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Informing Future Media Approaches: The Perspective of Paralympic Athletes

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine how Paralympic athletes make meaning of discourses of disability within Paralympic media coverage. This involved semi-structured photo-elicitation interviews with eight Canadian Paralympic athletes. A reflexive thematic analysis was used to analyze the data utilizing Foucault's notions of discourse, power and technologies of the self. The findings demonstrate that Paralympic athletes made meaning of the discourses of disability within Paralympic media coverage by drawing on their lived and media experiences. Athletes with more media experience articulated problematizations of dominant discourses of disability in Paralympic media coverage and engagement in technologies of the self. Knowledge generated from this study offers media personnel an informed understanding of how Paralympic athletes understand representations of disability and disability sport. This knowledge may offer insight and inform future media approaches of disability sport and the Paralympic Games.

Keywords

Paralympic, Disability, Media, Representation, Photo-elicitation, Foucault

Summary for Lay Audience

The Paralympic Games are a mega sporting event for elite athletes with impairment. Media coverage of the Paralympic Games has a role in how elite athletes with impairment and disability sport are perceived by the public. In order to understand how media coverage may be a force for positive social change regarding disability, it is essential to understand how Paralympic athletes perceive Paralympic media representation. The purpose of this study was to examine how Paralympic athletes understand representations of disability within Paralympic media coverage of themselves and of other Paralympic athletes. This involved semi-structured photo-elicitation interviews with eight Canadian Paralympic athletes. Knowledge generated from this study offers media personnel an informed understanding of how Paralympic athletes understand representations of disability and disability sport. This knowledge may offer insight and inform future media approaches of disability sport and the Paralympic Games.

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List of Abbreviations, Symbols, Nomenclature

C4 .... Channel 4

CBC .... Canadian Broadcasting Company

ICF .... International Classification of Functioning, Health, and Disability

IOC .... International Olympic Committee

IPC .... International Paralympic Committee

PEI .... Photo Elicitation Interviews

RTA .... Reflexive Thematic Analysis

UPIAS .... Union of Physically Impaired Against Segregation

WHO .... World Health Organization

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Chapter 1

1   Introduction

The Paralympic Games are a mega sporting event for elite athletes with

impairment. Media coverage of the Paralympic Games has a role in how elite athletes

with impairment and disability sport are portrayed and perceived by the public (Hellwege

& Hallmann, 2019; Rees et al., 2019). Disability has historically been represented as a

medical issue where an individual must 'overcome' their impairment in order to achieve

'normalcy' (Beacom et al., 2016). Medicalized discourses of disability often idealize

impaired bodies and give hero status to individuals who are able to 'overcome' their

impairment in order to achieve success (Silva & Howe, 2012). This is the dominant

manner in which disability has been represented by the media and is dominant in

Paralympic media coverage (Rees, Robinson & Shields, 2019). Medicalized discourses of

disability are thereby used by the media to foreground athletes' impairment stories as

human-interest pieces rather than focusing on their athletic achievements (Hodges et al.,

2015). Media that focus on disability first and athletic achievements second affect how

disability sport and disability are consequently understood by society.

Researchers investigating disability sport and the media have focused their

attention on investigating how Paralympic athletes and disability sport are represented by

the media (Beacom et al., 2016; Chang et al., 2011; Goggin & Newell, 2000; Golden,

2003; M. Hardin & Hardin, 2005; Maika & Danylchuk, 2016; Pearson & Misener, 2019;

Pullen et al., 2018; Rees et al., 2018; Thomas & Smith, 2003; Tynedal & Wolbring,

2013). The emancipatory nature of this research has led scholars to argue that

medicalized discourses of disability that dominate media coverage disempower athletes

by framing disability as a problem that requires 'overcoming' in order to achieve success (Rees et al., 2019). Limited research, however, has investigated how Paralympic athletes perceive representations of themselves or of others in general, and the meanings they attribute to such representations. In order to understand how media coverage may be a force for positive social change regarding disability, it is essential to understand how Paralympic athletes perceive Paralympic media representation.

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this research was to examine how Paralympic athletes make meaning of the discourses of disability within Paralympic media coverage. I used Foucault's notions of discourse, power and technologies of the self in order to consider how Paralympic athletes make meaning of the discourses of disability within coverage through engagement (or non-engagement) with technologies of the self. I further examined Paralympic athletes' understandings of the relations of power between themselves and media. Knowledge generated from this research offers media personnel an informed understanding of how Paralympic athletes understand representations of disability and disability sport. This subsequently may offer insight and inform future media approaches of disability sport and the Paralympic Games.

1.2 Terminology

In order to examine the dominant discourses of disability within Paralympic media coverage, we must reflect on how disability has been conceptualized throughout

history. Herein I provide a brief explanation of the basic models of disability, their strengths and limitations, and the terminology chosen for this study.

1.2.1   The Medical Model of Disability

Medicalized discourses of disability predominant in Paralympic media coverage originated from the medical model of disability (Smith & Bundon, 2018). The medical model of disability, sometimes called the individual model of disability, is considered by scholars to be the dominant way that disability is understood by Western society (Areheart, 2008). The medical model of disability is based in biological and physical difference relying on normative categories of 'disabled' and 'non-disabled' bodies. Disability is defined as "any lack of ability resulting from impairment to perform an activity within the range considered normal for a person" (Smith & Bundon, 2018, p. 16). Disability is consequently understood as a medical condition that needs to be 'fixed' in order for a person to be 'normal' (Thomas, 2007). The medical model considers the individual as the locus of disability excluding any social, political or environmental factors that may contribute to the disablement of an individual (Areheart, 2008).

1.2.2   The Social Model of Disability

The social model of disability offers an alternative framework for conceptualizing disability by rejecting medicalized discourses of disability. According to the social model, disability is a product of marginalization from the social environment rather than a product of biological difference (Davis, 1993; Goggin et al., 2003). Disability is

therefore not caused by impairment, but by the social barriers (e.g., attitudinal and structural) that an individual with an impairment faces within their social environment.

The social model was first described by the Union of Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS) in the 1970s who confronted medical model supporters in the United Kingdom (Smith & Bundon, 2018). The disability studies community at large has rejected the medical model of disability and embraced the social model of disability. The social model of disability has been a powerful tool for helping individuals produce social and political change (Smith & Bundon, 2018). The role of impairment in the social model of disability has, however, remained an issue for many people as the social model ignores the lived experience of bodily impairment (Hughes, 2000).

1.2.3   The Biopsychosocial Model of Disability

The biopsychosocial model of disability combines both the medical and social models to form a complete conceptualization of the disability experience (Jette, 2006). The biopsychosocial model of disability is derived from the International Classification of Functioning, Health, and Disability (ICF) Framework developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2001. From this perspective, disability is considered to be 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" (World Health Organization, 2002, p. 9).

For this study, disability is therefore understood as "a comprehensive term that includes the social, cultural, and individual factors that have an impact on the experiences of people with impairment(s)" (Silva & Howe, 2012, p. 36). I will use the terminology

people with impairment, not people with disability as it recognizes disability as a "multi-dimensional phenomenon, of which individual impairment is just a constituent part" (Silva & Howe, 2012, p. 36). The term disability sport is additionally used to refer to "sport that has been specifically designed for and practiced by athletes with [impairment(s)]" (DePauw & Gavron, 2005, p. 8).

1.3   Personal Interest & Positionality

Sport has always played a major role in my life. I am an able-bodied woman and was privileged to have easy access to different sports in my local community and throughout my education. I competed in soccer, basketball and volleyball throughout my childhood and into my adolescent years. My passion for sport is what led me to complete a Kinesiology undergraduate degree at Western University. During my undergraduate studies, I had the privilege to experience many diverse aspects of kinesiology. Nothing, however, impacted me more than my Community Engaged Learning Project working with a disability sports team. The purpose of the Community Engaged Learning project was to help create a sponsorship and social media activation plan for the team. This experience was my first introduction to disability sport at an elite level and to the medicalized discourses of disability portrayed in disability sport media. The athletes shared that they often felt like they had to promote stereotypical discourses of disability to potential sponsors in order to receive funding. The disconnect between the athlete's lived experience and the stereotypical discourses they felt they had to enact in order to gain opportunities in their sport is what sparked my interest in disability sport research. Following this project, I completed a study titled *Canadian Media Representations of*

Para-athletes for the 2016 Paralympic Games (Pearson & Misener, 2019). This study brought to light the current landscape of Paralympic media representation in Canada and provided significant insight for my Master's thesis.

The most important lesson I learned during my fourth-year research project and from the disability studies courses I took was the importance of including individuals with an impairments voice within disability research. The slogan, "nothing about us without us," describes how no decision (e.g., policy, research, etc.) should be decided without the full and direct participation of members of the group affected by that decision (Charlton, 1998). That slogan lays the foundation for my positionality within this research as I recognize myself as an outsider to the Paralympic athlete experience. Paralympic athlete's voices and experiences are central to the discussion of informing future media approaches for the Paralympic Games. My hope is that the findings of this study will provide insight into the media experiences of Paralympic athletes and help to inform future media approaches for the Paralympic Games.

Chapter 2

2   Review of Literature

The following chapter presents a review of literature in order to situate this study within existing research. The first section provides an overview of the history of the Paralympic Games which examines the medicalized origins of disability sport. In the second section, I reflect on how the medicalized origins of disability sport have informed dominant representations of Paralympic athletes and disability sport in the media. The third section explores the struggles media personnel have had in producing Paralympic media coverage in the past and present. The fourth section examines research that has investigated the perspectives of athletes with impairment of disability sport media coverage and the gap in the literature in which this study is situated. The final section of this chapter focuses on the theoretical framework guiding this study, and how drawing on Foucault's notions of discourse, power and technologies of the self, framed my research approach.

2.1   Overview of the History of The Paralympic Games

Medicalized discourses of disability sport dominant in Paralympic media coverage are rooted in the rehabilitative origins of the Paralympic Games in Stoke Mandeville. The Paralympic Games originated from the Stoke Mandeville Games beginning in 1948 at the Stoke Mandeville Hospital in Aylesbury, England (Legg & Steadward, 2011). The origins of disability sport are inherently tied to the medical profession as Doctor Ludwig Guttmann, a German neurologist at Stoke Mandeville Hospital, embraced sport as part of rehabilitative practice for ex-servicemen with spinal

cord injuries (Legg & Steadward, 2011; Wedgwood, 2014). Dr. Guttmann understood disability through the lens of the medical model as he used sport as a tool to restore an individual's physical impairment in order for the individual to successfully integrate back into society (Wedgwood, 2014). Engagement in the Stoke Mandeville Games was viewed by Dr. Guttmann as participation rather than sporting competition (Legg & Steadward, 2011). Participants in the Stoke Mandeville Games were thereby referred to as patients rather than as athletes or competitors in his sporting event (Legg & Steadward, 2011).

The ninth Stoke Mandeville Games were held in 1960 in Rome and are considered to be the first official Paralympic Games (Legg & Steadward, 2011). The first Paralympic Games featured 400 athletes from 23 countries and occurred the same year as the Summer Olympic Games (Legg & Steadward, 2011). The 1980s marked a significant change for the Paralympic movement as it began to formalize its institutions and structure (Howe, 2008a). The International Olympic Committee (IOC) officially approved the name for the Paralympic Games in 1984, and the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) was formed in 1989 (Legg & Steadward, 2011). The first 'modern' Paralympic Games occurred in 1988 in Seoul and was hosted in the same venue and year as the Olympic Games (Howe, 2008a). This was the first time the Olympic and Paralympic Games were hosted alongside one another since 1964. The 1988 Seoul Paralympic Games signified an increase in professionalism of disability sport and marked the beginning of a shift away from medicalized discourses of disability sport (Howe, 2008a). Individuals competing at the Paralympic Games began to be seen as athletes competing in an elite sporting competition rather than patients participating in rehabilitative exercise (Howe, 2008a).

The 2000 Paralympic Games in Sydney marked the first occurrence where both the Olympic and Paralympic Games were marketed together as one entity (Howe, 2008a). The partnership formed between the IPC and IOC helped shift the Paralympic movement into its current form as an elite mega sporting competition (Howe, 2008a). The Sydney Paralympic Games broke all tickets sales and were covered by 2300 accredited members of the media (Howe, 2008a; Legg & Steadward, 2011). The success of the Sydney Paralympic Games led other news organizations to make efforts to view Paralympic sport more seriously (Goggin & Hutchins, 2017). The success of the Sydney Paralympic Games also sparked an uptake in the number of researchers interested in examining media representations of the Paralympic Games and of Paralympic athletes (Rees et al., 2019).

2.2 Media Representations of Paralympic Athletes

Medicalized discourses of disability in Paralympic media coverage are evident of the historical origins of the Paralympic Games. The formation of the Paralympic Games by able-bodied medical professionals and sport administrators has had long lasting effects on the way Paralympic sport is covered by the media. Medicalized discourses of disability reinforce ableist norms as researchers have found evident in the language, visual images and location of content media personnel used to depict Paralympic athletes (Beacom et al., 2016; Chang et al., 2011; Goggin & Newell, 2000; Golden, 2003; M. Hardin & Hardin, 2005; Howe, 2011; Maika & Danylchuk, 2016; Pearson & Misener, 2019; Pullen et al., 2018; Rees et al., 2018; Silva & Howe, 2012; Thomas & Smith, 2003; Tynedal & Wolbring, 2013).

