

Understanding The Meanings Created Around The Aging Body And Sports By Masters Athletes  
Through Media Data

By

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## Abstract

There is literature based on masters athletes and their involvement in sports at the later stages of life. Masters athletes are exercise-trained individuals who compete in athletic events at a high level well beyond a typical retirement age (Tanaka & Seals, 2008). These athletes vary widely in age but are typically older than 35 years, with many more over the ages of 50 and well into old age. The research questions guiding this study included; (a) what are the media representation of masters athletes, and how are they used to generate meanings around aging, sports and the aging body and (b) what are the implications of these meanings on how the aging body is represented to the audience. A qualitative (i.e., case study) approach was used to explore what meanings were generated around aging and sports through media narratives in relation to aging successfully. Media data in the form of sports magazines (i.e., Runner's World and Lexis-Nexis data base) were compiled for the data analysis. This research focused specifically on two cases, 81year old Ed Whitlock, a Canadian long distance marathon runner, and 77 year-old Jeanne Daprano, an American masters track and field athlete. The data included ( $n=41$  Ed Whitlock,  $n=17$  Jeanne Daprano). The data were analyzed via an inductive thematic analysis (see Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The following central themes emerged a) life-long involvement in sports (higher order themes: earlier sporting experience, triumphant return, uninterrupted engagement), (b) performance narratives (serious contenders, reasoning for performance, systematic training, an individualized approach), and (c) decline narratives (resistance to declines in old age, sports related injuries, maintenance of performance). This study highlights how both athletes were depicted in the media narratives, demonstrating that their involvement in sports in later life provided an alternate way to view the aging process. The findings from this study seek to extend the understanding of masters athletes, by contextualization how they challenge some of the decline narratives associated with old age.

**Keywords:** aging; older adults; later life, masters athletes; physical activity, sports

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Appendix A: Copy of my Laurentian University Research Ethics Board letter of Approval.

## CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

For the average person, aging is an inevitable part of life, however as it relates to later life, it has been well documented that not every older adult ages at the same rate or to the same extent (Freedman, Martin, & Schoeni, 2002). The percentage of the population over the age of 65 is growing rapidly worldwide (Health Canada, 2009; O'Brien Cousins, 2003). Older adults constitute the fastest growing population group in Canada today. In fact, the growth of this population will account for close to half of the growth of the overall Canadian population in the next four decades (Statistics Canada, 2009). Individuals who are above 50 years old currently account for 29.3% of Canada's population. It is estimated that by 2026, this segment of the population will climb as high as 41% of the total Canadian population (Statistics Canada, 2009, 2006). Furthermore, between 2005 and 2036, the number of individuals over the age of 65 will increase from 4.2 million to 9.8 million (Health Canada, 2009; Public Health, 2003). This large and growing population is a highly diverse group, in terms of ethnicity, race, language, values and beliefs, education levels, independence level and socioeconomic status (Chappell, Gee, McDonald, & Stones, 2003). For instance, people aged 65 range from the very rich to the very poor, from the very active and healthy to the frail, and unhealthy, from those living alone to those living in a multigenerational household, those in institutions, and those residing at home (Chappell et al., 2003; Spirduso, Francis, & MacRae, 2005).

A large and growing body of evidence has demonstrated that physical activity provides numerous health benefits (Dionigi, 2008; Grant, 2001; Hawkins, Wiswell, & Marcell, 2003, Baker, Horton, & Weir, 2010). Physical activity has a significant effect on the quality of life of older adults and also on how well they age. According to the World

Health Organization (2008), physical activity is defined as any voluntary movement produced by the skeletal muscles that result in increased energy expenditure than resting. Some of the confirmed health benefits associated with physical activity include reducing the rate of disability and mortality due to coronary heart disease (CHD), diabetes, hypertension (DiPietro, 2001), obesity, depression, osteoporosis, colon cancer (Marcra, Hootman, & Sniezek, 2003; Warburton, Nicol, & Bredin, 2006), and improving the control of joint swelling and pain associated with arthritis (Vogel et al., 2009). Regular physical activity has been shown to have beneficial effects on most (if not all) organ systems and consequently it improves a broad range of health problems and diseases in later life. For example, physical activity in older adults produces three main types of health benefits, which include reducing risk of developing chronic diseases; aid in the management of active problems; and improving the ability to function and stay independent (O'Brien Cousins, 2003; Oja, Bull, Fogelholm, & Martin, 2010; Spirduso et al., 2005). These major health benefits related to physical activity are thought to be responsible for the increased life expectancy and better quality of life seen in highly active individuals.

Despite the reported and confirmed benefits of physical activity, a large proportion of older adults remain physically inactive (Kamenimoto, Easton, Maurice, Husten, & Macera, 1999; Speck & Harrell, 2003). O'Brien Cousins (2003) estimated that half of all physical declines associated with aging are preventable if adequate levels of physical activity are maintained. According to the National Population Health data, 14% of older adults were sufficiently active, 21% were moderately active, and 65% were inactive. Inactivity levels increase from 59% for adults 55 to 64 years of age to 60% for

older adults 65 to 74 years of age to 75% for those 75 or older (Health Canada, 2002; Statistics Canada, 2009). Although this is not a drastic change, there is a significant fall off or decline in physical activity for those 75 years of age and older. The current Canadian physical activity guidelines for older adults recommend that older adults should engage in at least 150 minutes per week of moderate to vigorous physical activity to obtain substantial health benefits (Colley et al., 2011; O'Brien Cousins, 2000). Physical activity levels in the general population have been shown to be declining, and in consideration of the additional age-related decline in exercise, it is older adults who are most at risk for physical activity decline (Nelson et al., 2007; Sjostrom, Oja, Hagstromer, Smith, & Baunan, 2006). Extensive research suggests that physical inactivity or sedentary lifestyles are associated with an increased incidence of chronic conditions later on in life (DiPietro, 2001; Marcra et al., 2003; O'Brien Cousins, 2003). As a result, the lack of physical activity in older adults has been identified as a primary contributor to decreases in functional capacity and increases in morbidity and mortality in old age (DiPietro, 2001; O'Brien Cousins, 2003). Therefore, the proportion of older adults who are getting some physical activity, active recreation, or formal exercise on a daily basis, will age better and postpone or delay many of the age related changes and health difficulties related to old age.

Considering that physical inactivity has been highlighted as one of the most important areas for disease risk factor reduction in the middle to older aged adults, efforts have been directed towards understanding how to increase and maintain physical activity and sport participation in this population (Baker et al., 2010a; Hawkins, Wiswell, & Marcell, 2003; Roper, Molnar, & Wrisberg, 2003; Wright & Perricelli, 2008). One

approach towards understanding the motivational processes of older adults in terms of their participation in physical activity and sports is by examining the relationship between physical activity and the aging process (Baker, Meisner, Logan, Kungl, & Weir, 2010; Grant, 2002, 2001; Grant & Kluge, 2007). But at the same time, it could be argued that the approach towards understanding the effects of physical activity and the aging process is more concerned with generating different and multiple meanings of the aging process and physical activity in later life. In essence, by examining the relationship between physical activity and the aging the process, much is to be gained in our awareness in regards to this dynamic relationship and its effect on the involvement of older adults in physical activity in later life. Consequently, an awareness of this dynamic relationship can be accomplished by drawing on the multiple forms of knowledge that can generate diverse understanding regarding the impact of physical activity on physiological, psychological, and social aspects of aging (Dionigi, Baker, & Horton, 2011; Dionigi & O'Flynn, 2007; Phoenix & Grant, 2009).

As such, masters athletes are of particular interest because of their exemplary physical and mental condition and their continuous involvement in sports across the lifespan in spite of the various age-related performance declines. The masters athlete has been proposed as an ideal model to determine successful aging due to their chronic participation in high-intensity exercise (Dionigi, 2008; Grant, 2002, 2001; Hawkins et al, 2003; Phoenix & Smith, 2011; Phoenix & Sparkes, 2009). Phoenix and Smith (2011) recently proposed that in certain circumstances (e.g., participating in sports), masters athletes can and do attempt to resist negative depictions of aging through telling and enacting alternative and potentially more creative versions of the aging process.

According to this notion, the involvement of older adults in physical activity or sports and or maintaining a physically active lifestyle in old age can create possibilities for people to age positively and reconstruct what aging “successfully” or “positive aging” means.

But at the same time, it is important to note that there are conflicting narratives in contrast to narratives that encourage activity and/ or high-level activity running throughout much of the “successful aging” approach or discourses. These conflicts are associated with the involvement of older adults in physical activity, sports or competitions and its notion of positive aging in later life (Dionigi, 2008; Grant, 2001; Phoenix & Smith, 2011). Interestingly, on one hand masters athletes are seen as generating alternative versions of the aging process, and on the other hand, they are seen as reinforcing the notion that the aging process is something to feared and avoided through extensive physical activity (Dionigi & O’Flynn, 2007; Grant & Kluge, 2007; Phoenix & Smith, 2011). Within the literature on masters athletes (see Baker et al., 2010a; Dionigi, 2008; Phoenix & Smith, 2011) physically active older adults are presented as individuals generating new and creative versions of the aging process, which in turn challenges some of the negative stereotypes of aging. For example, older adults are commonly not recognized as acceptable or normal subjects of performance discourses because they are traditionally positioned as weak and less able or less powerful (Grant, 2001; Phoenix & Smith, 2011). That is, the involvement in physical activity or sports was inappropriate by older adults or not enjoyable because overexertion was perceived as being life threatening or places too many demands on the aging body (Dionigi & O’Flynn, 2007).

However, the number of older people participating in physically demanding competitive sports is increasing significantly (Baker et al., 2010b; Dionigi & O'Flynn, 2007). At the international level, the number of participants competing at the World Masters Games has increased almost four-fold since the inaugural World Masters event in 1985 in Toronto, Canada (Baker et al., 2010a; Hawkins et al., 2003; Weir, 2007). At the Sydney 2009 World Master Games approximately 28, 000 athletes representing 95 countries participated in 28 different sports (Dionigi et al., 2011). There are 50,000 athletes expected at the next World Masters Game in Turin, Italy in 2013. However, on the other hand physically active older adults can be seen as (inadvertently) reinforcing the notion that aging is something to fear and fight through their extensive physical training at times for the purpose of working against a “problematic” aging body (Grant, 2001; Hodge, Allen, & Smellie, 2008; Phoenix & Smith, 2011; Roper, 2003; Wearing, 1995). At the individual and societal level, these conflicts have significant implications on how the aging and older adults are viewed and the meaning attached to it.

Beyond the influence on health, participation in physical activity and sports may also influence the notion of successful aging. The term successful aging represents the physical, psychology, and social success during the aging process. In a broader sense, successful aging includes components such as life satisfaction, mental and physical well-being and quality of life (Dogra & Stathokostas, 2012). Rowe and Khan (1987) proposed that individuals who aged successfully had a reduced probability of disease and disease related disability. These individuals also developed a high cognitive and physical functional capacity and active engagement with life including maintenance of autonomy and social support (Baker et al., 2010b). Nevertheless, evidence shows that health related

practices like participation in physical activity or sports and subjective health or wellbeing are the most robust determinants of successful aging than are demographic or socioeconomic factors. These activities provide meaning and circumstances where individuals can express creativity, a sense of achievement, obtaining competence, and experiencing pleasure, often in the form of physical activity or sports (Eakman, Carlson, & Clark, 2010). For instance, an older adult might view their personal involvement in physical activity or sports as part of a larger perseverance against illness, disease or injuries.

According to the successful aging model, aging is conceptualized as a changing balance between gains and losses and successful aging is viewed as a process of adaptation by way of selection, optimization and compensation strategies. Baltes and Baltes (1990) suggest that individuals will likely engage in these components throughout their lifetime in order to meet life goals and this process of adaptation are unique in older age due to declines in biological, mental and social reserves, and losses of function. Also, older adults might experience some decline in physical capacity, but they modified their involvement and expectations accordingly, continuing to derive satisfaction out of their setting and working toward their training goals (Baker et al., 2010a; Dionigi, 2008; Grant, 2001). Overall, the successful aging framework challenges the view that aging consists of inevitable decline, and instead proposes that age-related losses in function may be the consequence of modifiable extrinsic factors.

The above examples reflect the two main definitions and discourse of successful aging. The first reflects a continuous adaptation to age related changes where aging presents unavoidable declines in performance as well as functional capacity and the

notion that an individual must learn to productively live with these deteriorations. The latter, represents a more common approach that seeks to define successful aging as a state of being that can be objectively measured at particular moment in any stage of life. These measures include variables such as disability, cognitive performance, and physical capacity, as well as life satisfaction (Baker et al., 2010b; Galloway & Jokl, 2000; Weir, 2007). Despite the various conflicting point of views by previous scholars, the successful aging approach is often used in research involving masters athletes, not only because of the comprehensive and interdisciplinary nature, but also for its focus on modifiable lifestyles related factors.

Masters athletes are a group of individuals who deviate from the typical profile of aging and the corresponding decline in physical activity levels. In addition, it could be argued that the social construction of masters athletes is established based upon a discourse of successful aging. In essence, successful aging is understood in terms of the maintenance of a healthy body and an active and engaged lifestyle in later life (Baker et al., 2010b; Rowe & Kahn, 1998). The designation of a competitive athlete refers to one who participates in organized team or individual sport that requires regular competition against others, places a high premium on excellence and achievement, and requires systematic training (Baker et al., 2010a; Dionigi, 2008; Maron et al., 2001). These athletes typically maintain higher than average levels of physical activity throughout their lifespan and are unique because they continue to physically train and compete well into old age (Dionigi, 2010; Grant, 2001; Hawkins et al., 2003; Horton, 2010; Phoenix & Smith, 2011; Phoenix & Sparkes, 2009). However, it is understood this definition is somewhat arbitrary, in the sense that many of these individuals participate in casual

sporting activities in a competitive fashion and in some organized sports. In other words, the distinctions between “truly” competitive and recreational physical activity may be ambiguous.

Masters athletes are individuals who systematically train for, and compete in, organized forms of competitive sports specifically designed for older adults. These aging individuals present a unique model to study the effects of high levels of physical training into older age (Dionigi et al., 2011; Rosenbloom & Bahns, 2005). Participation in competition by these athletes has risen over the past two decades. Some of the venues in which masters athletes compete include; the annual Huntsman World Senior Games, National Senior Olympic Games, World Masters Athletic championship and Ontario Masters Athletics championships (Baker et al., 2010a; Rosenbloom & Bahns, 2005; Tanaka & Seals, 2003). Currently, more than 50 Countries sponsor masters sporting events, with the most participation in the United States, Canada, Western Europe, and most parts of Asia and South America (Hawkins et al., 2003; Maron et al., 2001). Each sports national or international governing body determines the age to define the masters athletes. In addition, the competitions features five-year age groups beginning at age 35. While masters athletes are typically older than 35 years of age, masters competition in swimming begins at age 25, track and field at 35 years, and golf at 50 years (Dionigi, 2008; Grant, 2001; Maron et al., 2001). For the purpose of this study, masters athletes are defined as individuals over the age of 50 years who are either highly conditioned and experienced competitive athletes who have completed their formal careers, the “weekend warriors” who sporadically train and compete, or older competitors who have resumed

physical training after long periods of physical inactivity (Maron et al., 2001; Phoenix & Sparks, 2009; Rosenbloom & Bahns, 2005).

Because the Canadian population is aging, there is a great deal of emphasis on promoting a healthy aging process, one that is not in the form of pharmacological or medical interventions. Masters athletes have the potential to change the way aging is viewed. They can serve as positive role models for how to age well, but also represent something that is unattainable and resistance to the notion of aging successfully or positively. When studying optimal aging, masters athletes should be considered as one example of “ideal subjects” (Ransdall, Vaner, & Huberty, 2009; Spirduso et al., 2005). Compared to their sedentary counterparts, masters athletes spend more time training, have better health indicators and records from masters athletes provide cross-sectional data for analysis (Dionigi, 2008; Ransdall et al., 2009). Therefore, the study of the media representations of masters athletes would provide a better understanding regarding the benefits of, and motivations for, life-long involvement in physical activity and sports for a sub-set of the population.

The focus of this study will be on masters athletes in terms of how their involvement in sports in later life with regards to successfully aging is presented within various media sources. Furthermore, it is important to study the contents within sports media because it consists of what we see or hear and read (i.e., media representations). These representations serve as the structures through which individuals interpret and organize information (Entman, 1993; Reber & Berger, 2005). In other words, the media present or frame an “event”, thus providing meaning to that event and those participating in it (e.g., the athletes, Bernstein, 2002; Hardin, Lynn, Walsdorf, & Hardin, 2002;

Stokvis, 2000). Media representations have the ability to influence public opinion in the way they transfer information from a media source to social and individual consciousness (Entman, 1993). Therefore, it is important to understand the ways in which the media portrays a particular group (i.e., masters athletes) in terms of how it serves to “re-present” or reflect their “reality” in terms of their involvement in sports in later life. The way the media portrays a sport or an athlete has the potential to impact the audience’s beliefs and attitudes regarding that sport or athlete. The involvement of masters athletes in sports presents an image that is powerful, vital and active compared to being passive, disabled and dependent. Evidence suggest that older adults’ involvement in competitive sport and/or structured regular exercise can optimize the experience of aging, motivate other older adults to be active, and resist the medicalized narrative of decline (Dionigi, 2008; Grant, 2001; Phoenix & Sparkes, 2009; Young, Medic, Weir, & Starkes, 2008). Furthermore, previous research has examined the meanings older adults attach to their competitive sports experiences, however very few have explored the media’s representations in relation to masters athletes. As a result, an understanding is needed in terms of how masters athletes perceive themselves (i.e., personal identity) as well as how they are perceived by others and the social world (e.g., social identity) as represented by the various media narratives. This study intends to bridge the gap by understanding what narratives are used in the portrayal of masters athletes involvement in sports in later life. Although several issues remain contentious throughout much of the literature on masters athletes in terms of how these athletes are presented within the sport media context. Through this study, an understanding will be gained in relations to how media

representations are used to frame or construct a version of “reality” associated with the involvement of masters athletes in sports in later in life.

### **Purpose of Research**

Masters athletes represent an intriguing group for researchers due to the fact that they represent some of society’s most successful agers, at least from a physical standpoint (Baker et al., 2010a; Dionigi, Horton, & Baker, 2010). In addition, given the substantial participation numbers of master athletes in sports, an understanding is needed as to how their involvement in sports at the later stages of life fits with the notion of successful aging. For example, the 2005 Masters games in Edmonton included 21,600 athletes, and registration was closed month’s prior because organizers reached the capacity of the competition venues (Baker et al., 2010b). The current research sought out to examine what meanings were generated and constructed around successful aging, in terms of masters athletes and their involvement in sports utilizing media data. The benefits of utilizing masters athletes in this research relates to the fact that they represent a way of living that centralizes around sports and physical activity for a lengthier period of time than most. Masters athletes engage in high levels of training and represent the upper levels of physical performance, thereby helping to control the “disuse” factor (Baker et al., 2010a, Grant, 2001; Phoenix & Sparkes, 2009). Furthermore, understanding what narratives surrounds masters athletes, and the performing aging body is important because extensive evidence suggest that the prolonged training by masters athletes play a critical role in the maintenance of athletic performance even in the face of anticipated age related decline (Baker, Fraser-Thomas, Dionigi, & Horton, 2010; Roper, Molnar, & Wrisberg, 2003; Young et al., 2008). According to Spirduso et al., (2005) masters

athletes are an important group to study and to emulate because they reveal the limits of human physical potential. These athletes are an inspiration because they symbolize optimal physical aging, they inspire an upward look and provide a standard, and give hope to others. Therefore, masters athletes should be acknowledged as being unique and atypical in a number of ways, and recognized as experts who have a lifetime of valuable experiences in regards to their involvement in sports.

Given the tremendous growth in sports participation by masters athletes and the interest that these individuals have for aging successfully, my intent was to examine how masters athletes were positioned within various media sources (i.e., Runner's World and Lexis-Nexis) in terms of their participation in sports. The main objective of this study was to broaden our understanding of what media narratives were used in terms of generating and constructing meanings around sports and the performing aging body. Also, it was important to understand the various media representations of masters athletes in terms of how their decisions to being involved and maintaining a physically active lifestyle in later life was presented to the public or readership. The importance of studying several media sources in relation to these athletes reflects an attempt to bridge the gaps in terms of understanding what narratives were used in the portrayal of these athletes involvement in sports later life. Additionally, it can be argued that studying sports media data relating to how these masters athletes were depicted provided an alternative and interesting way to re-examine the notion of performance and the aging process. In addition, this study sought to investigate the implications of how these meanings are portrayed and depicted to the broader audience and readership. From the various media data, my intent has been to identify how these two athletes (i.e., Ed

Whitlock and Jeanne Daprano) are depicted and then to consider more broadly what those depictions revealed about how each athlete was portrayed through the various media data. In essence, the findings from this study provided a platform for discussing how and why these masters athletes chose to remain physical active in later life. For most masters athletes, participation in sports at this level is viewed as a continuation of sport involvement from earlier periods in the lifespan (Baker et al., 2010a; Dionigi, 2010).

Ultimately, through this research we gained an understanding in terms of how media narratives were used to present and showcase both selected athletes through the various media representations of them. The understanding gained from the media narratives involved the media's presentation of the athletes and the significance of these presentations to the broader audience. Therefore, it was important for us to understand how these athletes were positioned in the media narratives and the implication or meaning of these portrayal to the general public and readership. In addition, it was important to study the portrayal of masters athletes within the media because it provided access to the athletes "words" through the various representations of their performance and accomplishments in later life. Furthermore, it was imperative to obtain an understanding in terms of the influence between sports and the media, because they were both intertwined and also represent one of the most powerful influences in terms of how society works in that they both affect how people think and shape ideas (Bernstein, 2002; Birell & McDonald, 2000; Hardin et al 2002; Wenner, 1998). This study attempted to fill a gap in research on sport media materials in relation to masters athletes by exploring the ways in which both athletes were described and the manner in which the representation of specific events (i.e., involvement in sports) were constructed to appeal to a specific

audience or readership. In a broader sense, this attempt provided a unique setting for conducting research in terms of the examining how both athletes were presented in the various sport media sources. Hence, it was important to examine the various media narratives in order to determine how the athletes were depicted in terms of aging successfully and their involvement in sports in later life.

