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Who writes it better, college students or journalists: an analysis of preferred and person-first terminology in midwestern collegiate and metropolitan newspapers

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WHO WRITES IT BETTER, COLLEGE STUDENTS OR JOURNALISTS: AN
ANALYSIS OF PREFERRED AND PERSON-FIRST TERMINOLOGY IN
MIDWESTERN COLLEGIATE AND METROPOLITAN NEWSPAPERS

by

Kari E. Santos

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the Master of Arts Degree
in Leisure Studies (Therapeutic Recreation)
in the Graduate College of
The University of Iowa

August 2015

Thesis Supervisor: Professor Kenneth Mobily

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Graduate College
The University of Iowa
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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

MASTER'S THESIS

This is to certify that the Master's Thesis of

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has been approved by the Examining Committee for the thesis requirement for the Master of Arts in Leisure Studies at the August 2015 graduation.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate my thesis work to everyone who has supported me throughout my graduate career.

A special thanks to my biggest supporter, my husband Spenser. He has been my encouragement, support system, academic sounding board, and much more throughout the process. Thank you.

I also dedicate my thesis to my family. My parents, Gary and Diane who taught me there is no limit and that I can achieve anything if I'm determined enough. To my sisters, both are my role models and closest friends. Lori, thank you for believing in me and allowing me to email you multiple back-up copies of drafts incase the worst should happen. Lisa, thank you for being my inspiration for entering the therapeutic recreation field. A special thanks to my in-laws, John, Jamie and Ryan, who continually reminded me of my goals and my academic determination.

Finally, I dedicate this work to the Leisure Studies Department at The University of Iowa. I dedicate this to all the professors who took the time to make me a better student and human being, thank you. To all of my classmates, who have been my students, friends, colleagues and more. It was amazing to have such a supportive department. I also thank my office-mates. These individuals were there for every bump in the road and were my cheerleaders.

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ABSTRACT

This study examines Midwestern collegiate and metropolitan newspapers to explore the differences in writing about disability language, terminology and tone. Specifically, this study focused on whether referential language and tone about people with disabilities differs depending on the source of the newspaper.

Data from six metropolitan papers and eight collegiate papers over forty randomly selected dates in the year 2014 was collected. The metropolitan newspapers analyzed were *The Chicago Tribune*, *The Indianapolis Star*, *The Des Moines Register*, *Detroit Free Press*, *Omaha World-Herald*, and *the Journal Sentinel*. The collegiate newspapers examined were *The Daily Illini*, *Indiana Daily Student*, *The Daily Iowan*, *The Michigan Daily*, *The State News*, *Daily Nebraskan*, *The Exponent*, and *The Badger Herald*. A list of key search terms was electronically searched in each newspaper and articles that fell on the forty dates were saved and analyzed. Each term that appeared in the article was evaluated on a Likert scale for language use and tone; the total number of pages of each article was also calculated. Statistical tests used were T-Tests and analysis of covariance (ANCOVAR). A visual analysis was also conducted using an online word generator called Wordle.

The results indicated that metropolitan papers used more preferred disability language than their collegiate counterparts. Both sources used an informational tone when referencing people with disabilities. Page length differences were statistically insignificant. Specific words repeatedly appeared throughout both newspaper sources: mental, disabilities, crazy, health and illness. While metropolitan papers also displayed preference for the following terms: elderly, elder, people, wheelchair, and older adults. Collegiate newspapers highlighted these terms: students, insane, madness, elderly and wheelchair.

An implication of the study is that the media sources selected represented people with disabilities in an informational tone rather than a sensationalistic manner. However, disability language needs to continue to improve and become more sensitive to people with disabilities and professionals who work with them.

PUBLIC ABSTRACT

Language allows humans to convey messages to one another. One of our prime informational sources is through media. This study focused on the effects of newspaper representation of people with disabilities. Evaluating the terminology and tone used by journalists allowed for determination of the message that journalists were sending. The research question asked was: do Midwest college newspapers or newspapers belonging to major cities send more positive, informational (neutral) or negative messages about people with disabilities.

It was hypothesized that college newspapers would send more positive messages about people with disabilities because of their exposure to people with disabilities and disability issues. A selected list of terms was searched in eight college and six metropolitan newspapers. Concerned that metropolitan newspapers would have lengthier newspapers this study also analyzed total number of pages to ensure this would not be a contaminating variable.

In the end it was determined that both Midwestern college and metropolitan newspapers most often used an informational tone when describing people with disabilities. When looking at the wording used, metropolitan newspapers used more politically correct terminology than their college counterparts. However, both college and metropolitan newspapers could make improvements towards the most up-to-date language. It was also determined that article page length was not a factor in this study.

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CHAPTER I: NEED FOR STUDY

Introduction

This chapter introduces the purpose of this study. It then expands upon why there is a need for a study such as this. The discussion focusing on how language can construct culture is central to the importance of the study. This chapter also presents the major research question of this study.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the language used in educational and public media when referring to persons with disabilities (PWD) to determine appropriate terminology and tone. By examining university newspapers in contrast to major city newspapers in the Midwest, this study aimed to determine if the presence of a large educational community (a major university) was associated with language use when referencing PWD. This study focused on the following question: does referential language and tone about PWD differ depending on source (university versus city newspaper)? The author hypothesized that collegiate newspapers would use more preferred, person-first terminology because students were being taught the most current journalism skills (in reference of language and tone). They also may have had more opportunities on a college campus to be exposed to a diverse population, including PWD.

Language and common terminology serve as a basis for culture (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). By using similar words people convey meaning and intent to one another. Language can help identify norms found within a community and these societal norms are reflected within the specific language choices made. Therefore, it is important to examine language because it is constantly evolving as cultures change. As Haller, Dorries and Rahn argue, “As society changes certain terminology falls out of favor” (2006, p.62).

The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis also suggests a connection between language and culture. Their hypothesis “suggested that each language embodies and perpetuates a world view. The speakers of the language are partners to an agreement to see and think of the world in a certain way...” (Brown & Lenneberg, 1954, p.454). Brown and Lenneberg note that there are many ways to construct a world view, therefore “the language we learn as children directs the formation of our particular structure” (1954, p. 454). Children adopt the language of their communities because they want to be part of that community. This is because “speech is a non-instinctive, acquired, ‘cultural’ function” (Sapir, 1949, p.4). If a child is to learn speech it must come from the community. Language is not an innate ability, but a learned one.

