

Media approach to Paralympic sports: the view of Brazilian athletes

*Renato Francisco Rodrigues Marques**

*Gustavo Luis Gutierrez***

*Marco Antonio Bettine de Almeida****

*Myriam Nunomura*****

*Rafael Pombo Menezes******

Abstract: Paralympic sport is in the process of social and economic assertion and the media is the main tool to spread its ideals and products. Based on concepts of Pierre Bourdieu's field theory, this work aimed to investigate Brazilian athletes' views on content, means and scope of media coverage of Paralympic sports so as to offer reflections on their expectations and perceptions. From semi-structured interviews with 23 Brazilian Paralympic athletes and discourse analysis based on the Collective Subject Discourse method, we reached the following important results: Paralympic coverage is low but on the rise; athletes divide their preferences between publicizing their sports feats and the idea of overcoming disability.

Keywords: Sports. Audiovisual media. People with disabilities. Sociology.

*School of Physical Education and Sport of Ribeirão Preto. University of São Paulo. Ribeirão Preto, SP, Brazil. Email: renatomarques@usp.br

**School of Physical Education. State University of Campinas. Campinas, SP, Brazil. Email: gutierrez@fef.unicamp.br

***School of Arts, Sciences and Humanities. University of São Paulo. São Paulo, SP, Brazil. Email: marcobettine@usp.br

****School of Physical Education and Sports of Ribeirão Preto. University of São Paulo. Ribeirão Preto, SP, Brazil. Email: mnunomur@usp.br

*****School of Physical Education and Sports of Ribeirão Preto. University of São Paulo. Ribeirão Preto, SP, Brazil. Email: rafaelpombo@usp.br

1 INTRODUCTION

Paralympic sport started with therapeutic and recreational purposes, but in the twenty-first century its characteristics are typical of high-performance sports (BAILEY, 2008). Since the late 1990s, this form of sporting event has been undergoing a process of assertion as a spectacularized practice and seeing growth in its the market (MARQUES *et al.*, 2009). The phenomenon has produced some social change regarding participation by and recognition of disabled people in prominent positions in society (BRITAIN, 2010).

The media, exposure and financial accumulation are interdependent in spectacle-sports. In this relationship, the media need sports as content to be marketed and sports need to be publicized in order to generate profits (COAKLEY, 2008).

Commercial interest in sports is guided by its proximity to viewers, who become consumers, and by businesses' desire to approach these people in order to sell their products (HOWE, 2004). The media are essential tools in this process as a means to spread ideas and ideals as well as to promote products. The economic aspect might be the most significant in the involvement between media and sport (HOWE, 2008). In this scenario, media coverage of Paralympic sport is a way to expand inclusive, sporting and business ideals, and places it in a highly competitive market where it fights for space with other forms of sporting events (PURDUE; HOWE, 2012).

Considering the situation, this research intended to unveil the opinions of Brazilian Paralympic athletes about the media's approach to the Paralympic movement and some consequences for their opportunities to operate in some social spaces, especially in the sports field and in relation to the discussion on social inclusion. The research is justified to present the perspective of players in the Paralympic movement about the way their field is presented and offered to the general public. That information can contribute,

among other possibilities, to reflections on the promotion social inclusion and the development of high performance sports.

Based on categories typical of Pierre Bourdieu's field theory, this study aimed at investigating Brazilian Paralympic athletes' views on content, means and scope of media coverage of Paralympic sports in order to propose reflections on their expectations and perceptions.

2 METHODOLOGICAL DECISIONS

This was a qualitative study with data collection based on personal and semi-structured interviews with Brazilian Paralympic athletes, conducted indoors in places suggested by the subjects (training centers, hotels, institutions for people with disabilities, homes), thus ensuring silence and avoiding interruptions, and at different times during practice and competitions.

