

Why do Channel 4 and the BBC portray disability and disability sport differently?

Analysing the production processes and audience reception of mediated sport

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Abstract

This thesis focuses on the perceptions of the audience/media professionals on the nature of the content on the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and Channel 4 – a mainstream commercial television broadcaster in the UK. It investigates whether Channel 4 portrays disability in shows which are designed to be *laughed at* or *laughed with*, given that Channel 4 has the UK broadcasting rights to the coverage of both the Summer and Winter Paralympics.

The thesis investigates why the two broadcasters show disability and disability sport differently, drawing upon contrasting theories - the medical model of disability, the social model of disability, the crip theory, and the social cognitive theory. In addition, the findings of past research in the disability domain are also drawn upon. For example, the stereotypes of disability in the media (Klobas, 1988 and Worrell, 2018) and the impact of ‘inspirational orn’ and the ‘unconscious’ negative light this has on the viewer (Young, 2014 and Evans, 2022) which in turn links back to the contrasting theories being used. The thesis will also draw upon questionnaires completed by 24 members of the public with a disability, and interviews with 5 media professionals in the domain of disability.

The findings from the questionnaire element of the data collection process illustrate those participants (with a physical or invisible disability) mostly feel best represented by factual programmes. However, the research has also found that the participants feel that, when shown in the media, it is done so to entertain. The final thesis also includes the findings of the interviews with media professionals from both Channel 4 and BBC in the domain of disability which suggest that change is happening regarding disability portrayal in the media. The findings from the media also include how Channel 4 influenced the coverage of the London 2012 Paralympic Games and the channels coverage of the Games post 2012, whilst also highlighting the media participants views and opinions of the coverage shown both the BBC and Channel 4.

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Introduction

People who have a disability in the 21st century are more visible in the media than they have ever been, including in the world of disability sport (DePeuw, 2013). As the decades have moved on the media has become a key platform to educate society on a number of controversial topics, including disability (Ellis and Goggin, 2015). Despite the media's pivotal role in educating society about significant topics, their portrayal of disability is still often seen as negative and with limited content (Head, 1954; Welch, 1994; Ellcessor and Kirkpatrick, 2017). At present when disability is shown in the media, more often than not productions are structured around the medical model of disability and historical stereotypes of disability; including the victim, the hero, the villain, and the fool (Klobas, 1988; Nelson, 2000; Worrell, 2018). However, there are shifts starting to happen within broadcasting, with productions of entertainment programmes not only functioning as mere amusement, but a site which contemporary social issues may be considered and negotiated (Klein, 2011). The British Broadcasting Company (BBC) put in their mission statement that they would inform, educate, and entertain (Klein, 2011; BBC, 2020). There has also been a shift in terms of production starting to use the social model of disability as the main structure of their programming.

Despite the shift in the way productions are structured, programmes showing disability and disability sport still remain few and far between. In 2012, Channel 4 won the bid to the rights to broadcast the Paralympics (Marketing Society Awards, 2015). The International Paralympic Committee commented that by Channel 4 winning the broadcasting rights, it was an opportunity to switch societies' focus from athletes' physical impairment to their sporting performance (Purdue & Howe, 2012; Cheong *et al*, 2020). Despite this, the media still portray disability sport by focusing on the disability and not the ability of the athlete (Bacon, French, & Kendall, 2016). However, it is important to understand the way the two broadcasters are different. The model of funding for the BBC is that it is funded by the public's licence fees (BBC, 2023) however, the way Channel 4 is funded is by advertising revenues and uses a cross funding model (Channel 4, 2023).

Given the findings of past literature, the main aim of this research is to look into why two of the mainstream television broadcasters in the UK – the BBC and Channel 4 – portray disability and disability sport differently. The research will aim to answer the main aim by splitting it in to smaller aims. The first aim will be to see whether the broadcaster Channel 4 portrays disability in productions which are designed to be laughed at or laughed with. The second aim is to compare the content on Channel 4 with the content on the BBC. The research will, therefore, fulfil the aims by carrying out questionnaires and recorded interviews, which will use the following objectives as the structure of the questions asked. The overarching objectives are asking:

- Examining the contrasting production values used by the BBC and Channel 4 in their coverage of disability and disability sport
- Exploring the impact of the contrasting production styles of BBC and Channel 4 for coverage of disability and disability sport on the experiences of audiences who have a disability
- Examining the experiences of media professionals who have worked for BBC and Channel 4 producing disability or disability sport coverage
- Critically reflect upon the impact of commercial considerations and audience demographics on the contrasting production values of the BBC and Channel 4 in their coverage of disability and disability sport

Past research has highlighted that there is a slight shift in the portrayal of disability and disability sport; it is also showing that there is still a way to go to get a more representative portrayal of disability in the media (Oliver and Sapey, 1999; Sandell, Delin, Dodd and Gay, 2010; Hodges *et al*, 2014; Evans, 2022). This research also shows why the current study is needed, as - despite the keen outlook of both the BBC and Channel 4 - they both appear to be still falling short when it comes to portraying disability and disability sport in a true light. Past research has hinted that the broadcaster Channel 4 has fallen short in their portrayal of disability sport, despite them winning the

broadcasting rights to the Paralympics (Hodges *et al*, 2014; Whannel, 2014). Recent research has also shown that further academic analysis is needed as there is a gap of why the two broadcasters portray disability and disability sport so differently (Smith and Perrier, 2014; Johnson, 2019; Joubin, 2021; Carolina, 2022).

The reason for this research project is to gain a more up to date understanding of the way disability and disability sport is portrayed in the media as there is little research that has recently been carried out in this area. The research will also build on the research done by DePeuw (2013, p.23), who noted that “people with disabilities are more visible in the 21st century than they used to be, including in the world of sport... However, despite the increase in the visibility of disability in the media; the portrayal of controversial topics, like people with a physical disability, still remains poor”. As well as building on DePeuw’s (2013) work, the research will also build on Klein’s (2011) research which found that “entertainment television programming does not function as mere amusement for viewers, but as a site through which contemporary social issues may be considered and negotiated” (p. 915). The above comments by Klein (2011) and DePeuw (2013) are just two examples of what research has been conducted already in this area. Despite this, there remains little research in the topic area that is more recent and that looks at both the portrayal of disability and disability sport. Since the research of Klein and DePeuw, there has been more understanding and exposure to disability in every day-to-day life, as well as three Paralympic Games which have been widely shown on different media platforms.

The following research, therefore, will be made up of a literature review, which will contain past research on theoretical models of disability, disability sport, and the portrayal of disability and disability sport in the media. The literature review will then be followed by the methodology of the research, explaining and justifying why this investigation will use qualitative methods, as well as why two sets of participants were used to gain an understanding of the research question. In addition, it will also contain the procedures taken to collect, analyse, and report the data. The

subsequent results and discussion chapter will be made up of the themes which emerged from the analysis of both the questionnaires and interviews. Themes include the portrayal of disability in factual and non-factual programmes, the use of inspiration/disability porn within productions, the feeling of sympathy being portrayed within the media, as well as looking at the use of an 'invisible privilege' and hierarchy within disability and the language used within publication depicting disability. The emerging themes will also look at the bespoke coverage of the Paralympics as well as the re-brand of Channel 4. The final chapter of the research will be the conclusion, which will include a summary of the key findings from the themes and analysis of the questionnaires and interviews. The chapter will also include a reflection of the strengths and weaknesses of the theoretical approaches used and will also include recommendations for future research in this area.

Literature Review

Introduction

The follow chapter will aim to enable an understanding of key theoretical models of disability used within this research. The following chapter will also look at past research of the theoretical models of disability, as well as disabled sport and disability in the media.

Theoretical Models of Disability

When thinking about disability and society's outlook and views, it is important to consider four theories which have an influence over society's unconscious bias. Throughout this chapter section the four theories of disability will be looked at. The theories being covered are the medical model of disability, the social model of disability, crip theory, and social cognitive theory. It is important to outline these theories at this stage, as these models underpin the rest of the discussion throughout the literature review, enabling later discussion as to which theoretical lens the media use when portraying disability.

Different theoretical model lenses were used throughout this research in an eclectic manner. This is because as Oliver and Sapey (1999) argued disabilities cannot all be approached in the same way, with Ellis and Goggin (2015) similarly contending that disability is dynamic and shape shifting and not one size fits all. Rather than picking one theoretical lens to use in thesis, the intention is to show that there are different theories that all inform the language being used by the participants and the production processes at the BBC and Channel 4.

Medical model

The first of these theories is the medical model of disability. The medical model was first coined by Thomas Szasz in the mid-1950's (Hogan, 2019) and his research and work on the model went on to influence and shape the research of many others in the disability field. Barnes and Ward (2005, p.6) stated that "the idea behind this model is that disability is solely biological and has medical causes... the medical model disregards there being any environmental or social factors as to why someone may be disabled", with similar arguments presented elsewhere (Szasz, 1956; Szasz, 1957; Hogan, 2019; Sandahl and Auslander, 2005). Ellis and Goggin (2015) argued that this model sees the person having an illness with a physical cause which can either be cured or managed. Thomas Couser and Mairs (1997, p.18) state that "this perspective of managing or curing means that people who have a disability are simply being supported to live and fit in with 'normal' life, while being supported they are also being seen as victims of biological injustice," Townsend, Smith, and Cushion (2015) have also stated the same. It is also thought that once the underlying problem has been cured then the overall disability will also disappear. The World Health Organisation's (WHO) definition of disability is that it is an 'umbrella term for any or all of an impairment of body structure or function, a limitation in activities, or a restriction in participation' (WHO, p.3, Cited in Ellis and Goggin, 2015; Shakespeare, 2012).

With this way of thinking, it has been argued that a disabled person is often referred to by their difference rather than them as a member of society (Sandahl and Auslander, 2005; Kielhofrier, 2009). Berg and Cassells (1992, p.23) comment on how the medical model also has an impact on social attitudes, exclusion, discrimination, and poverty leading to disability either being ignored altogether or downplayed. This has also been argued by other academics like Shakespeare (2012) and Barnes and Ward (2005). Swain, French, and Cameron (2003, p.64) state that by the medical model having an impact on social attitudes it "reinforces dominant ableist (normal) ideals and values". Smith and Perrier (2014, p.96) also suggest that the focus of normalisation of the body and

compliance with ableist standards creates a “hierarchy of power where disabled individuals can lose autonomy over their own bodies”.

In agreement with Swain, French, and Cameron (2003) and Smith and Perrier (2014), Haegele and Hodge (2016, p.193) also say that “the way disability is understood is important because the language people use to describe individuals with disabilities influences their expectations and interactions with them”. Barton (2009, p.39) also states that “language we use and the assumptions informing such discourses have been disablist and deficit-based”. Brittain (2004, p.432), goes on to state that the “conceptualizations of ability of individuals with disabilities can be routed back to the deficit-based definitions and perceptions provided by the medical model”. In conclusion, what the medical model is doing is fitting all disabled people¹ in to one box, which in turn is causing society to see disabled people as all being the same.

One of the main concepts that works in conjunction with the medical model is that of ableism. Over the years the depiction of ableism has changed; however, the overall understanding and definition has not changed. Fiona Kumari Campbell (2013, p.44) commented on how ableism refers to:

“a network of beliefs, processes, and practices that is projected as the perfect, species-typical, and therefore essential and fully human. Disability then is a cast as a diminished state of being human.”

More recently Ives, Clayton, Brittain, and Mackintosh (2021, p.3) commented that “ableism is the devaluation and disregard of disabled people by the prioritisation of the development of essential

¹ Throughout this research I will use the phrases ‘disabled person/s’, ‘disabled individual’, or ‘people with intellectual disabilities’. The use of this phrase comes out of the ‘social model’ of disability as the model which sees the person before their disability, as a disability is caused by society’s unwillingness to meet the needs of people with impairments. As a result, the term ‘disabled people’ is used to describe people with impairments who are disabled by barriers constructed by society. In contrast to this, past phrases such as ‘wheelchair bound’ or ‘person with a disability’ come out of the ‘medical model’ of disability and imply disability is something caused by the individual, rather than society (Disability Rights UK, 2022).

characteristics of a normative body". Bogart and Dunn (2019, p.650) also commented that "ableism [is] stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, and social oppression toward people with disabilities". However, a consequence of the social norm of being able – ableism – is disablism (Goodley *et al.*, 2012; Gappmayer, 2020). Campbell (2009, pp.3-4) commented that disablism is "a set of conscious or unconscious assumptions and practices that foster the different or unequal treatment of people because of their actual or presumed disabilities".

The effects of ableism and disablism is that society perceive these norms as natural, which in turn becomes an unquestioned ideal of a person (Campbell, 2009). It is argued that the ideal reinforces societies tendency to normalize people with disabilities (Thelen, 2015; Gappmayer, 2020). Recent disability studies have also noted how this is more visible in medical settings, where certain categories are desired of a person to fit in (Goodley *et al.*, 2012; Gibson, 2016; Gappmayer, 2020). These recent ideals of disability are woven into all theories of disability however, more commonly they are seen within the medical model of disability. Moreover, unlike the medical model which draws on disabled people conforming to ableist norms while being victims of life, the forthcoming social model aims to alter this way of thinking.

Social Model

However, in the mid-1960's the International Classification of Functioning Disability and Health (ICF), stated their own definition of disability. They stated that "disability is not just a medical or health condition" (ICF, p.4, Cited in Ellis and Goggin, 2015). With this shift in thinking the social model of disability was starting to be used, to explain disability. One of the main ideas with the social model is that 'people with disabilities cannot all be approached in the same way' (Oliver and Sapey, 1999, p.6), whereas the medical model thought of people fitting into boxes and approached disabled people as all being the same. In the 1960's there were many different social movements

happening (Sixties Britain - The National Archives, 2021). One such movement was the disabilities movement, which was made up of groups with a range of perspectives and voices. One such group was the Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS), which was a small Marxist-inspired action group (Shakespeare, 2018, p.12). It is down to UPIAS's analysis being published in academic articles by member Michael Oliver, that the 'social model' of disability came about. However, the original idea came from a small UPIAS booklet called 'Fundamental Principles,' in 1976 (Berghs, *et al*, 2019, p.1035). In this booklet the UPIAS state:

“...it is society which disables physically impaired people. Disability is something imposed on top of our impairments, by the way we are unnecessarily isolated and excluded from full participation in society” (UPIAS, 1976, cited by Shakespeare, 2018, p13).

From the above statement, there was a shift in thinking of disability, with an emphasis on social barriers excluding and making people disabled, rather than individual problems (Shakespeare, 2018, p.13). There are two overarching terms in the social model that are important to be aware of (Hughes, 2010):

1. Impairment: a long-term characteristic of an individual that affects their body, mind, or senses.
2. Disability: a result of exclusion because of the barriers society puts in the way.

However, the social model is not disregarding the need for medical interventions and treatments when required. Ellis and Goggin (2015, p.6), remind us that “disability is often dynamic,” that the very nature of “disability is often shape – shifting and hard to pin down!”. Following in the same vein is the language of disability. An example of the fluidity of disability language, is that in the United Kingdom the word 'disabled' is the more accepted term. However, in the United States and

other parts of the world the more accepted way to speak is to say 'people with disabilities' (Ellis and Goggin, 2015). Hughes and Paterson (1997, p.331) also remind us that the social model "has succeeded in de-medicalising and de-individualising disability."

Nonetheless, Thomas (*et al*, 2002, p.43) says that the social model "is one-dimensional." Therefore, both Thomas (2004) and Reindal (2008) talk about a refined version of the social model; the social-relational model. Reindal (2008) mentions that the social-relational model recognizes both personal and social effects of an impairment, yet still claims that disability is possible upon social conditions. There has also been some critique towards the social model by Bury (2010, p.1075), who stated that he does:

"... not believe that the 'social model' has really engaged with the real issues facing the vast majority of disabled people, and despite it's rhetoric and undoubted attractions for some, it has not produced a cogent approach which can serve the real practical needs of disabled people, or indeed the research community."

Harley and Palmer (2012) also criticise the social model for failing to address the impairment, which is seen as integral to the experience of disabled people. Mitra (2005), Braithwaite and Mont (2008), and Palmer (2011) all mention how these criticisms of the social model largely effect developing countries, as well as having "little attention ... given to disability in national poverty reduction strategies". Overall, what the social model has started to do is draw attention of what the disabled person can do and that they are not defined by their disability as the model highlights the fact of disability not being one dimensional.

Crip Theory

One word which has been seen as a form of abuse throughout the world is 'crip'. Wendell (1997, p.247) expressed how "not only the architecture, but the entire physical and social organization of life, assumes that we are either strong and healthy and able to do what the average able-bodied person can do, or that we are completely disabled, unable to participate in life." The Oxford English Dictionary 's (2021) definition of 'able-bodied' is "physically healthy, fit and strong in contrast to somebody who is weak or disabled". McRuer (2006, p16) says that "...disability is created by an oppressive system that has naturalized the concept of able-bodiedness". This is echoed by Campbell (2009, p.17) who expressed ableism being because of "from the moment a child is born, he/she emerges into a world where he/she receives messages that to be disabled is to be less than, a world where disability may be tolerated but in the final instance, is inherently negative. We are all, regardless of our status, shaped and formed by the politics of ableism."

However, the word is now being reclaimed by disabled people with terms like the 'crip theory' (McRuer, 2006). In a lot of literature, the concept of crip theory is often spoken about with the concept of 'queer theory' (McRuer, 2006; Bone, 2017; Fletcher and Primack, 2017; Berghs *et al.*, 2019). The success of queer theory has been that it has been able to make visible the invisibility of heterosexuality (Bone,2017). McRuer (2006) goes on to suggest that crip theory is the 'child' to queer theory. The biggest connection between the crip and queer theories is that they both question and challenge normality (Sandahl, 2003). The idea behind crip theory is to allow a community to reclaim a negative word and announce their non-normative status to challenge the dominant power of able-bodiedness (Inckle, 2013; Erevelles, 2014). By challenging the dominant power, crip theory is disputing the historical narratives which project compulsory able-bodiedness (Davidson, 2003). Bone (2017, p.1300) called for a "social space where identities could be formed... free from the normative constraints imposed by bipolar norms". Crip theory sets out to unsettle the key perceptions of ability by bridging the divide between impairment and disability. Crip theory

manages this bridging of the divide, by not prioritising any particular identity as superior. Rather the theory brings together all groups who have been excluded by normativity, and create a more inclusive, accessible, and non-normative society (Berger,2014).

Like many theories Crip theory too has been criticised. On one hand it has been criticised for its language. Kafer (2016, p. 21) states that “the term ‘crip’ still has the ability to make people feel uncomfortable and unwelcome”. However, on the other hand, Gahman (2017, p. 706) states that “those disabled people who choose to use it, the term ‘crip’ also proves to be conceptually powerful... and sundering in particular the hegemony of ableism”. It has also been argued that from an epistemological point of view, the reclaiming of the word ‘crip’, signals a shift in power from external forms (medical or legal) to a person’s right to use their own words or concepts (Okrent, 2015; Rydstrom, 2019). Either way, the main aim for McRuer’s (2006) crip theory is to strive for inclusivity in society.

Social Cognitive Theory

The final model of disability to be looked at is social cognitive theory. The idea behind the theory is that learning happens in a social setting with a “dynamic and reciprocal interaction of the person, environment and behaviour” (Bandura, 1986, cited by Worrell, 2018, p.30). One main element of social cognitive theory is the response-reinforcement of behaviour, both external and internal reinforcement. There is also one main central concept too, this being reciprocal determinism. The meaning behind reciprocal determinism is that there is a dynamic and reciprocal interaction of a person with a set of learned experiences, their environment, and behaviour to achieve goals (Bandura, 2005; Schunk, 2012). Bandura (2002, p. 273) stated that:

“by using a person’s learned experiences it influences a person’s unconscious reinforcements, expectations, and expectancies. All of these then go on to shape the

person to engage in a specific manor and the reasons why the person engages with that certain behaviour”

Green and Vervaeke (1996, p. 204) also state that “people do not act on beliefs, goals, aspirations, and expectations... Rather, activation of their network structure makes them do things”. Furthermore, Kolb and Whishaw (1998, p. 50) state that “people are agentic operators... agentic action shapes brain development and functioning throughout the life course”.

One example of how the social cognitive theory affects behaviour and agentic action is with the media coverage of the Paralympics on the able-bodied society. As a consequence of this, the viewer’s behaviour and agentic action towards disabled people changes, with them thinking that all disabled people are Paralympians and/or have overcome many physical challenges and are therefore an inspiration. Bandura (1999) explains why this could be the case when people see the media’s coverage of the Games. Bandura (1999, p.13) states that “individual differences in a personal determinant and performance resulting from curtailed variability are often misinterpreted as evidence”. Bandura (1999, p.13) also goes on to state that “these alternative perspectives on personal causation reflect more than differences in semantic labelling.” The viewer’s understanding and behaviour changes are typical with the social cognitive theory as Worrell (2018, p.31) states that a viewer’s “take-aways from a television program are no longer seen as only their personal commentary when the popular press reports on the same elements or findings”. Another example is of a young disabled person watching programs which depict disabled athletes. From viewing such media at a young age, the child is reinforced with the idea that they too should be either good at sport and/or become a Paralympian and get a gold medal. Chen, Feng, and Leung (2014, cited by Worrell, 2018, p. 31) say that “the media is a ‘major source’ of information from which children, in particular, learn and form their social views”. From these two examples it shows why representations of disability are so important to viewers of all ages and abilities.

Summary

Throughout the above section it can be seen that different models used to describe disability have evolved throughout history. However, it is important at this stage to acknowledge the impact they have on society and disability. The first model of disability looked at was the medical model. The main point to take away from this model is that it sees the disabled person as a victim of life who needs to be supported to live and fit in with a 'normal' life (Thomas Couser and Mairs, 1997). With Thomas Couser and Mairs's (1997) comment in mind it is important to know that this style of looking at disability has an impact on societies attitude and focus on the 'normal' body (Swain, French, and Cameron, 2003; Smith and Perrier, 2014). The next two models see disability as a persons' environment being their main barrier to accessing society, unlike the medical model (Wendell, 1997; Shakespeare, 2018). Ultimately, what both models are calling for is an inclusive environment, with the key note to take away being that they both challenge and question what 'normal' is (Sandahl, 2003; Shakespeare, 2018; Berghs *et al*, 2019). The final model is the Social Cognitive Theory, which can be seen having an impact in the three models looked before. The main message from this model is that societies beliefs, attitudes, and behaviour is impacted by external factors such as their environment or what they are exposed to (Bandura, 2005; Schunk, 2012; Worrell, 2018). With this in mind, it can help explain how by using models to explain disability it can have an impact on how society views disability (Bandura, 1999; Chen, Feng, and Leung, 2014). It is important to keep in mind as this research advances, that all four of these models play a crucial role in past research as well as shaping how this research will look going forward.

Disabled Sport

Introduction

For disabled people sport is a major keystone to gaining independence. Akkermans, (2016, p.1210) states that “sport is such a major keystone, as it not only has health benefits but also becomes a passion, which in turn gives their lives meaning”. The same statement was argued again by Szmelcer *et al.* (2018) a few years later. Carless *et al.* (2013) adds to this statement by saying that participation improves disabled people’s lives, particularly regarding social interaction, acceptance of their disability, self-esteem, and quality of life. DePauw and Gavron (2005, p.16) also state that “these forgotten or invisible athletes are gaining increased recognition as athletes first and persons with disabilities second”. The following chapter will therefore look at further literature which will aim to look further into the above statements. The chapter will also investigate Sir Ludwig Guttmann’s influence on disabled sport, the Olympic and Paralympic split, Paralympic classification, and the funding/provisions for disabled and Paralympic sport.

Sir Ludwig Guttmann

Given the importance of Sir Ludwig Guttmann’s development of disability sport, this section focuses upon past literature which has scrutinised the pivotal role of Guttmann in relation to the establishment of disability sport. In March 1939, Ludwig Guttmann arrived in England, fresh from medical school in Germany, to start a research fellowship at the Nuffield Department of Neurosurgery at the Radcliffe Infirmary, Oxford. However, in 1943 England was starting to see a number of personnel from World War II coming back with spinal injuries (Cooper and Nowark, 2011, p.11). Due to the increase of injured personnel, the British Government asked Guttmann to start a unit at Stoke Mandeville Hospital, which would be dedicated to spinal injuries (Akkermans, 2016, National Paralympic Heritage Trust, 2015). Nevertheless, as noted by Akkermans (2016), the attitude of Guttmann’s colleagues was one of confusion, as to why he would want to leave Oxford

University to be engulfed in the hopeless and depressing task of looking after traumatic spine paraplegics.

Silver (2012) states that in 1944, a unit at Stoke Mandeville, known as Ward X, was opened, with only 24 beds and not many resources; but Guttman, set about to change this. Guttman's daughter, Eva, stated that Guttman 'was a great believer in the power of sport and competition in physical, psychological, and social rehabilitation' (Eva Loeffler; cited in Akkermans, 2016, p.1210). Stahnisch and Tynedal (2012) say that to start off with Guttman had his patients take part in physical activities for medical benefits as well as for the social benefits which come with working in a team. The first three sports which the patients were encouraged to take part in were wheelchair polo – where walking sticks were used as well as a puck - wheelchair basketball, and the most popular sport among patients and the medical staff, archery. Guttman and Mehra (1973, p. 159) also state that "archery was the most popular sport on offer as it relied on upper body strength, meaning that the patients were able to build up their upper body strength and core whilst having fun." Archery was also immensely popular because it required upper body strength it meant that the patients could compete with their non-disabled counter parts.

In 1948, Guttman held the first ever Stoke Mandeville Games, with archery being the competition (Mandeville Legacy, 2014). Bailey (2008) says that since the 1948 Games, the Games were held each year, and every year that they were held they grew in size. Bailey (2008) goes on to mention that the Games not only grew in size, due to more Spinal Units in Great Britain taking part, but also by having Spinal Units from around the world also coming to take part. Brittain (2012, p. 56) also states that in 1952 "the Games became internationally recognised, when a team of spinal injured veterans came over from Holland to compete". In addition to the Games being internationally recognised, Schultke (2001, p.305) stated that "the Games also started on the same day as the 1952 Summer Olympic Games in London". Guttman's daughter, Eva Loeffler, stated that "it was always my dad's intention that his Games would one day be held alongside the Olympic Games" (cited in

Akkermans, 2016, p.1210). In 1960 Guttman's dream of equal play for both disabled and non-disabled athletes was realised. His dream was realised as the Games were held for the very first time outside of the United Kingdom in Rome, Italy. 1960 was also the very first time the Games had been held in the same country as the Olympic Games (Mandeville Legacy, 2014, National Paralympic Heritage Trust, 2015, Akkermans, 2016). With the help of Sir Ludwig Guttman, the Paralympic Games had been born.

Olympic and Paralympic Division

The term 'Para' in the word Paralympic comes from the Greek word meaning 'beside or alongside' (Bellieni, 2015, International Paralympic Committee, 2020). With this translation in mind, and the vision of Sir Ludwig Guttman of athletes being able to compete with their non-disabled counterparts (Mandeville Legacy, 2014, Akkermans, 2016), the supposed meaning, behind the Paralympics is that the Games are "parallel to the Olympics and illustrates how the two movements exist side-by-side" (International Paralympic Committee, 2020). Despite this meaning and the comment of the International Paralympic Committee, the Olympics and Paralympics do not run alongside one another. In fact, despite attempts after the Games in Rome 1960, of every Olympic and Paralympic Games being held in the same city, literature states that Paralympians are still seen as second-class citizens (Gold and Gold, 2007, Cheong, Khoo and Razman, 2016). Gold and Gold (2007, p.133) states that after the Tokyo 1964 Games "subsequent host cities refused to host the competitions and alternative locations had to be found, where a package of official support, finance and suitable venues could be assembled".

The refusal to host both the Olympic and Paralympic Games continued until it became compulsory at the Beijing Games in 2008 (Gold and Gold, 2007; Purdue, 2013). However, yet again this binding agreement does not see the Games running alongside each other, instead with a two-to-three-week gap. The question being raised by current literature (Purdue, 2013; Misener and Molloy, 2018)

is whether the Olympic and Paralympics should be put together as one big major event. One argument which Misener and Molloy mention is the current layout of the Paralympics being held two to three weeks after the Olympics is just as damaging as not showing them at all. Springer (2016) says that with the current layout the Paralympics become 'overshadowed' by the Olympics, with Gold and Gold (2007) also stating that they may even become an 'afterthought' for host cities. Gold and Gold (2007, p.140) also states a way around the current argument of layout by looking at the Commonwealth Games:

"The Commonwealth Games... integrate events for athletes with disabilities into the overall programme... All participants are classed as 'Elite Athletes', with some events designated for Elite Athletes with a disability".

On the other hand, however, despite the 'integrated model' working at the Commonwealth Games, Davies and Mackenzie (2014) explain that the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) are not keen on integrating the two Games. The main argument for the two committees being unsure is an economic one. The IOC and IPC say that "integration could lead to a decrease in attendance to the Games, which would lead to a fall in economic revenue" (International Olympic and Paralympic Committee cited in Bellieni, 2015; International Paralympic Committee, 2020. Bellieni (2015, p.44) states that the IOC and IPC fear this as "because most people still have prejudices against disability", as has also been argued by Gold and Gold (2007) and Purdue (2013). With this statement from the IOC and IPC it shows why organisers are not keen to include the Paralympics alongside the Olympics.

Classification

Since the early days of Sir Ludwig Guttmann holding the very first Stoke Mandeville Games, to it now being an International Paralympic Movement, Howe (2008, p.500) states how "disability

diagnosis has dramatically developed as well as the number of disability sporting events". Due to the development of disabled sporting events and medical advances, a medical and sporting classification system needed to be introduced to minimize sporting disadvantages on disabled athletes (Busse, 2014; Szmelcer *et al*, 2018). Classification is now at the forefront of competitive disabled sport. Thomas (2003, p.106) states that it is at the forefront "as it is the method that groups athletes into categories which enable 'fair' competition". Prior to 1992, the classification of disabled athletes was that they were classified according to their disability; however, since 1992, athletes have been classified according to a sport specific classification system, the International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health (ICF) (Thomas, 2003; Tweedy, Beckman and Connick, 2014). The new style of classification means that an athlete is classified according to their functional ability within the sport, rather than their clinical disability (Thomas, 2003; Busse, 2014; Szmelcer *et al.*, 2018).