Researchers have found that a hierarchy exists in representation of disability and extends to an individual's impairment, sport and gender (Haller, 2000; Pearson & Misener, 2019; Quinn & Yoshida, 2016). According to DePauw (1997), sporting bodies are constructed based on dominant understandings of physicality, sexuality and masculinity. For example, DePauw (1997) explained the hierarchy of disability in relation to a male wheelchair athlete as having more coverage due to society's ableist understandings of sport as a space for masculinity and physicality. The most covered disability sports are those that are also popular in able-bodied sports such as rugby and basketball. In wheelchair rugby and wheelchair basketball, male athletes are able to reinforce their masculinity by demonstrating toughness and physicality of the sport (DePauw, 1997). On a spectrum of impairment, athletes that are 'more' able, male, and who compete in mainstream sports have received more Paralympic media coverage (Rees et al., 2019). This group of athletes are able to reap the social rewards of their involvement in sport as they reinforce dominant understandings of physicality, masculinity and sexuality. Paralympic media coverage has therefore been dominated by a single perception of the impaired body (Quinn & Yoshida, 2016). This singular type of representation does not reflect the diversity of the Paralympic community as female athletes, athletes of lesser known sports, and athletes who are 'less' able have received less coverage.

Paralympic athletes who are represented by the media are most commonly portrayed as a supercrip (Crow, 2014; Ellis, 2009; Goggin & Newell, 2000; B. Hardin & Hardin, 2003; Howe, 2011; Pullen et al., 2018; Silva & Howe, 2012; Tynedal & Wolbring, 2013). The supercrip narrative reinforces medicalized discourses of disability

by framing disability as an individual problem that a person must 'overcome' in order to achieve success (Silva & Howe, 2012). Paralympic athletes are thereby represented by media as heroic for their ability to 'overcome' their impairment by participating in the Paralympic Games. Marketing campaigns over the last decade have focused on representing athletes as 'superhumans' to sell the games to the broader audience. For example, Beijing's *Superatleta* campaign in 2008, the United Kingdom's *Meet the Superhumans* campaign in 2012 and *We're the Superhumans* in 2016, and Canada's *#Paratough* Campaign in 2016. The supercrip narrative celebrates Paralympic athletes as superhumans for 'overcoming' their impairment and perpetuates the idea that all individuals with impairment who try hard enough can 'overcome' their impairment too. The reinforcement of ableism and downplaying of the bodily experience of impairment for Paralympic athletes misrepresents and further distances the experience of athletes from the everyday lived experiences of those with impairment (Silva & Howe, 2012). Ultimately, the supercrip narrative marginalizes those in society who do not have the capacity, resources or desire to achieve 'superhuman' status (Silva & Howe, 2012).

Ableist norms are additionally reinforced by media personnel's comparisons of Paralympic athletes and able-bodied athletes, fixation on athletes who use technologies, and exclusion of impairment from visual representation (Bruce, 2014; Crow, 2014; Golden, 2003; Howe, 2011; Pearson & Misener, 2019; Schell & Rodriguez, 2001; Thomas & Smith, 2003). Researchers investigating visual representations of Paralympic athletes have found that ableism is commonly reinforced by media erasing disability from visual images (Bruce, 2014; Crow, 2014; Pearson & Misener, 2019; Schell & Rodriguez, 2001). Pearson and Misener (2019) found that visual images in Paralympic media

coverage favoured athletes who were 'more' able than other athletes. For example, media favoured visual images of athletes who used technologies (e.g., wheelchairs or prosthetics) and whose impairment was almost invisible from visual representation (e.g., athletes who are 'more' able). Visual representations additionally reinforced dominant discourses of disability by primarily featuring athletes in passive positions (Pearson & Misener, 2019).

2.3   Media Personnel and Paralympic Media Coverage

Media personnel's tendency to reflect a hierarchy of disability showcases an effort to provide audiences with palatable, ableist understandings of disability sport and the body (Purdue & Howe, 2012). These ableist types of representation may be reflective of media personnel's struggle to understand dominant discourses of disability when covering Paralympic sport (Howe, 2008b; Purdue & Howe, 2012). For example, researchers have found that most media personnel responsible for covering Paralympic Games in the past have had little to no experience with disability or knowledge of disability sport (Howe, 2008b; Misener, 2013). Scholars have found that journalists attribute a lower status to covering Paralympic sport by repeatedly framing the Paralympics as unimportant, lesser and not 'true' sporting competition (Golden, 2003; Thomas & Smith, 2009).

After the success of the 2000 Paralympic Games, media personnel began to address the "deeply embedded journalistic practices and perceptions, such as news values, the role of the journalist, approach to sources, and audience appeal and interest" of covering Paralympic sport (Goggin & Hutchins, 2017, p. 226). Golden (2003) found in

her examination of Paralympic journalists that media personnel were trying to write in an enlightened manner about the discourses of disability. The journalists wanted to cover the Paralympic Games as elite sporting competition and feature disabilities a secondary issue (Golden, 2003). It was not until the 2012 Paralympic Games in London, however, that media personnel's mentality began to shift about covering the Paralympic Games (Pullen et al., 2018). Since the 2012 Paralympic Games in London, broadcasting networks such as Channel 4 (C4) in the United Kingdom and the Canadian Broadcasting Company (CBC) in Canada have recognized and worked towards improving Paralympic media coverage (Beacom et al., 2016; CBC Media Centre, 2017; Pullen et al., 2018). This has primarily been achieved by voicing a dedication to providing not only greater media coverage, but by providing empowering coverage that focuses on athleticism first and foremost (Beacom et al., 2016; CBC Media Centre, 2017; Pullen et al., 2018). Scholars have observed an improvement in the amount and value the media has placed on covering Paralympic sport by predominantly focusing on athletic achievement in coverage (Maika & Danylchuk, 2016; Pearson & Misener, 2019; Pullen et al., 2018). For example, researchers investigating Canadian media representations of the 2012 and 2016 Paralympic Games found that Canadian media companies have primarily represented Paralympic athletes as athletes (Maika & Danylchuk, 2016; Pearson & Misener, 2019). According to Pearson and Misener (2019), this was demonstrated by media personnel referring to the sporting events as competitions, focusing on the dedication and training of the athlete, and by reporting on the results and athletic accomplishments.

Despite the positive shift, medicalized discourses of disability have remained prevalent in media coverage as media personnel have focused on the supercrip,

overcoming, and comparison narratives depicting the participation of a Paralympic athlete at the Paralympic Games (Maika & Danylchuk, 2016; Pearson & Misener, 2019). Ableist and gendered representations have also remained prominent within Canadian media coverage as media personnel would depict a Paralympic athlete as an athlete in text, but erase their disability within visual representation (Pearson & Misener, 2019). Finally, Pearson and Misener (2019) found that male and female Paralympic athletes had almost equal representation within articles. The content of the articles for female Paralympic athletes, however, represented female Paralympians in a uni-dimensional view of the self. For example, male athletes were described as competitors, fathers, husbands, using descriptive language. Where female Paralympic athletes were described in the absence of descriptive language highlighting their physicality or sexuality.

The tension demonstrated by media companies voicing a dedication to producing empowering coverage yet depicting Paralympic athletes using medicalized discourses of disability can be understood as the Paralympic Paradox. Purdue and Howe (2012) coined the term the Paralympic Paradox to describe such tensions that exist in the media representation of disability. If Paralympic athletes are portrayed in a way that focuses on their athletic success and not their disability, this could be perceived as empowering for individuals with impairment who may or may not be physically active. At the same time, Paralympic athletes are desired by a disabled audience to be represented as a role model within the disability community by foregrounding their disability in representation. Purdue and Howe (2012) found that Paralympic stakeholders expressed the complexities of navigating the Paralympic Paradox. The authors found that some stakeholders believed that the media should focus only on the sport and not the disability, others believed that

the focus of media coverage should be on both the sport and the disability (Purdue & Howe, 2012).

2.4   Paralympic Athletes Perspectives of Media Coverage

The aforementioned literature demonstrates the complex and multiple discourses Paralympic athletes are confronted by in Paralympic media. The literature highlights the tensions experienced by the media and Paralympic stakeholders who are trying to navigate the complexities of disability sport coverage. The voice of Paralympic athletes who are represented in the media and their perspectives of media coverage has, however, been largely absent from research. Researchers have primarily used content analysis (Beacom et al., 2016; Chang et al., 2011; M. Hardin & Hardin, 2005; Rees et al., 2018; Thomas & Smith, 2003; Tynedal & Wolbring, 2013) and frames analysis (Maika & Danylchuk, 2016; Misener, 2013; Pearson & Misener, 2019) in order to examine Paralympic media coverage. Researchers employing a content analysis of Paralympic media coverage have often focused on evaluating the quantity of coverage across print media and television outlets. For example, investigating the frequency of content (e.g., number of times athletes were mentioned), the location of such content in print media, and the discourses of disability used. Scholars conducting a frames analysis of Paralympic media representation examined "the ways in which society shapes, and is shaped by, framing devices such as word choice, metaphors, exemplars, descriptions, and visual images" (Misener, 2013, p. 348). Both types of research are crucial for understanding where and how Paralympic athletes have been represented in Paralympic media coverage and the broader social effects that may imply.

Limited research has considered athletes with impairment perspectives of disability sport and in particular Paralympic media coverage. The few studies that have investigated this topic have predominantly used in-depth interviews (Brittain, 2004; B. Hardin & Hardin, 2003; Marques et al., 2014) with the exception of one study that employed photo elicitation methodology (Hargreaves & Hardin, 2009). The studies were conducted in the United Kingdom (Brittain, 2004), United States (B. Hardin & Hardin, 2003; Hargreaves & Hardin, 2009), and Brazil (Marques et al., 2014).

In the United Kingdom, Brittain (2004) examined Paralympic athletes who competed at the 2000 Paralympic Games perceptions of Paralympic media coverage of the 2000 Paralympic Games. Brittain (2004) found that Paralympic athletes were unhappy with the overall lack of Paralympic media coverage and content of Paralympic media coverage. Paralympic athletes perceived to be represented using medicalized discourses of disability and "as objects of pity" (Brittain, 2004, p. 447). Hardin and Hardin's (2003) study used in-depth interviews in order to investigate American male wheelchair basketball players perceptions of disability sport media. The scholars found that the majority of male athletes were desensitized to the way that the media ignores athletes with impairment and all athletes enjoyed both mainstream sports and disability sport media (B. Hardin & Hardin, 2003). Hargreaves and Hardin (2009) further explored the perceptions of American female wheelchair athletes' perspectives of both mainstream and disability print and web-based sport media. The scholars used auto-driven interviews with artifacts (e.g., print and web-based media, a copy of a recent issue of the Sports n' Spokes magazine) to provoke participants perceptions (Hargreaves & Hardin, 2009). Hargreaves and Hardin (2009) also gave participants money to purchase their favourite

print sports media to bring to the interview and asked each athlete to identify their favourite sport media website. The scholars found that female wheelchair athletes did not like sexualized representations of female athletes in mainstream media, or the supercrip representation within disability sport media (Hargreaves & Hardin, 2009). The athletes further argued that both mainstream and disability sport media should depict women as dominant athletes and disabilities should be shown more as a whole (Hargreaves & Hardin, 2009).

A more recent study conducted by Marques et al., (2014) used in-depth interviews to investigate Brazilian Paralympic athletes' perceptions of Brazilian Paralympic media coverage. The scholars found that there was a lack of consensus about how to appropriately represent Paralympic athletes and disability sport. For example, some Paralympic athletes wanted more representation in terms of comparing the success of both Olympic and Paralympic athletes in media coverage. Other Paralympic athletes, however, cautioned the media from doing this by arguing that Olympic and Paralympic athletes should not be compared to one another in representation. Athletes believed that there are too many specific differences between the sports that it would not make sense to compare them. The authors argued that the type of representation media personnel use to represent Paralympic athletes can have different consequences for individuals with impairment regarding their inclusion as full citizens within society (Marques et al., 2014).

Furthermore, the work of Howe (2008b; 2011) and Peers (2009; 2012) are important as they provide perspective regarding media coverage and disability sport as both scholars and retired Paralympians. Howe (2008b; 2011) and Peers (2009; 2012) have tended to reject the use of dominant discourses within media coverage. For

example, by arguing how medicalized discourses of disability homogenize disability experiences resulting in the loss of an opportunity for media to "acknowledge the pervasiveness of difference" (Silva & Howe, 2012, p. 191). Peers (2012) further called on members of the disability sport community to stop reproducing and accepting dominant discourses of disability and for members to begin participating "in de-composing the stories, cultures and industries that disable" (p. 186).

The aforementioned literature demonstrates that there are conflicting findings about how athletes with impairment perceive representations of disability and sport in disability sport media coverage. Limited research has investigated how Paralympic athletes perceive representations of themselves and the meanings they attribute to such representations. This study seeks to expand understanding beyond whether or not Paralympic athletes like or dislike certain representations. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine how Paralympic athletes make meaning of discourses of disability in Paralympic media coverage.

