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FIRST-PERSON PERSPECTIVES IN DISABILITY COVERAGE ON THE AUSTRALIAN WEB

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ABSTRACT

In this study, we focus on first-person accounts of disability found online to examine the self-presentations that are available to young people in public web resources. We curated a specialised corpus of Australian webpages that refer to disability, from which we were able to identify first-person accounts of persons with disability. A collocation analysis of the use of first-person pronouns in these accounts, compared with collocates identified in accounts from other kinds of contributors, reveals patterns in how disability experiences are presented online. Alongside discussion of the prominent themes that characterise published first-person accounts of disability, we consider aspects of narrative form to facilitate a critical discussion of how these online resources offer a model for understanding disability. We find that the Australian webpages offer a relatively narrow range of disability representations that favour positive outcomes and emphasise the role of other supportive social actors in an individual's disability experience.

KEYWORDS

disability, lived experience, online communication, narrative, agency

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First-person perspectives in disability coverage on the Australian Web

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1. Introduction

Public discourses around disability are consequential to how disability is perceived and experienced. The biopsychosocial model of disability (see Hunt, 2024) recognises that there are multiple factors that constitute 'disability', orienting around:

- impairment as a bodily and embodied phenomenon
- psychological components—namely, individuals' thoughts and feelings
- social factors, concerning relationships and social support

The social dimension highlights the significance of the context(s) in which impairment is experienced and how systems devised by society, such as healthcare systems, determine disability. As such, there are important aspects of this social dimension that align well with notions of discourse, that posit that social reality both produces and is produced by language (Fairclough, 1992). The applicability of a discourse-analytic approach to disability has been outlined by Grue (2015), who sees—in discourse analysis—the potential to encompass 'the full range of language functions, and the full range of interaction between language, language users, and the world, that produce the words, concepts and frames of thought that are integral to disability and disabled experience' (p. 8).

Persons with disability themselves represent one group of language users determining the concepts and frames through which we discuss disability and there is increasing recognition of the significance of lived experience in public discourse and policymaking (Stein & Lord, 2010). Yet there remain concerns that with respect to disability experience, 'public opinions, professional practice and settings may speak far louder' (Kittelsaa, 2014, p. 29). Representations of disability in publicly available materials generate both descriptive and normative conceptions of disability (Grue, 2015). Subsequently, Cocq and Ljuslinder (2020) highlight the need for 'platforms and public spaces where people with their own experiences of disability can describe their situation in their own words and not be described by non-disabled people, which continues to be the most common practice' (p. 82). Online forms of communication have generated avenues for new means of social participation and enhanced opportunities for people with disabilities to disseminate their stories and opinions (Pearson & Trevisan, 2015). The potential breadth and variety of those representations that are available in public web resources is of great interest to researchers concerned with discursive representations and even specific linguistic formulations (Potts *et al.*, 2023). In this study, we report our approach to targeting particular representations found online that take the form of first-person accounts of disability and in doing so, explore the reporting of various social factors that shape these self-presentations. Our corpus-based analysis of first-person accounts of disability considers not only how contributors position themselves as actors within social systems, but also how these accounts are presented as stories in the context of webpages concerned with disability services, or sporting activities, for example.

2. Investigating disability discourses

Informed by a study of self-representations on Instagram, Cocq and Ljuslinder (2020) remind us that the meaning of 'disability' is not unequivocal and that '[m]ultiple and overlapping understandings of disability also coexist when people with disabilities themselves discuss disability' (p. 82). There is a widely recognised debate around person-first (i.e., person with disability) versus identity-first (i.e., disabled person) language, for example, that has a long and complex history and has led to different preferences for naming practices (Grue, 2015). As such, analyses of how persons with disability present themselves, including how they name and position any impairment, can consider the extent to which individual accounts adhere to or challenge prevailing conceptualisations. The 'medical model' of disability represents one such prevailing conceptualisation, in which individuals are defined by a 'defect' to be cured and reliant upon health professionals (see Grue, 2015). In turn, one form of resistance observed by Kittelsaa (2014) in interviews with people with intellectual disability was the emphasis on their 'ordinariness', with participants distancing themselves from the stigmatised label of intellectual disability. Furthermore, participants were 'showing that they were active, intentional and goal oriented' in their self-presentations (p.40). Linguistic patterns associated with terms indexing impairment or disability can therefore offer insights into perceptions of self-efficacy and agency.

A critical approach to the language used in relation to disability, particularly by those with lived experience, can offer insights into how such experiences are informed by wider language practices. Potts *et al.* (2023) have shown how combining corpus techniques with Critical Discourse Analysis can facilitate large-scale investigations of language use in public contexts, with a study of identity-first and people-first language in Australian news media. Their analysis demonstrates how a study of collocations—the words consistently used alongside lexical items of interest—of 'disability' terms can highlight the syntactic structures through which normalising and othering associations are established. As such, we can contextualise instances observed in our data among wider patterns of talk about 'disability'.

Collocation analysis has been applied across health contexts to investigate the conceptualisation of health concerns, such as postnatal depression (PND; Kinloch & Jaworska, 2020), as well as healthcare interactions (Skelton *et al.*, 2002). Identifying collocational patterns, in turn, can direct analysts' attention toward representations of different social actors. For example, Kinloch and Jaworska (2020) find that *woman*, *my*, *I*, and *who* are collocates of *PND* in online forum data and subsequently investigate how illness is incorporated into representations of the self by those with lived experience. Skelton *et al.* (2002)

examined collocates of first-person pronouns used by doctors and patients in health consultations to explore the actions associated with their respective roles. Their summation is that patients can be characterised by the expression *I suffer* while doctors state, *I think* and *We will act*. Skelton *et al.* (2002) highlight the ambiguity in *we* for taking responsibility for actions, as well as who is making decisions about treatment. Subsequently, we can consider how those offering lived experience position themselves in relation to others when recounting their experiences, and what kinds of interactions and relationships they choose to report.

In this study, we focus on collocates of singular first-person pronouns in contributions of persons with disability to Australian webpages to identify patterns in the characteristics, actions and associations claimed by these individuals when they tell their stories. In doing so, we demonstrate how these first-person accounts are shaped by narrative aspects and variously position the teller within social contexts and structures that contribute to what it means to experience disability.