Busse (2014, p.20) states that under the new classification system "the Paralympic Movement offers sport opportunities for athletes that have a primary impairment that belongs to one of the ten 'eligible' impairment types", with the work of Tweedy, Beckman and Connick (2014) arguing similar points regarding the aims underpinning this process. According to the ICF and the Paralympic Movement the ten 'eligible' impairment types are:

1. **Impaired muscle power** (Examples of conditions are: Para/Quadriplegia, Muscular Dystrophy, Polio, and Spina Bifida)
2. **Impaired passive range of movement** (Hypermobility, joint instability and acute conditions of reduced range of movement are excluded. For example Ehlers-Danlos syndrome)
3. **Limb deficiency** (Total or partial loss of bones or limbs due to trauma, illness, or congenital limb deficiency)
4. **Leg length difference** (Due to congenital deficiency or trauma)
5. **Short stature** (An Example is Dwarf Syndrome e.g. Achondroplasia)

6. **Hypertonia** (Examples are: Cerebral Palsy, Stroke, Multiple Sclerosis, Brain Trauma)
7. **Ataxia** (Examples are: Cerebral Palsy, Stroke, Multiple Sclerosis, Brain Trauma)
8. **Athetosis** (Examples are: Cerebral Palsy, Stroke, Multiple Sclerosis, Brain Trauma)
9. **Vision impairment** (Vision is impacted by either impairment of the eye structure, optical nerves or optical pathways, or visual cortex of the brain)
10. **Intellectual impairment** (Have a restriction in intellectual functioning and adaptive behaviour in which affects conceptual, social and practical adaptive skills required for everyday life. This Impairment must be present before the age of 18. For example, Down Syndrome)

(World Health Organization International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health, 2001; cited by Busse, 2014, p.20-21)

However, throughout the literature there are some reoccurring themes about the classification system being very much like the medical model of disability. Thomas (2003, p.106) argue that “whilst classification provides the vehicle by which disabled people compete, concerns surrounding the fairness of classification systems have been abounded”. For example, as DePauw and Gavron (2005, p.246) state:

“classification based on functional ability... is to provide for meaningful athletic competition based upon ability, not disability. Given the increased emphasis on ability and less on adaptation/modification... the more severely impaired tend to be eliminated from elite competition”

From further reading of current literature (Thomas, 2003; DePauw and Gavron, 2005; Houlihan and Malcolm, 2015), there is an ever-increasing need for more academic research into the fairness of the classification system within the Paralympic Movement. At present there is a lack of academic literature which up-to-date analysis of ~~with~~ the current classification of the Paralympics. Busse

(2014, p.64) stated that the “Paralympic classification system continuously changes to ensure for an equal and level playing field for all athletes of all ability”.

However, despite there being a lack of academic literature on up-to-date classification, the National Governing Bodies (NGB) of each sport represented in the Paralympics keeps their websites up to date with the new classification rules of their sport. One example of this is the NGB of Para-Swimming. British Swimming (2021) explain on their website the Para-Swimmers are classed in “three types of classification: Physical (S1-S10), Visual (S11-S13) and Intellectual (S14).” Another example is with Para-Archery, although unlike with swimming, it is the World Governing Body which update their website about classification; in this instance therefore, it is the World Archery Federation. World Archery (2021) states that “since London 2012 the way archers are now classified has changed.” It states that “Para Archery is now split into two classes, ‘open’ and ‘W1’.”, where ‘open’ “contains both standing and wheelchair archers... who may use body supports”, whereas ‘W1’ athletes “...use a bow limited to 45lbs... and may NOT use magnifying sights.” After further research looking at Para-Athletics, it has shown that due to the many numbers of classification classes, there is little information on it. However, after some more research a break down on the classification classes were documented on the Paralympics website, in full detail.

Funding and Provision

In 1995 the United Kingdom’s Sports Council started to give out funding from the Sports Lottery Fund of a total of up to £756 million (Bourn, 1998). The funding was the biggest form of money to be injected into sport from the public sector. At the beginning, the idea behind the funding was that it was destined to go to grass-root sport. However, Garrett (2007) suggests that a large percentage of grass-root sport success comes from the willingness, determination, honesty and ability of the clubs’ volunteers, who ultimately run the grass root sport clubs. Low *et al.* (2007) says that “the grass-roots volunteers are the supporting structure to Great Britain’s sporting success at

elite level.” However, funding to grass root sport is subject to them meeting the Department of Culture, Media and Sport’s (DCMS) aims (UK Sport, 2018), as illustrated below:

“... we will support the development of clubs which have the potential to develop a number of teams offering opportunities to progress to higher levels of competition... provide levels of coaching which welcomes and encourages everyone regardless of age or ability... recognise the volunteers on whom the clubs depend”. (DCMS, p.13; cited by Evans and Shaw, 2004)

This can be compared to the funding that Sport England (2020) state that they now receive of “£1.5 billion, although not all this funding comes from the Lottery alone. Girginov (2009, p.244-245) states that “...funding of sport was identified as fragmented and potentially unsustainable given the decline in National Lottery sales and increasing pressures on Local Authority budgets”.

Grix and Carmichael (2012) and Garrett (2007) suggest that a big part of grassroots sports gaining funding is if they are willing to follow DCMS’s aims. However, even with DCMS’s aims for grass root sport, most of the sport funding ends up going to elite sport. The DCMS’s reason for this is that “as a driver of the ‘feel good factor’ and the image of the UK abroad; as a driver for grass roots participation, whereby sporting heroes inspire participation” (DCMS, 2002; cited by Grix and Carmichael, 2012, p.75). Dejong (*et al*, 2010) suggested that the DCMS and Sport England were funding sport by using the ‘double pyramid theory’, a concept which has been supported elsewhere (Hanstad and Skille, 2010). Van Bottenburg (*et al*, 2013, p. 329) stated the ‘double pyramid theory’ best explained elite sport funding as:

“thousands of people practising sport at the base, lead to a few Olympic Champions and, at the same time the existence of champion role models encourages thousands of people to take up some form of sport”

However, Gold and Gold (2007, p. 138) have stated that “the funding elite sports get shows when athletes come together to compete on the world stage at both the summer and winter Olympics and Paralympic Games.” Over the last 6 summer Olympic and Paralympic Games, since the sport funding began, Great Britain has been within the top ten on the medal table for both Games. On the other hand, however, there is a funding difference for the Paralympics compared to the Olympics. For example, for the London 2012 Games the Olympics were funded £256,588,649 compared to the Paralympics who were funded £47,085,250 (HLST Learning Legacies, 2010). Although, as Sir Philip Craven (2016 cited by Mauerberg-DeCastro, Campbell and Tavares, 2016), head of the International Paralympic Committee (IPC), states “...the funding given to the Paralympics changes depending on the results of athletes performance at the previous Games.” The same statement was also made by Thomas Bach (2016, cited by Boykoff and Mascarenhas, 2016), head of the International Olympic Committee (IOC). Therefore, due to the funding being so fluid in its amount for both Games, there is little research that has been done and/or kept up to date. Yet the overall figures for both Games can be accessed through the UK Sport website; UK Sport (2020) have stated the postponed Tokyo Games funding for both games as well as the intended funding for the Paris 2024 Games. Funding for the Tokyo Olympics is set to be £221,055,416 and for Paris 2024 the Olympics are looking at receiving £213,371,575 in funding costs. This is compared to the Paralympic Games, who for Tokyo will only receive £55,541,349 in funding, and set to gain a fraction more for the Paris games, at £61,817,905. Sir Philip Craven (cited by Legg, 2018, p.161) states that “50%” of the funding which helps elite Para athletes, comes from major partners as well as the Agitos Foundation, which was set up with the aim of being able to help fund and support the vision and development of the Paralympic Movement.

Summary

This chapter brings us back round to the vision Sir Ludwig Guttmann had in 1948, with the first Games for injured personnel. Throughout literature on the Paralympic Games, Guttmann is referred to as the 'Father of the Paralympic Movement' (Farrar, 2012, Collis Pallatt, 2013). The reference of 'Father' has been due to these three key points made within this chapter. The first key point being that Guttmann set up a ward at Stoke Mandeville Hospital due to the increase of injured personnel with spinal injuries coming back to England during and after the Second World War. The second and most significant key point is Guttmann's belief in the power of sport and competition, for rehabilitation both physically and socially. The final key point to make about Guttmann in this chapter is how his passion and belief of sport for rehabilitation, enabled the Stoke Mandeville Games, in 1952, to become internationally recognised, resulting in the Paralympics and Paralympic Movement there is today.

Leading on from Guttmann's belief, it is important to remember from the Olympic and Paralympic Divide is why Guttmann used the word 'Para' within the Paralympics. The Paralympics are called the 'Para-lympics' as it was intended, they would run parallel to the Olympic Games. However, the two Games do not run parallel to each other. Not only do the Paralympics not run parallel to the Olympics as intended, but it was not until 2008 at the Beijing Paralympic Games that it became compulsory for the host city of the Olympics to hold the Paralympic Games also. The last key point from this section and one to keep an eye on over the coming years, is the argument of whether the Olympic and Paralympic Games should be integrated like the Commonwealth Games are currently.

When it comes to classification, within disability and Paralympic sport, it can be a confusing topic however there are some key points to remember. The first being that, due to the development of disabled sporting events and medical advances, a medical and sporting classification system needed to be introduced. The idea behind this system being introduced, was that it would avoid disabled athletes being disadvantaged as sport would become a level playing field for all. Since 1992, the new style of classification means that an athlete is classified according to their functional ability

within the sport, rather than their clinical disability. However, the system is appearing to be more like the medical model of disability, leading to more severely impaired athletes being eliminated from elite competition.

The funding for sport is often very overwhelming, however within this chapter and the subsection on funding and provisions there are three simple key points to take away. The first key point to take away is that in 1995, the Sports Lottery Fund gave out the biggest form of money to be given out to the development of sport by the public sector. The second key point is that by 2020 other funding was also being given out by local authorities as well as the National Lottery. Local authorities are also having to give funding out due to a drop in National Lottery ticket sales. The third and most important funding key point to take away, is that the Olympics and Paralympics are not equally funded. The amount of funding each Games get, comes down to how well the athletes have performed in the previous Games and where the country has placed on the medal table. Yet, until prejudices and attitudes towards disabled people change, there may be many more arguments to come on the inclusion of the Paralympics joining the Olympics and the fairness of the Games overall.

Disability and the Media

Introduction

Throughout the recent chapters of this literature review it has focused on theoretical models of disability, and disabled sport and its background. As Smart (2004, p.25) states, the models of disability “serve a number of important purposes”; some of the purposes Smart (2004) identifies are that:

- Models of disability provide definitions of disability

- Models of disability provide explanations of casual attribution and responsibility attributions
- Models guide the formulation and implementation of policy
- Models of disability shape the self-identity of disabled people
- Models of disability can cause prejudice and discrimination

It is equally important to know about disabled sport and its theoretical background before focusing on disability and disability sport in the media. Bunbury (2019) suggests that by knowing the background to disability and having an overview to it means that, in turn, it reduces a person's unconscious bias. Therefore, the follow chapter will look at disability and the media. This will be broken down into three sub-headings of: 1) disability and the media 2) disability and television; and 3) disability sport and television.

Disability and the Media

Over the years and with the advancement in all forms of media types, Ellis and Goggin (2015, p6) mention how the media "has been a key platform... that educates society on a number of topics". One such topic the media has a large impact upon is the representation of different 'special' population groups within society. One such group is disability. However, the media's portrayal of disability, in all forms, is negative and often is limited (Head, 1954; Welch, 1994; Ellcessor and Kirkpatrick, 2017). Klobas (1988, p4) found that when disability is shown within the media they concentrate on "blindness, wheelchair use, deafness, amputees, developmental disabilities, and small stature". Twelve years on Kloba's findings and fifty-five years on from Head's comment about the portrayal of disability, Nelson (2000) found that very little had changed. Nelson (2000, p.185) found that the media use six stereotypes within their portrayal of disability, "the victim, the hero, the threat, unable to adjust, unable to be cared for, and one who shouldn't have survived." Nelson (2000) felt that compared to the era when Kloba carried out his research, the main media tool used

to influence society was television. Therefore, Nelson changed Kloba's main headings of impact to incorporate a more educated society. Worrell (2018, p.5) continues from Nelson's work to state that "the majority of characters with a disability fall into one of the four main categories; the victim, the hero, the villain, and the fool". Worrell (2018) changed the main categories used in the media for portrayal of disability as it was felt that the work of Head (1954), Kloba (1988) and Nelson's (2000) work of portrayal was using the medical model of disability. Worrell (2018) felt that they used this style of model as the categories fitted disabled people into boxes.

The previous work done by Nelson and Worrell, has been influential in further research of stereotypes of disability within the media. Each researcher found similar categories, which the media use to portray disability. However, this chapter will extend upon briefly the categories stated by Worrell, by discussion of past literature, which has also looked upon the respective stereotypes.

The 'Victim'

With the four categories in mind, Cumberbatch and Negrine (1992, p.63) explain that 'victim' refers to victims of criminal or violent behaviour. Signonelli (1989, p6) stated that "often, people with disabilities are really victims of life, and they are failures, whose lives revolve around their disability and dependence on others". At present the media's portrayal of disability is often as the victim compared to the other three categories. The portrayal of the 'victim' comes as disabled individuals are more likely to be victims in life and overall failures; disabled people are four to ten times more at risk to be a victim of crime compared to those without a disability (Harrell, 2015). With the media's portrayal of the 'victim', Nelson (2000, p.186) argues that this portrayal shows that "individuals with disabilities are often seen as... the 'focus of telethons' or being seen as weak and needing a lot of external help for survival". Lynch and Thomas (1994, p8) also argue that that these "emotionally-laden campaigns... can be viewed as prime examples of promoting the victim concept." Consequently, the concept of 'victim' ends up becoming imbedded in the public's

everyday conversation. If the word 'victim' is not used specifically then other synonymous words are also used. Words used which are associated with the 'victim' concept are casualty, sufferer, martyr, patient, and/or invalid (Landau, 1977). However, what this concept does not emphasise is for the potential of the disabled individual being independent; or allowed to have individuality from each other.

Given this, Emener (1991, p10) stated that institutions who are involved with disabilities should use the "empowerment approach to facilitate and maximize opportunities for individuals... to have control and authority over their own lives". The empowerment model sets about cancelling out the concept of disabled people being the 'victim'. The empowerment model focuses on equipping the individual with the skills and the encouragement to be representative for self-change; instead of a 'victim' of their circumstances needing to depend on others (Imrie, 1997). Overall, the empowerment model is another way of looking at disability through a social model lens, which was explained in greater detail in the previous chapter on theories of disability.

The 'Hero'

Worrell (2018) comments on the portrayal of the disabled individual being seen as the 'hero'. Worrell (2018, p.5) states how this could be "regarded as uniformly positive in nature." Zhang and Haller (2013) found that the term 'hero' and the medias portrayal of 'supercrip' and 'superhuman' was seen as empowering. However, it has also been argued that the term 'supercrip' and 'superhuman' is often seen as a positive by society, as the term suggests that a disabled person can accomplish mundane, taken-for-granted tasks as if they were massive accomplishments (Kama, 2004; Ellis and Goggin, 2015). On the other hand, however, Kama (2004, p.450) also stated how this portrayal may also be seen as a negative, as it could "construct the idea that disability is something that needs to be overcome or that someone can overcome their disability with enough determination." Kama's ideas are also echoed within both factual and fictional storylines. It is often

thought throughout these storylines that disabled people who 'rise above' the experience of disability can earn the right to be a 'honorary non-disabled' (Sandell, Delin, Dodd, and Gay, 2010). Delin (2002, p.90) also stated that "when people become heroic enough, they transcend disability, their disability is forgotten and emphasis is thrown on what they achieve ... it gives rise to the 'see the ability, not the disability'".

However, the idea of disability being something that needs to be overcome (Kama, 2004), it could be argued that the term 'hero' links back to the medical model. The link between the two comes as it could be thought that disabled people who need to overcome their disability, are simply being aided to fit in with 'normal' life and ableist-norms (Thomas Couser and Mairs, 1997). There is also a link between the term and the medical model, in the way the media portray disabled people; by showing disability as being risen above and enabling disabled people the right to be an 'honorary non-disabled' (Sandell, Delin, Dodd, and Gay, 2010). This way of the media portraying disabled people links with the medical model as it could suggest that once the underlying problem has been risen above, then the overall disability will disappear. Although, it could be argued that the way in which disabled people are being given the right to be seen as 'honorary non-disabled' and portrayed in a way which allows for their ability to be seen rather than their disability (Delin, 2002), links the term 'hero' with the crip theory. The link comes as, the term is enabling disabled people to challenge the dominant power of able-bodiedness, by making visible the invisible (Inckle, 2013; Erevelles, 2014; Bone, 2017). Overall, the term 'hero' is dynamic – like disability (Ellis and Goggin, 2015) – with no one theoretical lens to look at it with.

The 'Villain'

Another portrayal of disability in the media is the 'villain', someone who is seen as evil and threatening to society (Nelson, 2000). The portrayal of the villain for disabled people is often shown as the person being criminal or dangerous to individuals, meaning they are marginalised by society

(Signorielli, 1989; Worrell, 2012). One example of a disabled villain, which society is introduced to at a young age is J.M. Barrie's Captain Hook (Moe, 2012). Dahl (1993, p.78) states how "Captain Hook, who is a hand amputee, is portrayed as evil and a villain to J.M. Barrie's Peter Pan". The media, in either form, portray disabled people as the 'villain' as they feel they portray what is happening in the real world. The media portray the disabled community as "railing against their 'fate' and vow to destroy a world inhabited by 'normals' (Nelson, 1994; Kane, 2018). The thoughts of Nelson (1994) and Kane (2018) link back to the idea of the medical and social models of disability and how it is the environment that is the barrier to a disabled person and not themselves.

On one hand, however, the media's portrayal of disabilities being the criminal and the villain is incorrect. Diefenbach (1997) comments on how there is no real evidence to say that disabled people have carried out anymore crimes than that of the rest of the population. On the other hand, however, research has found that there are more disabled criminals in jail than that of the overall population (Bronson and Berzofsky, 2015). Overall, the image being received by society from the media is that disability is what nightmares are made from (Nelson, 1994, p72).

The 'Fool'

The final of Nelson's (2000) media portrayal categories is 'fool'. Often, characters are depicted as the 'fool' due to having an intellectual or a learning disability (Cumberbatch and Negrine, 1992; Worrell, 2018). One example of this representation is with Steinbeck's 'Of Mice and Men', with the character Lennie. Chaloupka (2017) states how this character "panders to popular fears about people with cognitive disabilities" and how Lennie's character "is a child or an animal in a man's body". Chivers (2017, p403) argues that the complexity of disability is "deliberately written out of a representational system leaving a gap that is both social and aesthetic".

Due to a lack of current research of the category of 'fool' within the media, this chapter has had to look back in history for the use of the word 'fool' as entertainment. One of the definitions from the Oxford English Dictionary (1989) for the category 'fool' is:

"A jester or clown, one retained in a royal court or noble household as a source of casual entertainment, traditionally dressed in a particoloured costume including a hood or cap adorned with bells and ass's ears and carrying a bauble."

Matzler (2016) also comments on how, in the Middle Ages, people who were seen to be a 'fool' were now starting to be used as jesters, as this was seen as a sign of wealth and status. However, Smith (2020, p.1041) states how "prior to people with intellectual disabilities as a means of entertainment... they were usually tasked with other jobs, like delivering messages or taking care of animals." Yet Bernuth (2006) comments that many of these tasks would have required a certain level of skill and mental acuity, those of which people with intellectual disabilities would not have, meaning they were confined to the role of jester or 'fool'. Bernuth (2006, p.298) goes on to state that due to the confinement of 'fool', "...caregivers or 'keepers' would be employed to look after the jester". The term and understanding of the category 'fool' has not changed since the Middle Ages. As Ross (1997, p.676) states "characters with disabilities are seen as 'disabled' first and 'human' second, reducing the humanness of... characters".

In addition, Worrell (2018, p.6) comments on how the media portrays individuals as the fool, as disadvantaged and who are seen as strange or bizarre. When the media does broadcast disability – whether that be fact or fiction – disabled people are not commonly part of any discussion regarding disability. This is more common for those with intellectual disabilities, whose family, or societies views of them are portrayed rather than the views of the disabled person. Carter and Williams (2012, p.220) express that at the Special Olympics in 2009 "all reporters and producers agreed [they] should approach coaches, team leaders, and chaperons before the athletes". It could be

argued that this is the way the media portrays disability because, their routine emphasis is to represent fit and healthy bodies (Allday, 2009). DePauw (1997, p.46) suggests how more portrayal of disability in the media could 'invisibilize' disabilities. One such coverage was that of the Special Olympics in 2009. The coverage of these Games was shown on local evening news bulletins (Carter and Williams, 2012), and focused on athletes who were thought by the media to be 'characters' (Grey-Thompson, 2001). All in all, the depiction of 'fool' in the media is still being portrayed, albeit not in a direct way.

Summary

Throughout the above four subheadings, this chapter has looked at the categories used by the media to portray disabled characters. Yet while representation of disability in the media has increased from 0.4% in the 1950's to 11% in 2010, Worrell (2018, p.6) states that media has "maintained a relatively negative portrayal across time with interspersing of positive and/or supercrip portrayals". With Worrell's (2018) statement in mind, it shows how the media is allowing society and the disabled society the power and permission to 'see the ability, and not the disability' (Delin, 2002). However, what this chapter has also shown is that the media has a big influence on how society also views disabled people in everyday life. For example, when the media shows disabled people as the 'hero' it is showing society that all disabled people can 'rise above' their disability no matter what, for they are 'superhuman' (Sandell, Delin, Dodd, and Gay, 2010).

Disability Sport and the Media

Introduction

Despite the above stats and increase of disability in the media, there remains an unconscious bias of prejudice, labelling, status loss, and discrimination towards disability (Link and Phelan, 2001).

Being able to normalize the unconscious bias towards disability is still an ongoing battle. However, Jackson *et al.* (2020, p.440) states that “the role of the media... is critical in raising global attention to sport and social justice”. One stand-alone media documentary which challenges disability perceptions was ‘The Rising Phoenix’, which was launched to 190 countries a year before the Tokyo Paralympics. The documentary was to show the Paralympic Movement as well as show off disability outside of a Paralympic year (Kolotouchkina *et al.*, 2021) - yet this type of documentary is few and far between. Goodley *et al.* (2019, p.973) argues this should not be the case and that disability “is both a signifier of inequity and the promise of something new and affirmative”. This sub-chapter will therefore look at how the media portrays disability sport generally as well as the Paralympics.

Disability Sport and the Media

Disability sport is impacted greatly by the media, as they focus on a disabled athletes’ physical disability and obstacles they have had to overcome to get where they are today; by doing this, the media are unconsciously using the medical model of disability (Smith and Bundon, 2017). Hunt (1966, p.56) notes how “having a different body, because of a disability, and therefore, being included in the ‘minority’ groups versus a ‘normal majority’... leads to discrimination and even oppression”. Kolotouchkina *et al.* (2021, p.256) states how the mass media’s dependence on the medical model for disability sport as well as disability is “discriminative because of the lack of ability or on the basis of imperfect or abnormal body are defined within the critical disability theory as ‘disablism’”.

In light of this, the idea of the ‘social relational’ model is to encompass and extend disablism by suggesting that people can experience many forms of social oppression. For example, structural disablism and indirect or direct psycho-emotional disablism comes from relationships with structures and human beings, not the individuals’ mindset (Smith and Bundon, 2017). Thomas (2007, p.72, cited by Hanisch, 2013) stated there is an “interacting and compounding relationship between psycho-emotional disablism and the imposition of restrictions on activity in employment,

education, and other social arenas.” Examples of how psycho-emotional disablism looks like within society are (Thomas, 2017, p.67):

- Being stared at by strangers at a leisure centre
- Having jokes made about an impairment during a gym session
- Seeing negative images of impairments on exercise posters
- Having to put up with either intended or unintended patronising comments when training for a sporting event

Hanisch (2013, p.5) expresses a strong statement of the “association between psycho-emotional wellbeing and social participation”. Smith and Bundon (2017, p.12) also state that “not only wellbeing can be damaged, but limits can also be placed on what a disabled person can do and become”. An example of how the media effects a disabled persons’ psycho-emotional wellbeing unconsciously is made visible in Kolotouchkina *et al* ‘s (2021) research. Kolotouchkina *et al.* (2021, p.256) state that the “media coverage of the Special Olympics in Leicester in 2009, for people with learning disabilities were depicted... as ‘largely sympathetic’ ... as they are dependent people... who rely profoundly on the assistance of others”. Yet again Kolotouchkina *et al.* ‘s (2021) research found that the stereotypes the media portray of disabled people doing sport links back to Nelson’s (2000) research of the ‘superhuman’ and ‘supercrip’. These stereotypes in turn then effect the overall participation and psycho-emotional wellbeing of disabled people taking part in physical activity of any kind (Berger, 2008; Smith and Bundon, 2017; Kolotouchkina *et el*, 2021).

Another influencer on an individual’s psycho-emotional wellbeing and a barrier to participation in sport for disabled people, is the idea of ‘ableism’. The idea of ‘ableism’ is that the impact of external factors creates social poverty and exclusion amongst certain populations of society (Brittan *et al*, 2020). A barrier to participation is formed as ‘ableism’ reinforces the idea that ‘non-disabled’ people are ‘normal’ and more superior (Smith *et al*, 2021). This barrier to participation was

highlighted during the Coronavirus Pandemic. During the Pandemic a number of online and home-based physical activities became readily available, with the aim to maintain societies health and wellbeing during the nationwide lockdowns (Hammami *et al*, 2020). One example – which was aimed at primary school aged children – was daily online Physical Education (PE) lessons designed to keep children active and enable them to continue receiving - the Government’s guideline for all children – at least 60 minutes of physical activity (University of Bristol, 2023). Although, despite the guideline being for all children, Fitzgerald *et al* (2020, p. 34) stated that it was “...evident that these classes are designed delivered in a way that does not reflect the diversity of young people who we might expect to be included in mainstream PE”.

Another example of a barrier to participation – which was highlighted even more during and post-Pandemic – is the exposure of disabled sport on television. Rees *et al* (2019, p.377) notes how “...disabled athletes are less visible in the media than non-disabled athletes”. The visibility of all sport was reduced during the Pandemic; however, the media was used as a key mechanism to reconfirm the sports society expect to see. The media gained this key role as they showed reruns of key sporting moments and interviews with athletes, which cemented what sports were valued by society (Rees *et al*, 2019; Fitzgerald *et al*, 2020). As with the pre-pandemic period, the productions shown by mass-media prioritised professional able-bodied sport, which in turn allowed normative and dominant ideals to be valued (Hargreaves and Anderson, 2016; Kiuppis, 2016; Fitzgerald *et al*, 2020). Overall, what the Pandemic and the portrayal of disability sport amplified was the divide between the able-bodied and disabled communities, as well as the vast differences of disabled and non-disabled sport.

As a consequence, the above examples of sport in the media from recent years, draws attention back to the impact of ‘ableism’. Focus is drawn back to the idea of ‘ableism,’ as the construction of the normative body and ability, and the marginalising of disability (Campbell, 2009; Wolbring, 2012; Martin, 2013; Ives *et al*, 2019) are shown throughout the media’s portrayal of disability. The portrayal of disability sport in the media overall shares an air of ‘ableism’ and reinforces an invisible

framework that positions disabled people as inferior and who are unable to achieve at the same level as their able-bodied counterparts (Lynch *et al*, 2020; Alfrey and Jeanes, 2021). In general, the portrayal of disability sport in the media echoes how disability is positioned in society.

Paralympic Sport and the Media

When reviewing past literature of the Paralympics and media coverage, it has shown the need for this research thesis as it has shown that media coverage still needs to change. An example of how coverage still needs to change comes after research which was carried out post the coverage of the London 2012 Paralympic Games (Pullen *et al.*, 2020). It was found that coverage of competitions which included athletes using racing wheelchairs or advanced technologies for limb impairment got 69% of the total airtime coverage of the Games; however, those competitions of which the athletes had other severe disabilities, were hardly given any airtime or coverage (Pullen *et al.*, 2020). Bush *et al.* (2013, p. 643) also states that Paralympic coverage is done the way it is so that it is “coalesced to make the event understandable”. In addition, the media reinforce ableist norms in their portrayal of disability but moreover their portrayal of Paralympic sport. Gilbert and Schantz (2012, p. 229) express their reasoning for this:

“...a powerful, but hidden, sense of ‘revulsion’ towards Paralympic athletes from the media... that some people are consciously or unconsciously repulsed by the disabled body and the... media are no exception... the media especially the sports media, attempt to hide anyone whose body does not conform to societal ‘norms’ ... largely because the sports media are used to reporting on ‘the perfect bodily form and the perfect performance.’”

A similar comment was also made by Allday (2009) who suggested that “the main emphasis of the media’s portrayal of disabled athletes is to concentrate on fit and healthy bodies”.

Despite these figures and the criticism of the overall coverage of the 2012 Paralympic Games, Bailey (2008, p.36) argues that “Paralympic sport has a far-reaching impact on the attitudes towards... disabilities, promoting inclusion, and bringing down barriers and stereotypes”. One example given, is that there were only 400 athletes from 23 countries that competed in 8 sports at the first Paralympics in Rome in 1960; yet, in 2016, the Rio Games had over 4000 athletes’ representing 160 countries in 22 different sports and disciplines (Bailey, 2008). Hodges *et al.* (2014) also comments on the importance of the mass media and a shift that happened for the London 2012 Games compared to that of the 2000 Sydney or even the 2008 Beijing Paralympic Games. Hodges *et al.* (2014, p.20) argues that:

“The contribution of Channel 4, who had exclusive rights to the Paralympic coverage of London 2012... highlighted the impact of the advertising campaigns such as ‘Meet the Superhumans’ and ‘We’re the Superhumans’... which gave society anticipation for the London 2012 and Rio 2016 Paralympic Games to come”

McGillivray *et al.* (2021, p.22) also states how the advertising campaigns paved the way “to the British Paralympic team delivering a new perspective on the identity of Para-Athletes, blending their athletic performance and daily life experiences for all of society to see, including the negative as well as the positive”. Kolotouchkina *et al.* (2021, p.2) also stated how Channel 4 “ran a nationwide search to hire presenters, editorial, and technical staff with disabilities to carry out these campaigns”. Kolotouchkina *et al.* (2021, p.2) therefore stresses how “the role of mass media in general, and particularly of television... and social platforms is essential for the development and globalization of the Paralympic movement”. On the other hand, however, Whannel (2014, p.773) warns that the:

“celebration of global sports events, enhanced by social media and smartphones, exercises such an impact in the media that it makes it ‘temporarily difficult for society to discuss anything else... they are drawn in as if by a vortex which only comes around every four years to be spat back out again two weeks later.’”

