

"Very us, them": Perceptions of Visually Impaired Athletes on Media Representations

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Type of Contribution:

Age Range Adult

Population Visual Impairment

Physical Activity Visual Impairment

Session Activity Research Presentation (20 minutes)

The article titled Sports Done Right: A Shining Example for All of Us tells the story of an interaction between two high school cross country runners from the perspective of an able-bodied and sighted witness. In the story, Ruth was celebrated and awarded a medal for her course record breaking performance at a local meet. Following the award ceremony, Ruth approached Noah, a blind runner, and presented her medal to him as a way to express her congratulations and pride for his race finish. Throughout the article, Ruth is characterized by her running ability through a description of how comfortable she looks while running and a tangible representation through her finish time of 14:29:05. Noah, on the other hand, is praised for his fearlessness, determination, and inspiration. This study was inspired by Lindsay's reading of the above article. as a blind athlete herself, often, she is dissatisfied with the representation disabled athletes receive in the media as based on her experience, the stories do not accurately reflect what it is like to be a disabled athlete. The purpose of this study was to examine the perspectives of adult blind or visually impaired athletes on the way in which a blind person and athlete was depicted in the recent media article. Seven visually impaired athletes (2 men and 5 women, ages 18-37) read the article and completed a one-on-one zoom interview where they discussed their thoughts regarding the representation of the athletes. Interviews consisted of gathering the participants' overall impressions of the article as well as revisiting specific sections of the article to discuss the portrayal of the athletes in the story. Interview transcripts are currently being analyzed with reflexive thematic analysis. Themes will be constructed and finalized in advance of this presentation.