3. Data and methods

Our interest in this study was, broadly, in online depictions of life with disability that are available to young (aged 15–24) Australians, in accordance with the project aims of the Research Alliance for Youth Disability and Mental Health (2025). We report here those depictions that can be considered to be most directly linked to self-representation, by way of targeting first-person reports and associated actions and attributes. To investigate online depictions, we curated a specialised dataset, beginning with the Australian subset of the English Web 2021 corpus. As one of the enTenTen family of corpora (Jakubíček *et al.*, 2013), the English Web 2021 (enTenTen21) corpus captures general English language Internet content from over 120 million web pages (61.6 billion tokens), downloaded October–December, 2021. We focused on the pre-defined Australian subset i.e., texts taken from sources with the *.au domain*, on the basis that such texts would be prioritised in web searches conducted by people living in Australia. The sub-corpus is available through the online corpus analysis software *Sketch Engine* (Kilgarriff *et al.*, 2014) and which comprises 2,556,582 texts (1,083,884,536 tokens). Using this tool, we determined the frequently occurring terms for people and objects described as *disabled* or *with disability* through the Word Sketch function, which generates a collocational profile of query terms according to a range of formulations. For example, the formulation 'nouns modified by x' helped us to determine that the most frequent nouns modified by *disabled* are *people*, *child* and *access*. We searched the lemmatised forms of DISABLED and DISABILITY to include the inflected forms, i.e., *disabilities*. While references to disability at any life stage (or a non-specified time) would be of interest, our project is concerned with the transition to adulthood and so we sought to target accounts that would refer to experiences in adolescence. There are no terms that specifically designate people in the age range 15–24, so in order to target depictions that would have most relevance to our interest group—young Australians—we identified a shortlist of terms that were partly or wholly indicative of a 'youth' population, based on manual checking of the concordance lines. The shortlisted terms were the lemmas: YOUNG, CHILD, KID, YOUTH, ADOLESCENT, TEEN/TEENAGER, STUDENT, LEARNER, GIRL, BOY, DAUGHTER, SON, ORPHAN, ARTIST and ATHLETE. The resulting query allowed for more complex phrases, such as 'learners with permanent intellectual disabilities'.

We subsequently created a new corpus of texts taken from the Australian subset of the English Web corpus that included at least one occurrence of DISABLED or DISABILITY in relation to one of our youth terms, which we refer to as the Disability on the Australian Web corpus (DotAW corpus). The corpus comprises 4,165 texts and 6,712,754 tokens. We categorised the texts in the DotAW corpus by domain, based on the wider interests of the website on which they appeared. We identified the following domains: Advocacy; Arts & design; Commerce; Education; Employment; Event; Finance; Government; Health & wellbeing; Legal; Media; Religion; Sports & leisure. Websites categorised as 'Advocacy' were typically hosted by charities and NGOs, while the 'Health & wellbeing' domain incorporated websites offering clinical services, alongside those focused on lifestyle concerns, for example.

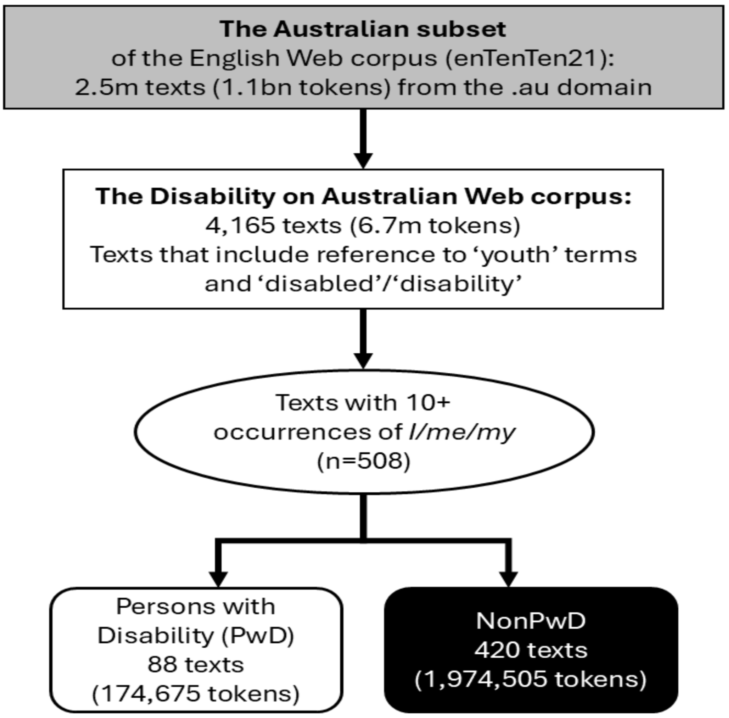

***Figure 1**: Processes in identifying web texts with first-person accounts from persons with disability*

Our objective was to focus on self-representations in the data and so we targeted first-person expressions through the use of the pronouns, *I*, *me* and *my*. We downsampled the DotAW corpus to texts that included a minimum of ten occurrences of *I/me/my* to target texts in which there was meaningful self-presentation. This resulted in a collection of 508 texts. While it was possible that a text could feature first-person accounts of a person with disability *and* a person not living with disability, we found that the webpages overwhelmingly favoured either (a) instances of one or more first-person accounts from people living with disability; *or* (b) accounts from people who were not (reported to be) living with disability, who would typically be a parent or carer of a person with disability, or a journalist or researcher as author of the web page content. This meant that we could separate and compare the 88 texts (174,675 tokens) representing first-person accounts of persons with disability (PwD) from the 420 texts (1,974,505 tokens) representing accounts of people not living with disability (NonPwD). These constitute the corpora used in the analysis. Quoted examples were checked to ensure that we are citing a confirmed person with disability. The procedures of this data curation are summarised in Figure 1.

We initially coded for type of disability with a view to investigating how experiences of physical and acquired (e.g., cervical cancer, spinal cord injury), physical and congenital (e.g., cerebral palsy), developmental (e.g., autism), behavioural or emotional (e.g., obsessive compulsive disorder), and sensory (e.g., deafness) impairments might relate to different kinds of reports. However, in the case of 29 (43.94%) out of 55 different individual PWDs, an impairment was not specified. Furthermore, impairment descriptions varied in specificity, from 'a rare, severe skin condition', to 'osteogenesis imperfecta' and we also saw cases of multiple impairments. Since we were not able to differentiate a sufficient number of cases according to meaningful categories, disability type was not part of our subsequent analysis.