Brittain (2016, p 68) adds to Whannel’s (2014) comment by stating how “the Paralympic Games is often the only time that disability sport receives any kind of national media coverage in countries around the world.” Brittain (2016, p.68) goes on to add that the “... lack of exposure has numerous knock-on effects. It limits the visibility of disability sport, therefore lessening the possibility of non-participating people with disabilities becoming aware of it or inspired to follow or take part themselves.” The lack of representation in the media results in any young disabled person, who is interested in sport, having few disabled athletes to look up to as a role model. In turn, this could also lead them to have a non-disabled athlete as a possible inspiration and role model. As a consequence, this could then lead to the young disabled person modelling themselves and measuring their sporting ability on their non-disabled role model. All in all, this would result in a barrier to their overall sport participation, as they would see their sporting ability as inferior compared to their non-disabled counterparts.

Given the differences of the highlight of the coverage, it is important to understand the differences of the philosophy and ideology of the production styles for the channels – the BBC and Channel 4 – as it has been argued in past literature (Born, 2002; Kerr, 2013; Merrill, 2021). Channel 4 and the BBC have different types of funding. The BBC’s type of funding comes from licence fees, compared to Channel 4’s, which comes from advertising. The two broadcasters also have different forms of supervisory structures. Channel 4 has external regulations by the Independent Television Commission (Born, 2002; Ofcom, 2024), compared to the BBC who self-regulate via the BBC Board of Governors and The Office of Communications (Ofcom) (BBC, 2024). In addition, to the differences

in funding and supervisory structures, they also have differences in their remits. The BBC's remit is (BBC, 2024):

“to act in the public interest, serving all audiences through provision of impartial, high-quality and distinctive output and services which inform, educate and entertain”

In contrast, Channel 4's governed 'public service' remit, that was agreed by Parliament and enshrined in legislation, sets out to (Channel 4, 2024):

“... champion unheard voices, to innovate and take bold creative risks, to inspire change in the way we lead our lives, to stand up for diversity across the UK.”

However, the lack of representation is not just in television media, but also printed media through the photographs they show. Hardin *et al* (2006) found that photographs of disabled athletes are depicted far less, especially age or gender – specific disabled athletes who could be seen as role models for disabled women and children (Hardin *et al*, 2001; Brittain, 2017). Brittain (2017) also found that despite the 2012 Games having been at 'home', the British newspapers gave four and a half time more coverage to the Olympics and they showed four time as many photographs, which were 25 percent bigger than the photos shown of the Paralympics. As a result, the lack of representation in all form of media denies disabled people the chance to have a role model that best represents them, as well as reinforcing ableism ideals and the feeling that non-disabled sport is of greater importance.

Summary

From the evidence in this chapter of coverage of disability sport, and Paralympic sport in the media, as well as the evidence shown from the previous chapters on disability sport, and the theoretical models of disability, it has shown how and why this research needs to be carried out. It has shown that there is still the need for more research to be done in this area, but also that there is some much-needed change to still happen and problems still needing to be highlighted.

There are a few key messages to take away from the literature review. The first of many important messages to keep at the forefront of the mind is that disability is not one dimensional (Ellis and Goggin, 2015) and that not all disabilities can be tarnished with the same brush. Another take-away message of disability overall is that the language society use can disable a person just as much as the interactions. In the same way language can disable a person, so too can the overuse of models of disability, as overuse can increase prejudice and discrimination in society (Smart, 2004).

However, the media has a key role to play in changing the above key points, and changing societies views (Ellis and Goggin, 2015). The role the media plays comes from the productions they show, and it has the potential to influence societies behaviour and interactions towards disability (Bandura, 1999; Chen, Feng and Leung, 2014; Worrell, 2018). Moreover, what past research has shown is how the media's coverage of the Paralympics has the ability to not only change the United Kingdom's attitudes to disability, but societies attitudes globally, by promoting inclusion (Jackson *et al*, 2020; Kolotouchkina *et al*, 2021).

Overall, until change can be made to societies prejudices and attitudes little will happen to aid inclusion within sport and society (Link and Phelan, 2001). These key messages show why further research is needed. The following chapters will aim to look further into the change that needs to happen, and outline changes that could be made in the future.

Methodology

Introduction

The following chapter will explain the methodological underpinnings of the current study - 'Why Channel 4 and the British Broadcasting Company portray disability and disability sport differently?' The chapter will explain why qualitative methods were used to address the research question, as well as why two sets of participants were used to gain the understanding. In addition, the chapter sets out the procedures taken to collect, analyse and report the data. Finally, the chapter will explain the issues of the research including the ethical issues that were considered.

Ontological and Epistemological Considerations

The style of research used to gain the answer to the research question was qualitative. Qualitative research was carried out in line with Guba and Lincoln's (1994) arguments regarding research paradigms. Guba and Lincoln (1994, p.107) state that a paradigm is:

"A set of basic beliefs (or metaphysics) ... and a worldview that defines, for its holder, the nature of the 'world', the individual's place in it, and the range of possible relationships to that world and its parts."

Sparkes and Smith (2014, p9) also comment on how "basic beliefs, assumptions and postulates of a paradigm are learned via the processes of socialisation". Similarly, Gull (2011, p309) argues that:

"Questions set our destination, but they often also set the direction or path. Questions do not arise out of thin air. Rather our questions come from us (the researchers) and

are influenced by a host of factors including our training, experiences, and immediate surroundings.”

From the fundamentals set out by their chosen paradigm, a researcher is able to respond to the question set in different ways (Keane and Baird, 2005). For this research project a qualitative style of approach was used. From all the points raised above, three paradigmatic considerations arise for researchers to use; these are (Sparkes and Smith, 2014, p10):

1. Ontology – What kind of being is the human being?
2. Epistemology – What is the relationship between the inquirer and the known?
3. Methodology – How do they know the world or gain knowledge of it?

For research, such as this, which is qualitative, the ontological question is either relativist or internal. A qualitative question more often than not, is made up of “social reality... and shaped in ways that make it fluid and multifaceted” (Sparkes and Smith, 2014, p12). However, it is useful to be mindful as a researcher that the mind plays a foundational role in the shaping or constructing of social reality, and therefore what exists is not independent of, but dependent on our minds (Smith,1989). On the other hand, Sparkes and Smith (2014, p11) also remind researchers to be mindful that this:

“Does not mean that the mind ‘creates’ the world objects or what people say or do... it means that how we give meaning to objects and how we interpret the movements and utterances of other people... are shaped by the determine categories of the mind, for example, language and cultural symbolism”.

This thesis used a relativist approach to ontology. Furthermore, due to the researcher’s position of being immersed in the disabled community, the overall approach which was used was that which

appreciates the existence of multiple realities. The reasoning for this approach was because there are many answers to the same question, as different disabled people in society will have their own opinion to the outcome of the question.

Epistemology is the theory of knowledge and deals with how knowledge is gathered and from which sources. However, in terms of research, like this thesis, the view of the world and of knowledge adopted strongly influence a researcher's interpretation of data (Flick, 2002). However, it is important to remember with qualitative research that the information collected is not just 'out-there', independent of inquires being made (Sparkes and Smith, 2014). Qualitative research is seen as a subject–subject relationship compared to quantitative research which is seen as a subject–object relationship. Smith (1989, p26) states that “there can be no separation of the researcher and the researched, and values always mediate and shape what is understood”. Sparkes and Smith (2014, p13) go on from Smith's (1989) comment to state that:

“The knower and the known are inter-dependent and fused together in such a way that the ‘findings’ are the creation of a process of interaction between the two.”

With the statement from Sparkes and Smith (2014), Flick (2002, p13) went on to explain that “due to the fused relationship of the knower and known there can be no theory free knowledge.” Due to the two different approaches to research, and how to answer questions about ontology and epistemology, how researchers develop their methodologies will be influenced by their approaches to the matters of ontology and epistemology.

In terms of epistemology, this thesis approach was subjectivist. The reasoning behind this thesis being subjectivist was due to it having an inherent bias, due to the exposure of the researcher being immersed in the disabled community. Due to the background of the researcher and their exposure to the topic, it has meant that the thesis has been able to be looked at through a personal as well

as a participant lens. This is a strength for the thesis, as the researcher was able to empathise with the participants' answers and feelings. However, due to the background of the researcher, being an immersive and personal one, it was important to be mindful of the reflexive impact on the data collection and analysis. In addition, the researcher had to consider any pre-existing power dynamics, that could have impacted the collection of data as well as the analysis of data from both sets of participants. Dowling (2006, p. 10) states that reflexivity is:

"The analytic attention to the researcher's role in qualitative research. A continuous self-critique and self-appraisal where the researcher explains how his or her own experience has or has not influenced the stages of the research process."

Reflexivity has several objective goals which researchers should keep in mind when conducting qualitative research, including neutralizing their influence on their subjectivity, then acknowledging it, and then either explaining on it, or capitalizing on it (Gentles *et al*, 2014). These objective goals therefore give different ways which researchers may think about their relationships between their identity, context, and their research (Olmos-Vega *et al*, 2022). For example, as stated above, the position of the researcher enabled greater access to participants; however, it meant that the researcher had to mediate any pre-existing opinions and/or feelings with the topic in order to uncover an understanding of the feelings and opinions of the participants.

Methodological Approach

The methods which were used in this research project are qualitative in nature. Qualitative research methods were used as it uses non-numerical data. This meant that data can be collected over a longer period. Qualitative research allows the researcher to collect the thoughts and feelings of the participants. Krane *et al*. (1997, cited in Jones and Gratton, 2015, p.24) states that "the issue of 'how many' is not relevant," which quantitative research is focused upon. Jones and Gratton (2015, p.36) stated the benefits to using qualitative research for sport studies are that this approach:

- “Relies on non-numerical analysis to provide understanding
- Assumes social reality is a subjective experience, constructed and related to the immediate social context
- Objectives are description, understanding and meaning
- Uses smaller samples, or ‘cases’ with data being rich and subjective
- The location of the research is natural”

Due to the data having been collected which examined participants thoughts and feelings, it also allowed for participants own life experiences to be considered. As Krane *et al* (1997, cited by Jones and Gratton, 2015, p24) suggested:

“In many cases, rare experiences are no less meaningful, useful, or important than common ones. In some cases, the rare experience may be the most enlightening one.”

Participants and Sampling

The research project used two sets of participants, which was made up of 1) the public who had either a visible or invisible disability, and 2) media professionals from both the BBC and Channel 4. To gain access to both sets of participants two types of sampling was used, 'convenience' and 'snowball'. Jones and Gratton (2015, p129) said that 'convenience' sampling is where "the sample is chosen as it is convenient in terms of location, accessibility and so on". Jones and Gratton (2015, p128) also stated that 'snowball' sampling is where "you locate your initial participants, and these initial participants identify further potential participants themselves."

The reasoning for 'convenience' sampling being used in this research project was that the participants were at a convenient place to be accessed, and also fit into the criteria of the project. The research was open to anyone from the public who had either a visible or invisible disability. These criteria were put in place to gather an understanding of how they felt they were being portrayed in the media. The second criteria were for the media professionals. The criteria for this set of participants were that they either work or worked for the BBC and/or Channel 4. However, the participants of both the public and media groups were then able to pass the questionnaire on, in the case of the public, or give the researcher the names of other media individuals who they thought would be of use to interview. Due to this passing on of either the questionnaire or names of other participants, 'snowballing' sampling was also used.

The participants involved in the questionnaire were invited to take part via email and through social media (Appendix A). The reason for them being addressed to take part was due to the criteria of the questionnaire for the research project, being for anyone who has a physical or invisible disability. The participants who were involved in the media interviews were approached due to their connections with either working or have worked for both/either the British Broadcasting Company (BBC) or Channel 4. Due to the media professionals being freelance, a gatekeeper was not needed to access the participants. In total, the public group consisted of around 24 participants,

who either had a visible or invisible disability, with the youngest age being no younger than 18. This group was made up of 24 anonymous participants of varying ages and disabilities. The media professionals' group was made up of 5 participants from both the BBC and/or Channel 4. The group was also made up of media professionals from both a disabled and able-bodied background. Figure 1 provides further details on each participant:

Pseudonym	BBC Employment	Channel 4 Employment	Professional Experience
Klara	1994 - Present	2004 - Present	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Presented on 5 Paralympics as well as a number of Summer and Winter Olympics (BBC & C4) - Presented on a variety of other major sporting events (BBC & C4)
Scott	2014 - Present	2016 – Present	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Presented on a variety of major disabled sporting events including the Invictus Games, wheelchair tennis and Paralympics (BBC & C4) - Presents on a number of different mainstream TV programs (BBC) - Competed in one Paralympics
Martin	2008	2012-2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Presented on a number of Paralympics (BBC & C4) - Competed in multiple Paralympics - Currently involved in disabled sport governance
Tilly	2008 - Present	2012 - Present	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Competed in a number of Paralympics - Activist for a variety of disability organisations - Presented on a vast number of major sporting events including the Paralympics, London Marathon, Commonwealth Games, and Athletic Championships (BBC & C4)
Joel	N/A	2012-Present	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - C4 Reporter for major sporting events, including FIFA 2018 - Presented on a number of Paralympics (C4) - Competed in one Paralympics

Figure 1 – Demographic data on media professional interviewees

Research Ethics

The validity and reliability of a research study depends heavily on the ethics put in place for participants (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015). The credibility of the researcher along with the rigorous methods are also essential components to the overall credibility of qualitative research (Patton, 2015). The only potential risk which participants may have faced was a minimal one. Stake (2005, p459) comments on how data collection:

“Carries with it both risks and benefits to the informants ... respondents may feel their privacy has been invaded, they may be embarrassed by certain questions, ... they may also tell things they had never intended to reveal.”

For example, a participant who was from the public group may have experienced psychological problems due to the nature of the questions being asked as they may have felt unrepresented by the nature of the shows that had shown and or have felt that they are not being seen as equal in society. Another example was from the participants from the BBC and or Channel 4, as they felt that they were facing a psychological problem in relation to the questions that were asked. This could have been the case if they felt they were being judged as a company and that they had to defend their company, or they have left the company and the questions brought back bad experiences. Given this, participants were able to withdraw at any point from the research. As a contingency plan, should a participant have experienced a form of psychological distress the interview would have been moved on to the next question or the interview being stopped, despite at what stage in the interview the participant had gotten too. As an extra contingency plan should a participant have experienced severe effects due to participation in the study, they would have been referred to an appropriate support service. Yet despite both contingency plans being in place these were not needed as none of the participants experienced any effects to taking part.

Overall, data collection may have unanticipated long-term effects. However, most people who agree to participate enjoy sharing their knowledge, opinions and/or experiences (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015). From participating, some participants will gain valuable self-knowledge; for others it may be therapeutic – which brings up the issue of the researcher’s stance which is first and foremost to gather data (Patton, 2015). The benefits from participants who took part in the research project outweighed the risk to them of any adverse outcomes. The benefits to participants of research are that of (Hutchinson, Wilson, and Skodol-Wilson, 1994):

- Catharsis
- Self-acknowledgement
- Sense of purpose
- Self-awareness
- Empowerment
- Being able to provide a voice for the disenfranchised

One of the benefits for the participants’ taking part in this research project was that they supported and gave a range of knowledge which was of great assistance to the project and future study of disability in contemporary society. The participants who aided the research knowing that they had also aided possible future research for the university and beyond, meant that the psychological risk stated above was of a smaller per cent of risk compared to the benefits that was gained by the participant and society more broadly. The second benefit was knowing that as a participant of the study the participant was helping to guide the world to disability inclusion and equality, both in day-to-day life as well as the disability sporting world.

Given the potential risks and benefits of participating in the research, each participant was invited to read and familiarise themselves with the Participant Information Sheet (Appendix B & C) as well as then giving their consent to take part despite the risk and benefits on the consent form

(Appendix D). Participant Information Sheets and consent forms are important aspects to the organisation and conduct of a study. The Participant Information Sheet gives potential participants the necessary understanding for the motivation and procedures of the study and sources of information to answer any further questions to allow them to give informed consent. A consent form essentially reprises this information to ensure the key points are understood and then records this understanding, usually with a signature. Consent may also be recorded electronically, for example through web-forms by clicking a button (Antoniou *et al.*, 2011).

Data Collection Methods

For this research project, two sets of participants were used. The first set was made up of the public, who were invited to take part in questionnaires. The questionnaire was created on Google Forms (Appendix E) due to Covid -19 and therefore, the link for the questionnaire was circulated online via social media as well as email due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The questionnaire had to be shared in this way due to there being social distancing measures, with restrictions on travel and national lockdowns having been put in place in order to control and reduce the spread of Covid-19 (Chu *et al.*, 2020). In total the public group consisted of 24 participants, who had either visible or invisible disability. Jones and Gratton (2014, p.132) state that “six rich, detailed informative interviews or questionnaires that are well analysed are always preferable to 12 less detailed interviews or questionnaires that have had limited analysis.” With this in mind, and under the current situation with Covid-19, 24 participants with disabilities were a justifiable sample size as a lot of participants were unable to participate due to having to shield.

The questionnaires took approximately 15 minutes to fill out. The questionnaires were designed to have both open and closed questions. Shuman and Presser (1979, p.692) state that questionnaires should “start with closed questions as they often show a bias in the way a participant answers due to the options given for a reply”, aligning with more recent reviews of best practice (Kurzahls, 2021).

Wesley *et al.* (2022, p. 979) also state that “open questions are best to end a questionnaire on as it allows a participant to answer spontaneously and how they really feel about the topic”. An example of some of the closed questions in this research questionnaire was to find out which broadcaster the participants watched most. The question read as: ‘Which of the following broadcasters do you watch the most?’ With only three possible answers of: The BBC, Channel 4 or neither. An example of an open question from the questionnaire is: ‘Do YOU feel represented by the programmes shown on the BBC? Please explain below.’

The second part of the investigation focused upon the second set of participants, which included media professionals from both the BBC and/or Channel 4 to get their opinions of each of the objectives and overall investigation. In contrast to how the information was gained from the public, the media professionals participated in recorded video interviews. The interviews were approximately 45 minutes long. The same objective questions were used (Appendix F) to design the interview questions. Despite having a question guide the interview questions were semi-structured. The advantages of having semi-structured interview questions are that they can address how and why questions from the perspective of the interviewees experience – as they allow researchers to explore the perceptions of the individual; they also allow the interview to be flexible, allowing the researcher to pursue emergent themes and follow the lead of the interviewee and gain new insights which may not have otherwise been thought of (Low, 2013). By keeping the overall objectives, the same, it enabled the results to be compared and contrasted against each other. In addition, it was also necessary to investigate each of Channel 4 and BBC’s policies on disability programmes, and if the International Olympic and Paralympic Committees had any influence on what programmes each corporation could show. In conclusion, the investigation weighed up the results from both parties, and was able to see the overarching viewpoint of both the public and the broadcasters.

Data Analysis Methods

For each of the objectives, the quantitative results were firstly measured as a percentage, recording how each participant responded. The percentage looked at the overall number of the participants that either agreed or disagreed with each of the overall objectives using descriptive statistics. By measuring the data using descriptive statistics allowed for several different purposes for the end analysis. These different purposes included opening a window on the population under study by showing the different characteristics of the population participating. It also allowed for a greater and more careful examination of the data overall by making sure it was valid to the research question being asked (Myers *et al.*, 2010). Finally, any additional qualitative comments that were made by the participants and were relevant to the investigation were also analysed thematically.

Once the data had been collected, it was analysed using coding and thematic analysis. Coding was used because it enabled the items of data to be examined in an open, and axial coding process (Appendix G & H). Open coding enables the researcher to see what direction in which to take the research. This then allows it to be selective and more focused conceptually on a particular social problem (Glaser, 2016). Axial coding provides a coding framework from which to synthesise and organize data into more coherent, hierarchically-structured categories and subcategories that add dimension to emergent concepts and their potential relationship to other framework elements. The purpose of this analytic phase is to consider and develop relationships between working categories and subcategories (Scott and Medaugh, 2017). Once the data had been coded, it allowed for conclusions from the discussions to be derived more efficiently (Jones and Gratton, 2015). The names of the participants were changed so all identity was kept private unless the participant asks not to be changed.

Results and Discussion

Introduction

The forthcoming chapter will bring together the feelings and opinions of the participants from the public and media professionals of the BBC and Channel 4. Together, along with drawing upon past research and using different theoretical lens; this chapter, will aim to put together an overview of the picture currently taking place on the portrayal of disability within the media. The chapter will also look into the bespoke coverage of the Paralympics and how there has been a shift in the portrayal since the main Paralympic broadcaster changed. The ideals of ableism and disablism will also be covered in this chapter, as the participants disclose how they feel these ideals are being portrayed within the media shown. It is important to remember at this stage that different theoretical model lenses were used throughout this research. Therefore, this research will use different types of theories throughout this section, that have been used in the portrayal disabled sport and disability.

Portrayal of Disability – Non-Factual Vs Factual

The first overarching topic that came to light in the questionnaires is the debate of whether disability is better portrayed in factual programmes or non-factual programmes. 75% of the 24 members of public - who had either a visible or invisible disability - said they feel disability is better portrayed in factual programmes (e.g., documentaries, news, or sport) compared to non-factual programmes (e.g., soap operas, films, or drama). Given the earlier analysis conducted on past literature findings, the result of 75% feeling disability is better portrayed in factual programmes, therefore, comes as no surprise. It comes as no surprise as disability rights have changed very little over the years. In fact, the finding aligns with the 'medical model' of disability, as factual programmes fit this model as they show real life. It can be argued that the people making the factual

shows - such as producers, programmers, and broadcasting executives - do so with their preconceived ideas of disability and what will bring in the most views (Johnson, 2019; Joubin, 2021).

For example, Berg and Cassells (1992, p23) comment on how “the medical model has an impact on social attitudes”. It can therefore be argued that, because factual programmes use the medical model and preconceived stereotypes, when depicting any form of disability, it has become the ‘norm’ and has shaped the rest of society as well as having an impact on the next generation. Swain, French and Cameron (2003, p.64) argue how the medical model “reinforces dominant ableist (normal) ideals and values”; it is thought that the next generation will also have the same preconceived ideas and values as the generation before, due to the nature of the factual programmes being made. Smith and Perrier (2014, p.96) also argue that the focus of normalisation and compliance with ableist standards creates a “hierarchy of power where disabled individuals can lose autonomy over their own bodies”. The above comment shows that factual programmes using the medical model and preconceived ideas have an overall impact on how the rest of society views disability, and even how disabled people view themselves in order for them to be able to fit in with the ableist ‘norm’ of society.

To Entertain or Not To Entertain?

From the data collected about factual versus non-factual portrayal, four main themes emerged. The first theme that emerged from the analysis of the questionnaires is that people thought the portrayal of disability in the media, was to ‘entertain’ the viewer. The theme of disability being entertaining for the viewer, echoes Matzler’s (2016) comment on how in the Middle Ages disabled people were seen as a ‘fool’, and were used for entertainment, as jesters, in royal and upper-class courts. This theme of ‘entertainment’ through disability portrayal was illustrated in several questionnaire responses. One participant of the questionnaires stated:

“Documentaries... aren’t scripted unlike dramas. Dramas portray disability in a way that is deemed more entertaining to the viewer... Soaps often use illness or situations that draw the individual in to watch the soap to make people want to keep watching”

One participant elaborated further by emphasising that the artistic licence around the ‘truth’ of disability for non-factual ‘entertainment’ purposes was problematic:

“I think that factual genre allows for better representation as it is about true events and people’s truth. Whereas, non-factual programmes, even if based on truth, can be embellished / altered for entertainment purposes”

These comments resonate with the work of, Ross (1997, p.676), who states that the portrayal of disability in the media is that “characters with disabilities are seen as ‘disabled’ first and ‘human’ second, which reduces the ‘humanness’ of the actor/character”. One such show that was brought up in the questionnaires by several participants was ‘The Undateables’. Several participants felt that this show depicted the participants’ disability rather than their ability, which could be seen as evidence to the comment made by Ross (1997). It raises the question of ‘is the viewer laughing at or with the participants of the show?’.

Another factual show that participants also felt raises the same question is ‘The Last Leg’. One participant felt that “unlike ‘The Undateables’, the laughter aimed at ‘The Last Leg’ is not seen as being derogative; as there are two main presenters on the show with very visible disabilities.” Every week the show airs disabled presenters as well as those without a disability laughing at themselves for whatever they have said or have done. Another participant said they felt:

“if all the main presenters were able bodied or had an invisible disability, it would be more discriminative, as it would show society it is OK for people to laugh at someone’s disability”

The way in which ‘The Last Leg’ is shown and produced is in a way that is captured in McRuer’s (2006) ‘Crip Theory’. The nature of this show aligns with the theory as a lot of the topics are to do with disability and/or disability sport, which draws upon the presenters’ and guests’ personal narratives. This echoes the idea behind the ‘Crip Theory’ of allowing a community to reclaim a negative word and announce their non-normative status to challenge the dominant power of able-bodiedness (Inckle, 2013; Erevelles, 2014). ‘The Last Leg’ also follows the idea of ‘Crip Theory’ by bridging the divide between ‘ableist norms’ and impairment.

Overall, the feeling emerged that both factual and non-factual programmes aim to entertain the viewer, whether that be consciously or subconsciously, or laughing at or with a participant. Yet there is a consensus among the participants of the questionnaires that there is more to be done to be seen as equal and not just as entertainment.

The same concern was also raised by Tilly (a media professional) in their interview response, expressing how disability is seen as a ‘token’. However, Tilly also explained why, in their opinion - from their time on the board of the BBC and from working at Channel 4 - broadcasters may be having a ‘token’ disabled person on their programmes:

“...Strictly (Come Dancing) has a ‘token’ disabled person on it every series now but is a fairly minimal impairment ...I think what they are all trying to do is balance several protected characteristics... and disability just gets lost... I think it is one of those things that both companies could just do more.”

The above comment fits with that of recent research conducted by Disability Horizons (2022) and Carolina (2022). The findings of the research by Disability Horizons (2022) and that of Carolina (2022) link with that of the above comment as both sets recent research have found that there is still a stark difference in the representation of disability in the media compared to that of other protected demographics of society. Carolina (2022) found that on average 50.2% of media casts are male with 49.8% being female. However, only 1.6% of actors are disabled compared to 98.4% who non-disabled. The research by Disability Horizons (2022), also found that disability is still the most underrepresented group within the media industry. Furthermore, The Minister of State, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport – Matt Warman (*cited in* HC Deb 20 July 2022) recently argued:

“Disabled people make up a fifth of the population... But when we watch the news or the media... it’s rare to see disabled people, and when we do, we are almost always speaking about individual disabilities... A huge lack of representation means... stories are going unreported, talent is unrecognised... and negative attitudes towards disability are going unchallenged... Even when representation does happen, it can be stereotypical and quite depressing for the audience...”

The research also carried out by Disability Horizons (2022), also found that when disability was featured in the media it is as a ‘token’ gesture, and something to tick a box for the broadcaster. They go on to state that:

“...disabled people are people, just like everyone else, with dreams... emotions, and above all, value... we need to get to a point where disability, like other aspects of our diverse world, are included without it even being thought about...”
(<https://disabilityhorizons.com/2022/10/less-than-2-of-characters-in-the-top-uk-tv-show-are-disabled/>)

Similar concerns were also raised by a couple of media professionals. Tilly expressed her concern:

“If that was said about any other protected characteristics, that 2012 changed the world for women or black people, everyone would go ‘no it didn’t’. I don’t know what it is about disability that makes them... not have to address the lack of equality and inclusion that currently exists.”

A similar concern was also raised by Klara – who has worked and commentated on the Paralympic Games for both Channel4 and the BBC since 2000:

“... in 1996 in Atlanta, Helen Rollison was presenting the Paralympics for the BBC... she did a really powerful piece to the camera at the end of the Games... Essentially... saying this has been the worst Paralympic Games that she had ever attended... there was no respect, there wasn’t the proper investment, the village wasn’t built with access in mind. It was worse than an afterthought, it was no thought at all.”

Joel – who has been a sports media commentator for Channel 4 since 2010 - also raised his concern of how this may be portrayed:

“It is ‘this is the way TV has done it and this is the way it will always do it.’ I don’t have strong views either way, but I understand why some people feel like it can portray disabled people in a particularly negative light.”

The comments made by the media participants and the findings of recent research (Carolina, 2022; Disability Horizons, 2022; and HC Deb 20 July 2022), echo that of past research into stereotypes of disability within the media (Head, 1945; Kloba, 1988; Nelson, 2000; Worrell, 2018). Moreover, what the participants comments and recent findings by Warman (*cited in* HC Deb 20 July 2022) illustrate the ongoing relevance of Signonelli’s (1989, p6) comment that “people with disabilities are really

victims of life ... whose lives revolve around their disability and dependence on others". The findings of Signonelli (1989) resonate with those of Zhang and Haller (2013), who found the portrayal of disability within the media was that of a 'hero', a prevalent stereotype being used today. Disability Rights UK (*cited in* UK Parliament, 2022, p.1) stated that "[a] fifth of us are disabled but we are not a fifth of the news. Media often represents us as heroes or scroungers." In conclusion, it would appear that the participant of the questionnaires, the media, and researchers have all highlighted the same view; in that more needs to be done for disability to be seen as equal.

Fact or Fiction?

The second emergent theme in relation to the debate of whether factual or non-factual programmes portray disability in a 'better' light was that factual programs provide truthful 'first-hand' knowledge of a condition. Just over a third of the participants felt that visible and invisible disabilities were either shown in a complete and relatable way, or in a way that explained the condition well. For example, one participant expressed that:

"Generally, a factual program (sic) is portrayed from the perspective of the subject, so if the documentary was about disability, it would have evidence, lived experience and present a more honest and non-biased program (sic)"

Another participant also argues how factual programs best portray disability than non-factual programmes:

"Non-factual programmes often misrepresent people with disabilities everyone struggles differently even if they all have the same conditions for example with CP there is different levels and even within them levels no one is the same. It's often easy to just read something and think that's how it would affect someone whereas

if it's news, sport, or documentary at least it's based on someone's true with a disability"

It is also felt that due to the nature of factual programmes - being documentaries, news, and sport - allows people with disabilities to tell their own stories. One participant said:

"Disabled characters in fiction can often suffer from being 'brought to life' by someone without the understanding of how people with disabilities behave, and how different - or not - we are"

It was also said that factual programmes are meant to inform and not entertain:

"Countryfile and Antiques Roadshow, and Gardeners' World where they show disabled presenters, experts and guests just doing their job or activities in their way without making a specific song and dance about it, and no-one else exclaiming how inspirational they are".