2.5   Theoretical Framework

This study is informed by Foucault's notions of discourse, power and technologies of the self. I chose to draw on Foucault's notions of discourse, power and technologies of the self in order to, first understand the history and current landscape of medicalized discourses of disability perpetuated in Paralympic media coverage. Second, this approach offers the opportunity to explore the relations of power between Paralympic athletes and the media. Finally, I acknowledged that Foucault's ideas would enable me to consider disability sport media research by examining how Paralympic athletes make

meaning of discourses of disability presented within coverage of themselves and of other athletes through engagement (or non-engagement) with technologies of the self.

Foucault's notions of discourse and power provide a foundation for understanding dominant discourses of disability depicted in Paralympic media coverage. According to Foucault, discourse refers to ways of thinking and speaking about aspects of reality (Cheek, 2008). Discourse functions to order reality in different ways (Cheek, 2008). Foucault (1978) argued that discourse produces forms of knowledge, objects and subjects, and that nothing meaningful exists outside of discourse. Foucault believed "that we can only have knowledge of things if they have meaning, it is discourse – not the things-in-themselves – which produces knowledge" (Wetherell et al., 2001, p. 73). Power and knowledge are therefore joined together in discourse (Foucault, 1978).

Understanding how Paralympic athletes make meaning of the discourses of disability in the media is a result of how Paralympic athletes understand themselves as subjects of media power relations. According to Foucault (1978), power is not a possession that can be acquired or held. Power is constantly in motion and is best understood as a relationship between subjects (Foucault, 1978). Institutions such as media consortiums are understood to 'naturally' hold power, but Foucault believed that institutions only represent the final form that power takes (Foucault, 1978). Dominant institutions do not arrive at their position because they have power, but rather they become influential because of the contingent workings of discourse (Markula & Pringle,

2006). For example, the media is able to reinforce what is constituted as 'normal' within society through the workings of discourse (Markula & Pringle, 2006).

There are a number of discursive frames for any given subject, however, not all discourses are given equal value in society. Dominant discourses represented in media coverage inform what typical, idealized behaviour, function and/or bodily aesthetic should look like. For example, the dominant discourse of disability is a product of historical, medicalized practices, which use discourse to frame disability as an issue that must be 'overcome' in order for an individual to achieve success (Beacom et al., 2016). Medicalized discourses of disability used by the media reinforce what type of bodies belong in sport and thereby define what 'normal' sporting practice should look like.

Foucault in his later work adopted a model of power that more effectively allowed for resistance. Power is conceptualized to be both productive and constitutive rather than only destructive. In his second volume of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault (1985) became specifically interested in subjectification. According to Foucault, understanding the self is called subjectification and is the process by which individuals "think about themselves, act for themselves, and transform themselves within power relations" (Rail & Harvey, 1995, p. 167). Subjectification can be realized through technologies of the self (Foucault, 1988). Certain conditions apply to this, however, the first step of technologies of the self involves an individual gaining the ability to problematize their identity and the discourses that govern him/her (Foucault, 1982). Problematizations is considered to be how a critically self-aware individual questions what seems 'natural' and 'inevitable' in their identity (Markula, 2003). Foucault (1984) was interested in how individuals learn to problematize their identities by becoming more self-reflexive as critical thought is central

to Foucault's understandings of technologies of the self. Once an individual has engaged in critical self-awareness, they may engage in technologies of the self (Foucault, 1988). Technologies of the self "permit individuals to effect by their own means a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being" which transforms individuals to attain a certain state of happiness (Markula, 2003, p. 88). Technologies of the self can act as practices of freedom, which can potentially be used to transform individuals within power relations (Foucault, 1988).

The majority of studies that have drawn on Foucault's technologies of the self in sport sociology research have applied a feminist approach. Markula's (2003) Foucauldian feminist approach in particular laid the foundation for subsequent investigations (Hardin, 2011; Markula, 2004; Spowart et al., 2010; Thorpe, 2008). Some of these investigations examined aesthetics of ethical self-stylization and ethical self-care (Markula, 2004; Spowart et al., 2010). While others focused specifically on critical self-awareness and practices of freedom of their participants (Hardin, 2011; Thorpe, 2008). Similar to Hardin (2011) and Thorpe (2008) this study focuses on Paralympic athletes problematizations and engagement in technologies of the self. Hardin (2011) examined a collective who blog about women's sports and found that female bloggers felt blogging facilitated their awareness and engagement with feminist issues. Thorpe (2008) examined female snowboarder's understandings of dominant discourses of femininity in snowboarding media representation. Thorpe (2008) found that sexist discourses in snowboarding media were not inherently oppressive as the effect of sexist discourses was dependant on the discursive lens through which female snowboarders read them. Thorpe (2008) found that:

The more snowboarding experience and cultural knowledge an individual has, the more likely he or she is to develop the ability to weigh up the competing versions of femininity on offer in the snowboarding culture and problematize some of these [discourses] (pp. 214-215).

The more experienced a professional female snowboarder was, the more likely she was to develop a critical self-awareness of dominant discourses of sexism and engage in practices of freedom. Furthermore, Thorpe (2008) argued that "the likelihood of a female boarder developing such a consciousness is highly dependent on both her life (e.g., education, parental and peer influences, generation, and occupation) and her snowboarding experiences" (p. 223). Thorpe (2008) found that those committed, experienced female snowboarders drew on 'reverse discourses' to negate the effect of overly sexualized images in snowboarding media. For example, female snowboarders differentiated themselves from 'skanky' and 'dirty' female models in snowboarding advertisements claiming they are not 'real' snowboarders. According to Foucault (1978), reverse discourses are those discourses that challenge the fundamental assumptions of a dominant discourse. Reverse discourses cannot reverse or overturn a dominant discourse, but rather represent a point of resistance for individuals engaging in reverse discourses in a repetitive manner (Butler, 1995; Foucault, 1978). Reverse discourses use the same or similar vocabulary as a dominant discourse but produce an opposing strategy or social effect (Foucault, 1978).

The aforementioned literature demonstrates that Paralympic athletes are confronted by multiple and competing discourses within Paralympic media representation depending on their impairment, sport and gender. How Paralympic athletes read

Paralympic media coverage and make meaning of discourses of disability is informed by the broader social context. Engagement with technologies of the self is therefore not meant to liberate a 'true self'. It is an "attempt to build a certain a type of identity within the relations of power by using one's own power ethically" (Markula & Pringle, 2006, p. 143). Utilizing Foucault's notions of discourse, power and technologies of the self can assist in understanding how Paralympic athletes make meaning of the discourses of disability within coverage through engagement (or non-engagement) with technologies of the self.

Chapter 3

3 Methods

For this study, I employed a qualitative design utilizing photo elicitation methodology. Photo elicitation interviews (PEI) were chosen for this study in order to help invoke deeper conversations with participants about their perceptions of their own Paralympic media representation. Utilizing this type of methodology is valuable because a PEI can be adapted in a variety of ways to best suit the specific needs of a study (Harper, 2002). A PEI can be participant-driven where participants provide the photographs to be used in the study (Bates et al., 2017). This type of PEI often uses open ended questions allowing the photos selected by the participants to guide the interview (Bates et al., 2017). PEI's can also be researcher-driven meaning that the researcher provides the photos used within the interview process as a tool to prompt discussions (Bates et al., 2017). Researcher-driven PEI's use photos to invoke discussion in the course of a semi-structured interview (Bates et al., 2017). There is no set number of photos that must be included in a PEI (Harper, 2002). The method of PEI used, and number of photos included is determined by the researcher. For this study, I chose to use researcher-driven PEI's following a semi-structured interview format with the option for participants to include their own text/visuals from media coverage in the interview. This allowed for participants to have a choice in the data discussed during their interviews and to help understand participants perspectives (Hatten et al., 2013).

3.1   Participants and Sampling

Participants were recruited for this study via their national sport governing bodies where the request to participate was distributed to the athlete by a coach and/or high-performance coordinator. Paralympic athletes who were contacted for participation had been featured in at least three online articles from Canadian national media companies since the 2012 Paralympic Games in London. This included Paralympic athletes who had competed at the 2012 Paralympic Games up until the most recent Winter Paralympic Games in 2018. The 2012 Paralympic Games were chosen as the starting point for athlete recruitment based off of the notable increase in interest and shift in approach for covering the Paralympic Games (Beacom et al., 2016; CBC Media Centre, 2017; Pullen et al., 2018). Paralympic athletes who were interested in participating in the study were asked to contact the researcher directly.

The result of this recruitment process was a sample of eight Paralympic athletes (four females and four males). For reasons of confidentiality, I have not provided a table of participant demographics. The Canadian Paralympic sport community is small, and participants could easily be identified if this information were disclosed. The sample, however, was diverse in terms of age, impairment, sport and number of Paralympic Games competed at. The sample included a mix of both summer and winter Paralympic athletes and both individual and team sports. Six out of the eight participants competed in different sports. All participants had a least one Paralympic Games experience between 2012 to 2018 with some athletes having additional Paralympic Games experience prior to the 2012 Paralympic Games.

3.2 Procedure

I created a portfolio of Canadian media articles, including text and visuals, for each Paralympic athlete's PEI. The portfolio included a minimum of three online media articles (text/visuals) written about the Paralympic athlete from one or more of the three major national media companies in Canada: CBC, the Globe and Mail, and/or the National Post's online webpages. All three sources are Canadian media companies providing Canadians with national Paralympic media coverage.

Once an interview date and time was scheduled with the participant, I manually searched all three Canadian media sources online within the specific timeframe (2012 onwards) for articles (text/visuals) of the participant. The initial search between the three media companies for all of the participants resulted in a total of $n = 184$ articles. All articles were next reviewed and articles not relevant to the study were removed. The articles considered not relevant were articles outside of the timeframe, did not prominently feature the athlete in the article (e.g., their name was mentioned in passing) and/or were videos or audio clips with no text. In total, this process resulted in $n = 94$ articles. Next, I employed a deductive coding analysis utilizing Paralympic media representation research by Pearson and Misener (2019) who analysed dominant mediated discourses of disability in Canadian Paralympic media coverage. Pearson and Misener (2019) found that the dominant frames used by media to depict Paralympic athletes for the 2016 Paralympic Games were: the athletic frame (e.g., represented as an athlete first), the stereotypical frame (e.g., the supercrip, overcoming and comparison narratives), the informative frame (e.g., educational and players own voice pieces) and the multi-dimensional frame (e.g., focus on roles with family, friends and life outside of sport).

This step was completed in order to present the participants with a portfolio that was reflective of the multiple discourses that Paralympic athletes are confronted by within their representation.

At least three coded articles (text/visuals) were selected for the participant's specific media portfolio. The portfolio was set to a minimum of three articles to ensure the participant could speak to an array of experiences interacting with and being featured by media. The average portfolio size was $n = 4$ texts and $n = 7$ visual images. This range in portfolio size was relevant to the number of articles to be selected from, the sources that had online articles about the participant and/or the variety of discourses presented. Table 1 provides a summary of discourses reflected in each participant's portfolio as a result of the coding process. A detailed summary of the analysis is presented in Appendix A.

Table 1. Summary of Participants Portfolios

Name	Total # of Articles	Athletic	Stereotypical	Informative	Multi-Dimensional
Trent	6	3	3		
Rafael	3	1	2		
Tricia	4	1	2	1	
Lance	4	1	2	1	
Janice	4	1	1	2	
Michelle	5	2	2		1
Carlo	4	3		1	
Caroline	3	1	1	1	

Note. Pseudonyms were used in order to protect participant's privacy in this study.

Once the portfolio was completed, the portfolio was emailed to the participant a week prior to their PEI. This step allowed the participant time for reflection prior to the interview and the option to select additional articles (text/visuals) to be included. All participants were reminded of this option during the PEI and reminded that they may email the researcher post interview with any additional article(s) (text/visuals). The total number of articles selected by the researcher for all of the participant's portfolios was $n = 33$ texts which included $n = 58$ visual images within the articles. One article (e.g., one text and three visual images) was sent to the researcher to be included in the participant's portfolio during their interview. The total number of articles including the articles sent to the researcher was $n = 34$ texts and $n = 61$ visual images.

A single, PEI was completed with each participant. PEI's were offered to be completed in person or via Zoom Web Conferencing in order to accommodate the participant's schedule. All interviews were completed via Zoom Web Conferencing as per the participant's requests. Verbal consent was obtained from the participants after reviewing the letter of information and having all questions answered to their satisfaction prior to the interview. The participants were reminded throughout the interview process that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time. The PEI followed a semi-structured format detailed in the interview guide in Appendix B. The interview began with conversation about participants perspectives of Paralympic media coverage in general. This was followed by the photo elicitation component where the researcher and participant discussed the portfolio of their media representation. Questions in this section began with asking for general likes or dislikes of the specific article (text/visual) and letting the participant guide the conversation from there. This prompted in-depth

discussions and reflections which helped to highlight the voice of the participants rather than the researcher asking specific questions about each article. This additionally helped to move the conversation beyond simple likes or dislikes of representation into deeper reflections about why that was the case. Following the completion of the photo elicitation section, the researcher prompted questions about participants problematizations of discourses of disability in media coverage and the possibility of engagement in technologies of the self. The audio recorded PEI's lasted between 30 to 90 minutes in length and were transcribed verbatim.

