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**JOURNALISM THROUGH THE EYES OF
THE UNSEEING JOURNALISTS IN
NORWAY**

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*“Those who know me never doubt me and those who doubt me
never knew me” (Gibbs, 2018).*

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To God be the glory.

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Abstract

This thesis made use of qualitative interviews to obtain a deeper insight and understanding into the experiences, perceptions, struggles and originalities in the daily profession of five blind and severely visually impaired journalists in Norway. The journalists had extensive experience in their profession, worked in various regions in Norway and across various media platforms. The participants did not view their sight as a problem or challenge in their profession, but rather viewed their various environments as being challenging. All the participants felt that the reasonable accommodation and assistants provided to them through NAV (the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration) aided them to fulfil their various daily professional duties. However, they did experience mild prejudices and oppression within their long-term careers. The participants did not view themselves different to their fellow journalists, colleagues and audience, as well as felt very comfortable in asking their colleagues for assistance when required. The participants also discuss what their perceptions are in their professions as well as which values they feel are important to uphold as journalists. They also discuss the stress within the profession and how it affects them.

Keywords

Blind and severely visually impaired journalists in Norway, challenges, how challenges are overcome, journalists role, quality and values

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

My thesis topic and objective were inspired after watching BBC's "The Travel Show", which is a journalistic travel show. The inspiration was gained specifically from the episode on the Oman Caves (2017, week 4). The presenter, Ade Adepitan, who is a wheel chair user attempted to explore the Oman Caves to find the rare pink blind fish which house themselves in these caves only. From the start of Ade Adepitan's journey in the caves, he managed to balance his personal experience with his difficulty in dwelling the caves in a wheel chair. While educating, informing and entertaining his audience with the wonders of the caves, he willingly expressed the desire to do more than he is able, his limitations, his regret of his impossible and then using all he had to do as much as he was able.

It was fascinating to view how the journalist dealt with the challenges that the caves held. It added educational value to the show, that BBC allowed him to present the programme in a way that he could express his own personal experience and challenge freely to his audience. The caves held large numbers of stairs, with narrow walk ways which made it very difficult for a person in a wheel chair to dwell in it. Being severely visually impaired myself, I could therefore appreciate his determination and vulnerability in expressing his disability. At the same time that he explained that he felt empowered dwelling the caves he also informed about the difficulties dwelling the caves and that described for me what I would have experienced should I have been dwelling these caves.

He however still attempted to investigate and report on the caves and got as far as he could with the abilities he had. This courageous display could inform people of the abilities and determination individuals living with disabilities could possess. His pride and determination have the potential to empower, uplift and encourage individuals living with disabilities in various societies. Not only is he the presenter of an international journalistic travel show, in a wheel chair, but he is also free to communicate what he is not able to do and he does it with his head held high. It is not very often that we are exposed to a journalist living with a disability in front of the camera and even less often that they express their personal vulnerabilities freely to their audience, when broadcasting or reporting. Ade Adepitan presents the last segment of the show as follows:

While travelling in his wheel chair on the cave's walkway he says:

As you venture deeper and deeper into the caves, the walkways get longer, and the stairs get steeper. But after coming all this way, I am determined to see as much as I can, especially those pink blind fish that I am told can only be found here. (Lake, Loyric, McKenzie, Wallace, Whalley, 2017, week 4)

He then proceeds up the stairs in the cave by steadying himself and using his hands "to walk" on the handrail of the walkway. He then remarks with a laugh:

This is like being back up my mom and dad's old council flat. You got to be pretty able to get around this cave. Sadly though, it does not look like I am really cut out to be a cave man. (Lake, Loyric, McKenzie, Wallace, Whalley, 2017, week 4)

Now back on his wheel chair again he further explains why he is not able to continue dwelling the caves and express his regret and disappointment:

It is like a proper training workout. Wow, look over there! It is like just stairs, flights and flights of stairs. I think ... em I think my cave dwelling is over now, this is enough for me. It is such a shame because this cave is starting to get so beautiful. While I caught my breath the crew ventured further into and at last they discovered what we all came to see:- the rare pink blind fish. (Lake, Loyric, McKenzie, Wallace, Whalley, 2017, week 4)

The media and news can contribute to the construction of self perception, the surrounding environment, as well as the perception of others (Wahi-Jorgensen, Hanitzsch, 2009, p. 3). The stories told or reported on, becomes a source of information to a society and it has the power to bring a society together as a whole, or divide society/societies into different or unequal entities. Journalism itself has been around from the time people realised the necessity of sharing personal information with others, to inform, educate and entertain (Wahi-Jorgensen, Hanitzsch, 2009). In being aware of the impression and influences journalists can have on their societies, I became curious about the experiences, perceptions and challenges Norwegian journalists who are blind or severely visually impaired encounter.

The interest also grew to explore and investigate how they manage to overcome their disability in their careers daily. Studies within different fields regarding people living with disabilities, are becoming more apparent.

The realisation that a disability can not only occur at any time, but some forms of disabilities are almost inevitable with age. Scholars are also realising that disabilities have no boundaries, restrictions and that it is a global occurrence (Davidson, 2006).

The UN (United Nations) estimates that a billion people worldwide live with disabilities. Thus, approximately 15% of the world population live with disabilities and therefore it means that people living with disabilities form the world's largest minority group. At the same time, they are also the group that is the most susceptible to segregation and discrimination (Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Norwegian Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion, 2013). Taking all of the above into consideration, this thesis hopes to shed light on how severely visually impaired or blind journalists perceive their roles as journalists, their career, their values, challenges, as well as unique methods that they have had to apply to become and continue to be journalists in Norway.

Genevieve Belmaker (2016) wrote an article on her experiences and challenges as a blind journalist in the United States of America, she wanted to be a journalist even though she was not

aware of any other blind journalists in the industry at the time. She expressed her experiences, challenges and limitations as follows:

In the years I've been doing journalism, my own streak of embarrassment and shame has shown little sign of slowing. I've needed help from security guards (sometimes even guiding me by the hand) to find important offices or meetings. I've asked editors for help reading the most basic charts, embedded in reports, swallowing any pride I had about independence. And I've routinely been subtly passed over to cover breaking or spot news because, as far as I can tell, editors don't trust me to be as fast as my peers. (Belmaker; 2016, para. 18)

In the same article however she is also quick to express and share the upper hand her blindness provided in the field of journalism and her career as follows: "There's an unexpected bright side to being a journalist with a disability: Holding a cane can be disarming, helping you connect with a source in an unguarded moment" (Belmaker; 2016, para. 11). In her article she communicates and even educates her audience that her disability does not define who she is and what she does. It might not make her circumstances and responsibilities easier, but by accepting the challenges and a will to do what she loves to do, anything is possible. This message is not only a learning curve to other individuals with a disability, but to every human being. In any diverse society, there is a place for a diverse outlook and perspective.

In so doing realizing the unique potential and contribution journalists from different backgrounds, genders races and yes, abilities can make to recognise and voice the requirements in the societies (Belmaker; 2016).

In taking account of the information that is hoped to be gained by this study, this thesis will aim to provide an in-depth look and understanding into blind or severely visually impaired journalists in Norway's experiences, challenges, as well as their unique methods of overcoming their daily challenges when investigating, constructing and reporting the story. This thesis also aims to be inquisitive in how they experience the support and attitudes of their colleagues, fellow journalists and audiences. It is however important to emphasise that the scope of this thesis only considers experiences of blind or severely visually impaired journalists across Norway, although it is mindful that contributions from all journalists living with disabilities are equally important and valuable.

This thesis will aim to collect data by means of interviewing various journalists across Norway who are either blind or severely visually impaired, working in various media platforms. A qualitative research design will be used in the attempt to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the main challenges journalists who are blind or severely visually impaired experience daily in their career as well as how they perceive the support or attitudes from their colleagues, fellow journalists and audiences?
2. How have they managed to overcome these daily challenges in order to be a journalist?

3. How do journalists in Norway who are blind or severely visually impaired perceive their role as journalist?

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The pressures of modern journalism today

The main function of journalists is to inform their citizens of their social and political structure timeously (Munir, n.d, p. 1). It goes without saying that the information provided to their citizens should be accurate, understandable and reliable in order for it to have meaning, be of importance and trustworthy in a free society:

Journalism's theory of democracy still relies on a belief that an informed citizenry will be an engaged citizenry, that an engaged citizenry will be more participatory and more informed, and that the result will be a more democratic society. (Munir, n.d, p. 1)

In so doing, journalists fulfil many roles in society namely: "helping define community, creating common language and common knowledge, identifying a community's goals, heroes and villains, and pushing people beyond complacency" (Munir; n.d; p. 1). Other roles of journalists include entertaining their audience, serving as watchdog to protect their society and providing a voice to the voiceless. According to this, journalists need to perform many diverse roles adequately, in order to support a free society. The best way to undertake and master these different roles in the societies, are by administering a diverse and included workforce within the field of journalism, overall (Munir, n.d).

Even though in the modern digital world, these clear-cut roles and practices of the journalists are not as clear-cut any more. The lines that define the role of the journalist today, have become quite unclear rather rapidly. It is not only with regard to the questions of who the journalists are today, what their skills should be, what quality journalism should have, but also how news media should be generated and produced. Journalists have to be able to multitask, be flexible and diverse in a limited and competitive turnover time. This is not withstanding the issue of which media platforms are best to reach the modern audience. Modern technology has evolved and altered the manner in which information is gathered, exchanged, mediated and allocated. The modern audience plays a larger and more active role in that the communication is now back and forth between the journalist and their audience and no longer only the journalist to their audience (Witschge, Nygren, 2009).

The survey by Ottosen & Krumsvik (2012) that focused on the Norwegian journalists' perception and believes on the pressures in the profession and newsrooms, brought about by digitalisation. It also looked into the different movements by the media industry, as well as how the habits of the audience have changed.

The consensus among the Norwegian journalists are towards the pressures accompanying digitalisation, the quality of the stories takes a back seat to the number of stories that need to be released in the designated time. The participants also highlighted the added pressure of attempting to resist the constant pressure from the evolving and increasing information industry, that continuously attempts to influence the news outline (Ottosen, Krumsvik, 2012).

2.2 What are the values and ethics in journalism today

Digitalisation played a larger role in transformation and evolution than was expected, not only in journalism, but across various and numerous fields, if not all. No-one could predict the full impact digitalisation would have, as well as foresee what measures should have been put in place to soften the evolutionary shock. It has even caused confusion in what ethics should be followed in the world of journalism. The audience today, play a much larger interactive role with the journalist, as the audience communicate with the journalist and not only the journalist communicating to their audience, as was the practice previously, through their reporting. Digitalisation have also provided the audience with more information at their fingertips, as well as a greater and broader selection and variety in news, media platform and material at the click of a button. By only browsing on the Internet, the audience can gain access and compare local and international newspapers, radio channels and television channels (Rosenstiel, 2013).

Previously, ethics such as truthfulness, independence and minimize harm were emphasized. However, together with digitalisation and the audience playing a greater role in modern journalism, values and ethics also have to adjust to the evolving changes. This brought about the importance of transparency in order to reflect and portray credibility in journalism. The community has also become a valuable ethical entity, due to the communal participation that has evolved as well (Rosenstiel, 2013).

Reliable journalism has by no means become less important but is still a requirement in order to ensure democracy. The powerful and elite still need to be held accountable for their actions. They need to be closely monitored and all abuse of power need to be voiced and exposed to the society.

It is still important to inform and protect the public against manipulation, half-truths and untruths. Subsequently, with a new and advanced digital era, journalists need new and broader values and ethics. Taking this into account, the ethics should be extended, in order to include ethics that oversee the potentials of this new era (Rosenstiel, 2013). Therefore, Rosenstiel (2013) recommended that the values and ethics be adjusted as follows:

Discover the truth, report the truth

Journalist should be fierce in their search of accuracy and not settle for anything less. In gathering and interpreting information and then reporting it, they need to remain honest and fair. Journalists should be the voice to those who do not have a voice in society, expose what is hidden and keep the powerful accountable and true. Overall, journalists should take responsibility for what they report and remain accountable, however, this task is easier said than done. Together with the modern digitalisation of journalism and the pressure thereof as discussed above, the time constraints journalists face today, make it very difficult for journalists to obtain the truth from a balanced and fair point of view. In other words, in a digitally competing, multi medium world the emphasis of a story is more related to who can release it first, instead of who can obtain the truth from multiple sides, in order to present the most accurately informative report. Another important aspect is for the report to explain multiple sides of the story and report it in an equal and just manner. This will ensure that the society decides how they feel about a matter, as they have all the facts, instead of being misled, due to the limited and specific information they had received (Rosenstiel, 2013).

Transparency

Journalists should be clear and translucent in their reporting, in order to reflect how the information was obtained and why the specific commentary was conducted, so that their audience should be aware of why they can believe the report. The evidence, sources and choices should be well explained in a manner that is understandable by their entire society. Journalists should also be open and honest if there happens to be knowledge they could not obtain, as well as remain modest in their profession (Rosenstiel, 2013).

Transparency is vital in the communication of opinions and beliefs, in order for the audience to decide how they might interpret the evidence provided. Journalists need to ensure that alterations are made on any errors and/or material that may change. The corrections also need to be rectified and available on a platform where their audience, who might have received the faulty information, may receive the rectified information timeously.

This goes hand in hand with truth and accountability. By journalists ensuring transparency in their reporting, they prove their worth, to a point to their accountability to their audience (Rosenstiel, 2013).

Engaging the community

Journalists have a responsibility to always be aware of the shifting needs and desires of their society and audience, as well as the changes that might or could occur within their specific society. The society should be encouraged to communicate with and advise the journalists of any developments,

as well as offer viable feedback on their reporting. By putting the necessary means in place, a two-way communication network can be created. The damage that could be inflicted to a single individual or an entire community by a journalistic report, should be reserved to the least harmful impact. Journalists should remain empathetic and compassionate to those they report on and never abuse their standing in the community, to inflict unnecessary hurt and pain (Rosenstiel, 2013).

