oscar Pistorius continues to expand scope of Paralympics	NP02	FA
28/08/12	Five-ring circus: Paralympic rugby player Hickling to carry flag for Canada	NP03	AG
28/08/12	Michelle Stilwell's goals have been to overcome her only real competition: herself Endless pursuit	NP04	AB
28/08/12	Canada faces fierce competition at Paralympics	NP05	AC
29/08/12	Pistorius going into Paralympics in 'great condition,' with patience	NP06	AF
29/08/12	'Prosthetics can outstrip human performance' Unfair advantage? Pistorius could spur other disabled athletes	NP07	EB
29/08/12	Swimmer North Korea's only hope: Sole participant	NP08	CA
29/08/12	Canada's Paralympic team hopes to draw from wider base to keep up with world	NP09	BD
29/08/12	Canadian Paralympic wheelchair racer Diane Roy will never forget Beijing 'injustice'	NP10	AG
29/08/12	'Look to the stars': Stephen Hawking helps open London 2012 Paralympics Games with a (big) bang	NP11	BC
30/08/12	Benoit Huot strikes gold in pool for Canada at Paralympic Games	NP12	AC
30/08/12	Paralympics open with a Big Bang, Stephen Hawking and Shakespeare	NP13	CA
31/08/12	Huot swims 'perfect race' as he claims world record 200-metre medley 'I had the best training years of my life'	NP14	AG
31/08/12	Paralympics 100-metre final 'going to be epic,' Jerome Singleton says	NP15	EA
1/09/12	Mortimer struts after world-record 50-metre swim Defying Doctors Canadian almost had foot amputated after trampoline accident	NP16	CB
1/09/12	Bomb survivor searching for more: 'One of the lucky ones'	NP17	CG
1/09/12	Canada's Michelle Stilwell defends Paralympic title in T52 200-metre final	NP18	AB
2/09/12	Canadian wheelchair racer Diane Roy misses the mark in Paralympic 5,000 metres	NP19	AG
2/09/12	Oscar Pistorius upset in Paralympic 200-metre final	NP20	FA
3/09/12	Busy Paralympians Brent Lakatos, Stefanie Reid making marriage work	NP21	CA
3/09/12	Canadian David Eng makes online list of most attractive Paralympic athletes	NP22	GA
3/09/12	Oscar Pistorius apologizes for complaints after Paralympic 200-metre final	NP23	EA

(Appendix B continued)

4/09/12	Canadian Anderson now stuff of legend: 'About winning' Double amputee at top of game on hardwood	NP24	AG
4/09/12	Canada claims bronze medals in archery, athletics at London Games	NP25	AG
4/09/12	Canadian pair wins Paralympic bronze in boccia	NP26	CA
4/09/12	Canadian wheelchair basketball player Patrick Anderson embraces role as the best	NP27	AG
4/09/12	No punishment for Oscar Pistorius after he complains about Paralympic rival's blades	NP28	EG
5/09/12	Canada's Mortimer sets world record in backstroke to win another gold	NP29	AG
5/09/12	Paralympian appreciates life after accident 'BLESSING IN DISGUISE' Wheelchair rugby player cherishes experiences	NP30	CA
5/09/12	Canadian swimmers add to Paralympic medal haul	NP31	AG
5/09/12	Ex-Formula One driver, who lost legs in crash, wins Paralympic gold in handcycling	NP32	BC
5/09/12	No evidence to support Oscar Pistorius' complaint about Paralympic blades: IPC	NP33	EA
6/09/12	On the track: Canada's Stilwell runs out of time, settles for silver in wheelchair 100	NP34	AB
6/09/12	Rule changes needed, racers say ahead of 100 'Tighten it up' Length of blades a hot topic after Pistorius' defeat	NP35	AE
6/09/12	Canada's wheelchair rugby players try to keep their cool at Paralympics	NP36	BG
6/09/12	Oscar Pistorius finishes fourth in 100 metres at Paralympics	NP37	AG
7/09/12	Canada's Mortimer, Huot shining at Paralympics 'Still hasn't hit me' Pair have collected seven of countries 22 medals	NP38	AC
7/09/12	Canada's days as a Paralympic powerhouse could well be over	NP39	AG
8/09/12	Canada stuns U.S. in wheelchair rugby, will play for Paralympic gold	NP40	AG
8/09/12	Canada's Robbi Weldon wins gold in cycling at Paralympics	NP41	AG
8/09/12	Oscar Pistorius dominates 400 metres to win Paralympic gold	NP42	AB
9/09/12	Canada settles for Paralympic silver as Australia wins first wheelchair rugby gold	NP43	AB
9/09/12	Coldplay, Rihanna bring down curtain on Paralympics, 'golden summer' for Britain	NP44	AG
9/09/12	Patrick Anderson leads Canada to Paralympic gold in wheelchair basketball	NP45	AG
10/09/12	Canada's poor showing could elicit changes: Coverage lacking Earned total of 31 medals for 13th place overall	NP46	FA
13/09/12	Sports Reports Own the Podium targets biathlon, cross-country skiing medals	NP47	AE

Appendix C: The Globe and Mail Articles for Analysis

CODES: A–athletic; B–medical/patient; C–supercrip; D–charity/victim; E–cyborg; F–“little brother”; G–n/a

