

**The School of Sociology and Social Policy**  
**The University of Leeds**

**Dürer 's Rhinoceros:  
disablement, violence and mass media**

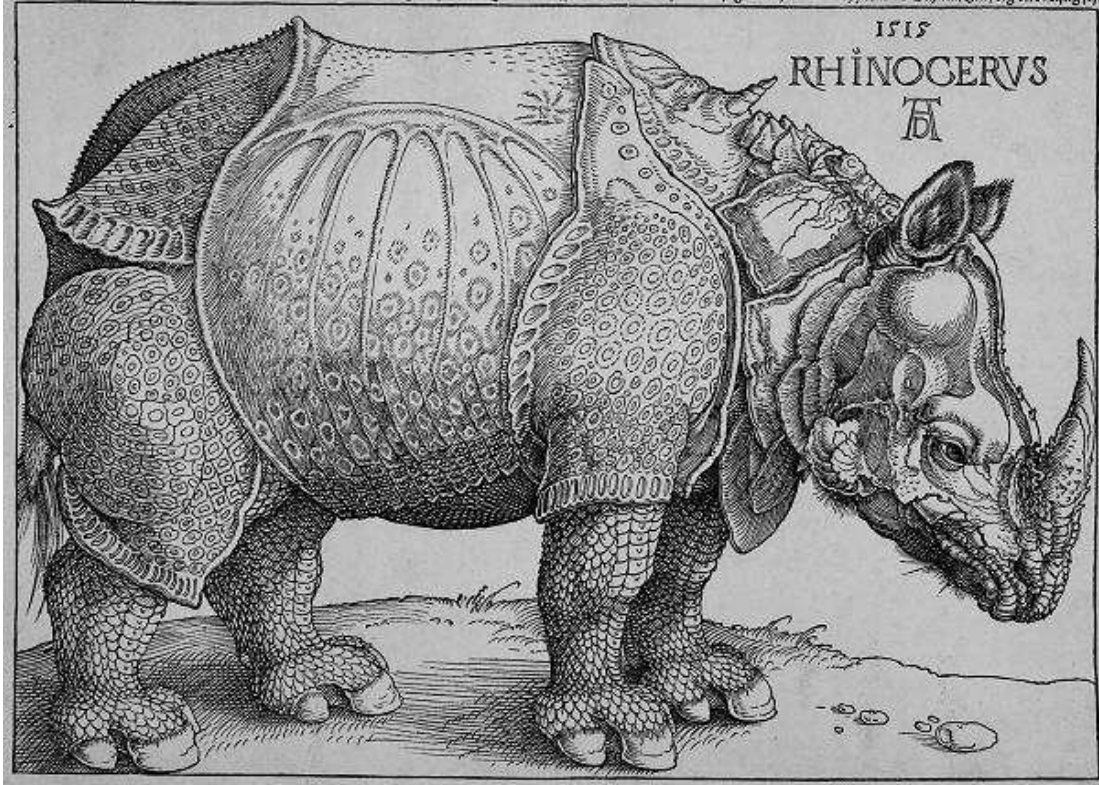
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A research dissertation submitted to The Department of Sociology and Social Policy, The University of Leeds, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Masters of Arts in Disability Studies.

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Student Number: 200234410

Nach Chusino gepurt. 1513. In. 2di. j. May. Hat man dem großmichtigen König von Portugall Ein amell gen Lysabona pracht an/ India/ ein sollich lebendig Thier. Das nennet sie Rhinoceros. Das ist hie mit aller sönner gestalt Absonderlic. Es hat ein sard reit ein geschnitten Schildkreuz. Und ist es dicken Schales vberlegt fast fest. Und ist in der groß als der Salfande Aber myderwichtig von paynen/ vnd fast vech afftig. Es hat ein scharff starck Horn vorn auff der nase/ Das beyndt es allweg zu wegen wo es bey steynen ist. Das dinstig Thier ist der Salfand fast feyndt. Der Salfande furcht es fast vbel/ dann wo es In anhandt/ so laufft In das Thier mit dem kopff zwischen drey foderen payn/ vnd reißt den Salfande vnder am pauch auff vñ erubigt In. Das mag er sich nit erwehen. Dann das Thier ist also gewapent/ das In der Salfand nicht so kan thun. Sie sagen auch das der Rhinoceros Schnell/ stuybig vnd listig sey.



"I hold that the perfection of form and beauty is contained in the sum of all men."  
Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528)

## Abstract

Previous research has shown that impaired individuals have been historically, and continue to be, victims of violence. This violence stems from a variety of sources, locations and situations. The story of this violence against impaired individuals has been hidden, ignored or denied and as Sorensen (2002) says, "Crime against people with substantial disabilities ... remains largely invisible and unaddressed" (p. 1). Only in the last thirty years have researchers truly begun to turn their interest towards this subject area.

This paper specifically examines violence towards impaired people in conjunction with the news media's influential presentation of stereotypical images of them. The news media's invariant presentation of these stereotypical images strengthens the societal acceptance of impaired people as legitimate targets for violence.

Through the paper's exploration of disablement from the perspective of cultural influence, societal beliefs and attitudes and the various stereotypical definitions given to impaired people, a more clear

understanding of the source of the societal definition, role and position assigned impaired people was gained. Additionally, the paper examined disability and the media generally, disability and the news media specifically and the ways the news media presents violence and disability.

The research element of the paper utilized the administration of a survey questionnaire to an impaired sample population and the gathering of all news media regarding a news event involving alleged violence towards an impaired individual.

The survey questionnaire used a population sample of disabled individuals, a group whose opinions have been for the most part ignored (Rioux, 1997b). The questionnaire focused on collecting the informant's opinions of what constitutes violence towards disabled people, how they saw disabled people portrayed in the news media and their suggestions for improvement of these portrayals. The questionnaire results were analyzed using a statistical approach.

The survey questionnaire results showed that the impaired individuals surveyed defined what constituted violence against impaired people in a far broader range than the standard 'dictionary' definition of violence. The impaired survey participants also reported that the most frequent news media story themes/topic involved charity appeals and events, and recorded much that the news media could do to improve how disabled people are presented. These included the news media presenting more honest portrayals focusing on the individual not the impairment. They also suggested that the news media do more extensive and higher quality research when preparing these stories.

The contextual analysis of the news media reporting found that this specific story, even though it contained many elements of a story that should have had both the potential for longevity and a strong audience interest, it failed to generate either. The reporting also displayed many of the stereotypes identified with the negative definition of impaired people.

## Acknowledgements

*"And I say to you that if you bring curiosity to your work it will cease to be merely a job and become a door through which you enter the best that life has to give you."*

- **Robertson Davies** Canadian novelist, playwright, critic, journalist, and professor, 1913 – 1995

I wish to sincerely thank my dissertation advisor Dr. Colin Barnes, University of Leeds, for sharing so freely his knowledge, advice, experience and, in a few instances, his patience. Dr. Barnes' support during my entire Disability Studies M.A. experience, and specifically through the creation of this dissertation, has been truly valued and appreciated.

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Lastly, I want to acknowledge the contribution that the Disability Studies programme has made to my life. It has allowed me the opportunity to embark on an extraordinary journey of enlightenment, discovery and revelation.

Robert H. Elliott  
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## Chapter one: **Introduction**

*“The fundamental job of the imagination in ordinary life, then, is to produce, out of the society we have to live in, a vision of the society we want to live in”* (Frye, 1964: 140).

- **Northrop Frye**, Canadian  
literary critic and literary theorist,  
1912-1991

### **Disablement and the Media Beast**

The representation of disabled people in the media is one that is based on a variety of negative stereotypes. These disabling stereotypes have been and remain a perennial part of all media (Barnes, 1992:19). What is most often taken as knowledge about disabled people, and disablement issues, is more often misinformation (Campling, 1981) or in the specific case of news media reporting, secondhand sources (Haller, 1999). Yet it remains a powerful truth that “How the attributes of news stories about disability are played in the news media can sway public opinion about disability issues and toward the cultural representations of people with disabilities in general” (Haller, 1999: 2).

In addition to these realities, the stories reported on disablement need to possess specific characteristics for a journalist’s piece to be

chosen for publication, it needs to be 'newsworthy'. The story needs to be able to 'sell' itself to the reader/viewer. This is true both figuratively and literally as, lest it be forgotten, the media is a "business" and businesses need to make money. What better way to do this than to present something different from the 'norm'? Something the able-bodied readers and viewers don't see everyday, that they rarely, if ever, interact with or want to interact with (Environics Research Group, 2004:), something 'deviant' in that it differs from the societal standard, and maybe even a little bit frightening or disconcerting.

The account of Dürer's Rhinoceros is particularly analogous to the manner and method used by mass media in its representation of disabled people today. It utilizes vast distribution networks, has a persuasive influence on public opinion, is financially motivated and produces disablement focused stories that are most often based on second-hand sources, misinformation and recycled cultural beliefs and attitudes.

Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528) was a 16<sup>th</sup> century German artist of extraordinary talent. One of his most famous drawings was entitled "Rhinoceros". Dürer had never seen a Rhinoceros in life; his drawing was based on notes made by another printer and a light 'sketch' from an unknown artist, who both had supposedly seen the beast. Dürer used the description in the creation of a woodcut to produce prints using the most advanced mass communication technology of the day, the printing press. Though Dürer made considerable sums painting commissioned pieces, by utilizing woodcuts and the printing press his art could be sold at a lower prices, but at much higher volumes and enjoy a much wider distribution. The end result was that Dürer became wealthier, more well known and artistically influential.

Dürer's Rhinoceros, though a 'misinformed' representation, was considered a true and accurate representation of a Rhinoceros into the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. (Mulch, 2007; Phelan, 2003; Wikipedia contributors, 2007c; Wikipedia contributors, 2007e; Wikipedia contributors, 2007f: Fulmar Television and Film, 2006).

## **Background**

A long personal interest in media and an even longer personal association with impairment came together with the reading of a news media article alleging the physical assault of a visibly disabled man. (Appendix One: Section One). This news report's details elicited many responses but overall the most powerful of these was in terms of its social context with an underlying impression that a fundamental social precept had been transgressed, but what was the precept and what was the nature of the transgression?

Given that the vast majority of the Western world embraces the adage, 'the strong do not abuse the weak', a maxim rooted in the majority of religious teachings and manifest in the words and spirit of societal laws, policies and the expectation of individual conduct, acts to the contrary are difficult to comprehend. This humanitarian face of caring and concerned dogmata for its weaker members contrasts sharply with the fact that violence towards disabled people does occur with alarming frequency, it has a long history and it continues to this day (Sobsey, 1995). Additionally, society inconsistently addresses cases of violence against disabled people. In only the

most egregious and public of cases (Council of Canadians with Disabilities, 2007: Wikipedia contributors, 2007a) is there a large vociferation, while the less visible, albeit more common, cases result in silence and apparent indifference.

### **The Research Problem**

Still, there is a dichotomy in the professed ethical and moral declaration of western society relating to violence towards disabled people and the contrary reality of its behaviour towards these disabled members of society. In the world today there are approximately 650 million people who are living with a disability (Foreign Affairs Media Relations, 2007) and as the 'Baby Boom' segment of society moves into its 60's this figure will rapidly increase (Bowe, 2005: unpagged). An accompaniment to this fact is the empirical research findings that show disabled people are four times more likely to be victims of violence than able-bodied people (Sorensen, 2002). These two facts constitute the fundamental base of the research problem explored in this study; that disabled people are a large population that lives more at risk to violent acts than able-bodied members of society.

*Why are disabled people more likely to be targets of violent acts?*

The common theory is that disabled people are seen and treated as devalued members of society (Barnes, 1990: Murphy, 1990: Oliver, 1990a). The most direct source of this devaluation is through the negative public beliefs and attitudes that define disabled people as being 'lesser' in value relative to the able-bodied ideals of beauty and normality (Shakespeare, 1994).

*How are the negative, devaluing stereotypes of disabled people disseminated and perpetuated?*

Though most often these stereotypes are based on ignorance, incorrect or dated information, mythos or misconceptions etc., "They are inherent to our culture and persist partly because they are constantly reproduced through the communications media" (Barnes, 1992: 5). The media's influence on defining societal opinion and belief, specifically the news media with its ubiquitous presence, make it a powerful disseminator of disability stereotypes.

## **Research Aim and Objectives**

This study's aim is to explore the issue of violence as experienced by disabled people and the auxiliary role that news media plays in the societal acceptability of these violent acts. To attain this goal the completion of the following objectives will be necessary:

1. To collect and analyze disabled individuals' opinions of what constitutes violence towards disabled people.
2. To collect and analyze disabled individuals' opinions of how disabled people are portrayed in the news media.
3. To collect and analyze the opinions of disabled individuals as to how the news media reporting of disabled people could be improved.
4. The influence of gender, impairment type and length of impairment on the data results for aims 1, 2, and 3.
5. To collect and analyze all news media reportage of one story involving violence and a disabled individual.

## **Data Collection and Strategies**

The data will be collected from two separate sources. First, through the administration of a survey, containing both closed and open-ended questions, to a population sample and the analysis of numerical response totals to the survey questions and variable cross-tabulation. After the questionnaire is administered the informants will engage in a 'debriefing' discussion where they will be free to discuss any issues that the questionnaire produced for them. The survey will.

The second data set will be a collection of all media news reportage (written and video) generated regarding the specific media event discussed at the top of this chapter. These compiled news media pieces will be transcribed and analyzed using techniques from both 'Content' and 'Textual' analysis techniques.

## **Organization of the Project**

The project will be organized in the required dissertation format. It will begin with the standard title page, acknowledgements, and table of contents pages. The initial chapter will give a general outline of the study followed by a comprehensive review of topic relevant literature



including disability, culture and violence towards disabled people. Chapter three will contain the research design information with the fourth chapter centering on violence against disabled people and its presentation by the media. Chapters five and six will present the research results from the survey questionnaire and the news media story analysis respectively. The final sections will include a conclusion chapter, a bibliography and the appendices.

## **Conclusion**

Violence perpetrated towards disabled people is indicative of society's view of disabled people's humanity. Regardless of whether the violence is rooted in misguided attempts to quell fears, to strengthen fragile identities (Shakespeare, 1994) or multifarious negative attitudes towards them (Barnes, 1997) it still leaves disabled individuals exposed to physical, emotional and/or psychological harm. Sadly, this whole phenomenon exists through the mere experience of an alternate life circumstance, a circumstance that finds them judged as an anomaly and therefore of less value by able-bodied society.

Note: Definitions of terms (Appendix Four).

## Chapter two: **Disability, culture and violence against disabled people**

*“Martin Luther King said ... when he asked himself does it always have to be that one group despises another and he says until we have discovered what is despicable in us, our brokenness. Until we have recognized it, accepted it, and loved it we will continue to despise others.”*

**Jean Vanier**, CC, GOQ, Ph.D,  
Canadian, born September 10,  
1928, founder of L'Arche

### **Introduction**

This chapter will explore how society understands disability by presenting the most common theories of disability, through showing the various ways in which culture can represent disability, the prevalence and dynamics of disability and violence, and why disabled people are more at jeopardy to violence than able-bodied individuals.