	PwD corpus			**NonPwD corpus**		
Domain	Texts	I/me/my occurrences	I/me/my RF (per10k)	Texts	I/me/my occurrences	I/me/my RF (per10k)
Advocacy	29	1,551	198.12	86	5,057	118.07
Arts & design	0	0	0	18	722	77.03
Commerce	0	0	0	12	382	40.85
Education	12	347	262.50	56	1,897	85.40
Employment	2	44	299.52	1	12	384.62
Event	0	0	0	4	85	199.11
Finance	0	0	0	1	12	75.90
Government	11	530	330.20	61	2,885	55.42
Health & wellbeing	11	367	209.64	50	1,670	127.23
Legal	1	10	85.84	1	15	36.72
Media	19	962	293.79	103	6,540	185.28
Religion	0	0	0	18	1,057	208.73
Sports & leisure	3	184	129.26	9	300	42.15
Total	**88**	**3,995**	**228.71**	**420**	**20,634**	**104.50**

Table 1*: Raw and relative frequencies of I/me/my in each domain of the PwD and NonPwD corpora*

The occurrence of *I/me/my* in the PwD and NonPwD corpora, as well as the distribution across web domains, is presented in Table 1. The numbers for texts and occurrences show that the majority of first-person perspectives articulated through the use of *I/me/my* appear in the NonPwD corpus, i.e., they do not come from people with disability. However, the relative frequency of *I/me/my* terms is more than twice the value in the PwD corpus (228.71 per 10k words) compared with the NonPwD corpus (104.50), suggesting that when they are included, first-person accounts are more prominent in texts from the PwD corpus, as indicated in the greater proportion of first-person pronouns.

We carried out collocation analysis using the GraphColl module in *#LancsBox* (Brezina *et al.*, 2020), which affords more user versatility with respect to collocation and concordance analysis, compared with *Sketch Engine* (Kilgarriff *et al.*, 2014). We measured collocation according to the Log Dice measure (Rychlý, 2008), setting a threshold of 7.0 and a minimum raw frequency of 5. We adjusted the collocational window for identifying collocates according to the grammatical function of our respective first-person pronouns, as follows:

- *I*: zero tokens to the left of the node, 5 tokens to the right (0L<>5R), to capture main clause elements in which 'I' is the grammatical subject;
- *me*: 5L<>2R, to capture main clause elements in which 'me' is the grammatical object, allowing for formulations such as 'they make me feel included';
- *my*: 0L<>2R, to maximally capture the noun modified by the possessive pronoun, e.g., 'my basic needs', whilst minimising the inadvertent inclusion of additional elements.

These parameters were designed to capture the most direct descriptions of actions and characteristics associated with self-representations. In our discussion of the collocates for *I*, *me* and *my*, we focus on those that meet our statistical thresholds for collocation in the PwD first-person corpus, but not the NonPwD first-person corpus. This enables us to discuss aspects which differentiate lived experience accounts of persons with disability in the Australian web materials from other first-person perspectives.

4. Analysis

The results of the collocation analysis are presented in Table 2, demonstrating the collocates that appeared alongside *I*, *me* and *my*, respectively. The two columns differentiate those collocates that were distinct for the singular first-person terms in the PwD data from those that appeared as collocates in both the PwD and NonPwD data. The entries are lemmatised and listed with the word class category annotation for the headword, i.e., 'adj' for adjective, 'adv' for adverb, 'con' for conjunction and preposition, 'n' for noun, 'pron' for pronoun, 'v' for verb, and 'other' for determiners and non-classifiable terms. This allows us to differentiate lexical forms that can function as more than one word class category (e.g., PLAY_n from PLAY_v).

Pronoun	Distinct collocates for PwD	Shared collocates with NonPwD
I	@card@_other, as_adv, australia_n, become_v, child_n, disability_n, disabled_adj, down_adv, every_other, first_adj, friend_n, grow_v, imagine_v, kid_n, little_adj, lose_v, old_adj, opportunity_n, play_v, push_v, realise_v, school_n, sit_v, so_con, sport_n, thank_v, there_adv, wheelchair_n, wish_v, word_n, work_n, year_n, young_adj **(n=33)**	a_other, able_adj, about_adv, about_con, all_other, also_adv, always_adv, an_other, and_con, any_other, as_con, ask_v, at_con, back_adv, be_v, because_con, believe_v, but_con, by_con, can_v, come_v, could_v, do_v, enjoy_v, even_adv, feel_v, find_v, for_con, from_con, get_v, give_v, go_v, good_adj, guess_v, have_v, he_pron, hear_v, help_v, her_pron, hope_v, how_adv, i_pron, if_con, important_adj, in_con, into_con, it_pron, just_adv, know_v, learn_v, leave_v, like_con, like_v, live_v, look_v, lot_n, love_v, make_v, many_adj, me_pron, meet_v, might_v, more_adj, my_pron, myself_pron, need_v, never_adv, no_other, not_adv, now_adv, of_con, on_con, one_other, only_adv, or_con, out_adv, people_n, put_v, read_v, really_adv, remember_v, say_v, see_v, she_pron, should_v, so_adv, some_other, something_n, spend_v, start_v, still_adv, support_n, take_v, tell_v, that_other, the_other, them_pron, then_adv, there_other, they_pron, thing_n, think_v, this_other, time_n, to_other, try_v, understand_v, up_adv, use_v, very_adv, want_v, we_pron, well_adv, what_pron, when_adv, who_pron, why_adv, will_v, with_con, work_v, would_v, write_v, you_pron **(n=123)**
me	about_adv, all_adv, as_adv, assist_v, decision_n, deserve_v, disability_n, doctor_n, few_adj, kid_n, mean_v, mother_n, never_adv, of_con, other_adj, provide_v, pull_v, represent_v, save_v, school_n, than_con, treat_v, where_adv, work_n, work_v **(n=25)**	a_other, about_con, after_con, all_other, allow_v, also_adv, always_adv, an_other, and_con, around_con, as_con, ask_v, at_con, back_adv, be_v, because_con, but_con, call_v, can_v, come_v, could_v, do_v, down_adv, feel_v, for_con, friend_n, from_con, get_v, give_v, go_v, great_adj, happen_v, have_v, he_pron, help_v, how_adv, i_pron, if_con, in_con, into_con, it_pron, just_adv, know_v, let_v, life_n, like_con, like_v, make_v, me_pron, my_pron, not_adv, on_con, one_other, or_con, out_adv, people_n, push_v, put_v, really_adv, say_v, see_v, she_pron, show_v, so_adv, so_con, some_other, stand_v, take_v, talk_v, teach_v, tell_v, that_other, the_other, them_pron, then_adv, there_adv, they_pron, thing_n, think_v, this_other, time_n, to_other, up_adv, very_adv, want_v, well_adv, what_pron, when_adv, which_other, who_pron, will_v, with_con, would_v, you_pron **(n=94)**

my	arm_n, at_con, because_con, board_n, book_n, brother_n, but_con, chair_n, class_n, community_n, dad_n, day_n, degree_n, disability_n, dream_n, father_n, favourite_adj, fellow_adj, go_v, goal_n, health_n, in_con, leg_n, license_n, main_adj, mom_n, music_n, my_pron, on_con, or_con, passion_n, personal_adj, role_n, say_v, school_n, second_adj, so_con, sporting_n, study_n, teacher_n, thing_n, to_other, two_other, way_n, wheelchair_n, when_adv, who_pron, with_con, would_v **(n=49)**	and_con, as_con, be_v, body_n, career_n, experience_n, eye_n, family_n, first_adj, friend_n, husband_n, i_pron, job_n, kid_n, life_n, mind_n, mother_n, mum_n, name_n, own_adj, parent_n, sister_n, son_n, time_n, work_n **(n=25)**

