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THE SPECTACULARIZATION OF DISABILITY SPORT

Brazilian and Australian Newspaper Photographs of 2012 London Paralympic Athletes

Tatiane Hilgemberg, Katie Ellis and Madison Magladry

Introduction

Media coverage of sport has undergone a process of “spectacularization” over the last 20 years. This is true also of the Paralympic Games, one of the largest international disability sporting and media events. We define spectacularization as the process by which sport is not just a game to be *played* by individuals or groups, but something to be *sold* to spectators. This process has therefore seen the adoption of a more visual language in the media. Newspaper photographs offer a particularly compelling example of this. Beth Haller argues newspaper photographs of people with disability are significant because people with disability are an oppressed group subject to limited media representations.¹ She posits that studying print photographs offer a way to “understand the media’s role in constructing disability as different.”² Newspaper photographs offer valuable information, especially in the sport section as a way to attract and appeal to readers. As Haller explains, they are the hook that draws the audience into a story.³ As a result of this spectacularization, the Paralympics have become an important media event in recent years.

The Paralympic Games have been the subject of numerous research works in the field of sport and disability studies. Most scholarly work has been preoccupied with politics of representation or with locating gaps in coverage of the athletes and their achievements, especially when compared to the mainstream ubiquity of Olympic coverage. More recently, as the amount of coverage increases, this field of scholarship has expanded to include intersectional analysis of how gender and nationality affect representation in the Paralympics.⁴ This chapter aims to contribute to this discussion, with a particular focus on the continued use of newspaper analysis as a prominent methodology among these studies. To return to Haller, newspaper photographs have been recognized as more progressive than other media representations of disability.⁵ The chapter aims to situate Australian and Brazilian newspaper coverage of the 2012 London Paralympics among existing analysis of the Games (2012 and earlier), emphasizing how the coverage constructs and addresses an audience of disability sport. The aim of this research is to analyze how these images of disabled athletes are portrayed in the media—the quantity of photographs depicted, their representation of gender, common photographic angles employed and the visibility and type of disability depicted.

Prior Research: A Story of Disparity

Research that examines how disability is represented in media coverage of the Paralympics can be roughly drawn into three themes—the disparity regarding the “correct” portrayal of visible and invisible disabilities; a lack of coverage or a disparity between the coverage of the Paralympics as a disabled sporting arena and the Olympics or other able-bodied sporting events; and how the variety of the coverage depends on other issues such as gender or nationality. These three themes share a common thread—they all address the idea of what constitutes “empowerment” or “progressiveness” among people with a disability, specifically in terms of media portrayal.

There was noted to be a marked difference in the way athletes with visible disabilities and those with invisible disabilities were portrayed. In an analysis of British newspaper coverage of the 2000 Sydney Paralympic Games, Nigel Thomas and Andrew Smith found that in cases of athletes with visible disabilities—for example having an amputation or being in a wheelchair—the image was cropped or the impairment was otherwise obscured from view.⁶ When combined with medicalized descriptions of disability and a tendency to compare an athlete with a disability to an able-bodied athlete, these images were seen as reinforcing a societal preoccupation with able-bodiedness and “appeared to deny the featured athlete’s identity as a person with a disability.”⁷ Christoph Bertling and Thomas Schierl concur with these findings, stating that “pictures are very rarely used in newspaper coverage of the Paralympics.”⁸ They found that when pictures were included, they often obscured the impairment and interpreted this as an attempt to emulate the aesthetic value and “entertainment” of able-bodied sports media. Indeed, they found that journalists in general “expressed a certain aversion towards pictures emphasising disability.”⁹ Danielle Peers, herself a former Paralympian, offers some insight as to why this is the case. For Peers, the visibility of disability “acts as a kind of caveat, lowering expectations of the athlete’s abilities and recentring their disability-based (as opposed to athlete-based) identities,”¹⁰ and argues that this framework contributes to “the construction and affirmation of Paralympians as passive, disabled and marginal.”¹¹