We considered as Paralympic Athletes individuals who practice and compete systematically and officially in one of the sports included in the Paralympic Games (PG) organized by the International Paralympic Committee. That determination is based on the definition proposed by Costa and Winckler (2012), in which Paralympic sport is a restricted environment involving PG sports and is available only to persons who meet the classification criteria and therefore are eligible for the disputes.

The final number of subjects was determined by saturation (MINAYO, 2006). We interviewed 23 adult Brazilian Paralympic athletes from several sports, with visual or body disability, of both sexes and different competition levels. Subjects were randomly designated as S1-S23 to preserve their identities. Table 1 shows the selected athletes, with five of their features:

Table 1: Characteristics of respondents athletes.

Subject	Sex	Modality	Disability	Competition level	National squad member
S1	F	Swimming	VD	National	No
S2	F	Goalball	VD	Regional	No
S3	F	Goalball	VD	Regional	No
S4	F	Goalball	VD	International	Yes
S5	M	Goalball	VD	International	Yes
S6	M	Athletics	BD	Paralympic Games	Yes
S7	F	Athletics	VD	Paralympic Games	Yes
S8	F	Athletics	BD	Paralympic Games	Yes
S9	M	Swimming	BD	Paralympic Games	Yes
S10	M	Swimming	BD	Paralympic Games	Yes
S11	M	Rugby	BD	InterNational	Yes
S12	M	Rugby	BD	InterNational	Yes
S13	M	Rugby	BD	InterNational	Yes
S14	M	Basketball	BD	Regional	No
S15	M	Basketball	BD	Regional	No
S16	M	Basketball	BD	Regional	No
S17	F	Basketball	BD	Regional	No
S18	M	Basketball	BD	Regional	No
S19	M	Goalball	VD	Paralympic Games	Yes
S20	M	Goalball	VD	Paralympic Games	Yes
S21	M	Goalball	VD	Paralympic Games	Yes

S22	M	Goalball	VD	Paralympic Games	Yes
S23	M	Goalball	VD	Paralympic Games	Yes

Key: F – Female; M – Male; VD – Visual disability; BD – Body Disability; National team – Yes: athletes who are or have been members of the Brazilian national team of sport they practice; No: athletes who have never been part of such a team. Source: Original survey data

After audio interviews were transcribed, discourse analysis was conducted through the method of “Collective Subject Discourse”. This research proposal is based on the concept of Social Representation that, at the symbolic level of exchanges between different actors in a field, enables communication and understanding of different meanings, providing cohesion between members of the same social space. In this scenario, the method aims to point out collective contents, i. e., those representing the opinion and socio-political positioning of groups of subjects without eliminating the different opinions that may arise within the same field, also considered in the analysis of results (LEFÈVRE; LEFÈVRE, 2012).

The product of this form of research involves the construction of different Collective Subject Discourses (CSDs) that cover common positions among respondents (LEFÈVRE; LEFÈVRE, 2005). This type of analysis is based on the premise that the same group includes different types or categories of collective thought and that the construction of different CSDs synthesizes and symbolizes such diversity (LEFÈVRE; LEFÈVRE, 2012) – typical of contexts of social unrest involving symbolic exchanges and disputes for power and social recognition (BOURDIEU, 1983, 1989, 1990, 2003).

While it is based in the search for consensus on several topics, dissent – and consequently speeches with little intensity or strength – are also expected (few subjects who share certain beliefs) (LEFÈVRE; LEFÈVRE, 2012).

Organization of data based on this method works with methodological figures that, being linked and related, order information: Key expressions (KE) – excerpts/literal parts of discourse that suggest approaches to its essence; Central Ideas (CI) – as the discourse’s core theme, it indicates points and categories that can contribute to discuss the topic (LEFÈVRE; LEFÈVRE, 2005).

CSD is based on a synthesis-speech drawn up by the researcher and composed of the sum of the KEs of each individual speech with the same CIs. In developing the CSD, KEs were detached and transported to Discourse Analysis Instruments where CIs were pointed out. Based on CI analysis, ECHs were grouped according to homogeneous meanings, building different CSDs (LEFÈVRE; LEFÈVRE, 2005).