### **Understanding Disability**

Impairments are about a functional loss, be it physical, cognitive or sensory. As defined by the Northern Officers Group, impairment is “an injury, illness, or congenital condition that causes or is likely to cause a loss or difference of physiological or psychological function” (1999: 7). For the most part, impairment is not sought after but rather a ubiquitous component of life, and according to the Human Genome

Project, one to which none of us are 'immune' (Shakespeare and Watson, 2002). Based on loss of body function it is a perennial and ceaseless human companion ranging from the obvious to the imperceptible, still impairment's effects "...are only ever apparent in a real social and historical context ..." (Abberley, 1987, p. 12) resulting in "... problems of daily living, reduced social status, decreased income and lowered perceptions of self" (Bowes, 1978; cited in Barnes, 1990: Ch. 2 p. 5)

To understand the different definitions of disability, it is prudent to explore the ways in which society views and interacts with its impaired members. The examination of the established "models of disability", with their intrinsic aim of explaining and understanding the beliefs and the manner in which society interacts with impaired members, will greatly aid in this understanding.

The most dominant of these models of disability is the 'individual' or 'personal tragedy' model. With strong links to the earliest model of disability, the 'moral model' and as its name clearly implies, it views disability as a grave misfortune that befalls the individual. This model

is rooted in the belief that the 'problem' of disability is located within the individual and that it originates from the functional limitations of impairment or the behavioural issues that are thought to arise from the 'disability' (Oliver, 1996: 32). The responsibility for the cause of 'disability' is within the impaired individual and is perceived therefore as a 'personal' biological creation.

The medical model of disability is an expansion on the individual/tragedy model through its presentation of disabled people being 'ill' and the attempts to "... "fix" individuals' abnormalities and defects ..." (Office of Disability Issues, 2003: 5). These efforts require control (Zola, 1977) over the impaired person's life (Finkelstein, 1980) such as the forced acceptance of dependence on professional and medical intervention, the loss of individual identity, becoming targets of prejudice etc. bare this out (Oliver, 1996: 34). Ivan Illich, adds that 'patients' generally have become, "... virtually passive clientele: dependent, cajoled and harassed, economically deprived and physically and mentally damaged ..." (Illich et al., 1977: introduction)

William Armer (2005) explains that through making the definition of disability a medical matter and perceiving impaired patients as 'ill', it would then follow that the impaired individual would be seen as a 'patient' and, as is the case for all 'patients', they would be in need of a 'cure'. Armer continues to describe that it then becomes the 'patient's' responsibility to respond to 'medical care', and return to 'normal' by becoming 'well'. Once again, the responsibility for disability is placed within the impaired individual.

The most recent and radical development in thinking about disability has been the appearance of the social model of disability. This model began its development in the 1970's growing out of politically engaged British disabled advocacy organizations, UPIAS and the DPI, and the thinking of British academics such as Mark Priestley, Vic Finkelstein, Ken Davis, Paul Hunt and Mike Oliver etc. The social model makes a clear distinction between impairment and disability, between the biological and the social root of disablement (Barnes, 1996a).

“In our view it is society which disables physically impaired people. Disability is something imposed on top of our impairments by the way we are unnecessarily isolated and excluded from full participation in society. Disabled people are therefore an oppressed group in society” (UPIAS, 1976: 14 cited in Oliver, 1996: 33)

The adoption of the belief that disabled people were an ‘oppressed group’ was the true beginning of a political, academic and philosophical link between disabled people and other ‘oppressed’ minorities. Disability organizations then began to use the frameworks of feminist groups, racial minority groups and specific sexual orientation minorities to refine and explore their own explanation and understanding of their role in society.

The population of this ‘minority’ group is formidable, comprising 650 million people worldwide (Foreign Affairs Media Relations, 2007) of whom 3.6 million are Canadians (The Office for Disability Issues, 2003) and 8.6 million reside in the UK. The social model has found no great acceptance or practical following among policy makers.

Conversely it has found major acceptance among disabled people, disabled advocacy groups and to varying degrees with some government sectors in Europe and North America.

## **Disability and Culture**

The relationship between disability and culture is an important component of violence directed towards disabled people. Society's cultural beliefs and attitudes towards a deviation from what it has deemed the 'norm' strongly influences society's response (policy, economic and attitude) towards the non-conforming member.

Understanding the dynamic between impairment and culture is essential to further elucidate violence towards disabled people.

To begin, it's important to have a clear understanding of the term 'culture' as it applies to Western Society. For this study, social anthropology, with it's study of human interaction and social organization, is the most appropriate area from which to draw a definition: 'Culture' is collected "...preconceptions, values, knowledge and norms that structure and give meaning to the whole life process

of people in social relationships” (Department of Social Anthropology, 2005: unpagged).

Though this definition appears to present ‘culture’ as a rather finite collection of the behaviours and beliefs of a society, the contrary is closer to the truth. Culture is a constantly developing process that uses ongoing diverse and varied societal experience, coupled with prior cultural ‘classifications, codifications and communications’ (Wikipedia contributors, 2007d) to present a base coherence of society and for society. Cultural coherence created through difference and contrary experience.

Tom Shakespeare (1994) presents a number of ways in which culture represents the meaning of disability through impairment imagery, ideology, otherness, anomaly and liminality that result in the overall ‘objectification’ of disabled people. His view is that this representation sees disabled people primarily as objects used to convey and represent specific emotions or beliefs. His views are based strongly on a feminist framework.



'Impairment imagery' is most often found in literature, film and other media manifesting itself as symbolism and metaphor. These representations of negative 'Images' display society's innate 'fear' of impairment and therefore disability (Shakespeare, 1994).

Shakespeare sees many of the Social Model Theorists as using a Marxist conception of 'ideology'. That "... ideas about disabled people are consequences of the material relations involving disabled people" (Shakespeare, 1994: 289). He sees this thinking as neglecting the role of culture and failing to consider the actual "... material processes and social relations" (Ibid) that actively define disability. Shakespeare believes disability is a complex process where "... the role of culture and meaning is crucial ..." (Ibid).

'Otherness' is another way that Shakespeare proposes that disability is being defined. Using Jordanova's (1989) major themes of the 'other' are shown to be consistent with other cultural representations of disability including: being treated as an 'object', being managed or controlled and as something to be feared.

Lastly, Shakespeare presents 'anomaly' and 'liminality' as cultural representative meanings of disability. 'Anomaly' is a position held by the disabled individual as a representation of a 'deviation' from the 'norm' or the 'standard'. By being defined as such the disabled person, by the very act of existing, defines 'normal' through displaying what 'normal' is not. "For there to be normality, it is necessary for there to be an abnormality" (Shakespeare, 1994: 14).

'Liminality' is oft times seen as existing "betwixt and between" (Turner, 1969, p. 95, cited in Shakespeare, 1994:16), being neither fish nor fowl (Murphy, 1987, p. 112, cited in Shakespeare, 1994:16) or colloquially defined as being 'in limbo' and needing a subsequent action to occur for there to be a 'release' from this state (Wikipedia contributors, 2007h: unpagged). More specifically for disabled people they are seen as neither "... `sick' nor 'well', 'dead' nor 'alive', 'out of society nor wholly in it .... they exist in partial isolation from society as undefined, ambiguous people'" (Murphy, 1987, p. 112, cited in Barnes, 1996c:10).

Liminality is often considered to be a “a period of transition” (Wikipedia contributors (2007i: unpagged) or a “temporary state” (Datasegment 2007: unpagged), but this is not true in the disabled individual’s experience of liminality. For disabled people liminality is a permanent state that can change only if the disabled person became ‘normal’ or the cultural definition of ‘normal’ changed to include their abnormality.

Many disabled people perceive “This cultural construction of their identities ... to be the epitome of their negation”

(Kama, 2003: 4).

## **Violence and Disabled People**

Violence is most commonly defined as the exertion of physical force with an intention of violating, damaging, or abusing. More enlightened thought saw the addition of ‘an abusive or unjust use of power’ (Bready, 1992). Specifically referencing disabled people, Marcia Rioux et al. (1997b) defines violence and abusive acts directed towards disabled people specifically and includes physical force, physical actions included in forms of care, sexual assault or abuse,

denial of rights, necessities, privileges and opportunities, any communications that constitute threatening, harassing, or insults and failures of action such as neglect or non-response to harmful situations.

The first sentence that Dick Sobsey wrote in the 'introduction' section of *Violence and Disability: An Annotated Bibliography* was, "Abuse of people with disabilities has been a well recognized problem for at least 100 years" (Sobsey et al., 1995: ix). 100 years, and it still continues. Violent physical abuse towards disabled people is historically prevalent and researched (Rioux, et al., 1997b; Roeher Institute, 1993; Sobsey; 1995; Sorensen, 2002; Wolbring, 1994) and therefore 'known' but this violence persists due to "... society's inability or unwillingness to clearly name and prohibit the problem" (Rioux, 1997b: 200).

For example, crimes against disabled people are much less often reported to the police, investigated if reported, prosecuted if investigated and a guilty conviction applied if prosecuted. Supporting this Sorenson states that, "... several studies suggest 80-85% of

criminal abuse of residents of institutions never reach the proper authorities (Powers, Mooney & Nunno, 1990)” (Sorenson, 2002: 4). In the event that these crimes actually do get reported to the police and proceed to the courts, “ ... convictions of offenders were rare in spite of the chronic and severe nature of the criminal abuse” (Sorenson, 2002: 5).

Modern western society maintains the mythology “... that in highly industrialised societies disabled people are 'well taken care of' (Barnes, 1991: Forward by Henry Enns). Lydia Zijdel refers to this mythology when she asks, “Certainly attitudes have become more benevolent and enlightened, but how much has really changed?” (Zijdel, 1999). Zijdel continues, “Although the rhetoric and rationales have changed, the means are subtler” (Ibid). ‘Subtler means’ is a direct reference to ‘soft eugenics’ with its use of ‘genetic screening and counseling’ (Armer, 2005), ultrasound (Shakespeare, 1998), amniocentesis (Davis, 1995) along with prenatal blood testing (Canadian Down Syndrome Society, 2007) coupled with a ‘mantra’ of personal choice (Armer, 2005).

Stiker (1999) believes that the need to eliminate those identified as 'different' is a global, societal phenomenon. "It is obvious that this violence toward the different resolves itself in other ways than in the elimination of the disabled, thanks to socialization, with its rules, its prohibitions and its institutions" (Stiker, 1999: 9).

### **Jeopardy to Violence**

Sobsey (2002) states that many theories exist to explain how 'disability influences risk' and in referring to the multi-factorial model (Sobsey et al., 1999) he stresses that 'cultural attitudes and beliefs' that reduce the gravity of offences against disabled people as a significant factor. Sobsey also notes that the reduced functional aspects of impairment such as mobility, communication and cognitive ability also increase the risk for some disabled people. Zijdel adds that lack of information, isolation, deprivation of information, economic dependence and low self-esteem also contribute to increased vulnerability to violence and abuse (1999: 20-21).

Tyiska (1998) goes on to record that though "... many offenders are motivated by a desire to obtain control over the victim and measure their potential prey for vulnerabilities" (Tyiska, 1998: unpagged)

surprisingly "... many criminals do not act upon a perceived "desirability" of the intended victim." (Ibid.). Tyiska (1998) continues saying that "... many perpetrators may be unaware that their victims have a disability" (Ibid.) and that violent acts experienced by disabled individuals are unfortunately a matter of bad timing and location.

This still does not deny the fact that those perpetrators who are focused on victims with impairments will not specifically seek them out through work, social or situational means. "Indeed, in one survey, virtually half, 48.1 percent, of the perpetrators of sexual abuse against people with disabilities had gained access to their victims through disability services" (Sobsey, 1994: pp. 75-76, cited in Tyiska, 1998: unpagged).

All victims of violence potentially experience a myriad of strong, often 'disabling', self-critical and self-deprecating emotions. In the case when the victim of violence is a disabled person these reactions can be intensified and exaggerated, for the effects of the experience comes in addition to the oppression (Barnes, 1996c; Davis, 1993) already being experienced as a disabled person (Tyiska, 1998).

Unlike the support available to able-bodied victims of violence after an act of violence, or even help in preventing the act, disabled individuals are reliant on ... “The luck of the draw ... to determine how family members, social workers, educators, counselors, law enforcement officers and the courts respond” (Roehrer Institute, 1993: 181).

## **Conclusion**

Cultural definitions of and societal beliefs and attitudes regarding impairment as a non-normal characteristic place impaired people in a low status position. Impaired members become stereotyped and subsequently labeled, seen more as object representations than full and ‘normal’ members of society. Goffman (1963) called this end result a ‘stigma’, the difference between what society expects you to be and what you actually are. Assigned this ‘deviant’ label, impaired members become the recipients of prejudice and oppression, including violence. Being devalued and oppressed by society together with having limited functional ability to avoid or escape violence combines to heighten the risk of disabled people being targets for violence.



## Chapter three: **Research Design**

*"We become what we behold. We shape our tool and then our tools shape us."*

- **Marshall McLuhan**, Canadian communications theorist  
Educator, Writer and Social Reformer, 1911-1980

### **Introduction**

The research in this study will be conducted based on the main tenets of the **Interpretive Paradigm** as it "... attempts to understand social situations from the perspective of the actors involved, the meanings they ascribe to these situations, and the 'social construction' of social as well as environmental issues and 'realities' ..." (York University, 2000: unpagged) including the belief that these 'actors' make choices and interpret the world they inhabit (Rouncefield, 2005: unpagged).

The Interpretive Paradigm incorporates an ontological view of reality being a social construct with multiple interpretations of reality, making the definition of reality reliant on the interpretation that people give it, how they individually 'see' it, their own personal interpretation. The epistemology of the interpretative paradigm maintains that the researcher establish and maintain a strong and ongoing relationship

of information transfer and genuine communication with the researched. (Packer, unknown: unpagged; Mercer, and Barnes, 2006: Module Four, Unit 1, Section 6)

### **Methodology Choices**

Both **quantitative** and **qualitative** research methodologies will be used in this study. In the history of social science research the overall propensity has been to use a variety of approaches. Incorporating both major research methods, quantitative and qualitative, to examine a research problem, using the best ‘tool’ for the job. Often using quantitative methods to make qualitative ideas measurable (Wikipedia contributors, 2007j: unpagged). This use of both ‘tools’ will be attempted in this research approach with the belief that these two methodologies will garner both objective and subjective information regarding the research.

“Data has to be interpreted, it does not ‘speak for itself””(Rouncefield, 2005: unpagged).