The difference in coverage of disabled versus able-bodied sport was also a common theme in the literature. For example, Thomas and Smith analyzed images and articles of Paralympians from the 2000 Games and located these images in relation to how Olympians were portrayed. Their analysis suggested that representation of Paralympians tended to compare them to able-bodied athletes, often concealing physical impairments in photographs. Although this may be construed as an effort to de-emphasize disability, Thomas and Smith argued that this kind of representation reinforced the naturalized link between able-bodiedness and athletic ability.¹² Peers’ research also considered the difference in coverage between Paralympians and able-bodied Olympians, via a textual analysis of two texts concerned with the larger historical context of the Paralympics. She concluded this context often overemphasizes the roles of volunteers and other able-bodied organizers.¹³ Emphasis on able-bodiedness in coverage of the Paralympics suggests that (in)visibility of an impairment is not inherently “empowering” nor progressive (nor disempowering nor stereotypical, conversely) but must be situated within a broader context of how the athlete, the Games and disability are constructed and understood. Indeed, both themes—visibility and disparity with able-bodied sports—reflect Karen DePauw’s perspective of sport as a site of cultural resistance and that marginality in sport should be viewed as “socially constructed,” “a dynamic process” and “in the context of power relations and resistance rather than assimilation.”¹⁴

Minimal coverage of the Paralympics compared to other able-bodied sports—particularly prior to the 2012 London games—is similarly complex in the context of acceptance of disability in sport media. Anne Golden found that American journalists who covered the Olympics perceived a lack of audience interest for the Paralympics, as well as logistical issues and a perception of the Paralympics as lesser to the Olympics.¹⁵ Toni Bruce addresses a similar preconception that

disability sport is viewed “in similar terms to women’s sport: as different, secondary and lesser.”¹⁶ It could therefore be argued that an increase in the amount of news articles that discuss the Paralympics might assist with changing this perception. However, P. David Howe proposes that the type of coverage that the Paralympic Games receives remains relatively static because it is tightly controlled by the International Paralympic Committee, “perpetuating the myth that Paralympic sport is of greater purity” through charitable, patronizing modes of portrayal.¹⁷ Howe argues that the underlying contexts of the Games are obscured from media representation in favor of celebratory, disability-focused rhetoric about the Games and the athletes.

More recent work concerning the Paralympics and disability sport examines the relationship between representation of disability alongside nationality and gender. DePauw’s model of marginality in sport addresses sexuality, masculinity and able-bodiedness, noting that the likelihood of being marginalized in the media increases when the subject occupies more than one of these positions.¹⁸ As an example, Thomas and Smith identify a “double impairment” in women with disabilities, where what little coverage Paralympian athletes are given is dominated by the male athletes, rendering the female athletes less visible.¹⁹ Nationality also becomes a factor in the marginalization or stereotyping of Paralympic athletes. In a study comparing the coverage of a nation’s own Paralympic athletes with those of other countries, Bruce found that

the closer that the athletes are perceived to being like “us,” the more likely they are to receive in-depth coverage marked by nuance and complexity ... the closer to “them,” the more likely they are to receive limited attention that narrowly stereotypes or exoticizes them within dominant discourses related to perceived differences.²⁰

Returning to the common thread throughout the literature assessing how media portrayal can empower or disempower, with the decreasing degrees of visibility and representation of Paralympic athletes outlined above, we ask what does this mean for the status of non-athletes with disabilities, everyday people with disabilities? David E. J. Purdue and P. David Howe question the idea that the Paralympics can “give” empowerment at all to people with disabilities who are not participants in elite sport.²¹ That is, if even elite Paralympic athletes struggle to gain acknowledgment beyond a restrictive set of stereotypes, what does this mean for those unable to participate? In their study, which featured interviews with Paralympic athletes and other stakeholders, Purdue and Howe ultimately found that “only those directly involved in Paralympic sport, the athletes, have the ability to use the Paralympic Games for their own empowerment.”²² This is due in part to the way the athletes are constructed as “supercrips”—“what they [non-athletes with disabilities] should be able to achieve, if only they tried hard enough.”²³ This type of rhetoric may alienate those with disabilities who do not have access to the platform of elite sport and may therefore reinforce stereotypes about living with disability while giving the impression that the Paralympics represent the pinnacle of empowerment.