Rosenstiel (2013) does not discuss the variance between reporting truthfully versus remaining empathetic and compassionate. To what extent does a journalist give a voice to the voiceless and play a watchdog role, at the same time be transparent, empathetic and compassionate in order not to cause harm to an individual and group? Rosenstiel (2013) provides the values that should be considered in a digital era but neglects the extent and who will keep the journalist or medium accountable.

2.3 Five important values by the Ethical Journalist Network

The Ethical Journalist Network (2016) defines five very similar principles in journalism today. The first principle in journalism, is to ensure truth and accuracy. Although it is not always easy to obtain the full truth or be sure of what the exact and entire truth is, nonetheless, the available facts must be used in an accurate and correct manner. Facts should be checked and rechecked by making use of multiple sources before a story is released. If a story has to be released with some doubt about the concrete accuracy, the public should be made aware of the uncertainty. If a discrepancy is however found, it needs to be rectified as soon as possible and in a means the audience can be made aware of the correction timeously (Who we are, 2016).

The second principle is for journalists to remain independent. In other words, journalists should attempt not be affiliated with a special interest but should remain self-governing if there is an indirect or direct affiliation, the audience should be made aware of it. The third principle refers to fairness and objectivity. Objectivity though very difficult to obtain and remain, should be strived after, as well as all the different sides of a story should be explored, conveyed and reported on. Journalists should attempt not to form a personal opinion and then convey this opinion to their audience, but rather try and remain objective and fair to all sides. By trying to convey the story in a balanced and objective manner, builds greater credibility and trustworthiness among the audience (Who are we, 2016).

The penultimate principle refers to humanity. Journalists should be aware of the damage and hurt words can cause. They should strive not to cause any amount of harm to another human being or group, through a report on any medium (Ethical Journalists Network). Lastly, the final principle

stated is for journalists to be accountable and responsible. Journalists should always be responsible, answerable and accountable for the product of their profession (Who are we, 2016).

The Ethical Journalist Network (2016) states that they feel that journalists should be held accountable by forming a legal and social basis in order to preserve the profession of journalism. This is one step further than Rosenstiel's (2016) recommended values. Furthermore, by defining and naming five concrete principles of journalism to follow instead of three ambiguous values, it leaves little to chance. Rosenstiel (2016) did however attempt to provide more details in the definition and explanation of each value. In other words, all five principles as discussed by the Ethical Journalist Network was also discussed by Rosenstiel, but in the definitions and not the specific naming of the values.

2.4 The media situation in Norway

Norway is a kingdom situated in Europe's most northern region and has a population of approximately 5 million people. In 2017 Reporters Without Borders ranked Norway's press freedom as "faultless". Journalists in Norway are not exposed to censorship or political pressures and enjoys the privilege of media freedom. Violence and aggression against journalists and even the media is not at all common, however there has been the rare Islamic fundamentalist that may have threaten journalists in the past couple of years (Reporters without borders, 2017).

Today, Norway is profoundly one of the most digitally sophisticated countries in Europe and one of the first countries that connected to the Internet. Of the top 10 sites visited online in Norway, is VG.no, which is an online newspaper, is the most visited sight and four more of the top 10 sites are traditional news organisations associated to newspapers and broadcasters (Ottosen, Krumsvik, 2012). Digitalisation in and of the media have brought with it an evolution that brought change faster, broader and deeper than anyone anticipated. Change is a difficult and interesting concept, as with the novelty it can bring, it also leaves a trail of re-invention, restructuring and reconstruction. This whirlwind of change did not leave any of the four corners of the world untouched and so it also managed to hit Norway's news media and media structural conditions. The evolutionary changes in the news media and media structures have also left journalists in Norway uncertain and worried about the future of journalism, what journalism stands for and their careers as journalists. Although Norway still has a relatively high print readership, financial prosperity and strong cultural policies in the media, it does not exempt them from feeling and experiencing the changes in their profession and the quality of the news they are able to produce (Steen-Johnson, Ihlebaek, Enjolras, 2016).

During 2013 and 2014 the Norwegian media houses had to downsize and lay off numerous journalists and other staff. This brought new pressures and challenges to the journalists and their

profession, as well as the quality thereof. Together with the changes digitalisation and the Internet brought, the crises of journalism were on the forefront in Norway as well. However, true to the ability to change to provide constructive and adverse contributions, so, many scholars have discussed, predicted and research the full outcome. Digitalisation has not only brought doom and devastation to journalism but has also brought new and exciting developments. It has opened an interaction ability between the journalist and their public as well as new innovations, for example the mobile phone and what it is now able to do, has widened the media and journalists' audience scope. On the other hand, digitalisation has widened and strengthened the opposition portal, created greater and more strenuous time constraints for news reports to be released, as well as blurs the lines of who is a journalist (Steen-Johnson, Ihlebaek, Enjolras, 2016).

Media usage patterns are also changing and seemingly worrying the industry. The younger population in Norway prefers reading the online version of the newspaper, whereas the older population does not feel so technologically comfortable and prefers a printed hard copy of the newspaper that they can physically hold and handle.

Although membership fees and paying walls to online newspaper versions are starting to emerge, the online newspaper has previously been free of charge. This free online version is part of what has caused the financial strains on print media today. The VAT exemption and press subsidies from the government has not extended to the online version, only printed press. Financial and political circumstances have developed a need for continues, up to date news reporting. All these scenarios are causing a great deal of pressures on the quality and values of the journalist as well as on the growth of journalism. At the moment this might inhibit the innovation, creativity and passion of the industry (Steen-Johnson, Ihlebaek, Enjolras, 2016).

2.5 Disability and accommodations in Norway

2.5.1 Defining a disability in Norway

The Norwegian policy definition of a disability is aligned with the United Nations (UN) convention's social political model principles. The Norwegian policy perceives a disability as "the gap between the individual's capabilities and society's demands" (UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities – Norway's Initial Report; 2014; p. 6). With owning this definition, a disability can be overcome by "increasing accessibility in society and by strengthening the individual's capabilities with providing reasonable accommodations and adjustments. User involvement is a key element in the Norwegian policy" (UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities – Norway's Initial Report; 2014; p. 6). Previously, a disability was more associated to a medical point of view or paradigm. As such, it was perceived to be a defect or fault within an individual or person, such as an

illness, injury or imperfection. As this initial definition did not consider the challenging and non-accessible environments societies have created for people living with a disability, it required a paradigm shift as well as a shift in the society's awareness in constructing the environment (UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities – Norway's Initial Report; 2014). In other words, the Norwegian policy does not perceive the disabled person as having the disability, but rather charges their surroundings and the society they live in, with not providing an environment for all its citizens to function and live in.

NAV, which is the abbreviation for the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration, has specific key goals to ensure that the entire Norwegian population is included within their own societies and have an opportunity to participate and contribute to them for example, to assist and encourage more people to be more active in their society and have a job or career and have less people on benefits. NAV strives to provide the proper services and assistance when it is most required, as well as providing a comprehensive and efficient labour and welfare administration" (NAV, 2017, p. 1). In light of achieving these goals, there is an action plan to extend these goals to also include people living with disabilities in Norway. NAV's Action Plan defines individuals living with a disability very similarly to the UN's definition: "A disability is a discrepancy between the capabilities of the individual and the functional demands of his/her environment in areas which are significant for the establishment of independence and a social life" (NAV; department of assistive technology, 2017, p. 6).

The environment in this context refers to both the in and outdoor environment, as well as socialising in the form of working and going about one's everyday life. They recognise two principles that these gaps influence, firstly, the person living with the disability experiences everyday difficulties and obstacles created by the environment which is constructed and built by the society and the various demands it forces onto the individual. Secondly, people living with a disability are left out and separated from various societal experiences and roles, including contributing to their society (NAV; department of assistive technology, 2017). In other words, the disability can be seen as the missing link between what the person is capable of doing and the difficulties and functions the environment demands. "By impaired functional capacity we mean loss of or damage to a body part or body function. This may mean, for example, impaired mobility, sight or hearing" (NAV; department of assistive technology, 2017, p. 6).

The Norwegian policy is of the belief that the difficulties the environment imposes can be bridged by adapting, modifying and changing it. "Assistive devices or personal assistance can be provided in order to narrow the gap between demands and capabilities" (NAV; department of assistive technology, 2017, p. 6). In other words, the consensus is that through modern technology,

accommodations and alternative assistance, the society can become accessible to and inhabited by all its members and citizens, in a near to equal manner (NAV; department of assistive technology, 2017, p. 6).

Statped is a Norwegian national facility that provides the special needs education required by individuals living with a disability. The aim is to assist the children, youth and adults requiring special educational needs in their own social environment, as well as by the best possible means. This may assist in ensuring that they have the opportunity to master their own lives and participate and contribute actively in education, work and their society (Statped, 2016.). In other words, Norway recognises the important role education can play to uplift and empower the individual living with a disability, in order to be independent, active and functioning within their environment. At the same time, these individuals remain part of their own society by attending the same schools as their non-disabled peers. This assists the societies in also being made aware of an environment that may/may not be incompatible to all its citizens, as well as recognizing and including the individuals social standing (Statped, 2016).

2.5.2 Defining blindness and visual impairment

According to the World Health Organisation approximately 253 million people worldwide live with vision impairment, of which 36 million individuals are blind and 217 million individuals live with moderate to severe vision impairment. Various types of chronic eye diseases are mainly to blame for vision loss globally (World Health Organisation, 2017). According to the International Classification of Diseases, vision function is divided and grouped into 4 different and extensive categories namely:

- normal;
- reasonable vision impairment;
- severe vision impairment;
- blindness (World Health Organisation, 2017).

It is thus important to emphasize that this research study however, will only focus on journalists who are severely visually impaired as well as blind. Apart from Norway all the Nordic countries (Finland, Sweden, Denmark and Iceland) have records, information and statistics on individuals who are visually impaired, under the age of 20. In Norway it was due to poor record keeping and poor data protection, that the Norwegian Register of Visual Impairment and Blindness (Blindekartoteket) was initially closed down in 1995. This has resulted in a large national gap of information and statistics on blind or visually impaired children in Norway (Haugen, Bredrup, Rødahl; 2016). The children had been referred to their various local municipal departments of special education needs. However there had been a number of attempts to launch a national and central registry again, but up to date

this has not been successful. Not having a chronological ophthalmological register, can lead to urgent and serious gaps in not only required research, but also precious information on what causes visual impairment and blindness as well as, evolving in disease patterns. The registry would also be able to provide a history of the starting age, rehabilitation and habituation patterns, monitor what equipment is useful and train teachers in the various new trends (Haugen, Bredrup, Rødahl; 2016).

Accommodations to assist individuals who are visually impaired or blind are for example, software that either enlarges the text on a computer and or reads the content displayed on the computer out loud, mobile phones that have the accessories to also enlarge the screen or and read the content on the screen. Other devices are for example specialised keyboards and devices that are able to read the content on a page, leaflet or book out loud for the individual. These accommodations however, are very expensive and not all countries assist the individuals who need them, to purchase it. NAV however, assists their citizens with the best and most required accommodations for their specific and unique needs (NAV; department of assistive technology, 2017).

2.6 Media representation of people living with disabilities

2.6.1 *The United Nations' view on media and disability*

The social model of disability which emphasises a blend of political activism and scholarship assisted in the movement towards a more positive impression of people living with disabilities internationally. Disabilities are no longer only seen as medical issues, but fall under the umbrella of human rights policies. The social paradigm has played a big role in the shift of the disability not being within the individual, but rather the inability of the environment to facilitate its citizens (Barns, 2012):

It has also opened the doors to the introduction of numerous legislative measures and policy initiatives to address the various economic and social deprivations encountered by disabled people across the world. Yet these policies have had only a marginal impact on the everyday experience of disablement, and the majority of disabled people remain the poorest of the poor in all societies. And given the unprecedented economic, environmental and demographic challenges that lie ahead, this situation is likely to get worse before it gets better if at all. (Barns, 2012, p. 22)

The dedication of the United Nations stretches across equal opportunity, enforcement and upholding of human rights to all human beings. This includes promoting the rights of individuals living with disabilities, in order to improve and ensure a place in society to all who live in it. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, is the legally binding document that commits them to the promotion of the empowerment, upliftment and inclusion of individuals living with disabilities. The aim is to improve their lives, ensure and promote equal opportunities to contribute to and be

included in their society (UN Division of Social Policy and Development Disability, 2017). To achieve this global goal the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities requires the collaboration, enforcement and commitment of states to promote individuals living with disabilities and fight against the negative stereotyping. The United Nations urges the states to encourage their media to represent people living with a disability in a respectful, honourable and dignified manner consistent with human rights (UNDESA) (UN Division of Social Policy and Development Disability, 2017).

Currently it seems that the global consensus of the media representation of people living with a disability is apparently portrayed as being excessively poor, suppressed and separated from society. People living with a disability are also negatively stereotyped or not covered at all. If anything is covered it regularly takes the form of either a subject of misfortune, assistance required or charity. On the other side of the spectrum the representation is how a “tragic and disabling condition or conversely, presented as superheroes who have accomplished and overcome great feats. It is mainly communicated to inspire and motivate the non-disabled or other disabled individuals” (UN Division of Social Policy and Development Disability, 2017, para. 3). This segregation likewise tends to be a reality in many societies. The exclusion as well as psychological, economic and social discrimination is against human rights and a challenge that hinders development and growth. Economic and social exclusion is a part of the daily lives of persons with disabilities and is a breach of human rights and a major developmental challenge. In truth, respectful and honourable diversity and inclusion in our societies and media, have the power to bridge, overcome and improve human rights and promote the evolution and development of entire nations and population (UN Division of Social Policy and Development Disability, 2017).

No-one similarly recognises and take note of the impact a picture or words can have on how we perceive, make sense and understand each other, as well as what surrounds us. In time these pictures and words have the power to become social norms, sway public opinion and alter our believes and actions. However, the media is and can also be a useful and impacting tool to empower individuals living with disabilities as well as their families. It has the power and influence to combat negative stereotyping and inform and educate societies in a positive and inclusive manner. This could dramatically impact the inclusion of individuals living with disabilities into societies and encourage their integration in order for the entire society to play an active and participatory role (UN Division of Social Policy and Development Disability, 2017).