***Table 2**: Lemma collocates listed with class category annotation for I, me and my (presented alphabetically)*

There are 98 distinct collocates (i.e., that apply to the PwD data only) and 159 shared collocates. The number of shared collocates indicates a high degree of similarity between PwD and NonPwD first-person accounts with respect to the use of *I* and *me*, which in both cases is notably higher than the number of collocates identified in the PwD data only. In contrast, there is a higher number of distinct collocates (n=49) in the PwD data for *my* than the number of shared collocates with the NonPwD accounts (n=25). In what follows, we discuss broader themes that we have identified based on these collocates and how they reflect aspects of the first-person accounts of persons with disability that we find in the online data. The themes derive from our close reading of the examples in the context of the original texts and our mapping of recurrent topics across individual experiences. We will see, though, that the dimensions of these experiences frequently overlap; as such, our delineation of themes offers a loose structure through which to address each topic, but we emphasise how these aspects are fundamentally interrelated. Examples from the data are cited according to domain category (Adv=Advocacy, Edu=Education, Emp=Employment, Gov=Government, Health=Health & wellbeing) and individual file number.

It is important to note that many of these collocates work in combination, as part of accounts that demonstrate how one aspect is related to another. For example, in Excerpt 1 the contributor recalls an encounter in which the inaccessibility of education was keenly felt, incorporating references to school, to the support of their mother and to using a wheelchair (distinct PwD collocates are in bold):

> (1) My mother, like the other mothers in the neighbourhood, took me to **school** to register me and she pushed my **wheelchair** up, is walking distance from our house. The school wasn't accessible. We knew that. But I presume my **mother** was going to **pull** me up the stairs to get to the school and pick me up at the end of the day. And when we went to the school,

> the principal said that I couldn't enrol in the **school** because there was a fire hazard. (Media_029)

The extract therefore reflects the coming together of some of the prominent themes—and specific collocates—discussed in our analysis. Although these telling combinations do often occur within a given account, we highlight the collective themes that can be seen across individual stories and across web domains, according to our interpretation of related collocates. The first of our themes is 'disability'.

4.1. *Disability*

In this section, we discuss collocates identified in the PwD accounts that index a disability concern and thereby highlight 'disability' as a potential identity label. DISABILITY as a noun is a distinct collocate of *I*, *me* and *my* in the PwD corpus, with DISABLED as an adjective also a distinct collocate of *I*. In Excerpt 2, the contributor provides some examples of what disability entails:

> (2) I identify as a **disabled** woman, and my experiences are shaped by being disabled and the discrimination faced, and also inclusion. (Adv_254)

This example demonstrates the salience of a collective disability identity, albeit one that is characterised through discrimination. We find further negative associations in the concordance lines of *I/me/my* with DISABLED/DISABILITY referring to 'limitations', to how disability makes things 'difficult' and as the reason why individuals are subject to physical violence and discrimination. In some instances, disability is cited as a source of determination, as in Excerpt 3:

> (3) My **disability** actually made me more determined to succeed and is my main motivator to keep going when everything seems extremely difficult. (Edu_0254)

Notions of 'inclusion' (Excerpt 2) and 'determin[ation]' (Excerpt 3) relate to other concepts identified in concordance lines in which contributors discuss disability as a social 'issue' that designates a community and to which there are associated 'rights' that can be 'championed'.

There is some discussion of language, related to the identification with disability, as in Excerpt 4:

> (4) Use of the label "**disability**" always causes me some uneasiness, largely because it suggests the overarching removal of an "ability". (Adv_853)

Similarly, the lemma WORD—a collocate of *I*—indicates that there are concerns around the language used in relation to disability for contributors to the PwD data (Excerpt 5):

> (5) I do use the **words** disability and disabilities. They are convenient labels for discussion about ways to improve websites so that they can be used effectively by people with a range of visual, aural, physical and intellectual abilities (Adv_853)

Alongside the recognition that 'disability' is a broad term that captures a multitude of experiences, the lemma PERSONAL is a collocate of *my* and highlights an appreciation for individualised experience, as contributors refer to 'my personal battles with both OCD and depression' (Adv_081), for example. Individual experiences are also referenced using the collocate WAY, as contributors discuss 'fighting my way through the system' (Edu_0821). The collocate PERSONAL also directs us to instances where experience contributes to legitimising an individual's perspective on disability (Excerpt 6):

> (6) That's where my **personal** experience meets my academic expertise. (Edu_0762)

These examples, then, demonstrate the ways in which a 'disability' label is discussed as indicative of a collective or individual experience.

Other collocates direct us to embodied aspects of disability. The lemmas ARM and LEG collocate with *my* and direct us to instances in which specific (physical) impairments are described in relation to body parts, as in Excerpts 7 and 8:

> (7) I was just born without my **arm** just below the elbow on the left hand side. (Media_020)

> (8) In 2014, I became ill with kidney problems which led to paralysis of my **legs**. (Adv_076)

Further examples illustrate congenital and acquired (e.g., through injury) impairments.

HEALTH is also a distinct collocate of *my* and is used in reference to a more general wellness concern e.g., 'my health issues', or in reference to cognitive wellbeing, which can be a corollary of physical impairment (Excerpt 9):

> (9) I've learnt that my mental **health** is my biggest disability. I've made all these adaptations to allow me to drive and that sort of thing, but it's not the physical side of things that slows me down and stops me. It's the brain. (Adv_668)

Discussions of physical aspects and mobility concerns, however, are shown to interact with social aspects, including environmental factors and institutional systems. The collocates WHEELCHAIR and CHAIR represent one of the more common types of assistive technologies that are discussed in the PwD data. Relatedly, discussions of wheelchair use account for the prevalence of the verb lemmas PUSH and SIT. Excerpt 10 highlights a challenge in accessing support and subsequently, certain domains of ordinary life:

> (10) I couldn't go to school because I did not have a **wheelchair**. You see the problem was that I didn't have an identity book so (at the hospital) they said they could not give me the **wheelchair**. (Health_305)

In Excerpts 11 and 12 contributors find themselves in environments that restrict their mobility or access:

> (11) I once stayed in a hotel which stated it was accessible, however the carpet was so thick that even as a super muscular Paralympic swimmer I had trouble **pushing** my **wheelchair** along the way and had to ask concierge for assistance (Adv_818)

> (12) I was disappointed that I was not allowed to **sit** in the area facing the water and watch them emerge from the ocean. Wheelchair users must always sit in the same wheelchair seating area. (Adv_824)

We can see then, that whether contributors foreground aspects of identity of physical impairment, the social factors associated with disability tend to figure. Discussions of disability incorporate collective and individual identities, as well as aspects of physical health and environment.