The **quantitative** research method will be used through the administration of a survey questionnaire to generate and collect numerical and measurable data (Wikipedia contributors, 2007j: unpagged) on specific areas of the research involving sample population opinions. The statistical analysis of this quantitatively generated data and the evaluation of the results will present a tangible 'iterative relationship of record' between the research questioning and the informant's answers. Though empirical data and results will be the outcome, the data will still be open to interpretation when introduced to the larger context view of the research study.

The **Qualitative** research on the other hand will seek to go beyond measurement and numbers through attempting "... to understand behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs ... to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denkin and Lincoln, 1994: unpagged)" (Scherer and LaPier, 2001: 1). The qualitative method will be used to collect and generate data utilizing content analysis examination of news media reportage involving alleged violence against a disabled person.

## **Data Sources and Collection Methods**

Violence, disability and the news media will be examined through two research approaches: administration of a survey questionnaire and the content analysis of news media reporting of an event involving violence against a disabled individual.

The **survey questionnaire** is designed to collect the opinions of disabled people, regarding their opinions on what constitutes violence towards disabled people, ways in which they see themselves presented in the news media and ways in which this presentation can be improved.

The **content analysis** of the news media story will constitute an examination of a practical example of the manner in which disability and violence are presented in current day reporting.

The **Survey Questionnaire** will be created using both research problems as its basis i.e. *to explore the issue of violence as experienced by disabled people and the auxiliary role that news media plays in the societal acceptability of these violent acts.* Though

an appropriate vehicle for generating the data required, the survey questionnaire method does have inherent weaknesses requiring researcher awareness. They include the survey's susceptibility to inaccuracies, ranging from informant dishonesty to questionnaire flaws due to being a self-reporting mechanism. Additionally, the survey method produces descriptive results with no linkage to variable similarities or differences. (Maricopa Center for Learning and Instruction, 2001; Jefferies, 1999)

The questionnaire will contain a combination of both closed and open-ended questions seeking the informant's opinions on two basic areas of enquiry. First, the closed-ended multiple choice questions will ask what constitutes violence perpetrated against disabled people and what are the most common themes/topics and the most stereotypical representations of disabled people found in news media stories. Secondly, open-ended questions requesting opinions as to how the news media could better present disabled people in their reporting, examples of a 'good news' and a 'bad news' story involving a disabled person and their most memorable news story involving a disabled person, will be asked. (See Appendix Three)

The survey questionnaire will be administered to a sample population independently selected from the membership of the British Columbia Coalition for People With Disabilities (BCCPD), a disability focused advocacy organization (Appendix Two). It has been noted that this group of informants is generally representative of a more politically aware sample of the general disabled population, being as they are members of an organization focused on advocacy and empowerment of disabled people.

Selecting disabled people for the population sample was predicated on three part reasoning: the belief that collecting the opinions of potential victims of violence against disabled people would create a more authentic and valid data source for this research, the fact that disabled people have had a limited voice in violence and disability research (Roehrer Institute, 1995) and through the involvement of ‘accredited’ disabled people in the research, the desired need for full participation by disabled people on issues that impact them would be fulfilled, “Nothing About Us Without Us” (United Nations, 2004: unpagged)

The survey questionnaire will be administered October 12, 2007 at the BCCPD offices with the researcher present. There will be a total of seven participants: 3 women and 4 men. Two participants have sensory impairments and the remaining five have impairments that restrict their mobility. The shortest length of time that any of these individuals had been impaired was 23 years, with 4 of the participants being impaired since birth.

At the completion of the survey administration a debriefing discussion will occur to allow participants to voice any questions or comments that may have arisen from the survey event. An audio recording of this discussion will be created.

The **News Media Data Set** will consist of all available news reports, both print and video, covering a specific story regarding alleged violence perpetrated towards a disabled individual. The research analysis of this data will examine and interpret the influence of news media reporting on creating, reinforcing and perpetuating societal stereotypes, attitudes and beliefs that may influence acts of violence perpetrated towards disabled people.

The print articles sourced were two British Columbia based daily newspaper and one weekly newspaper: The Province (Vancouver - Daily), The Victoria Times-Colonist (Victoria - Daily) and The Georgia Straight (Vancouver - Weekly). The television reports were collected from two Vancouver based television station affiliates of national television networks, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) and the CTV Television Network (CTV). The CBC is a Canadian crown corporation and the country's national public broadcaster. "CTV" is a Canadian English language television network. It is Canada's largest privately-owned network, the main asset of CTVglobemedia, one of the country's largest media conglomerates" (Wikipedia contributors, 2007g: unpagged)

The print reporting was collected through acquiring digital copies of the stories available through both online editions of the newspapers involved and through an online archive service, CanWest Interactive. The video reporting was purchased directly from the two television networks' archive services.



The time frame for both the video and print stories creation was from March 3, 2006 through September 21, 2006. There were a total of 9 separate pieces of media content relating to this story topic during that period. The bulk of the print and video reporting occurred on March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2006 with letters to the editor responses occurring up to a week later. The last article regarding this event was a print based follow-up in the Georgia Straight on September 14, 2006 and a reader response letter to that article September 21, 2006.

### **Analysing the Data**

The quantitative data set generated by the survey questionnaire will be analyzed using both the creation and examination of basic frequency tables of the survey responses. Along with this will be the cross tabulation of these tables with the collected independent variables: sample population gender, impairment type and length of impairment. These results will subsequently be generally discussed and interpreted.

In the case of news media data set it will be analyzed in conjunction with a qualitative content analysis approach "... where

communication content (speech, written text, interviews, images ...) is categorized and classified” (Wikipedia contributors, 2007: unpagged).

The basics of Zipf's law will be used initially to analyze the news report's textual data (the video stories will be transcribed) for researcher defined keyword frequency. The remainder will be based on Harold Lasswell formulated core questions of content analysis: "Who says what to whom via what channels with what effect," (Lasswell, 1927: unpagged, cited in Semati, 2004: unpagged). To this end the remainder of the analysis will approach the data set from an 'open analysis' perspective in an effort to identify and decipher preeminent message characteristics of the journalistic pieces, seperately and as a whole, such as themes, reporter bias, visual and story formation etc. In essence, the goal will be to discover and examine the more 'latent' meanings within the news media reports and the overall view of the reporting and story, rather than the 'manifest' content.

## **Research Dissemination**

Both Margaret Birrell Executive Director of BCCPD and Olga Krassioukova-Enns, Executive Director of the Canadian Centre on Disability Studies have shown interest in publishing this research on their web site. The researcher will also consider writing a condensed version of this research as the basis for a media article.

## **Ethical Considerations**

The one specific ethical concern was the creating a sense of or actual experience of exclusion of the survey questionnaire participants from the research study. To counter this concern a concerted effort was made to assure that the informants and organizers involved with the administration of the survey questionnaire were kept as fully informed as possible regarding the nature of the study, the study's specific aims and objectives, the survey's content and process and their specific role in it. By doing so the participants would be shown not only a genuine level of respect and a sense of inclusion in the research but they would also be able to generate survey responses that were possibly more valid than if they were less aware of the study details.

Also, through including a participant discussion, after the survey questionnaire administration was complete, there was a further effort to assure that participants exited the process with an opportunity to ask any questions they might have had and to have a forum to voice any concerns.

The other potential ethical concern is that of the potential effects of a disabled researcher engaging in disability based research. To counter any negative effects, the researcher maintained awareness that he could bring both negative and positive biases to all aspects of the research.

Maintaining awareness of both of these issues and acting to neutralize the effects of bias when necessary was the researcher's best response to these concerns.

## **Conclusion**

The research component of this study will use both a quantitative and qualitative approach. The methodology will include data collection

from a survey questionnaire and the collection of specific news media reporting. The data sets will be examined using statistical analysis and content analysis respectively. Potential research dissemination has been noted and two ethical concerns have been discussed and addressed.

**NOTE:** As the definition of terms is paramount to the full understanding of any communication the definitions of significant terms as they are used in this study are presented and discussed in Appendix Four. E.g. Abuse, Violence, Impairment and Disability, Disabled People or People with Disabilities?

## Chapter four: Disablement, the mass media and violence

*“All media exist to invest our lives with artificial perceptions and arbitrary values.”*

- **Marshall McLuhan**, Canadian communications theorist Educator, Writer and Social Reformer, 1911-1980

### Introduction

The financial size, ubiquitous nature and range of influence that is the makeup of the mass media cannot be denied. Mass media permeates every facet of daily life in Western culture, from the seeming ever-presence of television, radio, newspapers and film to books, Internet, portable audio and video content, ad nauseum. Without a conscious effort it is difficult, if not nearly impossible, to escape its reach.

Mass media has, throughout its history, presented disablement and disabled people in a variety of ways, usually negative. Using all types of media to convey a primarily “symbolic” (Stiker, 1999: ix) message that, in its simplest form, proclaims: an able-bodied state is ‘good’ and a non-able-bodied state is ‘bad’. From the bible, Leviticus 21:18-21 (Appendix Five), cartoon characters (Longmore, 1987: 66; cited in Barnes, et al., 1999: 194), classic literature such as “Moby Dick” and

Shakespeare's "Richard III" and "King Lear", through to the current day films such as "Million Dollar Baby", this basic message has been perennial. "Media images of people with disabilities have been used as metaphor for the human condition throughout history" (Platt, 2007: unpagged).

This repetitive confirmation of the established message is a key factor in both supporting, and to a lesser degree, the creation of the cultural attitudes and beliefs regarding impaired people. Media is a major mechanism for the repetition of this message, that impaired members of society are devalued and therefore are less worthy of the receipt of similar status, treatment and protection that is accorded to able-bodied members. Being viewed in this way, the impaired members would therefore appear as more acceptable targets for violence than able-bodied members. Coupled to this is the fact that the impaired societal members also come to believe in this societal construct and see themselves as less valued and occupying lower status than the able-bodied. Through this acceptance, the impaired members are less likely to view violence towards them as an event that they do not deserve, could resist or report.

## **Disability in the 'Media'**

There is a strained social interactional relationship between disabled people and non-disabled people based on the able-bodied perception of impaired people as being non-normal (Davis, 1961). Further, the discrimination experienced by disabled people is an established part of modern society and these oppressive attitudes and policies are seen, among other aspects of society, in the media (Barnes, 1992).

The combination of these facts, together with Western society's tendency to restrict disabled people from engaging fully in society through the socially constructed disenfranchisement mechanisms such as physical barriers, exclusionary attitudes, prejudice and stereotyped labeling, unfortunately leaves the mass media as one of the few places that impaired people can be 'viewed' (Kama, 2004).

The term "Mass Media" is most often used as a modern 'catchall' phrase to describe all the media channels available today. The reality is that 'media' is merely the conveyance of communication and the term 'mass' is a relative term, depending on the point in history, describing a large audience. The relevance of making this point is to show that the "mass media" is not a 'modern' phenomenon but rather



has a very long history that has included its representations of impaired people.

When examining Mass Media the first, and likely the most important, fact to be aware of is that mass media is a business and that it creates a product to make money. The expectation of compensation is at its root; the point of it all is profit. If education, accuracy of representation or investigation occurs it is only as a secondary outcome.

Recurring stereotypes of disabled people appear in the full gamut of media types and have formed the foundation "... on which the attitudes towards, assumptions and about and expectations of disabled people are based" (Barnes, 1992: 15). These recurring stereotypical representations of disability in the media have been outlined succinctly by Colin Barnes (1992), including Pitiable and Pathetic, an Object of Violence, Sinister and Evil, Atmosphere or Curio, as Super Cripple, an Object of Ridicule, as Their Own Worst and Only Enemy, as Burden, as Sexually Abnormal, as Incapable of Participating Fully in Community Life and as Normal" (Barnes, 1992:

pp. 3-15). Media does not solely cause the public's perception of impaired people but "... its impact should not be underestimated" (Barnes, 1992: 2).

In literature or film, the disabled character is most often presented symbolically or metaphorically as an object to further convey the author's or auteur's artistic message and theme, but in doing so it says little about disabled people's lives "... but everything about the attitudes of non-disabled people about disability" (Morris, 1991: 93). Morris continues by saying that the "... more disability is used as a metaphor for evil, or just to induce a sense of unease, the more the cultural stereotype is confirmed" (Ibid.) Susan Sontag adds that there is "Nothing more punitive than to give a disease a meaning" (Sontag, 1990: 58).

Books and their film adaptations bare out representative objectification of disabled people in examples such as "Of Mice and Men", "Moby Dick", "Treasure Island", "Peter Pan", "The Hunchback of Notre Dame", "Phantom of the Opera", "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde",

“My Left Foot”, “A Christmas Carol”, and so many more. (Bogdan et al., 1982)

### **Disability and the News Media**

As Tom Shakespeare said of the cinematic representation of disabled people, “Their particular impairment is made the most important thing about the person” (Shakespeare, 1999: 164). This is also an accurate statement for the manner in which news media presents stories regarding disabled people.

In the case of news media, it is the journalists and editors who make a judgement on what is an ‘important’ story; which one gets reported and which ones get published or ‘aired’. Their main concern is what will be of interest to the largest number of audience members and they believe this to be the most “... exciting, intriguing and even exotic” they can find (Postman and Powers, 1992: 24). Stories with an impaired central or peripheral character are therefore considered desirable. Stories involving a disabled character are presented from the perspective of the impairment being the central theme with “...the tendency to exaggeration and romanticization of disability”

(Shakespeare, 1994: 284). The sensationalism around the disabled character's impairment becomes the story. The opportunity for any political or non-disablement aspect of the story to appear is therefore minimal or non-existent. "Media treatments depoliticize struggles of disabled people by always taking an individualized perspective, focusing on disability as personal misfortune" (Shakespeare, 1994: 284).

"The complementary image of the pitiful disabled is grounded in a process of objectification, whereby disabled people become the personification of their impairments" (Kama, 2003: 4).

In **1988** a Discussion Paper was released by the Status of Disabled Persons Secretariat, Department of the Secretary of State Canada entitled "Worthless or Wonderful: The Social Stereotyping of Persons With Disabilities". The paper was based on a contracted study to examine the "... social stereotyping of persons with disabilities" (Status of Disabled Persons Secretariat, 1988: ii) in media and to further explore stereotyping of disabled people through the "...

distorted perceptions of myths which may arise in the public education system due to the absence or segregation of disabled children from their able-bodied peers” (Ibid.). The findings of this study included the following:

- Able-bodied people experience considerable fear, pity, ignorance and outmoded perceptions with respect to disability
- Disabled people experience feelings of being labeled or ignored, as children and/or adults
- Almost unanimous support is evident for voluntary guidelines against stereotyping
- Near-unanimous support was shown for developing alternatives to television fund-raising telethons
- Most disabled persons believe that stereotyping in the public schools is part of the problem, either because of ignorance or segregation or both
- Although physical barrier reductions have received considerable attention, change has not yet been seriously addressed (Status of Disabled Persons Secretariat, 1988: pp. ii-iii)

Eighteen years later, in **2006**, Human Resources and Development Canada released a booklet entitled “A Way with Words and Images: Suggestions for the portrayal of people with disabilities”. It contained information, recommendations and practical suggestions on how to fairly, accurately and respectfully create media content of people with disabilities.