The last sentence of the above comment made by the participant draws attention back to Matzler's (2016), Worrell's (2018) and Nelson's (2000) category of 'fool'. It also brings attention back to Signonelli's (1989) theory of disabled people being 'victims' of life and whose lives revolve around their disability and dependence on others.

Overall, this data has shown that people – from the publics' questionnaires - feel that factual programmes portray disability in a better way than non-factual. Some of the comments in this section have depicted how the use of the 'crip theory' is starting to be used within programmes. However, it also shows how factual programmes still use preconceived ideas and stereotypes when producing a programme. This has led to factual programmes being made using the medical model

of disability, whether that be consciously or subconsciously. Programmes – whether that be factual or non-factual – still have a way to go to make programmes seen as equal for both disabled and able-bodied viewers.

Similar concerns were also raised by the media professionals when asked. Martin – who has worked for both the BBC and Channel 4 since retiring as an international athlete in the 2000's – shared his view:

“I think it is varied, there are pockets in both stations that are great but there are still elements, both in the news outlets or in the programming, where it's not going very well. So... I am saying that even if you look at sport specific, there are elements... which are great and there are elements which I would prefer to be different. I think there is still a little bit of 'poor them, aren't they brave...'"

Tilly also raised similar concerns:

“I think it can be quite mixed... If you look at soap operas you must take it in a context with what is generally on a soap opera... They are all quite stereotypical characters... In some documentaries they do have lived experiences of disabled people as part of it but that does not always necessarily mean they are experts in that field... I think some of it is around how much understanding they have of the issue or lived experience of disabled people.”

The above comments by Martin and Tilly draws upon the past research of Ellis and Goggin (2015) who commented on how the media is a pivotal platform to inform and educate society on several topics, such as disability. However, past research has also found that media's portrayal is often negative and limited (Head, 1954; Welch, 1994; Ellcessor and Kirkpatrick, 2017). The comment

made by Tilly of how broadcasters portray 'stereotypical characters' echoes that of past research by Klobus (1988). Klobus (1988) found that the portrayal of disability in the media, is concentrated on six main characteristics of 'blindness, wheelchair users, deafness, amputees, developmental disabilities, and small stature'.

However, Scott – who has worked for a variety of broadcasters including the BBC since 2014 and Channel 4 since 2016 – shares his view and understanding on why the broadcasters show the style of programs which they do:

“Channel 4 is much more fly on the wall. A lot of what their programmes and what they do... in terms of whether that's 'First Dates' which you watch people date or... reality shows o ... 'Goggle Box'. It's people watching people, whereas the BBC does not do that. They are much more factual in terms of their content... the way that they look at disability and portray disability whether that is disability sport... or disability in general, by definition the BBC are a lot more factual as opposed to conversational around things... Channel 4... is much more immersive TV... with that can come a lot more humour just because of the style of it... because they are not so linear in their approach to a lot of things, it means that there is room to maybe go off-piste a bit more and speak to people about other things.”

Taking everything into account from the responses of the media participants, broadcasters are still portraying disability by using stereotypes and depicting 'stereotypical' characters. The use of 'stereotypical' characters draws upon past research of the medical model. The use of this model resonates with the comment made by participant Tilly and that of past research conducted by Klobas (1988), as well as that of Worrell (2018, p.5) who argued that the “majority of characters with a disability fall into one of four main categories; the victim, the hero, the villain, and the fool.” This illustrates how the medical model is being used by broadcasters, as the categories – as stated

by Worrell (2018) – are fitting disabled people into boxes. However, the comment made about Channel 4 by participant Scott that “they are not so linear in their approach” could suggest that Channel 4 are using the social model to portray disability. It could also be argued that by doing this the broadcaster is moving away from ‘ableist-norms’.

In conclusion, the findings from both the participants of the questionnaires and the media have shown how broadcasters are still portraying disability predominantly in a negative light which is conforming with ‘ableist-norms’. By conforming to these ‘ableist-norms’ on mainstream media outlets, it could be argued that this is then having an impact on the wider society and how they then perceive disability overall. On the other hand, what both sets of participants comments have shown is that broadcasters are starting to make change in the style of portrayal of disability.

Heard But Not Seen?

The third theme that has come about from the question of ‘Which type of programme do you feel best represents disability?’ is that disability is seen as a minority. The emergent theme comes about from the participants reasons as to their reply to question two (Appendix G). One such comment made was:

“non-factual mostly appears to try and gloss over anything uncomfortable”

Another participant argued that:

“too often, it feels as though disabled characters are tokens rather than drive the plot”

What this emergent theme and the above comment shows is that the findings of Worrell (2018) are still apparent today. Worrell (2018, p.5) argued that “the majority of characters with a disability

fall into one of four main categories: the victim, the hero, the villain, and the fool". With the argument from the participant as well as that of Barnes (2016, p.8) who also argues that disability is "seen as an afterthought or as a side line," all connect with Worrell's (2018) findings. It also shows that the lack of disabled main characters or disabled characters at all falls in with the findings of Franzen (1990, pg. 24), who found that disabled people "get less attention, less stimulation, less education, and less upbringing," as well as that of Heilman (2014, p. 65) who found that in the psychology of society "such roles of fools or victims are thought about or remembered compared to those of the villain or hero".

The above comment made by Franzen (1990) - as well as the comments made by the participants above - are also echoed by other participants' comments to the questionnaire (appendix G). One participant argues:

"It's a whiter middle-class demographic in presenters but as with Channel 4 the representation of mental health is distorted and does not represent me and my family's experience of my mental health problems"

The above comment aligns with that of previous comments on how the media glosses over uncomfortable topics, as well as aligning with the findings of Franzen (1990) as the topics are not shown or spoken about. Thus, the viewer is never exposed or taught about difficult problems, even if the problems could also affect them.

However, other participants feel that factual programmes show disability better than non-factual programmes, even if it is not the main bulk of the show. One participant responded:

“a factual programme is portrayed from the perspective of the subject, so if the documentary was about disability, it would have evidence and lived experience and present a more honest and non-biased program (sic)”

Another participant argued:

“I think that factual genre allows for representation as it is about true events and people’s truth. Whereas, non-factual programmes, even if based on truth, can be embellished /altered”

Overall, the views in this section are mixed on participants’ perspective of whether disabled people are marginalized in factual or non-factual programmes. However, what the comments do show is that views on disability in the media are a kaleidoscope of different views and opinions; but, more importantly, it shows that there is no one-size-fits-all when it comes to thinking about the fairness and equality of disability in the media. The notion of one-size-fits-all, could be argued to align with the medical model; of needing to fix or cure people as well as just supporting disabled people to live and fit in with ‘normal’ life (Thomas Couser and Mairs, 1997). However, the comments made were mixed in this section and therefore, also align with ‘crip theory’. This link comes as some of the above comments suggested that disabled people want to be seen and the hard facts of disability be shown as well as the positives. There is a link to crip theory, as just as the participants the theory is trying to create a space for all groups to be included and get away from ableist norms (Bone, 2017).

In addition to the concerns raised by the participants in the questionnaires, similar points were also raised by the media participants. Tilly raised a concern of how disability is heard but not seen until its big news in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic:

“Where I see a bit more of a challenge is in terms of... news coverage. There are not often stories about disabled people or disabilities rights. So when ‘Do Not Resuscitate’ orders came out in March 2020, there wasn’t a lot of media pick up of it straight away.”

The comment made by Tilly could be argued to align with the principles of the medical model. This comes as Thomas Couser and Mairs (1997, p.18) state that the “perspective of managing or curing means that people who have a disability are simply being supported to live and fit in with ‘normal’ life while being supported they are being seen as victims of biological injustice”. Berg and Cassells’(1992) comment about the medical model having an impact on social attitudes - as well as exclusion, discrimination, and poverty - is echoed in that of the comment made by Tilly. It could be argued that the media use the medical model and therefore exclude and discriminate unconsciously towards disability. In turn, this use of the model led to the biological injustice towards disabled people during the Covid-19 Pandemic and thus the slow pick up from the media regarding the ‘Do Not Resuscitate’ orders for disabled people in March 2020.

The same concerns of biological injustices being used is raised again in another comment by Tilly:

“...the only thing young disabled people are being told they can be is a Paralympian, not a lawyer, or a teacher, or something else... I think that is really negative because Paralympics make everyone feel warm and cuddly... that’s lovely but that’s not real! In the same way the Olympics isn’t real. It’s for a tiny minority... who compete at the highest level... it just doesn’t translate into the real world.”

The same concern was also raised by Joel:

“I think representation is key in showing the wider world, like disabled young people what they can do... I think it’s really important that we show young disabled people

that its normal to be an athlete, or a cook, or a politician, or an academic... but I think it is also important to show that they can be flawed and be bad at their jobs like everyone else... and not have them painted as perfect.”

The above comments by Tilly and Joel are shared concerns among researchers and disabled activists alike (Kim, 2011; Dixon and Gibbons, 2012; Disability Rights, 2016; Oliver,2018). A concern raised by Dixon and Gibbons (2012) was that the media’s focus on elite Paralympians, was depicting an image of disability to society which was far from the ‘typical’ experiences of a disabled person. Therefore, the image the media is creating for society is of one which is overly optimistic and an unrealistic view of living as a disabled person. One participant, ‘Maggie; cited in Dixon and Gibbons’ research (2012, p.989) commented “I don’t think seeing amazing achievements by disabled athletes demonstrates in any way the day-to-day struggles of living as a disabled person, or makes people think about such things as accessibility etc.” The concerns raised by Tilly and Joel - as well as the concerns and findings from disability activists and researchers - highlights the overall concern that disabilities shown in the media are of elite athletes, rather than as members of society with ‘normal’ jobs and who make mistakes.

It could be argued that the concern of disability not being seen in the media, as ‘normal’ members of society and instead as elite athletes, as the broadcasting is shown on platforms which are inaccessible to all of society. Although some productions depicting disabled elite athletes are also shown on platforms which are not accessible to all. An example of productions being shown this way was shared by participant Klara about the BBC:

“I think... coverage certainly started to expand and improve... and by Athens (2004) and Beijing (2008) we were doing live coverage of the major events... but not necessarily on the main channels. We had [the] ‘Red Button’ then for the first time, so

we were putting a lot of it live on the 'Red Button' but presenting it as if it was on the main channel and frankly it could have been and should have been.”

Another example was also raised by participant Martin about Channel 4:

“Channel 4... would say that sport was all there to be watched if you are willing... that is part of the challenge, to hop around all the various outputs. If you are happy to go from watching it on Channel 4, to switching to More4 and to switching to online, then absolutely you get to see all the action... but if you are like the majority of people, a lazy viewer, who will stick it on a channel until they get bored... then go and find something else...”

The above comments by Klara and Martin show how the lack of representation of disability could have an impact on the understanding of disability in society. It could be argued that the lack of representation would reinforce unconscious biases, prejudices, labelling, status loss, and discrimination towards disability (Link and Phelan, 2001). This argument could be made in conjunction with the social cognitive model, as rather than societies behaviour being impacted by what they are viewing (Bandura, 1999; Worrell, 2018); their behaviour is impacted by what they already know and believe to be true 'ability' ideologies (Parsons *et al*, 2016). Therefore, this style of broadcasting as mentioned by Klara and Martin, is impacting on the preconceived ideologies and unconscious biases, and ableist-norms, by putting disability on the side line or largely ignoring the subject (Barnes, 2016; Parsons *et al*, 2016; McGillivray *et al*, 2019; Pullen *et al*, 2020).

Disability Porn or Inspiration Porn?

The following emerging theme was referenced by over half of the participants in the questionnaires. Some commented on being seen as 'inspirational' whereas others commented on being portrayed

in a 'patronising' light; however, one participant made a comment which captured the theme in one go – 'tragedy porn':

"Disability rights activists are ignored by all mainstream media providers; Channel 4 is either all sport or tragedy porn"

Another participant also argued:

"The extremes are shown and visible disabilities and everything has an under tone of feeling sorry for the people shown"

The same feeling is echoed by another participant who feels that media portrays disability as:

"...serious, but normally in a negative light. If it is touched upon there isn't normally the positives shown"

Young (2014, *cited by Ayers, 2022, p. 94*) comments on how the media uses 'inspirational' porn as a genre for them to depict disabled people as inspirational or who need pity. Young (2014, p.95) goes on to state some examples of 'inspirational' porn, such as:

"Publicizing people who have been 'fixed' through miraculous medical treatments or home remedies, or someone 'overcoming' their disability... or news stories, such as the BBC news's headline 'Teen couple with Down's Syndrome voted prom king and queen."

The above examples given by Young demonstrates how 'inspirational' porn cannot only be consciously created but also unconsciously created. Evans (2022, p.15) also comments how the

“‘pride’ and ‘inspiration’ that comes from ‘inspirational’ porn is often drawn from a foundation that expects disabled people to be unsuccessful, unhappy, and dependent”. The same arguments and beliefs were also found by Head (1954), Kloba (1988) and Nelson (2000). However, what Evans (2022, p.15) goes on to comment is how “‘inspirational’ porn is trying to show brief moments of breaking out of the bounds of this foundation of attitudes, stereotypes, and beliefs.” Therefore, despite ‘inspirational’ porn depicting disability in an unconscious negative ‘light’, it is consciously trying to move away from this and portray disability in a more positive ‘light’, using social media to facilitate this.

In conjunction with the views of the public questionnaires, the participants from the media also had concerns of how ‘disability/inspirational porn’ is being portrayed in the media. In the same way ‘inspirational porn’ is created consciously and unconsciously in the media overall, it has also been highlighted in the media’s coverage of disabled sport and being seen in coverage more often than before. Tilly expressed her concern on this matter:

“I see inspirational porn slipping in much more into disabled sports coverage than it used to be which does worry me because I think that sets a really negative tone for other disabled people. I have said this publicly several times that the only thing young disabled people are being told they can be [is] a Paralympian...”

Moreover, what has emerged as a more pressing concern of disability/inspirational porn from the media interviews, is it being portrayed in the language used by broadcasters. One such piece of language used, was that of ‘superhuman’ which Channel 4 used for the first time in their London 2012 Paralympic campaign ‘Meet the Superhumans’, and then again in their 2016 and 2020/2021 Paralympic campaigns. Martin shared his view on this use of language:

“Obviously, it has... social implications, because of the wall-to-wall coverage... disabled people were viewed as ‘are you a superhuman athlete, or aren’t you?’... ‘are you appearing at the Paralympics, or aren’t you?’... ‘why don’t you want to be a Paralympian cause that’s where it’s at!?’ . It was so powerful.”

Tilly also raised concerns on how the language has negative implications on the disabled community:

“‘Superhuman’, not really keen on... because the opposite of superhuman is sub-human. I think... it has the ability to send out some very damaging messages to disabled people... Around 2012 when Oscar Pistorius was wanting to become an Olympian... there was almost a tone in the press that if you weren’t a Paralympian also trying to be an Olympian, then you weren’t quite good enough... I think that some of the messages it is sending out to disabled people can be quite challenging. If you are not trying to be a Paralympian, you have no value.”

A similar concern was also raised by Klara:

“The negative side of it is that everyone thinks that anyone in a wheelchair can be a ‘superhuman’ and a Paralympian...”

However, despite the language of ‘superhuman’ having negative implications, the media participants have also expressed how the phrase could also have positive implications. Scott expressed his understanding of how it could be seen as a positive:

“I think when they [Channel 4] wanted to introduce the Paralympics, they wanted to do it with as much punch as possible... it’s to get people’s attention like ‘well what’s a

superhuman?'... They want people to ask questions of what's going on... the language that's used... is to get people's attention, to make people question..."

Klara also raised how the language of the broadcasters was being flipped and reclaimed in to a positive by disabled people:

"Sofiah Wanner... competed at the Paralympics... has created the Superhero Tri Series... she has gone down the 'Superhero' which is another level up, from 'Superhuman'... It's upbeat, it's really positive. They talk about sidekicks rather than carers. It's all a team thing... you are in a team with your family or with your friends and everybody is doing every bit... they are all doing it together..."

The reclaiming of the word by Sofiah Wanner links with the idea of 'crip theory', as the idea behind the theory is that disabled people are reclaiming words which historically are derogative and turning them into positives (McRuer,2006). 'Crip theory' aims to make positives and change by unsettling key perceptions of ability by bridging the divide between impairment and disability and not prioritising any particular identity as superior. The way in which the Superhero Tri Series, calls carers as sidekicks, shows how the crip theory is being used – as the series as well as the theory – are bringing together all groups and creating an inclusive, accessible, and non-normative society.

Another way in which disability/inspirational porn is delivered to society by broadcasters is in the programming and delivery of disability sport. One example is from Klara:

"Swimming at the Paralympics on the BBC... would take the race from the gun being fired at the start... to them touching the wall at the end... bang, out to the results, that's is... Channel 4 took it from the swimmers coming out of the cool room, getting into the water... that involved either manoeuvring themselves from chair into the water..."

removing prosthetics... and getting into the water. Now you are watching, suddenly, the transition period... that was a real eye opener as it is to anyone seeing 200 people with a variety of disabilities actually in the flesh in front of you... it had that effect on television as well. I don't mean it in a way that you are gawking, you're not, you're just in awe..."

Another example of how broadcasters depict disability/inspirational porn in their programmes is shown in a comment made by Scott:

"They [Channel 4] ... changed their campaigns on the build up quite a lot with a documentary... called 'Inside Incredible Athletes'. It homed in on four... athletes. What it done is it broke down a lot of what people would have been guessing really, 'what is training like?'... 'what are their disabilities?'... It showed us at training and then... entwined through the story how and where our disabilities came from and really put everything into perspective... It looked a little bit at our home lives and day to day struggles, but it focused very much on the athletes' side of things and how... Paralympians overall train in a very similar way to the Olympics and Olympians..."

The above comments by the media participants both positive and negative towards the word 'superhuman' and how it contributes to disability/inspirational porn – as well as the programmes shown by broadcasters – shows how 'social cognitive theory' has an impact on society. The social cognitive theory is used in the above comments as from what the participants are suggesting is that the wording of 'superhuman' impacts how society views disability away from the Paralympics and disability sport. The way the wording impacts society is because it reinforces the response – reinforcement behaviour as well as reciprocal determinism. Bandura (2002, p.273) states that "by using a person's learned experiences it influences a person's unconscious reinforcements, expectations, and expectancies. All of these then go on to shape the person to engage in a specific

manor and the reasons why the person engages with that certain behaviour.” Therefore, building on that of past research of the social cognitive theory and that of the participants, the use of certain words and imagery shown by broadcasters, have an ongoing impact on society, rather than it being compacted and isolated to once every four years (Bandura, 2005; Schunk, 2012; Whannel, 2014; Worrell, 2018).

In Need of Sympathy

Another theme which emerged from the questionnaires was that of being portrayed as needing sympathy or pity. As with many of the themes already covered, past literature has also found the same when looking at how disability is portrayed. For example, Clare (2001, *cited by* Lippolito, 2020, p.8) comments on how Jerry Lewis used to use the stereotype of ‘pity’ in order to raise money on a telethon. Clare (2001, p.7) goes on to explain that Lewis used pity to raise money with a promise of finding a cure:

“This money does not fund wheelchairs, ramps... lawyers to file disability discrimination lawsuits, but research for a cure, for a repair of bodies seen as broken”

The findings of Clare (2001) can be linked back to that of the medical model; as the idea of ‘curing’ the disabled person, via raising funds, echoes the findings of Thomas Couser and Mairs (1997) as well as Townsend, Smith and Cushion (2015).

These same feelings and emotions were also showed by the participants when asked in the questionnaires; one participant expressed their strong feelings to this:

“it seems over-egged, as if the person's disability must be explained or discussed. I know it's natural curiosity, but people don't always want to be asked "what

happened to you?" or "When will you get better?" or indeed, if they're seen on a good day, people assuming they are better now..."

The participant goes on to raise their frustration by stating:

"We don't want any special treatment; we want to be spoken to without any hint of pity or patronisation."

The above participant was not alone in their feelings for this theme. Other participants also raised the same feelings in their comments, just not in as much detail. For example, one participant stated that:

"The extremes are shown and visible disabilities and everything has an under tone of feeling sorry for the people shown."

Another comment made from a participant also echoed that of the feelings from the two previous participants above. The participant stated how:

"normally disability is shown in a negative light. If it is touched upon there isn't normally the positives that it can be..."

Another participant also argued that:

"if you have an easily diagnosed illness/disability or you are born with your illness/disability, there is often more awareness of it and less pity/sympathy is portrayed or needed to be given; such as Downs Syndrome or Cerebral Palsy..."

The same participant goes on to state, however:

“...except if you have a less known condition, effected younger than normal, or you gain your illness/disability due to an illness or accident then you need more pity and sympathy as your no longer normal to society, so you don’t fit in. But your also seen as no longer straightforward and your life is no longer seen stable by society as it was before your illness/disability. So, you need pity/sympathy as it will help make your life more comfortable.”

The above comments from participants in this section, echo that of the findings of Clare (2001), as well as that of Thomas-Couser and Mairs (1997), and Townsend, Smith and Cushion (2015) with the medical model. The theme of ‘needing sympathy’ links with that of the medical model, as the theme is suggesting that disabled people need society to feel ‘sorry’ for them in order for them to be cured. The same argument can also be linked with the findings of Clare (2001). In this case society was giving ‘sympathy’ in the form of money on Jerry Lewis’s telethon;² with the idea being that society could show their sympathy by donating money to ‘cure’ the disabled person. The same sort of idea of a night for showing sympathy to disabled people continues today in Great Britain in form of Children in Need – shown on the BBC³. What Clare’s (2001) findings show is how the social cognitive theory could be influencing the people who watch and engage with it. A link can be made between the telethon and the social cognitive theory, as the people who watch and engage with it will use that experience to influence their unconscious bias, which in turn goes on to shape how society engages with disability and seeing all disabilities as needing a cure (Green and Vervaeke, 1996; Kolb and Whishaw, 1998; Bandura, 2002).

² The Jerry Lewis telethon ran from 1966 to 2014. The telethon was run annually to raise money for Muscular Dystrophy. The same style of telethon ran in the UK in 1988, 1990 and 1992 which aired on ITV. However, these telethons were protested against, by the Disability Action Network, due to them portraying disabled people in a patronising way,

³ Children in Need has run on the BBC since 1980 but is also seen as an evening of showing disabled people needing to be ‘pitied’ for life.

One participant's comment that "if you have a less known condition, effected younger than normal, or if you gain your... disability due to an illness or accident then you need more pity and sympathy as your no longer normal to society" demonstrates the impact of which the medical model has on society as well as the social cognitive theory. The participants comment shows that if the person has a disability that society cannot put in a box labelled 'common' and 'often seen', then the individual must need curing as society does not know what to do with them. This idea of labelling and people fitting into boxes is the same as that of the medical model, as well as being commonly used with in the medical community who put their patients into 'boxes' in order to treat them.

Similar feelings were also shared among the media professionals. Klara shared her view from the Sydney Paralympics on 2000:

"By Sydney, I do think attitudes had changed... but the stadiums weren't particularly full and if they were it was with school children that had been bussed in ... it was lovely to have a young audience, but it felt a bit like a charity event rather than an elite sports event."

Similar feelings about the Paralympics and the impact the coverage of the Games had on the representation of disabled people post-Games was shared by Joel:

"Some people said post-Games (London 2012) ... that actually they think it was a negative... they said because what it did was, that the implication was that if you are disabled, but not an athlete, your worthless. So, it is all well and good 'you're Superhuman, you're amazing', if you're an athlete ... There are millions of people who are not doing that so... if you are not in a wheelchair going at 100mph... if you're not scoring a 3 pointer or if you're not Jonnie Peacock, what we don't count!?! I found that

quite interesting, that people... in praising a group of disabled people you marginalize the vast majority of everyone else.”

The concerns raised by Klara and Joel, highlight the impact of society’s unconscious bias on the disabled community. The link between the unconscious bias of society, and that of Klara and Joel’s comments comes as everyone is affected by an unconscious bias. It has been argued that we are all born with a predisposition to prefer the sort of people by whom we are surrounded by and learn from them; through the development of our attitudes which are also shaped by our cultural values both implicitly and explicitly (Uta Frith, 2015). Therefore, it is human nature to have an unconscious bias towards things and objects. However, the unconscious bias crosses over to disability discrimination when society uses the medical model to fit disabled people into boxes and categories. The need to categorize comes as it is an ingrained human nature, as this behaviour protects society from becoming overwhelmed by every new encounter (Barry-Kaufman, 2012). Nevertheless, this behaviour can also become damaging and influences societies unconscious bias, as by labelling/ categorising objects/people effect how people perceive the object or individual. Societies individual categorization tends to grow spontaneously throughout our lives from our personal activities and interactions with others.

However, the impact of the media influencing the human nature of categorising to make sense of the environment, can also have an unconscious positive impact on society. The positive impacts the media is already having on society was expressed by Scott:

“Areas like The Last Leg... opens up people’s eyes, it makes... the same as other people can poke fun at themselves and can laugh and joke about their life. It gave people with disabilities the platform to do the same... It shows that... people with a disability have got very different attitudes the same as the rest of society, some... can laugh and joke

at themselves... and other people can't and that's not about whether you are in a wheelchair or not or got a disability, it's about your personality... The Last Leg... lets barriers down. It lets people realise that you can talk about disability in a fun way, but of course it is always met with a balance of empathy and understanding at the same time..."

Like Scott, Klara also expressed how the media and the portrayal of disability is having an unconscious positive impact on society. Klara commented on how the coverage of the Paralympics in particular are having an impact:

"This is where the Paralympics... is so crucial to the portrayal of disability... over those 20 years of coverage from way back in 1992 to 2012... you had seen ability, you had seen the triumph of ability. And that is what, I think the Paralympic Games can do... Generally speaking, people think of the hurdles and the barriers and the inability and the disability rather than what can be done if you allow yourself a little flexible thinking ..."

Overall, the theme of 'needing sympathy' aligns with that of past literature findings. But what this theme also shows is that the portrayal of disability in the media and in daily life (Uta Frith, 2015), both past and present, has an impact on how disability is seen in the modern day. The theme has highlighted the human nature and instinctive behaviour of categorising people and objects; as well as showing how this behaviour is affected by how much we are exposed to in order to impact our learning and interactions (Barry-Kaufman, 2012). In addition, the theme has also shown how the media is having a positive impact on society and shifting their attention away from intentionally giving disabled people sympathy (Green and Vervaeke, 1996; Kolb and Whishaw, 1998; Bandura, 2002). Despite the comments made by both sets of participants – showing the need of sympathy is

still being portrayed in the media – show that there is an air to the media participant’s comments, of society still giving sympathy unconsciously.

‘Invisible Privilege’ and Hierarchy in Disability?

The final emerging theme from the analysis of the participant questionnaires is that of an ‘invisible privilege’, or hierarchy of disability. Despite the focus of the questions asked (Appendix E) being on the media, the emerging theme is unconsciously perpetuated by both disabled and non-disabled people within society (Deal,2010). The idea of a disability hierarchy is often expressed by both groups in society, as certain impairments are seen as more or less disabling than others, as well as some impairments being ‘better’ to have than others (Stewart, 2014; Deal, 2010; Thomas, 2000). However, despite this theme unconsciously being perpetuated by both abled-bodied and disabled members of society, Stewart (2014, p.397) found that “many disabled people believe a hierarchy of disability only perpetuates the social exclusion and stigma felt by all... as well as discriminate[s] against and/or degrade[s] those with ‘worse’ disabilities.”

The idea of hierarchy when disability is depicted in the media was mentioned in the comments of the participants questionnaires:

“I am an amputee and feel there’s not much representation, as I’m not seen as disabled enough...”

“I’m one of those who has invisible and visible disabilities, but not interesting disabilities that would boost viewing numbers. I feel they make programmes with obvious disabilities that they think people want to watch...”

“they have decided what are ‘real’ disabilities and bypass the remaining ones.”

As with all the themes within this chapter, the unconscious need of a hierarchy of disability links to the idea of 'putting disability into boxes', like that of the medical model. The impact the hierarchy has, however, is that if a disability does not fit into a box or is not seen as 'simple', then society is unsure about it, which consequently means it is forgotten.

The hierarchy of disability is clearly seen in the media coverage of the Paralympics:

"The portrayal of disabled athletes is usually focusing on the more able athletes such as amputee sprinters and cyclists... The mixture of impairment groups in swimming is always portrayed as being equal, when it is obviously isn't. The most severely disabled athletes have been cut from the Paralympic programme. The media and the IPC/BPA (International Paralympic Committee & British Paralympic Association) are trying to create a visual spectacle equal to the Olympics and at the same time promote the propaganda that disability equality has arrived because of them, when in reality it hasn't, they only shown what they think will get viewer numbers up."

In conclusion, what the unconscious hierarchy is doing with both the 'able-bodied' and 'disabled' communities is causing a stigma/social exclusion towards those seen as 'more' disabled than another, as well as all those within the disabled community. It is thought that many disabled people are unaware that they are discriminating or putting others into a hierarchy; as often, it is done in forms that are not easy recognized or said in a way which automatically used within everyday society (Stewart, 2004). Many in the disabled community do not mean to discriminate or compare themselves to others within the disabled community. Research has shown that disabled people create an unconscious hierarchy as a way for them to not be categorized as 'really disabled', but rather be perceived as 'normal' by the rest of society (Stewart, 2004; Dolmage, 2005; Sanchez, 2017). At large, the unconscious hierarchy in the disabled community, emerges as a result of-the

medical model and the idea that disabled people must 'fit' in a box in order to be accepted by the rest of society.

Language of Disability

An emerging theme which caused some contrasting feelings among the media participants, was that of language used when talking about disability. The use of language used to discuss disability has changed throughout history. Words such as 'gimp', 'cripple', 'handicap', 'imbecile', and 'lame' can all be traced back to the 9th century but was not seen as stigmatising until the 17th century (Andrew, Powell and Ayers, 2022). However, during the late 19th century when the medical model of disability was introduced, the language used to describe disability also changed. Due to the nature of the model being clinical and categorising, so too was the language used, such as 'the blind', 'the mentally ill', or 'the spastic quadriplegic'; this style of language reduces disabled people being identified by the diagnoses or condition (Smart, 2009; Barnes and Ward, 2005; Ellis and Goggin, 2015).