True to the role of journalism and media, an accurate, fair and balanced representation of people living with disabilities is required to achieve the United Nation’s mission and goal. With the co-operation of the different states, media and United Nations working together, they have the potential to further promote health, education, employment and access to information and

specialised equipment that could further empower these individuals lives. In other words, the co-operation can assist in the development, growth and independence of people with disabilities and in so doing provide them with a rich, fulfilled and decent life (UN Division of Social Policy and Development Disability, 2017).

The newly elected 2010 UK (United Kingdom) Coalition Government has drastically changed their policies related to disability benefits. This change is justified by the financial crises the United Kingdom experienced in 2007 and 2008. This had led to a shift in the manner the media represents the people living with disabilities. Studies have shown that newspaper coverages of 2010 and 2011 were seemingly “less sympathetic and there was an increase in articles that focused on disability benefit and fraud, and an increase in the use of prejudice language to describe disabled people” (Briant, 2013, p. 1). An audience reception study proposes that the shift in the reporting and representation of people living with disabilities is impacting and altering the perception, beliefs and ways the audience think about individuals living with disabilities (Briant, 2013).

2.6.2 Consequences of disability and reasonable accommodation

The term *self-determination* refers to the:

right and the responsibility of people to make decisions for themselves. Self-determination includes freedom to associate with whomever one chooses, authority to control money owned by or used to purchase services for oneself, autonomy to be the boss of one’s own life, and assuming responsibility for the consequences of one’s decisions. (Albrecht, 2005, p. 2)

However, these rights are often denied to people living with disabilities in various societies and countries. Self-determination is at the same time often denied to people living with disabilities, even if it is a national law and human right. “Ableism occurs whenever a group of persons endorse self-determination among most group members but restrict or inhibit disabled persons from making basic life choices” (Albrecht, 2005, p. 2). These restrictions can occur in the schooling, employment of people with disabilities, housing, transportation needs making medical choices and social interchange due to the inability and inaccessibility to buildings and other social places, financial circumstances and lastly, crippling attitudes amongst the society they live in (Albrecht, 2005).

People who are not like the norm, for example, who look very different or who live with disabilities, are often treated differently due to their “otherness”. The difference brings about fear, disdain or insignificance by their society. This often leads to two different reactions by the people living with disabilities or other differences. Firstly, they attempt to hide their disability or person with a disability themselves and secondly, they tend to only mix with other people who are similar or see themselves as similar to the disabled person (Johnstone, 2004). People living with disabilities across

all boarders, experience higher levels of unemployment, as well as underemployment. The fears and doubt employers have regarding people living with disabilities are not limited to a specific sector or industry. These fears and doubts are also by no means limited to a specific impairment but runs across all disabilities. It is then not surprising that employers across all media, newspapers, radio, television etc. experience the very same uncertainties, reservations and attitudes to employ people living with disabilities, as well as promote them into different roles and positions (Ellis, 2016, p. 4). The three main uncertainties recognised include, “job qualifications/ performance concerns, costs associated with hiring people with disabilities; and the reactions /responses of others” (Ellis, 2016, p. 4). There are two main aspects that are clearly imminent in the process of employing and promoting individuals with disabilities namely fear and pity by the employer as well as a lack of accommodation itself and knowledge of how the accommodation can enable the individual with a disability (Ellis, 2016).

It appears that the media universally, repeatedly make use of language that instill fear and pity towards people living with disabilities as well as their experiences. These discourses can play a huge role in the cultural and societal perception, which is also reflected in the unemployment and underemployment of this group. The employers very often worry about the potential cost of the required accommodations. On top of this there is also every so often the pity that their colleagues display towards the individual living with a disability. For example, the colleagues may give them a hug and express their regret to the individual’s misfortune of having a disability. Another example is the colleagues that do some of the individual’s duties, not because they were asked for help, but because the colleagues merely feel sorry for the individual. However, if the media were to adjust their discourse to alternatively educate and inform people of the benefits the business and ultimately the society and population could gain through employing individuals living with disabilities, it could go a long way in reducing the fear, shame and stigma that follows the individuals themselves (Ellis, 2016).

Places of education can also make a huge difference in teaching children and adults living with disabilities, to overcome their disability in completing a task to the best of their abilities and/or finding alternative methods. It may not always be in the same manner the task is completed in the mainstream, but there are many ways to complete a single task. In time the education can and will run over into the workplaces. It could also be very beneficial if the person learns how to make use of the assistive devices and gain confidence in their alternative methods in their place of education, as it can assist in the smooth transference into the world of employment (Ellis, 2016, p. 4).

Accommodations need not always be in the form of specialised equipment but could also be in the form of where an individual sits in the office, or larger printed text, or even a couple extra leave days

in a year. Many countries today have legislation regarding reasonable accommodation or adjustment within the workplace. "A reasonable adjustment or accommodation, refers to a modification in work processes, practices or environment that allows a person with disability to complete their job in such a way, in order to minimise the impact of their impairment" (Ellis, 2016, p. 4). However, companies are still very worried about the potential cost of the accommodations and therefore chooses not to employ the individual living with a disability, or employ the individual with less compensation, or deduct the cost of the accommodation for their compensation (Ellis, 2016, p. 4).

2.6.3 Media representation of individuals living with disabilities in Norway

Norway's public service broadcaster is known as NRK (Norsk rikskringkasting AS), or the Norwegian Broadcaster Corporation and is Norway's biggest media house. It consists of three national television-channels, 14 national radio-channels and the website NRK.no. NRK has been given a special mandate to be a non-commercial, politically independent public broadcaster, which is financed by a licence fee payable by the Norwegian households. In 2016 it was recorded that 88 percent of the Norwegian population made use of 1 or more of NRK's services on a daily basis. NRK's purpose is to serve the entire Norwegian population with its public service broadcasting via television, radio, mobile and other forms of media. They strive to broadcast news that is both unbiased and trustworthy. Quality, relevance as well as credibility are all characteristics which is considered when choosing programs and documentaries related to education, information, sport and others. These characteristics are also taken into account with regards to the representation of all children and all adults within the Norwegian population (About NRK, 2017).

NRK is required to support and strengthen the Norwegian democracy. First and foremost, the NRK has two priorities related to individuals living with disabilities that they attempt to include in their broadcasting structure. They read as follows:

it is the responsibility of the NRK to reveal matters which ought to be subjected to criticism and to help protect individuals and groups against abuse or neglect by public authorities and institutions, private undertakings or others and the NRK shall have editorial independence. The NRK shall safeguard its integrity and credibility in order to be able to operate freely and independently in relation to persons or groups that, for political, ideological, economic or other reasons, wish to exert influence on its editorial content. Activities shall be characterised by a high ethical standard and provide a balanced representation over time. An attempt shall be made to achieve objectivity and an analytical and neutral approach- the self-regulatory mechanisms of the Norwegian press. (NRK, Fordal, 2010, Article 13)

NRK has a responsibility to ensure that its 3 main channels in radio and television must be available, accessible and understandable to the entire Norwegian population. This includes, by means of

speaking also the accessibility and understanding by individuals living with disabilities. However, the rest of their channels are required to be as broadly available as possible. With this in mind, NRK is also responsible to ensure that their programming is available and can be consumed by people living with disabilities. It also includes that all television programming is required to have subtitles (NRK, Fordal, 2010).

2.7 Feminist Disability Theory

2.7.1 *Feminist theory + disability = the feminist disability theory*

Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (2002) wrote an essay called “Integrating Disability, Transforming Feminist Theory” in which she attempts to strengthen the feminist theory by developing the feminist disability theory. This theory is an academic field of investigation, which increases and enhances the restrictions in which we perceive and understand human diversity. This also includes “the materiality of the body, multiculturalism and the social formation that interprets bodily differences” (Garland-Thomson, 2002, p. 1). By adding, mixing and integrating the analysis and a classification of representation of disability into feminist theory, it not only has the potential to develop and expand the theory but also challenge it (Garland-Thomson, 2002).

Studies on disability have slowly moved out of the fields of medicine, social work and reintegration in order for it to develop into an investigation field of identity study (Garland-Thomson, 2002). The field of identity study refers to the ongoing debate in an attempt to define how individuals identify themselves, as well as how and by what means do they categorise themselves, for example, their national, ethnic, gender, and state identities (Fearon, 1999). Together with the emphasis on the Civil Rights Movements, studies regarding woman and race fast tracked and launched “a model in the academy for identity-based critical enterprises that followed, such as gender studies, queer studies, disability studies, and a proliferation of ethnic studies” (Garland-Thomson, 2002, p. 1).

These developments have widened our knowledge and understanding of, but also created confusion and uncertainty regarding social justice, construction and behaviour. Disability studies are growing and thriving in fields like theatre, literature and philosophy in the same way feminist theory did 20 – 25 years ago. However not everyone acknowledges that disability studies should and could fall under the same umbrella as identity studies (Garland-Thomson, 2002, p. 1). Rosemarie Garland-Thomson concludes that “much of current disability studies do a great deal of wheel reinventing” (Garland-Thomson, 2002, p. 1). She however blames the unfamiliarity of the feminist theory to the disability study scholars but claims that the “pronouncements in disability studies of what we need to start addressing are precisely issues that femininity theory has been grappling with for years”

(Garland-Thomson, 2002, p. 1). Although feminist theory might be used to gain some insights, knowledge, methods and perspectives into disability studies, it is important to remember that not all aspects of the theory is compatible to the research into disability studies (Garland-Thomson, 2002, p. 2). In other words, there are aspects and situations for example, oppression, the manner in which they always need to prove their worth, opinions of care, differences of the body etcetera, that is very similar in nature to the treatment and experiences of females when the feminist theory first came about (Garland-Thomson, 2002, p. 2).

Susan Wendell (2006) writes in her article called *“Toward a Feminist Theory of Disability”* that a disability theory is required, and it needs to be social, because it is firstly socially constructed and secondly political, because the ethical, psychological and epistemological issues also need to be taken into consideration. With these factors in mind, she also proposed that the feminist theory was best suited (Wendell, 2006). Although Susan Wendell also recognizes that more women worldwide are disabled, but more importantly feminist thinkers “have raised the most radical issues about cultural attitudes to the body. Some of the same attitudes about the body which contribute to women’s oppression generally also contribute to the social and psychological disablement of people who have physical disabilities” (Wendell, 2006, p. 243). Females have struggled with many situations that people who have a disability have also struggled with in different contexts (Wendell, 2006, p. 243). It is important to note that this study does not consider the gender related inequalities in the thesis but merely the similar issues that individuals living with a disability (male/female) experience as raised by the feminist theory. This includes the following scenarios:

1. Should the differences and similarities between different groups be emphasized and should there be a dominant group?
2. How important should independence be?
3. Should the values be questioned, that emphasises the negativity of being dependant on others?
4. Should the goal be equality between men and woman, abled and disabled whether to, as well as should the integration then be into the men’s world or the abled?
5. Should some form of segregation remain and if so how much (Wendell, 2006)?

2.7.2 The social construction of people living with disabilities

Integration and transformation are the two main aspects of combining disability studies and feminist theory. Firstly, the disability studies integrate into the feminist theory and secondly, the feminist theory transforms into the feminist disability theory. Furthermore, integration and transformation

are two important aspects which appeal to the feminist theory as well as to the Civil Rights Movements. "Integration suggests achieving parity by fully including that which has been excluded and subordinated. Transformation suggests re-imagining established knowledge and the order of things" (Garland-Thomson, 2002, p. 3).

Many people living with a disability find it difficult to obtain an education as well as, being unemployed, underemployed and disadvantaged. They find themselves lonely and often isolated and often victims of crime and violence. On the other hand, they often experience that abled bodies often pity, ridicule, avoid, stereotype and label them due to a body nature had given them. At the same time feminist theory fights the very thought that because the biological female body looks different, she is or should be oppressed, weaker than and at a disadvantage of power. However, this is socially constructed because it mainly reflects in the social context of the society. In the same manner society's attitude, behaviour and beliefs determine the female's role in society, the society can also empower and uplift the role of the person living with a disability (Wendell, 2006). Feminist theory researches this social and cultural construction of meaning as a subject of analysis.

All too often people living with disabilities find themselves in a catch twenty-two situation. The equipment they require to for example obtain an education or find employment is very expensive when bought individually and not freely available. Due to them not having the equipment they require, they cannot obtain employment or education in order to afford the equipment they require. Many governments provide the funds to keep people with disabilities in different specialised institutions, whereas it is often found that if the funds are rather put to use for equipment required, the very same people will be able to live independently and contribute to the society in a productive and economic manner (Wendell, 2006).

Having a family member who has a disability is also often seen as the family's situation or problem and not society's. The responsibility (financial and care) often falls on the family members, which can add a lot of strain onto the family economically and emotionally (Wendell, 2006, p. 246). The individuals living with the disabilities are left on their own account to seek alternative ways to do ordinary things in an environment not compatible to their abilities. In many, if not all cases, it is not possible, to participate, within the society they live in, without the required equipment or resources, which forces the individual rather not to take part in the society at all (Wendell, 2006, p. 247). It all boils down to the important factor, that if the society recognises and can identify with assisting in the obtaining of resources as well as assistance with required help to people living with disabilities (Wendell, 2006). the society can able the disabled.

2.7.3 Oppression of people living with disabilities

The word “diversity” is one that has become very popular in the past couple of years. With the role of migrants, refugees and the move towards a global world, diversity and what it symbolises have become very prominent. In reality, all human beings have a diverse and unique body, might it be short, thin, tall, dark, light, hairy or bold. In the same manner our bodies are varied in its function, movement and development and is ever changing. However, these changes or differences are often not mentioned, discussed or acknowledged culturally or in societies (Wendell, 2006). In fact, the media and societies are more prone to promote how bodies should look and what it should be able to do. More often than not, this makes it very difficult for anyone to love his or her own unique and diverse body, abled or disabled. The strive is then to try and mould one’s body as close as the cultural and social ideal than possible (Wendell, 2006). With the perfect image of the body that is idealised, it makes it difficult for people living with disabilities to expect, that their otherwise abled physiques fit the physical ideals of their society and culture. As Barbara Hillyer Davis says:

For all of us the difficult work of finding (one’s) self includes the body, but people who live with disability in a society that glorifies fitness and physical conformity are forced to understand more fully what bodily integrity means” (Wendell, 2006, p. 247). In the body conscious societies people living with disabilities are very often disregarded and therefore strive to obtain a body which is just not possible, and this can cause enormous problems with their self-worth, self-esteem and self-image. “People learn to identify with their own strengths (by cultural standards) and to hate, fear and neglect their own weaknesses. The disabled are not only de-valued for their de-valued bodies, they are constant reminders to the able-bodied of the negative body—of what the able-bodied are trying to avoid, forget and ignore. (Wendell, 2006, p. 247)

By intimidating the individual living with a disability’s body, we also oppress every human being’s unique, real and exceptional body. The focus also then falls on the physical disabled body and not the capabilities, ambitions and determination the individual may have, as well as can achieve (Wendell, 2006).