If language is a cultural phenomenon then it would seem that the words attributed to PWD come from a culturally agreed upon or tolerated meaning. When people speak to one another the

words would be meaningless if the receiver does not also share the same meaning and language. If words have a cultural backing, then they express the view of that culture. Hence, the argument is that “language is a reflection of how people in a society see each other” (Blaska, 1993, p.25). In studying language, then, one can study the cultural reflection within the language.

The terms then associated with a group create expectations and biases that have the potential to stigmatize. Stereotypes attached to specific words create a “standardized mental picture” (Mobily & Ositguy, 2004, p.112). Once this image is formed it is hard for community members to look past this first impression. Often minority groups seek to implement terminology that is more “descriptive, reflective and respectful. These labels often have been ‘replacement’ terms for those created by people outside of the group in question” (Dajani, 2001, p.2).

This study seeks to examine language as a barometer of the cultural construction of disability. Has the terminology followed the suggested guidelines of the preferred terminology recommended decades ago, or are journalists still use stigmatizing terms?

CHAPTER II: PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a literature review of previous research findings in regard to disability language.

Theoretical Frame Work: Social Construction of Reality

Berger and Luckmann (1966) argue “language also typifies experiences, allowing me to subsume them under broad categories in terms of which they have meaning not only to myself but also to my fellowmen” (1996, p.39). Language is the key that provides humanity with a way to understand each other verbally and through our personal experiences. Language allows humanity to actualize an entire world (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p.39) and to comprehend it. Berger and Luckmann discuss how all objects have a subjective meaning that can demonstrate the intentions of other humans. The example they give is how a knife on its own was created for the use of hunting animals. However, if they were to wake up and discover the knife above their bed the meaning is clear, it is an aggressive act from someone. These “objects that ‘proclaim’ the subjective intentions of my fellowmen” (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 35) are a physical representation of communication between people. The knife serves as a “human product and an objectivation of human subjectivity” (p.35); the knife is an object but its meanings are subject to our interpretation and intended message.

In the case of the knife the object has become a sign. The object itself was meant for another purpose but this particular signal or message conveys more serious attributes. Humanity needs language, “which may be defined here as a system of vocal signs,” in order to organize societies; language “is the most important sign system of human society” (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p.37). Berger and Luckmann maintain that language and human communication evolve. Thinking of humanity's ancestors, grunts and groans were a way of communicating. Yet, when it is realized that the groan is a sign for pain it conveys a new, deeper meaning. Culture and society develop when humans can look beyond the basics of a word and instead see the meaning conveyed behind it: “detachment of language lies much more basically in its capacity to communicate meanings that are not direct expressions of subjectivity ‘here and now.’” (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p.37).

Therefore, newspapers not only convey words written but also the tone of those expressions. Every object has multiple levels of communication depending on how the author presents it. This becomes crucially important when remembering that “language can also be employed to refer to other realities” (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p.38). That is, language as it is presented and used helps humans construct a concept or idea of the world around them. Therefore, the terminology and language presented in newspapers is a prominent source of information that people use to construct

their realities. For example, “I encounter knowledge in everyday life as socially distributed, that is, as possessed differently by different individuals and types of individuals... I do not know everything known by my fellowmen, and vice versa... [and] whom I can turn to for information on what I do not know, and generally which types of individuals may be expected to have which types of knowledge” (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p.46). The quote suggests that when there is information not understood humans seek out widely distributed sources of knowledge, whether from a professional in the field or a professional source. The way experts (journalists) present information (or in this case, terminology) to a society/culture will then influence how that society interprets the meaning.

Language and Culture

Language related to disability creates an image or portrait that can be a persuasive to people who have little to no exposure to PWD (Blaska, 1993). Accordingly, Coverdale et al. (2002) were concerned about negative portrayals related to mental illness in their study. Blaska writes about the use of person-first language and its importance within media, saying that “language is a reflection of how people in a society see each other” (1993, p. 25). She argues that we are a media driven society; “the press can have enormous impact on society’s knowledge, attitudes, and public policies regarding individuals with disabilities” (1993, p. 26). Therefore we need to represent PWD, especially children with disabilities, in a positive way. It is so important for children with disabilities to see this reflection so that they can learn they too are important in their society (Blaska, 1993, p. 26). Children may learn their own self value through the language used to represent people similar to themselves, reinforcing the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis that children learn cultural values through language. If the media publishes negative n articles about PWD, then it may follow that children with disabilities will see themselves in a similar manner. Blaska also discussed how teachers need to become more self-aware of their own speech patterns, as many have disability biases they are unaware of and may use words that “may be promoting disability bias” (1993, p. 26).

Later in her article, Blaska shared recommendations to different professional groups on how to convey information about disability terminology to multiple spheres, including business communications, professional journals, laws, and even pre-service training. She also provided recommendations about terminology that should be used as well as terminology that should be avoided. In the most striking part of the article, she cited Radloff (1974): “words are ‘powerful tools’ by which civilization perpetuates its values - both its proudest achievements and its most crippling prejudices” (p.1).

The media may also act as a positive catalyst for change. Several articles about people with mental illnesses have actually led to changes in public policy. Wahl (2003) gathered several case

studies together to examine the effects newspapers have on the public and public policy. One example is Kendra's Law. Kendra Webdale was pushed under the subway train (in New York) and killed by Andrew Goldstein. The articles that followed this event focused on Goldstein's previous mental health issues and ignored the fact that he had sought treatment before this event. After Kendra's Law was passed, "one of the outcomes was ... allowing for the compelled outpatient treatment of psychiatrically disabled persons who refused needed treatment" (Wahl, 2003, p. 1597). Wahl cited bad facilities that were closed due to public reports about how New York allocated one million dollars to improve care of people with mental illness after a book came out demonstrating all of the negative events (such as abuse of clients with mental illness) that were happening in the system. In reviewing multiple studies of newspaper stories about people with mental illness, a consistent theme of violence and danger emerged. Wahl feared that these continual links between mental illness and violence and danger will continue to stigmatize mental illness and create public fear. Public fear "in turn fuels resistance to community care... fear that community safety will be compromised by neighborhood placement of group homes for people with mental illnesses" leading to public feelings of "not in my back yard" (Wahl, 2003, p. 1596). Beyond public policies influenced by media portrayal, employers may also be affected by these stories. They may be most hesitant to hire individuals with mental illnesses out of concern provoked by negative newspaper stories.

Wahl encouraged reporters to expand beyond the perspectives of medical professionals. In previous studies Wahl found that few other expert opinions were present, besides medical ones, creating an "emphasis on hospitalization and medication for treatment of mental illness" (2003, p.1598) as a public solution. There are many individuals involved in the mental health field who can bring a variety of "effective interventions beyond medication and hospitalization" that the public should be aware of (Wahl, 2003).