It was identified – after speaking to the participants from the media – that the campaign and advertisement which Channel 4 were going to use in the run up to London 2012 Paralympics was 'Freak of Nature' and 'Here Come The Freaks.' Tilly expressed the concerns she had when she found out this was the wording which was to be used:

"I saw the 'Freak of Nature' campaign, the day before it was launched, and I expressed quite a serious level of concern about it... to be an Olympian like Usain Bolt is a freak of nature. But in terms of disability, that term is used in a very different way. It's not used as you are a freak of nature, its used as you are a freak and not part of society."

Martin also raised similar concerns about the use of the word 'freak':

“... when they told me that their working title for the (London 2012) Paralympics was ‘Here Come The Freaks’ ... I was appalled by that I thought, ‘oh my God I can’t get involved’... if that is the direction Channel 4 are going.”

Scott also shared his understanding and feeling towards the use of the word:

“They did start a branding piece called ‘Freaks Of Nature’ which was a play on words really. You talk about Usain Bolt, and you don’t say he is a ‘freak’ in being able to run fast... So, the word ‘freak’ has got very derogatory terms relating to it... The word ‘freak’, as a definition isn’t a negative term. It talks about being unexplainably, like something unexplainably in the environment and being different from how people would perceive something to be and so the connotations around the word ‘freak’ then meant that it was maybe a little too close, even for Channel 4, to the bone. I don’t think it was a case of it was needed but I can understand entirely why Channel 4 done it and in no way was any of their advertising or way that disability or Paralympic sport, was advertised, described, or shown, it didn’t bother me. There was nothing where I thought that’s too close to the mark, I don’t want to be talked about like that. I was very happy with what they done, how they have done it and to be involved with it... that way of advertising was very quickly left again. Which I understand but ... I thought it was bold, it was clever.”

Joel also raised a level of concern; however, he also acknowledged how the term ‘freak’ could also be seen as a positive:

“the word ‘freak’, I totally understand why that would be offensive to some people but you have to remember that the word ‘freak’ has different connotations to it. I often

use the word 'freak' when I talk about Lionel Messi, Michael Jordan, Serena Williams, because for me when I describe them as freaks I am describing them as above human. They do things that I think 'how is that even physically possible?'... 'how did he/she do that?'... That is beyond talented, that is beyond world class ability, that's freakish behaviour... I understand why people would think 'freak' is offensive especially in the historical connotations of being disabled and people were described as freakish back in the day... but you have to also understand that there can be a positive connotation linked with being described as a 'freak' as well... it depends on who you are talking to... You are probably going to offend more than you are going to not, but I wouldn't say the word 'freak' per se is an overtly offensive one"

What the above comments show is how the use of one word can provoke different connotations for different people. Tilly made a comment which encompasses the feelings of the participants:

"You can argue all these things, but once you add a layer of permanent disability, it does change the narrative."

Moreover, what the comments highlight is a link to past research done about the history of language used to depict disability (Laurence Clark, and Stephen Marsh, 2002; Barnes and Ward, 2005; Smart, 2009; Ellis and Goggin, 2015; Andrew, Powell, and Ayers, 2022). It had been found that language towards disability has changed over the last 50 years as the social model started being used as well as the Disabled People's Movement in 1974 (Andrew, Powell, and Ayers, 2022; BCODP, 1997) which links back to the Crip Theory. One idea behind the Crip Theory is that of enabling the disabled community to reclaim a negative word and announce their non-normative status to challenge the dominant power of the rest of society (Inckle, 2013; Erevelles, 2014); as well as unsettle the key perceptions of ability (Berger, 2014).

With this change in mind, it has unconsciously been shown within the comments made by the media participants. Drawing on the comments made by Tilly and Martin, who were both born before the acknowledgment of the disabled person not being the barrier to them accessing society. Therefore, both participants grew up around words such as 'freak', and the negative impact that had on the disabled community. This reflected in their comments and their concerns of how it could be perceived. On the other hand, Scott and Joel's comments depict the impact of words – such as 'freak' – of a society born after the Disabled People's Movement and once the social model of disability was being understood and used more widely. Both Scott and Joel's comments show how people can view words differently and perceive individuals who are called words like 'freak' differently to that of the era of Tilly and Martin. Wright (1964, p.198), found "... the tendency of persons perceiving one characteristic of another person (such as lameness or physical beauty) to develop other perceptions about that person which tend to be positive or negative according to the attitude generated by the first impression".

In addition to the use of the word 'freak' being used in any potential tag lines and/or campaigns, Channel 4 moved away from this and instead used the word 'superhuman'. The change in language exposed mixed feelings among participants. Martin commented:

"when it came through that it was 'Thank You For The Warm Up' and 'Superhumans' I was really relieved... that they hadn't gone the other direction... I thought it was punchy and it caught the imagination. I think it captured a totally new audience for the Games."

However, both Joel and Tilly raised concerns about the use of the word. Joel commented:

"although the advert and the marketing campaign around the 2012 Games of 'Superhumans' went down amazingly. They won awards for their adverts. Some

people said post-Games, that actually are disabled... said that actually they think it was a negative... they said because what it did was, that implication was that if you are disabled, but not an athlete, your worthless. So, it is all well and good 'you're superhuman, you're amazing', if you're an athlete... Most disabled people are not athletes."

Tilly raised her concerns:

"...'superhuman', that was better but I still think you have to be really careful about what it says to other disabled people who aren't Paralympians... You don't say to an untalented 12-year-old who does sport once a week 'do you want to be an Olympian?' but we say to an untalented 12-year-old disabled child 'do you want to be a Paralympian?'... That shows that there is still a lack of understanding about what it takes to be a Paralympian... there is that balance between hope, aspiration, and appeal, but then you are sending out the wrong messages to those who will never be."

The above comments made by Joel and Tilly link back to the theme of 'inspirational porn', as well as that of past research on the medical model of disability. The concept of Joel and Tilly's comments linking comes as past research has found that the representation of para-athletes in the media have remnants of the supercrip narrative and more so when branded 'superhuman' (McPherson *et al*, 2016). Furthermore, what the media are unconsciously depicting through the use of the word 'superhuman', is highlighting what disabled people cannot do. The word 'superhuman' could be argued to be a contributor to disabled people feeling that sporting participation is unattainable for them. Brate, Gibbons, and Dixon (2013, p.988) found that "rather than inspiring disabled people to play sport, when para-athletes are depicted as a supercrip, inspirational, or superhuman this might put off some people from wanting to engage with sport".

Overall, language has had and still has an important role to play in how society views disability. The role of the media is pivotal in increasing global attention to disability sport (Jackson *et al*, 2020). The above findings also highlight again how the media use language to categories disabled people into boxes. Albeit unconscious, the language the media use to depict athletes in the Paralympics and disability overall, aligns with that of the medical model as the language used depicts to put people into boxes as they need to be supported to fit in with 'normal' life at the same time are excluded as a normal member of society (Thomas-Couser and Mairs, 1997; Sandahl and Auslander, 2005). Worrell (2018) found that the media portrayal of disability has 'maintained a relatively negative portrayal across time with interspersing of positive and/or supercrip portrayals.' The language used by the media influences the way disability is understood by society which in turn influences the language society uses to describe disability, their expectations, and interactions in everyday settings. Therefore, the media has the power to influence how society acts around disability, by promoting inclusion and bring down barriers.

Bespoke Coverage of the Paralympics

The next emerging theme specific to the media participants focuses on, how/why the Paralympics are covered the way they are and if this has an impact on society, both positively and negatively. Scott commented on the positive impact the Games – London 2012 in particular – had on society:

“...it was a fantastic platform to introduce people to Paralympic sports... as a legacy, I think that London 2012, for a generation, will be remembered. I think it has done so much for disability sports. People have got more of an understanding of disability and the opportunities that are available. Now people have got an educated decision as opposed to going 'there is nothing I can do'. It's not just about doing it, but you are educated that it is possible to do... you are educated on what is happening.”

Scott's above comment links with many of the assumptions of the social cognitive theory. The idea of the theory is that learning happens in a social setting which has a dynamic, as well as a reciprocal, interaction of a person with the environment and behaviour (Luszczynska and Schwarzer, 2015; Worrell, 2018). The social cognitive theory is made up of 6 main constructs, which include 'reciprocal determinism', 'behavioural capability', 'observational learning', 'reinforcements', 'expectations', and 'self-efficacy' (LaMorte, 2022). However, Scott's comment suggests that three main constructs were being used, the first being 'behavioural capability' which refers to a person's actual ability to perform a behaviour through vital knowledge and skill. As a result, for a person to perform a behaviour successfully, a person must know what to do and to do it; this construct can be seen in Scott's comment that 'people have got more of an understanding of disability and the opportunities that are available'. The second construct seen in Scott's comment was 'observational learning'; this construct refers to obtaining a new behaviour by watching someone else perform it and observing the outcomes and then go on to exhibit this through 'modelling behaviour' (Rossi and Velicer, 2000; LaMorte, 2022). The third construct used was 'self-efficacy', where a person's confidence in their own ability to perform a behaviour. This construct is influenced by the person's specific capabilities and other individual factors, as well as other environmental factors, such as facilitators and barriers (Rossi and Velicer, 2000; Luszczynska and Schwarzer, 2015; LaMorte, 2022). This construct can be seen in Scott's comment when he expresses his feelings on the Paralympic coverage where he argues 'now people have got an educated decision as opposed to going "there is nothing I can do". It's not just about doing it, but you are educated that it is possible to do... you are educated on what is happening.'

However, despite Scott's above comments and positive links with the constructs of social cognitive theory, the following comments suggest that if the coverage of disability is not consistent, the positive change will not set in. Martin expressed his concern on this matter but also explains the journey the production channels have been on, as well as his opinion as to why there is a difference in opinion on what should be aired within the disability community:

“In 1988, it was patronizing. A 10-minute package for the entire Paralympic Games... it was about, for example, ‘here is Simon Jackson, he is blind, and he can play the piano, isn’t that amazing and, oh, by the way he won a gold in judo!’ Then they [BBC] kind of swung and in 1992 and to a certain degree in 1996, it was much more sports-focused. It was about the sport not the disability and as an athlete it felt like a really positive move. I can remember getting told by the BBC ‘imagine if your auntie is watching this and if you think something needs explaining to her, explain it to the viewers’. So, we went on a journey with the BBC and the BBC, I think got to a point in Beijing [2008] where I thought they were doing a pretty good job ... Channel 4 took it on [2012] and it became much more about the story behind the individual ... there is a difference between how people who receive their disabilities think about things and how people who were born and have always known the world of disability ... I define myself as a disabled person, but receiving that disability was a real key moment in my life that defined who I am, ... I am ok talking about that.

Martin’s above comment shows the journey and changes the media made in their portrayal of disability and disability sport. Martin’s comment on how the media have changed how they report on disabled athletes still portrays them as the victim as a Para-athlete’s disability was always at the forefront of any Paralympic broadcasting. Disability is highlighted at the forefront, as it was hidden away and not spoken about, or spoken about as the reason for the athlete doing the sport and the reason why they are competing at such a high level. Tilly also expressed her concerns:

“I don’t think you can expect two weeks of a Paralympic Games to change the world... It’s interesting with Tokyo [2020/21] with the opening ceremony and the ‘We the 15 campaign’. It’s a lovely idea but how can the IPC [International Paralympic Committee] influence every jurisdiction in education and employment? When it is so different in

every single country around the world... at the moment it feels like a PR campaign. The IPC should be organising an amazing Paralympic Games... I understand why they are linking to the UN [United Nations] and other organisations, but they can't dilute what they are meant to be doing... encouraging countries to have social programmes for disabled people and bringing them into sport. Ministers get very excited about the Olympics and Paralympics, but it needs more political will than once every four years."

Tilly's above comment draws attention back to that of past research done by Ross (1997) who commented on how a person's 'humanness' was reduced if they have a disability. In conjunction with Ross (1997), research done by Matzler's (2016) argued that disabled people have been depicted as entertainment first and human second, since the era of royal and upper-class court jesters. Tilly's comment also echoes the findings of Whannel (2014, p.773) who commented on how major global para-events broadcasted by the media "exercises such an impact in the media that it makes it temporarily difficult for society to discuss anything else... they are drawn in as if by a vortex which only comes around every four years to be then spat back out again two weeks later".

Klara went on to explain the inner workings and thinking of why the major broadcasters – from the UK and the USA – of the Paralympics in 2012 and beyond portray the Games the way they do now:

"Sebastian Coe, when he was negotiating positions... you bid for broadcast positions at the Olympics and Paralympics. NBC [National Broadcasting Company] have the rights in America for the Olympics, and he said to them you can only have the number one positions if you improve your coverage of the Paralympic Games and you will hold those positions then for the Paralympic as well. He basically motivated NBC to improve their coverage in America but also... because they were all over here, they saw what we were doing and they were like 'oh my God, they are on air everyday all day long, and they are doing highlight shows, and they are doing the Last Leg – they are doing

an entertainment show'. So, I think the coverage of the Paralympic Games, but particularly Channel 4 taking it over and turning it into something so different and allowing it a sense of humour and the glamour of entertainment with the Last Leg, was an absolute key change and it changed things in this country... but I think because the world's sport media were here they took that message back to China or Russia or America"

The above comment made by Klara shows the impact of thinking outside the box when portraying disability/Paralympics in the media. Klara's comment also aligns with that of crip theory, where the portrayal of disability as entertainment is being seen as a positive rather than a negative. This is seen in the above comment, as it shows how the disabled community is re-claiming airtime on the media and it is having a rippling effect on the media around the world.

Summary

Overall, what this section shows is how the media's portrayal of the Paralympics have changed in the right direction over the years. Its important to note that the media's portrayal of disability is now showing what disabled people can do and achieve. Its key to acknowledge that now disabled people are being able to see representation of themselves achieving rather than negative portrayal; in turn this representation builds a persons' confidence in their ability (Rossi and Velicer, 2000; LaMorte, 2022). However, despite this positive portrayal it is isolated to it being for 2 weeks every 4 years, on the Paralympic cycle (Whannel, 2014). Attention is brought back by the participants comments, on how an athletes' disability is depicted above their ability, which in turn reduces the athlete's humanness (Ross, 1997). This attention on an athletes' disability rather than their ability, brings back the work of past research done (Nelson, 2000;Worell, 2018) which has shone light on how disability is seen as victim of life and who needs supporting in life (Imrie, 1997; Townsend, Smith and Cushion, 2015). Therefore, the most important and key takeaway message from this

section, is that if positive portrayal of disability is not consistent outside of a Paralympic year, then perceptions of disability are unlikely to change.

The Re-brand of Channel 4

The final theme coming from the analysis of the media interviews is that of the rebranding of Channel 4 after gaining the rights to do the coverage of the London 2012 Paralympics. Klara commented on how gaining the broadcasting rights for the Paralympics came at the right time for the channel:

“Channel 4 re-branded themselves and because this was straight after the Big Brother debacle⁴, Channel 4’s currency was in a downwards trajectory and it was in trouble. Channel 4’s share price... well, it’s a strangely funded beast of half-public, half-private funding. I think the way they did the Paralympics allowed them to completely reinvent themselves. They re-branded the whole station. The outside of the building where Channel 4 works from in Horseferry Road had this giant wheelchair logo which became their logo for all of that summer [2012] in recognition of the Paralympics. They really... invested in it wholeheartedly.”

Joel also expressed his opinion on how the re-brand of Channel 4 impacted disability positively:

“I think Channel 4 capitalized on the poor job the BBC were doing with the Paralympics. ... they said ‘we are not going to make the Paralympics a secondary event to the Olympics... we are going to treat the Paralympics on a par with the Olympics’. I think

⁴ The Channel 4 debacle came after racist abuse occurred during the broadcast of Celebrity Big Brother in 2007. After this broadcast of the show, it was documented that no employees of Channel 4 resigned, despite the racism that was going on within the show. As a result of the racism viewer numbers dropped from 10 million to 2 million. Big Brother was one of the channel’s main productions taking up 200 hours of air time. The decision to axe the show meant that the channel needed to do a complete review of their content at a time when they were low on cash as Big Brother had cost the Channel £180 million to broadcast.

what Channel 4 did in 2012 was phenomenal because ... it made people realize that no matter what disability you may have you can still run fast, ... score a basket, ... take part in boccia. You can do all these things ... they have normalized it ... they treated it in a way that made people just think ...”

The above comment by Joel shows how Channel 4 aligned with ‘crip theory’ in their broadcasting of the Paralympics when they took it over from the BBC. Joel’s comment shows that the Channel was allowing the disabled community to reclaim and reinvent societies concept of disability. Joel’s comment also shows how the Social Cognitive Theory is having an impact in their broadcasting. The Channel has been able to ‘normalize’ disability for society as they have been able to affect the reinforcement of a person’s environment, through what they are seeing when watching Channel 4’s broadcasts. By effecting a person’s environment Channel 4 is echoing the ‘social cognitive’ main concept of learning happens through a social setting of dynamic and reciprocal interaction of the person, environment, and behaviour” (Bandura, 1986).

Joel went on to express how he felt about the advertisements of Channel 4 in the run up to the Paralympics:

“...the best advertising campaigns I saw was the Channel 4 Paralympics ... in 2012. The black bill board that said ‘Thank You For The Warm Up’. ... it was basically saying that the Olympics was great but let’s get to the real event ... almost two fingers to the BBC, to say you have treated the Paralympics as the baby brother for so long ... we are going to go big on it and give the disabled athletes the respect they deserve.”

Scott also commented on how the broadcaster, in his opinion, highlighted disability positively:

“What Channel 4 did... was some of their everyday advertising and some of their campaigns for it were saying ‘Thanks For The Warm Up’, talking about the Olympics as a warm up to make sure everything works properly for the Paralympics. 2012 was quite ground-breaking in the way that Channel 4 started looking at disability, and started to raise the profile of disability and disability sport when they got the rights to the London 2012 Games.”

What the above comments show is how the broadcaster – Channel 4 – has drawn upon the ‘social model’ of disability when they re-branded themselves. The model is seen to be used in all the above comments as they all depict how the broadcaster is removing the barriers, unconsciously put up by the BBC when they covered the Paralympics. Channel 4 appear to have made the conscious decision to remove these barriers when they gained the broadcasting rights to the Paralympics in 2010. From the comments, it appears that Channel 4 used the concept of the social model of ‘people with disabilities cannot all be approached in the same way’ (Oliver and Sapey, 1999, p.6). The above comments also highlight how the broadcaster aligned with the principles of ‘crip theory’ in their overall re-brand and portrayal of disability. It is clear to see from the participants comments that Channel 4 not only re-branded themselves as a broadcaster, but also enabled disability to reclaim the airtime given to the Paralympics (Walsh, 2014; Cockain, 2020; Pullen *et al*, 2020). Overall, what Channel 4 enabled – whether consciously or unconsciously – was for disabled people a space/platform where they are free from the normative constraints of ableist norms (Davidson, 2003; Bone, 2017).

Klara goes onto comment about an initiative Channel 4 had while they were re-branding:

“...they made the big decision to train up new talent with visible disabilities and invisible, but they were very keen it looked different, and it looked how they felt. To

give them enormous credit, I think they have made other broadcasters up their game and specifically around the training they did of new presenters.”

Martin also expresses his understanding and feelings behind Channel 4’s initiative:

“Channel 4 made a statement that they would have a certain percentage of people working both behind and in front of the camera... [The] BBC never did that and so the numbers are always going to look bad against Channel 4... [The] BBC probably were actually pretty good at getting the right people in front of the camera, the right pundits... there was never a budget to train disabled people up and Channel 4 took the decision to do that. That said, they are still sticking with the same presenters they trained in 2012... Now in my mind we should be looking at training people like Liz Johnson to segway out for and through into a presenting role but those budgets they [Channel 4] had for 2012 are not there now, So yes Channel 4 are looking much better, but they are still leveraging the investment they put in 10 years ago and it is not an ongoing investment”

Martin’s above comment draws upon how broadcasters were consciously including disabled people when training up new talent for broadcasting roles. On one hand, it could be argued that this conscious inclusion by the broadcaster’s links to the Social Model. With the broadcasters including disabled presenters they link with the argument made by the UPIAS (1976) whereby they suggest that disability is imposed upon someone by society unnecessarily, excluding them from being able to fully participate from society. With disabled people being trained up as new talent for broadcasting roles, both the BBC and Channel 4 started to bring down the social barriers, which historically had excluded disabled people from society (Shakespeare, 2018).

However, on the other hand Martin's comment links back to previous themes in this chapter of 'Heard But Not Seen' and 'Invisible Privilege'. This link comes as the investment of funds to train disabled people up is not ongoing, which could be argued that due to the broadcaster having trained up disabled presenters it's not needed to be carried on and therefore the investment stopped; which links with Barnes (2016) who suggested that disability is often seen as a side line to the rest of society. As a result, it could be suggested that there is a link with the medical model of disability, as it could be seen as the broadcasters only trained disabled people up as broadcasters in order to aid them in fitting in with 'normal' life (Thomas Couser and Mairs, 1997).

The above comment by Martin appears to show that despite on the surface of Channel 4, it appearing to portray disability in a positive light, it seems that disability post-2012 is being seen as an after-thought and hidden away. The above also draws attention back to the findings of Barnes (2016) and Franzen (1990), who found that disabled people are often an after-thought, which in turn means they often get less attention or stimulation. Both comments by the media participants draw attention again back to the previous emerging theme from both the public and media participants of how its felt that disability is 'heard but not seen' and seen as a minority.

Overall, what the above theme has shown is that the re-branding of Channel 4 has been one of testing new ground in their style of using different theoretical models in their portrayal of disability. The models used by the broadcaster were the 'social model' of disability and 'crip theory'. By using these two theoretical models, more often than not as the main structure of their productions, Channel 4 made a conscious decision to move away from the norm of using the 'medical model'. The use of different theoretical models was not only used within the productions shown, but also in the aesthetics of the building of Channel 4, as well as their conscious decision to have an equal number of staff with disabilities both in front and behind the camera. However, the theme has also shown that despite the positive start of re-branding the Channel, to be a new innovative broadcaster, who are paving the way for disability, Channel 4 are still using the 'medical model'.

Whether it is conscious or unconscious, this theme has shown that the Channel has not been able to sustain the use of the 'social model' or 'crip theory' as the main structure, post London 2012. All in all, it could be argued that the re-brand of Channel 4 is the same as society, who start out with the best intentions to move away from using ableist-norms, but fall back into old habits due to historical normative constraints.

Summary

On one hand, as has been shown in the above emerging themes, the medical model is seen to underpin the portrayal of disability in the media, which comes from the view of both sets of participants asked. It could be argued that the medical model is seen to be the underpin of the media's portrayal of disability, as it is seen to be the main structure used by the media when broadcasting, with other theoretical models being added in on top. On the other hand, however, what the analysis of the public questionnaires has shown is that there is a shift emerging in the more recent portrayal of disability, whether that be on television or that of social media. One example of this shift away from the medical model being the corner stone of disability portrayal, comes from the emerging theme 'inspirational porn'. The shift is shown as the portrayal of 'inspirational porn' is trying to break out of the bounds of depicting disability in a negative light, but rather depict it a much more positive light (Evans, 2022). It could be argued that this shift is in line with that of the 'crip theory', where by turning a negative and a derogative way of looking at disability and reclaiming it and turning it into a positive for all. The shift in the way disability is being viewed is starting to challenge dominant powers, much like the 'crip theory', and set out to unsettle the dominant perceptions of ability by bridging the divide between impairment and disability, by not prioritising any particular identity as superior (Berger, 2014).

The emerging shift seen from the analysis of the public questionnaires, is also seen from the analysis of the media's interviews. The shift can be seen clearly in the re-branding of the broadcaster

Channel 4, where they made the conscious decision to amplify the Paralympics and made a point of bringing disability to the forefront of society's mind, which in turn normalized disability. As with the theme of 'inspirational porn', the re-branding of Channel 4 also aligns with the 'crip theory'. The way Channel 4 have aligned with the 'crip theory', is because they are creating a social space which is free from the constraints of ableist-norms (Bone, 2017). By creating this space, they are bringing together all groups of society – who have been excluded by normativity – and help create a more inclusive, accessible, and non-normative society (Berger, 2014). Generally speaking, what the emerging themes have shown, is that there are shifts happening in the portrayal of disability. However, there are also changes still needing to be made.

Summary of Findings

The main aim of the investigation was to gain an understanding of why the broadcasters – Channel 4 and the BBC – portray disability and disability sport differently. In order to answer the aim of the investigation, it was important to understand some of the theoretical models which underpin the framework of disability and disability study, including:

- 'Medical model' of disability
- 'Social model' of disability
- 'Crip theory'
- 'Social cognitive theory'

Gaining an understanding of these theoretical models enabled for a better understanding from the findings of the analysis of both sets of data, from the media and public participants. As previous chapters have shown the analysis found a number of emerging themes, with four overarching themes:

1. Broadcasters still use historical stereotypes and the medical model when portraying disability and disability sport.
2. Broadcasters are starting to use crip theory and the social model in their productions.
3. Broadcasters have a key role to play to educate society on topics.
4. Disabled people feel they have to conform to the 'norm' in order to belong and be accepted.

The first overarching theme emerged as the analysis of both the public and media data has shown how they feel the productions from both broadcasters still portrays disability using historical

stereotypes – the ‘victim’, ‘hero’, ‘villain’, and ‘fool’ (Worrell, 2018) - and preconceived ideas from the medical model. Examples of the broadcasters using historical stereotypes can be seen in the themes of ‘Heard But Not Seen’, and ‘Bespoke Coverage of the Paralympics’. One example of the stereotype ‘victim’ comes from participant Martin’s comment about how the media have changed how they report on disabled athletes but are still portraying the athletes as the victim. When athletes are portrayed, broadcasters draw the viewers’ attention to the athletes’ disability. By drawing attention to an athletes’ disability, it could be thought that they are competing at an elite level because of their disability; or that they are victims of life as their disability is being pointed out ahead of their sporting achievements.

The victim portrayal draws attention to past research from Signonelli (1989, p.6) who stated that “often people with disabilities are really victims of life, and they are failures, whose lives revolve around their disability ...”. It could be argued that the medical model of disability is also being used by the media. This link to the medical model comes as the idea behind the model is that disability is solely biological with medical causes (Barnes and Ward, 2005), and that disability is merely an umbrella term for a person with an impairment of the body (Shakespeare, 2012). Therefore, it has been argued that a disabled person is being put into a box in order for society to accept them, as they are often referred to by their difference rather than them as a member of society (Sandahl and Auslander, 2005; Kielhofrier, 2009).

The second overarching theme is that, despite the broadcasters still using the medical model and historical stereotypes for the vast majority of its portrayal of disability, there is evidence that they are starting to align with the principles of ‘crip theory’ and the ‘social model’ of disability. One example of crip theory being used in productions comes from the emerging theme of ‘Heard But Not Seen’; the use of crip theory in this theme can be seen as, when participants of the public were asked, they felt that factual programmes portrayed them better as it allowed them to be seen in real time. Participants expressed that they felt this style of production enables society to see the

negatives of disability as well as the positives. The depiction of disability in this way links to 'crip theory' as it is creating a space for all groups to be included and move away from ableist-norms (Bone, 2017).

Another example can be seen in the emerging theme of 'Disability Porn or Inspiration Porn?'. The theory can be seen here from a comment made by one of the media participants, who expressed how the term 'Superhuman' – which was used by Channel 4 when they covered the Paralympics – was reclaimed by a former Paralympic athlete, who created an inclusive event called the 'Superhero Tri Series'. The link to crip theory comes from the reclaiming of the word, as the main idea of the theory is that the disabled community reclaim words which historically are derogative and turn them into positives (McRuer, 2006). The theory also aims to make positive change by unsettling key perceptions of ability by bridging the divide between impairment and disability and not prioritising any particular identity as superior.

The theme of the 'Rebrand of Channel 4' also shows how the broadcaster used the 'social model' of disability when they rebranded. The use of the model comes as Channel 4 made the decision to portray the Paralympics as the same as the Olympics, which meant that society saw peoples' ability rather than just their disability. By treating the Paralympics on par with the Olympics, Channel 4 showed – whether consciously or unconsciously – that disabled people cannot all be approached the same way (Oliver and Sapey, 1999). The main principle of the social model is that "it is society which disables physically impaired people. Disability is something imposed on top of our impairment, by the way we are unnecessarily isolated and excluded from full participation in society" (The Disability Alliance, 1976, p. 4). Overall, this movement towards using crip theory and the social model shows how there is a shift happening in how disability is being portrayed by broadcasters. In turn, the broadcasters shift in thinking and portrayal will start to have an influence on societies view of disability overall.

The advancement in all forms of media - and societies engagement with it - brings attention to the third overarching theme of the main role: that broadcasters have to inform and educate society on a number of topics. One example of how broadcasters' impact and unconsciously educate society is through the use of the language they use in productions and/or campaigns. The example can be seen in the emerging theme of 'language of disability', where broadcasters use words such as 'freak' and 'superhuman'. The use of the word 'superhuman' by broadcasters focuses attention on what disabled cannot do as well as their physical differences. It could be argued that this style of portrayal is a contributor to disabled people not engaging with sport, as when Para-athletes are portrayed by broadcasters as 'supercrip', 'inspirational' or 'superhuman' it increases the feeling that sporting participation might be unattainable for them (Brate, Gibbons, and Dixon, 2013). The language of disability has changed throughout history, and like the very nature of disability often being seen as shapeshifting (Ellis and Goggin, 2015), so too is the language used to describe disability and the connotations of the language.

However, the use of words by broadcasters influences a persons' perception of one characteristic of another person (such as a physical difference) which develops their perceptions about the person, which could be either positive or negative depending on the attitude they had with their first impression (Wright, 1964). The language used also impacts on how society interacts with a disabled person. Broadcasters' use of language impacts society as society unconsciously takes the lessons learnt by the productions aired and then expresses them in real life. This shows how social cognitive theory is relevant to impact of broadcasters because a persons' learned experiences (what they see on productions aired) is influencing their unconscious reinforcements, expectations, and expectancies, which go on to impact a person's engagement of a certain behaviour (Bandura, 2002). Social cognitive theory also expresses how society is consisted of agentic operators, and that agentic actions shape brain development as well as functioning throughout a person's life (Kolb and Whishaw, 1998). Therefore, the media's pivotal role in educating society us as important now as it has ever been, with the advancement of media outlets (Ellis and Goggin, 2015). The role of all

media outlets, have a part to play in educating the right messages of disability, to the next generation and enabling society to be all inclusive.