2.7.4 Otherness and people living with disabilities

Otherness, refers to the manner in which we group different people together, according to our own personal experiences. We do not see them as individuals with whom we might be able to identify with, but rather a member in another group. A group different to the one we belong to. To the abled person or group the disabled person or group are often the other. This has social, economic, mental and emotional oppressive costs to the people living with disabilities. This can also cause a mental and emotional dominance to the not disabled group. Otherness, can also take place vice versa, but the disabled group is so small that the effect can be insignificant and ignored by the abled person or

group. However, when a person living with a disability is recognised for overcoming or doing the exceptional, they are often seen as the disabled hero. The abled person or group is then stunned that the person or group living with disabilities managed to overcome their disability or rose above what they were not able to do. This ideal can lead to positive and negative perceptions, on the one hand it can be inspiring, as well as motivating and for the specific moment lessens the stigma. On the other hand, though, it leaves the impression that all people living with disabilities are able to do the seemingly impossible. This scenario once again, widens the gap of otherness as well as puts enormous pressure on the person who overcomes his/her disability by merely mastering their lives one day, obstacle and situation at a time (Wendell, 2006).

The term “differently abled” has been constructed to lessen the stigma and otherness of the term and concept “disabled”. Although the term “differently” immediately highlights and emphasises the “otherness”. Another common term used today instead of disabled, is the term “challenged”, which also only highlights the difficulties of the individual (Wendell, 2006). However, the truth of the matter is:

we are disabled. We live with particular social and physical struggles that are partly consequences of the conditions of our bodies and partly consequences of the structures and expectations of our societies, but they are struggles which only people with bodies like ours experience. (Wendell, 2006, p. 251)

At the end of the day, just as the feminist struggle to be perceived as equal to men in society, likewise people living with disabilities just want to be known as people, individuals and human beings. They just want to be seen as equal to their abled counterparts, contribute to their society and lead an ordinary and independent life (Wendell, 2006).

2.7.5 Criticism of feminist disability theory

Feminist disability theory is often criticised for being narrow and too specific. Scholars also feel that the theory is not suited as an academic field as it does not provide conventional knowledge. Nevertheless, by studying disability, one is able to gain a broader understanding of the finer workings of the society and how it functions, as well as a deeper insight to the human experience (Garland-Thomson, 2002, p. 2). It can also broaden the manner in which we perceive and understand uniqueness, independents, dependants, equality, diversity, inclusion and how a society can move beyond their previous constructions. By studying feminist disability as a whole will allow us to make sense of disability as an identity and a social construction and in time bring a deeper understanding in what it means to be a human being and all the concepts that accompany the term (Garland-Thomson, 2002, p. 5).

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 A Qualitative methodology

When the main purpose and goal of the research is to obtain in-depth understanding of social behaviour, emotion, thought and life itself, then qualitative research provides the best potential research method. Qualitative data is mainly produced, analysed and clarified through words (Patton, Cochran, 2002). The aim is to learn more about the individuals' unique experience in their unique circumstances and unique environments. Therefore qualitative research can provide an opportunity to study a specific phenomenon in the social sciences in-depth. It provides the opportunity to dig deep into the core of the specific field of interest as well as providing an insight and understanding into the experiences and social worlds of the specific participants (Hancock, Ockleford, Windridge, 2009). Qualitative research does not aim to collect a general explanation but seeks to find an exact meaning and understanding to a specific subject or phenomenon. Previously qualitative research was criticised for using a small number of participants, and that the participants were not selected in a random manner. This led to the belief that qualitative research does not and cannot represent the greater population as is. Today however, the consensus is that:

if the original research question sought insight into a specific subgroup of the population, not the general population, because the subgroup is "special" or different from the general population and that specialness is the focus of the research, the small sample may have been appropriate. (Hancock, Ockleford, Windridge; 2009; p. 7)

This thesis' main focus and aim is to investigate the perception into, the challenges of journalists, who are blind or severely visually impaired, how they overcome these challenges, how these journalists perceive their careers in Norway and how they perceive their roles as journalists, as well as journalism in general today. It is not the goal in this thesis to generalise a population or part thereof, but rather to obtain a unique understanding in each of these journalist's circumstances and perceptions. Consequently, this thesis believes that a qualitative research methodology is best suited to obtain the required data.

All methodologies have their fair share of weaknesses and qualitative research is no different. Some would mention that it can merely be circumstantial or expressive and that it can appear that the data obtained is unintentional and unsystematic (Mason, 2002). Nevertheless, there are research fields for example, where a specific group or society is required to be researched in their environments, where these weaknesses are the very source of the study. These weaknesses are then best overcome by the researchers being systematic as well as actively and knowledgeably engaged with their participants (Mason, 2002). As the aim of the study was to find a specific group of severely

visually impaired or blind journalists in Norway and study their unique perceptions, it overshadows the weaknesses of the qualitative methodology technique.

As there are many types of research questions, there are many different methods that can be used in qualitative research to obtain the data required. “The research process will reflect the methodological approach which a team of researchers decides to adopt. Many methodological approaches are described in terms of the type of analysis they imply” (Hancock, Ockleford, Windridge, 2009, p. 10). This thesis aims to follow an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). An interpretative phenomenological analysis has two components namely:

1. It is phenomenological in the sense that it tries to understand and make sense of the participants personal view and interpretations of their experiences;
2. It also takes into account the researcher’s interpretation process (Hancock, Ockleford, Windridge, 2009).

In other words, the interpretative phenomenological analysis pays attention to the subjective conditions and in so doing recognises an insider’s viewpoint. “It is interpretative – it recognises negotiation between researcher and researched to produce the account of the insider’s perspective, so both researcher and researched are “present” (Hancock, Ockleford, Windridge, 2009, p. 13). The data that is collected during the research is then coded in search of developing themes and connections as well as elements of comparisons (Hancock, Ockleford, Windridge, 2009). Interpretive phenomenological analysis recognises that there is a connection between what people say what they think and what their emotional state is at the time. It searches for the participants personal and unique experiences and perceptions to thus seek a glimpse into the life of the participant’s world (Smith, Osborn, 2007 p. 53). Researchers therefore need to be aware and empathetic to the facts that the participants may have difficulty in expressing what they think and feel, as well as taking all these matters into account when trying to understand why information is not freely and effortlessly disclosed (Smith, Osborn; 2007 p. 53).

3.2 Sampling

Interpretive phenomenological analysis requires a small sample size as it is interested in the individual’s personal reality and not to generalise the collected data. It therefore focusses more on specific cases (Smith, Osborn; 2007 p. 55). The original aim of the study was to obtain a sample of 7 or 8 blind or severely visually impaired Norwegian journalists. A homogeneous sample was required and therefore the sample collection could not be random or representative. These cases are particularly common in interpretive phenomenological analysis (Smith, Osborn, 2007). This led me to make use of a snowball sampling method. “Snowball sampling may simply be defined as: A technique for finding research subjects. One subject gives

the researcher the name of another subject, who in turn provides the name of a third, and so on” (Atkinson, Flint, 2001, p. 1). It lends a valuable hand when trying to find a specific, hard to reach or even hidden population. The snowball sampling method is also particularly used in qualitative research in the form of interviews (Atkinson, Flint, 2001). I was only looking to interview journalists, in Norway, who were blind or severely visually impaired, who were very specific and difficult to find, hence, my required sample fell deep within the scope of the snowball sampling method.

One of the difficulties of snowball sampling is “finding respondents and initiating ‘chain referral” (Atkinson, Flint, 2001, p. 3). It is useful to have previous knowledge and experience with a population and are acquainted with some insiders. This is a good start to identify more potential participants.

Much of snowball sampling rests on the assumption that social networks consist of groups with relatively homogeneous social traits. However, there are limits to this and it largely depends on what characteristics are considered to be the most important. In the case of a particular disability, for example, it is assumed that someone in this group would know others to whom a researcher could be directed. (Atkinson, Flint; 2001; p. 3)

It is thus also good to note that snowball sampling can be time-consuming. In the case of this thesis, I myself being severely visually impaired happened to be acquainted with a Norwegian blind journalist, who became the first participant of the research sample. I asked if he knew any other journalists who fitted my required sample description. At first, I did not think of consulting him as we have been acquainted for some time and, “interviews should resemble interpersonal relationships” (Stilling Blichfeldt, Heldbjerg; 2011| p. 12).

The choosing of informants known by the researcher was supposed to ensure that interviews do not only resemble interpersonal relationships, but that they are, in fact, drawing on the advantages of interpersonal relationships (e.g. trust and openness). The choosing of informants already known by the researcher was also expected to ensure that previous knowledge on informants would help to form more complete portraits of informants. (Stilling Blichfeldt, Heldbjerg, 2011, p. 12)

I also consulted a local newspaper, contacted various institutions, googled “blind journalist” and asked each journalist who I spoke to, if they knew any other journalist that fitted my required sample description. I obtained information that originally led me to 7 journalists who fit the description. I decided on taking a proactive role in contacting each participant by telephone from the start instead of sending an email and waiting for a response. I would be giving a misconception if all was in fact smooth sailing. It did take some time to find contact numbers for the potential participants. I also followed up on a couple of potential participants who were either in fact not blind

or severely visually impaired or who did not by their own account see themselves as journalists, but more as communicators. 7 journalists initially agreed to participate in my research. When my research started 2 of the participants stated that they no longer sought to be a part of the research. I therefore obtained 5 participants, that agreed to partake in this study.

The limits of this thesis were that only the perceptions of the 5 participants were taken into consideration, the thesis did not recognise the participant's audience, colleagues or fellow journalists reaction, and actual perceptions towards the participants.

3.3 Unexpected language barriers

Primarily, I did not perceive the language barrier as a potential problem, as my investigation showed that English was the favoured second language in Norway. My personal experience, being from South Africa and studying in Norway myself, brought me to the same conclusion. However, my experience at that point led me to make use of a Norwegian family member to at least make contact with the participants in their own native language. When contacting the potential participants, we only provided a short description on the desired research as well as informing the potential participants that I myself am a severely visually impaired Global Journalism Masters student. We also asked if the person we were speaking to was however blind or severely visually impaired and in fact a journalist. We also asked if they would feel comfortable in conducting the interview in English or if they would prefer it in Norwegian. It was also explained that as I was still waiting for the approval from NSD, the Norwegian Data Protection Centre (Norsk senter for forskningsdata), because of the sensitive nature of my research, the interviews would only take place at a later time.

NSD, the Norwegian Data Protection Centre (Norsk senter for forskningsdata) approved the research before I started. All the participants verbally agreed to partake in this research, which had also been recorded. Most of the participants felt more comfortable with a degree of anonymity. It is with this in mind, that I provide the following information, introduction and background of the participants, but will not reveal their names.

By making use of the snowball sampling method, I ended up with 5 male participants. This was by no means planned, but in my search for participants I was not given any information of females that fit my sample requirements. In other words, no one I spoke to knew of a Norwegian female journalist, who was blind or severely visually impaired. It was nevertheless, ironic that I could only find male participants that fit the research requirements and that the feminist disability theory was made use of, in reference to the relevance of the connotation this theory had to people living with disabilities. However, I need to stress again that this theory was only made use of for its epistemology towards people living with disabilities and not any relation to gender or gender

inequalities. This study does not by any means state that there are no female journalists in Norway who are blind or severely visually impaired, but merely a result, as well as a potential barrier, of the snowball sampling method that was used. However, it could also possibly be that no female journalist who is blind or visually impaired had bridged the Norwegian journalism arena. The other interesting fact was also that one gentleman was over the age of sixty, but the other four participants were in their early 40s. This could once again be a result of the homogeneity that accompanies snowball sampling. Thus, as the main interest of this study was to obtain an in-depth glimpse into each journalists' unique perceptions and experiences, this research did not view any of these barriers as problematic, but merely viewed it as suggestions for possible future research.

The participants were from different parts of Norway and had also worked in various other regions in Norway for example, Oslo, Trondheim, Kristiansand and Bergen. They also worked across various media, such as radio, newspapers and magazines. Though, sadly I could not get hold of a journalist working in television who had been blind or visually impaired. Four of the participants were journalists in a mainstream media and one participant was a journalist in a specialized medium. The participants likewise, had extensive experience as journalists ranging between 10, 21, 24 and 44 years in their profession. The extensive experience of these journalists as well as the diversity of media and regions they have worked in, could provide worthy and extensive insights within the journalistic profession, as well as a glimpse into the perceptions, experiences and beliefs of severely visually impaired or blind individuals in Norway. Each individual living with a disability has a unique manner in overcoming their various obstacles, owned only by their unique experiences, environments and societies. Disabilities occur in different people at different times of their lives and they therefore learn their coping strategies in different manners, by different people and in different environments and circumstances. By exploring and investigating my three research questions next, I hope to shed light on each one of their personal experiences, perceptions and how they overcame their various obstacles in their profession as journalists.

What I did not take into consideration initially, was that all the journalists except one, did not feel comfortable (or could not) in speaking and answering the research questions in English. The Norwegian vocabulary that I had obtained at that time, was also by no means good enough to translate and interview the participants myself. My Norwegian family member had to therefore firstly, translate the questions for me, from English to Norwegian. Secondly, he had to be well informed of my research objectives, purposes and potential outcomes, in order to interview the participants on behalf of me, with me being present in the interview every time. As I could not understand every response to the questions, my family member had to be so well informed as to elaborate on a question where and when needed. Thirdly, my family member was required to

translate the answers of the participants back into English in order for me to analyse the data. This could potentially cause barriers related to language differences, important clarifications and explanations of Norwegian terms that would not have similar uses in English, as well as contextual misunderstandings. It also made it more difficult in sighting the journalists in the findings and discussion chapter, as we do not always make use of the same analogies or words to explain scenarios. Therefore, it is important to note that I could firstly not use as many quotes as I wanted to and secondly, I had to change some of the specific words, where I sighted the journalists in order to be grammatically and meaningfully correct.