Wahl recommended that journalists reduce their emphasis on mental illness connected to violence and instead write more about recovery and achievement. Even the *Associated Press Stylebook* warns journalists not to "assume that mental illness is a factor in violent crime, and verify statements to that effect," recognizing a disproportionate representation of people with mental illnesses occurring in such articles (p.167). Wahl encouraged "changed patterns of newspaper reporting on mental illnesses may avoid contributing to the harmful public attitudes and public policies supported by current coverage" (2003, p.1600) in attempt to prevent misconceptions. When public policy is based on inaccurate information presented in the media the consequences have the potential to be harmful to those the policy is directed towards, in these cases individuals who have mental illnesses. Therefore, there is a continued need for researching newspapers to evaluate public perception of PWD to determine appropriate actions for advocacy.

Initial Research

Many articles have been published examining the media's viewpoint of PWD. Most of the work cited here focuses on terminology, location of the article within the newspaper, and if the article has an attached photo. Perhaps the biggest issue with previous studies is the fact that many of them are now outdated. With the growth of the internet, laptop computers, smartphones, tablets and easier access to the internet (such as free wifi) the public receives news faster than ever and from a wide variety of sources. This means it is critically important to continue examining current media representation of PWD and to advocate for appropriate articles. Understanding the history of media and PWD provides a basis for this and future studies.

Gilbert, MacCauley and Smale (1997) evaluated newspapers to determine the portrayal of PWD. The purpose of their study was to determine if there had been changes in language use pertaining to disabled persons and if awareness had increased. Gilbert et al. selected 1980 to 1990 as their time frame. Additionally, they were curious if major events such as the declaration of 1981 as the International Year of Disabled Persons, the United Nations declaration of 1983 to 1992 as the Decade of Disabled Persons, and the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990 would bring a more positive awareness of disabilities to writing. Gilbert et al. predicted that increased media coverage about events from the International Year of Disabled Persons and the Decade of Disabled Persons would bring more attention to PWD and would reflect increased use of appropriate language when describing PWD. Articles were selected from two prominent Canadian newspapers. The newspapers were indexed for all articles containing the following words: "handicapped, blind, deaf, mentally retarded, special populations, disabled persons, disabled." To be included in the study the articles had to discuss one or more individuals with a disability, resulting in a sample of 513 articles from the 696 potential cases. Articles were then organized by the appropriate language and by prominence within the newspaper, and then graded using a four point Likert scale (ranging from 1 to 4).

Gilbert et al. discovered that "minimal, if any, positive change has occurred in the language and characteristics of newspaper articles ... concerning persons with disabilities from 1980 to 1990" (1997, p. 118). Neither length of the article nor its placement within the newspaper had any effect on language use. They found that articles often were contradictory, using both positive and negative terminology throughout. One reason for this finding may be that newspapers are more concerned about sales than terminology. The authors advised disability specialists to continue their advocacy mission and to also continue to monitor the media, especially with reference to appropriate language, "as newspapers reflect the subjective norm, it is reasonable to state that if the attitudes have not and do not change in media, they have not and will not change in society" (Gilbert et al., 1997, p 120).

Later Research

In 2006 Haller, Dorries and Rahn sought to determine if the introduction of the ADA would affect journalists' word choices. They examined two prominent United States newspapers, *the New York Times* and *Washington Post*, over a ten year period. Articles were sampled for these key terms: "disabled, disability, disabilities, handicapped, cripple, and crippled". They opted to not include stories that used metaphorical disability terms (stories not connected to disability issues or PWD), restaurant listings (as many of them noted their handicap accessibility), or stories where the terminology was used just for an organization's name. Haller et al. selected articles from October and November in the years of 1990, 1995, and 2000. They conducted a second analysis of the terms "confined to a wheelchair, wheelchair-bound, and wheelchair user" throughout the entire year(s) for 1990, 1995 and 2000. Their goal was to evaluate how the media referenced PWD as a social group.

Unlike Gilbert et al., Haller and colleagues discovered a transitioning of language from handicapped to disabled. They speculated that journalists were taking cues from the individuals being interviewed about preferred terminology. However, non-preferred terminology also increased, as did the use of wheelchair related terminology. This may have indicated that the ADA brought more attention to disability as a social issue in general, but ignorance about appropriate language remains common. Haller et al. did note that the increase of wheelchair references meant that newspapers were raising awareness about wheelchair users. This was a sign that more sensitive language was emerging. Haller et al. were enthusiastic about the increased representation of people using wheelchairs, but proper terminology had not followed.

Coverdale, Nairn and Claasen (2002) focused on how mental illness was portrayed in print media. Using a commercial clipping company for a four-week period of time, they were able to locate 600 articles that fit their search criteria. Articles were selected from papers all across New Zealand. Mental health or mental illness, persons with mental disorders, psychiatric patients, treatments or practitioners, mental health services, mad, madness, insane, colloquial phrases (out to lunch, go completely bananas) were among the terms that Coverdale et al. used for inclusion criteria (2002). They then categorized articles based on seven variables: nature of the paper the article appeared in, circulation, type of article (editorial, cartoon, etc), size of the article (line length and sentences), gender, and if the person the article discusses was given a voice in the article or if they were simply talked about.

Coverdale et al. discovered that most of the articles were located in the editorial sections of daily newspapers. The common length of the article spanned four paragraphs to half a page. They noted that during the time of their study two major events occurred that might have increased articles about this subject. The first event was when a young man with schizophrenia shot several people. In a

second event a nurse released confidential papers to a member of parliament. The nurse felt a client who had been released from their secure mental facility was still a danger to others. It was also noted that most of the articles were of a negative nature, such as portraying the individual with a mental illness as dangerous. Generic terminology was more commonly used than specific illness related terminology, and colloquial phrases only appeared 8.5% of the time (Coverdale et al., 2002). Coverdale et al. mentioned that “[in the] absence of diagnosis, readers may generalize from a particular description to other persons with mental illness,” so it is therefore important to mention the diagnosis so readers will understand that not all mental illnesses are the same (2002, p.700). This would have been useful to readers because of the two incidents related to people with mental illnesses in the news that occurred during the time of this study. The articles discussing the incidents (mentioned previously) were written to suggest that all persons with mental illness are dangerous to themselves and to others. The researchers identified some positive articles, mostly editorial pieces about human rights interests and persons with mental illnesses. Positive articles, however, were far outnumbered by negative articles. In most of the articles the PWD was not given his/her own voice, which could further cause misunderstandings about persons with mental illness among the general public.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to evaluate if there were any difference between the writings of college student newspaper reporters and professional journalists related to PWD. This chapter details the data sources, methods, procedures and planned analyses of this study. The methodology also consists of the variables, inclusion criteria, and scoring systems for campus and metropolitan newspapers.