### **Operational Definitions**

**Amotivation.** Amotivation refers to a state in which individuals cannot perceive a relationship between their behaviour and that behaviours subsequent outcome.

**Extrinsic motivation.** Extrinsic motivation refers to motivation that is driven by external forces. A person tends to do a task mainly because doing so will yield some kind of reward or benefit upon completion.

**Intrinsic motivation.** Intrinsic motivation refers to motivation that comes from the inside of the individual as opposed to from external or outside rewards. This type of motivation comes from within and is characterized by interest in and enjoyment derived from sports and physical activity participation.

**Masters athletes.** Refers to one who participates in organized sport with regular competition against others, placing a high premium on excellence and achievement, and systematic training. Masters athletes vary widely in age but are typically older than 35 years, with many more over the ages of 50 and well into old age.

**Motivation.** Motivation is defined as the process that initiates, guides and maintains goal-oriented behaviours. It means to move or moving a cause.

**Negative aging.** Negative aging refers to a tradition or medicalized view of aging. The images and meaning of aging and older adults are predominantly related to the

notion of ill health, frailty, loss, disability, disengagement and dependency on the health care system.

**Physical activity.** Physical activity refers to any voluntary movement produced by the skeletal muscles that result in increased energy expenditure than resting.

**Self-determination theory (SDT).** SDT refers to a theory of motivation that aims to explain an individual's goal-directed behaviours. Motivation resides along a continuum, with intrinsic motivation on the far right and extrinsic motivation in the middle and amotivation on the far.

**Successful aging.** Successful aging is defined as consisting of the following criteria, a reduced probability of disease and disease related disability, a high cognitive and physical functional capacity and active engagement with life.

**The first age.** The first age refers to a life stage of babyhood, childhood. This stage is associated with dependency, immaturity, socialization and education.

**The second age.** The second age refers to a stage associated to independence, maturity, earning, saving and responsibility.

**The third age.** The third age refers to an emerging life stage within contemporary society that represents new possibilities for personal identity development through an expanded period of consumption and choice

**The fourth age.** The fourth age is associated by sickness, disability, dependency, decrepitude, frailty and the imminence of death, rather than a natural progression of life that can also be a positive experience.

## **CHAPTER TWO: Literature Review**

The majority of research on being “older” is primarily presented in the literature from a physical science or biomedical perspective, which tends to emphasize the declining body (Dionigi et al., 2010; Grant & Kluge, 2007). Much of the literature regarding physical activity and sport participation patterns in old age has focused on the physiological aspects of aging and the evidence for the delay of aging effect. Generally, research focused on the motivations of sports participants have mainly been directed towards young athletes. More recently, the assessment of participatory motivations of those engaged in masters sports have been evident in both the exercise science and psychology literature (Baker et al., 2010c; Dionigi, 2008; Grant, 2001; Phoenix & Smith, 2011). Accordingly, the literature review below pertains to masters athletes and their involvement in sports and physical activity in later life. Chapter two covers the following topics; the two perspectives of aging, the four ages, age effects on performance, gender effects on performance, motives for sports and physical activity participation, media’s influence on understanding masters athletes, and contentious issues within this area of research.

### **The Two Perspectives of Aging**

There are numerous understandings and stereotypes associated with the aging process and physical activity in Western cultures (Dionigi & O’Flynn, 2007; Grant & Kluge, 2007; Phoenix & Smith, 2011). The two contrasting perspectives associated with the aging process are the traditional or biomedicalized view of aging and a more contemporary (i.e., positive) view about aging. The “biomedicalized”, or traditional view of aging refers to a tendency to see aging negatively and as a process of inevitable

decline, disease, and irreversible decay, with the necessitation of medical intervention (Katz, 1996; Powell, 1998). However, these traditional negative assumptions are being challenged by a more contemporary view, as aging has been repositioned as a time of opportunity, good health and independence (Grant, 2002, 2001).

For most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, aging was perceived as a medical and social problem (Dionigi & O'Flynn, 2007; Grant, 2002, 2001; Hodge et al., 2008; O'Brien Cousins, 2003). During this period, images and meaning of aging and older adults were predominantly related to the notions of ill health, frailty, loss, disability, disengagement and dependency on the health care system (Dionigi, 2008; Grant & Kluge, 2007; Hawkins et al., 2003; Phoenix & Smith, 2011). From this point of view, aging is constructed and shaped by the traditional or biomedicalized model, and consequently, the perceptions and the practice of care for older adults are based on these traditional or biomedicalized assumptions or views. Estes and Binney (1991) proposed that aging was constructed as a medical problem or "pathology" and thus is viewed substantially by means of clinical phenomena and the management of clinical problems. For instance, in today's society there is a demand for products or services that promise to delay or eliminate the physiological effects of aging.

The traditional or biomedicalized views of aging are embedded in Western societies and older adults are seen as less able, and less powerful, due to the fact that they are aging. Accordingly, Estes and Binney (1991) argued that putting old age in line with illness has encouraged society to think about aging as pathological or abnormal and to associate it with conditions we identify as sickness or illness. The biomedicalized view of aging has had a strong influence on the public's opinion and attitudes towards aging in

terms of the focus and emphasis on youth. For example, it would appear that the increasing reorganization of the health care system around technological interventions and modes of preventions (i.e., keeping fit, young and slim) is a result of the biomedicalized approach towards aging. The negative attitudes or opinions towards older adults and stereotypes about their inability or ill health are reflected in the types of physical activities and leisure pursuits usually prescribed and promoted for older adults (Grant, 2001; O'Brien Cousins, 2003; Spirduso et al., 2005). The traditional approach to aging was perhaps unintentionally influential in establishing a medicalized and predominately negative view of aging based on a model of biological decline (Dionigi, 2008; Grant & Kluge, 2007). For example, an older adult working from the biomedicalized model of aging might be seen and treated as being incompetent or slow, when it comes to performing activities of daily living (e.g., grooming, housework, physical activity). In essence, it could be argued that the social reflection of how this individual is perceived in relation to who they are as individuals can profoundly impact their sense of well-being in later life. Therefore, it can be suggested that the biomedicalized perspective of aging locks the aging process and the individuals experiencing it into an irreversible decline (i.e., physical deterioration). Consequently, the older individual is trapped in this stereotype of age, which in turns limits all other possibilities for recognizing and valuing other developments (e.g., physical, social, psychological) in later life.

There has been a significant paradigm shift in regards to how aging is conceptualized and experienced in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, focusing on ensuring quality of life for older adults (Dogra & Stathokostas, 2012; Rowe & Kahn, 1998). In the latter third of

the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a more “healthy” or “positive” aging discourse emerged in the related fields of gerontology and health care, exercise promotion and leisure (Baker et al., 2010b; Dionigi, 2008; Grant, 2001). This paradigm shift in the meaning and experience of aging was captured by a more contemporary point of view, which emphasizes the importance of maintaining and fostering the physical and mental well-being of people as they age. The positive aging discourses includes multiple messages about autonomy for older people, in terms of an alternative way of thinking about aging, self-responsibility for health, and advice on leisure, lifestyle, and physical activity (Dionigi, 2008; Grant, 2001). In other words, these positive aging approaches have opened up opportunities for older adults to participate in a range of physically active leisure activities in later life. Additionally, during this period, there was a swift in research, theories, images and attitudes towards the aging process and older adults. Old age was celebrated as a period for enjoyment, good health, exercise, leisure, independence, vitality, exploration (Grant, 2001; Phoenix & Grant, 2009), challenge, productivity, creativity, growth and development (Spirduso et al., 2005). Furthermore, this period of life was seen as positive and productive, rather than just focusing on the negative aspects of aging in terms of decline, disengagement, ill health and frailty that is usually associated with old age (Dionigi, 2008).

The positive aging discourse approach to aging represents recent efforts to appropriately describe, predict and accommodate the changing needs of a rapidly increasing cohort of older adults. In a broader sense, the positive aging perspective provides older adults with alternative ways of viewing aging, advice on physical activity, active living, and the health benefits of physical activity and sports participation. Today there is a push for older adults to take preventative measures so that they can remain

healthy and live independently for as long (Dionigi, 2008; Gilleard & Higgs, 2005; Grant, 2001; Grant & Kluge, 2007). For example, preventative measures for an older adult aging successfully might include; learning to adapt to change, staying physically and socially active and feeling connected to ones community. In particular, being physically active through the involvement in sport and recreation is recognized as a key strategy for older adults to enhance their physical, social and psychological health, and resist their aging bodies and postpone deep old age (Grant, 2002, 2001; O'Brien Cousins, 2003; Phoenix & Smith, 2011). Nevertheless, the two contrasting perspectives on aging (i.e., biomedicalized and positive aging models) provide a foundation for discussing and interpreting the multiple meanings made available to older athletes in terms of defining and explaining their participating in sports and physical activity in later life.

### **The Four Ages**

Many older adults are breaking away from previously set social norms to explore increasingly more diverse lifestyles. In light of this deviation from social norms, the four ages approach has been seen as representing a new life course stage (Gilleard & Higgs, 2005). Previous research suggest that identifying the different “ages” in later life has served the purpose of highlighting the heterogeneity of the older population in terms of their characteristics and needs (i.e., socio-economic, health, patterns of mortality, morbidity). There has been a tendency among a significant number of theorists in the fields of aging and exercise science to view life after retirement as an expanded leisure phase and as a period of high activity and involvement (Gilleard & Higgs, 2005; Grant, 2002; Laslett, 1996; Phoenix & Smith, 2011). Laslett’s (1996) concept of the “Four ages” of a Western person’s life span has been adopted as a way of categorizing the life course.

A key reason why Laslett's model has been useful is because it is not too closely tied to chronological age, but rather to the kinds of activities people are engaged in as they move across the life span. Although it is suggested that some times the different "ages" can be experienced concurrently, for Laslett (1996), the life cycle of an individual is made up of the following stages; the first age, second age, third age and fourth age.

**The first age.** The first age is defined as a stage of babyhood, childhood and initial instruction (Laslett, 1996). The first age is associated with dependency, immaturity, socialization and education. This stage is usually (although not exclusively) related with the periods of childhood and adolescence. In addition, it is stage of relative irresponsibility and of little authority over others. The first age also involves the transition from home to school, and often to subsequent full-time education, from living in the parental group to independent living, which usually though not quite necessarily, marks its close (Laslett, 1996). The first age is essentially of early socialization in which a person is dependent on others usually their parents. The calendar age of 25 years has been suggested as the end of the first age and the beginning of the second age (Gilleard & Higgs, 2005).

**The second age.** The second age is associated with independence, maturity, earning, saving and responsibility. The second age is one of adult maturity where individuals typically take on responsibilities such as established social relationships, career and financial independence, and perhaps childrearing (Gilleard & Higgs, 2005; Laslett, 1996). According to Laslett (1996), the experience of the third age is most likely to be positive for those individuals who have used the second age to work out a plan that will bring final satisfaction in the third age when he or she is free to realize personal

purposes completely. In other words, it is essential to develop life plans and strategies in the second age to help ensure fulfillment in the third age.

**The third age.** The third age refers to an emerging life stage within contemporary society that represents new possibilities for personal identity development through an expanded period of consumption and choice (Gilleard & Higgs, 2005; Laslett, 1996; Phoenix & Smith, 2011). The third age is the period of relative freedom, leisure, personal achievement, independence and fulfillment. The third age is often considered a time after retirement when good health and opportunities for self-selected pursuits permit a range of fulfilling activities (Gilleard & Higgs, 2005; Phoenix & Smith, 2011). According to Laslett (1996), the hallmark of the third age is self-fulfillment and self-realization. For instance, the post-retirement period is for most adults the first time they become free from the responsibility of raising children and no longer engage in income-producing labour with its potential for self-alienation. In other words, the third age is the only stage in the life cycle where individuals are free to pursue their self-defined goals. The third age may be experienced, variably, across a considerable span of the life course, depending on circumstance and attitude of the individual. People may enter the third age early, through choice or through events such as early retirement and still be in it well beyond retirement (Phoenix & Smith, 2011).

**The fourth age.** The fourth age is associated with sickness, disability, dependency, decrepitude, frailty, and the imminence of death, rather than a natural progression of life that can also be a positive experience (Gilleard & Higgs, 2005; Grant & Kluge, 2007). This stage is seen as a fairly short period of time before death. The fourth age can come at any time, but it is often compressed into the last couple of years

before death (Gilleard & Higgs, 2005; Grant & Kluge, 2007; Rowe & Kahn, 1998).

According to Laslett (1996), people will (indeed ‘must’) conduct themselves across the life course, especially during the third age with continued activity of body and mind in such a way that the fourth age can be staved off for as long as possible and shortened in duration. Although the transition from the third to fourth age is at some point inevitable, it is not fixed at a specific age.

The four age concept has some value in that it provides a counter-view to the prevailing view of inevitable dependence in old age and questions the assumption that older adults cannot and do not make useful contribution to society. Laslett (1996) adopted the concept of the third age as a basis for a more positive discussion of later life, in place of what he believed was an emphasis on decline and dependency. Understanding the changing perceptions of how aging is viewed in society is essential in the growing movement of social gerontology and sport and exercise science. According to Phoenix and Smith (2011), the social landscape of aging is rapidly changing to the extent that “normal” aging now takes on a multiplicity of forms. There are variations within the aging experience including how the pursuit of a “fit” body has become both the normal and normative. That being recognized, the concept of the third age does enable researchers to better understand the changing social landscape of aging and persons within it, who deviate from a uni-linear notion of natural aging (Grant & Kluge, 2007; Phoenix & Smith, 2011; Rowe & Kahn, 1998). Conversely, the third age is seen as problematic in terms of promoting excessive positive aging. It has been argued that positive aging philosophies are an understandable reaction to the negative stereotypes in society, but they are rather escapist in that individuals ignore the eventuality of deep old

age or “the body’s failure” (Gilleard & Higgs, 2005; Grant & Kluge, 2007; Phoenix & Smith, 2011; Rowe & Kahn, 1998). In other words, the notion of positive aging has the potential to establish a sense of undesirability to encourage denial or fear of old age and contribute in part to an individual’s attempt to resist the aging body. The desire to retain youthfulness, health, and fitness at all ages has become a common theme in contemporary culture (Dionigi, 2008; Grant, 2002, 2001; Phoenix & Smith, 2011).

### **Age Effects on Sports Performance**

Older athletes strive to maintain or even improve upon the performance they achieved at younger ages, but declines in athletic performance are inevitable with aging (Tanaka & Seals, 2003). There are many physiological changes seen in the masters athletes that are generally believed to be the result of their age on performance and involvement in sports (Maharam, Bauman, Skolnik, & Perle, 1999). Research exploring the age effects on performance of masters athletes versus their sedentary counterparts have found that the effects of age on performance are actually the result of a long standing sedentary lifestyle of “disuse” (Maharam et al., 1999; Young et al., 2008). Therefore, it is believed that many of the age effects on performance are not seen or are seen to a lesser degree in master’s athletes. For instance, much of the research on declining athletic performance with age focuses on the body’s maximum oxygen consumption, or VO<sub>2</sub>max (Baker et al., 2010a; Gilleard & Higgs, 2005; Tanka & Seals, 2008, 2003). The body’s maximum oxygen or VO<sub>2</sub>max is a measure of aerobic condition, reflecting the functional limit of the body’s ability to deliver and extract oxygen to meet the metabolic demands of physical activity. Older adults commonly demonstrate VO<sub>2</sub>max values that are lower than younger individuals. Previous research

indicates that aerobic power decreases fairly steadily in sedentary older adults, with average value of 25ml/kg/min at the age of 60 years (Baker et al., 2010c; Shephard, 2008). Existing research suggests that older adults whose maximal aerobic power has dropped to approximately 12-15ml/kg/min often become challenged to complete activities of daily living (see Shephard, 2008, Tanka & Seals, 2008). Some of these activities of daily living include things we usually do such as; leisure, grooming, housework, and work. For sedentary people, VO<sub>2</sub>max typically declines by about 10 per cent per decade after 25-30 years of age. For master athletes by contrast, the decline is about half that (Pollock, Mengelkoch, & Graves, 1997; Tanaka & Seals, 2003). According to Baker and colleagues (2010), those athletes under the age of 70 years demonstrate a six per cent per decade loss rate in VO<sub>2</sub>max. Interestingly, the decreases from early adulthood to old age and the rate of decline in VO<sub>2</sub>max with age are reduced in healthy adults who are habitually involved in sports or exercise.

More generally, examinations of athletic performance have demonstrated inevitable and increasingly greater age-related decline as athletes advance from the age of peak function into middle and old aged years (Baker et al., 2010b; Dionigi, 2008; O'Brien Cousins, 2003). With respect to aging, it is not entirely clear whether there is an accelerated decline in performance between the ages of 60 to 70 years of age. Although the effects of age on performance cannot be staved off indefinitely, there are some questions as to how much these pronounced trends reflect primary aging and how much inactivity or "disuse" intensifies these trends (Tanaka & Seals, 2003). Many theorists (see Baker et al., 2010a; Tanaka & Seals, 2003) have contended that the trends for age-related performance or decline are evident due to the declining involvement or insufficient

participation in sports and physical activity. It is clear that performance in sports and physical activity declines with age. However, the rate of decline varies for each individual as the demands of the event or sport is different for each person. For instance, in sports such as swimming, running and cycling performance gradually declines in performance with age at a rate of approximately 0.5 to 1 percent per year until the age of 70, after which declines in performance accelerate (Tanaka & Seals, 2003; Young et al., 2008).

Additionally, muscular strength, as assessed by Olympic weightlifting capacity, declines linearly until age 70, after which time the rate of decrease accelerates significantly (Phoenix & Smith, 2011; Tanaka & Seals, 2003). Therefore, it is safe to speculate that fundamental changes in biological aging processes may occur around the ages of 60 to 70 years, which in turn acts to substantially impair physical performance in later life. According to Krampe and Ericsson (1996), selective maintenance accounts for skilled aged performance. This notion suggests that normal rates of age decline for performance can be substantially moderated if individuals engage in large amounts of domain specific “maintenance practices”. It has been proposed that skilled performance could be retained at older ages as long as individuals have continuously practiced across the lifespan in a particular domain of expertise and have engaged in specific practice activities that are most relevant for improving performance (Starkes & Weir, 2007; Young et al., 2008). The selective maintenance approach proposes a preservative role for practicing or engaging in activities during old age, but these preservations are attributable to the kinds of activities that had been accumulated across the lifespan (Krampe & Ericsson, 1996; Young et al., 2008). For example, Krampe and Ericsson (1996) examined

how well older musicians maintained skilled performance beyond peak age. They investigated two groups of pianists (young amateurs and experts, plus old amateurs and experts) on a battery of skilled piano tasks. The findings revealed that the amount of training invested during later career phases, most pivotally from 50 to 60 years of age, moderated the normal age decline in experts (Krampe & Ericsson, 1996; Weir, 2007; Wiswell et al., 2001; Young et al., 2008). In essence, the continuous participation or involvement in selected activities throughout the lifespan is associated with early life training or practices with skilled performance in later decades. However, as elite performers continue to compete as masters athletes and as the number of competitors increase, particularly at older ages, it is likely that decreases in sport performance with age will be less than currently reported.

### **Gender Effects on Sports Performance**

In addition to age related changes, attention has also been focused on gender related differences on aging and its effects on performance and participation in later life. Gender related performance declines are often assumed to underline differences in sports participation and achievement (O'Brien Cousins, 2003; Spirduso et al., 2005) and are also considered in relation to older adults decisions to get involved, or stay involved in various activities in later life. For example Weir and colleagues (2003) examined the performance of female masters athletes and found that women showed greater relative decline in sports performance than men in long and short duration swimming events. Also, in swimming events, both men and women endurance swimmers decline linearly from a peak at 35 to 40 years to about 70 years and then the decline increases exponentially (Tanaka & Seals, 2008, 2003; Spirduso et al., 2005). However, the rate and

magnitude of decline performance were greater in women only in short distance event, due to its dependence on upper body strength (Spirduso et al., 2005). Such evidence suggests that the performance of women in sports declines at a greater rate than those of men. Although the rate of decline in maximal oxygen consumption (VO<sub>2</sub>max) is the same in men and women, the decline in muscular strength and power, particularly in the upper extremities is greater in women than in men (Holloszy & Kohrt, 1995; Spirduso et al., 2005). In other words, the greater the aging effect is on a sport performance, the bigger the difference is between men and women's scores. Concerning the gender specific differences in performance decline with age, most studies reveal that elderly women may lose their performance ability more rapidly than their male counterparts (Baker et al., 2010b; Young & Starkes, 2005).

Stereotyped gender roles also impact the decisions regarding gender appropriateness of sport behaviour and consequently, sport motivation and participation of males and females (Spirduso et al., 2005; Tanaka & Seals, 2003). Evidence suggests that the stereotyped masculinity of sport negatively influences sport participation of older women because sport practice is strongly at odds with their gender role and socialization at a younger age (Donato, 2003; Spirduso et al., 2005). In essence, it is likely that decreases in performance and the lower numbers of women competitors in old age, coupled with negative societal attitudes toward old adults as sports competitors play a more predominant role in the decline of women's performance. According to Spirduso and colleagues (2005), it also limits the opportunities for training and coaching of athletes in those sports that are considered inappropriate for a specific gender, such as strength based activities like weight lifting, wrestling and boxing.