Taking these barriers into account and fully being conscious of them, I asked each of the participants if it would be possible that I contact them after the interview and translation thereof, to clear up any uncertainties. I also worked very closely with my family member, not taking any information as obvious or apparent. One should also take the time it takes to translate an interview into account, as it is very time consuming. The questionnaires can be found in the Appendix section. Appendix 1 is the English questionnaire and Appendix 2 the Norwegian questionnaire.

3.4 Personal disclosure

It is important to note that I am also a severely visually impaired journalism student from a foreign country. I have experienced high degrees of discrimination, oppression and have had to fight very hard to prove my worth in many situations. To a large extent this makes me a two-folded bias researcher, firstly, towards the blind or severely visually impaired journalists and secondly, towards the Norwegian policies referring to people living with disabilities. There had been numerous times my professor had to remind me to distance myself from the study. The upper hand I had however, was that the journalists whom I interviewed could answer my research questions openly and honestly as I understood what their challenges were and the emotion behind it. Lastly, I made a conscious effort to remain objective and distant myself from the study. I hope my efforts are visible. Let's start exploring the research!

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 “Education is a better safeguard of liberty than a standing army” (Edward Everett)

A clear finding was that most of the participants, had some form of further education related to their associated fields of journalism. Two of the participants did not entirely complete their tertiary education, even so, did not terminate their education due to difficulties their sight brought, financial difficulties or other, but rather due to alternative opportunities, circumstances and conditions. Also, although they did not feel the need to complete a tertiary education as such, participant 5, did complete a year in Bible school, which was a requirement off the Christian radio station he wanted to be a journalist for. The findings here were two-fold, firstly, these journalists’ sight did not inhibit or stop them from obtaining further education. It could be due to the benefits Norway’s policies make available for special requirements to people living with disabilities. The policies motivates education rights, and/or the providing of required reasonable accommodations, adjustments or assistive technological equipment to provide them with the capability to obtain further education. The education these journalists had chosen to obtain had given them the opportunity to contribute and participate in their respective societies, in a manner they saw fit and able, to their own wants, needs and desires. These journalists themselves, had the freedom to choose if they wanted to pursue a tertiary education and to what extend they were satisfied with the education they had in fact received. Secondly, it could also reflect on the requirements of the media situation in Norway. If, further journalism education was in fact a requirement or advantage in Norway’s media landscape, it emphasized once more that the journalists were not inhibited or stopped by their sight to obtain further education within their desired profession.

Each of the participants had very unique and personal backgrounds and experiences regarding the loss of their sight. This study provides a short description of each participant’s background regarding their sight and education. It is important to note that the allocation that was given to each participant would remain the same throughout the thesis. This is to ensure consistency and avoid any confusion that could take place when speaking of the different participants. With this in mind, let me introduce you shortly to each of the five journalists who participated in this study:

Participant 1 – had gradually become blind from the age of 19 and had been completely blind for the past 20 years. He could still drive when he started his career in a local newspaper, where he is still a journalist today. He started his tertiary education in the field of psychology, but only completed his first year. His career in journalism occurred quite accidentally, as he responded to a part time vacancy as a journalist in the local newspaper, in the town he grew up in, where he remained for 44 years. At the time, he felt that it was

difficult to learn to do his writing on a typewriter but made use of a camera as long as he could see.

Participant 2 - was born blind. He had a fascination with sound and music, which led him in completing a tertiary education in journalism. He was a radio journalist for a national mainstream radio station for approximately 10 years, where after he felt dissatisfied with the progress of his career and decided to make the change to specialize in music.

Participant 3 – had been severely visually impaired from birth and mainly used his left eye to see. He loved writing and obtained an internship in a local newspaper. After gaining some experience in the profession, he managed to complete a tertiary education in journalism. His main field of expertise had been in mainstream print media, newspaper and magazines. He had been a journalist for 24 years.

Participant 4 – had gradually become blind. As a child, he loved writing and wanted to become an author. He also loved commenting and recording his own radio programs as a child. He started out broadcasting as a hobby for local radio stations and after being given an opportunity to attend a short radio journalism course through the Norwegian Association of the Blind, he realized that radio journalism was his great love and decided to complete his tertiary education in radio and television journalism. He had been a journalist in a mainstream national radio channel for 10 years.

Participant 5 – had gradually become severely visually impaired and after being severely visually impaired for 11 years, he was in the blessed situation in being a candidate for an eye operation, which gave him back his full sight. In this thesis he refers to the time he was a severely visually impaired journalist as well as how he reflects back on his experiences when reporting. He was a radio journalist for a Christian radio station and was a couple of subjects short on completing his tertiary education in journalism, due to a change in curriculum. He however, also completed a year in Bible school. It was due to his severe visual impairment that he decided to become a radio journalist in a Christian radio station.

4.2 Reasonable accommodation provided the means

The participants were asked how they were able to complete their daily duties in their profession, as well as what techniques they had learnt throughout their various experiences. An important finding was that all the participants emphasised the crucial and key part their reasonable accommodation, adjustments and technological equipment played in their ability to be journalists in Norway. The reasonable accommodations and various required technology and equipment, had been available and accessible to each of the participants and had provided the means to bridge the gap in their

unique environment, in order to allow them to achieve their goals that they set out to accomplish. It was also interesting that a number of the participants mentioned it important to “be open and honest” about their sight to their colleagues and interviewees, as well as if they were struggling with something at the time. They believed that it was vital for their colleagues and others to be knowledgeable and understand their disability and limits, in order for them to feel comfortable in asking for help when required.

Participant 1 explained how his mobile phone had a voice over option, which read out the information on the mobile phone’s screen. His computer had similar software that allowed the computer to read what it displayed. At the same time, he also used a specialised keyboard for his computer. This equipment allowed him to perform all his duties. All his interviews were arranged to take place at his office, as he personally felt more comfortable not to go out into the field in order to interview people. Participant 2 similarly, made use of his mobile phone’s voice over abilities as well as computer software that read out what the computer screen displayed. Furthermore, he felt that he relied on his determination and ambitious attitude to find ways around his disability to be the best he could possibly be and did not accept anything less from himself.

Participant 3 similarly replied that he always had to have his enlargement equipment with him. There are various enlargement equipment such as software for computers and tablets, as well as hand held and portable electric magnifiers. He admitted that his equipment was crucial for him to read texts and investigate pictures. Lastly, he also felt that it was just as crucial to be open about what he could not do and ask for help when he needed it. He felt that when he was honest and open regarding his sight and help he required, he found that people, his colleagues and so forth were very helpful. Participant 4, as well explained how he made use of a voice over software on his computer and mobile phone. He felt that he would not have been able to do the editing writing and correspondence he was required to do, or any research if he did not have the required software. He admitted that he had used his screen reading equipment for over 12 years. Furthermore, he also mentioned that he had learnt to be open and honest regarding his sight and when required assistance. Lastly, participant 5 felt that being open regarding his sight with the people he interviewed was important to obtain their whole story. He also had to learn to balance the sound he used in order for it not to overshadow the story and the people he interviewed. He mostly had to make use of sound.

All the participants confessed that the specific reasonable accommodations provided them with the means and ability to work in their professions. This went hand in hand with NAV’s (Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration) belief that the difficulties the environment imposed could be bridged by adapting, modifying and changing it. “Assistive devices or personal assistance

can be provided in order to narrow the gap between demands and capabilities” (NAV; department of assistive technology, 2017, p. 6). In other words, the consensus was that through modern technology, accommodations and alternative assistance, the society could become accessible to and inhabited by all its members and citizens, in a near to equal manner. As NAV provided the reasonable accommodation, it could take a lot of pressure of the employers, individual, as well as their families. This is not only in a financial capacity, but also in a social, stressful and emotional manner. The participants were confident in their assistive devices and therefore, they could be confident in the various tasks they needed to complete in their profession and thus, have confidence in their unique abilities. However, the reasonable accommodation was not only within technology, but also in the manner they needed to do specific tasks. For example, Participant 1 admitted that he conducted his interviews in the familiar environment of his office and no longer in the field.

Various participants mentioned that it was important for them that their colleagues, interviewees and others were knowledgeable and understood their sight limitations in order for them to ask for help when they required it. They felt it important to be honest and open about their disability. This was interesting as in many other societies and countries still today, a disability still bears a mark of shame of the person living with the disability as well as to their families. Many people living with disabilities would go very far in trying to hide their disability, not be open about it and ask for help. However, as Norway’s policies recognise the important role education can play to uplift and empower the individual living with a disability, in order to be independent, active and functioning. These individuals remain part of their own society by attending the same schools as their non-disabled peers. This could assist their societies in also being made aware of an environment that may/may not be incompatible to all its citizens, as well as recognizing and including the individuals social standing. Thus, the Norwegian societies could be made aware of the differences in the society from a young age and therefore may learn how to accommodate one another, as well as could be made aware of how the alternative accommodations can assist various individuals in completing the same tasks in different manners.

As the participants had various degrees of sight ranging from severely visual impairments to no sight at all, as well as that their impairments occurred at different seasons in their lives, it could potentially have led to different coping techniques and behaviours. Consequently, this study believed that it could be significant to learn more about how they came about their assistive technologies and unique techniques and abilities to manage and overcome their various trials in their field of journalism.

Unanimously, all the participants felt secure, protected and sheltered within the facilities and support provided by their municipality and care centres namely, NAV (Norwegian Labour and

Welfare Administration). Many of the participants also believed that their determined, positive and ambitious attitudes played a very big role in developing the various techniques they required to learn various alternative skills. They felt it important to acquire the various unique tasks themselves, as they believed it to be a very personal and individual process. At the same time, the participants also appreciated and acknowledged the assistance and time various acquaintances took in teaching them certain skills when required.

Participant 1 said that he was assisted with the most useful equipment through care services in the municipality he lived in (NAV, Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration). The municipalities assisted people with equipment they required in their homes and place of work. He was also taught to use his computer programmes, by assistive services within these care centres. Participant 2 said that all the techniques he learnt came mostly from a positive and determined attitude. He wanted to work and be the best he could be and therefore felt that his determination, was the greatest key in overcoming the various challenges he needed to overcome. His attitude was a great asset together with the assistance he also received from the municipality he lived in.

Participant 3 acknowledged that someone once took the time in teaching him how to type on a keyboard, as well as taught him the various keyboard short cuts. These short cuts could be very helpful if one has difficulty in seeing the computer's screen cursor and in fact can save a lot of time to the severely visually impaired person. These types of assistance and knowledge had made all the difference in his writing of reports. Participant 4 said that he taught himself how to overcome all his challenges and difficulties his sight caused. He felt that it was important that he taught himself what the best and easiest way was for himself, to perform the various duties he was required to complete. It was important for him to do this himself as he felt that learning to overcome his various challenges was a very unique process and what works for the one person does not always work for another. Furthermore, he always felt he had the support of his colleagues and the public aids centre (NAV, Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration), so if anything was truly something he could not overcome himself, he only had to ask.

4.3 Their sight constrains were not the problem, their environments created the snags

Although the participants' personal experiences were very unique and different, the challenges and limitations they faced in their profession as journalists to a certain extent, had many similarities. Similarly, not one of the participants viewed their sight to be the untainted challenge or limitation but viewed some benefits to their sight within their role as journalists. The first question in this section, was related to their trials and challenges within their profession as journalists. It was apparent that these journalists started feeling the stresses accompanied with modern digitalisation

as mentioned by other journalists as well, in their own professions and started being affected by it to. The participants did not at all view their sight as an obstacle to their profession as journalist, but rather viewed some gaps and obstacles within their environments that needed to be overcome. This was very much related to the UN's (United Nations) and Norway's policy's definition on what a disability is. A disability is perceived to be "the gap between the individual's capabilities and society's demands" (UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities – Norway's Initial Report; 2014; p.6). With owning this definition, a disability could be overcome by "increasing accessibility in society and by strengthening the individual's capabilities with providing reasonable accommodations. User involvement was also a key element in Norwegian policy" (UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities – Norway's Initial Report; 2014; p. 6). Previously, a disability was more related to a medical point of view. As such it was viewed as a defect within an individual or person, such as an illness, injury or imperfection. As this initial definition did not consider the challenging environments societies have created for people living with a disability, it required a paradigm shift as well as a shift in the society's awareness in constructing the environment (UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities – Norway's Initial Report; 2014). It would appear that the participants' freedom to be honest about their disability and ask for help when needed, also could have reflected on the paradigm shifts that might have already taken place, or in the process of taking place within the Norwegian society's construction of these journalists' impairments.

It could also reflect on the power a society could hold in their hands, by uplifting, empowering and including all members of their society in a meaningful and respectable manner. However on the contrary, one of the participants stated that he found it very difficult to obtain a permanent position in the field of journalism, but states after he secured a permanent position his sight limitations was not a problem at all. The difficulty of obtaining a permanent position could have been due to the financial crises across journalism or possibly regarding his blindness. It is also important to note that this study only relied on the perceptions and beliefs of the various participants of this research.

