

PEDAGOGY

**Utilizing Documentary Film
as a Pedagogical Methodology:
Exploring the Student Experience
Through Writing to Learn
After Viewing
*The Rebound:
A Wheelchair Basketball Story***

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Abstract

This study explored the effect of a documentary film on college students through the write-to-learn (WTL) process, including how students experience the film, their feelings about the experience, and the manner in which the film informed perceptions of or actions toward inclusion and disability sport. A convenience sample of 204 undergraduate students enrolled in a general education lifetime fitness and wellness kinesiology course ($M_{age} = 19.89$; 55.4% female, 81.8% Caucasian) completed a short questionnaire. After data collection was complete, long-format responses were compiled into a spreadsheet and open coded by the first and third authors independently. In total, participants' responses were coded into 332, 258, and 240 codes for the first, second, and third long-format questions,

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respectively. The most common response categories were gained new knowledge, inspirational, power of personal stories, emotional, I learned a lot, and people with disabilities are able. Disability sport experiences, including the viewing of a disability-focused documentary film, can offer a platform from which students can examine dispositions toward disability, evaluate the effect of their dispositions on other people, and potentially experience a change in perspective.

Film has been used as an educational tool to pose questions about important social issues, to evolve consciousness through storytelling, and to offer an avenue for critical thinking (Brown, 2011). Using film in the classroom offers a blend of visual and audible learning opportunities for the student (Miller, 2009) and brings complex concepts to life (Kuzma & Haney, 2001). The power of film to address sociocultural topics is manifested through a film's ability to stimulate action, change perceptions, and cultivate social transformation (McKay, 2017).

Documentary film as a teaching tool has been used in numerous academic disciplines. Educators have used science fiction movies to examine how students learn science (Barnett et al., 2006), educational films to examine future teachers' perceptions of their careers (Kontas, 2016), and films about culture to examine students' multicultural awareness (Rorrer & Furr, 2009) and attitudes toward race relations (Loewen, 1991). Additionally, films have been and can be used as a stimulating means for teaching students about disability (Safran, 1998). According to Schwartz et al. (2010), using film as a pedagogical methodology can have a "profound impact" on students' perceptions of disability (p. 846). Students have reported that viewing films on disability in which real people engage in daily living activities (e.g., school, work, relationships, and entertainment) dispels stereotypes (Schwartz et al., 2010). Thus, screening a film as part of the educational experience in the classroom can offer an appealing pedagogical approach for millennial students to learn about disability.

Writing has been used to increase student engagement, critical thinking, reflection, and knowledge transformation (Bean, 2011). Goldenberg, Lee, and O'Bannon (2010) found that most college professors who use film for educational purposes also require reflective

writing so students can carefully consider the learned knowledge in a safe and thoughtful environment. In-class write-to-learn (WTL) is a technique utilized to increase understanding of material through writing and to facilitate engagement with materials in an active and thoughtful manner (Bean, 2011; Gingerich et al., 2014). When employing a WTL strategy, instructors may ask students to evaluate a topic or experience, apply a topic or experience to their own life to derive deeper connections and meaning, unpack the content of a topic or experience, or summarize the benefits of a topic or experience. The usefulness of WTL is highlighted through the countless ways that it can be introduced in a learning environment. Gingerich et al. (2014) identified numerous benefits of WTL activities, including the ability to be completed in a short time frame, the focus on the learning process (not the product), and the ability for students to use higher level thinking skills such as evaluation, application, and integration. While the tangible learning benefits (e.g., performance on a final test) are mixed in regard to WTL activities (Butler, Phillmann, & Smart, 2001; Gingerich et al., 2014; Nevid, Pastva, & McClellan, 2012), the promotion of active learning processes that support deep engagement with the material, as well as application and integration of concepts, has been documented (Bean, 2011; McDaniel, Waddill, & Einstein, 1988; Reynolds, Thaiss, Katkin, & Thompson, 2012). Interventions utilizing written activities have improved knowledge, perceptions, and acceptance of disability (Lindsay & Edwards, 2013). Thus, this study explored the effect of a documentary film on college students through the WTL process, including how students experience the film, their feelings about the experience, and the manner in which the film informed perceptions of or actions toward inclusion and disability sport.