In summary, based on the literature reviewed, the Paralympics offers a culturally significant representation of disability. Yet the media tends to consistently represent Paralympians and, by extension, disabled people, in two ways—as “more able” (for example by obscuring impairment), or as a tragic inspiration in contrast to an able-bodied mindset (the supercrip). Further, other issues in addition to disability—such as gender or nationality—have also been seen to reflect greatly on how the media represents Paralympians. Returning to the focus of this chapter, the coverage of the 2012 Paralympic Games in Brazilian and Australian newspapers, we predicted that representations of Paralympians during the 2012 Games would remain constant with those of previous years despite a more commercial focus; however, we discovered this drive to attract an audience for future Paralympic Games resulted in a different type of representation.

Method

A content analysis of the representation of the 2012 London Paralympic Games by four Brazilian and four Australian newspapers with wide circulation was conducted. The sample included articles published throughout the duration of the Games (August 28–September 10, 2012), including the day before the opening ceremony and the day after the closing ceremony. The Brazilian sample was conducted from four Brazilian broadsheet daily newspapers—*O Globo*, *Folha de S. Paulo*, *Estado de Minas* and *Zero Hora*. The Australian sample included the *Australian*, *West Australian*, *Courier Mail* and *Sydney Morning Herald*. Editorials, letters and opinion articles were not included; we analyzed only news, interviews and photos that reflected the newspapers’ institutional values rather than the opinion of an individual. In addition, only those articles that focused on Paralympic athletes were analyzed.

Our coding methodology followed several steps. First, each photo was identified with a number. From the photographs, we identified the portrayed athletes with their name and gender. We analyzed the photographic angles used according to the following categories: “whole body,” “waist up,” “knee up,” “close” (face only) and “detail” (when the focus is on a detail of the image or a specific part of the athlete’s body). The visibility of the disability was coded as either “visible” (not concealed due to the angle of the photograph and identifiable), “invisible” (which includes images of athletes where an otherwise visible disability is concealed due to the angle of the photograph, and also invisible disabilities such as intellectual disabilities) or “both,” where multiple athletes are pictured. Type of disability was coded in the case of visible disability.

Results

Brazil

In the four Brazilian newspapers analyzed we found 106 articles and 86 photographs that met the inclusion criteria. Only 28 of these articles did not include photos, meaning 78 (73.6 percent) of the articles contained at least one image of a Paralympian (Figure 9.1).

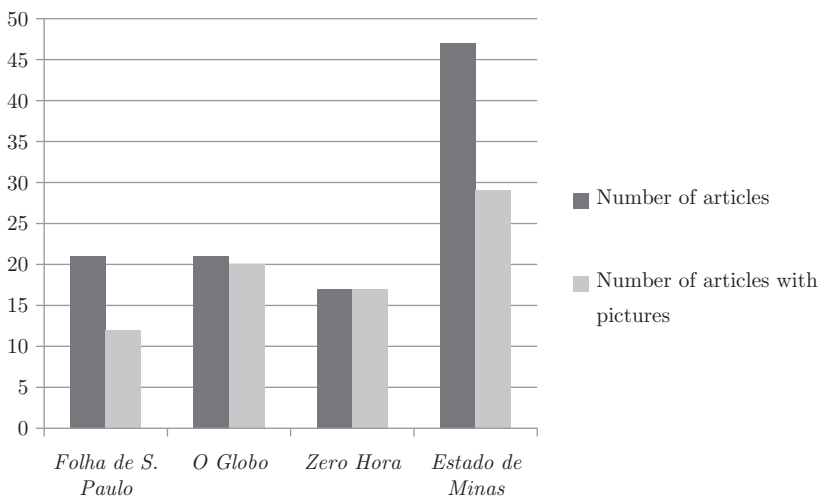


Figure 9.1 Breakdown of number of articles by newspaper (Brazil).

We also found a difference in the amount of coverage between male and female athletes. The male athletes were portrayed in 75 (87.2 percent) of the photographs, while females were represented in 11 (12.8 percent). It could simplistically be argued that women won fewer medals than men and were therefore represented less; however, statistics show that female athletes were responsible for 25 percent of all Brazilian medals.