“Attitudes can be the most difficult barrier people with disabilities face in achieving full integration, acceptance, and participation in society. Since words are a mirror of society’s attitudes and perceptions, we should all put great thought into how we present information about people with disabilities, to help overcome negative attitudes and shape positive ones” (Human Resources and Development Canada, 2006: 1)

## **Violence and Disability in the Media**

“All physical acts of violence involve an invasion and disruption of the bodily or psychological well-being of the person under attack. The person affected does not consent to the acts and is treated as an object or an inferior, not as an equal. Frequently, the abuser is in a position of power, trust or authority” (Roeher Institute, 1995:p. 55).

The impact of violent abuse, beyond the physical repercussions, on the lives of its recipients is far-reaching and long lasting. Its impact can affect self-esteem, self-confidence, an increased vulnerability to further acts of violence and a strong sense of loss of control (Roeher Institute, 1995). The locus for the vast amount of violent abuse directed towards impaired people has traditionally and historically been found within the walls of the residential setting or the family home. Here, the abuse is hidden away from public view without monitoring or control. Its existence is kept from the public. Now, it is more likely that abuse of the impaired will find its way to the public arena through the media channels, albeit they are infrequent and ever so brief. For a story with a ‘disability and violence’ theme to experience news media longevity it must, in the idiom of the media

business, 'have legs'. It appears that the story must be shocking, outrageous or prurient to hold an audience and an editors' attention. Two examples of such 'high profile' cases are *Robert Latimer's* 'euthanasia' killing of his impaired fourteen-year-old daughter Tracy (O'Malley et al., 2003), and the murder of Leon Klinghoffer by four Palestinian militants on the cruise ship *Achille Lauro* (Wikipedia contributors, 2007). Both of these stories garnered much media and attention. Due either to the flagitiousness of the story in the Klinghoffer case, and the challenge of accepted moral or religious codes in both cases, they maintained a longevity of commentary. These stories generated much public and media attention, opinion and debate.

The Latimer case generated heated debates and commentaries, focusing particularly on the euthanasia debate/defence (Robert Latimer.Net, 2007; Kunc & Van der Klift, 2007; Council of Canadians with Disabilities, 2007). Religious groups were outraged, disability groups were outraged, parents were outraged, but in the end Robert Latimer was sentenced to a 10 year jail term. He will be "... eligible for full parole on Dec. 8, 2010" (Canadian Press, 2006). A Canadian



poll taken six years after Tracey Latimer died resulted in finding that “Three Quarters (73%) of Canadians Believe Robert Latimer Ended His Daughter’s Life Out of Compassion and Should Receive a More Lenient Sentence” (Ipsos News Center, 1999: none).

In the Klinghoffer case, which is still commemorated more than twenty plus years after it occurred (Anti-Defamation League, 2005), the fact that Leon Klinghoffer had experienced a stroke and used a wheelchair for mobility at the time of his shooting was over-shadowed by this event being presented as a terrorist and anti-Semitic act and that the victim was an American. The fact that Klinghoffer was impaired, murdered in public and thrown overboard, along with his wheelchair, is used to add to the evil of his murderers’ despicable and loathsome behaviour, rather than being presented as an act of violence against an impaired person. “Both film and television have also employed the metaphor of the disabled as helpless victim. For example, roughing up a cripple or a blind man is a device used to show a villain as a particularly evil person” (Dahl, 1987: 69). In the end the Leon and Marilyn Klinghoffer Memorial Foundation with the Anti-Defamation League was created using a financial settlement

resulting from a lawsuit against the P.L.O. The importance of Klinghoffer's nationality and his religion superseded his status as a disabled person as the major issues of public and media concern surrounding his murder. Still, the fact of his impairment and use of a wheelchair was present in every full retelling of his murder.

Even though the number of reports that are covered by the media detailing physical abuse has increased and involves those with a variety of impairments, there doesn't appear to be any large public demand for this to cease, except in the most extreme and widely covered 'high profile' media stories. In the instances of lesser known cases such as the stabbing murder of 'mentally challenged' Kenny Gibson (CBC News, 2007) or the 'murder-suicide' of 'mentally disabled' Reese Baulne and his parents, Maurice and Belva (LifeSite, 2002) cause only momentary media stirs for those not directly involved. In the media, the impact of these events and stories is sharp but short. Any lasting impact on the issue appears negligible.

Although most able-bodied individuals would present as 'horrified' at the suggestion that violence towards disabled people was in any way

societally condoned, and though they voice loud protest when the issue appears in the media, finding any ongoing movement for change is minimal. Granted there are grass roots movements showing consistent and admirable efforts to initiate change and/or to keep the story alive, both pro and con in the case of Robert Latimer, but the effect on the issue, the results of their efforts is unremarkable (Marlowe's Shade, 2005; Robert Latimer.Net, 2007; American Memorial Site, 2007; Anti-Defamation League, The, 2005). "It would be fair to say that silent acceptance of violence and abuse of disabled people is more common than activism against it" (Sherry, 2000: none).

## **Conclusion**

The media has a direct influence on cultural attitudes and beliefs regarding impaired people through its repetition of the negative stereotypes of disabled people, often depicting them in the form of symbolic or metaphorical objects. The use of disabled people in news media stories most often presents the story as an impairment-focused piece using the impairment to enhance the story's sensationalism and therefore audience appeal. The reality is that the

more shocking, outrageous or prurient the story's facts are the greater chance it will 'have legs'.

The survey questionnaire results presented in the following chapter outlines impaired people's perspective on how the news media portrays disabled people and disablement issues, plus offering ways in which news media could improve these presentations.

## Chapter five: **Survey Questionnaire**

*“... a caregiver...it was a kid, and they were pretty rough with one of the residents, but most people don't have the strength to say anything, they're afraid.”*

**Jeanette**, regarding violence in the institution where she used to reside

### **Introduction**

A quantitative survey questionnaire was administered to a small, selected group of disabled people to generate data regarding their opinions regarding violence, disability and news media.

### **Survey Administration**

The survey questionnaire was administered October 12<sup>th</sup>, 2007 in the boardroom of the British Columbia Coalition of People with Disabilities (Appendix Two) commencing at 11:15 a.m. and ending at approximately 1:30 p.m.

### **Questionnaire Group Profile**

The group consisted of 7 individuals, three women and four men. All participants were members of the BCCPD, an organization who's stated '... mandate is to raise public and political awareness around issues of concern to disability communities and to create change

(Appendix Two). With the participants being members of BCCPD they were by circumstance considered to be more politically aware of disablement issues and politics.

The informants were asked for three pieces of personal information to be used for cross-variable tabulations (see Table One)

Questionnaire Participant Profiles (Table One)

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Impairment (Specific)</b>	<b>Impairment (Type)</b>	<b>Impairment (Term)</b>
Jeanette	Mobility	Polio	55yrs
Lucy	Mobility Communications	Cerebral Palsy	Life Long
Troy	Sensory	Visual & Epilepsy	Life Long
Bernie	Mobility	Multiple Sclerosis	35yrs
David	Mobility	ALD	23yrs
Rob	Sensory	Visual	Life Long
Tom	Mobility	Muscular Dystrophy	Life Long

The nature of the impairments represented were a mix of sensory and mobility, two sensory related impairments and five mobility impairments. The participant's individual terms of impairment were substantial, ranging from 23 years to lifelong. This greater tenure gave these participants a more protracted experience as, and perspective on, living as disabled individuals. It should also be noted

that the two participants with sensory impairments were a domestic couple.

### Media and Disability Questions

(A complete copy of the 'Media and Disability Questions' portion of the questionnaire is available in Appendix Two: Section Four)

- 1. In your opinion what are the most common news media story themes or topics published or broadcast regarding disabled people? (*You may choose more than one answer*)**

**Media and Disability Responses (Table Two)**

Answer Choices	Female	Male	TOTAL
a. Charity Appeals	3	4	7
b. Disability Organizations	0	1	1
c. Disabled Sports	1	2	3
c. Disabled Women	0	1	1
d. Education	0	1	1
e. Employment	0	1	1
f. Extraordinary Achievements	2	4	6
g. Medical	1	2	3
h. Mistreatment	1	2	3
i. Overcoming Adversity	1	3	4
j. 'Super Cripples'	1	1	2
k. Violence	0	1	1
m. Others:	0	0	0

The survey showed strong results for 'Charity Appeals' being the most common news media story theme. These formal charity pleas most often show disabled people (usually children) as needing, or as recipients of, charity. The core appeal of these charity pleas for monetary subvention is to generate feelings of pity in the able-bodied, encouraging them to engage in free and generous benefaction (Barnes, 1992). There is a plethora of charity organization associated with various impairments such as March of Dimes, Easter Seals and the Muscular Dystrophy Association along with numerous others large and small. For many of them, their fund raising strategies and campaigns have been publicly criticized as patronizing and stigmatizing, by the very people they claim to be helping (Johnson, 1992).

- 2. In your opinion what are the most common way(s) that disabled people are presented in news media stories?  
(You may choose more than one answer\*)**

**Media and Disability Responses (Table Three)**

<b>Answer Choices</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>
a. as an Object of Ridicule	1	0	1
b. as Atmosphere or	3	0	3



Curio			
c. as a Burden		0	0
d. as Incapable of Participating Fully in Community Life	5	2	3
e. as Normal	0	0	0
f. as Objects of Violence	3	1	2
g. as Pitiable and Pathetic	1	1	0
h. as Sexually Abnormal	0	0	0
i. as Sinister and Evil	0	0	0
j. as Super Cripple	3	1	2
k. as Their Own Worst and Only Enemy	0	0	0

Answer choices have been adapted from Barnes, 1992: pp. 7-18.

In addition to the multiple-choice answers in Table Three, three 'written in' answers: 'Encouraging Stories', 'Inclusive Stories' and 'Charity Case' stories.

Most significant of all the responses was the lack of any responses to choice 'e', disabled people presented in news media 'as normal'. This links directly to the informant's suggestions for news media story improvements that they be 'more honest portrayals, 'show disabled people as intelligent and capable' and to focus the stories on the

'individual', suggesting that disabled people do not see themselves as being represented in a way that they perceive themselves.

**3. Briefly list the items that in your opinion would improve the way in which disabled people are portrayed in the news media?**

The results to this question fell into two distinct categories:

**1. Direct recommendations made to the media producers:**

- a. to be more "knowledgeable about disability issues"
- b. that there be "more disabled media personalities"
- c. that the media "do more research on their stories"

**2. Recommendation regarding media story themes:**

- a. Display a more "honest portrayals of life of disability not 'sugar coated'"
- b. show disabled people as "intelligent and capable of holding down a job (hardworking and a taxpayer)"

- c. that “Charity appeals - understanding that disabled people are not charity cases”
- d. to “focus on the individual”
- e. to see “disability Issues presented positively”
- f. to decrease the ‘Super Cripple’ theme (locally too much attention on Rick Hansen\* and Sam Sullivan\*\*)

Participant recommendations displayed a marked dissatisfaction in the way that disabled persons were portrayed by the news media.

The first recommendation category points out participant’s beliefs that the news media isn’t knowledgeable about disability issues and that the stories aren’t researched thoroughly enough, ergo the stories have errors that make them misrepresentative of disabled people and their issues.

The second category shows the participants belief that news media story themes don’t show the reality of life as a disabled person and the fact that they are bright, employed and are capable of having a positive and successful life that contributes to society. The focus of news media stories on disabled people as ‘Super Cripples’ presents

unreasonable expectations on the 'average' disabled individual, and being presented as a homogeneous group was also seen as a detrimental representation.

3. Briefly describe a memorable 'good news story' and particularly 'bad news story' where the story's main character(s) involved a disabled person(s).

**Good News Stories:**

- a. Rick Hansen\* (3 entries)
- b. Terry Fox\*\*\*\* (2 entries)
- c. Local Handy Dart and Transit Reform (1 entry)
- d. Stephen Hawking (1 entry)
- e. Can't Think of One (1 entry)

Rick Hansen (SCI) and Terry Fox (Cancer related single leg amputee) were the two most popular answers to this question. Both were disabled athletes and raised money through Marathon run and wheel across Canada and around the world respectively. Both received massive news media coverage in Canada and both were

based in British Columbia during these feats. Rick Hansen did complete his 'Wheels in Motion' tour to raise money for spinal cord research. Terry Fox could not complete his 'Marathon of Hope' designed to raise money for cancer research due to a recurrence of cancer that eventually caused Fox's death a little over ten months later. These individuals still maintain enormous media profiles in both the province of British Columbia and throughout Canada.

**Bad News Story:**

- a. Robert Latimer\*\*\*\*\* Euthanasia Story (3 entries)
- b. Steve Fonyo\*\*\* (bad treatment by the press) (2 entries)
- c. The theft of a hearing aid (1 entry)
- d. Home Support User Fees Increasing (1 entry)

The euthanasia killing of Tracy Latimer by her father Robert was a ubiquitous and long lasting news media story throughout Canada (O'Malley, 2003: web). Few if any disability organizations support euthanasia. Dr. Gregor Wolbring puts the reason succinctly that the able-bodied desire to employ euthanasia, "... is about fear. It is about prejudice. It is about negative perception of a characteristic"

(Wolbring, 1998: web). This story is a significant one in the minds of many disabled Canadians.

**5. Briefly describe what is your first or most remarkable memory of a disabled person in the media?** (Kama, 2004: p. 452)

- a. Terry Fox\*\*\*\* (6 entries)
- b. Helen Keller (1 entry)
- c. Roosevelt (1entry)

Terry Fox is a national hero in Canada with his attempt to cross Canada ending with the reoccurrence of the cancer that caused his initial leg amputation. He died the 28<sup>th</sup> of June, 1981 at the age of 22. He is immortalized across Canada in statues, on coins, as the name of parks, schools and a mountain. To find Terry Fox as the most cited remarkable news story is almost expected given the location of the survey, Fox's home province of British Columbia.

## **Violence and Disability Scenarios Questions**

The design of the Violence and Disability Scenarios portion of the questionnaire (Appendix Two: Section Three) presented, in a declining degree of brutality and savagery, scenarios describing violence perpetrated on disabled people. The severity of these acts ranged from a premeditated assassination to verbal abuse directed towards a disabled person.

This approach was designed to specifically examine what constitutes 'violence' towards disabled people in the opinion of impaired people. After the researchers reading of each scenario aloud the participants were asked 'Are the following scenarios examples of violence perpetrated against a disabled person?' The possible answer choices to the question asked of each scenario were 'yes, no or unsure'.