Method

Research Approach

This study was situated in a transformative approach (Banks & McGee-Banks, 2004). According to Banks and McGee-Banks (2004), research on the use of film in the development of culturally responsive attitudes is rooted in the transformative approach. This approach supports the viewer in experiencing a variety of perspectives and cultural vantage points, with characters and story

lines representing the point of view of minority cultures (Banks & McGee-Banks, 2004). When viewing film, students can understand and relate to the characters with whom they may have little in common, allowing perspectives and thoughts on marginalization and identity development to form (Bluestone, 2000). Students are transformed by moving through an empathetic identification with the characters from the story, reflecting on their own personal values and experiences, and challenging the lens through which they view the characters (Brown, 2011).

Participants

Participants were a convenience sample of 204 undergraduate students enrolled in a general education lifetime fitness and wellness kinesiology course ($M_{\text{age}} = 19.89$; 55.4% female, 81.8% Caucasian) at a university in a Mid-Atlantic state. Two of the participants (< 1.0%) identified with having a disability. Eighty-two participants (40%) identified with having a friend or family member with a disability. The treatment of participants was in accordance with the ethical standards of the American Psychological Association. Permission to conduct the study was granted by the Institutional Review Board at the primary researcher's university.

Intervention

Implementation of the intervention involved screening the 76-min documentary film *The Rebound: A Wheelchair Basketball Documentary*. The film is an award-winning documentary intended to raise awareness about adapted sport. *The Rebound* depicts the journey of three athletes as they work, with their teammates, to earn a national wheelchair basketball title. Participants viewed the film during a typical class meeting. The researcher was not the instructor of record for the course but was present for the documentary screening to introduce the documentary and invite students to participate in the study.

Data Collection

A nine-item questionnaire was used in this study. Participants completed the questionnaire at the conclusion of the class meeting in which they viewed the film. The questionnaire included six demographic questions (age, gender, race, year in school, do you identify

with having a physical disability, and do you know any friends or family who are living with a physical disability) and three WTL questions that were intended to elicit the participants' experiences during and after the viewing experience. The questions were created by the researchers, who utilized them alone and within a larger set of questions in a variety of studies related to the documentary. The three WTL questions were (a) describe your experience watching the documentary, (b) describe how you feel about your experience watching the documentary, and (c) how does watching the film shape your attitudes or actions toward inclusion, adapted athletes, and disability sport? The collected data were used to identify topics for further exploration and were not intended to replicate the richness of data that could be derived from other qualitative methodologies (Shields & Synnot, 2014).

Data Coding and Analysis

Data coding was done in a two-step inductive approach that has been used in previous research (Haegele, Zhu, & Davis, 2018; Shields & Synnot, 2014). This approach is recommended when researchers want to code specifically in relation to several categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

After data collection was complete, data were compiled into a spreadsheet and the first and third authors independently open coded each long-format question. First, for each long-format question response, whether it included a few words or a sentence, the coders had to grasp the major idea that the students reported. Next, the coders assigned a code (i.e., short name) to each response. Responses that spanned several content areas were assigned more than one code. Following, codes were reassembled and grouped into broader categories. Broader categories were derived from the coders and were discussed until 100% agreement was reached on the broad categories and the placement of the codes into each broad category. In total, 10 categories (unique to this study) were used across questions including (a) changed attitude (participants altered their mental outlook), (b) people with disabilities are able (participants reflected on ability instead of disability), (c) equality (participants felt a sense of parallelism), (d) emotional (participants demonstrated a variety of feelings), (e) gained new knowledge (participants increased their understanding and cognition), (f) inclusion and disability sport are

important (participants saw the value of inclusion and adapted sport programs), (g) inspirational (participants were filled with thoughts of inspirit and encouragement), (h) not interesting (participants were unstimulated or bored), (i) power of personal studies (participants were moved by the depth of influence the individual narratives advanced), and (j) respect for people with disabilities (participants held individuals with disabilities in high esteem).