We also analyzed how the athletes' bodies were framed and concluded that more than 40 percent of photographs presented the entire body and in more than 60 percent the disability was visible. The representation of both male and female athletes follows this pattern. In other words in 72.7 percent of photographs that portrayed women the disability was visible, and the same occurred in 62.7 percent of the images that represented men. This data was further broken down into photographic angle used (Figure 9.2). These findings contrast with those of Schantz and Gilbert, who reported that French and German newspapers' coverage of the 1996 Games tended to frame athletes from the waist up—44 percent of the images framed the athletes from the waist up or just their faces—and hide their disabilities.²⁴

We also noted that the most commonly portrayed disabilities were the physical ones—mostly amputees, wheelchair users and visually impaired athletes (Table 9.1).

Australia

Collectively, our sample set from the four Australian newspapers analyzed consisted of 103 articles and 123 photographs. Of the 103 articles, 26 articles did not feature a photograph of an athlete, meaning that 77 (74.7 percent) of the articles did feature at least one photograph (Figure 9.3). These statistics are notably similar to those of our Brazilian results, with the exception of the much higher number of photographs (123 in the Australian sample compared to 86 in the Brazilian sample), due mostly to the large number of photographs present in the *Courier Mail*.

The difference in representation between male and female athletes was pronounced, but the gap was not as significant as found in the Brazilian results. The 123 photographs showed 135 athletes: 90 (66.6 percent) were male and 45 (33.3 percent) were female.

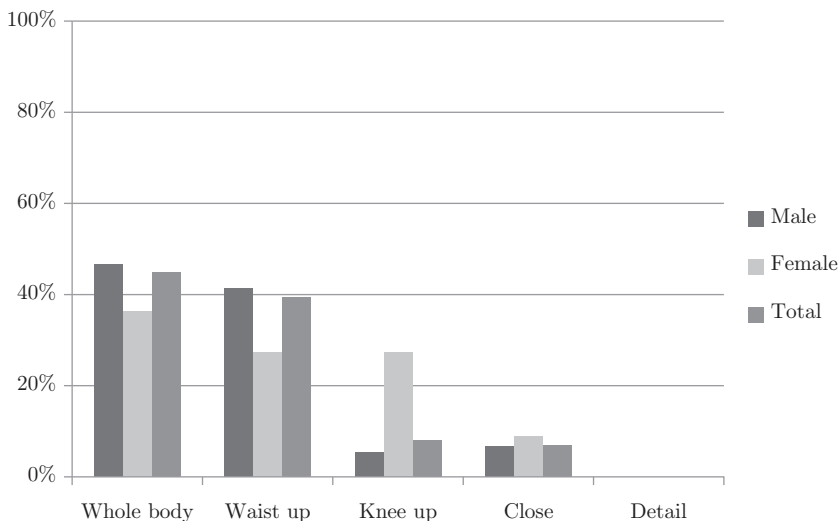


Figure 9.2 Proportion of photographs by photographic angle and athletes' gender (Brazilian newspapers).

Table 9.1 Type of visible disability portrayed (Brazilian newspapers)

| Type | Quantity | Percentage |
|-------------------|----------|------------|
| Amputee | 36 | 63.2 |
| Visual disability | 15 | 26.3 |
| Wheelchair | 6 | 10.5 |

The disparity between visible and invisible disabilities was less significant than that observed in the Brazilian results, with 48.5 percent of images displaying a visible disability and 51.5 percent not showing a disability. This relative evenness is reflected in the male athletes, but the photographs of female athletes present a larger gap, with 30.6 percent of images showing a visible disability and 69.4 percent not showing a disability. Further analysis of the way the athletes were framed found prevalence in the representation of the whole body, accounting for 49 percent of the total images of athletes. However, this trend was not consistent between men and women. Photographs of women presented the athlete waist up in 36 percent of photographs, compared to men who were featured waist up in 17 percent of the images (Figure 9.4).