4.2. Roles

The second of our themes reflects the fact that contributors to texts in the online resources are often invited to a programme or the subject of an editorial on the basis of their professional roles—as disability advocates or paralympic athletes, for example. Therefore, we find references to those professional activities and outputs in their first-person accounts. Whether such individuals participate in sports in a professional capacity or not, the foregrounding of these functional roles emphasises what these individuals *do*, and can therefore be seen as distinct from other kinds of social identification.

WORK is a distinct collocate in the PwD data—as both a noun and a verb in relation to *me* and as a verb collocate for *I*. It should be noted that there are cases in which WORK is also a collocate in NonPwD accounts (as a verb in relation to *I* and a noun in relation to *my*), indicating that the practice of speaking about one's professional activity is not exclusive to disability experiences. Nevertheless, the examples from the PwD accounts demonstrate the value that work has as part of a disability experience. In the first instance, work in disability rights and activism can offer inspiration and a sense of inclusion, as shown in Excerpt 13:

> (13) I personally became to identify as disabled when I met and read the **work** of other disabled people- even though I've had a life-long severe skin condition. (Adv_252)

This sense of inclusion can also arise when individuals pursue such work themselves and find opportunities 'for me to work with other activists' (Media_029). There is, also, a more general sense of pride that derives from having one's work recognised, as shown in Excerpt 14:

> (14) "It makes me happy and very pleased that someone likes my **work** and appreciates all the effort that I put into my **work**," says Henry. (Adv_467)

Relatedly, the collocate BOOK represents an associated output of work that contributors to the data do.

In Excerpt 15, we find quite an explicit demarcation between what the contributor does in their work and forms of social identification, as they distance themselves from the area of 'disability issues':

> (15) I've never wanted disability to define me and my work. My research is not in disability. I'm not a disability specialist," she says. [...] I teach, research and **work** across all human rights issues, including disability, but disability is one aspect of it. (Edu_0779)

This demonstrates that contributors claim other aspects of their identities and highlight their ROLE—which is a distinct collocate of *my*—such as 'my research role' (Emp_008), which can be alongside or distinct from 'disability'. As a key part of a sense of self, WORK is also an aspect which can be challenged, for example as a result of difficulties in finding employment (Excerpt 16):

(16) Yet when I tried to get part-time **work** as an art facilitator at a taxpayer-funded private company that provides art training services to the disabled, I was told they wanted my unpaid contributions only. (Adv_494)

In this instance, while the search for (paid) employment is not an experience that is unique to persons with disability, we can see how support services can be compromised when the opportunities are not conducive to recruiting people who suit the role. The collocate LICENSE similarly highlights an obstacle for an individual who had successfully passed their written and oral exams as part of their medical training in the 1970s, but who had been 'denied my license because I couldn't walk' (Media_029). They go on to explain that 51 years later, they received an apology letter, acknowledging the discriminatory nature of this decision. Nevertheless, individuals in the data report the difficulties associated with being restricted in carrying out the roles they envisage for themselves.

Participation in sports is another way through which individuals can foreground the doing of an activity. Many of the contributions to the PwD data represent first-person accounts from athletes, which appear across webpages hosted by what we have coded as Advocacy, Government, Media and Sports sites. While the collocate SPORTING appears in references to 'my sporting career', there is also discussion of non-professional participation in sports. Related collocates include SPORT and PLAY, which are distinct collocates of *I*. Furthermore, the collocate BOARD provides an example of the equipment that is referenced in relation to participating in sport (i.e., windsurfing). Excerpt 17 demonstrates that sports are presented as a domain in which certain stigmatising factors associated with disability may be less keenly felt:

(17) There is also such a low expectation of people with disability, and I think this is where **sport** smashes some of that stuff. (Media_169)

Indeed, such accounts highlight how options in sport enable participants to showcase a range of attributes, as in Excerpt 18:

(18) I wanted to **play** something more competitive and less reliant on physical abilities, so I tried powerchair football in mid-2017. (Adv_668)

Excerpt 19 shows how participation in sport is presented as having helped individuals to develop confidence and learn things about their own character:

(19) One of the things that I have taken out of **sport** is that no matter what I do, no matter what craft I take or thing that I chase after I am going to believe that I am going to nail it. (Gov_0548)

Such examples help to demonstrate how the opportunity to get involved in an activity can be directly related to an individual's sense of self an overall perspective. Furthermore, the sense of achievement found through participation in sport is something that has motivated these contributors to work to support others (Excerpt 20):

> (20) Becoming a Paralympian has changed my life and I wanted to ensure every athlete had the same opportunity to experience the benefits I have had through **sport** (Adv_833)

Representations of sports in the accounts in the data are overwhelmingly positive. However, we must view these as partial, since Smith *et al.* (2015) have shown that participation in sport does not always lead to positive outcomes for persons with disability, with respect to social inclusion and personal achievement. More generally, while there are some challenges associated with finding employment or participating in recreational activities, references to WORK and SPORT in the data generally promote achievement and the perspectives of those who have taken on advocacy roles, based on empowering experiences in these roles. Perhaps, then, such depictions are more consequential to our understanding of the importance of ensuring that such opportunities are there. Relatedly, they are also a reminder of the value of being able to show what one can do, to a given individual's sense of self. In the context of disability, this notion aligns with calls for culture change through a reframing toward 'ability' and away from 'disability' (Harpur, 2012).

4.3. Opinions and evaluation

Our third theme concerns how contributors to the PwD data characterise their disability experiences through expressions of knowledge and evaluation. Collocates of *I/me/my* provide evaluation in reference to the contributor themselves, to people and concepts included in their accounts, or to the value of their reported experiences, for example. Such evaluations are germane to story-telling (Labov & Waletzky, 1997) of course; nevertheless, these expressions can provide insights into the psychological components of disability experiences, as well as directing readers towards preferred readings and providing justification of how such events are reportable.