This study was submitted to and approved by the Scientific Committee of the Brazilian Paralympic Academy, which assisted in contacting athletes and granted authorization for access to places, and by the Ethics Committee of the School of Philosophy, Science and Languages of the University of São Paulo at Ribeirão Preto. All subjects signed a free and informed consent form.

Two initial questions were asked:

- 1) How would you rate the media’s attention to Paralympic sport?
- 2) How is the relationship of Paralympic athletes with the media?

According to the issues resulting from conversations, new questions emerged. This explains the fact that not all athletes have expressed opinion on all issues exposed in the analysis and discussion section. Such an occurrence, added to the dissent typical of social fields, produced the three CSDs with only one subject as “speaker” (Track 1 – CSD-4 and CSD-7; Theme 3 – CSD-2). According to Massa, Uezu and Böhme (2010), in these specific cases it characterizes legitimate discourses for analysis, but which do not constitute essentially collective forms.

3 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This section describes the synthesis-discourses resulting from the analysis of respondents' discourses expressed by the description of CIs and CSDs, followed by discussion of data divided according to themes resulting from interviews. Along with CI titles, we point out subjects who share such stance in order to demonstrate the intensity/strength of discourses within the sample of subjects interviewed.

Theme 1: Media coverage of Paralympic sports.

CSD1 – CI-A: There is no satisfactory coverage. Therefore, the public knows little about Paralympic sports – S2; S3; S8; S12; S13; S17; S18; S20; S21; S22; S23

The media gives very small space to Paralympic sports. We rarely see something on TV. I think they could cover it a little more; the press sometimes doesn't cover it because they think it will not pay off, because no one will watch it, and people are not interested and they don't watch it because the press doesn't cover it.

CSD2 – CI-B: Paralympic sports' coverage is temporary and restricted to major events – S2; S8; S9; S13; S19; S20; S22

Coverage improved only because the Paralympic Games will take place in Brazil. We tried to publicize the Grand Prix of Goalball in the Northeast, we left notes for people on radio and TV stations, and hardly anyone published anything. No TV station came to cover it. The press gives no incentive during the Paralympic cycle, we only appear when we win some medal at the Games, then we are forgotten again. Regardless of the athlete's situation, the media should follow the daily life of the sport.

CSD3 – CI-C: Only the best results are covered – S2; S4; S6; S8; S19; S22

I get a little upset because they only seek athletes when they win medals. When you go to a competition and get a nice result the media pays attention to it. I think for the media what matters is how many medals you've won. Only when you win will reporters interview you, you are interesting to them only at that time. The media should serve not only to publicize results, but also to cover a national, regional competition, a Grand Prix. If we had not won a medal in London, we might not be mentioned on TV at all.

CSD4 – CI-D: exclusively Paralympic sports have greater difficulty to be covered than those adapted, which the public already knows – S21

Goalball is not covered much because only the blind practice it. Athletics, swimming, football, volleyball, in turn, are practiced by everyone. Everyone knows what they are.

CSD5 – CI-E: Football's supremacy in the media is an obstacle – S8; S13; S16; S21

I think the Brazilian press is still very devoted to some specific sports, especially football. Not only Paralympic football, but other sports in the country are also affected. The media today only talk about football.

CSD6 - CI-F: Coverage is increasing – S1; S2; S4; S6; S7; S9; S10

It has increased. We can't complain, because things have improved a lot. People have been seeking Paralympic sports. Previously, it seemed to have little importance. Today the media coverage is spontaneous. People look for the sport, not because our Committee will pay for a nice hotel for the journalist or for any TV station to cover the competition. Today we already know that the Paralympic Games follow the Olympics, and people also look forward to watching it.

CSD7 – CI-G: The Brazilian media has given more prominence to Paralympic sports than the international press – S10

I believe that it is a little better here, that's why I say that we are on the right track. We have been on the media a lot, and if think of it, it's a lot for a sport that, until 2004, had almost nothing.