To ensure reliability and consistency, the codes were only entered into categories when both coders agreed on them. In instances when disagreements emerged, a third coder (the second author) read the response and assigned it to one of the two codes provided by the two coders. Subsequent to the coding procedure, descriptive statistics, such as frequency counts of codes, were found and presented for each code and category.

Results

In total, participants' responses were coded into 332, 258, and 240 codes for the first, second, and third long-format questions, respectively. As Table 1 shows, responses categorized as gained new knowledge ($n = 80$; 24%), inspirational ($n = 80$; 24%), and power of personal stories ($n = 71$; 21%) were the most commonly reported responses to Question 1 (i.e., Can you describe your experience watching the documentary?). Among codes, inspirational ($n = 80$; 24%), gained new awareness ($n = 29$; 9%), and emotional ($n = 25$, 8%) were the most common for Question 1. For Question 2 (i.e., Describe how you feel about your experience watching the documentary), inspirational ($n = 67$; 26%), emotional ($n = 66$; 26%), and I learned a lot ($n = 63$; 24%) were the most commonly entered categories, whereas inspirational ($n = 56$; 22%) and new knowledge ($n = 27$; 10%) were the most commonly used codes (see Table 2). Finally, for Question 3 (i.e., How does watching the film shape your attitudes or actions toward inclusion, adapted athletes, and disability sport?), people with disabilities are able ($n = 58$; 24%), gained new knowledge ($n = 47$; 20%), and inclusion and disability sport are important ($n = 44$; 18%) were the most commonly used categories (see Table 3). Among the codes used in this question, people with disabilities are able ($n = 32$; 13%), new knowledge ($n = 32$; 13%), and inclusion is important ($n = 26$; 11%) were the most commonly used.

Table 1
Coded and Categorized Responses for Question 1

Category	Code	Response example
Gained New Knowledge (80)	Gained new awareness (29)	"I didn't realize there was an entire league."
	Eye-opening (18)	"It was very eye-opening."
	People with disabilities are able (10)	"They are just as capable as anyone without a disability."
	People with disabilities are resilient (10)	"The individuals in the movie were incredibly resilient."
	Enlightening (7)	"I found the documentary to be very enlightening."
	I appreciate being able-bodied more (3)	"It made me realize how grateful I am to have my legs."
	Disability sport is intense (1)	"It was cool to see the training program and intensity of the team."
	Empathy (1)	"Empathy, but also admiration."
	Training is intense (1)	"Knowing that people train just as hard, if not harder as athletes without disabilities."
Inspirational (80)	Inspirational (80)	"It was very inspiring to see what they went through."

Table 1 (cont.)

Category	Code	Response example
Power of Personal Stories (71)	Interesting personal stories (15)	"I was very engaged and interested in the biographies of the players."
	Interesting (12)	"It was interesting to see them have such a great attitude."
	People with disabilities are like everyone else (6)	"I feel as if the film aimed to establish that these people are human beings before they are wheelchair bound."
	Connections (6)	"I felt myself wanting them to succeed."
	Uplifting (6)	"It was moving, very uplifting to see that people don't limit themselves."
	Overcoming barriers (5)	"I was able to see the sides of living with a disability and the strength that it takes to overcome certain obstacles."
	Powerful messages/moments (4)	"Makes me realized that life's a game and the only way to lose is by giving up."
	Self-reflective (4)	"It reminded me of when I had to spend 4 years in a wheelchair."
	Perseverance (3)	"Seeing these guys not stop doing what they love because of a setback makes me realize to never give up."
	Hard work pays off (3)	"Seeing all the men being out into something they love, even though there are difficulties and how they motivate themselves was a happy piece and I really enjoyed it."
	Entertaining (2)	"Documentary was entertaining and inspiring."
	Anything is possible (2)	"This documentary was a reminder that you can do anything, and the only thing stopping you, is you."
	Holistic portrayal (1)	"I was able to see the sides of living with a disability and the strength that it takes to overcome certain obstacles."
	Intriguing (1)	"It was very eye opening and intriguing to see all that they can do, but also how some of them changed their lives around."
Humbling (1)	"It was humbling and I really appreciated getting the insight."	

Table 1 (cont.)