The collocate FAVOURITE offers a clear indication of an individual's point of view and their priorities, as contributors refer to 'my favourite thing about work' (Adv_668), 'my favourite sport' (Adv_668) or 'my favourite wheelchair athletes' (Media_018). The collocate IMAGINE is used to convey an overwhelmingly positive response to experiences in relation to expectations, as shown in Excerpts 21 and 22:

> (21) I am enjoying it far more than I could have ever **imagined**. (Gov_0548)

> (22) I never **imagined** anything would happen, she was this bubbly young nurse who lit up the room with her smile and was really great. (Adv_668)

We also get a sense of their priorities through the collocates DREAM, GOAL, WISH and PASSION. These can be further qualified by the use of the collocate MAIN, i.e., 'my main goal'. While such objectives are predominantly reported as having been achieved, Excerpt 23 shows that there are instances in which these remain as yet unfilled:

(23) I do **wish** we were talking about that more (Gov_0548)

In other instances, a contributor has had to reevaluate their objectives, as they come to terms with their personal circumstances (Excerpt 24):

(24) the first day I was told I couldn't though (over and over again by the harsh but true words of teenagers), and realised myself that maybe my **dreams** were a bit out of reach. (Gov_0479)

We are also told about some of the conditions that are required in order for a dream to be realised, and this highlights some of the social factors that determine disability, as in Excerpt 25:

(25) To follow my **dreams** financial assistance is paramount to allow continued involvement and competitiveness. (Adv_834)

These examples demonstrate how contributors have had to reconcile their expectations in response to certain limitations. Such expectations can be exceeded or lowered, but in either case 'limitations' are foregrounded and can be based in the physical limitations of the body (Excerpt 24), restricted financial support (Excerpt 25) or public discourses (Excerpt 23).

Contributors demonstrate their appreciation for the support and efforts of people around them, as demonstrated by the collocate THANK. The collocate OPPORTUNITY offers a more subtle endorsement of the circumstances that have shaped contributors' experiences, though again, the work of other people is foregrounded, as demonstrated in Excerpt 26:

(26) I'm really glad I had that **opportunity**. I'm forever grateful to the president for selecting me for that position. (Media_029)

When contributors are discussing their own efforts and achievements, their evaluative language can be self-effacing, as seen in the collocate LITTLE, which appears in Excerpts 27 and 28:

(27) In this article I hope to throw a **little** light on these questions. (Adv_853)

(28) I hope I made a **little** contribution (Media_029)

As such, when it comes to contributors' descriptions of themselves, particularly in relation to other people, we tend to see an inhibited sense of individual agency and a dependency on the actions of others.

While they may downplay their own contributions, individuals are seen to use extreme case formulations (Pomerantz, 1986) such as 'every' and 'never' within their accounts, which serve to characterise their experiences as unusual and therefore, reportable. Examples include references to working 'every single day' (Adv_177) and to ending up in a situation 'that's never happened to me or my husband' (Adv_165). Alongside speaking to the value of these experiences as exceptional, contributors to the PwD data focalise the merits of their accounts through the collocates ALL and ABOUT, which appear in constructions such as 'it all comes down to' and 'for me, it's about'. Similarly, Excerpt 29 demonstrates how the collocate MEAN offers another perspective on how different aspects of their experience are interpreted, as in:

> (29) It **means** the world to me to be able to cut through, break that glass ceiling. (Adv_477)

> (30) I didn't really appreciate the magnitude of what it would **mean** to me (Media_167)

In Excerpt 30, we see how outcomes have exceeded the individual's expectations in a similar way to how IMAGINE is used. This, alongside other evaluative terms, demonstrates how experiences of disability—and any meaning found through those experiences—are shaped by expectations. In some instances, expectations have been inhibited by the impacts of impairment, while in other cases, imagined possibilities can provide inspiration toward higher achievement. It is worth noting, however, that experiences denoting high achievement have higher reportability (Labov & Waletzky, 1997)—as tales of inspiration. What is less apparent in the data are reports of more mundane or troubled responses to impairment, with only minimal accounts of when impairment leads individuals to despondency.

4.4. Change

Not all first-person accounts constitute narratives but many of the collocates identified in our analysis contribute to the construction of narratives in the sense of involving 'complicating action' (Labov & Waletzky, 1997). In other words, collocates of *I/me/my* can denote some process of change that provides some pivotal, 'tellable' event. The verb lemma BECOME marks a change in events, such as in relation to the individual's professional identity (Excerpt 31):

> (31) That teacher and the advice I received from such community-minded public education teachers is the reason I would **become** a teacher (Gov_0547)

Common in the PwD accounts is the reported onset of illness or injury that leads to impairment, e.g. 'I became ill with kidney problems' (Adv_076). The verb lemma LOSE is also used in this way, as in Excerpt 32:

> (32) Then I **lost** my leg when I was fifteen (Media_392)

Other kinds of 'loss' refer to the events preceding injury, such as having 'lost my balance' (Adv_668), or 'I lost control and the car rolled' (Health_241). As a counterpoint to what is potentially 'lost' through illness, Excerpt 33 shows how the collocate SAVE points to a pivotal moment in which a health intervention is a matter of life or death:

> (33) they gave me a shot of steroids that was going **save** me or kill me. (Media_487)

When used in reference to health issues, these change-of-state collocates foreground physical 'loss' and the embodied aspects of impairment. The collocate REALISE, on the other hand, directs us to instances such as Excerpt 34 in which individuals experience a change in their thinking, which can be brought about by health concerns:

(34) I **realised** it was time to change my habits. (Health_160)

The process of coming to terms with the impacts of injury may also happen in stages, as shown in Excerpt 35:

(35) I knew I'd been paralysed before anyone even mentioned it to me, I just didn't **realise** it was to the extent of becoming quadriplegic. (Edu_0254)

Contributors also refer to pivotal realisations that helped them to engage with activities that facilitate personal development or wider engagement, as is the case in Excerpts 36 and 37:

(36) I **realised** that power football was my passion. (Adv_668)

(37) It was then that I **realised** the importance of inclusion and the absolute importance of diversity. (Edu_0634)

Such examples pinpoint key moments that are shown to have longer term implications for the development of the individual's professional role or advocacy work, for example. Nevertheless, we might surmise that those with impairments necessarily have to experience some form of life lesson or personal discovery, raising questions as to the implications for those yet to undergo such a moment of realisation.

The collocate GROW similarly captures aspects of personal and physical development, i.e., 'growing up', which is often positioned as necessary, in response to the impacts of impairment as in Excerpt 38:

(38) I really **grew** a lot because I had to do things that I didn't think I was able to do. (Media_029)

In Excerpt 38, the individual appears empowered through exceeding their own expectations. In comparison with grow, the verb collocate PUSH offers a more agentive depiction of how contributors to the data pursue change. We have seen in Section 4.1. how the literal sense of PUSH relates to using a wheelchair, but we also see examples in which this term is used metaphorically to capture individuals' self-motivation and assertiveness, as in Excerpts 39 and 40:

(39) "Sport's a very selfish thing," Di Toro told ESPN, "and I enjoy **pushing** myself and I enjoy the arena to learn about myself". (Media_169)

(40) feeling secure enough that I would really **push** my ideas forward. (Media_029)

Excerpts 41 and 42 show how this determination also extends to advocacy work, both with respect to the contributor's own experiences and to the provision of services for the wider community:

> (41) I was one of the first wheelchair kids to go to an able-bodied high school. It was something I had **pushed** hard for. (Media_167)
>
> (42) When I came back to Australia, I knew we needed to **push** the wheelchair manufacturers. (Gov_0766)

In the collocates that denote changing events, which are shown to be pivotal in the accounts provided by contributors to the PwD data, we find overlap between the physical changes that most explicitly align with the biomedical aspects of disability, and the psychological components captured in the individual's cognitive and emotional response to the impacts of, for example, acquired impairment. These kinds of excerpts from first-person accounts foreground individual action, which can foster an 'individual responsibility' perspective that aligns with neoliberal approaches to healthcare that have been shown to disadvantage persons with disability (WHO, 2022). Furthermore, they offer a representation to readers that demonstrates the kind of work that PWDs are reported to (have to) undertake, in terms of 'pushing' for support, or having to come to terms with what it means to live with impairment.