The last overarching theme is that disabled people are still feeling that they have to conform to ableist norms in order to fit in and be accepted by society. The feeling of needing to conform to the 'norm' can be seen throughout the thesis; however, one example of it can be seen in the theme of 'Is there an invisible privilege and hierarchy to disability?'. The disabled community's need to fit in has resulted in them having an unconscious hierarchy among themselves. However, the hierarchy is not just isolated to the disabled community, as the able-bodied community also use the same hierarchy. Both groups of society use the hierarchy of disability, as certain impairments are seen as more or less disabling than others, or that one impairment is better to have than another (Thomas, 2000; Deal, 2010; Stewart, 2014). Although, the use of hierarchy, has led the able-bodied community to want to fit disabled people into a box to make sense of it/them. However, if a disability does not fit into a box, then the able-bodied community is unsure about it, which as a result means it is forgotten.

As a consequence, the disabled community believe that the hierarchy of disability only prolongs social exclusion and stigma felt by the disabled community, as well as those with a 'worse' disability being discriminated against and degraded (Stewart, 2014). As an overall result of feeling the need to fit in, the disabled community use a hierarchy among themselves as a way for them to not be categorised as 'really disabled', but rather be seen as 'normal' by the able-bodied community (Stewart, 2004; Dolmage, 2005; Sanchez, 2017). Despite the disabled community using a form of hierarchy to depict one another, it is often done unconsciously, and many do not mean to compare themselves or discriminate against others in the community. Throughout this thesis it has shown an air of an invisible hierarchy being used. However, there are snippets of the hierarchy and need to conform to ableist norms not being used, but instead there being an inclusive environment within the broadcasters and the publications shown.

Methodological Reflections

The methodological approach used within this research was qualitative in nature. Two sets of participants were used, from the general public – whom had either a visible or invisible disability – and media professionals who either work or have worked for the BBC and/or Channel 4. Data was collected from the public through questionnaires; this form of data collections was used as it enabled all abilities to access it as well as physical contact not being needed due to social distancing (Galea *et al.*, 2020) as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, by only being able to distribute the questionnaire by online platforms, it could mean that participants were missed if they do not have access to online (Roy *et al.*, 2020). The questionnaires were distributed via social media, which led to being passed on among participants, meaning that the overall participation was greater than first thought with 24 participants taking part. However, should the research be carried out again, a bigger network of participants could be accessed, by being able to hand the questionnaires out physically, as well as a bigger group of participants with varying disabilities also being available due to them not shielding from the Covid-19 pandemic and being at a high risk of contracting the virus (Lasseter *et al.*, 2022; Porter *et al.*, 2023). Furthermore, a wider range of views could be gained if carers of disabled participants were also asked.

The collection of data from the media professionals was conducted via interviews. The interviews were conducted remotely, which meant that it enabled ease for participants, as they were able to take part from where ever they were. By carrying it out remotely, it also enabled the data to be collected in a timely manner, despite the challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic, such as lockdowns and social distancing (Chu *et al.*, 2020; Tremblay *et al.*, 2021). Although the research was able to collect data from 5 participants; if it were to be done again, a vaster group of media participants could be asked. A greater group of media participants could be accessed – if the research was done again – by opening up the research to include participants from different areas

within the BBC and Channel 4, as well as participants from other broadcasters within the UK. By opening up the research to a wider audience, will allow for a greater understanding of the actions taken in productions. A larger group of participants could also be accessed if the research was done again, by opening the participation to broadcasters from around the world. By opening the participation to broadcasters from the around the world, would create a better understanding of how they portray disability and the impact it has on society.

However, despite some of the challenges the research has come across while collecting data, one of its biggest strengths was its access to elite high-profile media participants. It is felt that this is a big strength for research, as it is often hard to get a foot in the door to obtain access, despite their high visibility (Cunningham-Sabot, 1999; Welch *et al.*, 2002; Thuesen, 2011; Mikecz, 2012). The research was able to gain access to media participants who are known around the world and are at the top of their profession. The strength of the research was gained through some contacts already obtained by the researcher, with more access and contacts obtained via the research being passed on among media participants. Shenton and Hayter (2004, p. 226) commented that “[t]he researcher’s success in this regard will have a significant effect on the nature and quality of data collected... and, ultimately, on the trustworthiness of the findings”. Overall, the success of unlocking the access of high profiled media professionals has been a crucial strength in this research.

Recommendations

Overall, what the research has gained, is a better understanding of how the public feel about the productions shown and the impact this has on how they view and interact with someone who has an impairment or disability. It has also gained an understanding from the media on how they feel about the productions aired, as well as their opinion on how these then impact society either consciously or unconsciously. It has also been highlighted from the past research that the portrayal of disability overall by the media has not changed since the time of court jesters, and that disability is seen as entertainment. Future research should look at how to change the need for disability to be seen as entertainment, and the impact this would have on the overall view of disability. In turn, future research should also look at a way to change the need for disabled people to conform to ableist norms in order for them to fit into society.

Changes that the media could make, in light of this research, is their portrayal of disability in non-fiction productions. Portrayal could be changed by having more visibility of disability in storylines rather than as a one-off. Non-fiction productions could also help in the change of portrayal for disabled people by having disabled actors playing disabled characters, as well as having a variety of disability being shown rather than the most common or easy. These changes would enable a bigger audience to see representation of themselves in an environment that is equal to an able-bodied actor. In addition, the media could also change its portrayal of disability in their fictional productions. Change could be made in different ways, the first of which, portraying disability in all forms and not sugar coating or hiding the 'hard' or 'challenging' parts of disability from society. The second change could be to make visible that disabled people come from all walks of life and can do any job rather than portraying just disabled athletes. The third and final change that could be made and one which was highlighted in the research is that the media make disability less of the 'token' one in its productions.

All in all, these simple little changes would enable bigger changes to happen within the media and in turn, society overall. These simple changes could instil inclusion for disability and remove the stereotypes placed on disabled people by the media. Consequently, all these changes would help contribute to making an all-inclusive community for disabled people.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Advertisement for participants from the public (FaceBook)

If you haven't already PLEASE follow the link and fill in the questionnaire I really wanna hear from you!! If you have filled it in please share as far and as wide as possible to get more people to fill it in. Parents and Carers of disabled people whether visible or not please feel free to fill it in on their behalf too! Thank you and PLEASE HELP!!!

I NEED YOU!!!!!!

Do you or someone else you know have a visible or invisible disability?

Do you feel there is the right amount or not enough TV coverage that represents people like you?

Do you want to help make a change?

If the answer to these three questions was YES then I need your help. As part of my masters degree I am looking at the way the media portrays disabilities whether that be visible or invisible as well as the way it portrays disabled sport. If you could spare 10 minutes to help me fight this I would be so happy. Please also feel free to pass it on to any one else you may know who has a disability. REMEMBER you/they DON'T have to have a visible disability!!!

So just click on the link below to join in! 

docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfUpSb71hYDKOzVa1PJr0o97so4DgAjwCK-mKeB4Yr5qS3TTA/viewform

Appendix B

Participant Information Sheet - Public



Name: Harriet Little

Position: Masters by Research Student, Department of Sport, Health Sciences and Social Work, Faculty of Health and Life Sciences, Oxford Brookes University

Email Address of Researcher: 16014559@brookes.ac.uk

Study title

Why do Channel 4 and the BBC portray disability and disability sport differently? A media content and production analysis.

Invitation paragraph

The following study is inviting you to take part and give your view and opinion on the research topic: 'Why do Channel 4 and the BBC portray disability and disability sport differently?'. However, before agreeing to take part in the study, it is important that you read and understand why the research is being undertaken, as well as what is involved. Please take the time to read and digest the following information fully and carefully; before consenting.

What is the purpose of the study?

At present the way in which disability and disability sport is portrayed is different across two broadcasting companies: the BBC and Channel 4. The purpose of this research is to compare both the BBC and Channel 4 with regards to the way which the two broadcasters show disability to society on their platforms, and if this has any lasting impact on the way the public view disability in day-to-day life. The research will be made up of a questionnaire to capture your views and comments on how you feel the two television channels portray disability and disability sport. The time scale for this collection will be two months.

Why have I been invited to participate?

You have been asked along with 24 other members of the general public, who either have a visible or invisible disability.

Do I have to take part?

Taking part in this project is completely voluntary and it is up to you whether you decide to participate or not in this research study. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet along with a privacy notice that will explain how your data will be collected and used and be asked to give your consent. Please remember that if you do decide to participate, you are able to withdraw or leave the project at any time without giving any reason as to why.

What will happen to me if I take part?

If you agree to take part, you will be asked to complete a questionnaire. The maximum amount of time you wish to contribute to the study will be up to you; however, the minimum amount of time required to contribute is 10 minutes. The information about the research project will be provided to you before you fully commit to completing the questionnaire.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

There are no known disadvantages of taking part in the research project, as the questionnaires will be completed in your own time. However, there is a small risk that you may feel that some of the experiences that are brought up may mean you feel you have been victimised against or be

made to feel uncomfortable resulting in a negative experience. If this is the case, then you will be able to share this feeling with the research team as well as be referred to support services, if needed. You will also be able to withdraw from the research at any time.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

There are benefits from taking part in the research project. For example, the support and views of both able-bodied and disabled participants will be of great assistance in the project and future study of disability in contemporary society, as it will be a mixed set of views and opinions on the chosen media platforms. The second benefit would be that from having the information and experiences of disabled people and able-bodied people about disability being shown on television, it will mean that you may be able to help with the improvement of 'disability portrayal' in the future, helping to make an 'equal' setting for both disabled and able-bodied individuals.

Will what I say in this study be kept confidential?

Yes, your contributions to this study will be kept confidential. Research data will be kept securely at all times, especially when collected in the field before being transferred back to Oxford Brookes University. Laptops and other devices will be password protected. Data will be stored in Google Drive, for which the University has a security agreement. Data generated by the study will be retained in accordance with the University's policy on Academic Integrity. The data generated in the course of the research will be kept securely in paper or electronic form for a period of 10 years.

All responses will be kept anonymous and personal information given will not be seen by anyone else other than the researcher and the supervisory team (Dr Stuart Whigham and Dr Adam Bibbey).

What should I do if I want to take part?

You will have either been asked to join in the research by the researcher or sent the link to the questionnaire via social media. If you agree to take part, then you will be asked to complete a questionnaire. You will also be asked to complete an informed consent form to acknowledge your willingness to participate in the project.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

There will be opportunity for all the participants involved to look at their own finished research findings and transcripts, upon request. The data being collected will be analysed as part of a MA by Research degree programme at Oxford Brookes University.

Who is organising and funding the research?

I am conducting this research as a MA by Research student at Oxford Brookes University, in the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences. The project is not externally funded.

Who has reviewed the study?

This research has been approved by the Department of Sport, Health Science & Social Work, Research Ethics Committee, Oxford Brookes University.

Contact for Further Information

For more information about the study please do not hesitate to contact myself at: 16014559@brookes.ac.uk or my project supervisor Stuart Whigham at: swhigham@brookes.ac.uk

If you have any concerns about the way in which the study has been conducted, please contact the Chair of the University Research Ethics Committee on ethics@brookes.ac.uk.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and agreeing to take part in this research study.

Version Number v1.1

Appendix: C

Participant Information Sheet - Media

Name: Harriet Little

Position: Masters by Research Student, Oxford Brookes University, Faculty of Health and Life Sciences

Email Address of Researcher: 16014559@brookes.ac.uk

Study title

Why do Channel 4 and the BBC portray disability and disability sport differently? A media content and production analysis.

Invitation paragraph

The following study is inviting you to take part and give your view and opinion on the research topic, 'Why do Channel 4 and the BBC portray disability and disability sport differently?' However, before agreeing to take part in the study, it is important that you read and understand why the research is being undertaken, as well as what is involved. Please take the time to read and digest the following information fully and carefully; before consenting.

What is the purpose of the study?

At present the way in which disability and disability sport is portrayed is different across both broadcasting companies; the BBC and Channel 4. The purpose of this research is to compare both the BBC and Channel 4 with the way in which the two show disability to society on their platforms, and if this has any lasting impact on the way society view disability in every day to day life. The research will be made up of a questionnaire to capture your views and comments on how you feel the two television channels portray disability and disability sport. The time scale for this collection will be done over two months.

Why have I been invited to participate?

You have been asked to participate in the project as you have a connection with one or both broadcasters and will therefore be able to provide an insight into the production practices and strategies which underpin each broadcaster's approach to the coverage of disability and disability sport. You have been invited to participate alongside a small group of media professionals (approximately 4-5 participants) who have worked for the BBC and/or Channel 4.

Do I have to take part?

Taking part in this project is completely voluntary and it is up to you whether you decide to participate or not in this research study. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet along with a privacy notice that will explain how your data will be collected and used and be asked to give your consent. Please remember that if you do decide to participate, you are able to withdraw or leave the project at any time without giving any reason as to why.

What will happen to me if I take part?

If you agree to take part, you will be asked to join an interview either by phone or video call. The maximum amount of time you wish to contribute to the study will be up to you, however the minimum amount of time required to contributing is 40 minutes. The information about the research project will be provided to you before agreeing in taking part in the interview.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

There are no known disadvantages of taking part in the research project, as the interviews will be done in the participants own time. However, there is a small risk that some participants may feel that some of the experiences that are brought up may mean they feel they have been victimised against or be made to feel uncomfortable resulting in a negative experience. If this is the case, then participants will be able to share this feeling with research team as well as be referred to support services if needed. In turn this could lead to negative psychological effects

of the participant's emotions. The participants will also be able to withdraw from the research at any time. Nonetheless, should any of the participants be affected by participating in the study, they will be able to gain information to get access to the appropriate support service.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

There are benefits from taking part in the research project. One being, the support and views of the media professionals which could be of great assistance in the project and future study. The second benefit would be that from having the information and experiences of why the media portray disability in a certain way, means that a better understanding will be had by the rest of the general population. The third benefit would be that the professionals could learn how their portrayal of disability is being received by the general public and therefore be able to shape the portrayal better in the future.

Will what I say in this study be kept confidential?

You may find it awkward being recorded while having an interview on this topic. The audio recording will be kept private and confidential as well as being kept away from general reference. The recording is for research use only and it will be subject to the Data Protection Act. The names of all participants will be changed so your identity will be kept private unless the participant asks not to be changed.

Research data will be kept securely at all times, especially when collected in the field before being transferred back to Oxford Brookes University. Laptops and other devices will be password protected. Data may be stored in Google Drive, for which the University has a security agreement. Data generated by the study will be retained in accordance with the University's policy on Academic Integrity. The data generated in the course of the research will be kept securely in paper or electronic form until the student graduates, unless the supervisory team consider there is an advantage to storing it for longer.

What should I do if I want to take part?

You will have been asked to join in the research by the researcher. If you agree to take part then you will be asked to complete an interview. The maximum amount of time you wish to contribute to the study will be up to you, however the minimum amount of time required to contribute is 40 minutes. The information about the research project will be given to you before you agree to the interview. The study will aim not to take up too much of your free time and will aim to work around your work schedule as much as possible.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

There will be opportunity for all the participants involved to look at their own finished research findings and transcripts. The data being collected will be analysed as part of a Research Masters at Oxford Brookes University.

Who is organising and funding the research?

I am conducting this research as a Research Masters student at Oxford Brookes University, in the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences. The project is not externally funded.

Who has reviewed the study?

This research has been approved by the Department of Sport, Health Science & Social Work, Research Ethics Committee, Oxford Brookes University.

Contact for Further Information

For more information about the study please don't hesitate to contact myself at:
16014559@brookes.ac.uk

Or my project supervisor Stuart Whigham at: swhigham@brookes.ac.uk

If you have any concerns about the way in which the study has been conducted, please contact the Chair of the University Research Ethics Committee on ethics@brookes.ac.uk.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and agreeing to take part in this research study.

Appendix: D



CONSENT FORM

Full title of Project: Why do Channel Four and the British Broadcasting Company portray disability and disability sport differently? A media content and production analysis.

Name: Harriet Little

Position: Masters by Research Student, Oxford Brookes University, Faculty of Health and Life Sciences

Contact address of researcher: 3 St Peter's Way, Thorney, Peterborough, PE6 0SH

Email Address of Researcher: 16014559@brookes.ac.uk

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason.
3. I agree to take part in the above study.

Please initial box

4. I understand that the interview will be audio-recorded

Yes	No
<input data-bbox="1273 1888 1332 1948" type="checkbox"/>	<input data-bbox="1426 1888 1485 1948" type="checkbox"/>

- | | | | |
|----|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 5. | I agree to the interview / focus group / consultation being video recorded | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. | I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. | I agree that an anonymised data set, gathered for this study may be stored in a specialist data centre/repository relevant to this subject area for future research | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Name of Participant	Date	Signature

Name of Researcher	Date	Signature

Appendix: E

Questionnaire Questions for: Why do Channel 4 and the BBC portray disability and disability sport differently? A media content and production analysis.

1. Which of the following broadcasters do you watch the most?

BBC Channel 4 Neither

2. Which type of programme do you feel best represents disability? Explain your answer below:

Factual (e.g. documentary, news, sport)

Non-factual (e.g. drama, soap opera, comedy)

3. Do you feel there is equal representation of both able bodied and disabled people on television? i.e. actors, presenters. Please explain below:

4. Do YOU feel represented by the programmes shown on Channel 4? Please explain below:

5. Do YOU feel represented by the programmes shown on the BBC? Please explain below:

6. Which of the following BBC shows featuring disability have YOU watched?

Silent Witness The A Word Call the Midwife Eastenders There She Goes

Alex Brooker: Disability and Me Targeted: The Truth About Disability Hate Crime

Katie Price: Harvey and Me The Disability Paradox Crip Tales

Other:

7. Which of the following Channel 4 shows featuring disability have YOU watched?

The Last Leg The Undateables Gogglesprogs Hunted Hollyoaks

Born to be Different Paralympics Save my Child

Other:

8. How well do YOU feel disability is portrayed in the media OVERALL? Please explain below:

9. How well do YOU feel disability is portrayed in the BBC? Please explain below:

10. How well do YOU feel disability is portrayed on Channel 4? Please explain below:

11. How does the overall portrayal of disability on the BBC make you feel PERSONALLY?
Please explain below:

12. How does the overall portrayal of disability on Channel 4 make you feel PERSONALLY?
Please explain below:

13. How well do YOU feel Channel 4 portrays disability around the time of the Paralympics?
Please explain below:

14. How well do YOU feel the BBC portrays disability around the time of the Paralympics?
Please explain below:
15. Do YOU feel the language used around disabled sport on the television is the same OR different to that of able-bodied sport? Please explain:
16. Overall, do YOU feel there is an equal amount of disabled sport shown compared to able-bodied sport? Please explain your reason:
17. Do YOU feel disabled sport is something YOU would want to try after seeing coverage of it on television?

Appendix: F

Interview Questions for:

Why do Channel 4 and the BBC portray disability and disability sport differently? A media content and production analysis.

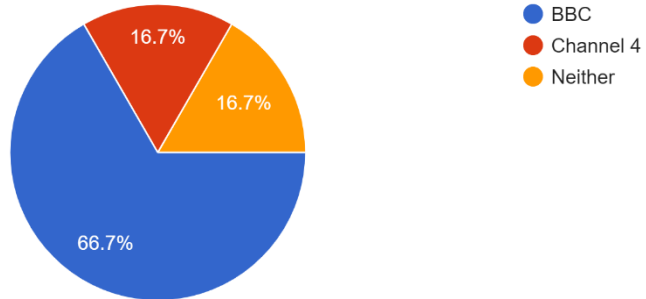
1. How well do you feel the (BBC or Channel 4) portray disability? (Channel to change depending on the interviewee)
2. Why do you think (the BBC or Channel 4) portray disability in the way that they do? (Channel to change depending on the interviewee)
3. To what extent do you think they are trying to appeal to certain audience?
4. To what extent do you feel there is equal representation of both able bodied and disabled people both in front and behind the camera?
5. How do you feel disabled representation in the media could be made better, if at all?
6. Do you feel there is equal screen time give to shows of disability? i.e. Olympics vs Paralympics, drama series / episodes
7. Are the actors playing disabled characters in dramas aired actually disabled in real life?
8. (Channel 4 ONLY) Are you advised by the International Paralympic Committee as to what to air in a Paralympic year?

Appendix: G

Survey Data for Publics Questionnaires

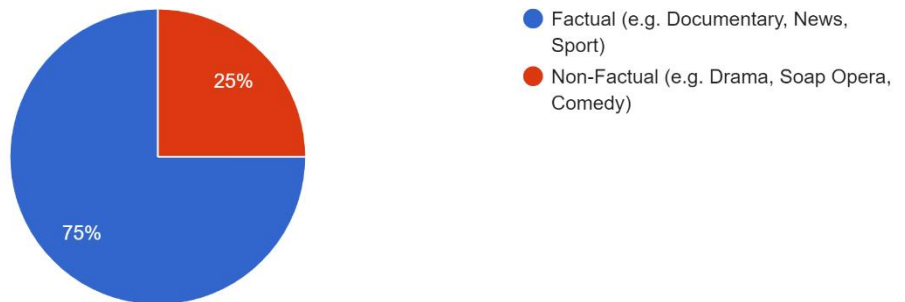
1. Which of the following broadcasters do you watch the most?

24 responses



2. Which type of programme do you feel best represents disability?

24 responses



Break Down of Qu.2

Person	Factual or Non-Factual
A	Non-Factual
B	Factual
C	Non-Factual
D	Factual
E (Anon)	Factual
F	Non-Factual
G	Factual
H	Factual
I	Factual
J	Factual
K	Factual
L	Factual
M	Non-Factual
N	Factual
O	Factual
P	Factual
Q	Factual
R	Non-Factual
S	Factual
T	Factual
U	Non-Factual
V	Factual
W	Factual
X	Factual

Qu.2B) Why?

- A) When the actors research disability they portray
- B) Many documentaries investigate disability prejudices, and a lot of presenters have visible disabilities.
- C) Soaps often use illnesses or situations that draw the individual in to watch the soap to make people want to keep watching these are based on real accounts but somehow, we seem to relate more to an actor than an individual themselves telling us their story. There are not many documentaries about individuals' health and disabilities it's often snip bits of accidents or rehabilitation processes rather than the living with a disability or invisible illness that is highlight.
- D) This form of information is meant to cover truth and not entertain others.
- E) Dramas get more criticism about how someone should/shouldn't be shown.
- F) The coverage of sport for the disabled is limited to the Paralympics. Every 4 years is not enough when there are events happening throughout the year as there is able bodied sport which is televised.
- G) Because disability sport is presented as it is, but often with background stories.
- H) Have seen a lot of BBC3 and Channel 4 programmes about different disabilities.
- I) I think that factual genre allows for representation as it is about true events and people's truth. Whereas non-factual programmes, even if based on truth, can be embellished/altered for entertainment purposes.

- J) Generally, a factual program is portrayed from the perspective of the subject so if the documentary was about disability, it would have evidence and lived experience and present a more honest and non-biased program.
- K) There were no other options and I feel disability isn't really represented in drama etc.
- L) I'm thinking of the programmes Countryfile and Antiques Roadshow, and Gardeners' World where they show disabled presenters, experts and guests just doing their job or activities in their way without making a specific song and dance about it, and no-one else exclaiming how inspirational they are. In other shows such as DIY SOS, they make specific reference to the needs of any disabled people they show, and the adaptations required. There are programmes like The Undatables which are sensitively done but the title grates!! In dramas, soaps and comedy, there is less representation and when there is, it seems they are rarely the main characters apart from if the drama is specifically about the disability, such as The A Word where the disabled person is portrayed in the most publicly known presentation such as poorly communicating autistic boys.
- M) Non-factual show the true effect of disability and show visible and invisible. Whereas factual only show people with visible disabilities.
- N) Soap Operas etc over dramatize disability.
- O) Non-Factual mostly appears to try and gloss over anything uncomfortable.
- P) To often, it feels as though disabled characters are tokens rather than drive the plot.
- Q) This is what I see.
- R) More disabled people seen on soaps and dramas.
- S) Non-factual programmes often misrepresent people with disabilities everyone struggles differently even if they all have the same conditions for example with CP there is different levels and even within them levels no one is the same. It's often easy to just read something and think that's how it would affect someone whereas if it's news, sport, or documentary at least it's based on someone's true with a disability.
- T) As a rule, documentaries can allow those with disabilities to tell their own stories. Disabled characters in fiction can often suffer from being 'brought to life' by someone without the understanding of how people with disabilities behave, and how different - or not - we are. There are exceptions to that rule, such as Silent Witness on the BBC, which seems to do a better job than most.
- U) Some dramas portray disability in a very understanding and true nature.
- V) Documentaries, for example, aren't scripted unlike dramas. Dramas portray disability in a way that is deemed more entertaining to the viewer. I find documentaries give the most accurate first-hand accounts of disability.
- W) Because if disabled people are speaking about disability, they are doing so from having personal experience. Most, but not all, Paralympic athletes tend to be so caught up in the sports celebrity element of the Paralympics that they forget the discrimination that they have faced and still face. They use terms like "You just have to get on with it", which isn't very helpful, or indeed realistic.
- X) I don't think either represent disability or disabled people well. In both cases we are depicted as superhuman or passive recipients of charity

2b Themes

- Research on condition supporting good portrayal in non-factual (x4)
- Factual providing information on condition (x9)
- Presenters with visible conditions in factual (x4)
- Disability shown only through sport/disability porn (x4)
- Disability seen as the minority (x5)

- Seen but not heard (x4)
- Seen as entertainment (x12)
- Portrayed as 'one size fits all' (x3)

Qu 3 Do YOU feel there is equal representation of both able bodied and disabled people on television? i.e. actors, presenters and Why?

- A) Depends on the program you're watching.
- B) I'm not sure equal is the word as there are not equal numbers of disabled people and able bodied in the world. There are certainly many more visibly disabled people on tv than there were as recently as 3 or 4 years ago.
- C) There's not many characters or presenters that are open about illnesses often you see mental health and learning disabilities represented but not physical disabilities. However, some shows are starting to do this such as strictly come dancing's as every year there is someone with a physical disability now.
- D) No, there is normally up to one person who is disabled but there isn't equal representation.
- E) No, it's getting better
- F) Disabled people do appear to be in the minority when it comes to this area. It could be that disabled people do not wish to pursue a career in live media, especially if it involves travelling to different countries.
- G) No-disability sport is always an afterthought, but has improved over recent years.
- H) I don't know what the ratio of disabled people/ able bodied people is so I don't know if it is ratioed well on that basis but there are more people with disabilities appearing on tv these days which is fantastic.
- I) I think it is much more likely to see able bodied representation on television. Occasionally I think there is good representation of visibly disabled people but a lot less representation/mention of invisibly disabled people.
- J) Definitely not - especially with hidden disability. The Paralympics and programs like the last leg have gone a long way in promoting equality but at the end of the day, disability is still stigmatised and feared to a certain extent.
- K) No definitely not, gay people are better represented than the disabled especially by % of population.
- L) 18% of the working age population in the UK is disabled, but many of these will be invisible disabilities, such as Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome, Mental Health, Autism, hearing impairment, etc. So, there may be sufficient representation but it's impossible to perceive unless everyone goes around with an electronic indicator over their heads!
- M) Depends on what you watch but I think there should be more disabled actors in non-factual.
- N) No, it seems like they are trying but it feels added on
- O) No
- P) No
- Q) No, but there are a lot more on all formats these days.
- R) No
- S) No, there is definitely a difference, it's getting smaller however still there. Only now are there actors with children having disabilities not many adult actors. Disabled sport isn't advertised as much as other sport. There's not many media channels dedicating there time to it.
- T) Absolutely not. However, I'd rather have nuanced inclusion than full equality on that front.

- U) I think that TV broadcasting now is more aware of disability than they have been in the past.
- V) I don't watch too many tv shows but from what I have seen, I don't believe there is equal representation. I feel that some disability acting roles would be better portrayed if played by someone with a disability or by someone who has that specific disability. Unless you have or have had a disability in the past, you won't be able to fully understand what life with a disability is like
- W) No. Disability has continually been pushed aside. Disabled people are portrayed as heroic or tragic rather than ordinary people who happen to be disabled.
- X) Absolutely not. Non disabled (as opposed to 'ablebodied') people are portrayed in a variety of ways and roles. TV is incredibly lazy in terms of how disabled people are represented.

3 Themes

- Disability is seen as a minority (x16)
- Disability representation is improving but not equal (x8)
- Visible disabilities are represented more than invisible/ disability porn (x5)
- Disabled people not wanting to get into acting or presenting due to lack of representation (x5)
- Disabled people don't play disabled characters (x4)

Qu.4) Do YOU feel represented by the programmes shown on Channel 4? Please explain below:

- A) Maybe
- B) No, I'm not in the under 30 bracket, slim or pretty! I do have mental health problems but outwardly I function well in the world but behind closed doors it's a different story. People with mental health problems are portrayed as not being able to function on any level or violent, alcoholic or with issues such as Bipolar or schizophrenia.
- C) No, I have never seen anyone such as a presenter or show represent people living with arthritis I feel mental health conditions, learning disabilities or the loss of limbs are often represented but I don't feel like people often associate my conditions with being disabled or an invisible illness.
- D) No, there isn't normally representation for me normally, maybe Hollyoaks at a push.
- E) Only Paralympic
- F) I rarely watch this television channel.
- G) Not really- there seem to be a lot of programmes that deal with quite extreme situations.
- H) No. I haven't seen any programmes which focus on my specific illness.
- I) I don't watch a lot of Channel 4, but from what I do, I would say there is little to no representation of chronic illness, particularly in the mainstream media.
- J) Partly, but still feel that hidden disabilities are not focused on as much.
- K) I feel Channel 4 better represents me as a disabled person and athlete.
- L) I can't recall any programmes on Channel 4
- M) I don't watch much Channel 4 so no comment.
- N) No. They only seem to cover disability near major sporting events.
- O) Yes
- P) Sometimes. My example will be The Last Leg. Great representation, but does not cover the Warrior or Invictus Games and I've not seen it cover hidden and/or psychiatric disabilities.
- Q) No, because they seem to over represent BAME (Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic) and non-heterosexual people.

- R) No
- S) Channel 4 do their part, there advertising the Para's very well and working to improve it
- T) Not particularly. It feels as though they only show the extremes of disability a lot of the time, and even though as someone with Asperger's I can pass for 'normal', it does feel like there's a bit of a void between content like 'The Undateables' and their other programming. That void is where I live.
- U) Yes. Factual programmes explain clearly how people struggle in their daily lives with disabilities. Such as 24 hours in A&E
- V) I don't watch Channel 4
- W) Not really. The general trend is that if you are a disabled person, all you must do is get on with life with a smile on your face and things aren't that bad.
- X) No for the reasons above. Disability rights activists are ignored by all mainstream media providers. Channel 4 is either sports or tragedy porn.