Category	Code	Response example
Emotional (63)	Emotional (25)	"A very emotional movie."
	Enjoyment (15)	"I really enjoyed watching since I have no previous experience with people with disabilities."
	Love (3)	"I loved it."
	Surprised people with disabilities are happy (3)	"It was interesting to see them have such a great attitude given their life challenges."
	Happy about (their) achievements (2)	"How they motivate themselves was a happy piece and I really enjoyed it."
	Hopeful (2)	"It's remarkable to see the human spirit shine through difficult situations and gives me hope that there is good spirits in the world."
	Empowering (2)	"It was definitely emotional and empowering to see people with something so seemingly huge taken away from them, but they see themselves as more than able."
	Sympathy (2)	"Sympathy, but also admiration for the Paralympic basketball players."
	Positive (2)	"It was cool."
	Touching (2)	"The documentary was very touching and it was amazing to see how determined the people were."
	Sadness (2)	"I felt really bad for everyone involved."
	Ableism (1)	"We should care more about disabled people. Life it tough for them."
	Awesome (1)	"It was awesome, made me think about my own life and direction and what I'm living for."
	Amazed (1)	"I really was amazed about what people can do when they really set their mind to do something."

Table 1 (cont.)

Category	Code	Response example
Changed Attitude (15)	Changed attitude (10)	“The documentary gave me a new perspective.”
	Impressive (4)	“It was really good. I could not do what they do. I have no upper body strength and suck at basketball so it was really impressive especially with everything they’ve been through.”
	Transformative (1)	“Transformative of thoughts and ideas regarding those living with disabilities.”
Not Interesting (1)	Not Interesting (1)	“I lost interest in the personal stories that weren’t related directly to their abilities to participate in athletics.”

Table 2
Coded and Categorized Responses for Question 2

Category	Code	Response example
Inspirational (67)	Inspirational (56)	“The film was very inspirational.”
	Happy about achievement (9)	“I felt inspired and my spirits uplifted. Just because you have a disability, you can still achieve any goal.”
	Impressive (2)	“It was very inspiring to see what they did with their situations.”
Emotional (66)	Motivation (12)	“I feel motivated to achieve anything I put my mind to. If they can, why can't I?”
	Emotional (9)	“I teared up during many parts of the movie.”
	Enjoyment (8)	“I enjoyed watching.”
	Uplifting (7)	“I really enjoyed watching it. It was uplifting.”
	Hopeful (4)	“I thought it was awesome and hopeful.”
	Awesome (3)	“Very uplifting and awesome experience.”
	Love (3)	“I loved it and was honestly one of the best documentaries I have watched.”
	Lack of connection (3)	“I found it hard to connect with. I have so little in common with the people.”
	Interesting (2)	“It was interesting watching their everyday lives.”
	Empathy (2)	“I feel for them because I have a family member who is in a wheelchair.”
	Touching (2)	“The documentary was very touching.”
	Amazed (2)	“I felt moments of excitement, amazement, and being perplexed throughout the different scenes of the film.”
	Mixed feelings (2)	“I have mixed feelings about it. I feel bad for some of the players, but some say their life was better after the injury.”
	Neutral (2)	“Overall the experience was neutral.”
	Proud (2)	“Proud that [individuals with disabilities] have an outlet like NWBA.”
Thought-provoking (1)	“It made me appreciate all they do much more and would make me more likely to include them.”	
Perplexed (1)	“I felt moments of excitement, amazement, and being perplexed throughout the different scenes of the film.”	
Sadness (1)	“Sad, but a very interesting and well-made video.”	

Table 2 (cont.)

Category	Code	Response example
I Learned a Lot (63)	New knowledge (27)	"I feel like I learned a lot about life."
	I appreciate being able-bodied more (13)	"Makes me realize how lucky I am and to not take things for granted."
	Enlightening (6)	"The documentary is very enlightening. It made me feel good watching all of them achieve their goals."
	People with disabilities are just like us (5)	"I feel hopeful for those with disabilities; they can still have careers, education, a family, etc."
	Resilience (4)	"I feel like this film did a good job of showing that life isn't over."
	Anything is possible (3)	"It made me happy to see those guys win their championship and follow their dreams; lets the audience know that anything is possible."
	Perseverance (2)	"They chose not to let this stop them."
	Worthwhile (1)	"I thought it was very worthwhile."
Rewarding (1)	"It is very humbling and rewarding."	