Source of Data (Subjects/Cases)

Colleges were selected from of the Big Ten Conference. Choosing from the list of Big Ten schools delimited the region of interest (Midwest). Big Ten Universities share the characteristics of large student enrollments, recognition as research universities, dedication to public service, and designation as a state's flagship public university (Big Ten School Conference Official Site, 2015).

Reputable universities advertise that their teaching methods are current and up to date. Faculty are expected to keep their courses up-to-date and current with scholarship and research in their fields. Not all of the Big Ten Schools were included in this research study. Inclusion criteria consisted of:

Inclusion Criteria for Big Ten Universities Newspapers:

- The University must be in the Midwest. The Midwest, "as defined by the federal government, comprises the states of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin" (Encyclopedia Britannica). This delimited the area of study.
- The University must not be located in the largest city in the state, and the University must not be located within 30 miles of the largest city in order to prevent potential contamination. This minimized influences between universities and metro papers and vice versa. For example, universities closer to larger newspapers may have had better access to the metropolitan paper.
- The university must have an online, accessible newspaper, ensuring consistency and equal access when using search terms, since articles are located based on those terms.
- Newspaper issues must be accessible during the time period covered by the study (must be able to look back into the archives) in order to randomly select articles.

Inclusion Criteria for metropolitan newspapers:

- Must be available online, again to create consistency and equality when using the database to search key terms.
- Must be accessible during time period covered by the study (must be able to look back into the archives) in order to randomly select articles.

- The city must have a larger population size than the city that its Big Ten University is located in. This allows for comparisons of the largest metropolitan areas in that state. A larger population size also provides opportunities for the newspaper to be widely distributed and read.

If multiple newspapers for the metropolitan area exist, the newspaper chosen to represent that area was selected randomly, the first non-advertisement result that appeared in Google, in response to the search entry of “ [insert metropolitan area name here] newspaper” (all papers selected by 12/1/14). Google creates its website listings using PageRank. PageRank decides where the website is ordered in the search engine using three factors: frequency and location of words within the website, how old the website is, how many other websites link to it (Google Support, 2014; Strickland, 2014). This connects the user’s search with the most cited reference. Using this method allowed for the selection of papers that were most often being referenced by others.

Below in Table 1 is an inclusive list of the selected universities and metropolitan newspapers. Following is an explanation of the universities that were not chosen and why (see Table 2).

Table 1: Utilized Newspapers	
Selected University Papers Included:	Selected Metropolitan Newspapers Included
University of Illinois at Urbana- Champaign	Chicago Tribune
Indiana University	The Indianapolis Star
University of Michigan (43.5 miles away from Detroit)	Detroit Free Press
Michigan State University	Detroit Free Press (repeated)
University of Nebraska	Omaha World Herald
Purdue University	The Indianapolis Star (repeated)
University of Wisconsin (Madison)	Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel
The University of Iowa	The Des Moines Register

Table 2: Universities and Metropolitan Areas Considered for Study

University	City college located in	College Paper	Largest City in State	Largest City Primary Newspaper	Does it Qualify??
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign	Urbana and Champaign, Illinois	The Daily Illini	Chicago	The Chicago Tribune	Yes
Indiana University	Bloomington, Indiana	Indiana Daily Student	Indianapolis	The Indianapolis Star	Yes
The University of Iowa	Iowa City, Iowa	The Daily Iowan	Des Moines	The Des Moines Register	Yes
University of Maryland	College Park, Maryland				No, out of Midwest
University of Michigan	Ann Arbor, Michigan	The Michigan Daily	Detroit	Detroit Free Press	43.5 miles away from Detroit, yes
Michigan State University	East Lansing, Michigan	The State News	Detroit	Detroit Free Press	Yes
University of Minnesota	St. Paul and Minneapolis, MN				No, it is in the largest city in its state
University of Nebraska	Lincoln, Nebraska	Daily Nebraskan	Omaha City	Omaha World-Herald	Yes
Northwestern University	Evanston, Illinois	The Daily Northwestern	Chicago	The Chicago Tribune	No, it is too close to Chicago
Ohio State University	Columbus, Ohio	The Lantern	Columbus		No, largest city is school city
Pennsylvania State University	State College, Pennsylvania				No, out of Midwest
Purdue University	West Lafayette, Indiana	The exponent	Indianapolis	The Indianapolis Star	Yes
Rutgers University	New Brunswick, NJ, Piscataway, NJ				No, out of Midwest
University of Wisconsin	Madison, WI	The badger herald	Milwaukee	Journal Sentinel	Yes

Reasons for exclusion

The University of Minnesota, Northwestern University, and Ohio State University are all located within the 30 mile radius of the largest city within their state. For that reason all of those universities were excluded from this study. Pennsylvania State University, Rutgers University, and the University of Maryland were not located within the Midwest and therefore were cut from inclusion because this study focused only on Midwestern universities.

Additional Criteria

Following Haller et al. (2006), articles also had inclusion criteria. The articles had to reference one or more individuals, groups, and concepts and/or utilize disability language terminology. The article was not included if it used the terminology only for organization names without discussion of the organization) metaphorical terms not connected to PWD or disability issues, or restaurant listings (e.g., indicating handicapped access). For example, if it was mentioned that there were mental health screenings available at a local clinic, then the article would not be included since it only mentioned the organization name/event but lacked further details.

Forty individual dates for a year period (of 2014) were randomly selected for data collection. Since the University newspapers do not publish on weekends, only weekdays were considered. Two hundred and sixty potential dates were thus available. This sampling strategy evaluated approximately fifteen percent of the available Monday-through-Friday dates for the year. A full list of dates utilized is available in the appendix.

Terminology Criteria

Varied items in the analysis of articles were accumulated from previous research by Haller et al. and Coverdale et al. Selected terminology by previous studies and terminology selected for this study is discussed in the following.

Valid items in analysis of articles were accumulated from previous research completed by Haller et al. and Coverdale et al. Terminology referencing disability/ies, handicap/ped, cripple/d, mental health, mental illness, and person (or individual) with mental illness/health were all terms searched to locate articles. Colloquial phrases and mental health services were analyzed if presented in the articles that matched the other significant search terms, but were not sought out individually. Previously used search terms noted by authors can be found in Table 3.