There were two prominent types of visible disability portrayed in the Australian newspapers—amputees and wheelchair users (Table 9.2). Pictures of amputees constituted 70.5 percent of photos of athletes with visible disabilities; visual impairment accounted for 2 percent; wheelchair users for 23.5 percent, and crutch or leg brace users were represented at 4 percent. This is different to the Brazilian results where the main two types were amputees and visually impaired athletes. This may be in part because of the success of Brazilian Paralympians Daniel Dias, who is an amputee, and Terezinha Guilhermina, an athlete with a visual impairment. Our observation of wheelchair users was also higher than those exhibited in the Brazilian results. This could be because of a high number of images of Kurt Fearnley, a successful Australian wheelchair racer, as well as a number of images of wheelchair rugby and basketball teams.

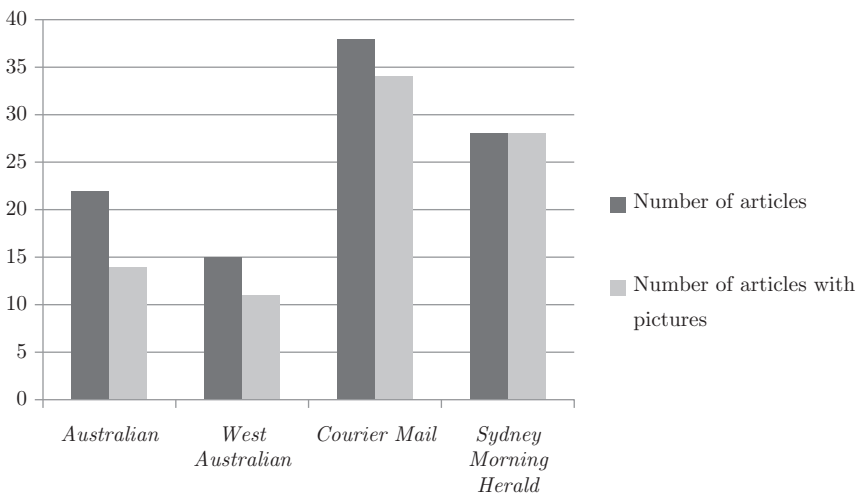


Figure 9.3 Breakdown of number of articles by newspaper (Australia).

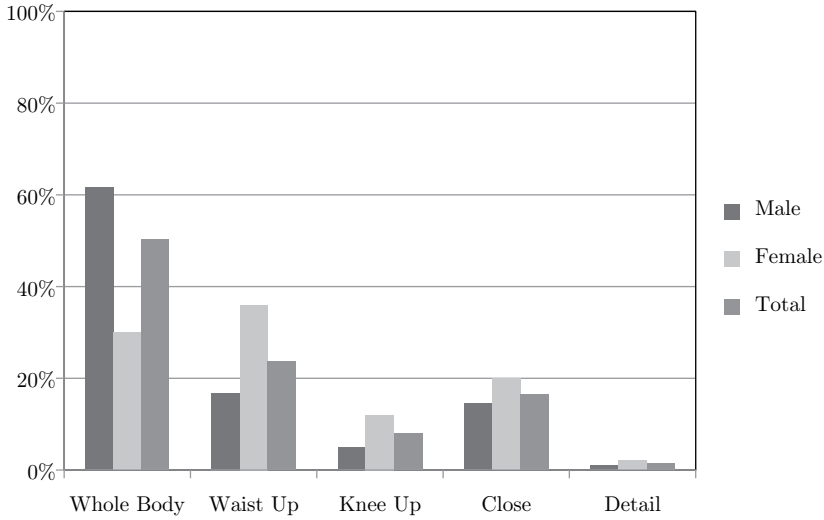


Figure 9.4 Proportion of photographs by photographic angle and athletes' gender (Australian newspapers).