CSD8 – CI-H: There is a certain priority to individual sports that are more popular, such as swimming and athletics – S20; S21

Swimming and athletics are the flagship of advertisement, of sponsorships. Others, such as goalball, can get some space, but not as much as athletics and swimming. Team sports in general are still in their childhood regarding media coverage.

Most athletes show dissatisfaction with media coverage of Paralympic sports. However, as pointed out by CI-F, some showed an optimistic perception about the improvement of that situation. The three first CIs signal dissatisfaction on the frequency of coverage in addition to the complaint that, when it occurs, it is superficial and focuses on major events or just on positive results, with no broad coverage.

The prevailing dissatisfaction with the coverage of Paralympic sports points to a desire for more recognition as sportspeople and as potential subjects with prominent social action. The urge to make the Paralympic movement a legitimate phenomenon consumed by the general public signals a search for acquisition of symbolic capital by the contemporary sports field, linked, according to Marques and Gutierrez (2009), to recognition of sporting merit and consequent possibility of financial and social gains.

Two perspectives justify concern with more media presence: a) recognition of people with disabilities (PWD) as productive members of society; b) the search for better conditions for practice and competition, based on the recognition of those subjects as high-performance athletes and consequent increase in potential

social and financial gains. Such perspectives direct discourses to a greater appreciation of a social view on disability, which, according to Munster *et al.* (2008), highlights PWD's current and potential relationship with society, rather than the medical model, which overestimates subjects' obstacles and limitations and holds them responsible for their own integration into social spaces.

Some authors corroborate respondents' views. Coakley (2008) states that disabled athletes receive little or no media attention. Pereira, Monteiro and Pereira (2011) highlight the predominance of press articles focused on results. Figueiredo and Novais (2011) point out that the Brazilian and Portuguese written presses, between the 1996 and the 2008 PGs, followed the same line of valuing results rather than other aspects of the event, such as organizational and political-economic issues, athletes' expectations, behind-the-scenes events or doping.

The literature suggests a commercial logic that determines the content favored by the media, including about paralympic sports (SCHANTZ; GILBERT, 2001). Such content would be chosen and developed based on its ability to generate audience (COAKLEY, 2008), for financial reasons, public interest or sponsors and "newsworthiness" (BRITAIN, 2004). Bourdieu (1997) points out that the media, and especially television, covers what is in its interest, whether politically or economically.

Paralympic sports are considered high-risk commercial content for the media (COAKLEY, 2008). One reason would be the general public's difficulty to link it with high performance, due to a very strong relationship with the prospect of rehabilitation and inclusion (PURDUE; HOWE, 2012). Therefore, problems for wider coverage result mainly from the permanence of a medical perspective on disability, both in the discourses of media agents and within the general public.

Potential sponsors resist to associate their brands to athletes with disabilities. Such distance is mainly a result of the aesthetic awkwardness that keeps athletes with disabilities away from

health and beauty stereotypes; lack of identification between the Paralympic movement and the consumer public; difficulty to associate an image seen as fragile to sporting ideals of superiority, strength and victories (FARIA; CARVALHO, 2010).

Contrary to these trends, some respondents reported that media coverage of Paralympic sports has improved in recent years (CI-F and CI-G). Some authors corroborate that perception (BRITAIN, 2004; HOWE, 2008; PEREIRA; MONTEIRO; PEREIRA, 2011). For Figueiredo and Guerra (2005), the 2004 PG mark a breakthrough in the relationship between the media and paralympic sports. The authors note that this event had a worldwide audience of 1.8 billion people and represented the start of commercial perspective for that type of sport in Brazil.

Another point to be noted in respondents' discourse is the general public's difficulty to know and approach paralympic sports, caused mainly by a still unsatisfactory coverage (CI-A and CI-D) and competition with other forms of sporting events (CI-E). US athletes have a similar discourse to Brazilian ones, claiming that few people attend disputes because they do not know them as a result of poor coverage (Berger, 2008).