Table 3: Search Terms from Previous Authors	
<i>Haller, et al. (2006)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The disabled” • disabled persons (as adjective) • become disabled (as a verb) or other • disability (as noun) • persons with disability/persons with disabilities • handicapped (any use not part of organization’s name) • cripple (noun, referring to disability) • crippled (verb or adjective, referring to disability)
<i>Coverdale et al.(2002)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mental health • mental illness • persons with mental disorder • psychiatric patients • treatments or practitioners • mental health services • terms associated with mental illness (mad, madness, insane) • colloquial phrases (out to lunch, go completely bananas, drives me crazy)

Variables

The newspaper articles were analyzed for content and characteristics based on the following factors: frequency (how many articles appeared in each issue of the newspaper related to disability terminology/language), appropriate terminology, and tone of the article. The triangulation of these three factors allowed for an evaluation to determine if newspapers were more understanding and empathetic to PWD. Terminology and tone were measured using Likert indexes.

Analysis of wording and use of selected terminology employed a four point Likert scale (see Table 2), similar to Gilbert et al. (1997). The Likert scaling for appropriate terminology followed the guidelines used by Gilbert et al. Gilbert et al. followed the suggested terminology set forth by

Words with Dignity (1991): Most Preferred (4), Preferred (3), Not Preferred (2), and Least Preferred (1)...*Most preferred* language involves placing the person, or persons, first followed by a careful and accurate description of the disability

(citations). The person with a disability is, after all, a person-first. *Preferred language* arises with the term “person” following a disability descriptor. The descriptor serves as an adjective, such as the phrase “the disabled person”. Language that is *not preferred* defines persons with disabilities without the presence of the term “person.” It uses the disability descriptor as a noun, and subsequent label ... Thus, the individual is identified and even equated with his or her particular disability or condition ... The *least preferred* form of language involves the use of emotional or sensationalistic terms. Words which have negative connotations and tendencies to evoke pity ... (p. 111)

Included in most preferred is the article that directly references how the individual prefers to be referenced. This will be especially important to groups who have different preferences of terminology. Edwin Vaughan (2009) wrote an article for the National Federation of the Blind discussing what he calls to be the “crusade of person-first language.” In the article Vaughan questions the use of person-first in relationship to making real world impacts. Being blind is not a symbol of shame or something that needs to be masked by the fact that he is still human. Rather, many who are blind are proud of all they have accomplished despite their barriers. Vaughan was concerned that academics have become separated from the people and are creating unwanted titles for them. He suggested the focus should be on what groups decide to call themselves and focus on their preferred terminology.

Referencing of the individual directly is critically important to change public perceptions through media. Wahl (2003) notes “the absence of comment from mental health consumers in articles about mental illness reinforces the public suspicions that those with mental illnesses are unable [or] too disordered, too disorganized, too unreliable [...] to speak for themselves” (p.1598). Promoting and highlighting articles that include reflections from the individuals themselves is a starting point to change public concerns. Hearing from PWD may change the view point that they are incapable human beings. Even the *Associated Press Stylebook* (2013) recommends journalists who are writing about mental illness to “wherever possible, rely on people with mental illness to talk about their own diagnosis” (2013, p.167).

Terminology selected for this study can be noted in Table 4. Important to know is the selection of terms was based upon combining previous studies. Gilbert et al.’s influence is used to describe each term by the most preferred to least preferred way to describe an individual with that condition. The terms selected for study come from a compilation of analyzing previous research.

Attributes (referencing people as having this attribute)	Most Preferred	Preferred	Not Preferred	Least Preferred
Gilbert et al. define these categories as:	Person comes first followed by accurate description(s) of the disability	The term person follows the disability descriptor, usually as an adjective	Defines a PWD without using the word person, usually as a noun or label	Using emotional, sensationalist terms with negative connotations. These tend to evoke pity
disability	person with a disability, persons with disabilities	the disabled person	the disabled , the impaired	“the poor, wheelchair-bound teacher.”
handicap	Do not use - refer to disability instead	the handicapped person	the handicapped	“Handicapped people suck up government money.”
cripple	Do not use		the crippled	“Don’t hire him, he’s a cripple.”
older adults	older adult		the elderly	“I don’t want to work with the elderly, they’re all senile.”
mental illness	if pertinent to the story: person with a mental illness, followed up by a “properly sourced diagnosis” (Associated Press Stylebook, 2013)	person with a mental illness (no follow up)	the mentally ill, mad/madness, insane/insanity	“I don’t want to be in a room with the crazy person.”
intellectual disability	person with intellectual disability	person with cognitive impairment, cognitively impaired person	the retard	“That clerk is a retard; they couldn’t even take my order.”

Tone referred to the emotional presence or attitude of the article. Was the article favorable towards PWD, unfavorable, or uncertain (such as informational pieces)? Tone represented the article as a whole work, rather than in segmented parts. The Likert scaling for tone was scored as follows: favorable (3), uncertain (2), and unfavorable (1). Examples of favorable, unfavorable (from Blaska, 1993), and uncertain are provided below.

Favorable:

A group of children on a school outing enter the department store with excitement. One young man worked his way through an aisle of clothing. While going slow he mastered the challenge and found the football jerseys. His teacher gave him a “high five” for his accomplishment of maneuvering his wheelchair and locating the “sporting goods” department. This student who has cerebral palsy had a successful outing with his classmates.

Unfavorable:

A group of handicapped children on a field trip with their normal classmates entered the department store with excitement. One wheelchair-bound young man who suffers from cerebral palsy struggled as he maneuvered his wheelchair through the clothes. His teacher praised his efforts for finding the football jerseys in the sporting goods department.

Uncertain:

An inclusive classroom went on a field trip today.

The unfavorable classification of the second example resulted from its tone of pity. The statement is emotional and sensationalized by using words such as “bound” and “struggled.” The story also creates an immediate negative image. These factors make it hard for the reader to move past the disability and look at the abilities being displayed (Blaska, 1993). The accumulation of these factors would put this article in the unfavorable category for tone.

The third factor measured was the frequency. Frequency was the total number of articles with one or more of the search terms. In other words, since the articles were collected from online sources, each article including one or more of the search terms was considered a frequency of one. Each paper was considered a “subject” for the analysis of the frequency variable. The independent variable was the newspaper type (college or metropolitan).

Research Hypothesis and Rationale

The rationale behind the hypothesis that collegiate newspapers would be more sensitive than metropolitan papers was because collegiate newspapers are written by students. Students may have been more sensitive to appropriate terminology than a metropolitan journalist who has either forgotten their college lessons or never learned appropriate terminology and who may have less personal experience with PWD.