3.3 Data Analysis

A reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) was used to analyze the data (Braun et al., 2016; Braun & Clarke, 2019). RTA was chosen for this study because it is a flexible method which allowed the researcher to analyze the data both inductively and deductively (e.g., theoretically) at times while also considering the researcher's own position within the study (e.g., reflexively). Data analysis was therefore not only based on the verbal and visual data set, but also guided by Foucault's notions of discourse, power and technologies of the self. This method of analysis allowed the researcher to work back and forth through Braun and Clarke's (2019) six phases of conducting thematic analysis recursively.

The first phase of Braun and Clarke's (2019) thematic analysis framework is data familiarization which involved writing notes of initial ideas. This was completed by the researcher listening and relistening to audio recordings of the interviews in addition to reading and re-reading the transcripts. The second phase of RTA was generating initial

data codes which involved coding segments of the data set that were interesting to the researcher and were relevant to the objectives of the study. I manually coded extracts of the data by systematically working through each transcript line by line identifying aspects of the data relevant to the research question. Codes were written beside the text on the transcripts and matched with data extracts during this process. Once the initial codes were generated, I uploaded the transcripts to NVivo for ease of organization. I created mind maps in NVivo throughout the data analysis process in order to help interpretation and visualization of the data. A mind map of the initial codes generated is demonstrated in Appendix D.

The third phase of analysis involved generating initial themes based on the clustering of codes that shared meaning related to a central organizing concept. Mind maps of the initial themes generated are displayed in Appendix E. The central point in the mind map demonstrates the central organizing concept or initial theme generated. The child points following the central organizing concept represent the clustering of codes that shared meaning to that concept. Five initial themes were generated in this process. It is important to recognize in this third phase that themes are not passive and did not emerge from the data set. This third phase was an active process where themes were considered analytic outputs developed through the coding process. According to Braun and Clarke (2019), "themes are creative and interpretive stories about the data, produced at the intersection of the researcher's theoretical assumptions, their analytic resources and skill, and the data themselves" (p. 594). The aim was to generate themes from codes that shared meaning in order to 'say something' about the data pertinent to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

The fourth phase of RTA involved reviewing and refining the generated themes in relation to the data set. At this time, my supervisor reviewed the initial coding and themes generated in order to ensure interrater reliability. Next, we reviewed the themes together and agreed on how to refine the generated themes. The five initial themes were refined into three final themes used for this study. Appendix F provides a display of how the initial generated themes were reviewed and refined into the final themes used. In the fifth phase, themes were defined and named in order to understand the themes scope and boundaries and how the themes fit into the overall 'story' of the research. The final sixth phase of analysis involved writing up the report (e.g., this article). I drew on Braun and Clarke's (2019) recommendations for quality RTA by providing a concise (e.g., not too many or too little themes), nonrepetitive (e.g., each theme has its own scope and boundaries), and interesting account of the story (e.g., the themes work together to tell a story of the research). For example, I aimed to include a good balance between analytic narrative and data extracts through the presentation of findings.

Chapter 4

4 Results

Utilizing PEI's as my approach helped to promote deeper discussions of the participant's media experience. My discussions with participants resulted in some laughter, frustrations and reflections about their media experience. One participant sent an article to be included in their portfolio during the interview. The participant and I were able to discuss what they specifically liked about this article and why they wanted to include it. All interviewees felt that the portfolio created represented their media presence and no participants sent any additional articles to discuss post interview.

Three themes were generated as a result of the RTA: the media experience, proportionate representation, and reflections of themselves versus others. The first theme, 'the media experience,' describes both Paralympic athlete's experience of interacting with media personnel as well as their experience of consuming Paralympic media coverage (e.g., coverage of themselves or Paralympic sport in general). The second theme, 'proportionate representation,' describes Paralympic athlete's call for an increase in the quantity and quality of representation that is equal to able-bodied sport. The third theme, 'reflections of themselves versus others,' describes Paralympic athlete's reflections of the discourses of disability within the representations. It also includes their reflections of how other Paralympic athletes and/or the public may understand discourses of disability within Paralympic media coverage.

4.1   The Media Experience

All interviewees reflected on how their perspective of Paralympic media coverage has changed over the past decade from a negative to a mostly positive perception. The understanding of what constituted a positive versus negative perception was based on the participant's lived experience of interacting with media personal and as a consumer of Paralympic media coverage.

4.1.1   Interactions with Media Personnel

All interviewees described having primarily positive experiences interacting with media personnel. A positive experience was described as working with media personnel who were prepared, knowledgeable about the athlete's history and treated the athlete like an athlete. For example, 'Michelle' described her positive experience with Canadian media personnel by stating:

> The difference with [Canadian media company] is that they kind of know what they're talking about. Every time we meet with them or if they call me, they know who they are talking to. They know what I did, and they know what question to ask. Where other reporters from other media, they don't know who I am and it's like they'd been assigned this.

Interviewees who had positive experiences with media considered themselves to have a working relationship with certain media personnel. 'Janice' described her positive working relationship with a Canadian journalist by stating that "he's prepared, he's on the ball, he hits it out of the park, and he comes at you with great questions too. He knows his stuff and he's fantastic." Janice attributed her positive media experience to media

personnel who were prepared for their interviews by "doing the legwork and a bit of the research so that [they] know the person [they're] interviewing." 'Tricia' described her positive relationship with media personnel onsite at the Paralympic Games. She enjoyed her working relationship with media personnel onsite because "you got to know the announcers, they interviewed you well enough that you felt like you got to know them."

Interviewees perceived their experience interacting with the media to be positive if they felt that media personnel respected them as an athlete. 'Lance,' a Paralympic athlete with a severe impairment, described the importance of media personnel treating a Paralympic athlete as an athlete. He reflected on his positive experience with particularly knowledgeable media personnel stating, "they don't talk down to us because we're Paralympic athletes. I've got a pretty severe disability so I've never felt that that they're judging me on the fact that I might not have the shape of an Olympic athlete." A negative experience with media personnel was considered to be with media who had no knowledge of or saw any value in covering the Paralympic Games. For example, Michelle expressed her frustration of being interviewed by media personnel who did not understand her impairment or disability sport. She stated, "you can tell in the first minute. I'm missing a [limb] and reporters ask me how I don't [move] in circles…so I know right away that they have no clue." Some interviewees highlighted that it is not only reporters who have to see the value in covering Paralympic sport, but the entire media team responsible for covering the Paralympic Games. Janice described an experience where a reporter told her how they liked covering Paralympic sport, "but [they] can't get it past [their] editor." According to Janice, the reporter stated, "my editor has no interest in covering it." A positive media experience therefore goes beyond a media personnel's

education and training of Paralympic sport, but also extends to whether media personnel genuinely see the value and merit in covering Paralympic sport.

4.1.2   Consuming Paralympic Media Coverage

Participant's interactions with media personnel affected how interviewees perceived Paralympic media representation. Interviewees described a positive shift in their interactions with media personnel over the past decade which helped to contribute to positive experiences of consuming Paralympic media coverage. For example, 'Trent' described how he has seen "a lot of progression in just the amount of exposure of the Paralympic sport and things that opportunities we are getting." He stated how he has noticed a shift in the quality of interviews over the past decade away from "your typical interview" that simply asks question such as "what is [your sport] and tell us about yourself." To interviews where media personnel "understand the sport and get into kind of the x's and o's and those sorts of things" going beyond the simple introduction type questions. Interviewees appreciated articles that went beyond what 'Carlo' called "the cycle of re-introducing the media" in which "every four years it was like, hey, who are you again?" Carlo explained that, "this is my [blank number of] games and there obviously would never be an article like this about Sidney Crosby. 'Sidney Crosby was born in Nova Scotia and so on'… I get it. But they have to tell people who I am over and over again." Some interviewees noted that the constant re-introduction of athletes to media personnel and being re-introduced within media coverage is reflective of the lack of quantity and diversity of disability sport coverage outside of the Paralympic Games. The lack in diversity of content contributed to interviewees lower perceptions of articles

that focused on re-introductions. Interviewees felt that only featuring that one type of article did not truly reflect the diversity or depth of disability sport coverage.

The positive shift in perception of Paralympic media coverage over the past decade was most evident in Michelle's interview and reflections of her portfolio. The first article we discussed together was from five years ago and the article portrayed her as a superhero arguing that her success was attributed to her overcoming her impairment. She stated, "I don't like how much there's the attention to the fact that I'm missing [a limb] and that's why I'm winning." As we went through the next few articles in her portfolio, she discussed how she has noticed the shift away from this type of discourse in Canadian media coverage to a focus on athleticism. She stated:

> That's something that I know has changed even over the last decade. For example, that doesn't happen often anymore. Where now it's more, they kind of leave that on the side. It's more about an athlete who won a medal for Canada rather than one missing [a limb] and inspiring others kind of thing.

The final article we discussed in her portfolio was published in 2020 and focused on a sport event outside of the Paralympic Games. We both noted this as something positive to see in terms of an increase in the diversity of disability sport coverage beyond the Paralympic Games.

Michelle had the most coverage out of all Paralympic athletes interviewed so her media experience provided a snapshot of the multiple discourses she has been confronted with as a well-represented Paralympic athlete. Michelle's reflections of her media experience were initially positive; however, through our discussion, she reflected on multiple negative media experiences that have frustrated and left her annoyed. She

described being frustrated when media personnel framed her as a superhero or used the overcoming narrative to describe her success. She rejected the use of both of those discourses in her reflections by describing how she wanted her success to be focused on her athleticism and dedication to sport. The constant comparisons between herself and able-bodied athletes as media personnel fixated on comparing her success to able-bodied athletes was also problematic for her. She described her frustration simply as, "why isn't [able-bodied athlete name] me 2.0, why am I [able-bodied athlete name] 2.0. I'm not [able-bodied athlete name] 2.0 thanks." Finally, Michelle was also confronted by discourses of gender in her interactions with media personnel. Whether that was media personnel making comments to her such as "if you don't win, at least you're gonna win for the best smile." She also noted irrelevant gendered questions such as being asked how she will be able to take care of a man if she is so busy with her sport.

Michelle's ability to speak to a variety of media experiences was evident because of the amount of media representation she had. Other interviewees who had less representation in the media than Michelle, reflected on what their media experience would be like if they had more. Lance reflected on what his media experiences may be like if he had more representation as he would be confronted by more discourses similar to Michelle's media experience. He stated:

I guess that's the other part, if you've got more visibility then you're more under scrutiny and the more you're under scrutiny, the more that your reputation could be damaged. I guess for some athletes it's better that we're not very well known.

Despite Lance's reflection, he advocated for greater amount of media presence that would be proportionate to able-bodied sport as did all other athletes who were interviewed.

4.2 Proportionate Representation

The term proportionate representation is used to describe Paralympic athlete's call for both an increase in the quantity and quality of representation that is equal to able-bodied sport. All interviewees highlighted a shift in their media experiences over the past decade from primarily negative experiences to more overly positive practices. 'Rafael' highlighted that Paralympic media coverage is "getting better and better every four years. The media attention is not equal to the Olympic movement, but I think it's going in the right direction." Interviewees expressed their desire for a media experience that is proportionate to able-bodied sport. This included using language that represents athletes as athletes, utilizing diverse mediums to broadcast disability sport, representing more sport events than just the Paralympic Games, and providing more in-depth and critical coverage comparative to able-bodied sport. For example, Carlo's reflections of his portfolio and media experiences over the course of his career highlighted his desire for greater representation proportionate to his able-bodied counterparts. He explained the importance of the language media personnel use to describe Paralympic athletes and reflected on what it would be like to have proportionate representation that both celebrated and critiqued his athletic achievements. He stated:

I view the word inspiration as sort of a dirty word because to me it represented

how people looked at me and didn't really care what kind of athlete I was or didn't

really see me as an athlete. They just saw me as symbolic as somebody who's just

like a champion for getting out of bed in the morning. And I wanted to be

appreciated and critiqued even as an athlete. I'm sure some other Paralympians

have this kind of complex to. But I just wanted it to be like going to the arena

with a thousand people and be heckled and have people yell terrible things about

me and get me to miss [my shot]. I've only had the slightest tiniest taste of that.

As Carlo highlighted, perhaps if the media experience for Paralympic athletes was

proportionate, he would be treated with the same level of 'normalcy' as afforded to able-

bodied athletes. Janice further expressed a desire for proportionate representation by

being able to see disability sport and able-bodied sport integrated together in sport

broadcasting. Interviewees made clear that this inclusion did not mean comparing able-

bodied athletes with Paralympic athletes but including both types of athletes as

representative as athletes. For example, Janice explained wanting to see an article about

the top ten athletes to look out for and both types of athletes included in that list. She

described this desire for proportionate representation by stating:

I want to see the sports. I want to see it as easily accessible. You know what I

mean? I want to be able to flick on my browser and for it to be one of the top

stories. I want it to be at the forefront. I want it to be easily accessible so people

can enjoy and celebrate the accomplishments of our athletes.

