



## Female Paralympic Athlete Views of Effective and Ineffective Coaching Practices

DANIELLE ALEXANDER AND GORDON A. BLOOM

*McGill University*

SHAUNNA L. TAYLOR

*The University of British Columbia*

People with physical disabilities are at a higher risk of developing secondary physical and mental health conditions, such as fatigue, obesity, and depression. The purpose of this study was to explore female Paralympic athlete views of effective and ineffective coaching practices. Individual semistructured interviews were conducted with 8 athletes who achieved an average of 8 combined Paralympic and Parapan American medals. A hierarchical content analysis revealed the athletes' perceptions and experiences of both effective and ineffective coaching strategies and behaviors, including how these experiences affected them on a personal and professional level. All athletes achieved tremendous athletic accomplishments and recognized the importance and value of their coaches in helping them reach such high standards of success. In addition, the participants spoke about male coaches inappropriately addressing their disability and gender and how it negatively influenced their psychological well-being. These results are particularly troublesome when you consider that females with a disability are more susceptible to experiencing discrimination, exclusion, or harassment and more likely to experience body image issues compared to their male counterparts. This research adds to the small body of coaching knowledge in parasport and is one of the first studies to include an all-female sample of Paralympic athletes. In addition, it offers a number of practical implications for coaches, athletes, and the Paralympic community.

**Lay Summary:** This study adds to the small body of coaching knowledge in parasport by interviewing female Paralympic athletes. Athletes talked about coaches who enhanced their athletic performance and personal development, whereas others spoke about male coaches inappropriately addressing their disability and gender and how it negatively influenced their psychological well-being.

The Paralympic Games is the largest international competition in the world for elite athletes with a physical disability (International Paralympic Committee, 2014). The Paralympic Games originated in 1960 with 400 athletes competing from 23 countries

---

Received 24 February 2018; accepted 30 October 2018.

Address correspondence to Danielle Alexander, Department of Kinesiology & Physical Education, McGill University, 475 Pine Avenue West, Montreal, Quebec, H2W 1S4, Canada. E-mail: danielle.alexander2@mail.mcgill.ca