The Education for All Handicapped Children Act was passed in 1975. This act enabled the beginning of integration into classrooms and free public education for children with disabilities. This means a journalist who started kindergarten when the Education for all Handicapped Children Act

was first enacted would now be forty-four years old. Reporters older than about 45 would therefore be less likely to have had first-hand direct contact with PWD.

In 1990 the law saw a reflection of person-first language as it was revised into the IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act). Therefore, the first students who grew up with these language changes reflecting person-first preference would have been in kindergarten in 1990. Today that would make them twenty-nine. Notably, these would be students either currently in the midst of their graduate educations or younger, or relatively recent graduates establishing themselves in their careers. These students should then be more accustomed to the idea of using person-first language, especially if this was the terminology they grew up with. Furthermore, IDEA specifically aims “to improve the quality of special education and related services for children and youth with severe disabilities, and change the delivery of those services from segregated to integrated environments” (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990).

This suggests that even though the Education for All Handicapped Children Act intended inclusion, it was not as successful as hoped. Inclusive classrooms became the conventional expectation when the language changed in the law to define the least restrictive environment as the setting a student should be in, reducing the concept of segregated education courses in favor of inclusion. Younger students not only grew up with more inclusive classrooms, but their classrooms provided more opportunities for first hand experiences. Exposure to students, teachers, friends, roommates, and office assistants with disabilities expanded the opportunities for students to have meaningful interactions. Teachers would be able to provide guidance and education about the issues facing PWD. A benefit for college students included more opportunity for peer review from classmates and teachers, which provided college students the chance for their errors to be noticed. Metropolitan newspapers were thought to have fewer opportunities for peer review, since their articles are only reviewed by editors.

In class, current journalism students have exposure to contemporary resources, such as the *Associated Press Stylebook*. This book is extensively used in journalism courses and many metropolitan newspapers as a style guide (Dajani, 2001). Students are taught to follow the guidelines set forth by the Associated Press. Terms related to disabilities that appear in the Stylebook with definitions include Asperger's, diseases, disabled / handicapped, mental illness, phobia, and post-traumatic stress disorder. The guide directs writers away from other not-preferred terms and towards the politically correct ones, such as handicap, mentally disabled, intellectually disabled, and developmentally disabled.

Therefore current or recent journalism students are taught the correct methods of referring to PWD, whereas established journalists may not have had comparable pre-career experiences and may have been more set in their ways with regards to terminology. It follows that students would utilize their lessons in their writing..

Finally in one analysis of the data, a control variable was employed. The aspect controlled for was the average length of the newspapers. Metropolitan papers tend to be longer in length, giving them the more opportunity to reference PWD. To control for the possible effect of length, it was used as a covariate when comparing the frequency of articles in college vs. metropolitan papers.

Procedures

The first step was to identify which collegiate and metropolitan newspapers qualified, as well as their websites. Once the sample was selected, forty non-weekend dates were randomly chosen using <http://www.random.org/calendar-dates/>. The settings were set for twenty options each time, done twice (the website only allows twenty-five dates to be selected at once), set to select from January 1st, 2014 to December 31st, 2014. Only weekdays were included (Monday through Friday), and date formatting was set with month first (month in numerical, date and year). See appendix for full list of dates.

Once on the newspaper's website the identified key terms were searched. The identified key terms are shown in Table 4: Disability Language Preference Ratings. Each attribute listed was the primary search term followed by their derived terms, such as person with a disability and disabled. Coverdale, Nairn and Claasen (2002) demonstrated that colloquial phrases in relation to mental illness are prevalent in newspapers. The present study attempted to account for as many forms of disability as possible and was not limited to a single type as in Coverdale, Nairn and Claasen's (2002) study. Due to the breadth of the present study, colloquial phrases were not included.

Every article that matched the key search terms was saved. Once the sample of articles was created articles were evaluated to determine if they met the inclusion criteria. Those articles that did not meet requirements were omitted from analysis. When the final selection of articles was made they were evaluated based on the definitions of the three dependent variables (see above).

From the total number of articles a small sample was randomly selected to determine inter-rater reliability. The second rater was a faculty member in the department. Raters (author and faculty member) reviewed and scored their judgments independent of one another using the above criteria. Reliability was checked using an inter-rater approach. Thirty articles were analyzed using two raters. The second rater (faculty member) was given the following guides to rate the terms: table and the

examples for favorability of tone. The results of the two raters were compared to determine percent of agreement.

Statistical Analysis

T-tests were used to compare the frequency of articles, page length of articles, tone, and use of preferred language. Within frequency, an analysis of covariance was used to control for the length of all the analyzed articles within the paper, so as to better compare the frequency of articles from each source. There was a concern that metropolitan newspapers would have more print space, therefore giving them an unfair advantage. The advantage meant metropolitan papers had more space/opportunity than their collegiate counterparts to write about PWD. This factor was controlled for using an ANCOVAR test. The mean length of each newspaper selected was recorded and entered as a covariate when comparing to the frequency of articles on PWD.

Appropriate terminology and tone were evaluated using a t-test, a comparison of means for each dependent variable between collegiate papers and metropolitan papers.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter presents data collected from the newspapers and an analysis of covariance and t-tests to detect the significant differences for each dependent variable. Tables and figures are used to depict the relationship between use of preferred language, tone, page length, and total number of articles between collegiate and metropolitan papers. Three out of the four analyses demonstrated significant statistical results.

Reliability

A department faculty member served as the second rater. The inter-rater reliability showed a 63% agreement for each of the ratings of tone and preference. Analysis covered thirty-five preferred terms and tone ratings from twenty-eight articles. Inter-rater data showed significant agreement but not as high as desired. One explanation for the moderate level of agreement was that the raters used a multiple point Likert scale instead of a dichotomous rating, as is typical of inter-rater reliability. Hence, with more choices, the probability for disagreement was higher.

Results

Table 5: Planned Comparisons by Newspapers: t-tests

Dependent Variable	Paper						t	df
	Collegiate			Metro				
	M	SD	n	M	SD	n		
Preferred Language	2.22	1.09	421	2.61	1.09	1226	-6.29**	1645
Tone	1.98	0.81	421	2.10	0.73	1226	-0.72	1645
Number of pages	63.88	29.99	8	265.50	143.26	6	-3.39*	5.33
Number of articles	21.25	9.74	8	93.50	59.07	6	-2.97*	5.20

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$

Table 6: ANCOVAR for Frequency of articles x Source (Collegiate newspaper vs. Metro Paper)

Source	df	Mean Square	F	p
Intercept	1	202.85	2.475	0.144
Pages (Covariate)	1	17205.40	209.92	0.001
Source	1	93.56	1.14	0.308
Error	11	901.60		

Comparison of preferred language between collegiate and metropolitan papers yielded a significant difference ($t = -6.29, p < .001$). Collegiate papers averaged a preferred language rating of 2.22 while metropolitan papers averaged 2.61.