4.5. Temporal sequence

There are various ways in which the collocates of *I/me/my* in the PwD data denote time. Temporal sequencing is an 'important defining property' of narratives (Labov & Waletzky, 1997, p.12) and the marking of time serves not only to define the order of events but also provides context, orienting audiences within the salient timeframe.

The most apparent way in which time is marked in the PwD data is through numbers and the collocate '@card@' represents the notation used in *#LancsBox* to record all cardinal numbers. These numbers refer to dates (e.g., 'in 2009'), ages ('when I was nine years old'), and provide quantification of days and years (e.g., 'I did that in 42 days'). The collocate FEW reflects a less specific designation of time (e.g., 'a few days') and the lemmas DAY and YEAR are also collocates of singular first-person pronouns. References to age also account for the collocate OLD and the collocate WHEN explicitly indexes time in constructions such as 'when I was very young'. These collocates, therefore, provide orientation in accounts that occur at a prior time in the contributor's life experience. Though we can also expect time orientation in NonPwD accounts, the prevalence of these collocates in the PwD data suggests that persons with disability are more likely to draw on (early) life experiences in their contributions.

Language that provides temporal structure can also offer evaluation. Excerpt 43 demonstrates how YOUNG functions not only to designate a period of time ('when I was young') but also implies vulnerability:

(43) I was **young** and the men in my community were doing anything they liked to me. So I became a victim. (Health_305)

The collocate FIRST denotes sequence, which is a fundamental aspect of storytelling and can also provide evaluation that attests to the significance of an individual's account, as in Excerpt 44:

(44) I was one of the **first** wheelchair kids to go to an able-bodied high school. (Media_167)

Sequentiality can also be indicated in the distinct collocates BECAUSE, BUT and SO, helping us to understand the consequences of events—or non-events—as in Excerpt 45:

(45) Nobody from [TOWN] told me I couldn't, **so** I just figured I could. (Gov_0479)

Ultimately, while references to time provide context for anecdotes that establish a personal history for the teller, they can also denote relations between components and contain implicit evaluation, which can provide insights into how the contributor perceives causality and meaning.

4.6. Place

Orientation is provided not only in designations of time but also place. The distinct collocate WHERE is an explicit marker of location, while the collocate AUSTRALIA is used to not only designate place, but also as a national identity—particularly in the context of international sport, i.e., 'I represented Australia'.

The prepositional collocates AT, IN and ON can index both time and place; these might even be merged, for example, in a reference to being 'at Uni'—which suggests a location and a time period. Indeed, references to the collocate SCHOOL indicate a place but often denote a life stage. This is indicated not only in references to 'when I was in school' but also broader characterisations of 'my school experience'. While education and school experiences are influential to anyone who attends, the status of SCHOOL as a distinct collocate in the PwD data suggests that this provides a particularly important contextual frame. In the PwD data, first-person accounts that revolve around school experiences also include other associated distinct collocates, namely, CLASS, DEGREE, STUDY and TEACHER. Tales about school encounters are presented as consequential to later life experiences and so are often characterised in terms of challenges, or moments of personal development. For example, in Excerpt 46 one contributor characterises the school system as a battleground:

(46) I had spent most of my **school** experience fighting my way through the system and it felt like everything was a battle to get any sort of special consideration or support. (Edu_0821)

Negative encounters can be framed as important character-forming experiences, as in Excerpt 47:

(47) When I started **school**, I didn't really have any friends and a lot of the other kids used to bully me to the point where I didn't feel like being at school. I work hard on my self-esteem and don't let the bullies get to me. (Media_018)

In contrast, Excerpts 48 and 49 show that other contributors referred to positive experiences, characterised by particularly supportive personnel:

> (48) when I moved **schools**, the team at Hearing Australia went out of their way to meet with my **teachers** to demonstrate what I could and couldn't hear in a classroom. (Health_148)

> (49) My music **class** has made a massive difference to being here at school. They make me feel included, normal, but most of all they make me feel a part of them- my mates. (Adv_668)

Success in navigating this life stage and the school environment can take various forms. In the PwD data, contributors point to the external factors (such as teachers, peers and the kind of support provided by Hearing Australia) that determined the nature of their experiences, as well as their own determination in working with or against these factors.

4.7. Other actors

The investigation of school-related collocates included the consideration of 'teachers' as important figures in (students') experiences of disability. The collocate analysis also alerted us to other social actors identified in PwD first-person accounts, affording us the opportunity to consider their roles and relations with the storyteller. For example, one of the categories of person that figures prominently in PwD accounts is DOCTOR, who operates in a largely communicative role as they are reported to 'tell' and 'present' the narrator with key information.

Relational terms appear to be particularly salient in PwD accounts, namely, BROTHER, COMMUNITY, DAD, FATHER, FELLOW, FRIEND, MOM and MOTHER. Although variations of some of these are also found in NonPwD accounts (see Table 2), the prevalence of terms denoting family members in PwD accounts emphasises their roles in the disability experiences that are shared via these webpages. In this data, family members largely fulfil supportive roles, though the relationships that persons with disability have with family members is variously complex (Cen-Yagiz & Aytac, 2019).

The distinct collocates CHILD and KID highlight the significance of an individual's formative years, including the influence of their peers. References to KID are presented as particularly significant in shaping experiences in later life, as in Excerpt 50:

> (50) I grew up around **kids** who didn't have disabilities in the neighbourhood or in my family, for that matter. So I first started meeting other disabled kids on a regular basis. And that was really a very important time in my life. (Media_029)

In Excerpt 51, we see that communities of 'children' and 'kids' are also targeted for interventions that can promote inclusivity:

> (51) I'm excited to be in the program so I can teach **kids** that they can overcome bullying. While also showing able bodied kids that people with a disability can do awesome things like I'm doing. (Media_018)

The collocate FELLOW is another relation term that positions the storyteller collectively among other actors and indexes different aspects of their identities. Examples include 'my fellow citizens' (Edu_0791), 'my fellow students' (Edu_0791), 'my fellow Australian teammates' (Adv_477) and 'my fellow commuters' (Media_031). Such forms of social connectedness are important, given the higher risk of poor health and wellbeing among persons with disability experiencing social isolation and loneliness (WHO, 2022).