Discussion

There are many aspects to consider when analyzing this data. The four main themes outlined above are considered here in detail—gender representation, the ways in which photographs are commonly framed (photographic angle used), the visibility of disability and the type of disability most commonly depicted in sport by the media. As Beth Haller observed, despite there being limited studies addressing the significance of news photography of people with disabilities, images have “unspoken cognitive implications,”²⁵ whereby people with disabilities can be cast “as passive and dependent, as an equal, or as a superhero.”²⁶

Sport is considered to be a powerful institution that reproduces the patriarchal order and reinforces masculinity.²⁷ In the last 30 years, studies from all over the world have compared media coverage of male and female athletes in international competitions in sports newspapers and in the sports pages of daily newspapers. These studies conclude that news and photographs portraying female athletes and sports were fewer in number and quality than their male counterparts.²⁸ For example, in a study of articles published in the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia between 1984 and 2000, Crossman, Vincent and Speed found that professional female tennis players were portrayed in one-third of photographs compared with the coverage dedicated to their male peers.²⁹ They also found that women involved in feminized

Table 9.2 Type of visible disability portrayed (Australian newspapers)

| Type | Quantity | Percentage |
|-----------------------|----------|------------|
| Amputee | 36 | 70.6 |
| Crutches or leg brace | 2 | 3.9 |
| Visual disability | 1 | 2.0 |
| Wheelchair | 12 | 23.5 |

sports, such as gymnastics, swimming and skating, received more media attention than those athletes that were engaged in masculinized sports such as soccer, basketball, softball or hockey. Press coverage of the Olympics also points to the prevalent male focus coverage. Pereira, Pontes and Ribeiro³⁰ analyzed the photographic coverage of the 2012 Olympic Games in two Brazilian newspapers, and concluded that 68 percent portrayed men and 32 percent women. Crossman et al. analyzed journal articles that discussed this issue, published in the United States, United Kingdom, Canada and Australia between 1984 and 2000, finding that female athletes were portrayed in one-third of the photographs, compared with the coverage dedicated to male athletes.

Continuing this gender-bias argument, yet focusing on how photographs of athletes are commonly depicted in newspaper imagery, while the entire body of athletes without disability are typically framed, several authors claim that images of female athletes with disability are closely framed, depicting only the athlete's face and obscuring her impaired body. Duncan and Sayao-vong denote a sexual prudence dimension to this, as areas such as genital areas, hips, breasts and legs are excluded.³¹ Previous studies have also discovered a tendency in the media to de-eroticize athletes with disabilities' bodies.³² This difference in the portrayal of Paralympic athletes along gender lines and in the way these photographs are framed was also apparent in our study of the literature. We hypothesize that a reason for this could be that the newspapers wanted to focus more on sporting performance rather than on body image. It could further be argued that this positive coverage could indicate a desire to overcome common criticisms about sexualizing or erotizing the female sporting body; however, we also have to take into account that people with disability are generally portrayed as asexual beings,³³ which could be a more realistic approach to explaining our results. Nevertheless, our study revealed that only 9 percent of the photographs in Brazilian newspapers and around 20 percent in Australian newspapers framed just the athlete's face, which is in contrast to these previous studies.

In further analyzing the difference between genders from a framing perspective, Lee found that in more than half of the photographs covering the 2012 Paralympic Games—images sourced from five international newspapers—the whole body of the male athletes was presented (54.9 percent), yet this number dropped to around a third (38.5 percent) when women were the focus.³⁴ Both our Brazilian and Australian data on the same Games reflect this pattern—depiction of the athlete's whole body was apparent in around half of the photographs portraying males, yet in around a third of the images portraying females.

Considering the issue of how visible an athlete's disability is in the media, a study conducted by Schantz and Gilbert about the French and German newspaper coverage of the 1996 Games showed that the press tend to hide Paralympic athletes' disabilities.³⁵ Buysse and Borchering, who analyzed 12 newspapers from five countries during the 2008 Beijing Paralympic Games, reached the same conclusion—the athlete's disability was invisible in 61 percent of the cases.³⁶ Athanasios Pappous, Anne Marcellini and Eric de Léséleuc. analyzed the photographic coverage of the 2000 Sydney to the 2008 Beijing Games in five European countries—their data outlines that in Sydney the majority of the published photographs (82 percent) indicated that the athlete had a disability,³⁷ whereas by Beijing this number had dropped to 42 percent. Bertling found similar results in the German press, claiming that the majority of photographs tended to hide athletes' disabilities through shadow techniques or similar artifices.³⁸ Lee's study, which analyzed the 2012 Paralympic Games' coverage in five countries, showed that there was a slightly increased tendency to show the athlete's disability (50.5 percent visible).³⁹ The same results were found by Ayvazoglu who analyzed the Turkish sports newspaper *Fanatik*.⁴⁰