Qu.4 Themes

- Visible disabilities are seen more than invisible (x4)
- False/unfair representation of disability (x5)
- Disabilities that are commonly associated with the older population are not represented even if they affect the young population eg: arthritis (x1)
- Disability seen as a minority (x8)
- Only shown through sport (x4)
- Only covered in and around major sporting events (x3)
- Advertisement helping to improve understanding (x1)
- Disability and tragedy porn (x2)

Qu.5) Do YOU feel represented by the programmes shown on the BBC? Please explain why?

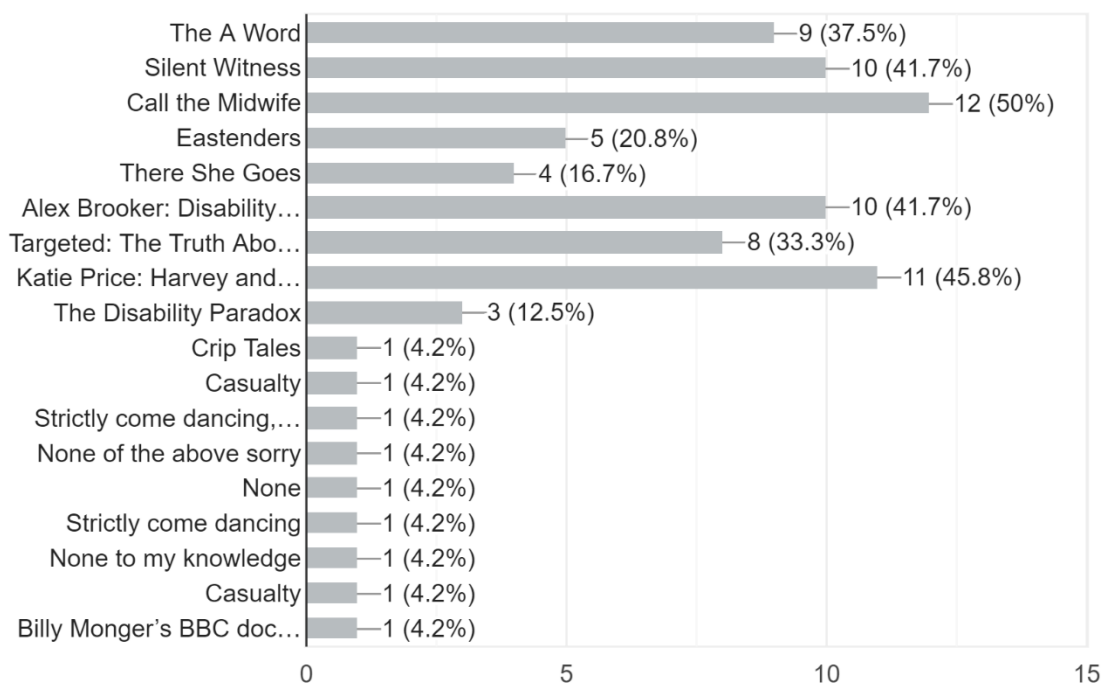
- A) No
- B) It's a whiter middle-class demographic in presenters but as with Channel 4 the representation of mental health is distorted and does not represent me and my family's experience of my mental health problems.
- C) No, I don't as mentioned; about, it's always common or easily visible disabilities shown and talked about
- D) No
- E) Yes it's more factual
- F) I rarely watch the BBC.
- G) Only very occasionally – there can be the odd documentary that looks more in-depth at a particular issue.
- H) No. I haven't seen any programmes which focus on my specific illness.
- I) I would say I have more knowledge of there being representation on the BBC but still that there is little representation of chronic illness.
- J) I don't know to be honest, I don't watch a lot of BBC programming
- K) Very rarely
- L) I do feel partially represented by the factual programmes on the BBC that I've mentioned above. But not so much in dramas. You don't see many younger people using rollators apart from elderly Captain Tom characters though. I'd like to see a change as I was not the only person under 60 to be using a rollator at a recent hospital appointment I went to.
- M) Yes – Casualty for example, they show all kinds of visible and invisible disabilities and the true effects.
- N) No. BBC are much worse, rarely showcasing disability programming
- O) No

- P) No. can't think of a positive role model/pro-active programme.
- Q) No, because they over represent non heterosexual people, women and BAME.
- R) No, I have a hidden disability.
- S) BBC do a great job streaming Wimbledon, however if we can get all disabilities sport streamed even better.
- T) More so, as their takes tend to be more nuanced.
- U) Yes. They indicate how hard life can be living with disabilities.
- V) I don't watch the BBC.
- W) Same as Channel 4. Not really. The general trend is that if you are a disabled person, all you must do is get on with life with a smile on your face and things aren't that bad.
- X) Absolutely not – same answer as previous

Qu.5 Themes

- Racists (x1)
- Visible disabilities are seen more than invisible (x3)
- True representation of disabilities (x3)
- Disability seen as a minority/not represented (x13)
- Disabilities that are commonly associated with the older population are not represented even if they effect the young population eg: arthritis (x3)
- Untrue representation of disability (x2)
- Only seen in sport (x2)
- Disability porn (x1)

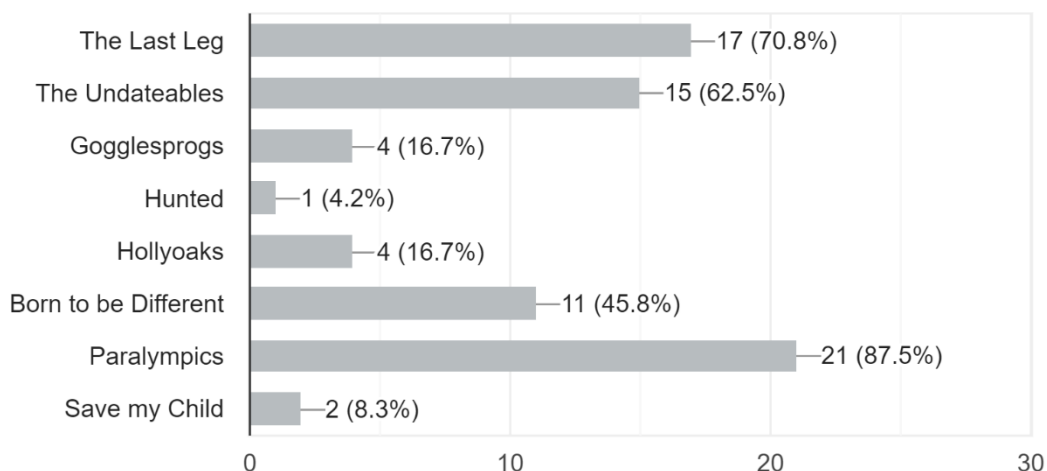
Qu.6) Which of the following BBC shows featuring disability have YOU watched?



Qu.7) Which of the following Channel 4 show featuring disability have YOU watched?

Qu.8) How well do YOU feel disability is portrayed in the media OVERALL? (e.g. BBC, Channel4, Netflix etc) Please Explain why.

- A) Other than the Paralympics there are some good storylines
- B) The extremes are shown and visible disabilities and everything has an under tone of feeling sorry for the people shown
- C) As mentioned before if you have a easily diagnosed illness/disability there is often more awareness of it such as Down syndrome, scoliosis, fibromyalgia, epilepsy Ext if you have a less known condition or are affected younger than normal I feel it's not heavily shown and portrayed
- D) Sometimes serious, but normally in a negative light. If it is touched upon there isn't normally the good, it can be
- E) Needs to be much more mainstream
- F) Although I watch the Undateables I do find the concept of the show somewhat patronising. Just because someone has a disability shouldn't mean they wish to be partnered with an individual who themselves has a disability all be it a different one



- G) It is improving, but still feels like an add on
- H) As previous the amount of disabled people on programmes is rising weather that be in acting, presenting ect and more awareness programmes are being made
- I) I think there is some good representation of disability throughout media to certain extent, most shows now will include a disability/disabled person, although this does not mean it is always accurate or well done. However, these are often side-line characters/extras, not many are the main character we are following.
- J) Unsure about BBC but feel that channel 4 and Netflix especially have a good range of programming that they promote covering a wide range of perspectives around disability
- K) Poorly which affects how people treat me as a person
- L) It's getting better but not quite there yet. So much of it seems over-egged, as if the person's disability must be explained or discussed. I know it's natural curiosity, but people don't always want to be asked "what happened to you?" or "When will you get better?" or indeed, if they're seen on a good day, people assuming they are better now. We don't want any special treatment; we want to be spoken to without any hint of pity or patronisation. We are allowed to make fun of ourselves if that's what we do.

- M) There is a stigma and this needs to be overcome, start starring disabled actors NOT able-bodied actors playing disabled characters
- N) More positively than it used to be, but more work is needed
- O) I think it's moving forward but has a long way to go
- P) It's pretty much an afterthought.
- Q) Better than it was, not hidden anymore
- R) It's not, very little shown
- S) I think real life, stories are much better than people acting it without a clue of the disability the awareness is getting better there's more openness which is great to see.
- T) There's still progress, to be made, but it is certainly getting there. I'd say that's been particularly evident over the last five or so years. Certainly, I notice more characters with disability today than I did back in 2014 or so, and I was watching more TV back then.
- U) Now a days it is portrayed well.
- V) Not very well. Disability is often used for comical value and is portrayed in a way that does not show a true representation of what life is like for those who are disabled. I have two ostomy bags and so I feel that having an ostomy bag should be portrayed in the media in a more positive light. Having an ostomy bag is seen as disgusting due to the stigma that has been created
- W) A real mixture, some good, some totally rubbish. However, representation in the media does not necessarily translate into good things for all disabled people. For example, the Paralympics has quite a high profile in the UK going back for many years, but disabled children still can't access PE.
- X) poorly, pandering to the same old stereotypes

Qu.8 Themes

- Only represented in sport (x2)
- Shown as needing sympathy/pity (x10)
- Untrue representation of disability (x10)
- Common disabilities are shown (x1)
- Disabilities that are commonly associated with the older population are not represented even if they effect the young population eg: arthritis (x2)
- Negative shown more than the positive of disability (x10)
- Disability is hidden on less common TV channels or online (x4)
- Shown in a patronising light (x9)
- Is improving (x10)
- Able-bodied actors play disabled characters (x3)

Qu.9) How well do YOU feel disability is portrayed in the BBC? Please explain why.

- A) More documentary than reality
- B) See above.
- C) See above.
- D) I think it does ok but could do better, shows that deafness is hard in eastenders as well as mental health, doesn't show the difficulties of day to day living if you are less mobile though.
- E) Still need more.
- F) A sever lack of representation, again this could be due to lack of disabled participants.
- G) Again, I do believe it is improving, but I'm not sure enough disabilities are considered or included.

- H) As above
- I) I think there is a wide range of different disabilities portrayed across different BBC programmes (as shown on the previous list) and even programmes like strictly come dancing which often features disabled participants. Although in terms of chronic illness only one documentary comes to mind.
- J) I'm not sure as I don't really watch it but that could be an answer in itself as I never watch it as I never hear of anything around disability being promoted.
- K) Poorly but improved over recent years.
- L) On the whole, I feel the BBC does a pretty good job of normalising disability.
- M) Very good but needs less stigma and more disabled actors.
- N) Somewhat positively. They have people with disabilities as presenters now which they never used to
- O) Reasonably but not out of their way to push forward.
- P) Worse than most other broadcast media channels.
- Q) Mental health is currently being prioritised; others seem to fit in
- R) Not very well, need much more.
- S) I think BBC is working hard to improve there shows and include people with disabilities can always be better though.
- T) So much of it depends on the production company when it comes to documentaries, but I feel that the BBC's factual content is less geared towards being entertainment generally. That is a good thing and allows for better storytelling, I think. I'd give them a 7/10.
- U) There are so many dramas that include disabled people.
- V) I haven't really watched many BBC programmes, especially recently, so can't give a good response.
- W) Not a full understanding of the disability rights agenda.
- X) Same as above

Qu.9 Themes

- More documentaries than reality (x2)
- Shown as needing pity and sympathy (x8)
- Common disabilities are shown (x5)
- Disabilities that are commonly associated with the older population are not represented even if they effect the young population eg: arthritis (x2)
- Untrue representation of disability (x8)
- Able-bodied play disabled characters (x2)
- Lack of disabled role models in the media (x11)
- Is improving (x9)

Qu.10) How well do YOU feel disability is portrayed on Channel 4? Please explain why.

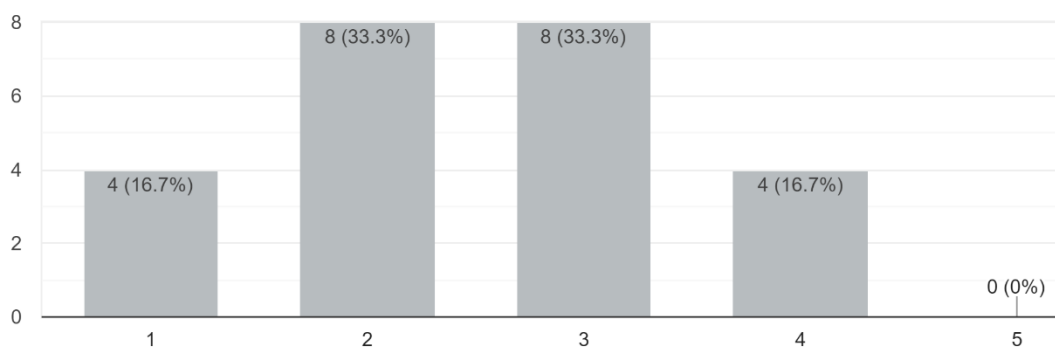
- A) Fun and enlightening, by people who have a disability
- B) Please see previous answers
- C) There are more documentaries on channel 4 than on BBC that I have watched. Again, as mentioned before if you fit in a box criteria it's easier for people to understand and help whereas if your condition is rare, it's often not researched enough so others don't know about it either

- D) I haven't seen much representation, other than Hollyoaks, it seems to be ok and I liked brook's storyline and the fact they used a disabled actor to play the role of a disabled person
- E) Still need more
- F) very poorly when it comes to shows such as the undateables. the presenters on the last leg are able to bring light to the conversation through their experiences.
- G) There are more reality/documentary type programmes, but I still think they focus on extreme situations
- H) As Above
- I) I think disability is less well presented on channel 4. The Last Leg is a good example of disability being presented with presenters who have disability and who openly talk about disability. And there was a disabled participant on this year's Stand Up To Cancer Bake Off but that is the only two examples that I can think of!
- J) Very well covers a number of perspectives – sport, gender, religion, love – from the disability angle
- K) Mostly good
- L) I feel Channel 4 tries to educate more but makes programmes people would watch either for voyeuristic reasons or because they are disabled themselves.
- M) Not sure
- N) Better than the BBC. Still feel uncomfortable around the undateables show
- O) More progressive and inclusive and seen more as the norm
- P) Making some effort, but still niche
- Q) Less disabled people in major programs
- R) Not very well
- S) I think channel is working hard to improve there shows and include people with disabilities can always be better though. They do an amazing job of the Paralympics though
- T) I feel C4 is more geared to make things 'binge-worthy', sometimes at the cost of sincerity in their programming. However, I'd say content like The Last Leg is something of a watershed moment for TV, and I'm not sure any other major UK outlet would have put that programming out there at the time. 6/10 for C4.
- U) There are so many documentaries that tell the story of people living with disabilities. Both visible and invisible
- V) I haven't really watched many Channel 4 programmes, especially recently, so can't give a good response
- W) Channel 4 – in my view – don't fully grasp the disability rights agenda. They grasp the Paralympic agenda which is not exactly the same thing
- X) Same as above

Qu.10 Themes

- Untrue representation of disability (x7)
- Shown as needing sympathy and pity (x6)
- Shown that just because there is a disability they can still laugh/be open about their disability (x3)
- Need to fit a 'medical' box to fit in (x3)
- Disabled actors play disabled characters/presenters (x4)
- Getting better (x7)
- Seen as minority (x4)

Qu.11) How does the overall portrayal of disability on the BBC make you feel PERSONALLY? On a scale of 1 to 5 (1=Under Portrayed & 5=Accurately Portrayed)

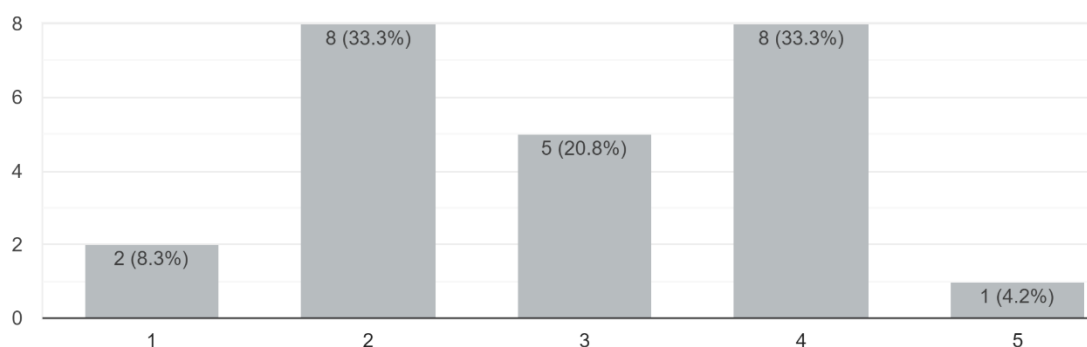


Qu.11a) Please explain your answer for Qu11

- A) 2 – There's not enough hidden disabilities shown
- B) 3 – worse cases shown
- C) 2 - Sometimes disability can be perceived in a negative way due to programs that look at how people have lied about illness to claim benefits which then can cause people to always second guess others. I do not feel disability is looked at holistically it's always documentaries that are showing why the NHS is failing, when people have overcome challenges and achieved awards or got into Paralympics rather than doing a day in the life and how we feel as disabled individuals and how we have to work at times double as hard to achieve the same as an able-bodied person but media can play it out as we don't because the bars are lower for disabled people which is not always the case
- D) 3 – they portray disabilities but not the extent that I would hope for
- E) 2 – Not enough
- F) 3 - until disability is recognised by the public as being missing how do the execs from both channels know they are portraying it correctly? We are all individuals, disability is an individual thing, especially when it takes into account the cognitive spectrum disorders. No 2 people are alike
- G) 3 - Disabled actors now more part of dramas, but not sure how broad the coverage of wider disability issues is
- H) 1 - Have never seen anything about my specific disability
- I) 4 - I think there are certain drama series, such as The A Word, that are made to give insight and representation about certain disabilities, as well as documentaries on chronic illness.
- J) 2 – Unsure
- K) 1 - Very few disabled characters in dramas and not representative of the % of population who are disabled. Disability when portrayed is generally seen as a problem.
- L) 4 - Some programmes are good, others seem to include a politically correct token disabled person for the sake of it, but then are respectful. Repair Shop is actually the most representative programme and makes me feel seen.
- M) 3 – Not true disabled actors
- N) 2 - Work is still needed to bring disability into mainstream programs
- O) 2 - Just don't really see it which isn't representative of life
- P) 2 - You feel that they have decided what are "real" disabilities and bypass the remaining ones.
- Q) 4 - In my life I do not meet or interact with many disabled people, and there are more in programs than I see in real life

- R) 2 - Things are better than they were but still a long way to go
- S) 3 – Could be better
- T) 3 - I do feel that they do a good job in general, but stories of folks on the high-functioning end of the spectrum feel under-done across the media landscape. But, as a journalist and broadcaster, I understand why the more subtle disabilities don't make for 'obvious' subjects.
- U) 4 – I think it is quite an accurate portrayal of life today
- V) 3 – There is room for improvement
- W) 1 – I am an amputee so not much representation. Same is true for other groups
- X) 1 – As above

Qu.12) How does the overall portrayal of disability on Channel 4 make you feel PERSONALLY? On a scale of 1 to 5 (1= Under Portrayed & 5=Accurately Portrayed)



Qu.12a) Please explain your answer for Qu.12

- A) 4 – Very much more realistic
- B) 2 – As above
- C) 4 - There is more access to more documentaries rather than soaps so channel 4 tend to have a wider variety of conditions and people displayed on their channel
- D) 2 – I haven't seen many different disabilities on this channel
- E) 2 – Not enough
- F) 3 - until disability is recognised by the public as being missing how do the execs from both channels know they are portraying it correctly? we are all individuals disability is an individual thing especially when it considers the cognitive spectrum disorders. no 2 people are alike
- G) 4 – There seems to be a more natural inclusiveness of disability issues, but still concerned that there is more focus on more extreme disabilities
- H) 1 – Have never seen anything about my specific disability
- I) 2 – Although there is some portrayal of disability, there is not nearly as much as the BBC and not as much diversity in disabilities either
- J) 4 – Well – but not with hidden disabilities
- K) 4 – As a disabled athlete with the Invictus foundation I feel Channel 4 better represents myself and my achievements
- L) 3 – I'm one of those who has invisible and visible disabilities but not interesting 3 - disabilities that would boost viewing numbers. I feel they make programmes with obvious disabilities that they think people want to watch for this reason
- M) 3 – Unsure
- N) 4 – Still a little more work to do but Channel 4 embrace disability better
- O) 4 – Seen regularly

- P) 2 – You feel that they have decided what are ‘real’ disabilities and bypass the remaining ones
- Q) 3 – About the same as I see in real life
- R) 2 – I don’t watch Channel 4 but it needs to improve
- S) 5 – They are more inclusive
- T) 2 – Again, I feel C4 is more extreme and perhaps slightly exaggerated in its portrayal, not that I’ve seen much content I can personally relate to in general
- U) 4 – There is far more knowledge portrayed on Channel 4 than there used to be
- V) 3 – There is room for improvement
- W) 1 – I am an amputee so not much representation. Same is true for other groups
- X) 2 – As before

Representation of Disabled Sport

Qu.13) How well do YOU feel Channel 4 portrays disability around the time of the Paralympics? Please explain.

- A) Excellent explanations, good work delivered by people who have a disability
- B) It’s a bit come and look at these people – almost like a curiosity show
- C) I feel they are treated similarly to normal athletes
- D) It seems ok
- E) Just the add which makes disabled people seem like superheroes
- F) There seems to be a sudden avalanche of disabled presenters
- G) There has been good coverage and it is presented as real sport
- H) Didn’t watch it or TV around that time
- I) I think it does a good coverage. If I correctly remember coverage of the Paralympics flips to Channel 4 as BBC reverts to normal shows
- J) Very well
- K) Fantastic coverage and not patronising or too serious. Love the humour
- L) This is a tough one to answer because I have to cast my mind back 5 years to the last one and I don’t watch Channel 4 as much
- M) Very well
- N) Very well but it would be good for more sport to be covered
- O) Increases and seen as a positive approach to disability
- P) Very well. The sports are sports, but the build up is the backstory that makes the actual sports more impressive
- Q) Really well, it’s a focus
- R) It’s getting better
- S) Amazingly inclusive, lots of stuff on social media
- T) I feel they do a good job in general; certainly, the Paralympics didn’t have as big of a spotlight on it before Channel 4’s London 2012 push. Some language and messaging used feels a little off, perhaps slightly undermining the competitors as the athletes they are, but it’s more minor than other cases
- U) Very well
- V) Not sure
- W) The portrayal of disabled athletes usually focusing on the more able athletes such as amputee sprinters and cyclists. For instance: How much of Sarah Storey’s minimal hand impairment really impacts on her ability to ride a bike? The mixture of impairment groups in swimming is always portrayed as being equal, when it obviously isn’t. the most severely disabled athletes have been cut from the Paralympic programme. C4 and the IPC/BPA are

- trying to create a visual spectacle equal to the Olympics and at the same time promote the propaganda that disability equality has arrived because of them
- X) Slightly better but still utterly obsessed with our impairments

Qu.13 Themes

- Fair representation (x10)
- Sudden Increase of publicity (x8)
- An attraction for the public/ like a freak show (x8)
- Treated the same whether it's the Paralympics or not (x3)
- Disability porn (x7)
- Not shown in a sympathetic way (x3)

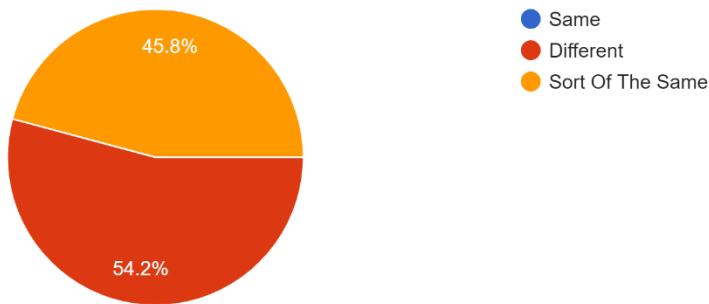
Qu.14) How well do YOU feel the BBC portrays disability around the time of the Paralympics?
Please explain.

- A) Straight, almost boring with not enough detail
- B) More factual and celebration of achievements rather than differences
- C) There's often more highlights but no different to other able bodied athletes
- D) Good, always see adverts for the Paralympics on BBC1
- E) Just the add which makes disabled people seem like superheroes
- F) Since the BBC have stopped broadcasting the Paralympics there appears to be no change in the portrayal of disability
- G) It has improved
- H) Didn't watch it or TV around that time
- I) I think a few main events are still shown on the BBC throughout the Paralympics but much less coverage than the Olympics as it switches to Channel 4
- J) Only saw it advertised on Channel 4
- K) Disappointing but has improved since 2012
- L) They put a few more Paralympic sports people in the clips between programmes
- M) Very well
- N) Not very well at all
- O) No change
- P) Below the standard of C4 as they know C4 is the lead
- Q) Didn't see much difference to their normal schedule
- R) Not as much as it could
- S) Not much, can be a lot better
- T) From what little I've seen of their coverage, it feels like more of a sideshow on the BBC, thanks in no small part to the fact they have the Olympics coverage too. Part of the reason C4 bigs up the Paralympics is because it is their 'main event' so to speak
- U) Very well
- V) Not sure
- W) Same as C4. The portrayal of disabled athletes usually focusing on the more able athletes such as amputee sprinters and cyclists. For instance: How much of Sarah Storey's minimal hand impairment really impact on her ability to ride a bike? The mixture of impairment groups in swimming is always portrayed as being equal, when it obviously isn't. The most severely disabled athletes have been cut from the Paralympic programme. The BBC and the IPC/BPA are trying to create a visual spectacle equal to the Olympics and at the same time promote the propaganda that disability equality has arrived because of them.
- X) Slightly better but still utterly obsessed with our impairments

Qu.14 Themes

- Not seen at all (x9)
- Shown as patronising in terms of 'look what this disabled person can do' (x7)
- Show as equal (x1)
- Adverts shown on main channels for Paralympics (x4)
- Disability porn (x6)
- Has improved (x2)

Qu.15) Do YOU feel the language used around disabled sport on the television is the same OR different to that of able-bodied sport?

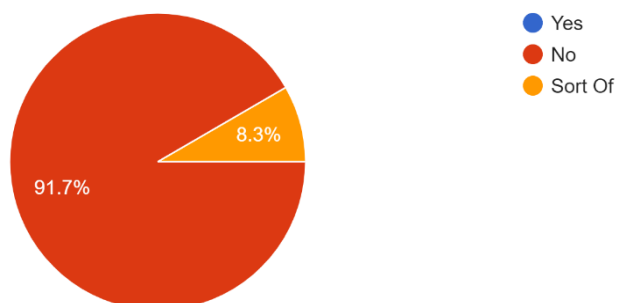


Qu.15a) Please explain your answer to Qu.15

- A) It's different almost condescending
- B) Disabled people are spoken down to
- C) Depends on the disability people are talking about at the time
- D) It feels awkward
- E) Not always explained as well
- F) There are many different categories in any given disabled sport, swimming, cycling etc
- G) There tends to be a focus on the disability rather than the sport
- H) –
- I) I think it is mostly the same, but of course there will be some different terminology as Paralympic competitors may be using different techniques etc in their sport. I think the Paralympics also has some good disabled/past Paralympic champions who go on to be commentators so they are taking experience of the sport not just from watching and looking in
- J) I don't really know
- K) I constantly get told I'm an inspiration because I do disability sport, it's the whole fighting against adversity thing. You don't get that with able bodied people
- L) When you're actually watching the sport, its done the same
- M) They use very simple terms
- N) They try to normalise disability but it doesn't always work
- O) Channel 4 employ disabled presenters who therefore use appropriate terminology and language as it is the normal
- P) The backstory enables you to feel more connected to the spectacle of the sport
- Q) Don't really see much difference
- R) The commentators still don't understand the grouping of different disabilities
- S) Sometimes some people can word things in a strange way so maybe some more education on disabilities would help the media teams

- T) At times the language can be overblown, but largely commentators and broadcasters are doing a better job
- U) Disabled people have limits to their capabilities
- V) I'm not sure
- W) The whole ethos of 'See the ability not the disability' remains the dominant style
- X) I reject your use of 'ablebodied' sport

Qu.16) Overall, do YOU feel there is an equal amount of disabled sport shown compared to able-bodied sport?

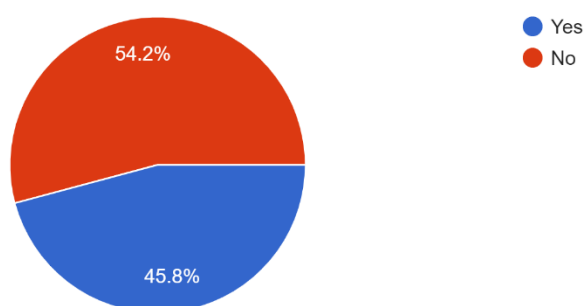


Qu.16a) Please explain your answer for Qu.16.