Table 2 (cont.)

Category	Code	Response example
Changed Attitude (44)	Changed attitude (9)	“It made me want to look past people’s outside appearance because that totally doesn’t mean anything.”
	Opened my eyes (7)	“Eye-opening experience.”
	Inclusion is important (4)	“I felt proud of those in the movie who found such confidence and hope through basketball. I have a cousin with severe cerebral palsy, and I think it is great to see inclusive, engaging options.”
	Personal stories (3)	“I think this experience was extremely positive and it was interesting getting to see all the hardships each one of them endured and still found a way to push through.”
	Strength of mind (3)	“It makes me think no matter your pain/disability, you can do anything.”
	People with disabilities are able (2)	“I felt inspired and my spirits uplifted. Just because you have a disability, you can still achieve any goal.”
	People with disabilities are athletes too (2)	“I feel like after watching these athletes, that nobody should have an excuse to [not] do anything.”
	Self-reflective (2)	“I feel changed from watching this film because I feel more culturally aware.”
	Respect (2)	“It makes me respect athletes with disabilities more and reminds me to be more adaptive in my own life.”
	Importance of sports (2)	“This experience has led me to feel a sense that sports are a completely inclusive activity.”
	Disproving stereotypes (2)	“I know I needed it—the only way to overcome stereotypes is to humbly learn about new situations.”
	Desire to do more (2)	“I would have liked to learn more about the history of the sport and other athletes.”
	Equality (1)	“Fine, I see the people as people, not disabled.”
	Focus on ability (1)	“I feel that more recognition should be made about all of the things people with disabilities CAN do.”

Table 3
Coded and Categorized Responses for Question 3

Category	Code	Response example
People With Disabilities Are Able (58)	People with disabilities are able (32)	“They can do it all and even more than us.”
	People with disabilities are just like everyone else (9)	“They can do everything like me. Just adapted differently.”
	Strength of mind (6)	“These people can so whatever they set their minds to.”
	People with disabilities are athletes too (4)	“It made me realize that the people playing disability sports are just regular people.”
	Impressive (3)	“What they do is so impressive.”
	Everyone is able (2)	“People shouldn’t feel less capable to play or be active. Just because you [have a disability] does not mean you’re incapable.”
	Anything is possible (2)	“I’ve always known that people can do what they want if they keep their mind to it. Watching this just made me really emphasize this.”
Gained New Knowledge (47)	New knowledge (32)	“I was aware of disability sport, but it was pleasant to see that it exists in adulthood too.”
	Funding (8)	“Programs like theirs should have more funding.”
	Importance of sport (5)	“It makes me love that they have sports for those with disabilities, to keep their confidence up.”
	Overcoming barriers (1)	“I feel even though they have limits, they have learned to overcome them.”
	Personal stories (1)	“It leads me to believe how each and every one has a story as well as an incredible dedication to the sport.”

Table 3 (cont.)

Category	Code	Response example
Inclusion and Disability Sport Are Important (44)	Inclusion is important (26)	“Inclusion is so important. It is so often that people with disabilities are told they can’t do something and that’s not true.”
	Support (5)	“I feel the same because I was very inclusive and now my feelings are regenerated.”
	Lack of knowledge (4)	“People don’t know enough about this.”
	Disability sport is important (2)	“It definitely makes me wish opportunities for disability sport were more widespread and advertised.”
	Desire to do more (2)	“We should do more to include adaptive athletes into sports and erase the stigma that they can’t do what individuals without physical disabilities can.”
	Need for attention (2)	“I think there was too little attention/funding/value placed in these programs. I’m not a huge sports fan but I would be more interested in watching sports on TV if diversity of abilities were portrayed as publicly as the men’s teams.”
	Appreciation of disability sport (1)	“It gives me a better appreciation for all sports and [athletes with disabilities].”
Respect for People With Disabilities (34)	Respect for people with disabilities (17)	“Same attitude since I’ve always had respect for Paralympics.”
	No change (9)	“I have always had the utmost respect for these type of people.”
	Persistence (3)	“I have always had the utmost respect for people who don’t stop doing what they love.”
	I appreciate being able-bodied more (2)	“Enjoy the life I have right now. Respect [people with disabilities], especially [athletes with disabilities].”
	Disproving stereotypes (2)	“It hasn’t changed it. These people still have fully functioning bones to use their determination to disprove a stereotype.”
	Reinforced feelings (1)	“Just reinforced it.”