Participant 1 stated that he felt that his sight in some instances provided a challenge, but not in all parts. He felt that his screen readers sometimes found it difficult to read the different websites he needed to research, due to their layout. On the other hand, he felt that he had always manage to do his job, interview the people he was required to interview and complete his tasks. He likewise felt that he also had the freedom to ask his colleagues for help if he needed to. Participant 2 stated that it was difficult for him to obtain a permanent position and job as a journalist. However, once he obtained a permanent position as a journalist, he did not view his sight as a further obstacle to fulfil his role as a journalist. In fact, he very quickly added, once he obtained a permanent position as a journalist, he quickly learnt how to manage his responsibilities and once he mastered his own way of

completing his tasks and job, his sight was no longer an obstacle to him. Participant 3 stated that he had never viewed his sight as an obstacle to the job he needed to do. Participant 4 also answered yes and no. He explained that: “in broadcasting over the radio and in listening to radio, we are equally blind”. His greatest challenge was in not being able to move around and get to the story quickly. He did however, feel that in front of his own equipped and adjusted computer, he is able to edit his own work and do the required research He stated that a challenge that had recently started was that:

the society and also the different media houses, have become more visualized. Presenting a story now, on the Internet for example, requires being more eye catching and I struggle with that. Today everything is about film and picture, media and the presentation of it, is certainly a changing field and has changed a lot in the last 10 years. I have 10 years of experience in the field and this gives me some weight to what I do. (Participant 4, 2018)

Nowadays, video cameras are also put up where the radio channels are broadcast, in order for the audience to follow the radio program live online as well. Therefore, nothing radio presenters do, while broadcasting is only audio, but visual today to.

Participant 5 also did not view his sight as an obstacle, however he did feel that the equipment used in radio was not very user friendly to a visually impaired or blind person. He did at the same time managed to learn how best to be able to use the equipment and in many situations, learnt to better use and trust his hearing ability.

The following section was very similar to the section above. The difference was though, that the above section referred to the challenges these journalists faced in their professions itself. The following section rather reflected on how they perceived their sight as a challenge in their long-term career. The journalists’ perceptions on the challenges their sight brought to their career, differed quite extensively to the challenges their sight brought to their profession as journalists. Their answers painted a very different picture in comparison to the previous section. The journalists did not feel as confident and invigorated in the challenges their sight posed to their career, as in their profession. Although they did not perceive their sight as a large challenge in their role as journalists, when it came to climb the corporate ladder in their respected medium, the challenges their sight brought was more imminent. Prejudice against a disability in the field was brought to light, in the previous section, Participant 2 mentioned that he had difficulty in entering the journalism field and as an ambitious journalist, he then felt it better to change his career path all together. Did the concept of “otherness” blind the potential of the contributions these journalists could make? Could it have been a mild form of oppression that the journalists still had to face and experience, even if Norway’s policy stated what it did?

Interestingly, many of the participants felt that they could be open and honest about their disability and ask their colleagues for help, but yet a form of prejudice and oppression had been experienced by the participants. People living with disabilities across the board experience higher levels of unemployment, as well as underemployment. The fears employers have regarding people living with disabilities are not limited to a specific sector or industry. These fears are also by no means limited to a specific impairment but runs across all disabilities. It is then not surprising that employers across all media, newspapers, radio, television etc. experience the very same uncertainties, reservations and attitudes to not only employ, but also promote people living with disabilities (Ellis, 2016,).

The three main uncertainties recognised include, “job qualifications/performance concerns, costs associated with hiring people with disabilities; and the reactions, or responses of others” (Ellis, 2016, p. 4). There are two aspects that are clearly imminent in the process of employing individuals with disabilities namely fear and pity by the employer as well as a lack of accommodation itself and knowledge of how the accommodation can enable the individual with a disability. In the previous part, we believed that the reasonable accommodation supplied by NAV (Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration), as well as the assistance in special education within the mainstream schools, had provided these journalists with an education and at the same time, exposed the society to the abilities of these journalists. However, these journalists perceived a form of prejudices, oppressions, underemployment and to an extent otherness. Further study would be required to find out if the forms of prejudice, oppression and so forth are experienced by other individuals with different disabilities as well.

As Participant 1 was 67 years old, he very honestly admitted that his career was nearly over as he was reaching his retirement age. He however, thought back and felt that a great advantage in his career was, that he had been a journalist in the local newspaper, within the society he grew up in. He believed that because he was well known in the society, it had made all the difference in managing the challenges his sight brought to his career. He felt that because he had been well known in the society from childhood, it had made the transition from visually impaired to blind and field work to conducting all his interviews by telephone and/or in his own office much easier. Participant 2 said that the turn around time on reporting a story became too fast for him and he could not keep up. He felt that journalists were expected to be able to perform a multitude of functions and be equally good and skilful in all the tasks simultaneously. He felt that he was very ambitious and had to admit that the challenges he faced to obtain the career he desired became too big for him and he later decided to change his career, to focus more on music.

Participant 3 admitted that “there was a large amount of prejudice in the workforce against individuals with reduced function and that the journalism field was no different”. He claimed to have not been directly affected by these prejudices in his career. He did however, also admit that: “in journalism there was a trend that everyone should be able to do everything to obtain a working position”. He gave an example of a driver’s licence, which unfortunately he would not have been able to obtain due to his sight. Not having a driver’s licence for example could exclude many possible good journalists from entering the field. Then he went on to elaborate on a further worry: “the Norwegian state was reducing the funding of equipment for example computers, readers etc. This could potentially cause more employers not to hire individuals with reduced sight or who are blind” (Participant 3, 2018).

Participant 4 explained that the greatest challenges in his career were the need to move around in the field and the industry (even radio), had become more visual. The visualisation of everything in the field had him sometimes feeling separated however, his colleagues had never made him feel this way in any manner. At the end of the day he felt that radio would hopefully always remain mostly audio. Participant 5 felt that his greatest challenges in his career was to ensure the sound quality was good, to obtain enough sound effects, as well as balance an environment that he could not see clearly.

In the introduction chapter of this thesis, a short description of Genevieve Belmaker’s experiences as an American blind journalist were discussed. She spoke very honestly about her mishaps as well as the upper hand her disability gave her in certain situations. To many people these concepts of an “upper hand” within a disability might be strange and unusual. However, in most cases people living with disabilities are very aware of an ability(s) that had become more sensitive or developed to compensate for the disability. You might have for example been told that individuals who are blind or severely visually impaired have keen hearing. Well, all individuals disabled or not, are very unique and may not always experience similar enhancements, sensitivities or developments. It is also very dependent on the individuals background, experiences, needs and requirements. For this exact reason it was relevant to obtain the specific perceptions from the participants and also shed light on the unique abilities that have developed out of the disability and the contributions it had brought to the field of journalism.

The participants were very honest in the difficulties their limited or no sight brought to their role as journalists and their careers. They were also aware of the limitations it brought and in recognising these limitations, they were even more aware of what they were required to do to overcome it. By overcome I meant, alternative ways in completing tasks, admitting that some tasks

were impossible to do and in other instances, being willing to put in the extra time and effort to complete a task to the best of their ability.

It was also important to note that the participants were mindful of the strengths and advantages they brought to their profession. Interestingly, each one of the participants strengths were related to a journalistic quality, role and requirement. The main function of a journalist is to inform their citizens of their social and political structure timeously. It goes without saying that the information provided to their citizens should be accurate, understandable and reliable in order for it to be of importance, meaningful and trusting in a free society. "Journalism's theory of democracy still relies on a belief that an informed citizenry will be an engaged citizenry, that an engaged citizenry will be more participatory and more informed, and that the result will be a more democratic society" (Munir, n.d, p.1).

In so doing, journalists fulfil many roles in society namely: "helping define community, creating common language and common knowledge, identifying a community's goals, heroes and villains, and pushing people beyond complacency" (Munir; n.d; p.1). Other roles of journalists include entertaining, serving as watchdog and providing a voice to the voiceless (Munir; n.d; p.1). According to this, journalists need to perform and satisfy many roles to support a free society and the best way to ensure that journalists fulfil, all these roles are to ensure and enforce a diverse workforce. In other words, participant 1, 2 and 5 believed that by not being prejudice when interviewing individuals, they were able to give unbiased and balanced voices to the voiceless. Participant 3, believed that he received more assistance when he asked and in so doing could pursue his watchdog role more actively. Participant 4 felt that he had an advantage in entertaining and informing his audience. Together these participants contributed to the diversity of their society and their profession.

Participant 1 admitted that his sight had definitely brought its fair share of limitations as well as benefits to his role as journalist and his career in journalism. He stated that it was very possible to work and have a life when one is blind. He mentioned two limitations, firstly, he always required alternative transport to get to his work and secondly, to move about in the field to obtain and gather information for his story. Nevertheless, he perceived his lack of sight as the upper hand when he was required to interview his sources. He felt that he could interview individuals without any prior prejudices or judgements on how they looked or were perceived. He could only hear the individual and therefore had to listen closely to the information that was disclosed and not be distracted by visual disturbances. Participant 2, similarly believed that he had the ability to interview and meet people without any prejudice and judgement on how they looked. As he was a journalist on the radio, he felt that not being prejudice or judgemental boosted his performance on air. However, he did not feel that his sight benefited his career as a whole. He had been ambitious and wanted to

achieve more and expected more from himself. As the first participant stated as well, he felt that it took him longer to get to the story and create the story. This made him feel incompetent as a journalist as time went by. He also believed that the turnaround time to release a story had become so short, that: “no single journalist was able to excel and specialise in a specific field of journalism any more. Rather, all journalists today are expected to do too much in too short a time, this is a hindrance in journalism today” (Participant 2, 2018).

Participant 2’s views were very similar to the study done by Hognestad and Dahlstrøm (2016), regarding the downsizing in the Norwegian field of journalism. They found that it impacted and affected the journalistic processes from idea to product. Digitalisation brought a strong wind of change concerning the structure of traditional journalism and the economics thereof. This has caused a negative and very pressurised working environment for journalist in the field. The journalists also felt that it gave them very little time to follow up on sources and do further investigations when needed and therefore impacted the quality of their journalism. “Downsizing therefore threatens the ideal of a free and independent press and intern challenges the traditional view of journalisms societal contribution” (Hognestad, Dahlstrøm, 2016, p. 1). It would appear that this affects all journalists whether they are, blind, severely visually impaired or normal sighted.

Participant 3 perceived his sight to have produced both limitations and benefits to his career. By stating the obvious, he felt that his sight let him down in situations where he really needed to see within the field, observe significant details and when situations around him quickly changed. Participant 4, voiced his limits and benefits very honestly. He said that in his experience his sight brought more limitations in his career than advantages. It took him longer to complete tasks, investigate and research a story, as well as travel from the one place to the next to obtain a story. All the tasks he was responsible for was more time consuming, but he also believed that he had to use more energy in completing the same tasks than his colleagues. He felt the same way even with making use of all the alternative equipment he had to his disposal. He mentioned that he felt his hearing had become more sensitive and that it brought many advantages to his radio programmes and reporting of stories. This had brought a lot of positive feedback from his colleagues and audience. They had mostly appreciated how he was able to bring a story to life with sound effects. His colleagues had commented that when he conveyed a story on air with the sound effects, people felt as if they were right there in the story, he was reporting on as well. Participant 5, said that it was due to him becoming severely visually impaired, that made him choose his career in radio journalism, as well as choosing his specialised medium. He did not ever feel that his sight limited him, but it had taught him to have a positive outlook and interview people in a manner that they

could open up towards him. He also replied that he was not sorry that there was a period in his life he could not see, but he was grateful for what he was taught in that time.

4.4 The participants could not see any difference between themselves and only saw an accepting audience

Continuing with the theme, this study tried to establish the sense of belonging and inclusion amongst the participants within their profession as journalists. Therefore, the interest rested upon whether the journalists perceived themselves to be different to their colleagues and fellow journalists. The journalists' responses were short, sweet and unanimous, in that they did not perceive themselves to be at all different than their fellow journalists and colleagues. This is interesting, as many other people might view the participants as being different and dissimilar.

The final questions to this section were related to how the participants viewed and perceived their audiences' responses to them as journalists, to establish if they experienced any prejudices, stereotyping or discriminations. This study was interested to know if they also felt comfortable in communicating their disabilities as Ade Adepitan did in: "The Travel Show" on BBC. In other words, if the journalists felt for example that they could disclose their disability, admit to their audience when they were not able to do something, or even build a story around their experiences of being blind or visually impaired.

Again, these journalists did not perceive themselves as different to their fellow journalists and colleagues. They also felt comfortable in communicating their disability to their audience, made use of their disability to create stories, as well as perceived their audience's reaction and responses towards them, as positive and respectful. If they did not perceive themselves unlike to their colleagues and perceived their audience and colleagues as encouraging and accepting, where did these journalists' perception of prejudices, suppression and pressures in their long-term careers come from. The Norwegian policy regarding the definition of a disability, as well as the support given to the individual living with a disability, is an attempt to uplift the disabled individual and dissolve the stigma related to individuals living with disabilities. By supplying the reasonable accommodation required, Norway's welfare also attempts to relieve the financial burden on the business organisations, the individuals themselves, as well as their families. People living with disabilities in Norway also received a seemingly equal education, within the very same schools their fellow community members attended, with numerous support to their disposal.

The societies grew-up, being informed of the equipment and assistance available to these individuals, as well as witnessed first-hand the abilities these individuals developed in a supporting environment. It would appear that Norway's policies and procedures that had been put in place,

would cultivate the positivity and acceptance the participants perceived from their audience and fellow colleagues, journalists and others. However, still these journalists had perceived a form of prejudice and oppression. One cannot help but wonder what the underlying factor could be between the prejudices perceived in the participants' careers and the acceptance perceived by their audience, fellow colleagues and other journalists. This fascinating phenomenon might require further investigation and research. Furthermore, the participants all felt free to communicate their disability to their audience and by no means felt that it hindered their credibility as journalists. This goes hand in hand with the desires stated by the feminist disability theory. At the end of the day, just as the feminist struggle to be perceived as equal to men in society, likewise people living with disabilities just want to be known as people, individuals and human beings. They just want to be seen as equal to their abled counter parts, contribute to their society and lead an ordinary and independent life (Wendell, 2006).

Participant 1 felt that as he became a journalist in the local newspaper in the society he grew up in, he had always been well received by his audience and it had made all the difference. He also felt that as he had always tried to treat others with respect, his audience had treated him with the same respect as well. His audience had never made him feel anything less than a professional journalist, he had to admit: "in some way even as a normal human being at times" (Participant 1, 2018). When he felt it necessary to communicate his disability to his audience, he did not perceive it as reflecting badly to his credibility as a journalist either.