Date	Headline	Ref #	Code
15/08/12	Canada aims for top eight at Paralympics	GM01	AF
22/08/12	London prepares to welcome the world, again	GM02	BD
23/08/12	Paralympians counting on a different kind of support	GM03	ED
25/08/12	London calling again Honeymoon glow from Olympics carries over with follow-up event	GM04	FG
26/08/12	Wheelchair rugby player Hickling named Canada's flag bearer at Paralympics	GM05	AC
27/08/12	B.C. wheelchair sprinter Michelle Stilwell primed for Paralympic glory	GM06	AC
28/08/12	Canada's Paralympians prepared, but competition has never been stiffer	GM07	AB
28/08/12	Paralympic flame lit at 'spiritual home'	GM08	BG
29/08/12	Pistorius leads the way Double amputee is eager to show that anything is possible as he prepares to defend titles	GM09	AE
29/08/12	Security scaled back for Paralympics	GM10	FG
30/08/12	A steeper climb to the podium Athletes have gone to London with strong funding and high expectations, but they face a talent pool that has never been deeper. An early leader at the Paralympics, Canada now faces tough competition	GM11	AG
30/08/12	Canadian Athletes in the medal hunt	GM12	AC
30/08/12	Canadian Arnold Boldt returns for another go-round	GM13	AC
31/08/12	Paralympics London 2012: Huot recovers his golden touch Canadian smashes own world record in 200-metre IM, then watches Mortimer capture silver	GM14	AB
1/09/12	London 2012 Paralympics: It's all going swimmingly for Canada Mortimer smashes own world record on way to gold on three-medal day in pool	GM15	BA
1/09/12	McLachlan sprints to bronze	GM16	AB
1/09/12	B.C. wheelchair sprinter Michelle Stilwell defends Paralympic title in 200	GM17	AC
2/09/12	Pool and track producing Canada's Paralympic medals in London	GM18	AB
2/09/12	Disappointment of a different kind for Diane Roy at the Paralympic Games	GM19	AG
3/09/12	Pistorius cries foul after losing sprint crown	GM20	EA
3/09/12	Canada increases Paralympic medal haul to 13	GM21	AG
4/09/12	Getting to London a victory for blinded Nepali soldier	GM22	DC
4/09/12	Pistorius apologizes for timing of rant	GM23	EG
4/09/12	Murderball still resonates for Canada's Paralympic rugby squad	GM24	CB
4/09/12	Outspoken Pistorius to face no punishment for post-race outburst	GM25	EG
4/09/12	Summer Mortimer swims to second gold at Paralympics	GM26	AG
5/09/12	Stilwell leads a run on silver for Canada at the Paralympic Games	GM27	AG

(Appendix C continued)

6/09/12	London 2012 Paralympics The triumph of Alex Zanardi	GM28	BC
6/09/12	London Paralympics smash ticket-sale targets	GM29	FG
6/09/12	Mortimer continues to boost Canada's medal count at Paralympic Games	GM30	AC
7/09/12	Pistorius surrenders another title	GM31	AG
7/09/12	Canada's Valerie Grand'Maison wins Paralympic Games gold in the pool	GM32	AG
8/09/12	Canada's Robbi Weldon wins Paralympic gold in road cycling	GM33	AG
8/09/12	Canadian athletes bask in bright Paralympic spotlight in London	GM34	FA
8/09/12	Pistorius retains Paralympic 400m title in style	GM35	AG
9/09/12	Benoit Huot chosen Canada's flag bearer for Paralympic closing ceremony	GM36	AG
9/09/12	Canada closes 2012 London Paralympics with silver in wheelchair rugby	GM37	AG
9/09/12	Canada loses ground to other countries at Paralympic Games in London	GM38	AB
9/09/12	Global superstars close Paralympic Games	GM39	AG
12/09/12	A lesson for us all Paralympian's swing might not look conventional but it's technically sound and inspirational	GM40	AG
12/09/12	New initiatives launched to give Canadians a cutting edge in Sochi	GM41	AG

Appendix D: Kitzinger's "Cues" for Media Analysis

Aspects of a text which might be examined to identify key "cues"

- Images used
- Type of language used
- Labels and definitions employed
- Explanations offered
- Responsibility assigned
- Solutions proposed
- Narrative structure
- Contextualization and links
- Historical associations invoked
- Similes and metaphors
- Emotional appeals
- Who is invited to comment
- How different speakers are introduced
- How different characters, groups, social movements or entities are described

(Adapted from Kitzinger, 2007, pp.141-142).

Curriculum Vitae

- Name:** Melinda Anne Maika
- Post-secondary Education and Degrees:** The University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario, Canada
2007-2011 B.A.
- Honours and Awards:** The University of Western Ontario
Continuing Admission Scholarship
2007-2011
- The University of Western Ontario
Jana Elise Oldham Award
2010
- Physical and Health Education Canada
PHE Canada Student Award
2010
- The University of Western Ontario
Dean's List
2008-2011
- The University of Western Ontario
Barbara Brown Commemorative Scholarship
2012
- Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC)
Joseph-Armand Bombardier Masters Scholarship
2012-2013
- Related Work Experience** Teaching Assistant
The University of Western Ontario
2011
- Research Assistant
The University of Western Ontario
2012
- Publications:**
Maika, M., & Danylchuk, K. (2014). Reframing media coverage of Paralympic sport in Canada. In Pedersen, P. M., Parks, J. B., Quarterman, J., & Thibault, L. (Eds.), *Contemporary sport management* (5th ed.) (pp. 434-435). Champaign, Ill: Human Kinetics.