Table 3 (cont.)

Category	Code	Response example
Equality (22)	Equality (18)	“It’s important for people with a disability to be able to do what they love.”
	Opened my eyes (3)	“It opens my eyes to their strength and abilities. I am very welcoming person, but this showed me that everyone has their own story and own strength for determination.”
	Tolerance (1)	“It makes me more open to them.”
	Opportunity (1)	“I believe that everyone should have equal opportunity—disabled or not.”
Change in Attitude (18)	Changed my attitude (16)	“It changed my attitude because I had no idea how much they could do.”
	Exclusion (1)	“They just need a place to feel welcome and accepted, like everyone else. I think sharing this experience with others of similar ability offers much more than trying to integrate them into normal sports/gym life.”
	People with disabilities are different	“It is clear that they have as much potential as everyone else, it’s just different.”
Inspiration (14)	Inspiration (8)	‘They have been through so much and have come so far’
	Resilience (3)	‘It just reminds me that people can make the most of any situation’
	Ableism guilt (3)	‘I feel bad for judging/thinking less of people in wheel chairs.’
	Motivation (1)	‘It makes me motivated to do whatever I want to do.’

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the effect of a documentary film through the WTL process, including how students experience the film, their feelings about the experience, and the manner in which the film informed perceptions of or actions toward inclusion and disability sport. Utilizing the transformative approach, this study provides data indicating the formation of culturally responsive attitudes, as students come to understand the point of view of individuals with physical disabilities and the adapted sport culture through viewing a documentary film. The formation of culturally responsive attitudes, as well as the understanding of a new perspective, aligns with the work of Bluestone (2000), Banks and McGee-Banks (2004), and Brown (2011). For example, results of this study indicate that viewing the documentary film influences participants to adopt a different lens through which to view persons with disabilities.

Research suggests that education and awareness activities aid in the formation of new knowledge and can have a positive effect on attitudes and perceptions toward adapted sport and individuals with disabilities (Grenier, Collins, Wright, & Kearns, 2014; Lindsay & Edwards, 2013; Lundberg, Zabriskie, Smith, & Barney, 2008; McKay, Block, & Park, 2015; McKay, Haegele, & Block, 2019). Consistent with the existing research, among the most commonly reported experiences related to viewing the documentary included “gained new knowledge” and “I learned a lot.” Similar to the McKay et al.’s (2019) qualitative study utilizing the Paralympic School Day (PSD) awareness program, this documentary experience provided participants with a platform to find meaning in their own beliefs and experiences, by delivering a realistic and holistic portrayal of disability sport and the athletes who participate in disability sport. Specific to the university level, connections can be drawn to the Lundberg et al. (2008) study that supported the notion that institutes of higher education are appropriate and logical locations to influence social attitudes and attitude change through disability awareness programming.

A goal of the documentary film, as listed on the film’s website, is to inspire—inspire action, inspire communities, and inspire inclusive thought. Consistent with the goal of the documentary, “inspiration” was a commonly reported experience, which brings to life the power of personal stories to inspire (a positive). On the other hand, the