Participant 2 said that he had communicated and used his disability within his reporting from time to time and felt his audience responded very well to his broadcasts. With regards to him communicating his disability as well, he never perceived his audience as questioning his credibility as a journalist. He was also interestingly, the second radio journalist who made the analogy that "through listening to the radio, you are only dependent on listening. Therefore, your audience was, in other words just as blind as I am and that they had to create the images and pictures in their minds that he reported on." In retrospect he felt that this also gave him an advantage. Through this all he felt that his audience responded very positively towards him as a journalist. He however also felt that it was not necessary to focus on his sight and if his audience deemed him less credible due to his disability. He felt he could be open and did not mind answering any questions his audience may have had regarding his sight.

Participant 3 worked mostly in printing media, especially in newspapers and magazines, as an investigative journalist. He answered that his audience had not always responded well to his stories or what he found, but it was due to the controversy of the story and never related to his sight. He

also felt that in communicating his impairment, he never perceived his sight to undermine his credibility as a journalist to his audience.

Participant 4, who had worked as a journalist in radio, had communicated his disability to his audience various times and viewed their feedback as very positive. However, he added very quickly, that as in all aspects of journalism, there was a balance required and that he was a journalist first and did not want to be known as the “blind journalist”. As his education and experiences were within journalism, he felt that he wanted to be known and respected for his journalistic contributions and not his disability. Though, he felt that if it was needed that he communicated his disability to his audience because it contributed to his story, he would not hesitate. He provided the example of his first live report which he reported on a golf course. He reported on being a blind person who was attempting to take golfing lessons for the first time. The feedback he received from his audience was perceived as very positive and entertaining and that he still receives positive feedback on the report today.

Participant 5 had never thought of communicating his disability when he was severely visually impaired, but nowadays though, he uses examples of his personal experiences and observations of when he was a severely visually impaired individual, when reporting to his audience. The feedback he received from them then, had been very positive.

4.5 A variety of goals, the determination to pursue it

In relation to the above phenomenon’s and perceptions, this study attempted to dig a bit deeper into the aspirations of the journalists by asking the participants about their career goals and ambitions. Everyone has dreams, aspirations and goals that they want to achieve in their careers and therefore it was believed to be significant to learn what their goals were. Not only was it important to learn more about their hopes and dreams, but also if they believed that they would be able to achieve the goals they set out for themselves, within their respective journalistic media. Just as any other person and journalist, these five participants had career aspirations and goals they wished to achieve. Through hard work, dedication, determination and sheer stubbornness, most of the journalists felt that they either achieved their goals or were on the right path. The one journalist who did not feel satisfied in reaching his goals, changed his career in an attempt to be what and who he wanted to be.

All the participants in this study, wanted to play an active role in their society and contribute in a respectable and meaningful manner, as well as be independent and resourceful. They were also determined in doing what was needed to obtain their goals, be it further studying, asking, nagging and pursuing. These participants similarly did not feel that it was anyone else’s, but their own

responsibility to achieve the goals they set out for themselves. Although, they believed their career paths to be an uphill battle, laced with perceptions of prejudice, stereotyping and at first glance scepticism, they still felt the responsibility laid with themselves and not someone else's.

In being very near to retiring, participant 1 felt that he had reached all the goals he set out for himself in his career. To be able to work was first and foremost very important to him, as financial independence and participating and contributing to his own society was important to him. Secondly, the society and what happens in it had always been a great interest and responsibility to him. Although he originally wanted to become a psychologist, he felt that by working as a journalist in his local newspaper, he could through a different means, serve the society he grew up in. His goals were to work with people, for people and by being a journalist, he reached the main goals he put down for himself to achieve.

Participant 2 found himself very ambitious and wanted to reach more goals than what his career as a journalist could allow him at the time. He thought his goals were too ambitious, driven and determined at the time, to be a blind journalist. Thus, he decided all together to change careers and specialise in his second love, music. Participant 3's career goals were what he believed was simple and modest. He wanted to be the best journalist he could be, as well as remain ever curious, inquisitive and remain eager to obtain more vital information. He felt that it was possible to achieve and reach all his goals he set out for himself in his career as journalist. He was also a strong believer that obtaining a person's goals, hopes and dreams, were their own responsibility.

Participant 4 replied that he had in fact, started in achieving the goals he set out for himself in his career. He explained that he had started in only producing ordinary radio reports, for example researching, writing and editing the reports and then giving the reports to the designated reporter to broadcast. After he felt he had mastered the craft, he wanted to try and go out into the field as a live field reporter. When he inquired about the change and possibility, his supervisor rejected the request. However, as he was determined to make the change, he kept on asking, nagging and pursuing. Later his supervisor gave him the chance and that was where he remained a live reporter in the field for several years and thoroughly enjoyed it. Once again, he wanted to make a change and this time wanted an opportunity as a host in a radio programme. Again, he was first rejected and was told that it would be too difficult for him to do. However, he kept on asking, nagging and pursuing until he was given an opportunity. He had been working as a host for the radio channel ever since. Honestly though, he did admit that it was very tiring trying to prove himself continuously. His perceptions were that as a blind person he needed to prove himself as a journalist all the time and the pressure was very big, not to slip up, make mistakes or let the pressure show. Putting all these feelings aside, he had already started evoking his next indaba, which was to become a better

journalist in the whole sense of the word. In other words, he was striving to write and produce deeper, more cultural, longer and more serious reports. He had started producing more and more such news reports for different radio channels and hoped to pursue it more on a full time basis. He believed that with enough determination it was possible to reach his goals but admitted that it was important to emphasise that it was a very tiring and timeous process.

Participant 5 told me that it was when he was severely visually impaired, that he had the goal and desire to work as a journalist, for the specific media house he is employed with today. The media house advised him at the time to study the subjects he completed. Being severely visually impaired at the time, he started as a radio technician. He felt safe and secure in working as a radio technician due to his sight at the time, but then he became more comfortable and confident with the idea of working in front of the microphone and wanted to go further into journalism. He explained that it was a gradual process to start enjoying talking over the radio. Later, it became second nature for him and he had mastered obtaining the required informants and being at the right place at the right time, before anything happened. He felt that he had managed to obtain and achieve the goals he set out for himself to attain.

4.6 Informing, educating and entertaining their audience

The following section focused on how the participants viewed their main roles as journalists versus, what they believed a journalists' main role was overall. As discussed in the Literature Review in chapter 2, the main function of a journalist, according to Munir (n.d.), was to inform their citizens of their social and political structure timeously. At the same time, the information provided to their citizens should be accurate, understandable and reliable in order for it to be of importance, meaningful and trusting in a free society:

Journalism's theory of democracy still relied on a belief that an informed citizenry will be an engaged citizenry, that an engaged citizenry will be more participatory and more informed, and that the result will be a more democratic society. (Munir, n.d, p.1).

Journalists fulfilled many roles in society namely: "helping define community, creating common language and common knowledge, identifying a community's goals, heroes and villains, and pushing people beyond complacency" (Munir; n.d; p. 1). Other roles of journalists included entertaining, serving as watchdog and providing a voice to the voiceless. According to this, journalists needed to perform and satisfy many roles to support a free society and the best way to ensure that journalists fulfil, all these roles are to ensure and enforce a diverse workforce. The journalists viewed a journalist's main role as informing their society of important truths that the society had the right to be informed on. Although, this idea of a role might seem relevantly simple and straight forward, the

information spoken of here is not only information handed to the journalists on silver platters, nice and neat. The journalists also believed that the information, that influenced the society and that they had a right on knowing, very often needed to be found, investigated and then scratched open. The participants also found it important to communicate the information to their society in an understandable and somewhat entertaining manner. However, all the participants were in agreement that informing their society was a journalist's main role. Similarly, the journalists viewed their own roles as very similar to a general journalistic role.

Participant 1 believed that a journalist's main role was to inform their audience. A journalist has a social duty to be critical of things that are not necessarily as they should be in both the public or private sector. It is then the journalist's role to investigate the concern and then make the information public. His own main role as journalists was that he reported on many different topics, but his favourite topics to report and investigate, had always been related to the municipality, its policies and politics. Participant 2 believed that a journalist's most important role was to be conscious of the influence they could have over their society and to be independent of all influences. He believed that his main role was to be a mediator and ensure that the information he conveyed to his audience was understandable to everyone who received and heard his reports.

Participant 3 sighted Vær Varsom-plakaten (2015) as the role of a journalist especially section 1.3 as follows:

1. The Role of the Press in Society

1.1. Freedom of Speech, Freedom of Information and Freedom of the Press are basic elements of a democracy. A free, independent press is among the most important institutions in a democratic society.

1.2. The press has important functions in that it carries information, debates and critical comments on current affairs. The press is particularly responsible for allowing different views to be expressed.

1.3. The press shall protect the freedom of speech, the freedom of the press and the principle of access to official documents. It cannot yield to any pressure from anybody who might want to prevent open debates, the free flow of information and free access to sources. Agreements concerning exclusive event reporting shall not preclude independent news reporting.

1.4. It is the right of the press to carry information on what goes on in society and to uncover and disclose matters, which ought to be subjected to criticism. It is a press obligation to shed critical light on how media themselves exercise their role.

1.5. It is the task of the press to protect individuals and groups against injustices or neglect, committed by public authorities and institutions, private enterprises, or others. (Code of Ethics of the Norwegian Press, 2015, para. 1-5)

He believed that his personal role as journalist was a watchdog role. In other words, to expose abuse of power as well as be a voice for the voiceless. Participant 4 believed that the role of a journalist

was to shed light on important aspects in their society. Ask the questions that needed to be asked in the society, in order to report the story from all sides. He also felt it was a journalist's role to tell interesting stories and be aware that all people have a story to tell. He felt that his main role as a journalist was to find a story on a daily basis and present it in an understandable and entertaining manner. The trial with this role and value were that media today were required to change and update the whole time. "This meant that the time it took to obtain a story and release it to the public had become very short, generic and competitive" (Participant 4, 2018). He preferred finding stories and delving into it, research it accurately and present all the different sides.

Participant 5 believed that the most important role of a journalist was to be objective and informative. Even though he worked more in a specialised medium, he still perceived his role to broadcast the relevant information to his audience. In his medium it was keeping his audience informed of the Christian religious truths and objectivities.

4.7 Truth, accuracy, independents, fairness, accountability, but objectivity was difficult

Journalists roles and values go hand in hand and thus we could not complete this study without investigating the participants views on a journalist's values versus their own. Rosenstiel (2013) views the modern values that should be used together with digitalisation within the profession as, discovering the truth as well as reporting the truth, transparency and engaging the community (Rosenstiel, 2013). Then the Ethical Journalist Network (2016), defined 5 key principles of journalism, namely, truth and accuracy, independents, fairness and objectivity, humanity and accountability (Who are we, 2016). This study deemed curious on which of these values the participants felt was the most important for a journalist to uphold daily and also how the participants themselves, upheld these values in their daily professions. Where the journalists had a homogeneous allegiance in what they perceived to have been their role as journalist, their views on what values were important were not as unanimous. In fact, the values they felt to be important and upheld stretch across the Ethical Journalist Network's (2016), rather than the Rosenstiel' (2013) journalistic values, deemed most significant. The participants were adamant and passionate that values within the profession were vital, in order for their audience to trust and depend on them as journalists.

Participant 1 did not believe that only one single value could be upheld or stand above the others in a journalist's daily career. He believed the values that were important were to treat everyone fair and equal, fight against what was unjust and put your own opinions aside even if it was difficult to remain neutral. He tried to uphold these values by identifying what the problem was and then asking what he believed the correct questions were in order to obtain fair, just and essential answers. Participant 2 believed that a journalist should be truthful and objective. He believed that he

tried very hard not to have an opinion as well as tried to focus on what the person said that he was interviewing without anyone else's opinions or prejudices. Participant 3 believed that a journalist should be accurate, trustworthy, transparent and also be trustworthy to the sources used. In his own journalistic indabas, he always tried to be honest and open about his agenda when interviewing people and sources. Participant 4 believed that credibility, although almost impossible to do, but try and remain neutral, was very important. In his own reporting he felt that he had enough of the quick "small" journalistic stories. He felt that he was becoming starved for sinking his teeth into a story and really dig deep and broad. He gave the analogy that he: "did not feel like eating cookies any more but wanted a full wholesome dinner" in journalistic reporting. Participant 5 believed that it was important for a journalist to be ethical as a whole.

4.8 Journalism and the upholding of journalistic qualities

In a digital world today, clear-cut roles and practices of journalists, were not as clear-cut any more. The lines that defined the role of the journalist today, have become quite unclear, rather quickly. It was not only the question of who the journalist was today, what their skills should be, what qualities journalism should have, but also how news media should have been generated and produced. Modern technology had evolved the manner in which information was gathered, exchanged, mediated and allocated (Witschge, Nygren, 2009, p. 37). The audience played a larger role and the communication was now between the journalist and their audience and no longer the journalist to their audience. Journalists have to be able to multi task, be flexible and diverse. Together with the changes digitalisation and the Internet brought, the crises of journalism were on the forefront in Norway as well. Political circumstances have contributed to develop a need for continues up to date news reporting. All these scenarios are causing a great deal of pressures on the quality and values of the journalist as well as on the growth of journalism. At the moment this might inhibit the innovation, creativity and passion of the industry (Steen-Johnson, Ihlebaek, Enjolras, 2016). In completing the findings in this study to the research questions, the final two questions to the participants were related to how they managed to uphold the quality of their reporting and finally for the journalists to reflect on good journalism and journalists in general.