The response was that 87 out of a possible 105 (83%) of the responses found that the 15 scenarios were examples of violence towards a disabled person (Table Four). 17% did not agree or were unsure. There were eight scenarios with all informants agreeing that

specific scenarios were examples of violence, scenarios 3 & 7 (the murder of a cognitively impaired man and a disabled person being called crude names) and all of the scenarios (10 thru 15) where the disabled person in the scenario was described as being a “resident of an institution”. Possible reasons for these strong responses could be increased knowledge of the realities of institutionalization either through direct knowledge or earned knowledge. Another possible source of these responses is informant apprehension of being institutionalized later in their lives. Without further investigation these possibilities are conjecture.

The Robert Latimer scenario received 6 out of the possible seven that it was an example of ‘violence’ against a disabled person.

**Violence and Disability Scenarios Responses (Table Four)**

<b>QUESTION</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>UNSURE</b>
1.	3	4	0
2.	5	1	1
3.	7	0	0
4.	6	1	0
5.	5	0	2
6.	4	0	3
7.	7	0	0
8.	2	3	2
9.	6	1	0



10.	7	0	0
11.	7	0	0
12.	7	0	0
13.	7	0	0
14.	7	0	0
15.	7	0	0
TOTAL	87 (83%)	10 (9.5%)	8 (7.5%)

When the responses to the violence scenarios were cross-tabulated with the informants' gender variables (Table Five) and corrected for the 4 to 3 ratio of male participants over female participants, the total gender responses become almost equal.

#### Violence and Disability Scenarios Responses (Table Five)

QUESTION	FEMALE (3)			MALE (4)		
	YES	NO	UNSURE	YES	NO	UNSURE
1.	1	2	0	2	2	0
2.	2	1	0	3	0	1
3.	3	0	0	4	0	0
4.	3	0	0	3	1	0
5.	2	0	1	3	0	1
6.	2	0	1	2	0	2
7.	3	0	0	4	0	0
8.	0	2	1	2	1	1
9.	3	0	0	3	1	0
10.	3	0	0	4	0	0
11.	3	0	0	4	0	0
12.	3	0	0	4	0	0
13.	3	0	0	4	0	0
14.	3	0	0	4	0	0
15.	3	0	0	4	0	0
TOTAL	37	5	3	50	5	5

	(35.2%)	(4.7%)	(2.9%)	(47.6%)	(4.7%)	(4.7%)
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The cross tabulation of the violence scenarios and impairment types was found to be problematic due to the fact that 5 of the 7 informants had mobility related impairments and only two had sensory impairments. Even with a statistical correction for this fact, along with the small sample size, the results would be weak.

Cross tabulation utilizing the length of impairment variable was also found to be problematic, as all informants' lengths of impairments were significant. Four of the informants had been impaired since birth, another for 55 years and the remaining participants for 35 and 23 years. All measured terms of informant impairment were deemed so long as to be insignificant in their influence on the data frequency.

## **Conclusion**

The survey data confirmed that disabled people see 'violence' in an expanded definition that would be considered less traditional by able-bodied individuals, particularly as it involves the abuse of power. The informants also saw the news media presenting disablement story themes most often as part of a charity appeal, as extraordinary or

overcoming adversity and being presented as “Curios” or as “Incapable of Participating Fully in Community Life”.

The informants also expressed displeasure with the way disabled people and disability issues were presented in news media stories.

They produced various suggestions as to how disablement could be more accurately portrayed; such as the news media performing more in-depth research involving stories about disablement and displaying more knowledge when presenting these stories.

#### NOTES

\***Rick Hansen** is “... a Canadian paraplegic athlete and activist for people with spinal cord injuries” (Wikipedia contributors, 2007n: unpagged)

\*\***Sam Sullivan** is currently “...the Mayor of Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada” (Wikipedia contributors, 2007o: unpagged)

\*\*\***Steve Fonyo** “... a Canadian man who lost his left leg to cancer and embarked on a cross-Canada marathon to raise funds for cancer research ... In later years he suffered from depression and faced legal problems... ” (Wikipedia contributors, 2007l: unpagged).

\*\*\*\***Terry Fox** (July 28, 1958 – June 28, 1981). A Canadian from the province of British Columbia he became famous for his attempted cross-Canada run to raise money for cancer research. Due to a cancer-related amputation of one leg, Fox ran using a prosthesis. He is considered one of the country's greatest heroes (Wikipedia contributors, 2007m: unpagged)

\*\*\*\*\***Robert Latimer** , a Canadian farmer, was convicted of murder for the killing of his daughter Tracy. The case sparked a national controversy on the definition and ethics of euthanasia. (Wikipedia contributors, 2007k: unpagged)

## Chapter six: **Media Reporting of Violence and Disability**

*‘Attitudes, beliefs, and misconceptions of society constitute a major barrier for people with disabilities.’*

- **Marilyn Dahl**, Canadian advocate and organizer for the hard of hearing, founder member of the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association, recipient of numerous awards for her efforts as a volunteer, academic and advocate

### **Introduction**

The focus of this chapter will be the content analysis based exploration of the news media coverage of an alleged incident of violence directed towards a man with a sensory impairment. The analysis approach will use the collection of keyword numerical frequency to identify major issues presented in the text of the reports. Content analysis will also be used to both “Describe & make inferences about the characteristics of ...” (Wikipedia contributors, 2007r: unpagged) the news reports. Though this may appear overly simplistic, it is more than capable of producing rich and revealing insight and information, and can prove itself quite difficult “... for even someone trained in media content analysis to see the nuances of stereotypes about disability in news stories” (Haller, 1999:pp. 6-7).

## **News Media Story Detailed Overview**

The 54-year-old man who was allegedly involved in this incident with SkyTrain police is legally blind and uses an accredited 'Seeing Eye' dog to enhance his mobility. The basics of the reported event are as follows: that on February 22 the man was riding the "SkyTrain" ["The SkyTrain is a two-line urban mass transit system in Metro Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada" (Wikipedia contributors, 2007q: unpagged)] when he was asked by two SkyTrain police officers to provide proof that his dog was an accredited guide dog and allowed to ride on SkyTrain. He showed 'his blind person's bus pass ' and left the train car. Allegedly the SkyTrain police followed him off the car again requesting that he show his dog's accreditation, physically accosted the man outside the SkyTrain car, threatening to have his dog taken to 'the pound unless he left the SkyTrain station immediately. As he continued to leave the SkyTrain station was walking down a flight of stairs he swore at the officers. The officers then, allegedly, twisted his arm behind his back, placed him in a chokehold and placed a hand over his mouth until he passed out falling down the rest of the flight of stairs and receiving a gash to his leg in the process.

The man filed an official complaint with The British Columbia Office of the Police Complaint Commissioner (OPCC). The OPCC "... is an independent agency established under the *Police Act*. We are responsible for overseeing complaints against municipal police to ensure they are handled fairly and impartially" (OPCC, 2007: unpagged).

On March 3, 2006 two video reports were aired (CBC and CTV) regarding the story (Table One) and two newspaper reports were published (Table Two: one by the Province (Vancouver daily) with 3 Letters to the Editor (LttE) generated and the Times Colonist (Victoria daily) with 0 LttE generated. The delay of 9 days between the occurrence of the event, February 22, 2006, and its first airing and publication are not explained but possible explanations are that the news media outlets had the story but intentionally delayed it, or that they were unaware of the story until the man involved contacted the news media outlets and relayed it to them. The latter seems the more likely.

Network Television Data (Table One)

<b>Television Station</b>	<b>March 3, 2006</b>
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CBC	1 Video
CTV	1 Video

Daily Newspaper Data (Table Two)

<b>Newspaper</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>LttE</b>
Province	1	March 3, 2006	3
Times-Colonist	1	March 3, 2006	0

There were no follow-ups to the story from any of the news media outlets that first published and aired it in the days or weeks after it first appeared. Over six months later a follow-up to the event was published in the Georgia Straight (Vancouver weekly) generating one LttE.

Weekly Newspaper Data (Table Three)

<b>Newspaper</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>LttE</b>
Georgia Straight	1	September 14, 2006	1

Why does news media publish and air “the kinds of news that doesn’t stay news?” (Postman and Powers, 1992: 22). “One cynical answer is that they are there because viewers take comfort in the realization that *they* have escaped disaster” (Ibid).

### **Keyword Frequency**



Researcher selected keywords were used to search all the print articles and video report transcripts. A count was collected of the number of times each keyword appeared for, “According to Zipf's Law, the assumption is that words and phrases mentioned most often are those reflecting important concerns in every communication” (Wikipedia contributors, 2007r: unpagged)

Keyword Frequency Data (Table Four)

<b>Keyword</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Keyword</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Blind	27	Roughed up	3
Assault	9	Harassed	2
Claims	8	Attackers	1
Alleged	7	Agitated	1
Abuse	5	Inappropriate	1
Threatened	4	Victim	1
Disabilities	3	Violence	0
Impaired	3	Disabled	0

Utilizing the principal of Zipf’s Law, the overall most important concern throughout all the reportage was the issue of the alleged victim’s blindness, his impairment. As mentioned in chapter four, many news stories about disabled people become “impairment-centric” as they are reported. This allows the impairment to supercede the person in the story (Shakespeare, 1999). The next most frequent keywords occurring overall were ‘assault’, ‘claims’ and

'alleged'. This can be used to suggest that though a 'blind' individual was 'assaulted', it is not yet fact and remains a 'claim' of an alleged event lacking any factual credibility.

### **Global Observations and Interpretations**

A number of issues arose within the story content reportage that showed themselves to be more global observations about the whole data set than either the print or video media specifically.

The first global observation is the fact that the 'story' did not have a very long or dynamic life. As noted above, the story ran in both print and video for only one day. There was a gap of over seven months before a print follow-up was done in a weekly paper that never actually ran the original. Coupled to this was the fact that the original story generated only three LttE, and of these three only one writer responded as being livid at the treatment the man allegedly received (Appendix One: Section Three). A second writer conveyed more of a concern about the consequence of the alleged confrontation had the TransLink officers been armed, and that they need more training. He showed more of a focus on these two issues than the alleged

behaviour towards the impaired man (Appendix One: Section Four). The final LttE was actually in response to the second LttE (Appendix One: Section Four) defending the TransLink officers' training and emphasizing the need to wait until all sides had been heard before making judgments about events that allegedly took place (Appendix One: Section Five). The point of the story appeared to be on the road to becoming lost and it soon appeared that the only person troubled by the alleged violence was the alleged victim himself.

It is additionally of interest that this story overall did not show longevity or receive a strong response, particularly given the fact that it possessed many of the attributes that would make it interesting to the media audience. It possessed elements that were "... exciting, intriguing and even exotic" (Postman and Powers, 1992: 24). But In the end it did not possess 'legs' from either a journalistic or a public perspective to last more than one day, and after a flurry of reports that all occurred in one day, it quickly disappeared without any form of story resolution.

The second global observation was that the story was, as mentioned earlier, very 'impairment-focused' without conveying any true experience of disability. The opportunity was not taken within the reporting to educate the audience on related disability issues such as acts of violence, vulnerability to being targets of violence, or other examples of violence towards an impaired person. "Disabled persons depictions in the news media are most often apolitical by emphasizing impairment ..." (Darke, 2004: 104).

The third global observation is that the alleged victim is portrayed as what Darke (2004) would call a normalized "good cripple" (p. 101). In the March 3, 2006 Province reporting he is described as the holder of a decade long status position as a member of a Board of Directors, a selfless raiser of money for charity and also employed and therefore not a dependant 'bad cripple'.

"Conway has been a board member of the B.C. Coalition of People with Disabilities for 11 years. He is also vice-president of the Sunshine Coast White Cane Club and

has raised nearly \$5,000 for Canine Vision Canada in Ontario.

He is well-known on the Sunshine Coast, where he sells hand-woven cane chairs at farmer's markets.” (Appendix One: Section Two)

This combined description lies somewhere between three of the stereotypical representations of disability that Barnes (1992) describes, ‘Super Cripple’, ‘Normal’ and ‘Object of Violence’. Conway is described as living a life not unlike what would be considered ‘normal’ by able-bodied standards (Normal) and yet it is extraordinary (Super Cripple) when measured by disability standards. There is still further stereotyping as he is an ‘Object of Violence’ which besides “... contributing to and underlining the mistaken belief that disabled people are totally helpless and dependant such imagery helps perpetuate violence” (Barnes, 1992: 6)

## **Video Specific Observations and Interpretations**

The two video reports allotted an inordinate amount of video time to a display of Conway walking with his guide dog, chopping wood, climbing stairs at his home, as well as full body shots of him standing in his yard. The CBC video showed Conway in this manner for nearly half of the CBC report time, 1 minute out of the total 2 minutes and 20 second length, and in the CTV video report, for 40 seconds out of the 2 minute and 27 second run time. There appeared to be no relevance to these shots beyond the role of having his impairment “put on display” and allowing the able-bodied in the audience to do what they may not attempt in reality and that is to be able to ‘stare at the blind man’. The power of the gaze to objectify (Shakespeare, 1994) is also able to turn “... the disabled object into a grotesque sight.” (Ghai, 2002: 7). “The ability to scrutinize is premised on power” (Coward, 1984: 75, cited in Shakespeare, 1994: 288)

Additionally, in regard to the video reporting, is the fact that the CBC reporter incorrectly refers to Conway as ‘Michael’ when in actuality his correct first name is ‘William’. The reporter also refers to his guide dog twice as ‘Doctor Max’ when the dog’s name is ‘Doctor M.C.’.

“Meet Michael(sic) Conway’s loyal companion Doctor Max(sic). For Conway the six-year-old shepherd is more than man’s best friend, he’s a lifeline.”

These are major story facts and making errors on these places the validity of what other information the reporter gives the audience in question. It also places into question the degree of value the reporter gives to this and other disablement stories.

In all of the reporting not one of the stories reflected any reality about the experience of disability beyond the platitudes of his near ‘normality’ such as “There’s really nothing William Conway can’t do. He chops wood, even though he’s blind.” (CTV Video) and “Conway has been blind since the age eight but with the help of a Seeing Eye dog he gets along just fine until now” (CBC Video).

Overall the video story’s visuals showed Conway either alone or with his guide dog. He was never shown with another human being. The assumption is that the video footage was shot intentionally as a ‘B-

roll' (videos shot specifically for voice-over). Nonetheless the impression this gives is one of being disconnected and isolated. Adding to this sense was that Conway's audio was a monologue of him telling the story with no questions offered to him. The other predominate voice was the reporter's voice over, disembodied and disconnected from Conway. No other people appeared visually in the video except for the 'experts' and their one-sentenced comments.

The story was told without any social or historical perspective or relevance, with no mention made regarding violence and disability, its cause, frequency or impact on disabled people. It was as if the incident was a one-off.

### **Newspaper Specific Observations and Interpretations**

There was only one follow-up piece published on September 14, 2006 in The Georgia Straight, a Vancouver weekly newspaper. The piece generated one LtE in the next issue, September 21, 2006. Part of the follow-up included the following text ...