Interviewees also expressed that the type of discourse used in Paralympic media coverage

contributes to the lack of proportionate representation. They expressed wanting to be

represented as an athlete first and foremost. This, however, did not mean the exclusion or

elimination of their impairment from media coverage. Interviewees expressed how much

they enjoyed reading articles that included both their backstory about their impairment, athletic achievements and focused on the current athletic event and/or achievements. For example, Rafael stated he likes articles that have a "good balance between [his] story and the [event] or the training itself." Impairment is an important part of their identity and to some interviewees, they felt that the inclusion of their impairment is what makes them unique. Interviewees stated that articles that focused only on the results and athletic achievements were less enjoyable to read than articles that included both a Paralympic athlete's athletic achievements and backstory. Furthermore, it was not the inclusion of their impairment that necessarily mattered in the media coverage, but the language used to describe their impairment that seemed to frustrate Paralympic athletes. For example, Janice stated:

> I have no problem talking a little bit about how I got started in the sport or whatever. I just don't want that to be the primary focus of the article. I don't want it to be focused on my disability. I want it to be focused on my ability.

Similar to able-bodied human-interest stories, Janice further argued that, "those stories are valuable as they get people to tie in emotionally. I have no problem with that human-interest aspect as long as it moves beyond that into the sport." Interviewees recommended that journalists who are covering Paralympic sport be educated in the type of language they use to describe disability, to ensure that they move beyond their impairment to focus on their athletic success and to ask questions if they are ever confused about impairment or disability sport. 'Caroline' suggested that "individuals might not feel comfortable sharing their story or might not want it represented a specific way. [Media] giving choice and voice is therefore really important in their narrative as well."

4.3   Reflections of Themselves versus Others

The final theme describes Paralympic athlete's own perceptions of the discourses of disability within Paralympic media coverage and their perceptions of how others (e.g., Paralympians and the public) may perceive those same discourses. This moves beyond Paralympic athletes expressing how the use of certain discourses in coverage contributes to a lack of proportionate representation. Paralympic athletes reflected on their own perceptions of the discourses of disability by discussing their media experiences in relation to the perceptions of others.

Before the PEI section of the interview, I asked interviewees their perceptions of the different discourses of disability presented in media coverage. For example, I asked interviewees what their thoughts were about media personnel who use the supercrip narrative, overcoming narrative and comparison narrative in representation. When discussing the supercrip narrative, each interviewee understood the discourse of disability presented a little differently. Interviewees drew upon their lived experiences to make meaning of the supercrip narrative. Some interviewees reflected upon their lived experience and additionally considered how the supercrip narrative may be perceived by the public. For example, Michelle highlighted how buzzwords such as 'superhuman' are:

> Just going to mix people up even more. They're just making us sound more like aliens cause in the end I know we're different and that's not the point. It's just we still do the same thing and that's the part that people don't get yet or don't know.

Caroline further reflected on her perception of how the overcoming and supercrip discourses could be perceived by the public. She explained:

I've been at a recent athlete forum and I really liked the example that they gave of some theories of how athletes or people with disability are portrayed and forced into particular categories within media. One's the superhuman and one's a victim. I don't remember what the two other ones are. But following that same kind of idea with this superhuman campaign, it's reinforcing a lot of people, just in general, when you tell them that you're involved with Paralympic sport their comments go along the lines of that Paralympic athletes work harder or that it's more impressive that you're in the Paralympics. Which to me isn't something that is necessarily true. So just kind of one of those stereotypes that maybe this campaign, even by the name of it, would be perpetuating.

Some interviewees used a 'not me' rhetoric to make meaning of the media discourses about superheroes and overcoming disability. The 'not me' rhetoric referred to interviewees accepting a certain type of discourse and arguing that they do not have a problem with it, but they know others do. Most interviewees related their understanding of the supercrip narrative to C4's *Meet the Superhumans* advertisement campaign for the 2012 Paralympic Games in London. The *Meet the Superhumans* advertisement showcased the athletic and 'superhuman' qualities of Paralympic sport. For example, when discussing the use of the supercrip narrative in the *Meet the Superhumans* advertisement, Janice stated, "I didn't have a problem with it. I know some people did do." Carlo further reflected on his own perception of the media campaigns stating, "I think the video was great. I think I understand some of the backlash. It's like does a person with disability have to be like a superhuman to count?" Finally, some interviewees simply expressed their perception of these types of media approaches as enjoyment

without reflection or consideration of others perception. In offering up an example, Tricia described the *Meet the Superhumans* campaign as "the one that [she] liked the most."

No matter how interviewees made meaning of the supercrip narrative, no participant wanted to be represented as a superhero in their own representation. Some participants who saw enjoyment in such media campaigns did so because of its creativity or what they understood as the ability to showcase athleticism of disability sport. Janice explained:

> I would never say I'm superhuman by any means. Just someone who loves to play sports and has a good time with it. That doesn't make me a superhuman. So, I thought that was kind of interesting. I get where they were going with that messaging, but when you look at what they covered and how they promoted the athleticism, it was the physicality of wheelchair rugby or basketball. It was the competitiveness and the drive of athletics and swimming. You saw the effort, determination, strength and just the combativeness of sport. I thought that was good, what they did using great little clips. I think it probably opened a lot of people's eyes to the sport.

Even Tricia who initially expressed enjoyment of media employing the supercrip narrative later expressed that she did not want to only be represented as someone whose athletic success was because of her ability to 'overcome' her disability. She wants media personnel to focus on the athletic "accomplishments that you've made and how hard you had to work to get there." Other interviewees who additionally expressed enjoyment of superhuman discourses later explained that they enjoy being considered a role model to all individuals and want to inspire others to have a healthy lifestyle. For example, Trent

expressed, "I think it's pretty cool if we can use this as just being a role model for kids at home who are wanting to get involved in sport, whether with or without a disability."

Participants additionally discussed their perceptions of the discourses of disability reflected in visual representations of themselves. During the PEIs, interviewees predominantly focused on the text of articles and only spoke about visual images when prompted. When asked about their perceptions of their visual representation, some participants simply commented on whether they liked or disliked the visual images. These participants were quick to comment on aspects of their appearance such their facial expression in a visual image. All interviewees commented on the fact that they liked athletic shots of themselves the best. Trent highlighted this by arguing that action shots depict "a very accurate representation of [his] sport," and display the physicality of himself and his teammates. Some interviewees furthermore reflected on how visual representations of the impaired body may affect public perceptions of disability. Lance discussed how a competitor in the same photo as he was in was "not in the greatest shape," which may cause those who see this image to not view his sport as legitimate. He explained how his sport focuses more on technical skill rather than physicality. This is why some athletes may not appear as physically fit. He reflected on how media personnel could possibly attempt to mitigate this in his sport by stating:

> I mean to the media, as somebody who's taking pictures and you're just yelling, 'everybody, hey, make sure that it's super positive and that we look good at performing our sport and look presentable for the population at large'. Well you can't have everything. So sometimes I feel that we complain a lot, but just deal with what you have, and this is what it is.

Lance also reflected on images of himself that included his performance partner. He described a performance partner as an able-bodied person who assists an athlete with their athletic performance such as setting up equipment for competition. He discussed how others close to him have voiced that the inclusion of a performance partner in an image of him on the podium sends the message that he is "not able to do anything by [himself] and needs somebody who's not disabled to help [him] achieve success." Lance, however, did not feel that way about having his performance partner in the image despite understanding others critiques of what it may look like to have an able-bodied person on the podium with him. Michelle also reflected on how she has noticed that media personnel choose certain images in order to reinforce a story they want to present, not necessarily her choice of approach. For example, Michelle reflected on how two different media companies used two different images to represent the same article of her. She described the article as "a celebration of where [she] started to where [she] has ended up." One media company chose an image of her laughing and happy while the other media company chose an image of her crying. She stated that she has "cried once in [her] life on the podium" and she felt the media company did so to represent her as a "poor little girl." She felt that media personnel used images to reinforce dominant discourses of disability and gender rather than celebrating her sporting success.

Finally, interviewees expressed a perceived level of control over the discourses used to depict them within their media coverage. This was expressed as training that they have received in order to know how to shift the narrative during interactions with media personnel when they perceived the conversation not going the way that they wanted it to. Paralympic athletes additionally believed that if some Paralympic athletes are unhappy

with their own media experience that it could be a result of them not knowing how to control the conversation during interviews. For example, Janice argued:

> As athletes, you have a voice and you have an opportunity to be covered the way you want to be covered. It's up to you to guide that as well. So, if you're not happy sometimes with the way it's being covered, maybe you need to reflect on the answers you give in the interview or even your approach to the interview. When you get a question that you're not a big fan of, how do you reframe it into what it is you want to say? All those workshops that they do with the athletes, I think that helps. Practice, obviously just like training, right?

Some interviewees also considered themselves to have a responsibility to encourage media personnel and the public to be interested in becoming consumers of disability sport. Lance described this in relation to his own media experience by stating:

> The people that I've met and some people you could see in the beginning they might be and just not super interested. Then it's the athlete's responsibility as well to teach them a little bit and get them interested.

This could also be achieved during interviews with media personnel where athletes described how they make an effort to "put a fun spin on" their interviews as Trent described in order to "help get the sport promoted" as Janice highlighted. Despite interviewees perceived level of control during media interviews, they commented on the fact that media personnel at the end of the day will produce what they want to produce as they believed to have ultimate control over their media coverage. Janice expressed this by explaining:

I'm always big on trying to redirect it into the sport, athleticism and the accomplishment versus the overcoming, you know, the inspirational message. Nothing like being an inspiration to someone, but at the end of the day, the journalist writes what they want to write, right? You can give the best of the best and it's working with them to move beyond that message. But when they leave us and they have the recording and they go back and they write their article, it is what it is.

Chapter 5

5   Discussion

In this chapter, I present my analysis of the results of this study in relation to my theoretical framework drawing on Foucault's notions of discourse, power and technologies of the self. The first section of this chapter focuses on Foucault's notions of discourse and how Paralympic athletes made meaning of the discourses of disability within Paralympic media coverage. The second section focuses on Foucault's notions of power and examines the relations of power between Paralympic athletes and media personnel. Athletes engagement (or non-engagement) with Foucault's notions of technologies of the self is discussed throughout both sections. The final section of this chapter provides several practical implications for media personnel covering future Paralympic Games based on the findings from this study.

First, I recognize my active role in the generation of this research. I am not a Paralympic athlete, but I am a consumer of Paralympic media coverage and immersed in academic literature of Paralympic media representation. I actively reflected on my own positionality within this research as I worked back and forth through my RTA and the writing up of my thesis. For example, I kept reflexive notes and spoke with my supervisor about my thoughts and feelings regarding my findings throughout the research process. Second, the data I am drawing on in my analysis is based on a single, PEI with Paralympic athletes that ranged from 30 to 90 minutes in length. I therefore recognize that Paralympic athletes who did not express conscious problematizations within our discussion, does not mean that they do not question or reflect upon their identity in relation to discourses of disability. In addition, I recognize the same for those athletes

who articulated conscious problematizations. Problematizing one's identity is a dynamic process which may result in interviewees problematizing discourses of disability at different times over the course of their lives. What I present in this chapter is my analysis of Paralympic athletes' understandings of discourses of disability in media coverage at the point and time this research was conducted.

5.1   Understanding of Discourses of Disability

The results of this study demonstrate that the media experience of a Paralympic athlete is complex. Each media experience was unique as each Paralympic athlete was confronted with multiple and contradictory discourses depending on their impairment, sport and gender. Paralympic athletes made meaning of the discourses of disability depicted in Paralympic media coverage by drawing on their lived (e.g., education, gender, impairment, sport, number of games competed at) and media experiences (e.g., number of media interactions, perception of consuming media, perception of media experiences). While all interviewees drew on both their lived and media experience to make meaning of discourses of disability, the amount of media experience an interviewee had was the only commonality between athletes who demonstrated problematizations of discourses from those who did not. An athlete's impairment, sport and/or gender did not relate to whether or not an athlete was more likely to problematize discourses of disability in media coverage.

Interviewees with less media experience were less likely to express conscious problematizations of discourses of disability. These athletes simply expressed what their perspective was of some discourses used in Paralympic media coverage without much

critical self-reflection to support their understanding. For example, some athletes spoke about how they enjoyed supercrip narratives within media advertising campaigns but later expressed that they would like to be represented for their sporting prowess first and foremost. By doing so, these athletes accepted some discourses of disability in media coverage and rejected others. They stated that they had only positive experiences with media personnel and of consuming Paralympic media coverage and that their media experience is not something they often think about. Markula (2004) suggested in her study of exercise instructors, if an individual did not have cause to find their experiences problematic, they may not have been exposed to discourses and power relations yet that could trigger or facilitate a process of problematization. Athletes with less media experience may not have had enough media experience to find their representation or interactions with media personnel problematic.