Comparison of tone was not significantly different between collegiate and metropolitan newspapers, with $t = -0.072$. The mean tone for metropolitan papers was 2.10 while the mean for collegiate newspapers was 1.98.

A significant difference was detected in number of pages per type of paper ($t = -3.39, p < .05$). From the eight collegiate papers analyzed the mean number of pages per paper was 63.88. Meanwhile, the six metropolitan papers analyzed averaged 142.26 pages per paper. Metropolitan papers thus had over two times the total length of all articles dedicated to PWD compared to collegiate papers.

ANCOVAR was used to compare the frequency of articles pertaining to disability controlling for the length of the articles. Analysis revealed no difference ($F(1,11) = 1.14, p = 0.308$) in the frequency of articles between sources (collegiate vs. metro). Notably, the significant difference in the frequency of articles variable disappeared when controlling for article length (Collegiate mean = 55.60, Metro mean = 47.71)

In a comparison of total number of articles from each newspaper another significant difference was noted ($t = -2.97, p < .05$). The six metropolitan papers averaged 93.50 articles per paper (for the forty issues selected for this study), while the eight collegiate papers averaged 21.25.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter discusses the data analyzed in chapter IV, focusing on what the results mean for disability language. Also, introduced in this chapter are visual representations of the words that were discovered in the articles.

Discussion

Metropolitan papers had higher (or more preferred) word ratings; their average was 2.61. When translated back to the preferred language scale this meant that metropolitan papers were between preferred and not-preferred language. While metropolitan papers were closer to the preferred scaling, the average for collegiate papers was closest to the not-preferred rating, with collegiate papers averaging a 2.22 rating. The results indicated that metropolitan papers used language more appropriate towards people with disabilities than did collegiate papers. This research finding was contrary the hypothesis in that it was metropolitan papers that were more considerate of their language use than collegiate papers. The results of this study did not support the research hypothesis.

It must be noted that all language on disabilities was included, but not all articles related directly to someone with a disability. One issue discovered while entering data was that mental health was often referenced as its own concept. Although the subtext was that mental health relates back to people, its portrayal in newspapers was often separated from the individuals who have a mental health diagnosis. Because of the division of person and condition in that terms were used without reference to any individual, these instances were rated as a 2.

Collegiate and metropolitan papers were about equal in their tone, with collegiate papers rating an average score of 1.98 versus metropolitan papers at 2.10. When comparing this to the tone Likert scale, the data suggested that each paper used disability language to be informative rather than the language intended to be favorable or unfavorable. This was considered a positive finding and suggested that each paper tried to be informative with language use rather than sensationalistic.

It is interesting to note that while both paper types were cautious in their tone and attempted to be informative, the message conveyed by word choice may be detrimental without meaning to be. Collegiate papers ended up over-weighted on the not-preferred language, which has the potential to promote stigmas associated with that language/word use. While metropolitan papers fared better on word use, they barely attained preferred language use. Clearly there is still a need to educate and attempt to improve language used by the media. The most confusing case with tone was the word “crazy.” There were multiple instances when crazy was used in reference to something good

Figure 2 represents the terminology used in just metropolitan papers. Again it can be noted that “mental, crazy, disability/ties, illness and elder(ly)” are very prevalent. A difference here was the greater emphasis on the word “people” than in Figure 1. An emerging word is “suffered,” which becomes slightly noticeable with metropolitan papers. “Suffered” is considered sensationalistic language, which large papers might have used to entice readership. “People” plays a prominent role, suggesting that metropolitan papers might have included “people with ...” more often. This might have explained the better language/word preference score found among metropolitan papers.

Figure 2: Visual representation of word frequency for metropolitan newspapers



Collegiate-only word choices are shown in Figure 3. Consistently throughout the three figures the words “crazy, mental, disability/ties/ed, health, wheelchair, illness and elderly” appear. However collegiate papers put less focus on “elderly” and “disability.” This is the first time “elder” is not a prominent word. Instead of “disability,” collegiate papers favored the past tense form “disabled.” “Students” became a prominent word choice, which made sense considering the population who write the papers as well as the paper's primary audience. In metropolitan papers “elderly” was the most discussed population.

CHAPTER VI: SUMMARY & CONCLUSION

Introduction

This final chapter discusses the initial hypothesis of the study in comparison to the results and summarizes the findings. It also focuses on limitations of the study, implications for practice, and concludes with ideas for future studies.

Who writes it better

It was hypothesized that college newspaper reporters would utilize more person-first terminology than metropolitan reporters because it was taught to them more recently in courses and because of more real life experiences with PWD. In actuality it was the journalists working at metropolitan papers who demonstrated better use of person-first terminology. Perhaps this is because journalists in metropolitan papers have completed their college studies and have learned the lessons and understands how to reference people with disabilities. Either way, both groups could use improvement in their terminology in relation to people with disabilities. This was demonstrated in a number of articles where a variety of professionals and advocates spoke about awareness topics. Often direct quotes would use person-first terminology, but the author of the article would switch back into non-preferred language or become sensationalistic (i.e. they suffered or struggled). This was ironic considering some of the articles were trying to educate people to not use inappropriate language.

Both types of papers were able to keep the tone at an informational level. This is beneficial because even if the language is not preferred, at least the tone was not negative or overly sensationalistic. Ideally, the trend will continue to be informational and move gradually toward a more favorable view of people with disabilities.

In summary, metropolitan newspapers had more articles and pages to discuss topics that used disability language. Metropolitan papers were found to use preferred language terminology in comparison to collegiate papers, which tended to use non-preferred language. Multiple thematic word categories occurred across all of the papers, such as “mental, disability and crazy.” Yet, each paper also catered to their readers, with collegiate papers citing “students” more often and metropolitan papers using “elderly” and “people” more.

Return to Gilbert et al.

The concern lies in the overall trend. Although Gilbert et al. (1997) examined a different set of newspapers, they noted that disability terminology remained mostly in the “not-preferred” to “preferred” range. Based on present findings, disability language has not changed as much as hoped.