In much of the literature regarding motivation for sport participation, women show higher levels of intrinsic motivation and lower levels of extrinsic motivation than men (Reaburn & Dascombe, 2008; Spirduso et al., 2005). Reaburn and Dascombe (2008) reported gender-based difference in motivation with aging. Men were more motivated by achievement and women were more motivated by health, social interaction and enjoyment (Baker et al., 2010a; Reaburn & Dascombe, 2008). In addition, both men and women ranked social interaction as the most important motivator for participation in masters athletic events. . Furthermore, researchers have argued that sports media assist in maintaining sport as a masculine hegemonic domain, where men occupy positions of power and masculinity is more cherished than femininity (Creedon, 1998; Duncan & Messner, 1998; Hardin et al., 2002). For instance, numerous studies have shown that sport media provided considerably less and different types of coverage to female athletes and women's sports than to male athletes and men's sports (Baker et al., 2010a; Duncan & Messner, 1998). Therefore, it was important to further focus on some of the gender related differences associated with aging and its effect on both genders in terms of how both masters athletes' involvement in sports in later life was presented within the various media sources.

### **Motives for Participation in Sports and Physical Activity**

Over the last three decades, an immense body of literature has focused on the concept of motivation in sports settings. A number of studies conducted to date have shown that masters athletes, regardless of the sport, have a variety of motives for continuing to participate in sport (Baker et al., 2010b; Dionigi, 2008; Medic, 2007; Medic et al., 2006; Phoenix & Grant, 2009). One factor that is thought to be responsible for

masters athletes involvement in sports in later life is their motivation to participate in exercise. In fact, various types of motivation have been found to influence masters athletes' participation in sports as well as their intentions to remaining physically active well into later life (Medic, 2007; Reaburn & Dascombe, 2008; Wilson, Rodgers, Fraser, & Murray, 2004). Several researchers have argued, that the complexity of the motivation concept is its ability to explain and predict what motivates athletes to behave the way they do (Baker et al., 2010a; Dionigi, 2008; Medic, 2007; Phoenix & Grant, 2009). Sports and physical activity motivational literature available to date offers many insights regarding the development of motivational factors until the time athletes reach peak performance in sports (Baker et al., 2010b). In light of the various motivational factors, there is emerging research directed towards the motivational processes of masters athletes and their continuous participation in sports in later life.

The word motivation is derived from a Latin root "motivus", which means to move or moving a cause (Medic, 2007). According to Villerand and Thill (1993), motivation is defined as the hypothetical construct used to describe the internal and or external forces that produce the initiation, direction, intensity and persistence of behaviour. In other words, motivation refers to an individual's inner will and dedication or focus to achieve a goal they have set for themselves or attain some standards of excellence (Baker et al., 2010a).

The self-determination theory (STD) has been proposed as a one way of examining the motivations of masters athletes to engage in sports (see Baker et al., 2010a; Deci & Ryan, 2002). Self-determination has been frequently applied to the sports and exercise science domain (Baker et al., 2010c; Deci & Ryan, 2002, 2000; Medic,

2007). According to this theory an individual's motivation lies along a continuum, which is represented by varying degrees of autonomy. But at the same time, autonomy represents the behaviours being self-determined, or freely initiated by the individual. The self-determination continuum includes amotivation, both intrinsic and extrinsic components and four regulations that vary in terms of the degree of self-determination they reflect (Duncan, Hall, Wilson, & Jenny, 2010). The four behavioural regulations include external regulation, introjected regulation, identified regulation, and integrated regulations. Intrinsic motivation represents the most self-determined end of the continuum and it involves motivation derived from the sheer pleasure and satisfaction of engaging in the behaviour itself (Baker et al., 2010a; Medic, 2007; Ryan & Deci, 2000). For instance, masters athletes who are intrinsically motivated might run because they enjoy the feeling of their body moving and the joy of being outside. Furthermore, this reflects an athlete's motivation to perform an activity simply for the reward inherent in their participation.

In general, the four main distinct behavioural regulations comprise of the extrinsic part of the motivational continuum (Duncan et al., 2010; Ryan & Deci, 2000). The first two are the integrated and identified regulations and both represent self-determined types of extrinsic motivation. Integrated regulation refers to an individual's beliefs that the behaviour is an important part of his or her identity and is consistent with his or her personal values (Duncan et al., 2010; Medic et al., 2006; Ryan & Deci, 2000), while identified regulation represents being motivated to perform the behaviour because it is personally significant and results in outcomes, which are valued by the individual (Duncan et al., 2010; Ryan & Deci, 2000). For example, an individual might engage in

aerobic exercise because they know that cardiovascular exercises are important for the hearts and lungs.

The second sets of regulations are external and introjected regulations and both represent a non-self-determined and controlling types of extrinsic motivation at the end of the motivational continuum. Introjected motivation refers to the desire to obtain intrapersonal rewards (e.g., pride) or to avoid self-inflicted punishments (i.e., guilt or shame, see Duncan et al., 2010; Ryan & Deci, 2000). In essence, introjected represents an internal pressure where athletes might participate out of feelings of guilt or to achieve recognition, while external regulations refers to the desire to obtain external rewards, avoid punishments or negative evaluation. For example, an individual who exercise for external reasons might do so to please their spouse or their physician. In a broader sense, the external and introjected regulations are considered extrinsic in nature, due to the fact that the individual does not sense that their behaviour are a result of their choices (Baker et al., 2010a; Duncan et al., 2010; Medic, 2007; Ryan & Deci, 2000). In turn, the consequences for that behavior (i.e., involvement in sports) are seen as psychological pressures for that individual.

Finally, it is also possible that an individual will be amotivated. Amotivated represents a lack of intention to engage in the behaviour and it is accompanied by feelings of incompetence and lack of connection with the behaviour and expected outcome (Duncan et al., 2010; Deci & Ryan, 2002). That is, individuals will engage in a given behaviour without feeling any motivation, or they will exhibit a complete lack of intention to perform the behaviour. However, according to the self-determination theory (SDT), there are various types of extrinsic motivation drawing on a range of factors that

contribute to particular action or behaviour (Ryan & Deci, 2000). These variations are reflected in the mini-theory of SDT proposed by Ryan and Deci (2000) as organismic integration theory (OIT), which is presented along a continuum in terms of the types of extrinsic motivations dependent on the degree to which the motivation is emanated from the self (i.e., internalization). But at the same time, external regulations can be internalized and become internal regulations, in turn extrinsic motivations can become self-determined. For instance, an individual's behaviour could be extrinsic in the sense that they are dependent on external consequences, but internal in the sense that motivation is emanated from within. In a broader sense, this mini-theory was developed to describe a continuum of autonomy underpinning unique types of extrinsic motivation ranging from those that are controlled via external contingencies or factors (i.e., high controlled) to those personally valued and self-endorsed (Duncan et al., 2010; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Furthermore, the self-determination theory conceptualizes psychological needs as essential nutrients that are required for optimal psychological growth and well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2002). The basis psychological needs theory is concerned with the idea of evolved psychological needs and their relationship with health and well-being. The need for autonomy, competence and relatedness are thought to be universal across people and cultures and it is also applicable throughout all aspects of an individual's life (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In line with this theory, autonomy refers to the experience of choice and volition in one's behaviour and to the personal authentic endorsement of one's activities and actions. While competence, involves the ability to bring about desired outcomes and feelings of effectiveness and mastery over one's environment (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Finally, relatedness reflects feelings of closeness and connection in one's

everyday interactions. According to Ryan and Deci, the fulfillment of these key psychological needs within a given context contributes to optimal growth, integrity and well-being whereas limiting these psychological needs will lead to greater fragmentation and ill-being (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In addition, the strive to satisfy these three key basic needs seems to partially characterize the underline motives of masters athletes in terms of their involvement in sports (e.g., running) and physical activity in later life, as well as it fits with the reported previous literature focused on the masters athletes. In essence, an understanding is needed in terms of the various contrasting forms of motivations, as represented by the various media sources in relation to masters athletes engagement in sports or physical activity in later life.

In an exercise context, research has examined masters athletes and found that the type of motivation that typifies their involvement in sports was intrinsic motivation (Baker et al., 2010c; Medic, 2007). Masters athletes are motivated intrinsically, due to their immersion in the process of participations and their continuous engagement in sports, even in the face of age related changes in later life. Overall, it has been shown that masters athletes, regardless of they sport they practice and compete in, have a variety of motives, and are very self-determined, goal oriented and do not intended to stop participating in sports (Baker et al., 2010a; Medic et al., 2006). Therefore, it could be argued that masters athletes are motivated intrinsically, due to their immersion in the process of participation and their continuous engagement in sports in later life.

Masters athletes participate in organized competitive sports and physical activity for a number of reasons. Previous research from masters athletes or older adults involved in regular exercise and sports has shown that masters athletes participate for enjoyment,

competition, physical fitness, health benefits, social, travel, stress relief, personal challenges, and skill development reasons (Hastings, Kurth, Scholder, & Cyr, 1995; Reaburn & Dascombe, 2008; Tantrum & Hodges, 1993). For example, Hastings et al. (1995) asked 700 masters athletes about their motives for participating in sports and physical activity. The six factors that emerged from the research ranged from enjoyment, skill development, fitness, achievement, socialization, and tension release. Another study by Roper et al. (2003) demonstrated that being physically active, overall fitness and a healthy lifestyle, performance outcome, being an older athlete, and social support from significant others were attributed to motivating older adults to participate in sports and physical activity. In other words, the enjoyment of physical activity, interest, and competence are the internal motivational factors that play an important role in motivating individuals to participate in sports. In addition, social and life opportunities (affiliation/friendship motive) and social recognition (factor of achievement/ status) were the other important factors to motivate people to take part in physical activity (Baker et al., 2010a; Hastings et al., 1995; Medic, 2007; Roper et al., 2003). In essence, wanting to compete among the best in their discipline is a common form of motivation among elite masters athletes, prizes or public adulation usually come in a distant second with masters athletes. . In general, older adults participating in sports and physical activity in later life have different motives for their continuous engagement.

Although understanding the motives of these masters athletes in and of themselves is useful, so too are how their stories are revealed to other people through the media (see Andrews & Jackson, 2001; Bernstein, 2003; Whannel, 2002). The media features particular ways of considering the experiences of masters athletes, framed in a

manner to convey certain messages and values, each with some takeaway for the reader or audience. For that reason, it was important to understand and consider how these motives are portrayed through the various media sources available.

### **Media's Influence on Understanding Masters Athletes**

Despite advances in the emerging scholarship relating to masters athletes, researchers have yet to determine the role media narratives play in constructing and generating meanings around masters athletes and their involvement in sports. In a broader sense, media data sources have the potential to offer an alternative storylines of the aging process, in the sense that it assumes many forms. The relationship between media and sports has become of particular interest to media scholars over the last decade (Bernstein & Blain, 2002). The various media data available to the public plays an important and constructive role in society as they represent a source of information, education and entertainment for individuals. For researchers interested in the media in particular, sport is important as a popular content of the media, which can also shed light on a range of related issues central to media narratives (Bernstein & Blain, 2002; Cunningham, 2003). For instance, “news stories” can be seen as narratives that information and factual elements, but also carry an implicit message to the readership or audience (see Bernstein & Blain, 2002; Duncan & Messner, 1998). Media data are a powerful tool and through its representation shapes the understanding, perception and views of society. According to O’Shaughnessy and Stadler (2005), the media in their representations, provides individuals with information and then explanations of ways of understanding the world they live in. Furthermore, previous researchers have argued that the media takes on an interpretative role and teaches individuals how to “make sense” of the world, others, and

ourselves (Entman, 1993; Stokvis, 2000; Reber & Berger, 2005). Therefore, it can be suggested that media sources communicate the importance of sports in our lives and shape the interest of the public. Although masters athletes have made great strides in sport in the recent years, the ways in which the media portray their sporting achievements is critically important in terms of deconstructing some of the negative stereotypes associated with their involvement in sports (Dionigi, 2008; Phoenix & Grant, 2009; Phoenix & Smith, 2011). Sports media narratives play a central role in informing our knowledge, opinions and attitudes about athletes in sport and informing perceptions that influence their future development. McGannon and colleagues (2012) proposed that the media is a power source for the representation and construction of meaning and ideology in relation to athletes. For instance the ideology surrounding the involvement of masters athletes in sport might consist of the decline in performance narrative associated with old age.

It is evident in the sense that there are a variety of ways that the media influences the lives of almost every individual (Bernstein & Blain, 2002; O'Shaughnessy & Stadler, 2005). Therefore, it can be assumed that the media is influential and plays a pivotal role in the lives of masters athletes, in terms of how their involvement in sports in later life are depicted in the various media sources. In order to understand the media influences on masters athletes, a qualitative method design (i.e., case study) was utilized for this study (i.e., inductive thematic analysis; see Braun & Clarke, 2006). Previous scholars have highlighted the benefits and significance of utilizing this unique and underutilized data source (i.e., media data) in sport psychology research (see; McGannon, Curtin, Schinke, & Schweinbenz, 2012a; McGannon, Hoffman, Metz, & Schinke, 2012b). Some of the highlighted benefits included the construction of a professional athletes identity and also

influencing the way in which an athlete is perceived by society and themselves (Bernstein & Blain, 2002; McGannon et al., 2012a; Schinke, Bonhomme, McGannon, & Cummings, 2012). In a broader sense, media data provides this area of research with an alternative way to access both athletes (i.e., Ed and Jeanne) words and stories in relation to the media representation of their performance in later life. Also noteworthy, media data provide this relatively area of study with a unique approach to viewing how individuals are socially and culturally constructed within a specific medium (i.e., sport).

Furthermore, most research on masters athletes and their participation in sports and exercise usually involves the exploration of physical performance in old age. In the course of quantifying physical performance, functional capabilities and psychological characteristics of the aged, the ineffable and less tangible aspects are either suppressed or absent (Grant, 2001; O'Brien Cousins, 2003). Previous research indicates that the stories about aging and sports are incomplete and the central character (i.e., the older person) is hidden from the text (Grant, 2001; Phoenix & Grant, 2009; Phoenix & Smith, 2011). Existing research allows us to suggest that understanding the aging process and participation in physical activity and sports in later life should not only consist of factual reports and explanations of the gradual decline of the biological processes (see Dionigi & O'Flynn, 2007; Grant, 2001). Instead, these reports and explanations should consist of stories and discussions in terms of attitudes, expectations, prejudices and cultural values of the society in which the individual develop and grow (Dionigi & O'Flynn, 2007; O'Brien Cousins, 2003). With that in mind, it was important to consider how the narratives related to masters athletes are framed or packaged within media sources and what implications these narratives might have on how the athletes are depicted to the

broader audience. There are compelling reasons to study sport media within the context of masters athletes including how it delivers messages to a large, diverse audience and the portrayals of various cultural groups or individual (Pearce, 1995; McGannon et al., 2012a; Schinke et al., 2012a). Hence, the intent of this study was to examine what narratives were used in relation to masters athletes and how those narratives are used in the various media sources around sports and the aging process and then consider those meanings in relations to how the aging process was portrayed and represented to the general audience.

### **Contentious Issues**

Extensive research has been conducted on issues affecting adolescent, female, collegiate and professional athletes, but masters athletes have received less attention (Baker et al., 2010c; Dionigi, 2008; Medic, 2007). The research generally involving masters athletes is multidisciplinary in nature; the understanding in relation to how old age is experienced and the performing aging body has the potential to be extensive (e.g., physiology, exercise sciences, psychology, leisure and gerontology) (Medic, 2007; Phoenix & Grant, 2009; Starkes, Weir, & Young, 2003). In other words, due to the increased attention directed towards health, fitness, leisure, as well as rehabilitation and therapy, the understanding of the aging process in terms of masters athletes involvement in sports encompasses many different areas. In general, these forms of research do provide a setting, or platform, for a more thorough discussion of masters athletes and their involvement in sports in later life and how the notion of successful aging is being represented in the various media sources. However, as this area of research continues to emerge, several issues remain contentious. These issues include the following; (a) limited

understanding of media representations of masters athletes and the specific meanings generated around sports and aging (b) the implications or consequence of those representations to the audience or public. The current gaps within the current literature on masters athletes relates to the fact that very few research have examined the social construction of masters athletes identities and their portrayal within sports media sources around the notion of successful aging. By exploring these issues at hand, a better understanding was obtained in terms of the various media representations of both athletes in relation to aging and participating in sports in later life. Related research suggests that studying figures in sports media allows for capturing the complexity of meanings surrounding a sportsman or celebrity identities (McGannon et al., 2012b; Pearce, 1995; Whannel, 2002). In broader sense, the media representations of an athlete has the potential to influence the athlete's decision in terms of their performance and also the way in which the athlete views themselves and the presentation of that point of view to the audience or readership.

Through this study, we sought to further expand understanding of what meanings were generated around aging and sports by masters athletes, as represented in several media sources. Additionally, this exploration provided an interesting platform for capturing, deciphering, and interpreting the narratives and meanings generated around the physically performing body in relation to aging successfully. Previous literature revolving around the meanings generated around masters athletes and the notion of successful aging proposed that masters athletes reshape the way in which aging is experienced and represented (Baker et al., 2010a; Dionigi, 2008; Phoenix & Smith, 2011). With that in mind, the overarching goal of this study was to explore what media

narratives were used in relation to masters athletes and what meanings were generated and constructed around the notion successful aging, in terms of their involvement in sports, as represented in several media sources. For the most part, masters athletes represent a significant minority of older adults who maintain involvement in vigorous activity throughout their lifespan (Baker et al., 2010b). Therefore, it was important to examine the media's representation of both athletes and how their involvement in sports was portrayed in the media narratives and the consequence of those representations to the broader public in relations to how the notion of successful aging was being represented.

The research questions guiding this study include:

1. What are the media representations of masters athletes, and how are they used to generate meanings around aging, sports and the performing aging body?
2. What are the implications of these meanings for how the aging body is portrayed or represented to the broader public?

### **CHAPTER THREE: Methodology**

There is emerging research and attention directed towards understanding and explaining the performance by masters athletes as compared to their novice counterparts. These masters athletes continue to be popular for researchers to study because of their life long engagement in sports and their outstanding achievements and records. Much of the research on masters athletes has provided researchers with high quality measurements on familiar and highly practiced activities, performance trends not confounded by the effects of chronic incapacity or physical inactivity and a rare opportunity to study expertise at the highest levels (Baker et al., 2010a; Dionigi et al., 2011, Phoenix & Smith, 2011). Accordingly, the methodology section below pertains to the media data related to masters athletes and their involvement in sports. Chapter three covers the following topics; media outlets, my contextual background, the masters athletes (Ed Whitlock and Jeanne Daprano), data sources, data collection and inductive thematic analysis.

#### **Media Outlets**

This project featured the words and accounts of masters athletes, individuals who participate in organized sport with regular competition against others, placing a high premium on excellence and achievement, and systematic training (Maron et al., 2010, Tanka & Seals, 2008), as presented within sports magazines and web sources (e.g., runnersworld.com and lexisnexis.com). Furthermore, it has been argued that mass media has become one of the most powerful institutional forces for shaping attitudes and values in Western culture. Mass media portray the dominant images or symbolic representations of society, and these images in turn tell audiences who and what is valued and esteemed in our culture (Konracki & Wellman, 2002; McGannon et al., 2012b). Furthermore, how

masters athletes are viewed within society is both reflected in and created by mass media. The media has been shown to influence the way people think and feel about issues (Bernstein & Blain, 2002; O'Shaughnessy & Stadler, 2005), and so it was important to analyze media communications in detail to uncover how deeper meanings are created and generated in these materials. For instance, media data might provide the sport scholar with insight with regards to a very specific understanding of an issue or phenomenon based on how it is presented to the broader public. Therefore, the master athletes are positioned as they are within sport media data by a third party with an agenda in mind. It has been well documented by sports researchers that the media representations of athletes provided a way for generating or constructing meanings, which in turn influenced the way they were perceived in society and also how the athletes perceived themselves (Bernstein & Blain, 2002; McGannon et al., 2012a; O'Shaughnessy & Stadler, 2005, Schinke et al., 2012a).

There are various types of media data available including; magazines, television, internet, newspaper, books, articles and music and other sorts of materials that can also be analyzed (Bryman, Bell, & Teevan, 2009; Patton, 2002). In order to answer the research questions of interest, this study focused specifically on sports magazines (i.e., *Runner's World* and additional web sources; Lexis-Nexis). This research project focused on two athletes, 81-year-old Ed Whitlock, a Canadian long distance marathon runner, and 77-year-old Jeanne Daprano, a world record setting American masters track and field athlete. The specifics concerning each of these athletes will be outlined in a separate section. The sports magazine and additional sources chosen for this project fit with the scope and intent of the study as it featured the athletes within the context of their

involvement in sports and exercise. It was important to examine media narratives within the context of masters athletes involvement in sports because the media was seen as the primary source for how individuals see the world or make sense of the world by providing information and explanations. In addition, numerous researchers have highlighted the benefits of utilizing media narratives in the context of professional athletes and the social significance of analyzing them (Andrews & Jackson, 2001; Bernstein & Blain, 2002; Birrell & McDonald, 2000; McGannon et al., 2012a; O'Shaughnessy & Stadler, 2005). These studies proposed that in certain circumstances the media contributed towards constructing certain identities for athletes, which in turn influenced how the broader public perceived them. The way in which the media portrays (i.e., media representation) a particular athlete or sport can impact both the athletes acceptance and credibility within the sport (Bernstein, 2003; McGannon et al., 2012b; Whannel, 2002). With that in mind, it was important to examine what narratives were used in terms of the social construction of sports in the lives of masters athletes or older adults. It was significant to explore the media representation of these athletes in terms of how meaning were generated and how social identities were reflected and constructed through media products (i.e., sports magazine).

### **My Contextual Background**

It should be noted that during the overall process of the inquiry, I relied upon and consulted with my supervisor and mentor (a cultural sport studies researcher). I consulted with my supervisor throughout the entire process in terms of establishing my research questions, methodology, and making sense of the data and feedback. It should also be noted that I have gained experience working with physically active older adults. My

previous experience working with older adults included; working with physically active older adults at a recreation center. While working at the recreation center, I was responsible for and coordinated an exercise and fitness group for seniors. Working at the recreational center provided me with the opportunity to use recreation (i.e., exercise) to help improve and maintain the general health and well-being of those seniors who participated. With that in mind, I believe my previous experience makes me an ideal match for this project in terms of working with individuals who have a variety of special needs (e.g., age, health, capability, experience). Also, I believe my previous experience will help me better understand the selected athletes in terms of how they are depicted in the various media narratives as it relates to their involvement in physical activity and sports in later life.