Interviewees that expressed conscious problematizations of discourses of disability in Paralympic media coverage were athletes that had the most media experience. These athletes had either multiple years of media experience at several Paralympic Games or had multiple media experiences accumulated during the span of two Paralympic Games. This finding supports Thorpe's (2008) study which found that more experienced female snowboarders were the ones who were more likely to develop a critical awareness of dominant discourses of sexism in media. Thorpe (2008) argued that:

> The more snowboarding experience and cultural knowledge an individual has, the more likely he or she is to develop the ability to weigh up the competing versions of femininity on offer in the snowboarding culture and problematize some of these [discourses] (pp. 214-215).

The more media experience a Paralympic athlete therefore had, the more likely they were to observe inconsistences between their lived experience and the mediated discursive constructions of disability.

A few interviewees adopted a 'not me' rhetoric in order to preserve the enjoyment of their media experience and were thereby demonstrating a technology of the self. By drawing on 'not me' rhetoric, athletes distanced themselves from individuals who get upset by the prominence of discourses of disability in Paralympic media coverage. As Purdue and Howe (2012) expressed with the Paralympic Paradox, Paralympic athletes are desired to be represented as role models within the disability community and are thereby expected to be role models for social change. Some athletes, however, distance themselves from this role as they want to be represented as an athlete and not as a role model for disability (Huang & Brittain, 2006; Purdue & Howe, 2012). By drawing on a 'not me' rhetoric, athletes are persevering their enjoyment of representation and distancing themselves from being a role model for the disability community. These athletes recognized the dominant discourses of disability in coverage and adopted this rhetoric as a 'coping mechanism' (Markula, 2003; Thorpe, 2008). These athletes therefore demonstrated problematizations of discourses of disability in media coverage as they recognized problematic representations of disability for the larger disability community but chose to ignore them in order to preserve their enjoyment of representation.

Some interviewees also drew on reverse discourses in order to demonstrate the inconsistences they perceived between mediated discursive constructions of disability and their lived experience. These athletes discussed wanting to be represented by the

media based on their sporting prowess. They thereby rejected dominant discourses of disability such as the supercrip narrative and overcoming narrative that framed their involvement in their sport through a participation lens and their success attributed to 'overcoming' their disability. This finding supports researchers who argued that media personnel should not depict Paralympic athletes through medicalized and ableist discourses of disability in Paralympic media coverage (Beacom et al., 2016; Crow, 2014; Ellis, 2009; Goggin & Newell, 2000; B. Hardin & Hardin, 2003; Howe, 2011; Maika & Danylchuk, 2016; Misener, 2013; Pearson & Misener, 2019; Pullen et al., 2018; Quinn & Yoshida, 2016; Silva & Howe, 2012; Tynedal & Wolbring, 2013).

As reflected in DePauw's (1997) construction of sporting bodies, athletes understood sport as an able-bodied, masculine space. Interviewees who drew on reverse discourses rejected dominant discursive constructions about disability and sport by expressing their desire to be valued for their sporting prowess. Some athletes expressed wanting representation that highlighted their sporting prowess but did not erase disability from their coverage. The reverse discourses athletes articulated demonstrated their desire for media to portray the impaired body as a legitimate sporting body. For some female interviewees, this also meant the impaired female body to be seen as a legitimate sporting body. This additionally was reinforced by interviewee's desire for proportionate representation where Paralympic sport is equally valued to able-bodied sport. This type of representation does not mean comparing able-bodied athletes to Paralympic athletes, but media personnel viewing the impaired sporting bodies as legitimate and valuable as able-bodied athletes.

5.2   Power Relations with Media

Paralympic athletes' reflections of power relations with the media demonstrates how media personnel's use of dominant discourses of disability affect what bodies are believed to belong in sport. Some interviewees reflected on how the language media personnel choose to depict Paralympic athletes reinforces dominant understandings of disability which may affect public perceptions of Paralympic athletes and disability sport. For example, using the terms 'inspirational' and 'superhuman' to represent Paralympic athletes in Paralympic media coverage. Some interviewees additionally highlighted how the choice of visual images used by media personnel may affect how society understands what bodies belong in sport. Interviewees highlighted how action shots were their preferred type of representation as this reinforced how they felt about their bodies and their desire to be celebrated for their sporting prowess. This supports previous findings that argued against media representing athletes through a participation lens by choosing to feature athletes in primarily passive positions (Crow, 2014; Pearson & Misener, 2019; Quinn & Yoshida, 2016; Schell & Rodriguez, 2001).

Furthermore, interviewee's reflections demonstrated how media personnel's perceptions of disability affect the media experience for Paralympic athletes. Media who understand disability in terms of dominant discourses exhibited a lower expectation and overall value of covering disability sport compared to able-bodied sport. This was reflected by interviewees providing examples of media personnel being unprepared for interviews and media who chose images that depict athletes based on dominant discourses of disability. The lack of quantity and diversity of Paralympic media coverage expressed by interviewees reflects the media's perceived lack of value of disability sport

as legitimate sport. The exclusionary practices of media personnel reflect media personnel's internalization of sport as an able-bodied, masculine space. Media personnel's internalization of dominant discourses of disability supports previous findings demonstrating that a hierarchy of disability exists in Paralympic media representation (DePauw, 1997; Haller, 2000; Pearson & Misener, 2019; Quinn & Yoshida, 2016). The media privileges stories that reflect medicalized discourses of disability which celebrate Paralympic athletes for 'overcoming' their impairment and/or as an object of comparison to able-bodied athletes. The athletes interviewed in this study were those who fit dominant understandings of the sporting body as the majority of interviewees were 'more' able and/or wheelchair users. Researchers have found that Paralympic athletes who fit dominant understandings of the sporting body receive more media coverage (DePauw, 1997; Haller, 2000; Pearson & Misener, 2019; Quinn & Yoshida, 2016). In addition to this, some female interviewee's sexuality was reinforced in coverage by dominant discourses of gender. This finding demonstrates a shift in media personnel who have in the past prominently asexualized and thereby excluded female Paralympic athletes from coverage (M. Hardin & Hardin, 2005; Pearson & Misener, 2019; Quinn & Yoshida, 2016). This finding reflects a positive shift from the full exclusion of female Paralympic athletes from media coverage. This seemingly positive shift, however, demonstrates that female Paralympic athletes are subjected to similar problems that able-bodied female athletes experience as gender is viewed as incongruent with dominant understandings of the ideal sporting body (DePauw, 1997).

Some Paralympic athletes additionally demonstrated a technology of the self by utilizing their media training and lived experience as a tool to control conversations with

media personnel. Some interviewees described how they actively drew on reverse discourses during their interviews with media in order to resist media personnel's dominant understandings of discourses of disability. Some athletes further expressed how they engaged in reverse discourses to educate the media and public about the legitimacy of Paralympic sport. Paralympic athletes' efforts to reverse discourses used by media personnel demonstrates a point of resistance for athletes from dominating power relations with media personnel. These athletes therefore demonstrated the capacity to discuss with media personnel their preferred type of representation acknowledging however that media personnel may represent Paralympic athlete's however they choose post interview. This enables media personnel to continue to objectify the 'disabled athlete' without understanding an athlete's desire for their media representation. Power relations with media personnel can preclude an athlete's efforts to be represented for their sporting prowess from being successful and thereby limit their ability to exercise their power.

5.3   Practical Implications

The findings of this study provide several practical implications for media personnel covering the Paralympic Games. The first is the importance of media companies providing training and education to media personnel covering disability sport events. Previous research has demonstrated that media personnel covering the Paralympic Games often have no prior experience or knowledge of disability sport (Howe, 2008b; Misener, 2013). Paralympic athletes stressed the importance of media personnel having prior knowledge and understanding of disability and disability sport for having a positive media experience. Furthermore, Paralympic athletes argued that a positive media

experience with media personnel goes beyond media personnel having knowledge of disability and disability sport. Media personnel who contributed to a positive media experience were prepared for their interviews with athletes by demonstrating a solid understanding of who the athlete was, their history and understood the sport/event they were covering. Athletes further expressed that they felt that these media personnel saw the value in covering their sport.

The second implication for media personnel is that Paralympic athletes want proportionate media coverage in terms of quantity and quality. All Paralympic athletes expressed wanting to see more Paralympic media coverage and diverse types of representation. For example, utilizing different media platforms (e.g., YouTube videos, social media, podcasts, blogs) to represent Paralympic media. Paralympic athletes expressed the enjoyment of engaging in these diverse mediums during the Paralympic Games, but described how outside of the time period of the games, representation remains relatively invisible (Pearson & Misener, 2019; Tynedal & Wolbring, 2013). Paralympic athletes also expressed a desire to receive coverage that was in-depth and went beyond the 're-introduction cycle.' Paralympic athletes encouraged media personnel to dig deeper and to look for different stories that are more representative than who an athlete is and what sport event they competed in. This supports previous findings that Paralympic media coverage often presents a uni-dimensional view of the self and media personnel are therefore encouraged to look for multi-dimensional views of representation (Pearson & Misener, 2019).

The third implication for media personnel is that all Paralympic athletes expressed wanting to be depicted as an athlete and not as a superhero and/or in comparison to able-

bodied athletes. Furthermore, Paralympic athletes expressed the importance of the inclusion of their impairment within Paralympic media coverage. This finding reflects the complexities discussed in previous research of Paralympic media representation as media personnel are faced with the Paralympic Paradox (Purdue & Howe, 2012). Based on my interviews with Paralympic athletes, I encourage media personnel to not erase impairment from Paralympic media coverage in an attempt to foreground athletic ability. Paralympic athletes demonstrated that there is a way for media personnel to include both an athlete's backstory and athletic achievements without reinforcing the supercrip narrative or erasing impairment from coverage. This was addressed in their recommendations for media personnel to be aware of the language they use, to move beyond discussions of impairment and to ask questions if they are ever unsure about appropriate terminology.

The final implication for media personnel is to recognize the relations of power between themselves and Paralympic athletes. Some athletes expressed how they work hard to change the conversation and/or educate media personnel about their preferred type of representation regarding impairment. These athletes, however, expressed that media personnel may exercise their power to represent the athletes however they choose post interview. Media personnel who are able to understand this power relationship and how dominant discourses of disability they choose may affect public perception of disability, can help to contribute to a positive media experience for Paralympic athletes. This study demonstrates the complexity of discourses that Paralympic athletes are confronted by in Paralympic media coverage depending on their impairment, sport and gender. I recommend that media personnel actively listen to Paralympic athletes'

experiences during their interactions and work hard not to homogenize the lived

experience of Paralympic athletes.

Chapter 6

6   Conclusion

The findings of this study demonstrate that Paralympic athletes make meaning of the discourses of disability within Paralympic media coverage by drawing on their lived and media experiences. Paralympic athletes who are well represented by the media are confronted by multiple and contradictory discourses of disability in coverage of themselves and of other Paralympians in general. This was exhibited in the portfolios constructed for this study and through Paralympic athletes' reflections of their media experiences. Using Foucault's notions of discourse, power and technologies of the self, my analysis demonstrates that some Paralympic athletes expressed conscious problematizations of the discourses of disability promoted in Paralympic media coverage. Those athletes who problematized dominant discourses were those with the most media experience. Some Paralympic athletes adopted coping mechanisms such as the 'not me' rhetoric, distancing themselves from the critiques, in order to preserve their enjoyment of Paralympic media coverage. Some athletes drew on reverse discourses of disability, rejecting dominant medicalized discourses such as the supercrip and comparison narratives. Some Paralympic athletes further expressed engagement in technologies of the self by using their media training and lived experience as a tool to control conversations with media personnel. In doing so, Paralympic athletes worked to shift the conversation away from medicalized discourses of disability to reverse discourses that highlighted their sporting prowess. Paralympic athletes who did not demonstrate problematizations of discourses of disability articulated only positive media experiences and had not found their experiences problematic in order to facilitate a process of problematization.

Furthermore, Paralympic athletes understood themselves as subjects within relations of power with media. Some athletes found that using reverse discourses during their interactions with media personnel a form of resistance from the medicalized discourses of disability within their Paralympic media coverage. However, athletes believed that media personnel were able to use dominant discourses of disability to control their representation and no matter how hard they sometimes tried to educate media personnel, there was nothing more they could do to change their representation. Through their media experiences, athletes highlighted the importance of media personnel having education and training about the dominant discourses of disability in order to appropriately cover disability sport. They also highlighted that it is more than media personnel having the training to cover disability sport, but media personnel need to see the value in covering disability sport. If media personnel understand disability in terms of medicalized discourses this negatively effects the media experience for a Paralympic athlete. Athletes furthermore believed media personnel's understandings of disability affected both the quality and quantity of Paralympic media coverage produced. Paralympic athletes called for future representation of the disability sport that is proportionate to able-bodied sport.

6.1   Future Research

The findings presented represent Paralympic athletes' reflections of their understandings of dominant discourses of disability at the point and time the research was conducted. Future research should explore the possibilities of embodied, affective, and emotional aspects of problematization which has been absent from this body of research.