theme “inspiration” may also highlight the power of societal norms that promote disability as inferior, creating a culture that expects the least and in turn considers success or apparent normalcy as inspirational (a negative). The responses in this study related to inspiration are consistent with existing research on disability sport awareness activities, especially as it relates to the negative aspect of the word. For example, participants responded with “It was very inspiring to see what they did with their situations,” “It just reminds me that people can make the most of any situation,” and “It was very inspiring to see what they went through.” These comments stem from a lens of ability (Evans, Bright, & Brown, 2015), where perceptions toward individuals with disabilities are unfavorable and perceptions toward being able-bodied are superior (Hehir, 2002). Societal beliefs often hold individuals with disabilities as inferior to individuals without disabilities (Hunt & Hunt, 2000). As such, disability is considered a negative attribute, and the bodies of individuals with disabilities are considered faulty or nonconforming (Haegele & Hodge, 2016). Watching characters whom society perceives to have faulty or nonconforming bodies succeed in tasks of everyday living and go above and beyond on the basketball court sparks the inspiration response predominantly from participants who are able-bodied. McKay et al. (2019) unpacked the idealized notion of normal that is often ascribed to individuals who are able-bodied, and noted that awareness interventions have the ability to support participants in challenging the idealized and exclusive notion of able-bodied superiority.

In addition to gaining new knowledge and shifting paradigms, this study also demonstrates the importance of emotions in the experience of viewing a documentary film. Participant responses included emotions as a recurrent theme, overwhelmingly reflecting positive emotions. This aligns with research that indicates the emotional connections inherent in documentary film viewing experiences (Kavan & Burne, 2009; Kuzma & Haney, 2001). Donahue and Miller (2016) reported that emotional engagement creates an improved understanding of course concepts. The film’s power is found in the emotions it stimulates, as these emotions leave a lasting effect, which may result in motivation (Kontas, 2016) or a call to action to cultivate social transformation (McKay, 2017).

Many themes and categories in this study have been commonly reported in disability sport research, as indicated in the aforementioned paragraphs. However, disconfirming themes and categories emerged that, while less frequently reported, are interesting to bring to the discussion. For example, “people with disabilities are different,” “sadness,” “lack of connection,” and “exclusion” were limited in number and reflect a more negative response. These categories may be underrepresented because of social desirability, which often leads to the underreporting of negative perceptions and thoughts on survey measures, whereby the participants give what they think is the most socially acceptable or desirable response (Fisher, 1993) instead of answering in an honest, truthful manner. McKay et al. (2015) surmised social desirability to be a factor in the underreporting of negative thoughts or experiences. These disconfirming cases provide evidence that although the documentary film was a powerful experience for many participants, other more powerful interventions may be required to elicit attitudinal changes among those with deeply rooted conceptions of disability as a negative attribute. For example, an intervention could couple the film with a hands-on skill practice session in which participants learn wheelchair basketball skills and participate in a scrimmage, ideally alongside athletes who regularly participate in the sport.

A final interesting group of categories focused on access, awareness, and equity, and the need for adapted athletics to be more integrated in society. The mission of the documentary is to promote a world where all people, regardless of ability, have equal opportunities to participate in sport (Rebound the Film, n.d.). The documentary utilizes awareness as its avenue for creating change. Culture and change are inextricably linked, and documentaries help create culture by building deep empathy, directly involving the audience by immersing them in the lives of others, and prompting the audience to act and engage (Doc Society, n.d.). Much of the data in this study reflect this empathy, immersion, and perspective on engagement.

Documentary film offers an avenue for enlightenment toward disability and inclusion. Disability sport experiences, including the viewing of a disability-focused documentary film, offer a platform from which students can examine dispositions toward disability, evaluate the effect of their dispositions on other people, and

potentially experience a change in perspective. WTL helps students develop greater control of the concepts, conceptual frameworks, skills, processes, and issues addressed in the film and deepens the learning from the documentary film experience. Several limitations should be considered in interpretation of the findings. First, the participants in this study may not be representative of the college student population; participants were enrolled at a public, comprehensive university. Second, experiences related to viewing the documentary were self-reported and therefore may not be accurate; students may give responses based on what they think is socially acceptable rather than indicating their actual experiences. Finally, it cannot be assumed that the findings will generalize across all adapted sport-focused documentary films, as each film may elicit different experiences. Future research should extend the use of the documentary film as a teaching and learning tool, to gain a comprehensive understanding of its effect. This includes replicating the research with focus group interviews, utilizing quantitative pre–post surveys, and extending the WTL prompts for enhanced critical thinking, analysis, and evaluation.

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