Furthermore, I strongly believe that my past experience working with older adults enabled me to learn, gain new insight, and knowledge in terms of the media representations of the selected athletes. In essence, my past experience working with seniors at the recreation center influenced the overall research process, which in turn influenced my future experience in relations to what meaning the selected athletes gave to words or actions as represented in the media narratives. Also, I believe the richness of my past experience working with older adults will powerfully add to my academic work. In a broader sense, this study sought out to extend the understanding and growing literature on masters athletes in terms of how their involvement in sports in later life was portrayed in the various media data. In addition, it should be noted that my past experience and personal interest (i.e., active older adults) and experiences working with them help to narrow the topic and research questions at hand. Additionally, reflexivity as

a researcher was employed throughout the research process. During the course of this study, my reflexivity as a researcher involved examining my self and the overall research relationship. Throughout the course of the project, I was employed an introspective approach in terms of examining my own thoughts or emotions in relation to the topic at hand. Hence, the research itself was the primary focus of inquiry, however an awareness of the researcher's contributions to the overall research process was required. This awareness involved the researcher acknowledging some of situational dynamics (i.e., not collecting enough data on Jeanne) encountered in terms of how the researcher and media data collected were jointly involved in the production and construction of meanings in relations to masters athletes.

### **The Master Athletes: Ed Whitlock and Jeanne Daprano**

In order to answer the research questions of interest it was important to further contextualize the lives and careers of Ed Whitlock and Jeanne Daprano. Running benefits all sizes, shapes and ages. Research shows that running is one of the most efficient ways to maintain and improve cardiovascular fitness; balance and muscle tone in later life (Ransdell, Vener, & Huberty, 2009; Reaburn & Dacombe, 2008). For the purpose of this study, the selected masters athlete was any individual over the age of 50 who participates in sports with regular competition against others as depicted in the media narratives. The inclusion criterion for choosing the selected masters athletes was based on their notoriety, numerous world records, and exemplary physical condition and also they represent the best in their age group category. These individual had excelled at their sport and were considered professionals and were generally recognizable in that sport. Ed Whitlock is an example of not only an athlete, but also an ageless runner (Runner's World, 2012). He

was born in 1931 and started running in his teens but he took a break and got back into running in his late 40's. Ed Whitlock is a Canadian long distance runner, and currently holds 15 world records ranging in distances from 1500m to 10,000m, as well as three age group marathon records (Masterstrack, 2012; Runner's World, 2012). He is also the first person over 70 years of age to run a marathon in less than three hours with a time of 2:54:44 in 2003. Ed Whitlock's career has also been plagued with setbacks; the most devastating of which came when he lost some time to knee arthritis in 2008 and was told that he would never run again (Runner's World, 2012). He took the news in stride and after a year away from racing, in September he ran a 1:37 half marathon, finishing 304th in a field of 3,411. The sports magazine, Runner's World, had numerous issues/publications featuring the running career of Ed Whitlock. Therefore, it can be assumed that the scope of Runner's World was appropriate in answering the research questions as this magazine featured this athlete and other masters athletes.

The second athlete examined in this study was Jeanne Daprano, a retired elementary school teacher and an American track and field athlete. Jeanne Daprano has been active all of her life, although she did not begin competitive running until age 45. She jogged occasionally to keep fit but did not enter a masters track meet until her late 40's. Currently, she is the first woman over the age of 70 to run a mile under seven minutes, shattering the listed 70-74 age group world record with a time of 6:47:91. Since turning 70, Jeanne Daprano has also set American records in the 800m (3:04:26) and the 1500m (6:22:77), both at the USA Masters outdoor championships (Masterstrack, 2012; Runner's World, 2012). In women's competition from age 60-65 and 65-70, Daprano holds indoor and outdoor records in 800 and 1,500 meters, the mile run and 4 by 800

meters relays. Last year she was nominated for the Masters hall of fame and chosen as the female track athlete of the year (Runner's World, 2012). Furthermore, she is considered quite a serious competitor due to her continuous involvement in the masters athletic scene. In addition, the running magazine, Runner's World, also covered Jeanne Daprano in numerous issues ranging from all her record setting performances and racing career.

### **Data Sources**

My intent for this project was to analyze a sports magazine and additional web sources (i.e., Runner's World) to determine the emergent themes present in relations to the selected masters athletes, Ed Whitlock and Jeanne Daprano. Runner's World magazine was launched in 1966 and it is a globally circulated monthly magazine. Runner's World magazine is recognized by millions of readers worldwide as the leading authority on running information and resources. It offers information, educates, and inspires runners of all ages and abilities, promoting sports as a healthy and more exciting form of recreation (Runner's World, 2012). Runners World offers 15 international editions in 18 countries and has a total audience of 3, 047,000 people worldwide. The demographic profile of the website claims they are "aimed at both male and female of any age", who run for fun, fitness or competition, the magazine has become more inclusive over the years to reflect running's broadening appeal as a mass participation sport (Runner's World.com, 2012). Approximately 52% of its readers are male and 48% female (Runner's World, 2012). The average age of readers is 39.2, with 38.7% falling between 18 and 34 years, and 74.5% between the ages of 25 to 54 years of age (Runner's World, 2012). It is suggestive that the demographic profile of Runner's World magazine

is primarily white and affluent given the income of this demographic. In addition, it is also accessible to a wide audience including; 18,000 Twitter followers and over 7,000 Facebook likes are testament to the importance of social media for Runner's World magazine. A closer examination of Runner's World magazine reinforces the notion that running is an excellent sport for any individual, as they get older. Running is by no means the only sport in which older athletes are and have been excelling in. For instance, more than half the runners in the New York City and Boston Marathon were over the age of 40 (Runner's World, 2012).

The data collection process for this study was drawn from two resources. First, media data in the form of a sport magazine (i.e., Runner's World) was compiled for the data analysis. In addition, both cases (i.e., Ed Whitlock and Jeanne Daprano) were also identified from the following web sources (e.g., runnersworld.com and masterstrack.com) to examine the media portrayals of these two master athletes in-depth. Runner's World magazine is the most well-known regularly distributed sports magazine in Canada. Runner's world magazine was chosen for this study based on its availability to the public, as it is one of the few specific sports based magazines available (e.g., focused on running). The scope of the magazine was applicable for the purpose of this study, as the audience or readership might include individuals who are involved in sports or have an interest in sports (i.e., running). Also, due to the fact that Runner's World magazine is a public source of data and anyone can use it, it was deemed suitable for this study. Therefore, suggesting that the audience or readers of these magazines are exposed to these texts in their everyday life.

In addition to Runner's World magazine, a second source of media data was

utilized in this study. During the second stage of the data collection process, media accounts of the selected athletes were compiled from the academic database Lexis-Nexis. The Lexis-Nexis database is an interdisciplinary, full-text database of over 18,000 sources including newspapers, journals wire services, newsletters, government documents, transcripts of broadcasts, and selected reference work (LexisNexisacademics.ca). Using the Lexis-Nexis database as an additional means to generate data provided me with immediate access to a comprehensive range of information and resources available to the public in terms of the selected masters athletes. Furthermore, the second step of the data collection process involved gathering media accounts in regards to the selected masters athletes from the Lexis-Nexis database (see McGannon et al., 2012b). The database consisted of articles from some of North American major newspapers (i.e., USA Today, New York Times, Toronto Star). The Lexis-Nexis database provided searchable biographical information on individuals who were connected with a particular industry or occupation as well as information on elected officials. Each article was selected or retrieved by means of the key words “Masters athlete Ed Whitlock”. All media accounts collected were collected and analyzed for their content and in-depth discussion in relation to how these were positioned by the media and to the broader public. The goal of utilizing this additional source of data was to complement and provide more convergence and corroboration in terms of the different data sources employed.

In total, 58 articles were collected and analyzed for this study ( $n=33$  Runner’s World,  $n=25$  Lexis-Nexis). Within the 58 articles collected, 41 of the articles featured Ed Whitlock and 17 featured Jeanne Darpano. A total of 33 articles were collected and

analyzed from Runner's World magazine and respective website. The following articles were compiled due their in-depth discussion in relations to the masters athletes selected for this project. Within the second stage of data collection, a total of 25 articles were collected and analyzed from the Lexis-Nexis academic database, in terms of their detailed accounts or presentation of the athletes and their involvement in sports in later life.

### **Data Collection**

The media data was collected using the following two steps. First, all the issues of Runner's World magazine featuring Ed Whitlock and Jeanne Daprano were included in the analysis. Copies of these issues of Runner's World were retrieved through the respective website and archival database (i.e., Runnersworld.com). It should be noted that the sole criteria for a text to be collected analyzed was that it had to reference Ed Whitlock or Jeanne Daprano. All textual articles that depicted the following masters athletes was considered to fall under the category for analysis and data collection. All content or information related or associated with these two cases of master athletes was considered in the analysis, along with all textual articles.

### **Inductive Thematic Analysis**

The media data collected were subjected to an inductive thematic analysis. The goal of using a thematic analysis method is to identify, analyse and report patterns (themes) within a data set, allowing for the organization of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is used for organizing and describing data in rich detail and thus is considered the most appropriate for any study that seeks to interpret. Furthermore thematic analysis is compatible with both essentialist and constructionist paradigms within psychology (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Additionally, thematic analysis is one of the

few methods of analysis that is epistemologically free and is thus compatible with a range of theories and paradigms (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Braun & Clarke, 2006). In that, it is an analytic approach that can be applied across a wide range of theoretical and epistemological settings. Through its relative freedom, a thematic approach provides a flexible and useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex account of data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In addition, thematic analysis acknowledges the active role of the researcher and the subjective nature of the data interpretation (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Creswell, 2005). In other words, themes did not simply emerge from the data set, but rather the researcher made active, interpretative choices in generating and constructing those codes and themes. Furthermore, thematic analysis involved the generation of codes and then themes from a qualitative data set. The codes generated captured interesting features of the data, which were of potential relevance to the research questions. Braun and Clarke (2006) argued that coding is not simply a method of data reduction, but rather an analytic process that captures both semantic (surface) meanings and latent (underlying) meanings within the data set. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), the “key” of a theme is not necessarily dependent on quantifiable measures, but rather on whether it captures something important in relation to the overall research questions. Interestingly, the materials collected are coded, codes are examined to look for common themes and themes are examined to determine whether they can be organized into superordinate or subordinate themes (Attride-Sterling, 2001). Hence, it is a form of pattern recognition or finding within the data set, where emerging themes becomes the categories for the analysis.

While there are differences in terms of how a thematic analysis might proceed Braun and Clarke (2006) outlined a six-stage model as guidelines to conducting thematic analysis in a theoretically and methodologically sound manner. These steps were proposed in order for researchers to avoid falling into the trap of claiming that several themes emerged from the analysis. For example, one possible way to proceed with a thematic analysis is through examining the linkages between themes, a technique presented as thematic network analysis (see Attride-Stirling, 2001). In other words, researchers can adopt either an inductive, deductive or hybrid (combination) approach in the data analysis. For this study, an inductive approach was adopted in terms of the themes were generated directly from the data set or elements (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In essence, the coding and themes development throughout the analysis phase were directed by the content of the data set. The current study included all six of Braun and Clarke proposed steps in the data analysis process.

The first step of the data analysis involved the researcher familiarizing his or her self with the data set. In order to familiarize one's self with the data set, the researcher began this process by transcribing/ noting and recording initial ideas and impressions of the data collected. In addition, the first step involved the researcher reading and re-reading the transcripts in order to familiarize his or her self with the data set. In other words, the data analysis process began by the researcher immersing his or her self into the data and transcribing and translating the data collected. The second step of the data analysis involved the creation and generation of initial codes across the data set. For example during the second phase of the analysis, the coding of the data involved breaking down each article collected on both athletes into its smallest parts before rebuilding it into

a major pattern or theme. In essence, the data collected was broken down in terms of what was reported about each athlete into its smallest constituent parts and then followed by deciding where each part should be. In the theme of performance narrative, the researcher went through the transcript several times and assigned codes to all reported accounts of records broken by both athletes. During this phase of the analysis, the researcher produced the initial codes, followed by organizing the relevant data into more meaning categories and grouped many of them together to create a shorter list of categories.

The third step consisted of searching the coded data for emerging themes (patterns). The third stage of the data analysis began once all the data were coded and collated. During this phase of the analysis, all collated coded data were place into potential themes and sub-themes, followed by gathering together all the data relevant to each further potential theme. Themes and sub-themes were inductively developed into a rich dataset, which in turn addressed the research questions. For instance, in the life long involvement theme all the coded data that involved both athletes accounts of their early sporting experience was grouped together into similar or compatible groups (i.e., time away or return to sport). During this phase, the researcher grouped all the early sporting experience accounts into a broader theme, while referring back to the transcript to clarify exactly what was reported about both athletes. This initial theme represented something important or interesting about the data in relation to both athletes early sporting experience in terms of their involvement in sports. Coincidentally, the focus of this stage was on sorting the different codes into potential themes and collating all coded data within the identified themes. The fourth stage involved reviewing and refining the

themes, in terms of checking to determine what themes and sub-themes worked in relation to the coded extracts and against the entire data set. For example, in this phase of the analysis the researcher examined all the potential themes to determine whether the themes had sufficient data and if they were sufficiently similar. Within the theme of decline narratives, it was observed that the initial theme appeared to be split into two. After a thorough inspection by a sports researcher (i.e., supervisor), some of the themes eventually proved to form one larger theme. Once the fourth step was accomplished, the coded data were then developed into a thematic map, whereby the researcher then considered if this “accurately” reflected the meanings evident in the data set as a whole.

The fifth stage of the analysis involved the researcher defining and re-naming the themes and sub-themes, in terms of continuing the analysis to refine the specifics of each theme. The fifth stage of the data analysis began once the thematic map of the data was satisfactory to the researcher and consultant (i.e., supervisor). For instance, during this stage of the analysis the researcher worked closely with the consultant in identifying the “names” or title that captured the core of what each theme was about. Each theme (i.e., life-long involvement, performance and decline) chosen or defined by the researcher and the consultant reflected key features that are of interest in terms of how the both athletes were presented within the media narratives. At this stage the researcher identified what each theme was about (overall themes) and also determined what aspect of the data each theme and sub-theme captured. The fifth phase of the analysis was a continuous process until each theme and sub-theme was clear, coherent and convincing. But at the same time, this continuous process enabled the researcher to generate an overall story in terms of the data collected on these masters athletes in relations to participating in sports.

During this stage the researcher strictly identified and described each theme and sub-theme, giving each one an appropriate name.

The sixth and final stage of the analysis involved producing the report; this was considered as the final opportunity for analysis. This stage began once the researcher had a set of fully worked-out themes and sub-themes, and also involved the final analysis and write-up of the report and findings. This stage of the analysis was where compelling examples were selected and related backed to the research questions and relevant literature on masters athletes. It was important that the analysis and the write up provided a concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive, and interesting account of the story of the data within and across themes. In other words, the researcher returned to the data and then considered the observed themes and sub-themes in relation to the literature on masters athletes and their involvement in sports in later life. All levels of the analysis were initially performed by the researcher, who then consulted with the study's second author (a sport media and cultural studies researcher) as categories, themes, and sub-themes were refined during the whole data analysis phase. It should be noted that other scholars have successfully utilized this approach in relation to media data (see Battochio et al., 2013; McGannon et al., 2012b; Schinke et al., 2012a).

In line with the practices of thematic analysis, I maintained an audit trail (i.e., logbook) to aide with the data analysis and coding of themes. The logbook approach was employed by the researcher to acknowledge and document initial reflections in terms of potential findings and implications of the study. These segment of notes consisted of the initial impressions of the data as it related to the generation of themes. Before the data collections process, I began by writing shorts notes, or memos in terms of getting down

initial ideas and thoughts in my logbook. Writing down those notes or journals enabled me to discover new and emergent ideas that were not evident at the start of the project. Coincidentally, the process of writing down and taking notes proved to stimulate more and new ideas and thoughts as the project progressed. Although there were many benefits of taking down notes regarding my initial thoughts, before the start of this project, I did not value the extent to which taking down notes and reflecting had on the overall experience of a researcher. The logbook approach led to new opening or insights, which in turn had a profound influence on my growth as a qualitative researcher. For example, some of these observed insights included how the selected athletes were depicted in the various media sources (i.e., highly profiled) and also how they were depicted in terms of decline in performance. These new insights, or openings revealed information about my thinking process pertaining to the athletes, data collected and themes and sub-themes that were developed throughout the analysis phase. For instance, while transcribing the data, I noticed that the athletes' involvement in sports was positioned in relations to being "extraordinary" or "unusually remarkable". In a general sense, this new opening enabled me to better understand how unique these selected athletes were compared to their novice counterparts in terms of the media's representation of their performance in later life.

## CHAPTER FOUR: Results

The results are presented within the context of masters athletes' involvement in sports in later life as portrayed by several media sources (i.e., Runner's World and Lexis-Nexis database). To show the media representations of both athletes in terms of their involvement in sports in later life, the results are presented around three central and multilayered themes (a) life-long involvement in sports, (b) performance narratives, and (c) decline narratives. The presentation of the themes reflected the media's construction of what narratives were used to portray the athletes and how media narratives were used to generate meanings around aging, sports and the performing aging body. By presenting the results under these central themes, the researcher was able to examine how the multilayered media narratives were connected to the higher order themes and sub-themes. Which in turn provided access to understanding how both athletes performance in later life was presented to the boarder public. Within the first central theme, three higher order themes emerged: earlier sporting experience (one sub-theme: time away from racing), triumphant return (two sub-theme: return to competitive racing and return in midlife), and uninterrupted engagement (two sub-themes: regular competition and competing regularly at major events). Within the second central theme, four higher order themes were identified: serious contenders (two sub-themes: accomplishments and supernatural), reasoning for performance (three sub-themes: physical fitness, engaging in meaningful activities and sense of achievement), systematic training (two sub-themes: daily training routine and training regime), and individualized approach (three sub-themes: secrets to success, advice on running and achieving goals). Within the final central theme, there were three higher order themes: resistance to declines in old age (three sub-themes:

deconstructs the negative notions about aging, underestimated and too extreme), sports related injuries (two sub-themes: recovery, injury prevention and fear of injury), and maintenance of performance (four sub-themes: staying on top, adapting to changes due to age and decline, age effects on performance and fear of inability).

### **Theme 1: Life-long Involvement in Sports**

Lifelong involvement in sports refers to the continuous involvement in sports beyond one's peak performance, or at some time later in their life, start or resume training on a daily basis and competing at major events. The media narratives used in relation to lifelong involvement in sports consisted of earlier sporting experience, triumphant return and uninterrupted engagement.

**Earlier sporting experience.** Within the central theme of life-long involvement in sports was the higher order theme of *earlier sporting experience* and this included the sub-theme of (a) time away from racing. The earlier sporting experience theme emerged from the various media narratives as both athletes' early experiences in sports and it also involved their time away from the competitive racing scene. The sub-theme of "time away from racing" was in regards to the break the athletes took within the context of their previous involvement in sports.

Earlier sporting experience was the point in time or space at which both athletes began their journey in relation to their involvement in sports in later life. In addition, early involvement in sports represented a particular point in time or circumstance, which in turn lead to an opening for a course of action (i.e., involvement in sports). It was found that for both masters athletes, their involvement in sports began earlier in their life course. Although these athletes acknowledged that their involvement and training began

at an earlier age, it was not until middle life that their involvement in sports became a deliberate practice. For example, Ed Whitlock began running seriously when he was a boy and at the university of London where he was captain of his track team. The earlier sporting experience of the Ed was further highlighted in the 2010 issue of *Runner's World* as: "Whitlock has been at this a long time, he started out as a middle-distance runner when he was in school, where he says he had a fair amount of success" (Falcone, 2010, p. 22). The athletes reported that they had participated in sports throughout their childhood and early adulthood lives but their careers had a stop and go pattern. In that, their earlier involvement in sports was characterized as "successful", but it was also seen as "not serious leisure pursuits" or involvement rather than a deliberate practice. They described their participation as enjoyable, playful and engaging, but could nonetheless have contributed to their development of expertise or future careers.

In the case of Jeanne Daprano, she had been active all of her life, although she did not get into a regular and serious running regimen until around the age of 45. In the case of Daprano, the various media representations depicted her involvement in masters athletics as starting late or a "late bloomer", in terms of her talents or capabilities developed later on in life. For example, Daprano's late involvement in masters athletics was further highlighted in an issue of the *New York Times* as: "Daprano grew up on a farm and jogged in the sand to keep fit but did not enter a masters track meet until her late 40's" (Bernstein, 2012, p. 6). The early involvement in sports by the selected masters athletes was positioned as a physical activity outlet. For both Ed Whitlock and Jeanne Daprano participating in these activities during the earlier years (i.e., before middle life) was seen as an advantage or edge to managing their physical health through their

involvement in a wide selection of activities. But at the same, this head start proved more beneficial as the athletes aged in terms of their return to racing competitively. Therefore, the earlier sporting experience of the selected masters athletes were seen as contributing to both physical and psychological development, which in turn had a positive impact on their involvement in later life.