“Ken Hardie, spokesperson for the Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority” commonly known as TransLink” said he couldn't speak about Conway's complaint but pointed out that the alleged February 22 incident wasn't the first encounter between the Sechelt man and the SkyTrain police.

“He has not responded favourably in the past for requests for identification of his dog,” Hardie said in a phone interview.” (Appendix One: Section One)

This appears as only a lightly veiled attempt to both discredit Conway and justify the alleged actions towards him through the Police public relations tactic of attempting to vilify the victim. This strategy is being used more and more often by police media relation departments through the use of phrases such as “known to the police” or “members have had contact with Mr. X in the past”. These statements are used to raise questions about the validity of the alleged victims claims.

Ken Hardie's comment also begs the question as to why, if the TransLink police had been in contact with Conway in the past regarding his guide dog's accreditation, had they not resolved the issue? If the issue did remain unresolved, then why had all TransLink officers not been made aware of the issue and a unified approach to a resolution been employed?

The follow-up piece covered both the Conway story and coverage of the arming of the TransLink police. The LtE that followed spoke more about the governance of the TransLink police and the potential cost in legal damages of their violent actions.

## **Conclusion**

Several news media stories that were generated in regards to the reporting of an alleged incident of violence against an impaired person were collected and viewed. The story pieces were first analyzed using a keyword frequency examination based on Zipf's Law, which revealed overwhelmingly that the most important concerns in the overall reporting was with the central character's impairment, he is blind. Lesser concern was given to the fact that

there had been an assault and that the assault was unconfirmed (alleged). The reporting was then analyzed using an observation and interpretation approach revealing global and video and newspaper specific results including a marked lack of either context or knowledge regarding violence against disabled people.

## Chapter seven – Summary and Conclusions

*"I'd like to say it's pleasure to meet you, but I won't know that until I read what you write."*

"Stomping" Tom Connors,  
Canadian singer, addressing an  
interviewer, Quote in The Toronto  
Star 27 May 1990

### Summary

Impaired individuals are far more likely to become victims of violence than their able-bodied brethren (Rioux, et al., 1997b; Roeher Institute, 1993; Sobsey; 1995; Sorensen, 2002; Wolbring, 1994). Yet, given this fact, the story of violence against impaired individuals has been hidden, ignored or denied and as Sorensen (2002) says, "Crime against people with substantial disabilities ... remains largely invisible and unaddressed" (p. 1). The most egregious fact is that the violence continues.

Reasons and excuses are plentiful for the continuation of this targeted violence. One reason in particular is the role that society has assigned its impaired members. A role defined as holding lesser value and status than non-impaired members. The mechanisms that reinforce these societal attitudes and beliefs held about its disabled

members include mass media and its repetition of this negative disability imagery.

Mass media, with its far-reaching influence on societal norms and standards, holds great sway in maintaining the established and accepted definitions of what a society holds to be normal, most often by presenting what is abnormal. News media is particularly powerful in this regard. It is driven predominately by financial concerns, it is almost ever-present and it conveys to the public the belief that it is telling the truth. News media is a potent disseminator of disability stereotypes.

The devalued status that society affords its impaired members presents them as less worthy of the support and protection expected and received by non-disabled members, resulting in impaired individuals being more vulnerable to violence. The news media is complicit in this vulnerability to violence through its reiteration of these negative stereotypes.

“Although there are no specific data showing attitude change in response to media communication, people tend to believe that the manner in which characters are portrayed is important. Characters presented on screen are sociocultural stereotypes designed to appeal to the majority of viewers, and reflect widely held values (albeit mostly American). It seems apparent that the repeated presentation of images in an acceptable and palatable manner will result in those images becoming a typification of everyday existence” (Dahl, 1993: unpagged).

With its research component this study explored the disability, violence and media relationship through both a survey questionnaire and the context analysis of a disability and violence news story. The questionnaire results brought with them an increased significance in that the questionnaire’s participants were themselves disabled. This gave the data a more meaningful connotation through originating directly from those who have been, or have the potential to be, recipients of this violence.

The result of the survey showed that disabled people ...

1. view what constitutes violence towards them in a less standard manner and with a broader definition than do able-bodied people.
2. view media presentation of impaired people critically and have recommendations as to how improvements to their media representation can be improved
3. view that disabled people are most commonly presented in the news media “as Incapable of Participating Fully in Community Life”

The analysis of the news reporting of an alleged act of violence perpetrated against an impaired individual resulted in finding ...

1. That news media tends to report from an impairment-centric perspective rather than reporting on the impaired individual and their issue, event or viewpoint.

2. That the use of negative disability imagery is still prevalent in the news media reporting of stories involving impairment and disablement issues.
3. That the news media presents very little in the way of in-depth and informed reporting of disability related stories.

“Crucially, what disabled audiences want is an acknowledgement of the fact that disability is a part of daily life and for the media to reflect that reality, removing the insulting label of ‘disabled’ and making it ordinary” (Ross, 1997: 676, cited in Roper, 2003: unpagged).

### **Practical Steps to Reduce Violence**

Given the facts of disability and violence and the increased susceptibility and diminished societal protection and support it is prudent to explore what practical measures can those in the disability community take to mitigate violence direct at them.

Lydia Zijdel (1999) believes that a goal for the complete eradication of violence towards disabled people is not a realistic one but that a



significant reduction is an attainable goal. The empowerment of disabled individuals to counter balance the power differential between abuser and the abused is key, just as it is for non-disabled members of society, in reducing risk and preventing violence. She suggests that ...

“The basic contents of violence prevention education for disabled people are basically the same as they are for all members of society:

1. Personal safety skills training
2. Individual rights education
3. Assertiveness and self-esteem training
4. Communication skills training
5. Social skills training
6. Sex education
7. Self-defence training” (Zijdel, 1999: 24)

### **News Media Recommendations**

As the study’s questionnaire results showed, disabled people believe that news media needs to be better researched and presented when

disability issues are reported on. Disability organizations also need to make themselves more knowledgeable about the politics and workings of the news media.

For instance, disability organizations should establish a strong media savvy component to their organization to balance, and 'push back' against when necessary, the news media's power and influence over the manner in which disability reports are published and broadcast. They can also generate and present their own stories to the news media rather than waiting for the news media to come to them. The establishment of a list of disability experts that the media could call on when a disability issue story is being reported, would place accurate and timely information in these stories. Creating a news media vehicle of their own that could, in a more limited way, present disability issues under their own control. (Haller, 1999)

### **Self Definition through Disability Cultural**

As disabled people become more active and politicized (Enns, 1991: forward in Barnes, 1991: iii) it becomes understandable that they would begin to identify and define their own image initiating the

erosion of the stereotypical images that society has created for them. Disability Culture is the vehicle for the creation of an accurate image and its dissemination to the wider, public world replacing the myriad representations of misinformed, inaccurate and negative beliefs and attitudes that oppress disabled people and make them more vulnerable to violence.

### **The Arrival of Clara**

Albercht Durer's Rhinoceros was "...regarded as a true representation of a rhinoceros into the late 18th century" (Wikipedia contributors, 2007c: unpagged). Though there were four other Rhinoceros' that briefly visited Europe it was the arrival of 'Clara' in 1741 and her 17 years of touring that gave a larger public an opportunity to view a 'real' rhinoceros. The public learned the truth about the Rhinoceros from 'Clara'. Unlike the misinformed image that they'd been told was the truth, they could now create an image based on truth and reality.

As with 'Clara' the key to establishing an accurate image of disability and disabled people is the education and awareness that comes from

more exposure of the able-bodied more often to disabled people and their lives. Interpersonal contact may be the key as so many 'barriers' limit contact with the able-bodied, and the mass media is the only cultural representation the public sees. (Haller, 1999; Environics Research Group, 2004)

## **Conclusion**

Social research, as an examination of our shared world, our shared society and our shared lives, can only be, at its utmost, a limited look at a moment in time, a 'snapshot'. It is unlikely that this dissertation's 'snapshot', with its limited scope and resources will by itself change society in any significant way in regards to violence against impaired people. Still, it is hoped that the information and data collected and presented will add, even in some small way, to the growing body of research that explores and searches for further understanding of this problem and possibly generates ideas for further and future study.

“So if those of us who are disabled live as fully as we can, while being completely conscious of the tragedy of our

situation-this is the possibility when one has an alert  
mind-then somehow we can communicate to others an  
awareness that the value of the human person  
transcends his social status, attributes and possessions  
or his lack of them” (Hunt, 1966: 5).

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## Appendix One: Section One



### News and Views

#### Blind man claims cop abuse

*News and Views By Carlito Pablo*

Publish Date: September 14, 2006



A blind man who claimed that he was assaulted by two SkyTrain police officers is asking what has happened to the complaint he filed.

William Conway told the Georgia Straight that he last received an official update about his case on June 24. "The status is, I don't know," said the Sechelt resident who regularly travels to Vancouver with his guide dog to attend meetings of the BC Coalition of People with Disabilities, where he sits as a board member.

Conway, who has been blind since he was eight, said nothing could have prepared him for the alleged February 22 assault following a night- time exchange of words with two SkyTrain constables at Joyce Station who questioned whether his German shepherd was a certified guide dog.

“They tried to break my wrist. They tried to choke me out of consciousness,” said Conway, who recalled that he passed out for a few seconds and regained awareness after his dog began licking his face. He later found out that he suffered a gash on the leg.

The Conway case is one of eight complaints filed so far against the SkyTrain police, officially known as the Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority Police Service, since the force became Canada's first armed transit police last December.

Deputy police complaints commissioner Bruce Brown advised the Straight that all eight complaints are open and under investigation. Five of these complaints have been for abuse of authority and one each for discreditable conduct, deceit, and neglect of duty; three contained allegations of excessive force.

The Office of the Police Complaint Commissioner is an independent agency tasked with ensuring that the investigation of complaints being undertaken by the internal-affairs or professional-standards unit of the police department involved is done in a fair and impartial manner.

The New Westminster police department investigates complaints against SkyTrain police officers. Sgt. Lori Jackson of the New Westminster police told the Straight that the investigation of Conway's complaint was completed in August and a final report is being prepared.

Margaret Birrell, executive director of the BC Coalition of People With Disabilities, has known Conway for several years and describes him as a “good advocate for the visually impaired”. Birrell said she was at the coalition's office when Conway came in the day after he was allegedly assaulted by the two SkyTrain police officers. “He was shaking, anxious, and agitated,” she said.

“I felt that this was something we have to look into,” Birrell said. Referring to Conway's alleged attackers, she said: “It's an outrageous behaviour. These are supposedly professional staff. When you're supposed to be protecting the public and on public payroll, it is inappropriate.”

Ken Hardie, spokesperson for the Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority “commonly known as TransLink” said he couldn't speak about Conway's complaint but pointed out that the alleged February 22 incident wasn't the first encounter between the Sechelt man and the SkyTrain police.

“He has not responded favourably in the past for requests for identification of his dog,” Hardie said in a phone interview.

As Conway waits for word about his complaint, doubts linger about the wisdom of arming SkyTrain cops.

“The danger associated with carrying firearms has to do with confined quarters in a fast-moving transit,” explained Jason Gratl, president of the B.C. Civil Liberties Association. “A gun is drawn, the crowd panics, somebody pushes, and a shot is fired,”

Gratl, a lawyer, told the Straight that although there have been no reports of a firearm discharge by SkyTrain police, the “danger has not significantly diminished”.

“Six months hasn't changed our mind about this issue,” Gratl said.

Insp. Dan Dureau, who handles media affairs for GVTAPS, dismissed as “unfounded” concerns about transit police bearing guns, although when asked by the Straight if there had been cases when the SkyTrain police drew their guns, he said, “Of course.”

Hardie pointed out that GVTAPS officers have an average of 18 years of police experience as former members of municipal police forces or the RCMP and are “fully trained in the context of operating at a transit system”. He also said that public reception of the arming of transit police has been very positive because it is seen as a deterrent to crimes committed inside and in the vicinity of TransLink facilities.

But Burnaby Coun. Nick Volkow says that people are split 50-50 on the issue and he counts himself firmly on the side of those who oppose having armed police on the transit system. “The risks

far outweigh the benefits,” Volkow told the Straight. “I don't want to wait and wake up to a shooting accident before I speak about this.”

Hardie argued that SkyTrain cops need to have the same tools as other police officers because of their expanded authority to enforce provincial and federal laws and arrest people wanted on outstanding warrants. Compared to their former status as special constables, GVTAPS officers can now operate in the community rather than being restricted to TransLink property, he said.

“They are more effective because they have more authority,” he said. Citing a July 6 report submitted to the TransLink board by GVTAPS chief officer, Bob Kind, Hardie noted that for a six-month period from January to June this year, SkyTrain police “received calls for service” on 25,106 offences ranging from crimes against persons to traffic violations in and outside TransLink facilities.

The same report stated that transit police were involved in 181 narcotics-related arrests and seizures for the same period. The force also served 163 warrants of arrest and conducted 421 joint operations with other police agencies in “such areas as drugs, stolen property, youth crime and safety, and graffiti,” said the report.

Currently, there are 77 sworn police officers of the GVTAPS and “active recruitment is underway to fill police officer vacancies and new 2006 positions,” the report said, adding that the 2006 authorized strength for the police force is 100 officers.

“Approximately \$2.7 million has been incurred to train staff to meet police officer standards, purchase firearms, implement necessary communications infrastructure and purchase new uniforms and equipment,” according to TransLink's 2005 annual report presented to the GVTA board by CEO Pat Jacobsen.

Zailda Chan, an organizer of the activist group Bus Riders Union, told the Straight that the arming of the SkyTrain police is another case of misplaced priorities.



“We need more buses, not guns,” Chan said in a phone interview.

David Eby of the Pivot Legal Society, an advocacy group for the poor, said there was very little public input taken before arming transit constables. “I don't know if there is any benefit to it,” he told the Straight.

## Appendix One: Section Two



### **Blind man: Transit cops assaulted me: Sechelt visitor alleges police roughed him up over his guide dog**

The Province

Friday, March 3, 2006

Page: A4

Section: News

Byline: Matthew Ramsey

Source: The Province

A sightless advocate for the blind claims he was roughed up and verbally abused by two SkyTrain police officers.

"I'd like them to be fired," said 54-year-old **William Conway** of Sechelt. "I'd like to see an assault charge. I don't think they have the right to do this. This should never happen to another blind person ever, ever again."

Conway, who has been blind since he was eight, has filed a formal complaint with the Office of the Police Complaints Commissioner.

"Right now, the New Westminster police department is doing an investigation at the request of [Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority Police Service]," confirmed transit police Staff-Sgt. Al McGregor. The New West department investigates internal matters concerning transit police.

McGregor said the two officers allegedly involved are still on the job, but he declined to comment directly on their experience levels or any other element of the incident.

Conway said the officers threatened to force him off the train on the night of Feb. 22 if he didn't prove to them his guide dog, six-year-old German shepherd Doctor M.C., was allowed on transit. He further alleges the officers never identified themselves.