Participant 1 remarked that he upheld the quality of his reporting by always being aware of what was happening around him, the developments in his society, always followed up on the field and society he covered and listened to NRK the whole time, to ensure that there was not something he missed. He also felt that journalism and a journalist needed to be fully informed in the topic they are reported on and always needing to remain fair in it all. A journalist could not report on a topic, or provide understandable information, if they themselves, were not fully informed and educated on

the situation first. Participant 2 upheld his reporting by always trying to find stories and being open to recognize the challenges that needed to be voiced in the society. He edited his stories himself and took full responsibility on what stories he released. Journalism and journalists in general, were required to be of help and always seek truth in a society. He emphasised that it was important for journalists to be conscious of the role they played in a society as well as the effect they could have on a society. He also believed that the turnaround time to release a story had become so short, that “no single journalist was able to excel and specialise in a specific field of journalism any more. Rather, journalists today were expected to do too much in too short a time, this is a hindrance in journalism today” (Participant 3, 2018). Participant 3 felt that the most vital aspect in maintaining his quality of journalism was in taking his time in investigating a story. In so doing taking his time to ensure the validity of sources and ensuring that the message he sent was understandable, good and truthful. With regards to journalism and journalists, he emphasised ethics. Participant 4 upheld his journalism by always trying to improve on the previous story he released. Regarding journalism and journalists, he remarked that society relied on solid credible journalism and that tabloids were only sensational journalism. He also believed that it might be on face value that the society enjoy the sensationalism tabloids thrive on, but when the society needed credible information, they would always go back to the dependable, reliable and fact seeking media outlets. Participant 5 felt that he upheld his journalism through his Christian faith and devotion. Regarding journalism and journalists, he felt it important that one remained ethical.

The journalists did not even mention anything regarding their sight, when asked how they upheld the quality of their reporting. Their journalistic quality was important to them and not much could deviate them from upholding what was vital to them. Further studies could compare the quality, roles and values of journalists who are blind or severely visually impaired with journalists with other disabilities and also to journalists who do not have a disability. The participants had a true passion for the journalistic craft and how they could serve their audience best. In fact they saw themselves as journalists first and by no means blind or visually impaired journalists at all. Not all the participants answered my questions related to what they loved most about their profession and if they felt this study neglected to touch an important aspect or subject.

All the participants felt that there was not much more they could contribute to this study but could add these final points to this study. Participant 1 added that he liked to perceive the development of the society and how the local newspaper could influence and contribute to this development. Participant 2 felt it important to reiterate that the most difficult aspect as a blind or severely visual impaired journalist was to enter the profession, but once entered everything else could be overcome. He did believe that it was important to be viewed as resourceful in the

profession and finally, he felt offended with the label «disabled» that was used in this study as he stated “we are not disabled, because disabled people do not work. We work and demand to be called normal working people, as we know our job and can do it” (Participant 2, 2018). Participant 3 added that his days as a journalist has never been monotonous and he had experienced some incredible and exciting things. He believed that through everything that the job he had done had meant a lot to individuals over the years. Participant 4 also added that he loved the variety journalism provided as a profession. He felt that he never stagnated or had the opportunity to become bored. He had been stimulated and stretched beyond what he thought he would and could do, this had made all the difference in his profession. Participant 5 felt that he contributed what he could to this study through his previous answers. However, he felt it important to reiterate, that it was through an 11 year era of being severely visually impaired that he chose to be a journalist in the medium he was today. He loved his profession and was grateful that the disability brought him to it. He did not regret the 11 years he was severely visually impaired and what it taught him.

Taking the above findings into account, it is prominent that the feminist disability theory’s characteristics had not significantly reflected in the participants responses. The participants were passionate about not only being journalists, but also in what they felt they could and did bring to the field, regardless of the medium they worked in. They also viewed their roles in journalism as contributing and meaningful to their society and in so doing uplifting the entire society. They did not view their sight as such a huge obstacle that it hindered their ability to pursue their profession. Even though they viewed a very slight environment of prejudice and oppression, they still viewed their desired goals and roles as being their own responsibility and to a certain extent attainable. The participants similarly viewed their roles, values and the quality of journalism not any different to the literature available today. In the field of journalism, according to this study, the diversity of the journalistic workforce lies within the individuals’ known impairment, but not in the journalistic standards. In other words externally, the journalists here all had a bodily impairment which made them perceivably different, but in their hearts, they were not very much different.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

As approximately 15% of the world population live with disabilities, it means that people living with disabilities form the world's largest minority group. At the same time, they are also the group that is the most susceptible to segregation and discrimination, as well as the group that is the least researched outside the medical field (Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Norwegian Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion, 2013). Taking all of the above chapters and literature into consideration, it is this thesis's hope and drive to shed light on how severely visually impaired or blind journalists perceive their roles as journalists, their career, their values, challenges, as well as unique mannerisms they have and had to apply to become and be journalists in Norway. This thesis's main intention and purpose has been to answer the three research questions provided in the Introduction chapter. In concluding the study, a brief overview is given here to ensure that the questions and answers provided by the five blind and severely visually impaired journalists in Norway are emphasised and highlighted.

5.1 What are the main challenges journalists who are blind or severely visually impaired experience, daily in their career as well as how they perceive the support or attitudes from their colleagues, fellow journalists and audiences?

All five the participants did not perceive their sight to be a challenge, but rather professed on the difficulties and challenges their environment caused to their profession as journalists. This was within the scope of how Norway's policy views what a disability is: "A disability is a discrepancy between the capabilities of the individual and the functional demands of his/her environment in areas which are significant for the establishment of independence and a social life" (NAV; department of assistive technology, 2017, p. 6). The challenges in their profession were related to not being able to move around freely and timeously within their field and environment. Secondly, the difficulties the equipment caused that they were required to use in their specific medium brought some challenges, for example, the websites they needed to research, and visual presentations being brought into all the media even radio. This had also been in line with the difficulties and challenges digitalisation brought within the media overall, the participants did not view their challenges as very significant in their professions.

However, in comparing the above answers to challenges they perceived in their career relating to their sight, brought about a slightly different picture. Within their careers as journalists, the participants had to admit to perceiving mild prejudices and oppressions within the field. They also perceived difficulties in being employed within the field, when being blind or severely visually impaired as a journalist as well as being overseen in growing in their career and therefore, were

required to be more persistent, stubborn and tenacious. The participants did admit that it was tiring to always prove themselves within the field, as well as that it put a lot of pressure and stress on them. Interestingly, the participants did not at all view themselves as different to their colleagues, fellow journalists or other. They also felt that their audiences accepted them and that they were able to, firstly communicate their disabilities to their audiences freely and secondly, use the experiences their sight brought in their reporting.

5.2 How have they managed to overcome these daily challenges in order to be a journalist?

The journalists explained how computer enlargement programs, screen readers and specialised keyboards have broadened their abilities, as well as they felt comfortable in asking their colleagues, fellow journalists and other for help when needed. All the journalists also admitted that knowing that they could go to NAV (The Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration) or other welfare care centres provided them with a type of security and safety net, when different challenges pop up in their profession. They also felt that their inability to see had brought its own unique traits and qualities to their profession. They all felt that they could interview their various informants, without the prejudices brought upon by seeing the person first. They felt it gave them a more objective and fair perspective. They similarly felt that they had the ability to tell a story with for example using different sound effects when broadcasting over the radio. It provided these journalists with a unique manner of entertaining and informing their audience, as well as giving the story across to their audience in a more understandable manner. Lastly, the 5 participants also felt that their attitude, determination and love of the profession made overcoming their daily challenges as journalists who are blind or severely visually impaired, much easier and able to attain.

Norway's policy has an exceptional and reputable view on individuals living with disabilities and the importance of this group being made a part of the society and contribute to it in an empowering and respectable manner. "Assistive devices or personal assistance can be provided in order to narrow the gap between demands and capabilities" (NAV; department of assistive technology, 2017, p. 6). In other words, the consensus is that through technology, accommodations and alternative assistance the society can become accessible to and inhabited by all its members and citizens in a near to equal manner (NAV; department of assistive technology, 2017). When asked if the journalists perceive themselves as different to their fellow journalists and colleagues, the participants were unanimous that they did not, in fact view themselves any different at all.

5.3 How do journalists in Norway who are blind or severely visually impaired perceive their role?

The five participants were unanimous in their perception of the role of a journalist in general, as well as their main role as journalist. They believed that the main roles of a journalist were to inform their society of things the society had a right to know of, in an understandable, fair and balanced manner. It was the journalists' role to investigate, research and dig deeper into matters in order to inform the society and provide a voice to the voiceless. When asked about which values journalists should follow, their answers were more diverse. They did however, agree that as journalists it was difficult to be neutral, but that it should not stand in the way of trying to remain neutral. Honesty, credibility, accuracy, fairness, independence were all values that were mentioned and although they all had their own opinion on which values were most important, the values they all mentioned were in the scope and categories journalists are known for and required to utilise in the field.

Taking the above findings into account, it is prominent that the feminist disability theory's characteristics had not significantly reflected in the participants responses. With regards to their sight and their ability to fulfil these roles and adhere to these values, their sight played no role, or obstacle. They all felt that a journalist should go the extra mile to ensure to remain ethical and fulfil their role in society. These journalists may be different due to their disability or impairment, but in their heart of hearts their perceptions, beliefs, roles and values was not different to what the literature provided. They may have required more determination, tenaciousness, perseverance, humility and concentration to fulfil their roles and keep their quality of journalism at a level, but their love for the profession and what it stands for has no impairment or disability.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: English questionnaire

The English questionnaire reads as follows:

Masters in Global Journalism
NLA university (Gimlekollen) Kristiansand
Interviewing journalists who are visually impaired or blind

A. For my information only

- I. Do you agree to me interviewing you for the purpose of research for my thesis in Global Journalism?
- II. May I use the information you give in this interview for analysis and study for my thesis?
- III. Would you prefer to remain anonymous?
 1. Name
 2. Gender
 3. Age

B. Background

4. Would you mind explaining your sight?
5. How long have you been blind or visually impaired?
6. Do you have a tertiary education?
7. What did you study?
8. How long have you been a journalist?
9. Are you a journalist in a mainstream media or a specialised media? (for example, do you perceive your audience to also be visually impaired, blind or disabled, or is your audience varied)
10. In which medium are you a journalist? (For example, radio, newspaper or television)
11. Why did you choose this particular medium to be a journalist in?
 - 12.1 Have you always wanted to be a journalist?
 - 12.2 If not, what did you want to be?
 - 12.3 And why did you become a journalist?
 - 12.4 Explain shortly how you managed to enter a career in journalism.

B. Profession and values

13. What do you feel is a journalist's main role in general?
14. What do you feel is your personal main role as journalist?
15. Do you feel your sight makes it difficult to fulfil your role as a journalist?
16. Can you explain some of the challenges your sight brings to your career?
17. Can you explain some of the techniques you use to try and overcome some of these challenges?
18. How did you come by your coping techniques for your career?
19. Do you feel your sight is a limit or an advantage to your career as journalist?
20. Can you provide some examples of how your sight limits or benefits your career?
21. Do you experience yourself as much different from your fellow journalists?
22. What are your goals in your career?
23. Do you feel you will have the opportunities to reach your goals in your career?

24. What do you feel is the most important values you need to uphold as journalist?
25. How do you incorporate these values in your reporting?
26. What is your view on a good journalist and good journalism?

C. *Product of your career*

27. How do you uphold the quality of your reporting?
- 28.1 Do you feel you have the freedom to communicate your disability to your audience, or do you feel communicating your disability would risk your credibility?
- 28.2 Can you elaborate on your above answer and how you perceive your audience?
29. How do you feel your audience respond to you as journalist?
30. What do you love most about your career?
31. Is there something you feel I should have asked that I did not, and you feel that it is important to mention?

Appendix 2: Norwegian questionnaire

The Norwegian questionnaire reads as follows:

Masters in Global Journalism
NLA university (Gimlekollen) Kristiansand
Interviewing journalists who are visually impaired or blind

A. *Reservert for min informasjon*

- I. Er du enig i at jeg intervjuer deg med formålet med forskning for min avhandling i Global Journalism?
- II. Kan jeg bruke informasjonen du gir i dette intervjuet til analyse og studie i avhandlingen min?
- III. Vil du helst være anonym?
 1. Navn
 2. Kjønn
 3. Alder

B. *Bakgrunn*

4. Har du lyst til å forklare synshemmingen din?
5. Hvor lenge har du vært blind eller synshemmet?
6. Har du en høyere utdanning?
7. Hva studerte du?
8. Hvor lenge har du vært journalist?
9. Er du journalist i vanlig media eller spesialisert media?
(for eksempel ser du målgruppen din også å være synshemmede, blinde eller uføre, eller er målgruppen variert?)
10. I hvilket medium er du journalist?
(For eksempel radio, avis eller fjernsyn)
11. Hvorfor valgte du nettopp dette mediet til å være journalist i?
- 12.1 Har du alltid villet bli journalist?
- 12.2 Hvis ikke; hva ville du da ønsket å bli?
- 12.3 Og hvorfor ble du nettopp journalist?
- 12.4 Forklar kort hvordan du klarte å gå inn i en karriere i journalistikk. (Overkomme vanskeligheter og hindringer som svaksynt)

C. *Yrke og verdier*

13. Hva synes du er journalistens hovedrolle generelt?
14. Hva føler du er din personlige hovedrolle som journalist?
15. Føler du at synet ditt gjør det vanskelig å oppfylle din rolle som journalist?
16. Kan du forklare noen av utfordringene synet gir deg i karrieren din?
17. Kan du forklare noen av de teknikkene du bruker for å prøve å overvinne noen av disse utfordringene?
18. Hvordan fant du på disse håndteringsteknikkene i din karriere?
19. Føler du at synet ditt er en begrensning eller en fordel for din karriere som journalist?
20. Kan du gi noen eksempler på hvordan synet ditt begrenser eller er til fordel i karrieren din?
21. Opplever du deg som mye annerledes enn andre journalister?
22. Hva er dine målsettinger for karrieren din?

23. Føler du at du vil få muligheter til å nå dine målsettinger som journalist?
24. Hva føler du er de viktigste verdiene du trenger å etterstrebe som journalist?
25. Hvordan integrerer du disse verdiene i rapporteringen din?
26. Hva er dine kriterier for en god journalist og en god journalistikk?

D. Resultat av din karriere

27. Hvordan opprettholder du kvaliteten på rapporteringen din?
- 28.1 Føler du at du har frihet til å kommunisere din funksjonshemming til publikum, eller føler du at om du viser din uføreevne, så vil risikere troverdigheten din?
- 28.2 Kan du utdype på svaret ovenfor, og hvordan du oppfatter ditt publikum?
29. Hvordan føler du at publikum reagerer på deg som journalist?
30. Hva liker du aller best i karrieren din?
31. Er det noe du føler at jeg burde ha spurt om som jeg ikke gjorde? Eller andre ting som du føler at det er viktig å nevne?