In our study the disability was visible and identifiable in the majority, 64 percent, of the Brazilian photographs. However, the same results were not found in Australia, where disability was invisible in 51 percent of the photographs. The interrelationship between cultural values and the spectacularization of sport could explain our results. First, cultural values influence the way that

body and disability are seen by society and portrayed by the media. Different cultures give different meanings to the body, for example a scar can be seen as a deformity by some Western cultures, whereas it is a symbol of maturity to the Papua New Guinea Kaningara tribe.⁴¹ Second, it can be argued that as sport becomes increasingly merchandized, marketing is increasing and the need to “sell” the Games is growing—this is in spite of the perceived difficulties of marketing the image of a disabled athlete, an image that goes against the usual ideal athletic body conveyed by the media. Brazil was the host of the 2016 Paralympic Games, therefore it was important during the 2012 Games for Brazilian newspapers to raise awareness about the Paralympic Games and athletes more extensively in preparation for their upcoming (marketing) event. This is part of the process of spectacularization, in which the media consolidates the sport as a product to be sold.

With regards to the type of visible disability portrayed, our study showed that the newspapers depicted amputees more often than other visible disabilities (63.2 percent in Brazil and 70.5 percent in Australia), followed by athletes with visual impairment (26.3 percent in Brazil and 2 percent in Australia), athletes in a wheelchair (10.5 percent in Brazil and 23.5 percent in Australia) and athletes with crutches or a leg brace (2 percent in Australia). This list of visible disabilities is also reflected in the literature—in Shell and Duncan’s study, 40 percent of the athletes portrayed on CBS during the 1996 Games coverage were in wheelchairs, 32 percent were amputees and 20 percent had a visual impairment.⁴² While not in the same sporting arena, yet still valid, when Haller analyzed 12 major American newspapers and magazines between 1990 and 1993, she came to the conclusion that more than 50 percent of the 171 published photographs portrayed people in wheelchairs.⁴³ Hardin and Hardin call this type of ranking by disability constructed by the media the “disability hierarchy,” where men in wheelchairs are in the top because they are the closest to an “ideal” athlete with disability.⁴⁴ DePauw agrees, arguing that this happens because the wheelchair can be seen as a substitute to the lower limbs, while the athlete’s upper body offers an “acceptable” and “apparently normal” physique.⁴⁵ Schantz and Gilbert also concur, and suggest that the visual image of this particular group is so strong that it allows the subject to be labelled as having a disability without exposing the audience to anything “confronting.”⁴⁶ Another complementary study was conducted by Raab and Janda who analyzed the portrayal of the 2008 Beijing Paralympic Games by German public television.⁴⁷ They found that athletes in wheelchairs were portrayed in 18 percent of the analyzed material, followed by amputees and visually impaired athletes. They also claim that athletes in wheelchairs or amputees are, in general, the most common in the media as they do not cause so much aversion despite their visible disability.

Considering all of these factors, our data suggested that there were more similarities than differences in the 2012 Paralympic Games photograph coverage between the two countries.

There were several limitations of the study. First, the analysis focused on photographic images and did not conduct an in-depth analysis of the written content of the articles. Such analysis of the interrelationship between image and article text will yield more comprehensive results regarding the social and cultural construction of disabled athletes in the media and is an important area of future research. Second, our study focused on newspapers. Although this helped to show changing patterns of representation and continued this prominent methodology focus of prior disability media studies, other forms of media are proving significant in changing the image of disability sport. For example, the roles of television and social media have been recognized as vital to the spectacularization of the Paralympics and future research could broaden the scope to include digital media, fandom and celebrity.

Conclusion

This chapter reports findings of a content analysis of photographs of Paralympic athletes appearing in popular Australian and Brazilian newspapers during the 2012 Paralympic Games.

The research focused on how these images of disabled athletes were portrayed in the media—the amount of photographs depicted, their representation of gender, the ways in which images were commonly framed (the photographic angle used), the visibility of disability and the type of disability shown.