Guide dogs are allowed on SkyTrain, said TransLink spokesman Ken Hardie, but they have to be properly accredited.

Conway's dog is accredited by Seeing Eye Incorporated out of Morristown N.J., a training facility officially recognized by the B.C. government since 1974.

Conway said he showed his blind person's bus pass at the officer's request then left the train voluntarily at Joyce Station, his dog's harness firmly in hand.

He said the officers again demanded he prove the dog was a working animal. Conway insisted the officers identify themselves and wondered aloud how they could mistake the animal as anything but a seeing-eye dog.

Conway said the police threatened to handcuff him and take Doctor M.C. to the pound unless he left immediately.

Conway claims the officers continued to harangue him as he made his way down the station stairs with Doctor M.C. leading the way. Angry, Conway says he turned and swore.

"After taking two steps down the stairs, my right arm, which was free, was yanked backwards -- a person grabbed my right wrist and physically bent it backwards to cause undue pain and attempt to break it," he alleged in the complaint to the OPCC.

"At the same time, I was put in a choke hold with an arm around my neck to cut off the air supply . . . Then a huge hand went over my mouth and nose to prevent my breathing," the complaint said.

Conway said he then fell and woke up with the dog licking his face. He suffered a large gash on his leg. He was not ticketed.

Bonnie Nelson of the Canadian National Institute for the Blind said guide dogs are free to go anywhere with their master.

"It doesn't have to have a sign saying 'I am a guide dog,' " she said.

While Conway's allegations are out of the ordinary, the CNIB routinely hears from members about problems convincing transit staff that their special passes and ID cards are valid, she said.

McGregor said all transit police are trained to the same level as any other municipal police force.

Conway has been a board member of the B.C. Coalition of People with Disabilities for 11 years. He is also vice-president of the Sunshine Coast White Cane Club and has raised nearly \$5,000 for Canine Vision Canada in Ontario.

He is well-known on the Sunshine Coast, where he sells hand-woven cane chairs at farmer's markets.

[mramsey@png.canwest.com](mailto:mramsey@png.canwest.com)

Illustration:

• Colour Photo: Keith Thirkell, Special to The Province / **William Conway**, with his guide dog, Doctor M.C., shows

the cut on his leg that he suffered during an incident with SkyTrain police at the Joyce station.

Idnumber: 200603030147

Edition: Final

Story Type: News

Length: 596 words

Keywords: SOFTWARE INDUSTRY; ANIMAL ATTACKS;  
DOGS

Illustration Type: Colour Photo

## Appendix One: Section Three



### **Horrific treatment**

The Province

Tuesday, March 7, 2006

Page: A17

Section: Editorial

Byline: Bev Rock

Source: The Province

I am stunned by the horrific treatment of **William Conway** by TransLink police.

Imagine harassing an innocent blind person and assaulting him while walking down the stairs, just because he swore.

At that point, anyone would.

How dare they threaten to arrest him and put his guide dog in the pound!

I cannot miss the irony of all the posters that have been put up to make us feel safe with transit police.

I have little faith in the review, as it will come down to his word against theirs.

Judging by Conway's appearance in the photo, he is not a fancy dresser.

The harassment and assault on this upstanding citizen would not have happened if he was all spiffy with an Armani suit and Gucci shoes.

Bev Rock,

Maple Ridge

Idnumber: 200603070087

Edition: Final

Story Type: Letter

Length: 131 words

## Appendix One: Section Four



### **More training needed**

The Province

Sunday, March 5, 2006

Page: A21

Section: Editorial

Byline: Angelo Gudiel

Source: The Province

The article about the treatment handed out to the blind **William Conway** and his guide dog by SkyTrain police is amazing.

And now we allow these guys to carry guns?

It makes you wonder whether a gun would have been pulled if Conway or his dog had resisted a little bit more.

It also makes you wonder, if transit cops are not well trained at identifying a seeing-eye dog at work, what level of training are they getting as to when to use a gun?

This overreaction shows more training is needed.

Angelo Gudiel, Vancouver

Idnumber: 200603050139

Edition: Final

Story Type: Letter

Length: 95 words



## Appendix One: Section Five



### **Well-trained police**

The Province

Tuesday, March 7, 2006

Page: A17

Section: Editorial

Byline: Jim Vandeborn

Source: The Province

In response to letter writer Angelo Guidel, I was hired by B.C. Transit as a special constable at its inception in 1986, after having served 12 years with the Vancouver police.

At that time, almost everyone hired had served as a policeman from various municipal forces or the RCMP. This eliminates the need for TransLink to incur any costs for training.

I'm sure this practice is still in place today and that the majority of those hired are well-trained and experienced police from other police forces.

As to the treatment of the blind **William Conway**, it's always been my belief that there are two sides to a story. I have only heard one side so far.

Try walking a mile in someone's shoes before being so quick to pass judgment.

Jim Vandeborn,

Harrison Hot Springs

Idnumber: 200603070086

Edition: Final

Story Type: Letter

Length: 135 words

Appendix One: Section Six

TIMES  COLONIST

**Blind man claims officers on SkyTrain roughed him up**

Times Colonist (Victoria)

Friday, March 3, 2006

Page: A5

Section: News

Byline:

Column: Canada Briefing

Dateline: VANCOUVER

Source: CanWest News Service

VANCOUVER - A sightless advocate for the blind claims he was the roughed up and verbally abused by two Vancouver SkyTrain police officers.

In a formal complaint with the Office of the Police Complaints Commissioner, **William Conway**, 54, said the officers threatened to force him off the train on the night of Feb. 22 if he didn't prove to them his guide dog, six-year-old German shepherd Doctor M.C., was allowed to be on transit -- which it is. Conway, who has been blind since age eight, further alleges the officers never identified themselves.

Conway says he showed his blind person's bus pass, then left the train voluntarily at a stop, Doctor M.C.'s harness handle firmly in hand. On the platform, Conway says the officers repeated their demands.

Idnumber: 200603030100

Edition: Final

Story Type: News; Brief

Length: 127 words

## Appendix One: Section Seven



### Letters

End special treatment for transit cops in Police Act

*Letters*

Publish Date: September 21, 2006

Thanks for your thorough update of William Conway's complaint against GVTA Police. Readers of "Blind man claims cop abuse" [Sept. 14-21] might wonder if our transit police are subject to civilian governance, as are police in Vancouver and other municipalities. They are not.

The Police Act forbids the appointment of police to municipal police boards. So B.C.'s 12 municipal and one First Nations police forces are governed by civilian boards. But the transit- police force is not. Police are not only on the board, they're in the majority: four of six transit-police board members are municipal police or RCMP. All were appointed by the ministry of B.C. Solicitor General John Les.

Attorney General Wally Oppal is now working on amendments to the Police Act. He should rewrite the transit-police section so its board includes no police at all.

Incidents like "William Conway's" or the \$40,000 assault judgment in May against transit officer "Walter Rossa" might be prevented if civilians were in charge of transit police.

The judge in a transit rider's lawsuit against Rossa and officer Ken Dorby determined that both men exhibited

“blatant untruthfulness” at trial. At last word, both still work at GVTAPS, and neither has been disciplined.

Perhaps a civilian transit-police board would ensure a higher standard of discipline among its officers.

> Rider Cooney / Vancouver

## Appendix One: Section Eight

CBC News Vancouver – March 03, 2006

Segment Title: “Blind Beating”

Format: Video

Length: 2:20

(Transcript and description of the video)

(News anchor (Ian Hanomansing) standing in front of a large flat-screen monitor. The monitor shows William Conway and his guide dog, Doctor M.C., walking up their driveway towards the camera)

**Ian Hanomansing**: A legally blind man from Sechelt has launched a complaint against the SkyTrain police. He claims they didn't believe his dog was an accredited guide dog and then forced him to leave the SkyTrain and roughed him up. Melanie Nagy has details about the man's complaint.

(Full screen video image of Doctor M.C. running up the porch stairs of Conway's home.)

**William Conway**: That's it ... come on ... that a boy.

**Melanie Nagy**: Meet Michael(sic) Conway's loyal companion Doctor Max(sic). For Conway the six-year-old shepherd is more than man's best friend, he's a lifeline.

(Conway placing a guide harness on Doctor M.C.)

**Melanie Nagy**: Conway has been blind since the age eight but with the help of a Seeing Eye dog he gets along just fine until now.

(Conway and Doctor M.C. descending the porch stairs moving away from the camera then a cut to Conway and Doctor M.C. declining the porch stairs moving towards the camera)

(Head and shoulders shot of Conway speaking. Superimposed at the lower left of the screen, top line: William Conway, second line: (smaller font size): Alleged Victim)

**William Conway:** I've used a dog for almost 30 years and never once have I ever been viciously attacked.

(Two Transit police standing. Camera zooms to a close-up of an officer's holstered side arm. )

**Melanie Nagy:** In Vancouver last week Conway claims he was yelled at ...

(Two transit police walking away from the camera down a SkyTrain station corridor.)

**Melanie Nagy:** ... and roughed up by SkyTrain police.

(SkyTrain rail car moving toward the camera as it pulls into a SkyTrain station. As train passes the camera the station name is exposed on the far wall, "Joyce – Collingwood".)

**Melanie Nagy:** Conway was traveling east on the 'Expo' line when he says ...

(Street level view of a SkyTrain train pulling into the Joyce – Collingwood' station)

Melanie Nagy: ... **two transit cops questioned whether Doctor Max (sic) was a pet or a working dog.**

(Head and shoulders shot of Conway speaking)

**William Conway:** I produced a bus pass. I carry identification for my dog, official identification.

(Close-up of Conway's hands holding two picture identification cards. A CNIB picture ID card for Conway and for Doctor M.C. a Guide Dog School picture ID showing a photo of both Conway and Doctor M.C. standing together)

**Melanie Nagy:** These are Conway's credentials. As long as he carries them he never runs into trouble.

(Medium shot of Conway holding the identification cards.)

**Melanie Nagy:** But this time the cards didn't help.

(Head and shoulders shot of Conway speaking)

**William Conway:** They started to state that they could order me off the train at the next station. Take my dog away from me.

(Floor level angle of SkyTrain passenger's legs and feet exiting and entering a SkyTrain passenger car.)

**Melanie Nagy:** Conway opted to leave ...

(View from the bottom of one of the Joyce – Collingwood station stairways. People are descending.)

**Melanie Nagy:** ... but says the two officers followed. Angry and frustrated Conway says he turned and swore at them.



(One of the ground level entrances to Joyce – Collingwood SkyTrain station.)

**Melanie Nagy:** But as soon as he did ...

(Head and shoulders shot of Conway speaking)

**William Conway:** Somebody came from behind and put an illegal chokehold on me, which I squirmed out of using a head move. I then felt a hand going over my mouth and my nose preventing me from breathing.

(Large group of transit police officers milling about in front of a door with one older officer appearing to give them instructions. Cut to: a single police officer shown ascending a staircase in the SkyTrain station.)

**Melanie Nagy:** At this time the agency responsible for policing public transportation has little to say about the allegation.

(Head and shoulders shot of a SkyTrain Transit policeman with a flag hanging behind him. Super-imposed at the lower left of the screen, top line: Staff Sgt. John Mills, second line (smaller font size): Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority, third line (Same font size as the line above): Police Service.)

**Staff Sgt. John Mills:** The Transit Police and TransLink are very concerned about the allegation and ah we'll deal with them appropriately once the investigation is completed.

(Head and shoulders shot of Conway speaking)

**William Conway:** I wonder who's the blind person here

(Conway walking with Doctor M.C. from right to left across the screen)

**Melanie Nagy:** Conway has filed a formal complaint and ...

(Close-up of Conway's hand on the handle of the harness attached to Doctor M.C. They are walking right to left across the screen.)

**Melanie Nagy:** ... New Westminster police are now investigating the allegation.

(Doctor M.C.'s face walking into the camera as the camera move with him.)

**Melanie Nagy:** Until that's complete Conway has this message for Transit police ...

(Wide shot of Conway and Doctor M.C. walking up the driveway towards the camera.)

**William Conway:** Let's switch roles. Let's walk in my shoes for a day.

(Cut to a head and shoulders shot of Conway speaking)

**William Conway:** When you are verbally threatened of having your dog, your pair of - your eyes - my eyes, taken away from me and put in a pound, at my expense by the way. What would you do?

(Conway and Doctor M.C. walking up the driveway and away from the camera.)

**Melanie Nagy:** Melanie Nagy, CBC News, Sechelt.

Appendix One: Section Nine

CTV News Vancouver – March 03, 2006

Segment Title: “Skytrain Blindman”

**Format: Video**

Length: 2:27

(Transcript and description of the video)

(News anchor sitting behind a desk)

**News Anchor (Keri Adams):** For people who can't see, a guide dog is a ticket to freedom but tonight the police officers who patrol SkyTrain are under fire accused of taking a 'no pets' policy way too far. Lisa Rossington explains ...

(William Conway is shown on his knees in his driveway using a hatchet to chop wood. Super imposed on the screen's lower left is the word “SECHELT” which is the name of the British Columbia town where Conway resides.)

**William Conway:** Come on wood.

**Reporter (Lisa Rossington):** There's really nothing William Conway can't do. He chops wood, even though he's blind.

(Conway's guide dog, Doctor M.C., licking Conway's face.)

**William Conway:** Yes, yes, yes, yes.

(Conway and Doctor M.C. walking down the road outside his home. They are shown walking towards the camera.)

**Reporter (Lisa Rossington):** Conway still needs his Seeing Eye dog to get around, but last week while riding SkyTrain he claims Transit Police kicked them both off.

(SkyTrain car pulling into a SkyTrain station moving right to left.)

(Head and shoulders shot of Conway speaking with super imposed caption in the lower left of the screen, top line: WILLIAM CONWAY, second line: Uses A Guide Dog)

**William Conway:** A person got on at 29<sup>th</sup> station and in an arrogant voice said to me, “Is that a pet or a trained dog?” My response to him was, “Who wants to know?”

(Close-up of the arm patch of a TransLink police officer. The upper portion of the patch shows a gold-bordered shield containing right-angled frets on a blue background. A crown is located at the top of the whole heraldry piece and a dogwood flower (provincial flower of British Columbia) at the bottom. The shield has the words “Safely Linking Communities” encircling its top and sides. These words are surrounded on the left and right by gold oak leaves. Below the crest is an escroll bearing the words “Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority”. Below that is the word “POLICE” in large letters and below that a small Canadian flag.)

**Reporter (Lisa Rossington):** the officers, who Conway says never identified themselves, wanted to see ID for him and the dog.

(The backs of two Transit Police officers going down a staircase. They have their backs to the camera. The backs of the officer’s jackets have the word “POLICE” emblazoned on them.)

**Reporter (Lisa Rossington):** He showed the ID ...

(Extreme Close-up of Conway's hand showing identification cards for both himself (CNIB picture ID card) and for Doctor M.C. (Guide Dog School picture ID showing a picture of Conway and Doctor M.C. together)

**Reporter (Lisa Rossington):** ... and then Conway says they questioned whether his German shepherd was a legitimate guide dog.