Howe (2008) points out that the general public knows little about the particulars of Paralympic sports. An example is the athletes' ranking system, which, according to the author, appears as the primary habitus of the Paralympic movement and which still presents itself confusingly to viewers due to lack of media coverage and publicizing of Paralympic culture (HOWE, 2004).

A complex situation is created in which the general public does not know Paralympic sport and therefore does not consume it while the media do not focus on it because of the risk of small audience rates and unsatisfactory commercial return.

Especially from the early 1980s on, Paralympic sports have developed an increasingly close relationship with economic capital, based on the marketing of its symbols, products and different forms

of manifestation (MARQUES; GUTIERREZ; MONTAGNER, 2009). This perspective also influences the Paralympic movement, which seeks, through more space on and recognition by the media, to increase its opportunities for social and economic inclusion. In this process, public consumption of Paralympic sports emerges as an important variable for the growth of this form of sporting manifestation.

The media, in turn, comes as a vital tool for publicizing Paralympic culture. Thus, we see respondent athletes' concern about the public knowing Paralympic sports better and therefore ascribing certain responsibility to the media regarding such unsatisfactory situation. Their discourses, although predominantly directed to television and leaving other media such as newspapers, magazines, internet, radio on the background, are mostly laden with discontent about media coverage.

Taking the media as an important tool for the dissemination of sports culture (SILVA; HOWE, 2012), it would be desirable that the logics in the coverage of Paralympic sports and other low status sporting events be reviewed in order to attract greater public interest. Such a move could happen in joint initiatives between Paralympic sports organizers and the media, for example, in the Brazilian Paralympic Committee's funding of Brazilian journalists to cover the 2004 and 2008 PG (MARQUES, 2013).

Accordingly, the coverage not only of sports results, but also of extracompetition news could help bring the general public closer to athletes and the different Paralympic sports (COAKLEY, 2008). There is also a significant lack of knowledge about disability and Paralympic sport by journalists and media agents (BRITTAIN, 2004), plus the shy presence of journalists with disabilities covering Paralympic events (HOWE, 2008).

As for the supremacy of football on the media (CI-E), Morato *et al.* (2011) illustrate it by citing that Brazilian blind football players point football players as their idols rather than athletes in the sport that they practice. That shows a culturally established predominance

of football over other modalities and Paralympic practice's secondary place, even within the sports field.

Some athletes highlighted that the media gives certain priority to covering some Paralympic sports over others (CI-H). Both subjects are team sports (goalball) practitioners and denounce the privilege given to individual sports. CPB officials indicate this trend in Brazil, where team sports face major difficulties for getting coverage and sponsorship compared to individual sports (MARQUES; GUTIERREZ, 2014). This would occur because of increased supply of medals and easier identification of athletes compared to teams.

A final point of the first topic is a comparison between Brazilian and international media (CI-L). Some data support the view according to which conditions in Brazil are better. For example, it was the country with more hours of coverage for the 2004 PG (168 hours), followed by Spain (125 hours) (FIGUEIREDO, GUERRA, 2005). The Brazilian media coverage seems to be more comprehensive and diverse than that of other countries. For example, it offered more information on the preparation of athletes and behind-the-scenes of competitions during the PG 1996-2008 than the Portuguese media (FIGUEIREDO; NOVAIS, 2011).

We can also mention the little attention given by the US media to Paralympic sports – virtually two or three weeks to the PG. That is, there is some coverage every four years while other events are ignored (BRITAIN, 2004; COAKLEY, 2008).

Theme 2 – Publicity of athlete with disabilities' difficulties and/or their sporting achievements.

CSD 1 – CI-A: Both approaches are important – S1; S2; S3; S4; S6; S7; S8; S13; S20; S22

I think both approaches are equally important. It's okay to approach overcoming as well as results. I think Paralympic sports would have to be covered as a competition, emphasizing the dispute itself

and then highlighting the overcoming difficulties in sports.