In general, both the Brazilian and Australian media published a large number of photographs; this was in opposition to findings in other studies, which claimed that there is iconography poverty regarding Paralympic Games coverage.⁴⁸ Regarding gender representation, the newspapers from both countries focused more on male than female athletes; the Brazilian press had a slightly more masculine coverage than the Australian press.

With regards to the way in which the photographs were framed, our results show that almost half of the images we analyzed from both countries represented the athlete's whole body, or at least from their waist up. As outlined above, this data does not corroborate prior research. This is a significant finding. Often the media will be seen to attempt to “neutralize” the disabled body, making it either “disappear” or appear as non-disabled as possible in case they make audiences feel uncomfortable. This is particularly the case with disabled athletes. Bertling and Schierl, explaining the lack of images associated with Paralympic athletes in newspaper coverage, write that “pictures attract attention; they demand emotional involvement”⁴⁹ and reiterate that audiences do not want to have such involvement with disability. This, alongside commercial media's long-standing argument that the Paralympics' complicated ranking system has alienated audiences,⁵⁰ has resulted in Paralympic athletes not receiving the same level of media coverage as their Olympic counterparts.

There was a marked difference between the coverage from the two countries with regards to the visibility of disability. In Brazil, in the majority of photographs presented during the period of the Games, the disability was visible and identifiable, an unusual outcome in a media that usually demands the depiction of perfect bodies. Indeed, this finding is in opposition to the majority of research about media representation of Paralympic sports and, in some sense, to the data from Australia in which 51 percent of the photographs did not display athletes' disabilities. The type of disability shown also varied slightly between the countries. In Brazil the most visible disability in the photographs were amputees, followed by visually impaired athletes and athletes in wheelchair. In Australia the data showed that amputees, athletes in wheelchairs, followed visually impaired athletes and those with crutches or leg brace were the more frequently displayed disabilities.

Returning to our theme of spectacularization, we noted that this seemed to have an impact on how the media in the respective countries approached the coverage of the 2012 Games. The 2016 Paralympic Games were to be held in Brazil and there was therefore a greater incentive for the Brazilian media to prepare their domestic audience for this significant sporting event—the more progressive representations could be seen to be part of a spectacularization in preparation for this. Increasing audience identification with any group turns the unfamiliar (disability) into the familiar⁵¹ and, in this case sell tickets to the Paralympic Games. Australian newspapers did not have the same commercial interests—their home-grown Paralympics were over long ago. However, the concept of spectacularized and merchandized sport for people with disabilities is still in its infancy, and disabled sports continues to be marginalized. Indeed, previous studies of newspaper representations of Paralympians have emphasized that such marginalization—alongside traditional negative and stereotypical portrayals of this group, including the common discourse of tragedy and/or inspiration while at the same time obscuring images of impairments—has also had consequences for a broader representation of disability. As the conventions of Paralympic coverage becomes more aligned with journalistic norms, it is important to produce updated accounts of how newspapers position their audiences to understand both the Games and disability in general.

Notes

- 1 Beth Haller, "Camera Angle and Media Representations of People with Disabilities" (paper presented to the Media and Disability Interest Group, Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication Annual Meeting, Washington, DC, August 1995), 2.
- 2 Haller, "Camera Angle and Media Representations," 2.
- 3 Haller, "Camera Angle and Media Representations," 1.
- 4 Nigel Thomas and Andrew Smith, "Preoccupied with Able-Bodiedness? An Analysis of the British Media Coverage of the 2000 Paralympics Games," *Adapted Physical Activity Quarterly* 20 (2003): 166–181; Toni Bruce, "Us and Them: The Influence of Discourses of Nationalism on Media Coverage of the Paralympics," *Disability & Society* 29, no. 9 (2014): 1446–1459.
- 5 Haller, "Camera Angle and Media Representations," 15.
- 6 Thomas and Smith, "Preoccupied with Able-Bodiedness?" 166.
- 7 Thomas and Smith, "Preoccupied with Able-Bodiedness?" 173.
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- 18 DePauw, "The (In)Visibility of Disability," 416–430.
- 19 Thomas and Smith, "Preoccupied with Able-Bodiedness?" 169.
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