**Triumphant return.** Within the various media narrative, *triumphant return* or a return to the competitive racing scene was presented as a return in middle life or midlife. In other words, the sub-theme of (a) return to competitive racing (b) return in midlife represented the athletes' return to competing after their time away from their sport of choice or previous sporting experience. Triumphant return was the period or point in time where the selected masters athletes decided to begin or return to racing after a long interruption. The triumphant return involved how the athletes were positioned in relation to their return to the competitive racing scene and reasons for their break or time away from racing. Both masters athletes return to the competitive racing scene was depicted as triumphant in terms of how they managed to navigate through various issues in their lives in order to make a triumphant return to their sport of choice or involvement in sports in later life. For both athletes, their return to the competitive racing scene was permitted by several factors in their lives (i.e., retirement or health reasons). For instance, in the case of Jeanne Daprano her return to the competitive racing scene was presented in an issue of the Atlanta Journal Constitution as: "It wasn't until she was in her 40s that she decided to get back in shape and took up running" (Hewitt, 2012, p. 7). In the case of Daprano, getting back in shape or being physically fit was the catalyst to her triumphant return to the competitive racing scene. The media representation of Daprano in terms of her return

to racing later life was positioned in relation to her desire to stay healthy and physically fit. In turn, this desire permitted her continuous engagement and return to sports (i.e., running) in her 40's or middle life.

A similar pattern was recognized across the life span for the selected athletes in terms of their triumphant return. Although both Ed Whitlock and Jeanne Daprano were portrayed as not participating in sports for a period of time, they were also positioned as resuming or becoming involved again in sports at some time in their lives. For both athletes, it was after the age of 40 (i.e., middle life), due to various opportunities in their lives returned to racing competitively. For example, Ed Whitlock stopped running in 1952 when he moved to Canada to pursue a career. Accordingly, Ed Whitlock's time away from the racing scene was presented in an issue of *Runner's World* magazine as:

At the age of 21 his mining engineering degree led him to northern Ontario, Canada. There was no racing scene up there and with my running the way it was there was no way I was going to be a pioneer (Douglas, 2012, p. 17).

In the case of Whitlock, there was no support (i.e., resources) in terms of his running career when he moved to Canada in 1952. Hence, why his running career involved a stop and continue pattern; however, once he retired that later changed.

The triumphant return to competitive racing by these athletes can be characterized as a re-socialization into the competitive racing scene after a time away. In turn, this re-socialization was portrayed as a deliberate practice with the primary goal of being committed to participating in sports and improving their performance over time. This deliberate practice required a high amount of concentration and was not inherently enjoyable but had to be carried out over time. Interestingly, "Daprano didn't get into

competitive running until age 45 and didn't get serious about it until after turning 50. Daprano's best mile (5:29.39) was recorded during 1987 at age 50" (Tymn, 2013, p. 10). Coincidentally, the return to the competitive masters scene and running became "concrete" or given a high priority once again, when both athletes retired from their former professions. In the case of Ed Whitlock, retirement represented a period of relative freedom and independence in terms of employment or house chores, which in turn influenced his triumphant return to racing. For instance, retirement for Ed Whitlock was further illustrated in the 2012 issue of *Runner's world*:

After moving to Canada, he did not run for another 20 years later. His commitment to running became full-fledge again when he retired, with ample time on his hands and less than exemplary patience for household chores, he decided to resume training but this time with a vengeance (Douglas, 2012, p. 16).

Hence, both masters athletes triumphant return to the competitive racing scene was permitted with the availability of time that was earlier consumed by work and life in general. In essence, both athletes were positioned as having fewer or no burdens or obligations during the retirement phase of their lives, which in turn provided them with the opportunity to return to the competitive racing scene. Furthermore, retirement was presented in the various media narratives along a continuum, in terms of the closing of one chapter (i.e., working careers) and the opening of another (i.e., sporting career).

**Uninterrupted engagement.** Uninterrupted engagement refers to the prolonged and continuous engagement and involvement in sports without any interruption or cessation after the triumphant return to the competitive racing scene. Emerging from the theme of *uninterrupted engagement* in sports, there were two sub-themes identified and

they involved (a) regular competition against others and (b) competing regularly at major events. The sub-themes emerged in the media narratives after the athlete's triumphant return to their sports in terms of continuously competing against others at events and for an extended period of time. The uninterrupted engagement in sports by both Ed Whitlock and Jeanne Daprano was positioned in the various media narratives as a continuous engagement process in later life. For both masters athletes, regular competition against others was identified as a pathway for their uninterrupted involvement in sports in later life. For instance, Ed Whitlock was depicted in the various media narratives as highly competitive and disciplined in relation to his involvement in later life. Ed's uninterrupted involvement in sports was further highlighted in the following quotations in an issue of the Toronto Star:

Because of the discipline he's developed over 30 years of competitive racing.

Whitlock's competitive instincts are in check. I'm really a competitive person in reality, but I enjoy having a race. I want to do as well as I can do. I don't want to be disgraced (Young, 2003, p. 07).

In the case of Whitlock, his involvement in sports was positioned as using others athletes' as comparison in order to achieve his goals (i.e., win) and compete against the best of the best. Also, the involvement of Whitlock in later life was depicted as participating in sports simply because he is competitive and his only goal was to go out there and put in the time. The training time were seen as necessary in order for him to keep his racing times "competitive".

Both Ed and Jeanne acknowledged that regular competition against others had an effect on their continuous involvement in sports in later life. Racing regularly against

others meant that competition against others provided a consistent measure for their performance. In a general sense, competition in its many aspects fostered the active involvement or engagement in sports by these athletes. Both athletes were positioned as having been involved in competitive sport throughout their lives; more specifically were continuously involved and competing against others in their sport (i.e., running) for a long period of time. In addition, the selected masters athletes involvement in sports was positioned in the various media narratives in two different ways. On one side, Whitlock involvement in sports in later life was positioned as very competitive (i.e., performance/ outcome), while Jeanne was depicted as less competitive, intrinsically motivated and self directed (i.e., performance/ process). In the media representations of Daprano, her involvement was portrayed as self directed in the sense that she picked up running later in life, prompted by a mid-life crisis (i.e., not gaining weight). In other words, both athletes remained continuously engaged in sports in later life for two very different reasons. For example, Jeanne Daprano was quoted in an issue of the Atlanta Journal saying: “Running should just enhance your life, not become an obsession, she said, Run for pleasure, not to get caught up in competition. There is no competition between us, just lots of fun, plus its healthy” (Hiskey, 2000, p. 11).

Competing regularly at major events was also positioned in the media narratives to have influenced the involvement of the masters athletes in sports. This notion of competing regularly at major events meant, that for the athletes, if you compete regularly you would meet and compete against many of the same people at each game or race. Also, this uninterrupted engagement in sports (i.e., running) by both Ed Whitlock and Jeanne Daprano was presented as a pathway for the athletes to sharpen their skills,

practice and re-engage with the process of being involved in sports. Accordingly, Ed Whitlock's re-engagement to running was portrayed by Scott Douglas in an issue of *Runner's World* magazine as:

I thought I might as well do some jogging around the track. This was quite a sight, because old men of 40 didn't run in those days. I kept showing up and jogging around and ended up racing again because of that. It just kind of happened (Douglas, 2010, p. 9).

For both Ed Whitlock and Jeanne Daprano competing regularly against others and at major events was depicted in the various media narratives as a platform for an uninterrupted engagement in terms of the athletes' involvement in sports in later life. In order for the athletes to be successful in terms of being continuously involved in sports, it was imperative that both Ed Whitlock and Jeanne Daprano maintained a prolonged and undisturbed engagement in that activity (i.e., running). In other words, this uninterrupted engagement in sports by the selected masters athletes can be seen as a more structured approach to competition, as it provided the athletes with the opportunity to pursue a level of excellence within a particular sporting activity (i.e., running).

## **Theme 2: Performance Narratives**

The theme performance narrative refers to the presentation or manner in which both athletes physical performance was presented in the various media narratives including any accomplishments, act, feat, and approach to participating in sports in later life. The narratives used in terms of performance included; (a) serious contenders, (b) reasoning for performance, (c) systematic training and (d) individualized approach.

**Serious contenders.** Within the theme of performance narratives were *serious contenders* and it consisted of two sub-themes; (a) accomplishments and (b) supernatural. The sub-themes were in relation to the various media portrayal of the numerous records broken and unique or supernatural abilities of the selected masters athletes. Both Ed Whitlock and Jeanne Daprano were presented in the various media narratives as serious contenders in terms of training and competing in sporting events available to older adults.

Serious contenders meant to be involved, committed, or displaying strong attachment towards a plan of action (e.g., involvement in sports). Both Ed Whitlock and Jeanne Daprano were positioned as willing to give up their time and energy to something they believed in (i.e., running). The various media accounts of both athletes were used as an opportunity to display and showcase the athletes' numerous records, achievements and supernatural or unique abilities. The numerous achievements by Ed Whitlock was further illustrated in a 2012 issue of Runner's World magazine by Amby Burfoot:

Whitlock set his 19<sup>th</sup> billion world age-group record this morning in the Toronto, Marathon. Ed Whitlock ran a 2:54 marathon six years ago at age 73, without a lick of strength training and very little training (Burfoot, 2012, p. 4).

In a broader sense, Whitlock was positioned in the various media narratives as supernatural in terms of his performance being effortless or showing little effort as he aged. Furthermore, Whitlock's effortless performance was further supported in the writing of Burfoot (2012):

His time puts him somewhere in the top nine percent of marathoners, which is impressive, he ran a sub 3:30 at age 81. An accomplishment that could be

considered as significant as Roger Bannister's breaking of the four-minute mile in 1954 (Burfoot, 2012, p. 4).

The performance of both athletes in terms of competition was presented as exceeding the ordinary (i.e., supernatural) and seemingly effortless in their endeavors (i.e., running) in later life. Furthermore, the media portrayal of both athletes was appropriate in the sense that it provided and focused not only on personal issues, but also on the athletes' sporting achievements and performance in later life. For instance, the media accounts of Jeanne Daprano's performances were related to words or references ascribed to youths and not the elderly. These references was further illustrated in a 2012 article by Dawn Hewitt:

Daprano is lean and strong and holds numerous world records four in-door running events in the age of 70 to 74 categories. Now that she is 75, she's in a different class. She smashed the previous world record for the 1mile on an indoor track. She is the first woman to ever break 8 minutes in the age 75-category (Hewitt, 2012, p. 7).

In addition, the media narratives positioned both athletes as being extraordinary and unique compared to the average older adult or their sedentary counterparts. Interestingly, the selected masters athletes were also compared to young athletes in terms of being able to perform at the same level and in the same activities (i.e., running). For example, Daprano's extraordinary abilities was further illustrated in the following quotations by Mike Tymn in the 2007 issue of *Runner's World* magazine as:

If you put all the girls from most high school on a track and ask them to run a mile as fast as possible, the odds are that, expect for the few competitive distance

runner, you wont find more than 2 or 3 that can run the mile under seven minutes (Tymn, 2007, p. 15).

In the above quote, the performance of Jeanne Daprano in later life was comparable or matched to that of high school students and youths. Hence, her performance was depicted as identical to younger athletes who were at their highest peak performance level.

Although, after a few decade of not seriously participating in any major sport, both athletes were portrayed as contenders in terms of having raw natural talent, but were slightly hindered by their earlier absent from the sport (i.e., running). However, in the various media representations both athletes were able to overcome previous challenges in their lives (i.e., careers & family responsibilities) and achieved their potential and even beyond (e.g., numerous records broken) in their sport of choice.

Also, both Ed Whitlock and Jeanne Daprano were positioned as able to maintain certain level of performance relative to the best in the world in terms of their sport (i.e., running). Due to their commitment to racing and competing, the athletes were portrayed as being able to maintain and continue to improve their skills over time, as opposed to the conventional views of decline in performance in old age. A similar pattern was also observed in the 2011 issue of Runner's World magazine in terms of how Whitlock performance was depicted:

Ed and company ventured time and again beyond the limits of human capacity. Digitized wizards and magic rings could not match them. To achieve what they do, they need supreme inherited talent, but also dedicated training, skillful race tactics and a lot of guts (Robinson, 2011, p. 4).

In the case of Whitlock, his performance was positioned as effortless, it seemed that his performance just happened over time with little or no effort. The quotations above illustrated how both athletes were positioned in the various media narratives in relation to the notion of being supreme, supernatural or extraordinary athletes. Furthermore, it can be suggested that the media narratives in relation to both athletes as serious contenders represented the media's efforts to recognize their various contributions, achievements and supernatural abilities of masters athletes in later life.

**Reasoning for performance.** The theme reasoning for performance refers to the media's representations of both athlete's explanations or justifications and rational with regard to their involvement in sports (i.e., running) in later life. Within the higher order theme of *reasoning for performance* were three sub-themes: (a) physical fitness, (b) engaging in meaningful activities, and (c) sense of achievement. The sub-themes represented the media narratives used in relations to why these athletes choose to participate in sports in later life. Emerging from the sub-themes were the motivations of the athletes to participate in sports in later life. Reasoning for performance included both Ed Whitlock and Jeanne Daprano's motives, basis and purpose for their involvement in sports (i.e., running) in later life, as presented within the various media narratives. The athletes' performance in later life were depicted in the various media narratives as motivated by physical fitness, engaging in meaningful activities and having a sense of achievement. The selected masters athletes were motivated to participate in sports for a variety of reasons, physical fitness was identified as a factor that influenced their involvement in sports in later life. For instance, older adults participating in sports and physical activity in later life typically engage in such activities because of the perceived

benefits associated to their participation (i.e., physical fitness, better health; Baker et al., 2010). But at the same time, the reasoning for Whitlock's performance was in relations to age grading tables:

Whitlock say's age grading tables are a great motivator. His main interest in them is to see if he is going downhill faster than the tables say he should, or to see if he can beat the age grading tables (Douglas, 2010, p. 10).

Also, both Ed Whitlock and Jeanne Daprano were positioned in the media narratives as getting physically fit in order to improve their competitive personal best performances and training times necessary to be competitive. The need or motivation to maintain physical fitness in later life by both athletes can be characterized by the identified behavioural regulation. Both athletes were presented as engaging in sports in later life because of the importance they ascribed to their involvement in sports. In the case of Daprano, the 2012 New York Times article by Aaron Bernstein further highlighted her rational in terms of her involvement in sports:

I don't do it for longevity alone, I do it to be the best at being alive right now.

Though pleased with her performances, she insisted that the only record I want is to be in the book of life for eternity (Bernstein, 2012, p. 6).

In essence, Daprano attributed the reasoning for her performance in relation to being in the present and living in her body as opposed to what others or society says it should be. Furthermore, it can be suggested that there is much deeper meaning ascribed to Daprano's involvement in sports (i.e., running) that extends beyond her life. In the case of Whitlock, his reasoning for performance was positioned as trying to beat the odds and defy some of stereotypes associated with aging in terms of decline in performance with

advancing age. Also, it could be suggested that Whitlock's motives for his participation in sports was characterized by alternative behavioral regulations (e.g., introjected regulation), due to his comparison with the age grading tables. Whitlock's engagement in sports in later life can be seen as reinforced by a sense of obligation and also a need to prove that he can maintain his performance (i.e., times) as he aged.

In addition, engaging in meaningful activities was reported as another reasoning for both athletes involvement in sports in later life. For both athletes, the involvement in sports in later life (running) was presented as an outlet for meaningful activities in later life. Engaging in meaning activities in later life was portrayed as important due to the fact that it provided both athletes with meaning and a purpose for being. In the various media representations of Ed Whitlock, running was depicted as something that was apart of his daily life and it was routinely performed. For instance, Ed's purpose for running was further illustrated in an issue of *Runner's World* by Amby Burfoot as: "I run to race, he says, I don't do it primarily for my health or anything else. Running is just something that has to be done" (Burfoot, 2003, p. 5). In the case of Ed Whitlock, engaging in meaningful activities (i.e., running) was not necessarily beneficial to his health, but rather it provided the opportunity or venue to be performed routinely and pleasure was derived from engaging in those activities.

For both Ed Whitlock and Jeanne Daprano, their involvement in sports in later life was also related to the notion of providing a sense of achievement. The selected masters athletes acknowledged setting goals and moving towards achieving those goals was important to their continuous engagement in sport and performance in later life. The

following quotation further illustrated how running was depicted for Whitlock in terms of providing a sense of achievement with regards to recognition (i.e., intrinsic reward):

Running for Whitlock gives him “a sense of achievement”, even though it may not be very important to the whole scheme of things. He is very proud of his achievements. But he feels fewer objections to winning prize money than receiving money for giving a speech, which he has been asked to do (Habib, 2001, p. 13).

In the case of Whitlock, the ability to do something (i.e., running) very well, especially after working hard at it over a period of time, provided him with a sense of accomplishment compared to making speeches or public appearances. A similar pattern was also recognized in terms of Jeanne Daprano. The various media narratives positioned the reasoning for her performance as driven by an interest and genuine pleasure to participate in her sport of choice. This was further highlighted in 2012 article by Dawn Hewitt, which depicted Daprano as being motivated by intrinsic rewards: “Not all super athletes, not all participants are super athletes like Daprano. I am not a champion at this stuff, I just want to get all the experience I can” (Hewitt, 2012, p. 7). In the case of Daprano, it was the genuine personal pleasure (i.e., personal experience gained) that was the driving force in terms of the reasoning for her performance, not external rewards.

From the various media sources it seem to be that both athletes were motivated or driven to participate in sports in later life for a variety of reasons. In the case of Ed Whitlock, the media narrative depicted his engagement in sports to be led by different goals (i.e., performance/ outcomes), while Jeanne Daprano was presented as driven by (i.e., performance/ process). The motivational orientation of both athletes in relation to

their involvement in sports in later life appeared to influence their approach to engaging in sports and physical activity. In the media representation of both athletes, it could be argued that their involvement in sports in later life was determined or directed by different sources of motivations (i.e., introjected or identified regulations). In that, the performance narrative positioned these master athletes involvement in sports as a pathway for improving their quality of life in old age and also providing them with a venue for engaging in meaningful activities in later life.

**Systematic training.** Systematic training refers to training or performing an act according to a fixed plan or system in terms of the media representations of both athletes performance in later life. The higher order theme of *systematic training* involved two sub-themes; (a) daily training routine, and (b) training regime. Within the sub-themes were the media representations of the types and forms of training regime the athletes performed in order to achieve their goals and improve upon their performance in later life. Systematic training for the masters athletes included their daily training routines and training regime before major events. Both Ed Whitlock and Jeanne Daprano were positioned as individuals engaging in a systematic training regime in pursuit of a specific competitive goal (i.e., improvement in their sport). For example, the media portrayal of Ed Whitlock's daily training routine consisted of his rigorous running routine around the graveyard. Whitlock's demanding daily regime was further highlighted in the 2010 issue of *Runner's World* magazine by Scott Douglas:

He lives two and a half blocks from the cemetery, and does all of his training there. His training consisted of daily 3 hours long runs through a cemetery. When at the height of marathon training, Whitlock does cemetery loops for 3 hours

every day, Just 3 hours a day of what he calls “plodding” or jogging (Douglas, 2010, p. 10).

In the case of Whitlock, he viewed his demanding training as a preparation in terms of getting mentally and physically ready before any big race or to run in general.

Furthermore, the systematic training of both masters athletes was portrayed as progressive and consistent with their abilities and improvements. The article by Mike Tymn in 2013 a Runner’s World issue further exemplified the notion of a systematic training regime in the selected master athletes. For example, in the case of Daprano, her rigorous training regime was further illustrated in the following quotation:

She runs three days a week. I take my training seriously. I do lots of lunges, squats and run on the grass. I run for practice on grass, not pavement. I expect my body to keep improving as I fuel it right, rest it right and do cross training (Tymn, 2013, p. 10).

The media narratives positioned Daprano’s rigorous training regime slightly different from Whitlock’s, in terms of being more structured and incorporating specific elements or exercises tailored to her abilities and body.

Additionally, these specific and targeted training regimes were positioned to prepare the masters athletes for competition and also in maintaining an active lifestyle. Both Ed Whitlock and Jeanne Daprano were positioned as well trained and spent more time training and had better health indicators. In the media narratives, having a systematic training regime was a common theme acknowledged by both athletes. For both athletes, a systematic training regime was crucial and keeping that routine was key to staying motivated and engaged in later life. The notion of keeping that routine was further

illustrated in the words of Ed Whitlock in a 2010 issue of Runner's World magazine by Scott Douglas:

The regimen day in and day out is close to unimaginable, I ask if he's some sort of a pain glutton. I do what not to do to an extreme, Whitlock says, I go out jogging. Its not fast running, just that I do it for a long time, I don't follow what typical coaches say about serious runners (Douglas, 2010, p. 11).

In the case of Whitlock, his training regime was presented as a regular pattern that occurred each day, however this extremely demanding regime was depicted as effortless or performed with little effect. Interestingly in the case of Daprano, the various media narrative further positioned her systematic training regime as a well-planned practice, which in turns provided her with an optimum development throughout their careers. For example, Jeanne's demanding training routine was further illustrated in a 2013 issue of Runner's world magazine as:

Her regimen includes three parts, core, exercise, cross training for endurance and interval running for speed. Given her lack of mileage, Daprano's endurance comes primarily from the rowing machine and the stationary bike. It's not something you will not find in any of the running books, but its works for me (Tymn, 2013, p. 9).

In regards to Daprano, the various forms of training she performed were presented as an outlet for her in terms of making up for her lack of millage (i.e., absent for sport). In turn, by focusing instead on different types of training, Jeanne was as able to make up for her lack of endurance as oppose to focusing on speed related training. Within the various

media representations, a systematic training regime was presented as essential for both athletes compliance in terms of following and maintaining a healthy lifestyle in later life.