CSD 2 – CI-B: Publicizing overcoming of difficulties is a way to encourage and value people with disabilities – S1; S3; S8; S22

It's good to show people the overcoming of disability. There are many people who have some disability and stay home and often don't know the opportunities provided by sports. This overcoming discourse helps us face the fears and our own limits. Because a lot of people hide their disability during their whole childhood and, when they become athletes, they show it to everyone. Then they discover that they can be happier.

CSD3 – CI-C: Preference for covering sporting achievements of athletes – S2; S5; S6; S8; S9; S10; S11; S12; S13; S20; S21; S22; S23

I think our media is a bit sensationalist. We want it to change. We're playing, and instead of saying that we are well prepared, physically fit, that we had proper training, they don't. They always say, "Look, they have overcome their difficulties. That's an example for everyone. They do what we don't do". I don't quite agree with that. That talk really bothers me. The worst feeling humans can have about others is pity. It's too bad because no one is better or worse than anyone else, people are just different. Every news on Paralympic sports has that background music that refers to overcoming limits, surpassing barriers. It's not like that. I'm a disabled person, OK. Life can be even more difficult, but in sports terms I'm just like any athlete. I think that talk that the people are poor things should end. No, we are not poor things. We're high-performance athletes.

CSD4 – CI-D: Sensationalism about the difficulties caused by disability does not help to promote the sport – S12; S13; S23

The media sometimes don't show some things because they might not sell. If the media

gave more coverage to the sporting aspect of Paralympic sports it would be wonderful. That's the problem with prejudice: to see disabled people as poor things or as heroes simply because they now take part in a competition. That's very negative and encourages prejudice. If we are to be admired, it should be as athletes, not because we are poor things.

Similar to US and British Paralympic athletes (HARDIN; HARDIN, 2004; BERGER, 2008; SILVA; HOWE, 2012), the subjects of this study did not agree on the different approaches used by the media. Three stances stand out: preference for coverage of athletic feats and discomfort with a focus on overcoming disability (CI-C); optimistic perception on overcoming disabilities (CI-B); positive perception of balance between both (CI-A).

Both possibilities happen in Paralympic Media (MARQUES *et al.*, 2013). However, CI-B's prospect is most recurrent and traditional (BERGER, 2008; HOWE, 2008; FARIA; CARVALHO, 2010; FIGUEIREDO; NOVAIS, 2011; SILVA; HOWE, 2012; VON SIKORSKI; SCHIERL, 2012).

The literature (HARDIN; HARDIN, 2004; BERGER, 2008; SILVA; HOWE, 2012) call supercrip the media's sensationalist proclivity to cover athletes with disabilities as heroes who overcome disadvantages imposed on them and have extraordinary achievements. Such perception implies a stereotyping process that requires a personal struggle against limitations in order to overcome them and achieve success (SILVA; HOWE, 2012).

Most respondents stated their preference for a focus on their athletic achievements and felt uncomfortable with the supercrip discourse (CI-C). Such evidence underscores the political and social stance of athletes regarding the value ascribed to the social model of disability, based on the appreciation of PWD's potential and their different possibilities to act in society. We see that most respondents take advantage of a position linked to the appreciation of their work and their social role as athletes, much more connected

to sports achievements than to their disability condition. The discourse against a form of publicizing ideas guided the medical model of disability (supercrip) is evident.

Some foreign athletes share that stance (HARDIN; HARDIN, 2004; BERGER, 2008; PURDUE; HOWE, 2012), even justifying that the supercrip view creates expectation on the part of society over minor sports performances of Olympic athletes and expressing some fear of a possible loss of advertising space with another type of approach (HARDIN; HARDIN, 2004).

The supercrip view, while treating athletes with disabilities paradoxically (as both poor things and heroes), comes as a form of symbolic capital of Paralympic sports on the media – an identity for that form of sport that differentiates it from others and thus would enable more coverage and audience through a sensationalist approach. This perspective is supported by the image of athletes as “exotic humans” who generate higher audience than their sports achievements (NOVAIS; FIGUEIREDO, 2010) and thus ensure “good news” (HOWE, 2008) and feed the sports media industry (SILVA; HOWE, 2012), but do not legitimate Paralympic athletes as elite athletes (BERGER, 2008).