- A) There's lots more sports that could be televised
- B) As stated, before the number of disabled people and able-bodied people isn't the same – TV representation should be proportional to reality. I took part in the Invictus Game's and the coverage that had has been massive
- C) I don't believe there should be Paralympics, disabled or not we can all achieve the same
- D) I feel there is less
- E) Only because of the Paralympics
- F) Disabled sport appears only for the Paralympics it happens all year round NOT once every 4 years
- G) Much much less disabled sport
- H) I don't watch sport, so I am not sure
- I) I think there is always this big hype about the Olympics and the opening ceremony, of the Games etc and then when the Olympics opens it sort of fizzles out towards the opening of the Paralympics. I don't think there is the same amount of coverage/TV showing time given to the Paralympics as there is for the Olympics
- J) When do you ever see any competitive sport on TV with disabled competitors unless it is some big event?
- K) What disability sport on TV? I've only ever seen Paralympics and a bit of the Invictus Games
- L) Of course, there isn't, you'd need almost 20% of disabled sports coverage to properly represent it
- M) Not enough disabled sport shown and there needs to be more shown of the Paralympics
- N) There is no equal coverage of major sporting events outside the Paralympics
- O) I don't see anywhere as much disabled sport to view as able bodied
- P) Disabled sport feels like it's once every 4 years since London 2012 – before that, it didn't exist
- Q) Percentage wise, do many more able-bodied sports at top level available
- R) Just doesn't happen
- S) There's not the same but better than what it used to be

- T) Quite simply, it is not as well highlighted; I'd be compelled to see the data for able-bodied sport vs. disabled, relative to say, women's football gets more than disability
- U) In motorsport, disabled drivers race with able-bodied competitors, and I will say that those drivers always get good screen time
- V) I feel there is not enough coverage of disabled sport on the TV. There are so many more sport that are never televised
- W) The Paralympics and other sporting events for disabled people are less advertised and have less media coverage
- X) There are many sports that don't get much coverage not just disability sport. For example, in gymnastics it is usually only Olympic, World and European championships that are shown. Obviously, gymnastics like many sports doesn't have a weekly competitive calendar so doesn't get the same coverage. Would weekly wheelchair basketball be a popular watch? Paralympic sport is the elite level of disability sport with not a great deal of grass roots performance, disability sport being that interesting or entertaining. Wheelchair tennis has grown significantly over many years but doesn't seem to get much coverage
- Y) Same as above

Qu.17) Do YOU feel disabled sport is something YOU would want to try after seeing coverage of it on TV?



Qu.17a) Please explain your answer to Qu.17

- A) I think it would give people more of an idea of what the feeling are
- B) Already involved and I have seen it motivate people
- C) People are often accused of cheating in Paralympic sport such as Oscar Pistorius who had to fight to compete because he was accused of his blade giving extra bounce and speed
- D) I personally don't overly enjoy sport
- E) More disability seen everywhere we are not monsters
- F) Already partake in disability sport
- G) I feel too old to take on that sort of challenge, but happy to support
- H) Sport doesn't interest me
- I) Not much of a sporty person but the wheelchair basketball from the last Paralympics stands out in my mind, I would probably try if given the chance. And I have in the past played a little sitting volleyball
- J) I would but I'm not really considered to have a disability as I am epileptic
- K) I joined the Invictus programme after seeing it on TV and in person. Many people have told me that the Paralympics are much more inspirational than the Olympics because they can see themselves doing the sports if someone less able than themselves can manage it. The Olympic athletes are viewed as elite super physical elites of a standard

they could never achieve but seeing a disabled person competing made them feel a bit guilty and they decided to start a sport and generally embrace a healthier lifestyle appreciating the body they have rather than dreaming of that super Olympian body that seems unattainable.

- L) I am already a disabled archer. I can't be bashed around so I'd have to do something more sedate, but I'd have a go at shooting too. However, despite chronic spine fractures and Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome, the problem is that I'd still be unlikely to get a classification as pain is disregarded by the Paralympic and medical boards that surround disabled sports. This is where a lot of misunderstanding lies because of their biases, and this needs to change.
- M) It would inspire me like you did
- N) I already take part in disability sport
- O) It doesn't explain how I get into it
- P) I've become an active and accomplished archer.
- Q) Am not disabled
- R) I'm too old
- S) The Paralympic is an amazing way to see all different athletes and disabilities within all different sports! Something for everyone!
- T) I don't feel my participation would be valid.
- U) I have a long-term chronic illness and would be unable to participate in any sport.
- V) It made me feel more empowered and motivated to keep on fighting to achieve my goals. It made me feel like I have just as much value and just as much to offer as able-bodied people
- W) Not Now. I am a retired British Paralympic athlete. Bronze medal, 1992 Barcelona in athletics. Coaching and management was nondisabled people patronising and controlling the athletes. I was very happy to get out of it.
- X) I reject your use of the language of "disabled" sport

Appendix: H

Media Interview Data

Themes:

Content (What)

1. Non-Fact Vs Fact
2. Entertain or Not To Entertain
3. Heard But Not Seen
4. Inspirational Porn (Inspire a Generation/Superhuman?)
5. In Need Of Sympathy
6. Invisible Privilege/Hierarchy

Production (Why)

7. Change
8. C4 Rebrand
9. BBC/C4 Differences
10. Bespoke coverage of Paralympics
11. Failure of campaigns in the real world
12. Hierarchy/ status of /in dis sport (tennis, swimming, athletics get more air time)
13. Important But Unsure

Qu. 1 – How well do you feel either the BBC or C4 portray disability overall? (Tilly, Scott, Klara, Martin & Joel)

Martin

- "I think it is varied, there are pockets in both stations that are great but there are still elements, both in the news outlets or in the programming, where it's not going very well."
- "I think there is still a little bit of 'poor them, aren't they brave', ... and there is a little too much 'inspiration porn'."
- "... I think we're on a journey with that still. When I think about where we have come since the late 80's, when I first got involved, disability was portrayed by able bodied people quite often or it was virtually non-existent."

Tilly

- "I think it can be quite mixed. ... If you look at soap operas you must take it in a context with what is generally on a soap opera ... They are all quite stereotypical characters."
- "Where I see a bit more of a challenge in terms of ... news coverage. There are not often stories about disabled people or disabilities rights. So when 'Do Not Resuscitate' orders came out in March 2020, there wasn't a lot of media pick up of it straight away."

- "... I think there is definitely more inclusion but it's hard to say whether it is good or bad because it's a very personnel perspective of it. You definitely see more disabled people on TV but not as much as there should be."

Joel

- "I think the BBC gets a really rough deal and a lot of criticism from people and I am one of them. I think the BBC get a lot wrong. I think the BBC don't divert their money in areas where I think they arguably should. **But I do think the BBC do a good job relatively with disability and representation.**"
- "... the BBC is a big beast and I think comparing the BBC and C4 is very tricky because the BBC is a continent and C4 is a country. To compare the needs, demands, expectations and deliverables for a continent compared to a country is difficult. So there are things C4 can do that the BBC can't do just because they are bigger."
- "I think they could do more but I don't think they are doing a bad job in their coverage of disability and disabled issues."-?
- "I think C4 capitalized on the poor job the BBC where doing with the Paralympics; before 2012 the BBC would be doing a one hour show every day, if that..."
- "C4 did 150 hours over the whole Games. So C4 amplified their coverage and made a beeline and said 'we are not going to make the Paralympics a secondary event to the Olympics' ... we are going to treat the Paralympics on a par with the Olympics."
- "... the best advertising campaigns I saw was the C4 Paralympics ... in 2012. The black bill board that said 'Thank You For The Warm Up.' ... It was basically saying that the Olympics was great but let's get to the real event ... almost two fingers to the BBC, to say you have treated the Paralympics as the baby brother for so long ... we are going to go big on it and give the disabled athletes the respect they deserve."
- "There are a lot of major countries within that continent at the BBC, so yes I think that they could do better but I think they generally do a good job."

Klara

- "I think it has improved and changed drastically ..."
- "I do think this is one of the key moments in the portrayal of disability on television, in 1996 in Atlanta, Helen Rollison was presenting the Paralympics for the BBC and she did a really powerful piece to camera at the end of the Games ... Essentially ... saying this has been the worst Paralympic Games that she had ever attended ... there was no respect, there wasn't the proper investment, the village wasn't built with access in mind. It was worse than an afterthought, it was no thought at all."
- "By Sydney, I do think attitudes had changed ... but the stadiums weren't particularly full and if they were it was with school children that had been bussed in ... it was lovely to have a young audience but it felt a bit like a charity event rather than an elite sports event."
- "... coverage certainly started to expand and improve from that point on and by Athens and Beijing we were doing live coverage of the major events ... but not necessarily on the main channel, we had red button then for the first time, so we were putting a lot of it live on the red button bit presenting it as if it was on the main channel and frankly it could have been and should have been."
- "Sebastian Coe, when he was negotiating positions ... at the Olympics and Paralympics ... said to NBC (National Broadcasting Company), 'you can only have the number one positions if you improve your coverage of the Paralympic Games ... he basically motivated NBC to improve their coverage in America but also ... because they were all over here ... they saw what we were doing and they were like 'Oh my God, they are on

air everyday all day long, and they are doing highlights show, and they are doing the Last Leg – they are doing an entertainment show’.”

- “C4 re-branded themselves and because this was straight after the Big Brother debacle, C4’s currency was in a downwards trajectory and it was in trouble ... the Paralympics allowed them to completely reinvent themselves ... they really ... invested in it whole heartedly and they made the big decision to train up new talent and talent with visible disability and invisible disability, but they were very keen it looked different ...”
- “This is where the Paralympics, ... is so crucial to the portrayal of disability ... over those 20 years of coverage from way back in 1992 to 2012 ... you had seen ability, you had seen the triumph of ability and that is what, I think, the Paralympic Games can do.”
- “... generally speaking people think of the hurdles and the barriers and the inability and the disability rather than what can be done if you allow yourself a little flexible thinking, a little creative thinking ...”
- “Swimming at the Paralympics on the BBC ... would take the race from the gun being fired at the start ... to them touching the wall at the end ... bang, out to the results, that it ... C4 took it from the swimmers coming out of the cool room, getting into the water ... that involved either manoeuvring themselves from chair into the water ... removing prosthetics ... and getting into the water. ... Now you are watching, suddenly, the transition period ... that was a real eye opener. ... seeing the raw body was an eye opener and it is to anyone seeing 200 people with a variety of disabilities actually in the flesh in front of you ... it had that effect on television as well. I don’t mean it in a way that you are gawking, you’re not, you’re just in awe...”
- “... BBC had not wanted to do it because they felt it was an invasion of privacy in a way that this is something we should hide ... C4 were like ‘don’t be ridiculous, we do it for swimming, so we do it for swimming, just get on with it’ ...”
- “... the Last Leg is another one that’s similar ... essentially it is all based around the slight embarrassment of people not knowing quite what was OK and what wasn’t OK to say. By making a running joke about it, you defunk the myth. You kind of take the elephant in the room and it is suddenly the star of the show ...”

Scott

- “I think that both channels have had a steep learning curve.”
- “... 2012 was quite ground breaking in the way that C4 started looking at disability and started to raise the profile of disability and disability sport when they got the rights to the London 2012 Games.”
- “What C4 did ... was some of their everyday advertising and some of their campaigns for it where ... saying ‘Thanks For The Warm Up’ talking about the Olympics as a warm up to make sure everything works properly for the Paralympics.”
- “They (C4) ... changed their campaigns on the build up quite a lot with a documentary ... called ‘Inside Incredible Athletes’ ... it homed in on four ... athletes. ... What it done is it broke down a lot of what people would have been guessing really, ‘what is training like?’ ‘what are their disabilities?’ ... it showed ... training and then ... entwined through the story how and where our disabilities came from ... It looked a little bit at our home lives and day to day struggles, but it focused very much on the athletes side of things and how ... Paralympians overall train in a very similar way to the Olympics and Olympians...”
- “They did start a branding piece called ‘Freaks of Nature’ which was a play on words really. You talk about Usain Bolt and you don’t say he is a ‘freak’ in being able to run fast ... The word ‘freak’, as a definition, isn’t a negative term. It talks about being unexplainably, like something unexplainably in the environment and being different from

how people would perceive something to be and so the connotations around the word 'freak' then meant that it was maybe a little too close, even for C4, to then bone."

- "C4 is much more fly on the wall ... whereas the BBC does not do that. They are much more factual in terms of their content ... the way that they look at disability and portray disability whether that is disability sport ... or disability in general, by definition the BBC are a lot more factual as opposed to conversational around things ..."
- "C4 ... is much more immersive TV ... with that can come a lot more humour just because of the style of it ... because they are not so linear in their approach to a lot of things, it means that there is room to maybe go off-piste a bit more and speak to people about other things."
- "Areas like the Last Leg ... opens up people's eyes, it makes the same as other people can poke fun at themselves and can laugh and joke about their life. It gave people with disabilities the platform to do the same ... that is really refreshing. It shows that ... people with a disability have got very different attitudes the same as the rest of society, some ... can laugh and joke at themselves ... and other people can't and that's not about whether you are in a wheelchair or not or got a disability, its about your personality."
- "The Last Leg ... lets barriers down, it lets people realise that you can talk about disability in a fun way, but of course it is always met with a balance of empathy and understanding at the same time..."
- "In terms of differences, I think it isn't just about disability. I think it is the channels styles. BBC is a much more factual, documentary style way of reporting or very much linear in terms of their interviews ... whereas C4 is much more relaxed and has room to go off-piste ..."

Qu. 2 – How do you feel about Channel 4 using the billboard of 'Thank You For The Warm Up' to the London 2012 Olympics and 'Superhuman' for the 2012 Paralympics? Do you feel it had a positive outlook for the rest of society? (Martin, Tilly, Klara, Joel & Scott)

Martin

- "... when ... they told me that their working title for the Paralympics was 'Here Come The Freaks' ... I was appalled by that I thought 'Oh my God I can't get involved ... if that is the direction C4 are going'."
- "... when it came through that it was 'Thank You For The Warm Up' and 'Superhumans' I was really relieved ... that they hadn't gone the other direction ... I thought it was punchy and it caught the imagination. I think it captured a totally new audience for the Games."
- "... it has other social implications, ... disabled people were viewed as 'are you a Superhuman athlete, or aren't you?' 'Are you appearing at the Paralympics, or aren't you?' 'Why don't you want to be a Paralympian cause that's where its at!?' ... it was so powerful ..."
- "I didn't feel as though it was patronising and even if you listed the lyrics from the track they used, ... 'Public Enemy' ... the last line of that track is 'Its harder than it looks' ... I think that's quite a good way of looking at Paralympic sport."

Joel

- "Some people said post-Games (London 2012) ... that actually they think it was a negative ... they said because what it did was, that the implication was that if you are disabled, but not an athlete, your worthless. So, it is all well and good your Superhuman, you're amazing, if you're an athlete ... There are millions of people who are not doing that so ... if you are not in a wheelchair going at 100mph or if you are not scoring a 3 pointer or if your not Jonnie Peacock, what we don't count!? I found that quite interesting, that people in praising a group of disabled people you marginalize the vast majority of everyone else."

- "... the word 'freak', I totally understand why that would be offensive to some but you have to remember that the word 'freak' has different connotations to it ... especially in the terms of the historical connotations of being disabled and people were described as freakish back in the day ... but you have to also understand that there can be a positive connotation linked with being described as a 'freak' as well."

Klara

- "I think it has had a positive impact overall at promoting one message."
- "The negative side of it is that everyone thinks that anyone in a wheelchair can be a 'Superhuman' and a Paralympian ..."
- "I do think their intention to elevate and magnify the personalities, the characters, and the achievements as well, I think that really worked. I think that has a broadly positive effect. There was a little kid called Rio who wants to run like Richard Whitehead ... that was really touching to have someone so young proudly showing off his prosthetic ... it can very quickly influence society ..."
- "... Sofiah Wanner ... competed at the Paralympics ... she has created the Superhero Tri Series ... she has gone down the 'Superhero' which is another level up from 'Superhuman' ... It's upbeat, it's really positive. They talk about sidekicks rather than carers. It's all a team thing, ... you are on a team with your family or with your friends and everybody is doing every bit, ... they are all doing it together ..."

Scott

- "C4 by definition are a much edgier and attention-grabbing channel ..."
- "... I think when they wanted to introduce the Paralympics, they wanted to do it with as much punch as possible ... whether that is calling people 'Super Humans' or 'Freaks' its to get people's attention like 'Wow, who you calling freak?' 'Well, what's a Super Human?' ... They want people to ask questions of what's going to be going on ..."
- "I do think, for the language that's used at C4 is attention grabbing and those sorts of words and those sort of slogans ... the way they were almost playing down the Olympics with 'Thanks For The Warm Up' is to get people's attention, to make it memorable and to make people question or laugh ..."
- "... there is no way if the BBC got the campaign and was covering the Paralympics, they would have used language like that. It would have been much more structured, much more daily language, ways of speaking about people and much more reeled in ..."

Tilly

- "I saw the 'Freak of Nature' campaign, the day before it was launched, and I expressed quite a serious level of concern about it ..."
- "... to be an Olympian, like Usain Bolt is a freak of nature, but in terms of disability that term is used in a very different way. It's not used as you are a freak of nature, its used as you are a freak and you're not part of society."
- "'Superhumans', not really keen on either because the opposite of superhuman is sub-human ..."
- "You can argue all these things, but once you add a layer of permanent disability, it does change the narrative."
- "... Superhuman, that was better but I still think you have to be really careful about what it says to other disabled people who aren't Paralympians ..."

- "... I think it has the ability to send out some very damaging messages to disabled people. So, ... around 2012 when Oscar Pistorius was wanting to become an Olympian ... there was almost a tone in the press that if weren't a Paralympian also trying to be an Olympian, then you weren't quite good enough."
- "... I think that some of the messages it is sending out to disabled people can be quite challenging. If you are not trying to be a Paralympian, you have no value."
- "You don't say to an untalented 12-year-old who does sport once a week 'do you want to be an Olympian?' but we say to an untalented 12-year-old disabled child 'do you want to be a Paralympian?' ... that shows that there is still a lack of understanding about what it takes to be a Paralympian."
- "... there is that balance between hope, aspiration, appeal, but then you are sending out the wrong message to those who will never be."
- "... I worked really hard to be a Paralympian and so I am quite protective over it. So, I don't think it helps to think that all disabled people can be a Paralympian ... because not every non-disabled person can be an Olympian."

Qu. 3 – Do You Think That London 2012's Legacy That Was Set Or Was Tried To Be Set, Do You Feel It Has Continued Or Do You Feel That Because Of after Rio 2016 and Tokyo 2020 Being Delayed, Do You Feel That Legacy Hasn't Continued? (Tilly, Klara, Joel & Scott)

Tilly

- "I don't think you can expect two weeks of a Paralympic Games to change the world ..."
- "... I think we must be realistic about what the legacy is.."
- "It's interesting with Tokyo with the opening ceremony and the 'We the 15' campaign ... it's a lovely idea but how can the IPC (International Paralympic Committee) influence every jurisdiction in education and employment ... where it is so different on every single country around the world."
- "... at the moment, it feels like a PR campaign with not much depth to it ... it's lovely to talk about rights but rights for disabled people in the UK are very different to the rights for disabled people in China."
- "... the IPC should be organising an amazing Paralympic Games, ... I understand why they are linking to the UN (United Nations) and other organisations, but they can't dilute what they are meant to be doing ... organising an amazing Paralympic Games and encouraging Countries to have social programmes for disabled people and bringing them into sport."
- "There is a bit where you think OK, ministers get very excited about the Olympics and Paralympics but it needs more political weald than once every four years."

Joel

- "I think there is a legacy of people seeing disabled people as 'normal' human beings."
- "I think there could be more work to be done as in terms of legacy. I think that when you go to certain buildings and basics such as ramps and lifts and doorways. Those are basics. I think those are the sorts of things that could be improved."
- "... I think the legacy of the Games is having an impact, however for the legacy of the coverage there's still a lot more work to do."
- "I would like to see more people behind the scenes commissioning programmes who are disabled ... I think that would be a legacy ... for the media anyway ... would be one that ... would show me that we have made significant progress in the last 8 to 9 years."

Klara

- "... if one is looking at legacy, the wheelchair tennis at Wimbledon is so different now to how it was in 2012. We have kept fighting ... saying that you should be putting the final on

a bigger court, we did finally achieve that ... amid a lot of 'oh, no that will be difficult, we don't have enough wheelchair access there'. It's like you don't need that much you have got enough for spectators to come in wheelchairs, you just need a massive stadium because loads of people want to watch ... they will find a way of getting the seats they can actually watch it from ... don't worry about what might go wrong ..."

- "I know ... about disability sport in school being rubbish and your basically just not allowed to be included in it ... I think changing that is clearly what's needed as its appalling."
- "It's just lack of imagination. Don't say it can't be done because it can it just needs a little tweaking."

Scott

- "What it done was it did get awful lot of understanding and following from London."
- "... it was a fantastic platform to introduce people to Paralympic sports and with that did come an absolute surge of people interested, and wanting to give it a go ..."
- "... as a legacy, I think that London 2012, ... for a generation will be remembered."
- "I think it has done so much for disability sports and ... Paralympic sports in particular ... people have got more of an understanding of disability and the opportunities that are available ..."
- "... Now people have got an educated decision as opposed to going 'there is nothing I can do' "
- "It's not just about doing it but you are educated that it is possible to do ... you are educated on what is happening."

(Personalized Questions)

Do you think that C4 or BBC or both are trying to appeal to a certain audience either during the Paralympics or from the TV you have seen as a viewer? (Martin Only)

- "... I always think of the BBC, rightly or wrongly, that it is a public service thing, and they are just reporting on sport. C4 will say they are reporting on sport, but they are also positioning that sport more for their viewership whereas the BBC are like we are reporting on it in a very straight way and if the viewers want to watch it, they will come and watch it, whereas C4 ... are positioning it for out viewers that we know come to C4."

From your time working at both channels, do you think there is an equal representation of both able-bodied and disabled people, both in front and behind the camera? Or do you think it has gotten better or worse? (Martin Only)

- "... it has been quite a while since the BBC lost the rights, to the Paralympics, so we are talking about 10 years ago."
- "C4 made a statement that they would have a certain percentage of people working both behind and in front of the camera ... and they live by that. BBC never did that and so the numbers are always going to look bad against C4 ... partly because times have changed in those 10 years considerably, since London 2012 ..."
- "... BBC probably were actually pretty good at getting the right people in front of the camera, the right pundits. The presenters were always able-bodied ... there was never a budget to train disabled people up and C4 took the decision to do that. That said, they are still sticking with the same presenters they trained in 2012."

- "... those budgets they had for 2012 are not there now. So, ... yes C4 are looking much better, but they are still leveraging the investment they put in 10 years ago and it is not an ongoing investment in the same way."
- "... the people who produced C4's coverage are former BBC people ... the vast majority of those editors, producers, or whatever have come out of the BBC at some point ... So, they are not two totally separate camps in some ways."

How well do you feel the BBC and C4 portray disability sport from your background on presenting? Do you feel that they now portray disability sport in the way that it should be portrayed? (Martin Only)

- "In 1988, it was patronizing. A 10 minute package for the entire Paralympic Games in Seoul, ... it was about, for example, 'here is Simon Jackson, he is blind, and he can play the piano, isn't that amazing and oh by the way he won a gold judo!'"
- "Then they kind of swung and in 1992 and to a certain degree in 1996 it was led by a lady called Helen Rollinson, ... it was much more sports focused. It was about the sport not the disability and as an athlete it felt like a really positive move but what it failed to do was make it very accessible for the general viewing public."
- "By ... 2000 and 2002, when I first started commentary, I felt as though it was important to view the sport and talk about it as sport, but where there was something else add it too. I can remember getting told by the BBC 'imagine if your auntie is watching this and if you think something needs explaining to her, explain it to the viewers' ... So, I felt as though we were starting to get a better balance of this; sports coverage, but this is different, and we will explain that difference and articulate some of the nuances and some of the challenges around classification in a way that is accessible without going too deep into it ..."
- "So, we went on a journey with the BBC and the BBC, I think, got to a point in Beijing where I thought they were doing a pretty good job ... in getting the balance right. Did we do the volume of coverage that we could have done, no we didn't, but the output was pretty good I think of the work that we did. C4 took it on and it became much more about their story behind the individual ..."
- "... there is a difference between how people who receive their disabilities think about things and how people who were born and have always known the world of disability ... I define myself as a disabled person, but receiving that disability was a real key moment in my life that defined who I am, ... I am ok talking about that. Tanni, who was born with her disability, well it is who she is, and she doesn't really want to get involved talking about it, ... she tends not to go that direction with it, whereas somebody like me will be like actually 'I am going to talk about mine and I am ok talking about somebody else's journey'."
- "Its difficult to make a judgment on Paralympic output when you are involved in the output because you are very aware of what you are doing but you're not watching every single programme because you are busy doing your job. If I look at the output, we did for swimming, I think ... we spent too much time in the studio talking and not enough time watching the sport and commentating on the sport. I think that balance was slightly skewed."
- "C4 would say it was spot on, ... but for my personal taste, and it does come down to personal taste, I would like a little bit less fluffy and chat, ... and a little bit more sporting action."
- "The BBC tended to do a bit less fluffy and chat, but they didn't do the hours. C4 had a lot of hours. They would say that sport was all there to be watched if you are willing ..."

- "... that is part of the challenge, to hop around all the various outputs. If you are happy to go from watching it on C4, to switching to More4 and to switching to online, then absolutely you get to see all the action ..."
- "... if you are like the majority of people, a lazy viewer, who will stick it on a channel until they get bored ... then go find something else, then I think there is a little bit too much chat in my opinion."

Why do you feel the BBC and or C4 portray disability as they do? (Tilly Only)

- "I am ... a board member of the BBC, ... but I also work for C4 ..."
- "I think some of it is around how much understanding they have of the issue or lived experience of disabled people."
- "In some documentaries they do have lived experiences of disabled people as part of it but that does not always necessarily mean they are experts in that field."
- "... I think what they are all trying to do is balance several protected characteristics ... and disability just gets lost ... like 'Strictly (Come Dancing) has a 'token' disabled person on it every series now but is a fairly minimal impairment."
- "... most of C4's coverage is around the Paralympic Games ... that's where the number of disabled people experientially rise who are on screen."
- "... I think it is one of those things that both companies could just do more. What affects the coverage is a whole range of things."
- "I see inspiration porn slipping in much more into disabled sports coverage than it used to be which does worry me because I think that sets a really negative tone for other disabled people."
- "... the only thing young disabled people are being told they can be is a Paralympian, not a lawyer, or a teacher, or something else ... I think that is really negative because Paralympics make everyone feel warm and cuddly ... that's lovely but that's not real! In the same way the Olympics isn't real. It's for a tiny minority ... who compete at the highest level ... it just doesn't translate into the real world."
- "One of the biggest frustrations I have is when people tell me that (London) 2012 changed the world for disabled people and it just didn't."
- "... it was an amazing ... Games and it probably changed the lives of a few Paralympians but it didn't change the lives of ordinary disabled people ... I mean we still can't get on the Northern Line!"
- "If that was said about any other protected characteristics, that 2012 changed the world for women or black people, everyone would go no it didn't. I don't know what it is about disability that makes them feel all warm and cuddly and not have to address the lack of equality and inclusion that currently exists."

How well do you feel Channel 4 could make it even better for young disabled people coming up? (Joel Only)

- "I think what C4 can do is what I think they have been doing, which is normalizing disability sport and ... disability full stop."
- "I think what C4 did in 2012 was phenomenal because it made people see people with one arm, or in a wheelchair, or with a visual impairment. To see them competing at an elite sport ... it made people realize that no matter what disability you may have you can still run fast, ... score a basket, ... take part in boccia. You can do all these things ... they

have normalised it ... they treated it in a way that made people just think ... in fact it made people think 'actually these guys are more phenomenal than the Olympians because they have had to overcome something to still be elite athletes.'

- "... I think what C4 has done ... is ... first of all normalising it and de-stigmatising the stigma around disabled people ..."
- "Now the reality is, if you are in a wheelchair, there are things you can't do ... but there are plenty of things you can do and I think that is important and the coverage C4 did in 2012 and thus in 2016 in Rio, I think showed that."
- "I think something else C4 ... are doing, is having people beyond sport on screen with disabilities. So we are seeing ... comedians, politicians, presenters, activists, students, people all across society in wheelchairs, or with one leg, or with a hearing impairment just doing the same things that everybody else is doing ... I think the more that we can see people on screen that reflect our society ... are the sorts of things I think make young people who are disabled see themselves and think 'oh it's normal, what's the big deal, he's doing it, she's doing it, why can't I do it?'"
- "... I think representation is key in showing the wider world, like disabled young people what they can do."
- "... I think it's really important that we show young disabled people that it's normal to be an athlete, or a cook, or a politician, or an academic, ... but I think it is also important to show that they can be flawed and be bad at their jobs just like everybody else ... and not have them painted as perfect ..."

Do you feel C4's coverage is changing the perception for the able-bodied community when they see a disabled person in public? Do you think it's having that knock on effect going forwards? (Joel Only)

- I remember, before 2012, whenever someone in a wheelchair would get on the bus, ... it was a big deal. Everyone would stop ... and see what was going on ... it was almost a show. Whereas now, ... when somebody in a wheelchair gets on the bus, if anything there's that kind of look of 'can you hurry up mate, I've got work to do.' But that is the same way they may treat an able-bodied person ... it's not a shock anymore ... I like that because it shows now that people are thinking 'what's the big deal, he's in a wheelchair ...'"
- "I think that in part down to what C4 did with their coverage because ... they normalised it. It's not as special now to see someone in a wheelchair."
- "We now know that disabled people can achieve great things in sport, ... that now bleeds into real life and into the wider society where we now treat people like 'oh yeah so he's in a wheelchair.'"
- "Sometimes there is that awkward moment of do I help them or not because it's a case of 'I don't want to patronize them because I am sure they can get on the bus by themselves,' but equally some people can't and they do need that bit of help but I think because of ... 2012 ... the thought now is 'at least let me let them have a chance ... before I help,' whereas before there was this automatic 'I have to help that person because they are in a wheelchair and they can't do anything' ..."
- "... the Games has had a wider societal impact on how people view disabled people ... you will always get people that will always abuse people ... Those people will always exist, but I've definitely seen a normalisation of how people view and see disabled people."

Do you feel that C4, BBC or media in general should focus on people who have acquired their disability due to an accident, like with the Invictus Games, rather than focusing heavily on a select few people who were born with their disability? (Joel Only)

- “I think it is part of what TV believes makes an overall show, so you have to have the back story ... They need that kind of arc narrative of a program ... to be fair TV does that I think with any sort of story of a person. You look at X-Factor, ... Britain’s Got Talent, that’s what they do. It’s like we need to hear this before a performance. I don’t think it is unique to disabled people.”

“It is ‘this is the way TV has done it ... this is the way it will always do it.’ I don’t have any strong views either way but I understand why some people feel like it can portray disabled people in a particularly negative light.”