**Individualized approach.** The higher order theme of individualized approach refers to the media representations with regards to the personal choices or adjustments made by both athletes in relation to their involvement in sports in later life. These personal choices or modification were chosen or made to fit the special needs of that particular athlete (i.e., one of a kind approach). Within the final higher order theme of performance narratives was *individualized approach* and this consisted of three sub-themes; (a) secrets to success, (b) advice on running, and (c) achieving goals. The sub-themes represented the various personal changes made by both athletes in terms of their approach or style with regards to participating and competing in later life. In the media representations, an individualized approach was presented as the different modifications both athletes made in relation to their approach to participating in sports (e.g., running). For both Ed Whitlock and Jeanne Daprano, the media narratives used to describe their individualized approach involved their secrets to success, advice on running, and achieving their goals. The athletes were positioned as modifying various activities to suit their wishes or needs, due to the large variation in physical functions among these athletes. In a general sense, an individualized approach meant that everybody had to find what worked out for him or her, within the context of participating in sports in later life. For example, in the case of Ed Whitlock, his individualized approach to running was further illustrated in an issue of The Windsor Star by Jill Barker:

Whitlock says that he thinks good genes and dogged determination are the secrets to his success. Whitlock says he trains by putting in daily runs and he doesn't time

the runs. He just puts one foot in front of the other at a comfortable pace (Barker, 2011, p. 6).

In the case of Whitlock, the various media narratives associated his success in masters sports (i.e., running) to having good genes. However, Whitlock attributed his success in terms of his performance to being persistent and striving to improve upon his performance as he aged. The performance or involvement of both Ed Whitlock and Jeanne Daprano was portrayed as being dependent on the health, capacity, experience, and expectations of the individual masters athlete. The individualized approach narrative was a common theme in the various media sources in terms of both athletes secret to their success in masters athletics. For example, in terms of Daprano, the secret to her success in masters athletics was further highlighted in a 2005 article in the Atlanta Journal Constitution as:

Feel good about yourself. You are what you think you are. If I sound cocky, I am. I don't believe in good or bad genes. You have a lot of good genes. If you can commit you can be healthy, unless you've been dealt a real bad hand (Atlanta Journal Constitution, 2005, p. 2).

In the case of Daprano, having good genes alone did not represent being healthy; however, adopting a healthy lifestyle or feeling good about one's self was more a important indicator of aging well. Therefore, in order for the athletes to be successful in their involvement in sport, an individualized approach or personalized training regime was needed. In the various media narratives, this individualized or personalized training regime was adjusted for each athlete's personal goals, fitness level and capabilities.

In addition, a second branch of an individualized approach to participating in sports consisted of both masters athletes achieving their goals. For both athletes, being a masters athlete was presented to involve setting goals and achieving those goals. The goals set by both athletes were portrayed as specific, measurable, and achievable. In the case of Ed Whitlock, he was positioned as being single minded and focused on a specific goal at a given time. Ed's single mindedness was further highlighted in a 2010 issue of *Runner's World* magazine as:

If you have two objectives, your mind gets confused. Stick to one goal, such as running a certain time. He realized in his late 60s that this silly objective of being the first person over 70 to get under 3 hours in the marathon was just sitting there waiting for someone (Douglas, 2010, p. 10).

For both Ed Whitlock and Jeanne Daprano, the goals they set for themselves were based on a desire to master a particular skill or task (i.e., break a record). But at the same time, seeing this achievement enabled these athletes to be able to achieve higher and more difficult goals. For instance, Daprano was quoted in the 2000 issue of the Atlanta journal highlighting some of the goals older female athletes set for themselves. In that article by Michelle Hiskey, Daprano was quoted saying:

Women in their 60's are the biggest group at track meets, she says. As women get through menopause, they get more focused. They set goals for themselves, I see women giving it their all out here. Running can be a wellness program that just makes them come alive (Hiskey, 2000, p.12).

Although, everybody had to find what worked out for him or her, an individualized approach was acknowledged as important to the athlete's involvement in sports in later

life. In a broader sense, this meant that what the athlete did in terms of their running reflected on each of the athlete's current level of physical fitness, experiences in the chosen sport and their motivation for competing.

### **Theme 3: Decline Narratives**

The decline narrative refers to the notions that as people age, some of their abilities begin to decline or gradually deteriorate. It represents a period or time when something approaches an end. The media narratives used in terms of decline as it relates to masters athletes involved: (a) resistance to declines in old age, (b) sports related injuries, and (c) maintenance of performance in old age.

**Resistance to declines in old age.** Resistance to declines in old age refers to the ability not to be affected by something, especially adversely in terms of the athletes' performance in later life. In the decline narratives theme, the higher order theme of *resistance to decline in old age* consisted of three sub-themes; (a) deconstructs the negative notions about aging, (b) underestimated and defies many stereotypes of aging, and (c) too extreme. These sub-themes were related to the notions that through the involvement in sports in later life some of the declines associated with aging can be avoided or postponed.

Both athletes were depicted in the media sources as resisting some of the physical decline associated with the aging process through their involvement in sports. In terms of resistance to declines in old age, the media representations of both athletes involvement in sports involved deconstructing many negative notions about aging, with regards to being underestimated and defying many stereotypes. However, on the other hand, both athletes involvement in sports was also depicted as "too extreme". The selected masters

athletes involvement in sports in later life were positioned as positive, which in turn provided an alternative way to view the aging process. The notion of deconstructing the negative notions in relation to the aging process was further illustrated by the quotations in the 2011 issue of *The Windsor Star* as:

Whitlock's accomplishments are indeed unique. He is one of a handful of older exercisers who are rewriting the book on theories of aging and exercise. Ed is special in the sense that he is still able to train this way at a much advance age than most (Barker, 2011, p. 18).

In the case of Whitlock, his involvement in sports in later life was depicted as being highly active and special in terms of continuously training and competing well into old age. Both Ed Whitlock and Jeanne Daprano's involvement in sports was portrayed as resisting some of the negative depictions associated with aging through their continuous engagement in their sport (i.e., running). For instance, the performance of these athletes in late life was seen as shattering some of the decline narratives associated with the aging process. Daprano was quoted by Jenn Hildreth in the 2000 issue of the *Atlanta Journal* in relation to shattering many stereotypes associated with aging: "With the right training, these over 40, or masters, runners are finding that they are not merely getting older. They're getting faster and often enjoying the sport now more than ever" (Hildreth, 2000, p. 16). In a broader sense, the involvement of these athletes in sports or a physically active lifestyle in later life was presented as challenging what aging "successfully" means in terms of physical abilities over time.

In addition, the media portrayal of both athletes positioned them as being underestimated and defying many stereotypes associated with aging. In the case of Ed,

his performance was presented in the various media sources as underestimated in later life. The media representation of Ed as underestimated in the various media sources, was further illustrated in the article by 2011 Jill Barker:

Whitlock undoubtedly prove that some old people can take on tasks of physical stamina once thought risky for 20-year-olds. Ed is a sobering reminder that we are not all created equal. His running exploits seem to be call to re-evaluate our basic assumptions about ageing and performance (Barker, 2011, p. 17).

Both athletes were depicted as defying many of the stereotypes that old age is accompanied by a less competitive lifestyle. Interestingly, these athletes were positioned as role model or serve as model for others and future masters athletes. For example, the media's portrayal of Jeanne Daprano to other older adults was further illustrated in her words in the article by Jenn Hildreth: "They just want it to be like a demonstration that old people can still run and have good form and have good times and still be competitive sprinters, so to speak (Hildreth, 2000, p. 14).

For both athletes involvement in sports in later life was depicted as a pathway for what successful aging or positive aging should represent. Despite being portrayed as aging successfully, the athlete's involvement was also constructed by the various media representations to be "too extreme". This notion suggest that these athletes are pushing themselves harder than ever, bridging the thin line between daredevil and death or even disability to the forefront. Both athletes involvement in sports in later life was presented as "too extreme", due to the fact that at advanced age or old age these athletes continue to push themselves. The notion of pushing one's self too far was further illustrated in the 2010 issue of Runner's World magazine: "Ed Whitlock is pushing the limits. The

grounds crew at the cemetery could be excused for thinking that, if Whitlock's not careful, he'll soon be joining the cemetery's residents" (Douglas, 2010, p.11). Though, both athletes involvement in sports illustrated that they are resisting some of the decline in old age, it was also seen as too extreme in the sense that their accomplishments could be unattainable at their age.

**Sport related injuries.** The higher order theme of sports related injuries refers to the media representations of any physical damage or harm that occurred (i.e., chronic or acute) in athletic activities by the both athletes with regards to participating in sports in later life. Within the higher order theme of *sports related injuries* were the sub-themes; (a) setbacks and recovery, (b) injury prevention, and (c) fear of injury. These sub-themes represented the media representations in relation to the impact of injuries to the lives of older athletes in terms of their involvement in sports. In the media sources, sports related injuries refers to any damage or harm done to or suffered by a person or thing in relation to participation in sports in later life. The media narratives used in relation to sports related injuries involved setbacks and recovery due to an injury, and injury prevention and fear of injury. Although, there were few incidences of injuries reported by both athletes in the various media sources. However, acute and overuse injuries commonly occurred with much greater frequency among masters athletes (Baker et al., 2010a). In addition, it was acknowledged that master athletes were more likely to experience injury and it took longer to rehabilitate than in younger athletes. For example, this brings us to the topic of injuries, which Whitlock has suffered from time to time. The 2011 article by Jill Barker further illustrated some of the sports related injuries encountered by Whitlock saying: "He has an Achilles tendon that acts up on occasion, as well as knees that have

disrupted his training on and off during the past few years” (Barker, 2011, p.16). In other words, the older athlete’s body takes longer to heal and recover from the stresses of a hard work out or training and injuries. Also, sports related injuries that resulted from the athlete’s involvement in sports in later life were positioned as setbacks but not roadblocks for both athletes. For example, the setbacks encountered by Ed Whitlock in terms of recovery was presented in the 2005 issue of Runner’s World magazine saying:

As the body ages, it progressively loses its ability to regenerate damaged cells.

The result is a loss of muscles mass, decreased cardiovascular endurance, joint stiffness, ligament fragility and a high susceptibility to injury. Put simply, the

elderly don’t get up nearly as quickly when they fall down (Bloom, 2005, p. 4).

In essence, sports related injuries could sometimes lead to long-lasting damage, so it was important that the athletes exercise safely and reduce the risk for future injuries. Despite the various injuries, both athletes were depicted as being able to bounce back and were resilient enough to handle those setbacks.

Additionally, injury prevention and fear of injury were acknowledged as a pathway to the narratives of decline. The involvement of masters athletes in sports in later life provided many benefits as well as physical and health related challenges. For instance, some of the health challenges experienced by Whitlock with regards to his involvement in sports was further highlighted in the 2012 issue of Runner’s World. This article was in regards to some of the sports related injuries encountered by Ed, in which he was depicted as:

Although he finds running fulfilling, he’s dogged with injuries to his joints and ligaments. Most of the decreases in performance are related to diminished aerobic

power, but its also likely that a decrease in join mobility, reaction time, muscle mass, strength, and a longer time for recovery contributes to the slowing down of aging runners (Douglas, 2012, p.7).

The media narratives positioned injury prevention and fear of injury as a critical factor in protecting the health of both masters athletes and also preventing further injuries. At the same time, both athletes acknowledged specific changes in their training routines to prevent sports related injuries. In the case of Jeanne Daprano, she acknowledged changing and adjusting her style of training in order to avoid injuries and remain active in later life. In the media representations of Daprano, her injury prevention strategy was further highlighted in the 2013 issue of Runner's World: "She does Pilates twice a week and various running routines in deep water with cuffs on the ankles and wrists. She believes these strengthening exercises have helped me avoid injuries over the past 5 years" (Tymn, 2013, p.6). Despite, the many positive experience obtained by masters athletes through their involvement in sports, some negative consequences to continued training and performing still remains. In a broader sense, in order for the athletes to be successful in terms of performing at a higher level in later life, they had to be "in tune" with their bodies. Hence, both Ed Whitlock and Jeanne Daprano were portrayed as continuously monitoring their bodies and performance and also adapting as problems or sports related injuries aroused over time.

**Maintenance of performance in old age.** The theme maintenance of performance in old age meant keeping or supporting both athletes performance at a higher level in later life. Within the higher order theme of *maintenance of performance in old age* were four sub-themes; (a) staying on top, (b) adapting to changes due to age and

decline, (c) age effects on performance, and (d) fear of inability. The sub-themes were identified in relation to the media portrayal of how both athletes were able to preserve and maintain their performance and abilities over a long period of time. Maintenance of performance in old age refers to the process of preserving a condition (i.e., performance) or keeping something in a good condition over a period of time. Both selected masters athletes were portrayed in the various media narratives as maintaining their performance in later life by staying on top (i.e., representing the best). For example, the 2011 article by Jill Baker further illustrated the strategy employed by Whitlock in maintaining his performance over time, Baker was quoted: “Whitlock’s seeming ability to defy the decline in performance inherent in aging, its that he continues to increases his workload. I don’t think you ever really stop the slide, he says. You can’t do that” (Baker, 2011, p. 12). Both athletes acknowledged that they strived to maintain or even improve upon the performance they have already achieved at younger ages. The notion of improving one’s performance over time was further illustrated in the words of Ed Whitlock in the issue of *Runner’s World*: “We all face a statute of limitations, don’t we? Something leaks out of your performance over time, and you can only do so much to hold on to it” (Burfoot, 2005, p. 3). Hence, for the athletes, staying on top represented a way for them to assess whether or not they were improving, maintaining, and losing their performance or abilities as they aged. Also, adapting to changes due to age and decline was identified as a pathway for the maintenance of performance in old age. Within the media narratives, a similar theme was reported, in terms of Ed Whitlock and Jeanne Daprano adapting to changes in late life. In the case of Daprano, adapting to the changes due to age and decline was presented as taking it slow and having patience. For Jeanne, adapting to

changes was further highlighted in the article by Dawn Hewitt of the Herald Times saying: “Masters runners can do what it takes to get faster as they age, but they need patience and more recovery time because getting there “just takes longer” (Hewitt, 2012, p. 6). In turn, the media representation of both Ed Whitlock and Jeanne Daprano was related to the notion that physiological capabilities can be maintained at a high level even in advancing age.

Additionally, both athletes were positioned as adapting to some of the age-related effects on physiological function that can be expected to reduce sports performance or participation in older athletes. These declines in physiological function for both athletes were related to how fast someone should be running based on their age and what distance is suitable for their age (i.e., age grading tables). In the case of Ed Whitlock, as he aged, he focused more on longer distance races compared to shorter distances. For example, Whitlock focus on long distance races was further illustrated in the 2011 article published by the Vancouver Sun:

Clearly, Whitlock at 80 is slower than he was in his 70s, but that’s probably the only thing about him that is typical. The loss of speed as he got older, made him decide to start longer distances instead. By participating in middle distances, Whitlock has nurtured his speed, which complements his long training runs (Barker, 2011, p.15).

The selected masters athletes were positioned as losing some of their strength and endurance at advanced ages, however this loss was at a much slower rate than their sedentary counterparts in relation the age grading tables on masters athletics. Despite these losses in performance, the athletes were portrayed as averting some of the age-

effects on performance narrative with the right type of exercises and training. Both Ed Whitlock and Jeanne Daprano acknowledged a similar pattern in terms of the types of events or activities they participated in (i.e., short distances and marathons). In the various media representations, both athletes were depicted as adjusting their performance or training to suit their current abilities or strengths (i.e., speed or endurance). The notion of adjusting one's training approach was further highlighted in an issue of *Runner's World* magazine: "Recalling that she put in up to 30 miles a week in earlier years, she agrees that she might have trouble running similar quality times at longer distances now" (Tymn, 2007, p. 7). In the case of Daprano, due to the fact that she mostly participated in shorter distance events, her performance (i.e., times) in longer distance events slowly declined over time. Finally, both athletes also identified fear of inability as a factor to the maintenance of their performance in old age. For both Ed Whitlock and Jeanne Daprano, fear of inability involved specific fears such as injury or inability to perform due to age. The various media narratives portrayed fear of inability for both athletes as not living up to past achievements in advanced ages and keeping one's mind and body active in later life. The notion of fear of inability was further highlighted in the words of Ed Whitlock in an issue of *Runner's World*:

If you train the same way you did last year, all things being equal you are going to run a slower time. The only way you can hold your own is by doing more training. I will carry on running as it is keeping me alive (Douglas, 2010, p. 10).

In the case of Whitlock, fear of inability meant always challenging one's self and abilities in a demanding but stimulating manner in order to see improvements in his or her performance over time. From what is evident, both selected masters athletes were

positioned as achieving more health and fitness gains through their involvement in sports in later life than previously thought, which in turn provides a more meaningful way of viewing the aging process. In general, the media's representations of both athletes involvement in sports in later life can be seen as a strategy for fighting, monitoring, adapting to, avoiding and or accepting the aging process for those individuals who participate.

## CHAPTER FIVE: Discussion

Using media data, the purpose of this study was to obtain a better understanding of what meanings were constructed or generated in terms of masters athletes as represented in several forms of media sources. This study involved the examination of two high profiled masters athletes (i.e., Ed Whitlock and Jeanne Daprano), in regards to what narratives surrounded their involvement in sports as presented in the media's representation of their performance in later life. The media's presentation of both athletes involvement in sports in later life was then considered in relation to the various meanings constructed and generated around the aging body and sports within sports media narratives (i.e., Runner's World & additional sources; Lexis-Nexis) in terms of aging successful. In order to answer the research questions, the data then were subjected to an inductive thematic analysis (see Braun & Clarke, 2006). The discussion positions the findings in terms of extending the literature on masters athletes in relation to the aging process and the physically active body. Consequently, the discussion section below pertains to the interpretation and explanation of the findings in relation to both athletes and their involvement in sports in later life. This chapter covers the following topics; life long involvement in sports, performance narratives, and decline narratives.

### **Life-long involvement in sports**

From what is known about life-long involvement in sports, it can have a very positive influence on one's development in terms of improving and mastering physical skills. Within the context of media narratives, life long involvement in sports was recognized and depicted as involving: *earlier sporting experience, triumphant return and uninterrupted engagement*. In the various media sources, *earlier sporting experience*

represented the point in time both Ed Whitlock and Jeanne Daprano began their involvement in sports. Within the media representations of both athletes, earlier sporting experiences or journeys were depicted as beginning in the early stages of their life course (i.e., youth phase). In the earlier years, both athletes indicated that their involvement in sports came in the form of “play like” participation, with little importance on skill development and competition. But at the same time, this phase or period was seen as laying down the foundation for future skill development and their high performance in later life. It has been argued that play like involvement in sports is beneficial for developing the intrinsic motivation required during later stages of development when training becomes more structured and effortful (Baker & Cote, 2003; Baker et al., 2010a). In essence, the early engagement or involvement of these athletes during childhood involved relatively high amount of “play” in the primary sport, with low amounts of practice and competition in that sport. Coincidentally, both Ed Whitlock and Jeanne Daprano’s early involvement in sport was portrayed in the media narratives as “play-like” rather than a deliberate practice, which should be carried out over a long period of time. However, there was a decrease and or absence in their involvement in sports after a period of regular participation. In addition, investigations into physical activity involvement across the lifespan showed a trend towards peak involvement during early to mid adolescence, followed by decreasing involvement from that point forward (Baker et al., 2010a; Crocker & Faulkner, 1999). The media’s representations of both Ed Whitlock and Jeanne Daprano shed some light on the stop and continued pattern/ trend that is seen with regards to participation in physical activity or sports over the lifespan. The finding from this study advances the current literature of masters athletes in terms of providing a

platform for discussing the different choices made by both athletes in relation to continue running (or not) earlier in their life course. In terms of peak involvement in sports, it can be argued that an athlete in their prime can make three choices in terms of their continual engagement in sport (Ransdell & Wells, 1998; Reaburn & Dascombe, 2008; Spirduso et al., 2005). These choices might include; continue pursuing high performance by training and competing, retire from competition entirely and continue to compete and race but in a relaxed fashion. Through this study, a better understanding was obtained in terms of the media's representation of the choices made by both athletes, which involved their retirement entirely from competition in the earlier phase of their life course. Subsequently, both athletes returned to running recreationally and eventually training and competing in both open and masters competition at the highest available levels.

In the higher order theme of *triumphant return*, this phase was presented in the various media narratives as both athletes return to the competitive racing scene after a long interruption. In the case of Ed Whitlock, his return to the competitive racing scene was positioned as a way for him to stay at the top of his game, due the fact that he was retired from his profession (i.e., mining). But at the same time, in the media representations of Jeanne Daprano, her involvement in sports was positioned as “aging into it” or became involved in sports later in life. Previous literature furthers affirms some of the reasons why masters athletes resume or return to racing in later life. These studies suggest that, for most master athletes, participation in sport at this level is viewed as a continuation of sports involvement from earlier periods in the lifespan (Baker et al., 2010a; Dionigi, 2010; Gilleard & Higgs, 2000; Grant & Kluge, 2007). At the same time, these athletes might be experienced veterans of the sport, recreational “buffs” or just

individuals returning to a sport after many years of absence. As a result of the diversity in terms of the sporting experience reported by masters athletes, it was essential to draw attention of this highly diverse group of athletes with varying degrees of experience and abilities. Previous research have shown that many of these athletes have not participated in sport previously and have varying expectations associated with their competitive experience (Baker et al, 2010b; Dionigi, 2008; Grant, 2001; Phoenix & Smith 2011). The study of the media representations of both athletes provided the opportunity to understand these athletes as a truly diverse group of participants in terms of sport specific experiences and expectations.

For both Ed Whitlock and Jeanne Daprano, resuming racing was depicted in the media sources as negotiating many physical, social and mental factors in order to maintain their sports performance in old age. Both athletes reported either taking some time off from competition or take on a demanding job or marriage and starting a family. Once life slowed down again (i.e., retirement), the opportunity presented itself for both athletes to get back or return and their former sport. Returning to one's former sport of choice has been reported in previous research (see Baker & Cote, 2003; Baker et al., 2010a; Dionigi, 2008), especially when an individual's goal in that sport was not realized or accomplished earlier in the life course. In addition, the athletes were portrayed as managing their aging bodies by accepting their limitations and adjusting their style of play or competition. A return to one's former sport meant that both athletes needed to overcome certain factors in order for their return to or continuing sports participation and training in later life. The athlete's return to the competitive racing scene signified that if an individual was involved in or return to sports during this period, they were much more

likely to engage in any physical activity throughout the life course. Previous research suggests that the reengagement in sports during this period leads to lifelong participation in sports (Boklund & Bjorklund, 1988; Dionigi, 2010). Through the media representations, an understanding was obtained in terms of how both athletes turned the retirement phase of their life course into a fulfilling re-engagement in their sport of choice after a long interruption or absent.