Future studies should also explore Paralympic athletes who are not represented by media understandings of dominant discourses of disability in Paralympic media coverage. Their perspectives would provide significant insights into the media experience of someone who is marginalized from representation. Finally, future research should investigate the perspectives of Canadian media personnel in order to understand their perspectives of the media experience and dominant discourses of disability in Paralympic media coverage. Canadian media personnel's understandings of the power relationship with Paralympic athletes would help us understand how the media experience for Paralympic athletes may be improved going forward.

6.2   Contributions

The results of this study provide contributions to both the body of sport management and sociology of sport field of research. Results of this study will add to the body of sport management research by providing practical insights for sport media personnel from the perspective of those who are represented in coverage. The practical implications of this study provide media personnel with several recommendations from Paralympic athletes which can assist media personnel with the development of new approaches for coverage of future Paralympic Games. Furthermore, the results of this study contribute to the body of sociology of sport research by providing insight as to how Paralympic athletes make meaning of the discourses of disability in Paralympic media coverage. This study also offers knowledge of how Paralympic athletes understand themselves as subjects within relations of power with media. This perspective has been missing from Paralympic media coverage scholarship.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Analysis of Canadian Media Articles for Participants Portfolios

Codes: AC=Athletic, ST=Stereotypical, IF=Informative, and MD=Multi-Dimensional

Name	Media Sources	Initial Search of Articles	Total # of Coded Articles	AC	ST	IF	MD
Trent	CBC	23	9	6	3		
	National Post	5	3	1	2		
	The Globe and Mail	2	2	1	1		
	Total	30	14	8	6		
	Portfolio		**6**	**3**	**3**		
Rafael	CBC	7	3	1	2		
	National Post	3	2	1	1		
	The Globe and Mail						
	Total	10	5	2	3		
	Portfolio		**3**	**1**	**2**		
Tricia	CBC	17	13	4	8	1	
	National Post	2	2		2		
	The Globe and Mail						
	Total	19	15	4	10		
	Portfolio		**4**	**1**	**2**	**1**	
Lance	CBC	13	3	1	1	1	
	National Post	6	4		3	1	
	The Globe and Mail	2	1	1			
	Total	21	8	2	4	2	
	Portfolio	-	**4**	**1**	**2**	**1**	
Janice	CBC	5	4	1	1	2	
	National Post	2	2	2			
	The Globe and Mail						

(Appendix A continued)

	Total	7	6	3	1	2	
	Portfolio		**4**	**1**	**1**	**2**	
Michelle	CBC	56	21	15	4		2
	National Post	9	7	2	4		1
	The Globe and Mail	7	5	2	3		
	Total	72	33	19	11		3
	Portfolio		**5**	**2**	**2**		**1**
Carlo	CBC	12	6	5		1	
	National Post	2	2	2			
	The Globe and Mail						
	Total	14	8	7		1	
	Portfolio		**4**	**3**		**1**	
Caroline	CBC	12	3	1	1	1	
	National Post	2	2	1			
	The Globe and Mail						
	Total	14	5	2	1	1	
	Portfolio		**3**	**1**	**1**	**1**	

Appendix B: Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Opening

1. Can you tell me about your experience as a Paralympic Athlete?

    a) Probe: Games competed at? Greatest career achievement?

2. What is your opinion of Paralympic media coverage?

    a) Probe: Canadian media coverage? CBC?

3. Can you describe what your relationship with the media has been like surrounding a Paralympic Games?

4. Are you aware of the dominant narratives ascribed within Paralympic media coverage?

    a) What do you think of the narratives?

        i. Probe: What do you think of specific narrative? (e.g., supercrip, overcoming, comparison narratives).

Photo Elicitation Section

1. What did you think of the media portfolio sent to you?

    a) Probe: Is there anything missing that you would like to add or would have added?

2. What did you think of this text/visual? *(Repeat for each text/visual)*

    a) Probe: likes/dislikes

    b) Probe: specific discourses etc.

Closing

1. Overall, is this how you wanted to be represented in this text and/or visual?

    a. If yes or no explain.

    b. Probe: if this is not how they want to be represented…

(Appendix B continued)

     i.   When you are misrepresented does that affect you?

     ii.   How do you cope with being misrepresented?

     iii.   What effects do you believe misrepresentation has on understandings of disability and disability sport?

2. Going forward, how would you like to be represented by the media?

    a) Probe: for text and visuals.

    b) Probe: What's included and excluded?

3. Say we took the results of this study to CBC, what recommendations or advice would you give, if any, to media personnel covering future Paralympic Games?

4. Is there anything you would like to add or ask?

Appendix C: Non-Medical Ethics Approval

Western Research

Date: 16 October 2019

To: Dr. Laura Misener

Project ID: 114150

Study Title: Understanding Paralympic Athletes Interpretations of Paralympic Media Coverage

Short Title: Paralympic Media Coverage Project

Application Type: NMREB Initial Application

Review Type: Delegated

Full Board Reporting Date: 01/Nov/2019

Date Approval Issued: 16/Oct/2019 16:36

REB Approval Expiry Date: 16/Oct/2020

Dear Dr. Laura Misener

The Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMREB) has reviewed and approved the WREM application form for the above mentioned study, as of the date noted above. NMREB approval for this study remains valid until the expiry date noted above, conditional to timely submission and acceptance of NMREB Continuing Ethics Review.

This research study is to be conducted by the investigator noted above. All other required institutional approvals must also be obtained prior to the conduct of the study.

Documents Approved:

Document Name	Document Type	Document Date	Document Version
Email Script - NSO	Recruitment Materials	04/Oct/2019	2
Interview Guide	Interview Guide	01/Aug/2019	1
Letter of Information	Recruitment Materials	16/Oct/2019	3
Letter of Information and Verbal Consent	Verbal Consent/Assent	16/Oct/2019	3
Letter of Information and Written Consent	Written Consent/Assent	16/Oct/2019	3
Request to Participate - NSO	Recruitment Materials	16/Oct/2019	3

No deviations from, or changes to the protocol should be initiated without prior written approval from the NMREB, except when necessary to eliminate immediate hazard(s) to study participants or when the change(s) involves only administrative or logistical aspects of the trial.

The Western University NMREB operates in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA, 2004), and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario. Members of the NMREB who are named as Investigators in research studies do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on such studies when they are presented to the REB. The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 00000941.
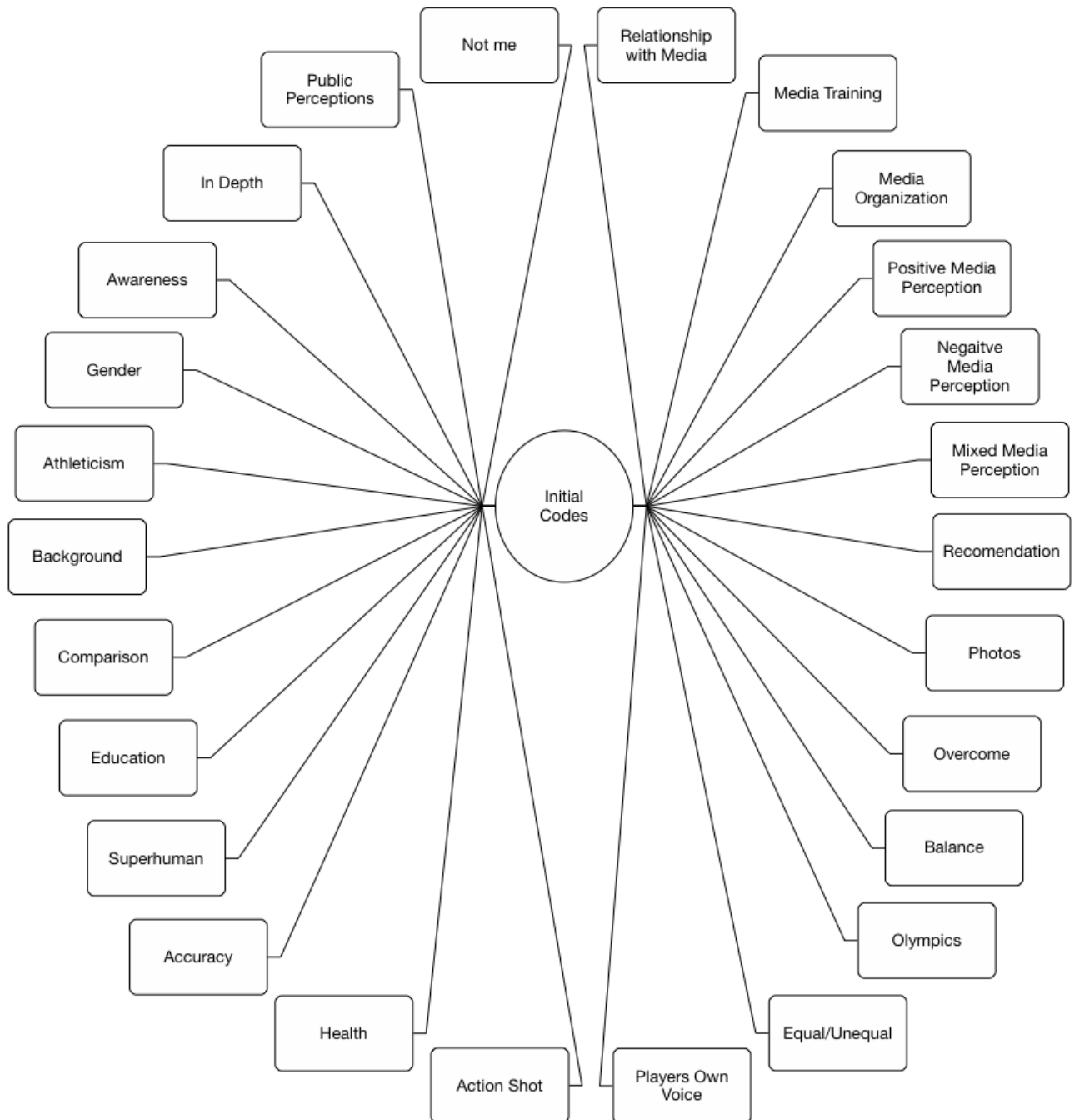
Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Katelyn Harris, Research Ethics Officer on behalf of Dr. Randal Graham, NMREB Chair

Note: This correspondence includes an electronic signature (validation and approval via an online system that is compliant with all regulations).

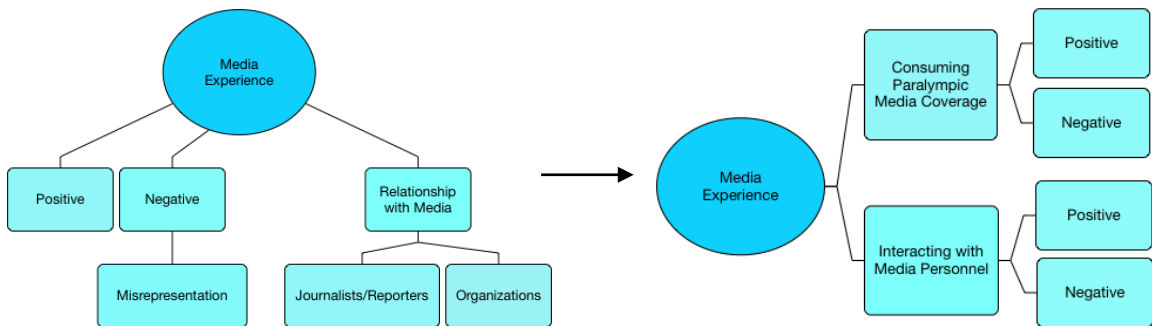**Appendix D: Mind Map of Initial Codes Generated in Phase Two**