(Head and shoulders shot of Conway speaking)

**William Conway:** They told me that they can take my dog at any given time, arrest me for trespassing and vagrancy ...

(Close-up of Doctor M.C. lying down at Conway's side and looking up towards Conway.)

**William Conway:** ... and put my dog into the SPCA (Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) pound at my expense.

(Wide shot of the Joyce Street Skytrain Station. Covered train tracks raised above street level. "JOYCE STREET SKYTRAIN STATION" superimpose in the lower left corner of the screen.)

**Reporter (Lisa Rossington):** At the Joyce Street Station an argument erupted.

(A Skytrain car pulling out of the station with people milling on the platform. The train is moving away from the camera.)

Conway admits he used colourful language, but then he claims the officers got physical.

(Head and shoulders shot of Conway speaking)

**William Conway:** A hand took my right hand, twisted it, bent it backwards and deliberately tried to break it. Another person, I assumed, when I yelled for the pain, which I was feeling at the time, reached from behind and put me into a choke hold.

(Wide shot of Conway and Doctor M.C.)

**Reporter (Lisa Rossington):** Conway says he lost consciousness for a short time.

(Close-up of Conway pulling up the pant leg on his right leg to show the undressed gash and bruising on his right shin.)

**Reporter (Lisa Rossington):** With a gash on his leg police eventually let him go.

(Close-up of the top of Conway's copy of the complaint form)

**Reporter (Lisa Rossington):** He has filed a complaint with the B.C. Police Complaints Commissioner.

(Skytrain station interior. Passengers entering a SkyTrain rail car)

**Reporter (Lisa Rossington):** SkyTrain says Guide Dogs are allowed on SkyTrain but they have to be accredited.

(Conway walking down a walkway, away from his house with Doctor M.C. They are walking towards the camera.)

**Reporter (Lisa Rossington):** Conway says his dog is certified and insists he produced the necessary documents.

(Head and shoulders shot of a large woman wearing dark glasses speaking. Super-imposed at the lower left of the screen, top line: BONNIE DENFORD-NELSON, second line: Canadian National Institutes for the Blind.)

**Bonnie Denford-Nelson:** Certainly with the ID card, with the dog in harness, it really shouldn't have gone as far as it did.

(Close-up of the sign outside the C.N.I.B. building. The sign reads, C.N.I.B., The Canadian national Institute for the Blind, B.C. – Yukon Division. The camera pans to show that the C.N.I.B. office building is located almost beside the Joyce Street TransLink station where this incident occurred.)

**Reporter (Lisa Rossington):** The Canadian Institute for the Blind says that it will ask that Transit Police be educated on how to deal with blind people.

(Head and shoulders shot of Conway speaking)

**Reporter (Lisa Rossington):** Even so, Conway says he's not looking forward to his next SkyTrain ride.

**William Conway:** I know what they did was wrong ...

(Conway on the porch of his house with Doctor M.C. Doctor M.C. is nuzzling Conway's face)

**William Conway:** ... and I think they should pay for their wrong.

**Reporter (Lisa Rossington):** Lisa Rossington, CTV news.



## Appendix Two

### **Who is BCCPD?**

'We are a non-profit organization that represents people with all types of disabilities throughout BC. The BCCPD is an umbrella group. Our membership includes individuals and groups from the communities of people who use wheelchairs, people with visual or hearing impairments, and people with hidden disabilities, mental health disabilities, learning disabilities and HIV/AIDS.'

### **What Do You Do?**

The Coalition's mandate is to raise public and political awareness around issues of concern to disability communities and to create change. We hope through our work to improve people with disabilities' access to all aspects of our communities.

### **How do you do this?**

We:

- advocate with all levels of government to improve policies and attitudes that affect people with disabilities
- promote public awareness of disability issues through conferences, special projects and the media
- provide individual and group advocacy for people with disabilities
- serve on government panels and committees
- share information and self-help skills with people with disabilities and disability organizations (BCCPD, 2007: p. none)

## Appendix Two: Section One

### Disability and Violence Survey Administration

#### **INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

My name is Robert H. Elliott and I am a disabled person working towards an M.A. in Disability Studies from the University of Leeds. As part of the research component of my dissertation I need to administer a survey questionnaire with the purpose of collecting data on violence and disabled people and the portrayal of disabled people in the media.

Participation in this survey questionnaire group is fully voluntary. You may withdraw from participation at any time or decline to answer any of the questions posed.

As a group participant you will be presented with a questionnaire that will require you to select multiple-choice answers and also to create a few brief written responses. The questionnaire responses are based on your own personal opinions and therefore there are no right or wrong answers.

After completing the questionnaires there will be an opportunity to discuss as a group the scenarios, questions and general topics posed by the questionnaire. The discussion portion of the survey questionnaire group will be audio recorded.

All participants will be given a nametag with a name of their choice e.g. first name, initials or other of their own choosing. This will allow the researcher the ability to link comments made during the discussion phase of the survey questionnaire group to the correct participant.

The briefest of biographical data will be required:

- gender
- impairment type (physical, sensory and/or cognitive)
- the length of time that you have been impaired.

The data collected will be used exclusively for this specific dissertation and only the data included in the academic paper proper will be published.

All physical data including the completed survey forms, audio recordings and notes will be kept for one year and then destroyed.

The complete group process will be limited to a length of 2 hours maximum.

Participant's Signature

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix Two: Section Two

### Questionnaire Survey Schedule

#### Agenda

- Brief explanation/overview of the research study
- Obtain informed consent from the interview subject
- Give participants the opportunity to voice any concerns they might have regarding the survey administration
- Assign Individual Identifiers and create name tags
- Record participants gender, impairment type and length of impairment
- Presentation of Violence and Disability Scenarios
- Presentation of Media and Disability Discussion Questions
- Presentation of the Final Structured Question

Location: BCCPD Offices

Group Size: 5-7 visibly disabled individuals

Time Frame: 1-2 hours

Privacy: No attempt will ever be made to 'personally' identity any of the group participants though it will be necessary to link group members through minimal physical qualities (age, gender and disability type e.g. mobility, sensory or cognitive) with potential quotes to be used in the dissertation.

\*I suggest that group members chose a fictitious first name for themselves in advance of the group meeting and use it throughout the session.

Activity Requirements: Participants will listen to the researcher read each scenario and then record their answer. This will be repeated until all scenarios have been read and answers recorded. For the open-ended questions can read the questions and record their answers independently.

Debriefing Discussion: With a minimal structure the researcher will attempt to have this discussion develop as more of an informal 'conversation'. The survey questions will act as a starting point if necessary. The discussion's purpose is two-fold. First, to act as a debriefing tool for the informant group and secondly to act as means to collect further data as to any issues, topics or themes that may have been created through the survey process.

Research Goal: to collect group opinions, attitudes and points of view towards news media presentations of disablement issues, violence perpetrated towards disabled people and personal experiences with violence.

Recording: the group will be recorded and written notes will also be taken.

## Violence and Disability Scenarios

REMEMBER, there are no right or wrong answers.

### Are the following scenarios examples of violence perpetrated against a disabled person?

01. Ahmed Yassin was a co-founder of Hamas and became its 'spiritual leader'. Hamas is regarded as a terrorist organization by many world nations including Canada. Yassin was nearly blind, a quadraplegic and had to use a wheelchair. Ahmed Yassin was killed by an Israeli helicopter gunship attack on March 22, 2004. (Wikipedia, 2007:s unpagged)

YES

NO

UNSURE

02. "On October 7, 1985, four heavily armed men, claiming to represent the Palestinian Liberation Front hijacked the Italian cruise ship Achille Lauro. They were demanding the release of 50 Palestinians imprisoned in Israel. To prove they were serious about their mission, the hijackers shot and killed Leon Klinghoffer, a disabled 69-year-old American tourist. Klinghoffer, who was wheelchair-bound, was thrown overboard into the Mediterranean." (Champ, 2007: none)

YES

NO

UNSURE

03. A mentally challenged man (Gibson) working as a janitor was killed by a newcomer (Anderson) to town. According to the Crown's theory, Anderson was in the hotel the night of the killing, asking questions about whether the video lottery terminals had been paying out that night and whether Gibson would be working. He allegedly went home at 1 a.m. and returned shortly after 4 a.m, tricking Gibson, who was alone, into letting him in by saying he needed to make a phone call.

Anderson knocked Gibson unconscious, robbed the business of about \$4,200, then stabbed Gibson when he regained consciousness, the Crown alleges. (CBC News, 2007: unpagged)

YES

NO

UNSURE

04. Robert Latimer, a farmer working a spread in Saskatchewan northwest of Saskatoon, killed his 12-year-old daughter Tracy on October 24, 1993. Latimer told police he did it. He said he loved his daughter and could not bear to watch her suffer from a severe form of cerebral palsy. Tracy was a 40-pound quadriplegic, a 12-year-old who functioned at the level of a three-month-old. She could not walk, talk or feed herself and was in constant, excruciating pain yet she did respond to affection and occasionally smiled. (Marlowe's Shade, 2005: unpagged)

YES

NO

UNSURE

05. An able-bodied husband prevents his wife from using a wheelchair as she experiences an increasing inability to walk due to the effects of post polio syndrome (Waxman, 1995: vii)

YES

NO

UNSURE

06. "Disabled children who are repeatedly parade, naked, in front of a team of doctors ..." (Waxman, 1995: vii)

YES

NO

UNSURE

07. A disabled person being called crude names by the able-bodied.

YES

NO

UNSURE

08. A flight of stairs that make access to a location impossible for a wheelchair user.

YES NO UNSURE

09. A wheelchair user being pushed without being asked for their permission to do so.

YES NO UNSURE

10. A resident of an institution having their food withheld by 'care-givers'.

YES NO UNSURE

11. A resident of an institution having their toileting withheld by 'care-givers'.

YES NO UNSURE

12. A resident of an institution being ignored by 'care-givers'.

YES NO UNSURE

13. A resident of an institution having their medication withheld by 'care-givers'.

YES NO UNSURE

14. A resident of an institution being handled roughly by 'care-givers'.

YES NO UNSURE

15. A resident of an institution subjected to verbal abuse by 'care-givers'.

YES NO UNSURE



## Appendix Two: Section Four

### Media and Disability Questions

REMEMBER, there are no right or wrong answers.

Please circle or underline the answer(s) that most closely represents your opinion or add any that you wish

4. In your opinion what are the most common news media story themes or topics published or broadcast regarding disabled people? (*You may choose more than one answer*)

- l. Charity Appeals
  - m. Disability Organizations
  - n. Disabled Sports
  - o. Disabled Women
  - p. Education
  - q. Employment
  - r. Extraordinary Achievements
  - s. Medical
  - t. Mistreatment
  - u. Overcoming Adversity
  - v. 'Super Cripples'
  - w. Violence
- Others: \_\_\_\_\_.

5. In your opinion what are the most common way(s) that disabled people are presented in news media stories? (*You may choose more than one answer*\*)

- l. as an Object of Ridicule
- m. as Atmosphere or Curio
- n. as a Burden
- o. as Incapable of Participating Fully in Community Life
- p. as Normal
- q. as Objects of Violence

- r. as Pitiable and Pathetic
- s. as Sexually Abnormal
- t. as Sinister and Evil
- u. as Super Cripple
- v. as Their Own Worst and Only Enemy

(\*Answer choices adapted from Barnes, C., 1992: pp. 7-18)

3. Briefly list the items that in your opinion would improve the way in which disabled people are portrayed in the news media?

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4. Briefly describe a memorable 'good news story' and particularly 'bad news story' where the story's main character(s) involved a disabled person(s).

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5. Briefly describe what is your first or most remarkable memory of a disabled person in the media? (Kama, 2004: 452)

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## Appendix Four

### Definition of significant terms

The increased political awareness and politicization of the disability community has markedly changed the nomenclature of impairment. In the last few decades, some words have been discarded while others have been re-defined and in other cases rearranged.

**Abuse:** Richard Sobsey defines abuse as "... used to span the spectrum from mild infractions to serious criminal acts against people of all ages ..." (Sobsey, 1992: xviii). Sobsey warns that his applied definition removes the often-euphemistic use of the word 'abuse' and the manner in which it lessens the impact of more serious crimes committed against disabled people.

For this reason the word 'abuse' will not be used within the created text of this study.

**Violence:** For most people the term 'violence' has a fairly broad definition and therefore establishes a relatively non-specific understanding. To aid in establishing a more clear understanding of the term violence, for the purpose of this study, the definition developed by and found in the report from the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 15th of September 1995 will be used. Even though the definition was developed in a very gender specific atmosphere the essence of the definition is very easily made appropriate for all disabled people with the substitution of "violence against disabled individuals" used in place of "violence against women".

The expression "violence against women" refers to any violent act based on the kind that results in possible or real physical, sexual or psychological harm, including threats, coercion, arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life" (World Conference On Women, 1995: item 113, cited in Iglesias et al., 1998: none).

Additionally, this study will include the following to the above definition. It is definition number four of the word 'violence' taken from the American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Third Edition: "Abusive or unjust exercise of power".

**Impairment and Disability:** Though they have had a tumultuous history, for the purposes of this study impairment and disability will have their own distinct and very separate meanings.

**"Disability** is the disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by a society which takes little or no account of people who have impairments, and thus excludes them from mainstream activity.

**Impairment** is certain individual appearance or certain functional limitations of the mind, body or senses" (UPIAS, 1976: 101, cited in Breakthrough UK, 2007: none).

### **Disabled People or People with Disabilities? :**

"Some people with disabilities argue that we are people first, and that our disabilities (impairments) have nothing to do with who or what we are, or what we can or cannot do.

Others, who identify themselves as disabled people, argue that we are disabled more by environmental and economic barriers than by our physical/sensory impairments - and that the term disabled people allows full exploration of what we are disabled by" (Rae, 1989: 1).

This study will employ the more politicized approach to naming impaired individuals and groups and use the Social Model of Disability (Oliver, 1990; Barnes, 1996) as the basis for this study's naming scheme; disabled people, disabled person(s), disabled man,

disabled men, disabled woman, disabled women, and disabled individual(s).

## Appendix Five

### **Passage Leviticus 21:18-21:**

<sup>18</sup>For whatsoever man he be that hath a blemish, he shall not approach: a blind man, or a lame, or he that hath a flat nose, or any thing superfluous,

<sup>19</sup>Or a man that is brokenfooted, or brokenhanded,

<sup>20</sup>Or crookbackt, or a dwarf, or that hath a blemish in his eye, or be scurvy, or scabbed, or hath his stones broken;

<sup>21</sup>No man that hath a blemish of the seed of Aaron the priest shall come nigh to offer the offerings of the LORD made by fire: he hath a blemish; he shall not come nigh to offer the bread of his God.