Subsequent to both Ed Whitlock and Jeanne Daprano's returned to the competitive racing scene, the athletes progressed into *uninterrupted engagement* in terms of competing regularly against others and regularly at major events. The continuous engagement experienced by the athletes was presented as a prolonged engagement or involvement in sports without any interruption or cessation for a long period of time. The athletes continuously trained and competed in tournaments and against others well into their 60s, 70s, and 80s. Previous research further affirms that masters athletes physically push themselves daily, competing in masters tournaments, the Senior Sports Classics, and local tournaments (Baker et al., 2010a; Spirduso et al., 2005). The prolonged engagement in sports by both athletes in the media narratives was positioned along a continuum that showed a deliberate engagement or practice rather than deliberate play or "play like" involvement. Baker and Cote (2003) proposed that deliberate practice is not simply training of any type, but rather a minimum of 10 years engagement in deliberate practice that is the necessary condition for the attainment of expertise. The prolonged involvement in sports by both athletes was depicted as competing regularly against others and regularly at major events. Furthermore, in the media's representation the uninterrupted involvement in sports (i.e., running) by both Ed Whitlock and Jeanne Daprano was

performed with the specific goal of improving their performance over time. For both athletes, their involvement in sports in later life was depicted as performed daily, in a work like-manner, it required effort and attention, did not lead to immediate social or financial rewards and were frequently not enjoyed to perform. Within the media narratives, the athletes were presented to the broader public and readership as sports experts because their performance was superior to their sedentary counterparts in the general population. In that, this meant that both athletes had a highly specific knowledge with regards to competition in their sport (i.e., running), due to their prolong or continuous engagement in sports. This highly specific knowledge with regards to their involvement in sports was represented in the media narratives in a positive light. But at the same, this positive presentation involved the notion that both athletes did not need to accept a major decline in their performance as an inevitable feature of aging, and they were capable of conditioning their bodies through rigorous training regimens.

Furthermore, the media representations of both athletes provided a venue in terms of understanding the remarkable resilience of the human body when it was properly maintained and the role of sports in relation to aging successfully in later life. In addition, research before now has proposed that performance could be retained at older ages as long as individuals have continuously practiced across the lifespan in a particular domain of expertise and have engaged in specific practice activities that are most relevant for improving performance (Baker & Cote, 2003; Baker, Horton, Pearce, & Deakin, 2005; Dionigi, 2008). In a general sense, competing against others (e.g., major events) provided both selected masters athletes with a venue to practice their “skills” or craft,

which in turn helps develop their abilities to become successful within their sport over time, as represented in several forms of media data.

### **Performance Narratives**

Following from the central theme of lifelong involvement in sports, both athletes involvement in later life were presented within the context of their performance in later life (i.e., achievements, acts or feats). There were four higher order themes identified from the results in relation to both athletes performance in later life: *serious contenders*, *reasoning for performance*, *systematic training and individualization*. Serious contenders follows from uninterrupted engagement in sports, the athletes were portrayed in the various media sources as willing to give up their time and energy to something they believed in as it related to their involvement in sports (i.e., running). The narratives used in relation to the athletes positioned their numerous records, achievements and supernatural abilities as an outstanding physical achievement. From what has already been written, masters athletes represent the extreme end of a distribution that ranges from physical disability and dysfunction at one end, to elite athletic accomplishments at the other (Baker et al., 2010b; Dionigi, 2008; Hawkins et al., 2003; Spirduso et al., 2005; Tantrum & Hodge, 1993). Hence, it could be argued that both athletes represent an extremely small proportion of their age cohort, in contrast to the high prevalence of sedentary lifestyle and frailty in the overall aging population. In other words, this interesting cohort of older adults were situated at the completely opposite end of the functional capacity spectrum in terms of decline in performance in old age (Reaburn & Dascombe, 2008; Spirduso et al., 2005; Tanaka & Seals, 2003). Within the sports media narratives both athletes were presented as atypical compared to most sedentary adult,

who display physiological decline over their middle and older years. At the same time, the outstanding athletic accomplishments of both athletes served as a reminder that physical ability can be maintained at remarkable levels for a very long period of time in one's life. Additionally, it has been proposed that the accomplishment and abilities of master athletes "raise the ceiling" for everyone at a time where there is a transformation into our thinking about the physical limitation of older adults (Baker et al., 2005; Hawkins et al., 2003; Spirduso et al., 2005). In a sense, the media's representations of both athlete's accomplishments and stories about their aging bodies (both positive and negative) provided the audience or readership with a way through an unfamiliar world (i.e., access to the athletes world). For the athletes, being a serious contender was depicted as providing an important opportunity to be recognized and rewarded for their athletic accomplishments and unique abilities in later life. In the broader sense, the media representations of the athlete's performance attempts to encourage the continued participation in competitive sports for these athletes and the general population, regardless of age.

The media can be used to convey messages in terms of promoting or discouraging physical activity or sports, which in turn might impact the awareness and participation in that activity or sport. However, on one hand, this could be good as the media representations of these athletes provided an alternative narrative of aging as inevitable decline. On the other hand it could also be problematic for older adults in the general population, whom might be excluded from the aging well narratives. In that, the aging well narrative tends to be represented by abled-bodied individuals, older adults with access and time, affluent and access to such sport training. Researchers before now have

highlighted some of the limitations of the aging well narrative in relation to focusing on the “universal person”, while overlooking issues related to race, class and gender (Dionigi & O’Flynn, 2007; Grant & Kluge, 2007; Phoenix & Grant, 2009) The implications of the aging well narrative is that it fails to take account of the differentiation (i.e., diversity) among older adults in terms of power relations surrounding sport and exercise participating in later life. To that end, one group of older adults often deemed to be aging well within the literature were masters athletes (Baker et al., 2010a; Horton, 2010; Phoenix & Sparks, 2009). The media representations of masters athletes have a huge impact on how they are viewed and view themselves and on the public’s attitudes towards the involvement of older adults in sports in later life.

*Reasoning for performance* was in relation to both athletes motives or decisions towards their involvement in sports in later life, within the context of media data. Both Ed Whitlock and Jeanne Daprano’s involvement in sports in later life was depicted as motivated by physical fitness, engaging in meaningful activities and having a sense of achievement. The athletes acknowledged they had different reasons for their involvement in sports and physical activity across the life course. In case of Ed Whitlock, the media narratives depicted his engagement in sports as characterized by the alternative behavioural regulation of introjected regulation, while Jeanne Daprano was presented as drive by identified regulations. A number of studies conducted to date have shown that masters athletes, regardless of the sport have different reasons for their involvement in sports in later life including; enjoyment of the sport, opportunities for test skills, health and fitness concerns, social reasons, and extrinsic rewards (see Medic, Starkes, Young, & Weir, 2006; Tantrum & Hodge, 1993). In addition, both athletes motivation for

continuing to train and compete in sports in later life was presented in the media narratives as intrinsic in nature. In the case of Ed Whitlock and Jeanne Daprano, their involvement in sports in later life was presented as participating in their sport (i.e., running) purely for the knowledge, experience, accomplishment and stimulation that it provided them. It is also important to note that the media representations of both athletes positioned their involvement in sports in later life to be directed or determined by different goals. In the case of Jeanne Daprano, her involvement in sports in later life was led by (e.g., performance/ process), while Whitlock was directed by (e.g., performance/ outcome). Within the media narratives, both athletes' motivations were depicted as based on goal achievements either in terms of their individual achievement (e.g., task orientation) or in competition with others (e.g., outcome orientation). However, regardless of both athletes' physical abilities, personal goal achievement was seen as an important reason in terms of their involvement in sports, which in turn supported their enjoyment and intention to continue participating in sports. In order to provide insight into the different goals of older adults practicing in sports and physical activity in later life, the self-determination theory has been proposed as a way of examining the motivational triggers and social needs of individuals (Medic et al., 2006; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Accordingly, this theory suggests that athletes who had high perceptions of their ability and a strong sense of belonging in the sport community will be intrinsically motivated (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Hodge et al., 2008, Medic, 2007). This positions fits with the argument that intrinsic motivation entails participation in an activity for the feelings of fun, pleasure, excitement, satisfaction associated with it (Deci & Ryan, 2002; Vallerand & Thill, 1993). But at the same time, the different goals of both athletes was

determined or directed by the type of motivation each individual employed in relation to their participation in sports in later life.

The media representations of the athletes reinforced that both athletes were motivated in an intrinsic nature in terms of their involvement in sports in later life. Both athletes were depicted to the audience or readership as exercising their competences in later life, and in doing so they were able to achieve mastery through their involvement in sports (i.e., running). Within the sports media narratives both athletes were positioned as continually striving to get better at a task, skill or behaviour that mattered personally to them. But at the same time, the media representations of these athletes provided an exceptional cohort to study how motivation and the aging body were represented within the context of participating in sports in later life. The media narratives related the both athletes provided a glimpse into how the media discussed and portrayed their motivations in relation to their involvement in sports in later life. Previous research has shown the studying masters athletes is crucial because they devote a large amount of time to sport and have a lifetime of valuable experience (Baker et al., 2010b; Spirduso et al., 2005).

Within the higher order theme of *systematic training*, the athletes were presented as individuals engaging in a systematic training regime in pursuit of a specific competitive goal. Hence, systematic training served as the daily training routines and training regime of the athletes before major events. In the media representations, the systematic training performed by both athletes was depicted as performed purposefully and progressive (e.g., over time) with the specific goal of personal development and the attainment of their peak performance at various competitions. Furthermore, it can be argued that the systematic training by these athletes enabled them to reach their

physiological peaks and maintain their performance over time. Extensive evidence suggests that, in order to maintain highly skilled levels of athletic performance, individuals need to engage in adequate amounts of high-quality sport specific training (Baker et al., 2010a; Krampe & Ericsson, 1996; Weir, 2007). In the media narratives, there was a shift from activities that were play like in nature to more structured and effortful training activities in terms of both athletes. For both athletes, the number of sport specific training hours dramatically increased from their initial involvement during the earlier years to committed involvement in the later years. The findings from this study further reinforced the notion that the hours of high quality training had a significant effect on the athletes ultimately achieving their goals in later life, as represented in the media sources. Furthermore, previous research have shown that on the national level masters athletes trained for a 6.5 hours per week on average and must be motivated to overcome setbacks in training and competition over time (Baker et al., 2010a; Dionigi, 2003; Tanka & Seals, 2008). The findings from this project further adds strength to the argument that masters athletes spend and invest a lot of time in training each week and over their careers with regards to training. The media's presentation of the both athletes performance in later life shed some light in terms of how the media sources depicted the athletes demanding training regimes. The implications of a systematic training regime, as represented in the media narratives was that it provided the athletes with the opportunity to work on different aspects of training at different times and also tested their fitness in terms of whether or not these training had a desired effect. In general, the process of a systematic training regime consisted of training programs with specific objectives to achieve. In order for both athletes to excel in their sport of choice (i.e., running), they had

to be subjected to a systematic training approach, which in turn prepared and helped improve their performance for the chosen event. The media representation of the systematic training regime of the selected masters athletes consisted of specific training programs (i.e., lunges, squats, or running on the grass), with specific objectives to achieve and it took years to achieve those goals. Additionally, the systematic training of each athlete met the needs of that individual (i.e., age, strength, objectives, ability and health). Previous research indicates that a specific and well-planned and practiced training regime, competition and recovery will ensure optimum development throughout an athlete's career (Balyi & Hamilton, 2004; Krampe & Ericsson, 1996; Tanka and Seals, 2003; Younge et al., 2008). Within the various media narratives, the systematic training performed by these athletes was depicted as progressive in terms of gradually increasing and improving over time and as they aged.

Finally, the higher order theme of an *individualized approach* was in relation to the media representations in regards to the personal choices or adjustments made by both athletes in relation to their involvement in sports in later life. For both Ed Whitlock and Jeanne Daprano, an individualized approach to their participation in sports involved their secrets to success, advice on running and achieving their goals. Within the context of the media's representation, both athletes identified various secrets to their success in terms of finding out what worked out best for them. In turn, this meant the both Ed Whitlock and Jeanne Daprano needed to modify various activities to suit their wishes or needs, due to the fact that there was large variation in physical functions among these older athletes. The diversity seen in masters athletes are generally associated with having different expectations and experiences in terms of their involvement in sports in later life.

Furthermore, previous scholars have recommended that training programs for masters athletes should be based on their health, functional capacity, experience, and expectations of the individual masters athlete (Baker et al., 2010a; Hawkins et al., 2003, Tanaka & Seals, 2008). Both Ed Whitlock and Jeanne Daprano acknowledged that their training programs or approach to racing was tailored specifically for them. In essence, the notion of one form of training works for everyone did not apply to both athletes. Therefore, to achieve the best results, each masters athlete needed their own individualized training program or approach to their involvement in their sport. In a broader sense, there is a tendency towards employing the notion that “one size fits all” approach training applies to masters athletes, however this notion was not evident in this study. In the media representations, both athletes were depicted as being aware in terms of how each athlete’s body and mind worked and how their bodies reacted to training and competitive situations. Research before now has argued that an individualized approach works for any athlete looking to achieve their top performance level (Grant, 2001; Hawkins et al., 2003; Tanaka & Seals, 2008).

Additionally, it has been well acknowledged by previous research that masters athletes have different reasons for their involvement, keeping and stopping their engagement in sports in later life (Baker et al., 2005; Medic et al., 2006). For instance, the sporting environments in which masters athletes train and compete need to be individualized so that they can complement personal reasons and the specific needs for continuing to train and compete (Baker et al., 2010a; Hawkins et al., 2003; Hodge et al., 2008). It would seem essential that training programs or approaches towards involvement in sports should be tailored to the athlete’s needs and preference in order to optimize their

performance and improvements over time. Hence, the application of a tailored approach was based on both athletes individual needs and goals, also it was seen as enhancing the strengths and addressing weaknesses in order to maximize the time and energy invested in training and competing. The media representation of the selected masters athletes involved both athletes adjusting their training or approach to running in relation to their current individual personal goals and fitness levels, age and demand of the activity. In turn, this adjustment was portrayed to the broader audience or readership as guidelines in terms of maximizing one's performance and maintaining their health in later life.

### **Decline Narrative**

The central theme of decline narrative addresses the athletes in relation to the notion that as people age, some of their abilities begin to decline or gradually deteriorate. Though decline is not inevitable with age, the media representations suggested that both masters athletes were declining in terms of performance at a lower rate compared to their than sedentary counterparts. Within the central theme of decline narratives are *resistance to declines in old age, sports related injuries, and maintenance of performance in old age*. With regards to resistance to declines in old age, both Ed Whitlock and Jeanne Daprano were presented as both celebrating and defining the aging body in terms of aging successfully through their involvement in sports in later life. In essence, this meant the athletes' involvement in sports in later life was seen as a deconstruction of some the negative notions associated with aging (e.g., inactive, disengaged).

Phoenix and Smith (2011) proposed that in certain circumstances, masters athletes can and do attempt to resist negative depictions of aging through telling and enacting alternative and potentially more creative versions of the aging process through their

involvement in sports in later life (Dionigi, 2008; Grant, 2001; Phoenix & Sparkes, 2009). The involvement of both masters athletes in a physically active lifestyle in later life was portrayed as challenging some of the negative notions regarding the decline of abilities and performance over time (i.e., physical or mental). The findings from the current project further adds strength to the argument that the involvement of masters athletes in sports in later life can create possibilities for people to age positively and reconstruct what aging normally means (Dionigi, 2008; Phoenix & Smith, 2011). In that, it would seem that by accepting the aging process or pushing back the aging process, both Ed Whitlock and Jeanne Daprano were able to create an alternate or new way to view the aging process in terms of their depictions in the various media sources. Furthermore, other researchers have highlighted the dominant narratives surrounding aging and the involvement in sport and physical activity in later life (see Dionigi & O'Flynn, 2007; Partington, Partington, Fishwick, & Allin, 2005; Phoenix & Grant, 2009). These dominant narratives are constructed in the subculture of sport and are drawn on by athletes to give meaning to their aging, changing performing body (Partington et al., 2005; Phoenix & Grant, 2009). In turn, these positive reflections or stories of the meanings surrounding aging and the performing body acted as narrative maps, guiding the athletes through the unknown as they approached later life or old age. The media representations of both athletes shed some light on the multiple meanings created and generated through the physically aging body or through the involvement in sports.

In addition, both athletes involvement in sports in later life was positioned in the media narratives as underestimated and defying many stereotypes of aging. Both selected masters athletes involvement in sports was depicted as generating awareness in

terms of the bridging the gap and deconstructing some of the decline narratives associated with the aging process by providing meaningful ways in which aging can be imagined and lived. Dionigi (2008) suggested that older adults who compete in sports are resisting the dominant negative stereotypes associated with aging and feeling empowered to live a fulfilled and healthy life. In addition, it should be acknowledged that masters athletes defy many stereotypical views of aging and stereotypical attitudes towards the elderly in terms of providing older adults with valuable role models as their accomplishments change the perceptions of what is possible in old age (Baker et al., 2010a; Dionigi, 2008; Dionigi & O'Flynn, 2007; Hawkins et al., 2003). Therefore, it can be argued that the media narratives in relation to both athletes involvement in sports in later life meant that they were breaking down many of the stereotypes of what many people think older adults can or should do. But at the same time, the selected masters athlete's involvement in sports in later life was seen as too extreme for their age. Previous studies have shown that, the involvement of master athletes in sports can be seen as (inadvertently) reinforcing the notion that aging is something to fear and fight through their extensive physical training (Dionigi, 2008; Phoenix & Smith, 2011). In essence, the involvement of older adults in sports in later life can be seen as a fear or denial of old age, through their extensive and continuous involvement in sports at advancing age. But at the same time, there are some contradictory meanings relating to the involvement of masters athletes in sports in later life and declines associated with aging. Extensive research suggest that these conflicting meaning has led to understanding the aging body as an ill body and that needs to be treated (Baker et al., 2010b; Dionigi & O'Flynn, 2007; Grant, 2001; Phoenix & Sparks, 2011). As such, the research or knowledge generated

from this framework has mainly focused on addressing the need for a “cure” by investigating methods that might “fix” or “postpone” the effects of aging. Consequently, these methods include the use of exercise or sport to improve the body’s functional capacity thereby delaying physical dependency in later life (Dionigi & O’Flynn, 2007; Grant, 2001; Phoenix & Grant, 2009; Phoenix & Sparks, 2011). Through the media’s presentation of both athletes involvement in sport, a better understanding was gained in terms of how sports and physical activity affects the experiences of growing older and the multiple meanings attached to participation in later life.

Within the narrative of decline were *sports related injuries*, this higher order theme addressed the damage done to or suffered by the athletes in relation to their later life participation in sports. The media representations used in relation to sports related injuries involved setbacks and recovery, injury prevention, and fear of injury. The athletes reported that injuries had an effect on their involvement in sports in later life. Statistically, in general older athletes are much more likely to be injured than younger athletes who are participating in the same sport (Baker et al., 2010b; Raeburn & Dascome, 2008). Furthermore, an increased prevalence of injuries meant that healing might be delayed in later life (i.e., setback in training and competing). In addition it has been well documented that sports participation entails an increased risk for injury for elite athletes, as well as recreational athletes (Raeburn & Dascome, 2008; Tanaka & Seals, 2008). Also, older runners have been reported in previous research to be more susceptible to falls and over exercise injuries in terms of their involvement in sports in later life. Some of the common reported sports related injuries in older adults included back pain, hamstring injury, Achilles tendonitis and heel pain (Baker et al., 2005; Phoenix & Grant,

2009; Tanaka & Seals, 2008). The media representations of sport related injuries consisted of two styles of narratives when describing both athletes' sports related injury experiences in later life. These narratives included a "restoration" to health and fitness narrative and a "hope" narrative in relation to becoming more aware of their bodies and their limitations through the experience of injury. In other words, the media narratives depicted how sport related injuries led to a disruption in both athletes identity/ self and also how they developed new perspectives or approach in terms of their involvement in sport because of their injury experience. The findings from this study have implications for understanding how both athletes made sense of their bodies and injuries as represented within several media sources.

Within the media representations of the selected athletes, when sports related injuries occurred, the healing process was more often prolonged and complete recovery took a long time. Despite these setbacks or injuries, both athletes were portrayed as learning the best ways to treat and prevent injuries, therefore shortening recovery time for the athlete and preventing future setbacks. Also, previous nagging injuries were reported to diminish the athlete's performance and recovery over time. For instance, in the case of Jeanne Daprano, she able to resist and prevent injury during the course of her racing career. Which in turn enabled her to continue her participation in sports and physical activity across the lifespan and was therefore more likely to be involved in masters sport over time. Staying injury free is not always an easy task; however, research suggests that more experienced athletes do have a lower risk of injury compared to athletic newcomers and high mileage and lack of recovery time are the paramount causes of sport related injuries in masters athletes (Raeburn & Dascome, 2008; Weir, 2007). Hence, in order for

the athletes to be successful in their sport of choice, he or she must maintain a high level of training while preventing fatigue that could lead to sports related injuries or overtraining.