Appendix E: Mind Maps of Initial Themes Generated in Phase Three
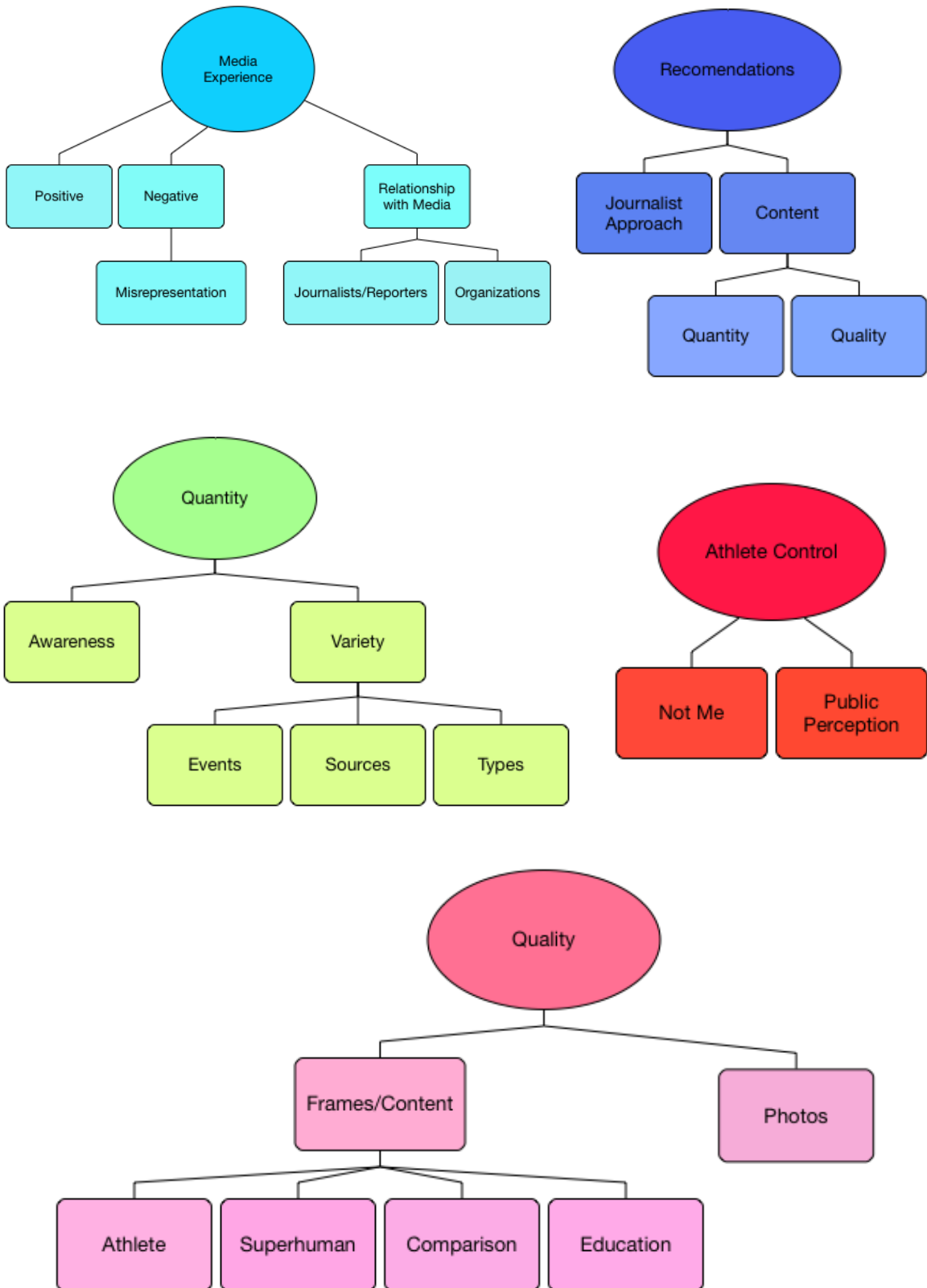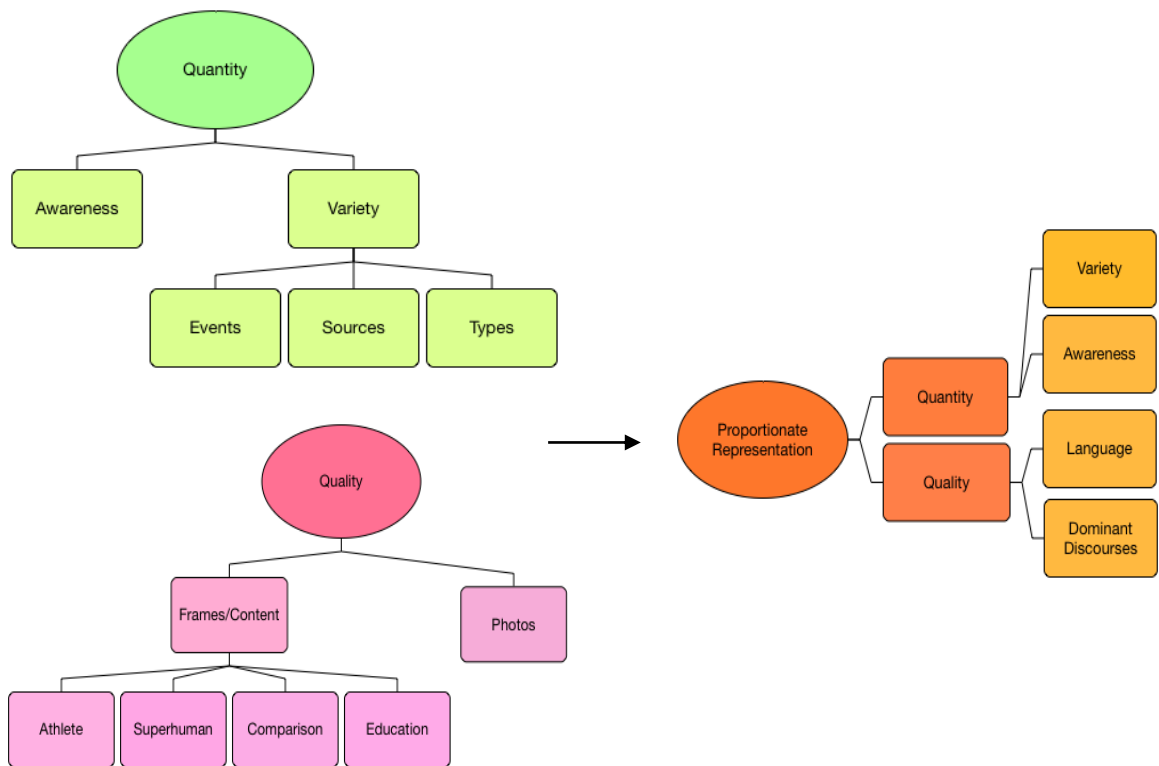
Appendix F: Mind Maps of Reviewing and Refining Themes in Phase Four
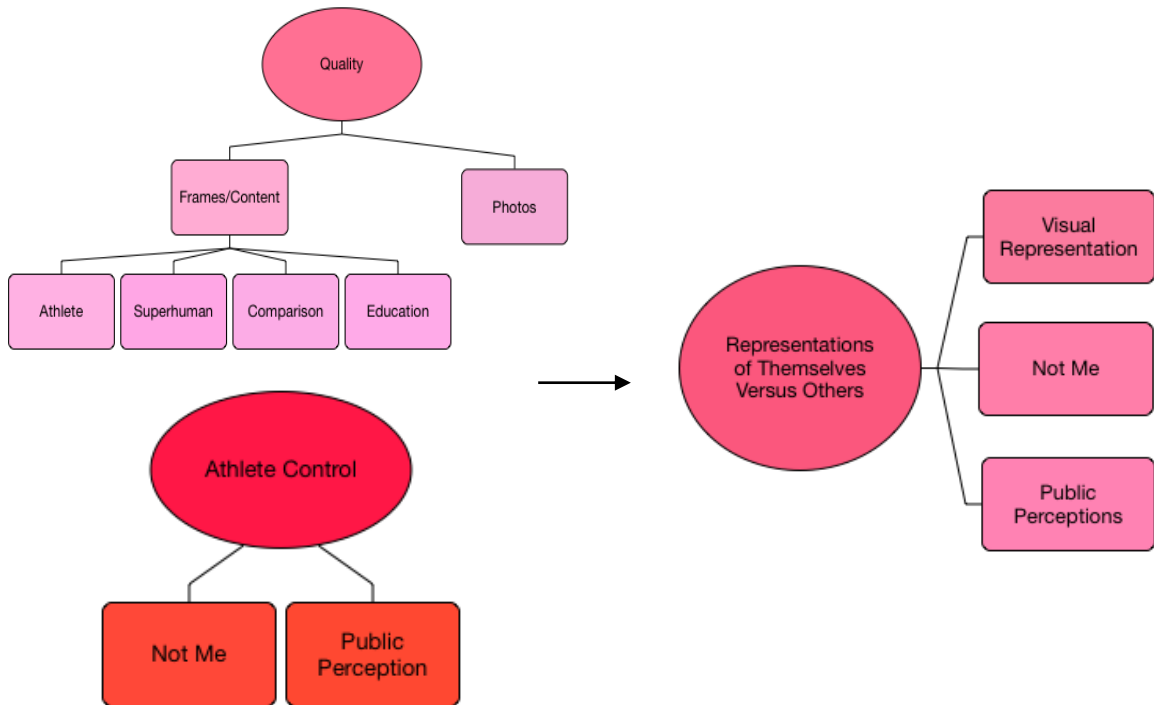
1. Media Experience

2. Proportionate Representation

(Appendix F continued)

3. Representations of Themselves versus Others

Note: *Recommendations were discussed throughout the three themes and prominently highlighted in the Practical Implications section of Chapter 5.*

Curriculum Vitae

Erin Pearson

EDUCATION

2018-Present   **Master of Arts, Kinesiology** *(Management & Leadership)*
                              Western University, London Ontario

 2014-2018   **Bachelor of Arts** *(Honours Specialization in Kinesiology)*
                              Western University, London Ontario

TEACHING AND RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

2019-Present   **Professor**
                              Fanshawe College, London Ontario

2018-Present   **Research Assistant, Dr. Laura Misener**
                              Western University, London Ontario

March-July 2020   **Graduate Student Assistantship**
                              School of Kinesiology
                              Western University, London Ontario

2019-2020   **Research Assistant**, **Dr. Alison Doherty**
                              Western University, London Ontario

2018-2019   **Administrative and Research Assistant**
                              Ontario Parasport Collective

2018-2019   **Graduate Teaching Assistant**
                              Leadership in Physical Activity (KIN 3335)
                              Western University, London Ontario

RESEARCH CONTRIBUTIONS

PEER REVIEWED PUBLICATION

Pearson, E., & Misener, L. (2019). Canadian Media Representations of Para-athletes for the 2016 Paralympic Games. *Olympika, 28,* 1-28.

PRESENTATIONS

Pearson, E., & Misener, L. (2020, May). Informing Future Media Approaches: The Perspective of Paralympic Athletes (published abstract). North American Society for Sport Management, San Diego, CA.

Pearson, E., & Misener, L. (2020, March). Informing Future Media Approaches: The Perspective of Paralympic Athletes (poster presentation). Kinesiology Graduate Student Research Conference, Western University, London, Ontario. (Conference Cancelled).

Pearson, E., & Misener, L. (2019, November). Understanding Paralympic Athletes Interpretations of Paralympic Media Coverage (oral presentation). Presented at the North American Society for the Sociology of Sport Conference, Virginia Beach, VA.

Pearson, E., & Misener, L. (2018, October). Canadian Media Representations of Para-athletes for the 2016 Paralympic Games (published abstract and oral presentation). Presented at the 14th International Symposium for Olympic and Paralympic Research, Western University, London, Ontario.

Guest Speaker, *KIN 2032B: Research Design in Human Movement Science*, Presented Fourth Year Independent Research Project, 2018, Western University, London Ontario.

CONFERENCE PARTICIPATION

May 2020	North American Society for Sport Management Conference, San Diego, CA
November 2019	North American Society for the Sociology of Sport Conference, Virginia Beach, VA
September 2019	Fall Perspectives on Teaching and Learning Conference, Western University, London Ontario
May 2019	North American Society for Sport Management Conference, New Orleans, Louisiana
October 2018	14th International Symposium for Olympic and Paralympic Research (ICOS), Western University, London Ontario
October 2018	Social Impact and Human Rights in Sport Symposium, Western University, London Ontario
September 2018	TA Day: Graduate Student Conference on Teaching, Western University, London Ontario

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

2019-Present	North American Society for Sport Management
2019-Present	North American Society for the Sociology of Sport

AWARDS AND HONOURS

2020-2024	Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Doctoral Fellowship - *valued at $80,000*
2020	Kinesiology Graduate Student Travel Award – *valued at $500*
2020	Faculty of Health Sciences Graduate Student Conference Travel Award – *valued at $210*
2019-2020	Western Graduate Research Scholarship – *valued at $3583*
2019-2020	Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Joseph Armand Bombardier Canada Graduate Scholarship Masters – *valued at $17,500*
2019-2020	Ontario Graduate Scholarship – *valued at $15,000 (declined)*
2019	Barbara Brown Commemorative Scholarship – *valued at $500*
2018	Western Graduate Research Scholarship – *valued at $493*
2017 & 2018	Dean's Honor List
2014	Western Scholarship of Distinction – *valued at $1000*
2014	Specialist High Skills Major: Health and Wellness Across the Lifespan
2014	Social Sciences Award

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

2019	**Fitness Instructor** Living Well at Western, London Ontario
2017-2018	**Internship** London Knights Hockey Club, London Ontario
2016	**Community Engaged Learning Project** Women's Sledge Hockey of Canada
2014-2017	**Receptionist** Porsche of London, London Ontario
2013-2018	**Accounting Associate (Summer)** Royal Building Solutions, London Ontario

ACADEMIC SERVICE

2019-2020 **Vice-President Communications**
Kinesiology Graduate Student Association, Western University

2019-2020 **Wellness Champion**
Living Well at Western, Western University

2019-2020 **Academic Committee Member**
Society of Graduate Students, Western University

2019-2020 **Policy Committee Member**
Society of Graduate Students, Western University

COMMUNITY SERVICE

2020-Present **Social Media Manager & Community Outreach**
COVID-19 Women's Initiative (CWI), London Ontario

2019-2020 **Go Girls Mentor**
Big Brothers Big Sisters London, London Ontario

2016-2017 **Physiotherapy Volunteer**
Fowler Kennedy Sport Medicine Clinic, Western University

2014-2015 **Builder and Fundraiser**
Habitat for Humanity Western, Western University
London Ontario and Thibodaux Louisiana

2013-2014 **Soccer Coach**
Byron Soccer League, London Ontario