Characterisations of other actors are also found in the actions directed towards 'me', i.e., the person providing the account. Certain habitual actions are indicated in the collocate WOULD, emphasising the support provided by family members, i.e., 'my girls would read my textbooks out loud' (Edu_0843), 'my mother would push me up the driveway' (Media_029). The verb collocates PROVIDE and ASSIST similarly highlight ways in which others' actions have provided 'opportunities', 'motivation' and 'networks', or assisted the individual with 'day to day practicalities' (Adv_834), 'maintaining a balance' (Gov_0826) or 'go[ing] to doctors' (Health_305). The distinct collocate REPRESENT also directs us to instances in which an individual speaks on others' behalf.

WHO was identified as a collocate for *my* and functions to offer further characterisation of other actors through relative clauses, as in Excerpts 52–54:

(52) my mum, **who** has really given up so much of her life for me (Edu_0254)

(53) my parents, **who** always look after me (Gov_0826)

(54) my doctors **who** say I should be back on Disability Support Pension (Adv_165)

Overall, other actors in the PwD data are reported to be supportive of the narrator. What is not observed in the data are experiences in which contributors are subject to discrimination, coercion or abuse from relatives, guardians and those involved in caring for persons with disability—a concern raised by the WHO (2022). Depictions of persons with disability supporting others is also minimal.

One aspect in which contributors to the PwD data are more critical of the involvement of other social actors is reflected in the collocate DECISION, as seen in Excerpts 55 and 56:

(55) In the 13 years and nine months that I've been paralysed I've had to fight against people taking my **decision** making capacity away from me. (Media_444)

(56) I will challenge people who make **decisions** for me or about me, particularly decisions which limit what I want to do. (Gov_0665)

First-person accounts from persons with disability, therefore, can reiterate to people what kinds of efforts are meaningful and desired by members of the community, which may be at odds with those determined by others speaking for them.

5. Discussion

The investigation of collocates is one of the ways through which we can identify patterns in reports of disability experience that support us determining aspects—and ways of talking about them—that are in some way common or generalisable. In focusing on the collocational patterns of *I/me/my*, we have prioritised self-representation, acknowledging the significance of engaging with the accounts of people with lived experience of disability. Furthermore, we have focused on elements that characterise first-person accounts written by persons with disability in contrast with first-person accounts written by persons without disability. We acknowledge that our decisions regarding the data curation and targetting specific linguistic features means that we have explored only part of the breadth of representations available online. Similarly, for reasons of space, we did not discuss similarities between the PwD and NonPwD data, we have not reported the collocates that appeared in the NonPwD data but not in PwD data, and we did not discuss discrepancies in collocate strength for what are shared collocates between PwD accounts and NonPwD accounts. Differences at each of these levels could highlight subtle discrepancies in the experiences of persons with disability, relative to their non-disabled peers and would be of interest in an extended study. We can briefly report that the shared collocates are generally stronger (i.e., generate a higher Log Dice score) compared with distinct collocates, suggesting that PwD accounts and NonPwD comments have plenty in common.

We have also only been able to discuss the wider text context of these extracts in minimal ways; for example, while our quoted examples demonstrate the range of web domains in which these accounts appear, a more sustained exploration of the genre of the texts and the implications for what kinds of experiences feature is warranted. In parallel work, we have focused on more extended passages and investigated narrativity, critically considering the extent to which the accounts that are published indicate preferences for particular forms and content. Here, for example, we observed prominent aspects of temporal sequencing, evaluation, reportability and key moments of change that align with canonical forms of narrative (Labov & Waletzky, 1997), suggesting that text-producers favour experiences that lend themselves to established narrative forms.

Our approach has supported us in determining some of the characteristics of reported disability experiences and thereby, what representations are available online that can shape the wider public's understanding of disability. It is important to consider the representativeness of these accounts, as a sample. As Grue (2015, p.109) points out, persons with disability who seek or attract media attention must 'fit the narrative' and are compelled to negotiate with established symbolic constructs such as the 'tragic victim' or 'resilient hero'. What we have examined, then, is a partial representation of the breadth of disability experience which may favour 'media friendly' presentations. While we have noted references to challenges and limitations associated with impairment, these experiences are largely 'overcome' and reported from a position of relative 'success', following key moments of personal growth. Indeed, we have seen accounts from individuals who have been motivated to take on advocacy roles, alongside elite (para)athletes who have reached the pinnacle of the field. Subsequently, while there are discussions of some of the challenges associated with disability stigma, there are likely aspects of disability on which people online may seek guidance, but that are not represented in these narratives.

The thematic discussion of collocates highlighted, in multiple ways, the significance of the individual's emotive and cognitive response to impacts associated with impairment —finding determination through adversity, for example. This corresponds with critiques of the psychosocial components of disability models and potential 'victim blaming', wherein 'maladaptive' thoughts and behaviours, alongside 'over-reliance on or a sense of entitlement toward social support' perpetuate disability within an increasingly neoliberal healthcare culture (Hunt, 2024, p.1034). The narratives do refer to discrimination, bullying, health issues, mobility issues when using a wheelchair, challenges with finding (paid) employment, etc., however these are often presented as obstacles that contributors navigate as part of a journey toward personal growth and advocacy work. Furthermore, contributors often refer to the support they received from, for example, teachers, service providers and family members. Elaborating on moments in which contributors navigate inadequate support services, despondency or people who are discriminatory or abusive could prove more instructive to readers.

6. Conclusion

This study has reiterated the value in engaging with first-person accounts of disability for promoting wider understanding of the ways in which disability is embodied and determined by psychological and social factors. Collocation analysis highlighted how persons with disability discuss their own identities in relation to disability and professional roles, as well as how they present themselves in relation to the people around them. First-person accounts incorporate various narrative elements, which offer exemplars of how contributors have navigated challenges in their lives and experienced personal development through engaging with sport and the wider disability community. The perspectives represented in online resources likely only offer a partial view of disability, however, and foreground experiences in which individuals have developed a positive outlook and been supported by peers or family members. It is therefore important to also consider additional perspectives related to understanding and navigating disability.

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Competing interests

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

Data accessibility

Our data derive from the English Web 2021 (enTenTen21) corpus (Jakubíček *et al.*, 2013) that is managed and available through *Sketch Engine*. Registered users can access the source URL for each of the texts included in our data through *Sketch Engine*.

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