The higher order theme of *maintenance of performance in old age* captured how the athletes were represented in the media sources in terms of preserving their performance over a period of time. The idea of maintaining one's performance in old age involved both athletes attempts to stay on top, adapt to changes due to old age and decline, the effects of age on their performance, and fear of inability. Within the various media sources, the masters athlete's involvement in sports was positioned as stable or "staying on top" with advancing age. But at the same time, the athlete's involvement in sports in later life was presented to the audience and readership as striving to maintain or even improve upon the performance they have already achieved at younger ages. Baker and colleagues (2010) proposed that cognitive skills, motor skills and physiological capabilities can be maintained with advancing age and age related decline are slowed in athletes that continue to train and compete in their later years (see Dionigi, 2008; Tanaka & Seals, 2008). In a broader sense, the rate of decline in performance can be reduced if the individual engaged in large amounts of practice in a particular activity (i.e., running). Furthermore, it has been proposed that it is possible for overall skills to remain stable with age, despite declines in some aspects of functional due to an increased reliance on other aspects (Baker et al, 2010; Krampe & Ericsson, 1996; Maharam et al., 1999). The media narratives presented both athletes as retaining or maintaining their skills in later life by continuously practicing in a specific activity (i.e., running) across the lifespan. In turn, engaging in these specific practiced activities was essential in regards to improving

their performance in later life. The implications of the media representations of both athletes was that, it informed the audience of the age-related processes in later life and also informs the public in terms of how both athletes selectively maintained their skill and performance as they aged. The findings from this study adds strength to the understanding of the effects of continuous lifespan sports involvement on the age related processes for masters athletes, as represented by several media sources.

Both athletes were presented as acquiring their performance capabilities by training intently and without interruption for many years. In that, both athletes involvement in sports in later life was related to maintaining their capabilities, fitness and health for as long as possible. In addition, both athletes involvement in sports in later life was seen as adapting to changes due to age and decline. Both Ed Whitlock and Jeanne Daprano were depicted as adjusting their style of play, developing new skills or changing their sport to compensate for their decline in speed, strength and endurance as time went by. Previous literature further affirms that masters athletes compensated for their loss in endurance, speed, and strength by developing new skills or adapting to the changes (Dionigi, 2008; Medic et al., 2006). For example, an athlete might use “their hands more than their feet” particularly in racquet sports such as squash and tennis or they might run longer distance races instead of short distance races. Additionally, both Ed Whitlock and Jeanne Daprano were depicted in the media sources as able to offset declines in other areas and remain competitive and competent in their sport of choice. In line with offsetting declines in other areas, both athletes involvement in sports in later life was seen as reducing the effects of age on their performance. The findings from the study added strength to the argument that age alone does not necessarily limit sports performance in

later life. The athletes were presented in several media narratives as averting some of the age-effect on performance through their continuous involvement in sports. Prior research comparing masters athletes to their sedentary counterparts has shown that many of these so called physiological changes or effects of aging were actually the result of a long standing sedentary lifestyle or disuse (Baker et al., 2010c; Maharam et al, 1999; Tanaka & Seals, 2008). In line with this, the media representation of both athletes suggests that these so-called aging effects are not seen or are seen to a lesser degree in the masters athletes. Through their involvement in sports in later life, both athletes were presented in the media sources as delaying the onset or slowing down the progression of many age related changes. The implications of these representations included the notion that much of the “slowing down” in performance that is seen in older athletes of all fitness levels was related more to the changes in training intensity as opposed to absolute changes in biological functions. The understanding of media narratives in relation to both athletes proved important as it provided insight into the various media depictions of how sports participation in later life can enhance functional capacity and slow down the aging process in later life.

Finally, fear of inability was identified by both athletes in relation to the maintenance of their performance in later life. For both athletes, fear of inability was presented as not living up to past achievements in advanced age or the need to continue to keep one’s mind and body active through their involvement in sports. In the media sources, the fear of losing and fear of success or not winning were depicted as real fears that the athletes had to face and overcome. By working with the power of their mind, both athletes were able to overcome any and all fears and became successful in their

pursuits or involvement in sport in sports in later life. Furthermore, the phrase of ‘use it or lose it’ can be applied to the notion of fear of in ability in terms maintenance of performance in later life. Within the media representations, this notion referred to the belief that if both athletes stop training and competing they will lose their abilities and performance. Previous scholars have proposed that via ongoing physical activity, training and competing master athletes could maintain the use of their minds and body to avoid the losses associated with aging, such as physical and mental decline (see Baker et al., 2010a; Dionigi et al., 2010; Phoenix & Sparks, 2011). In that, if both athletes stopped training and competing in sport, they would lose their sense of self and their independence. Convincing evidence also suggest that regular training and competing can prevent the typical loss of muscle mass and strength associated with aging in relation to performance in later life (Raeburn & Dascome, 2008; Spirduso et al., 2005; Tanaka & Seals, 2008). The implications for these media representations are that it seems that the decreases in performance and functional capacity typically began in middle life (i.e., around 40) and these decreases had more to do with lack of “use” or involvement than the inevitable effects of aging. In sum, the present study provided more information in terms of the media’s representation of how both athletes maintained their performance in later life, despite advancing age through the continual involvement and engagement in sports over time. In addition, it is noteworthy to mention that findings from this study presents the results as possible alternatives to the current literature or perspective in terms of the aging process and late life participation in sports and physical activity.

## CHAPTER SIX: Conclusions

In the current study, the objective was to further extend the understanding what meanings were generated around the aging body and sports by masters athletes within sports media narratives (i.e., Runner's World). The data were analyzed qualitatively in terms of the media representations of two high profiled master athletes (i.e., Ed Whitlock and Jeanne Daprano). An inductive thematic analysis revealed that the athletes were positioned in the various media narratives as embodying the characteristics of a "masters athlete"; also these characteristics was consistent with previous research on masters athletes (see Baker et al., 2010a; Dionigi, 2010; Grant, 2001; Maron et al., 2001; Phoenix & Sparkes, 2009). The athletes were depicted in the various media sources as individuals who participated in organized sport with regular competition against others, placing a high premium on excellence and achievement, and systematic training. During the analysis phase three central themes emerged from the media data: *life long involvement in sports, performance narratives and decline narratives*. The themes illustrated how both athletes' involvements in sports in later life were connected to how the aging process and the physically active body were portrayed to the broader public or audience. It should be noted that the narratives used in relation to both athletes was organized or systematic in nature. In a sense, it was a "story-like" or "structured wise" with a beginning, middle and end or a sequence of actions. The arrangement of the "stories" in the various media sources enabled the researcher to construct a narrative map in relation to both athletes involvement in sports with regards to their journey or sporting careers over time.

The media narratives of both athletes included the belief that they were supernatural and very determined athletes, trying their best to compete and win well into

old age. It should be considered that the ways in which these athletes were represented speaks volumes in terms of what a society strives to be. Both selected masters athletes were portrayed in two contrasting ways (i.e., positive and negative stories). For example, within the media narratives, positive stories included some of the benefits and rewards of participating in sports in later life such as, longevity, functional health and aging well. In the media representations of both athletes, negative stories were related to stories associated to physical decline, cognitive decline and that growing old was difficult and involved something that should be planned. In turn, these negative stories reinforced the connection of these events to some of the age related declines in later life. These narratives indeed do play an important role in our society in terms of how the media works to shape the viewers or audience perception by portraying the athletes either negatively or positively. But at the same time, the audience (i.e., readership) learns beliefs, values, knowledge and skills in terms of understanding how society people work and operate in it. Within the various media sources, the depictions of both athletes involved a more diverse and multi-dimensional narrative (i.e., positive aging, decline and loss). For instance, the media played a part in reproducing some of the dominant narratives concerning older adults, in terms of telling a narrow tale of decline and loss in later life. On the other hand, the positive aging narratives were used to describe older adults in a positively charged manner. These positive aging narratives were seen as representations that ran counter to the loss and decline paradigm (Baker et al., 2010a; Dionigi et al., 2010; Dionigi & O'Flynn, 2007; Phoenix & Sparkes, 2009). Therefore, it should be acknowledged that the media representations used in the portrayal of both athletes differs and were multi-dimensional in nature depending on the narrative within

which they are produced or formed (see Battocchio et al., 2012; McGannon et al., 2012a; Schinke et al., 2012a). The understanding of the different narratives associated with masters athletes in terms of the media representation of their performance in later life provided new insight into how personal and cultural realities are constructed and generated through narratives or stories.

Furthermore, researchers generally agree that media data have the potential to play an active part in shaping and framing our perception of the world in which we live (Ferkins, 1992; McGannon et al., 2012b). The media representations of both athletes provided a platform to understand, interpret and critique its meanings and messages to the broader audience (i.e., readership) in relation to masters athletes. The media representations of both Ed Whitlock and Jeanne Daprano were not simply a mirror of society but rather they were a portrayal of the outstanding contributions and achievements of the selected athletes in terms of their involvement in sports in later life. In a broader sense, the readership's perception of these masters athletes will largely be determined by how they are portrayed in the various media narratives. In that, these portrayals shape and frame our perception of the world in which we live in and also influences popular opinion or beliefs. In several media sources, both athletes were portrayed as expert in terms of their persistence in sport in later life, thus providing a platform for a more positive discussion in relation to the aging process and masters athletes' involvement in sports in later life. Therefore, it was important to examine the media's representations of both athletes and what meanings were constructed around the aging body and sports, as represented in several media sources.

It is also important to note that both athletes involvement in sports in later life was presented within a high performance narrative. Douglas and Carless (2006) utilized the concept of narrative types within the context of high performance sport and identified a dominant narrative called performance narrative. Performance narrative refers to stories of single-minded dedication to sport performance to the exclusion of other areas of life and self (Douglas & Carless, 2006; Smith & Sparks, 2009; Whannel, 2002). In a sense, it can be argued that the focus of the performance narratives was on winning, results and achievements in relation to the athletes well being, identity and self worth. Both selected masters athletes were positioned as having a highly “competitive athlete” identity through their engagement in sports in later life. The identity of a competitive athlete was further reinforced in the various media narratives through their performance and training in an effort to maintain a healthy lifestyle. According to Douglas and Carless (2006), the storyline of the high performance narratives are reflected in sport literatures where optimal athletic achievement are considered to be the entire life focus of the top performer and it is expected that the top professional athlete has, and must have such a narrow focus on achieving optimal performance (see McGannon et al., 2012b). Additionally, previous research has shown that older athletes negotiate sport performance discourses through their talk and practice by demonstrating the importance of winning, pushing the body to its limit, training hard and doing one’s best in competition (Baker et al., 2010a; Dionigi & O’Flynn, 2007). But at the same time, the individual’s health was not the driving force for both athletes continued involvement in sports, but rather it was the positive by-product that is related with health promotion discourses.

In media construction of the masters athletes' identities, the high performance narrative was portrayed as a more positive identity of aging. The connection between the high performance narrative and the athlete's involvement in sport was the value they placed on their sport, health and how they made sense of their experiences in terms of growing old. Moreover, these high performance narratives have the potential to evoke social changes in the way aging is interpreted and perceived. The socio-cultural context in which today's older adults are situated plays a key role in identity management and hence their maintenance of sport performance (Dionigi et al., 2013; Phoenix & Sparkes, 2009). The present findings further extend understanding in terms of how two high profile and accomplished masters athletes involvement in sports (i.e., track/running) played a critical role in this social discourse. Due to the fact that both selected athletes were presented in the media narratives as challenging the limits and defining the upper level of physical performance, it can be further suggested that the involvement in sports can produce a richer and more satisfying narrative in later life. With that in mind, masters athletes have been proposed to actively and vigorously challenge themselves both physically and mentally (Dionigi, 2008; Grant, 2001), hence why they were able to persevere, plan and pace themselves in their physically active lives.

In-line with previous work in gerontology and sport and exercise science (see Dionigi & O'Flynn, 2007; Phoenix & Sparkes, 2009; Phoenix & Smith, 2011), we know the importance of how we talk about aging and how such talk actually can shape our own experience of aging. It has been proposed that it is important to identify new narratives or stories that could provide the master athletes with alternative and potentially more creative views of the aging process. In other words, the stories told by these athletes have

the potential to produce a more positive representation of old age and also provide a counter story to the traditional decline narrative associated with aging. Within the context of this study, the media narratives identified provided a more empowering and positive narrative in terms of the involvement of both athletes in sports in later life and the performing aging body. But at the same time, research before now suggests that narratives enable the world to be experienced including what we perceive, depending on the stories we tell and hear (Dionigi & O'Flynn, 2007; Grant, 2002; Phoenix & Smith, 2011). In essence, these stories or narratives teach us much about the personal experiences of aging and also the social nature of aging. Therefore, it is important to identify alternate narratives that older adults might use to run counter to those associated with the inevitable physical decline and deterioration surrounding masters athletes in later life. Phoenix and Smith (2011) proposed that by focusing on alternative narratives, researchers could generate knowledge in relation to how particular individuals experience aging, while engaging with the contested domains of aging. Therefore it is important to generate awareness on how these alternative narratives of the aging process can create more meaningful ways in which aging can be lived and imagined.

Additionally, it is important to consider what an inductive thematic analysis of media data contributed to the understanding the media representations of masters athletes and what meanings were generated around the aging body and sports. Inductive thematic analysis provided a venue for further opening or venturing into new and emergent contextually themes. In turn, an inductive thematic analysis approach enabled the researcher to identify and recognize how both selected masters athletes were depicted unrealistically in the various media narratives. Coincidentally, emerging from the analysis

was how both masters athletes identities was represented in the various media sources. Both Ed Whitlock and Jeanne Daprano's identities were depicted in a "one dimensional" or narrow frame (i.e., focused on performance). Within the various media narratives, this narrow or one-dimensional frame was related to their demographic profile or characteristics. Previous research has shown that in general masters athletes typically have physical, family, work and social characteristics that are different from their sedentary counterparts (Wright & Perricelli, 2008). Both Ed Whitlock and Jeanne Daprano were depicted as having higher educational attainment, Caucasian and combined with their high amount of discretionary income, which was conducive to their continued involvement in sports over the life course. Therefore, it could be argued that what was presented in the various media sources to the audience was possibly narrow identities of these athletes. In a sense, through media frames biased messages may emerge or generated, which in turn is presented to the broader public or audience. The implications of this narrow media frame (i.e., demographic profile) might be interpreted by the mass audience as a sign that masters athletics is suitable for the affluent or well-off members of society. The frames used in the sports media narratives have the ability to influence the opinion of individuals in terms of masters athletes involvement in sports by emphasizing or reducing the amount of focus given to a certain area of topic (i.e., athletes). However, research suggests that the influence media frames have on the public is often unnoticed because the portrayals are so commonly shared and accepted in today's culture (Ferkins, 1992; Reber & Berger, 2005). In other words, challenging these narrow media frames or portrayals of athletes within the context of sports in later has the potential to alter social inequality in sports.

In general, masters athletes can have great influence, acting as positive role models especially in terms of encouraging individuals to becoming active and living healthier lives. But on the other hand, these athletes can also represent or place too high of a standard for some older adults, due to the fact that they perform or participate in sport at a higher level. In that, this standard might reinforce the notion of high performance sports narratives, which could be overwhelming and dismissed as too difficult for a sedentary older adult. Throughout the course of this study it was observed that sports and sports media was a powerful cultural driving force. Additionally, it can be argued that sport media has an impact on the lives of everyone for better or worse, regardless of whether the individual likes, plays or watches sports. The power of sports media is well recognized by researchers and consumers in terms of advertising, a medium to broadcast information to people at large and platform for positioning athletes (Bernstein & Blain, 2002; McGannon et al., 2012a; Reber & Berger, 2005; Schinke et al., 2012a; Whannel, 2002). The media representations of both athletes were constructed to challenge some of the prevailing ideas and values in society in terms aging successfully through involvement in sports in later. Within the media narratives both athletes were positioned as experts who maintained their independence in later life by increasing their involvement in sports as they aged. Furthermore, it is important to note how sports media plays a central and crucial role in portraying and supplying information to the public, not only for the readership, but also for the athletes. Bernstein and Blain (2002) argued that the sports media is a contemporary medium for performing many tasks and carrying multiple messages. In essence, the media enjoys a very prominent role in our lives and on society at large. The media tends to influence each and every individual either positively

or negatively, however it is dependent upon the way the audiences perceive the various messages being presented to them. Since the media narratives are used to explore how individuals construct meanings within the context of their life experiences (i.e., sports), it was imperative to obtain an understanding in relations to what media narratives were used to depict both athletes involvement in sports. In addition, this study explored what meanings were generated around aging, sports and the performing body and the implications in terms of how the aging body was represented to the public or audience. Developing this line of inquiry is critical for understanding the potential that can be achieved and obtained from the physical, cognitive and the social aspect of aging.

### **Future Research Directions**

This section pertains to future research ideas and limitations based on the findings from this study in terms of the literature concerning masters athletes. Older adults live in a complex, dynamic, and continuously changing societal setting that strongly influences their biography (Dionigi, 2008; Grant, 2002, 2001; Phoenix & Smith, 2011). Though exploring the media representations of the selected masters athletes (i.e., Ed Whitlock and Jeanne Daprano) provided further insight into their experiences in sports, as represented in the media narratives. It was recommended that future research explore other influences (i.e., the media and how it can be used to define a masters athletes reality), also how it might impact an athlete's involvement in sports in later life. As older adults progress through the various stages of life, it is imperative that their realities, lives and performing bodies be defined and told by them. In other words, future research into this area of interest should include interviewing or narratives strategies in terms of accessing the words or stories of masters athletes. These types of stories or strategies will

enable researchers to generate and offer deeper understandings or meanings as it is related to masters athletes and their involvement in sports in later life. In addition, these athletes should be given the opportunity to share their personal stories and experiences of aging in terms of their involvement sports in later life. Obtaining the personal stories or experience of masters athletes could be accomplished through narratives, an unstructured interview and conversational approaches. At the same time, giving these athletes the opportunity to tell their personal stories and experiences will provide more insight into what we do not yet know in terms of the literature relating the media representations of masters athletes. The findings from this study suggest that more examination is needed in terms of obtaining an understanding of what it means to grow older and to be older with regards to the depiction of the selected masters athletes (i.e., Ed and Jeanne) in the various sports media sources.

Additionally, given the nature of competition in later life and also sport participation, ultimately more data was available for the male athletes compared to their female counterparts. Previous research has shown that women's sports generally received strikingly less coverage than men's, even when women happen to constitute the majority of a sport's participants (Creedon, 1998; Koivula, 1999). It would be necessary to further understand the influence of sports media narratives on gender. Gerontologist and sports and exercise scientists might need to explore the socio-cultural influences of the media in terms of the depictions and media coverage of female and male masters athletes within the context of their performance in later life. Also, future research into this area of interest will need to explore the media representations of masters athletes from different demographic profiles or cultural backgrounds (i.e., lower SES, a minority, disability, ill

health). For instance, an athlete who is not as fortunate as the typical masters athlete (e.g., upper class, white, high SES) might not be privileged to materials or resources necessary to be successful in terms of maintaining and participating in sports in later life. In sum, a better understanding is needed with regards to the media influence on gender and demographic characteristics of masters athletes in later life. In turn, this will bridge the gap in the literature concerning some of the effects and influences of gender and socio-cultural factors on sports participation in later life.

There was a particular limitation in regards to this study. It should be noted that the media data collected was laid or compiled together in relation to how both athletes were portrayed in the various media texts in terms of their involvement in sports in later life. The data were compiled together using various news articles or stories about the two chosen athletes, Ed Whitlock and Jeanne Daprano. The particular limitation encountered in this study was that by identifying and focusing on specific narratives we risk creating another general unifying view that subsumes the particularity of individual experience (McLeod, 1997; Smith & Sparkes, 2006). In other words, the focus on specific narratives should not diminish the uniqueness of the story any individual tells, because no actual telling fits in exclusively to one type of narrative or narrative type. These unique self-stories told by both athletes can draw upon more general narratives that are embedded within particular socio-cultural contexts. Both Ed Whitlock and Jeanne Daprano were presented as having similar narrative type, their stories or journey developed and evolved in relation to their life experiences and experience within the context of their involvement in sports. The media representations of both athletes provided a platform to raise awareness of the possible alternatives to the dominant performance narrative and these

representations served as listening devices in terms of allowing these alternatives to be heard.

Several recommendations have been proposed in light of the findings from this study for the gerontologist and sport and exercise scientist concerned with aging. It is recommended that future researcher in this field obtain deeper understanding into some of the contextual and theoretical underpinnings (i.e., objective or subjective approaches) that might better explain the involvement of masters athletes in sports in later life.

Although the goal of this study was to advance the understanding in terms of masters athletes and their experience of aging and participating in sports in later life, it can be assumed that doing so has also raised further questions. For example, masters athletes are motivated for different reasons, it is unclear if their motivation for participation change over time (Baker et al., 2005; Medic, 2007; Medic et al., 2006). It would also be beneficial to examine the different motivational regulations or orientation employed by males and females, also older and younger masters athletes, as represented sports media sources. Future studies are needed to shed light on the different performance goals of masters athletes and the sources of their motivation as it related to their involvement in sports. In addition, future studies may also consider examining sports media data in relation to the media's representation of societal conception or perception of growing older and how masters athletes continue to challenge the negative stereotypes associated with aging. Previous research suggests that masters athletes can play an important role in changing societal perceptions of aging through their involvement in sports (see Baker et al., 2005; Dionigi, 2008; Phoenix & Smith, 2011). In other words, gerontologists and sport and exercise scientists have the potential to evoke social change in the way aging is

interpreted and given meaning. In a broader sense, the involvement of the selected masters athletes in sports in later life was seen as positive in terms of enhanced quality of life, improvement in various aspects of the age process (i.e., decline) and positive role model for their sedentary cohorts. More importantly it is advantageous for gerontologist as well as the sport and exercise scientist to recognize the complexity involved in the aging process and the limitations of our understanding of what it means to become older and the role of sports and physical activity in later life.

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## Appendices



### **Laurentian University Research Ethics Board**

#### ***Understanding The Meanings Created Around The Aging Body And Sports By Masters Athletes Through Media Data. 2013-03-06***

This is to certify that Odirin Patrick Oghene has submitted this proposal to the Laurentian University Research Ethics Board on March 12, 2013.

Considering

- The project does not involve direct participation of human subjects
- The data will be collected from publically available media sources

The project has been declared by the Laurentian University Research Ethics Board to not be subject to ethics review at this time.

Any modification of the purpose of the project will immediately require a new REB application.

Signed

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan James".

Chair

**Date: March 17, 2013**