Semantic representation in the media still lingers in the “not-preferred” to “preferred” language range. Gilbert et al. warned that “there needs to be continued research to monitor all types of media, particularly with regards to the use of most appropriate language. If we are to expect positive changes in the social environment, we must encourage and expect positive change in the media” (1997, p. 119-120). It has been eighteen years since that study, and language about disabilities still faces the same issues.

The media has a long history of using PWD as sympathetic figures to gain attention (and often financial donations). Easter Seals, March of Dimes, Paralysis Dances, all use what Longmore calls “poster children”: images of children with disabilities to elicit sympathy and open pockets to get donations (Davis, 2013, p. 34). These methods are still used today. Newspapers can utilize these methods to elicit reader interest and sympathies. This could have been one of the many reasons that the language and terminology has not changed.

However, the tone might show suggestions towards change in how the media talks about people with disabilities. Longmore noted when discussing PWD that “frequently used terms also express perceptions of helplessness and dependency: ‘victim’, ‘abnormal’, ‘defective’ [etc]... a disability is seen as engulfing the person’s social identity” (1985, p. 420). If this were still consistently true, the study should have found tone to be unfavorable; rather, tone was found to be informational. This could be because of advocacy from “disability civil rights activists ... attempting to deal with the issue of prejudice more directly” by suggesting their own disability terminology and preferred “terms of identification” (Longmore, 1985, p. 423).

Limitations of Study

One limitation of the study was word choices. “Seniors” (in reference to older adults) should have been analyzed. During the study the word “mad” had to be dropped, as it was too prevalent (often not referring to PWD), would have skewed the data, and time constraints had to be taken into consideration. There is always the concern for human error. One researcher collected all of the data electronically through searching key terms. Articles may have been missed or discarded as not applicable. “Mental health” also had to be redefined during the study, since it was often used without being related to a person(s) with a disability. Not all the words directly related to individuals with disabilities, so end results had to focus upon disability language. Often words would trigger specific events such as “March Madness,” which has no relation to disability studies. However, since it used disability language, or at least a specific search term, analyzing it became tricky.

Other uncontrollable variables must be considered. For instance, perhaps metropolitan newspaper editors could be more watchful about language use because of sensitivity to their

readership. In another possible scenario, a journalist receiving feedback from a reader (via an angry letter) and may become more sensitive in their language use. Another factor that cannot be controlled for is the reporters themselves. There could be a particular individual who skewed the findings because they happened to specialize in or focus on writing about disabilities. Editors may watch for inappropriate references and change them before it becomes a problem. Such disproportionate influence of one writer or the newspaper could have affected results.

Implications for Practice

Individuals, professionals, organizations, business, and universities need to continue to advocate for person-first language use with reference to disability in public media. The *Associated Press Style-Guide* for journalists recommends following up of any mental health diagnosis with a description of the diagnosis, and to only mention it when necessary after confirmation from a professional that the person indeed has the diagnosis. This rarely occurs in the samples of articles about mental health. Continuing education and conscientious effort toward adaption and use of disability-appropriate language must continue. Therapeutic Recreation Specialists need to continue interacting with and educating the community, including media sources, by promoting positive images and terminology about individuals with disabilities.

It is also critical that specialists of all kinds working with disability pay attention to the preferred language of the individual they are working with. Preferred language is “an emerging language, being developed by handicapped persons themselves and particularly influenced by the disability civil rights movement, actively resist stigma and social subordination, seeks to create an opposing positive social identity, and in some instances, affirms a minority group identity” (Longmore, 1985, p.423). PWD are moving away from medical or government-given terminology and towards terminology they give to themselves.

Historically, the media has taken advantage of images of PWD, especially children, to boost fundraising efforts. The sadder and more sensationalistic the story, the more money the public would donate. Organizations such as The Easter Seals, Jerry’s Kids, the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis, Polio Dances, and even an Arthritis telethon have all used children with disabilities for fundraising because “children raise more money than adults” (Longmore, 1985, p. 34-36). The media has long relied on these images to tug at the heart strings of the public. Longmore notes that organizations would have nationwide searches to find children who “heart-tuggingly dependent... his clear, sweet, high-pitched voice... together with this angelic face, breaks the heart... [or] a special magnetism that will draw you near and steal your heart... they had to appear helpless but they mustn’t be too disabled” (1985, p.37). Of course, newspapers supported these images by promoting

the fundraising events on their pages. For political candidates it is considered good press to have a photo taken with a child who has a disability. Hillary Clinton and George H.W. Bush have been guilty of this (Longmore, 1985, p.38). As a professional, it becomes a very fine line to walk. Where is the line between promoting information and promoting a specific cause often designed to benefit someone besides the PWD? Ideally, those in the profession of therapeutic recreation would like to see positive articles that are well-written, promoting not only proper language, but proper messages as well.

Future Studies

It would be interesting to analyze newspapers and media news sources that exist solely online, as these sources can employ individuals who do not come from journalistic backgrounds. It would also be interesting to correlate every time “older adults” is related to health care and fraud, and “mental health” in relation to (criminal) justice or law. Specific events often occur over a time intervals and may influence narratives about disability; in this study, several articles focused on two young women who attempted to kill their friend in the name of a fictional being named “Slenderman.” Several of the articles debated the mental health status of the girls. A continuing observation from previous studies suggests that often a series of related events/articles about a PWD occurs during the “historical period” covered by the study. One option for a future study would be to find these catalytic events and track all of the articles around the event to see if disability language changes in correlation with the event’s occurrence. Another future study would be to look into newspapers portraying the poster children icon to evoke the public’s sympathy, as Longmore suggested (1985).

Conclusion

Metropolitan papers fared better than their collegiate counterparts when using disability language. Both collegiate and metropolitan newspapers, however, have room to improve. Over the last eighteen years little has changed in disability language in the media. Today and into the future advocates need to keep promoting and educating the public about persons with disabilities. There have been some improvements, but there is still a long way to go.

APPENDIX

Dates of study

1/10/2014	7/31/2014
1/13/2014	
2/7/2014	8/6/2014
2/17/2014	8/15/2014
	8/26/2014
3/18/2014	
3/31/2014	9/1/2014
	9/5/2014
4/14/2014	9/17/2014
4/22/2014	9/24/2014
5/1/2014	10/17/2014
5/8/2014	10/30/2014
5/9/2014	
5/12/2014	11/7/2014
5/13/2014	11/10/2014
	11/14/2014
6/3/2014	11/19/2014
6/12/2014	
6/24/2014	12/1/2014
	12/19/2014
7/7/2014	12/22/2014
7/9/2014	12/26/2014
7/17/2014	12/29/2014
7/28/2014	12/30/2014

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