By spreading the supercrip discourse, the media exploits spectators’ compassion towards Paralympic athletes, treating them as victims (FIGUEIREDO, GUERRA, 2005). The problem is that it hinders admiration for athletic achievements and therefore the emergence of sports idols (NOVAIS; FIGUEIREDO, 2010). It creates certain “moral asepsis”, i. e., Paralympic sports are treated by the media in a puritanical way, disconnected from any critical sense. Controversial issues such as doping and unsatisfactory performances by athletes are not pointed out, casting Olympic sports as something different and creating an aura of marginalization or lack of prestige (HOWE, 2008).

Although many Paralympic athletes prefer to be treated according to their athletic achievements, some accept the supercrip discourse to receive some media exposure (HARDIN; HARDIN,

2004; COAKLEY, 2008), since the lack of coverage contributes to inhibit the involvement of PWDs in sports practices (BRITAIN, 2004). This stance was also found among the subjects of this study (CI-B). In addition to some who assume that such perspective allows certain media access, others point out that the supercrip view can motivate PWDs to join sports. This group is supported in part by athletes interviewed by Berger (2008) and Hardin and Hardin (2004), who see the supercrip view as a way to show disabilities in a positive light, underscoring PWD's determination and their overcoming ability.

Perhaps for the – most outstanding – positive and negative aspects exposed in the literature, some respondents in this work approve of both types of approaches (CI-A). Their speeches show both concern about appreciation of sportspeople with disabilities as high performance athletes and sympathy towards spreading the view of the difficulties and social barriers faced by PWDs.

Subjects linked to both CI-A and CI-B are less reluctant towards the supercrip view. This perspective elucidates mainly two types of political-social stances: a) the first is linked to coverage of sports for PWDs, regardless of the means; b) the second is connected to a less critical stance towards the medical perspective on disability and more related to the view of sports as a tool to encourage PWDs to seek ways to participate more actively in society.

In contrast, subjects who think that the supercrip discourse does not contribute to the publicizing sports (CI-D) take a stance close to CI-C and find some support in the literature (BRITAIN, 2004). For some authors, such an approach is based on the medical paradigm of disability and strengthens stereotypes of dependence and inefficiency, thus contributing to the spread of discrimination and prejudice (HARDIN; HARDIN, 2004; HOWE, 2008; PEREIRA; MONTEIRO; PEREIRA, 2011; FIGUEIREDO; NOVAIS, 2011; SILVA; HOWE, 2012).

On the other hand, by highlighting the emphasis on sports achievements and treating Olympic and Paralympic athletes from the same perspective, the media can help strengthen social inclusion and reduce prejudice (NOVAIS; FIGUEIREDO, 2010; VON SIVORSKI; SCHIERL, 2012). Thus, disability would lead to efficiency and limitation would open way for potential (MORATO *et al.*, 2011).

Theme 3 - Comparisons between Olympic and Paralympic sports in the media.

CSD 1 – CI-A: There is more coverage of Olympic sports – S3; S9; S22

Coverage of Olympic sports is wide and always happens, but you never get news about Paralympic sports, only paid channels will broadcast it, with a smaller scope and number of events. For example, when a Paralympic national team is selected, there is no coverage. Or when Daniel Dias won six gold medals, you didn't see him once swimming on TV. At the time of the Olympics, in turn, stations would interrupt regular programming to broadcast a competition with César Cielo.

CSD 2 – CI-B: We must be cautious about comparing Olympic and Paralympic sports in relation to the number of medals – S13

When we look, for example, at the Paralympic medal table, if compared to the Olympics, we always see that the former have statistically better results. But I think that it is something we have to examine with caution. For example, you have more than ten times the number of medals in Paralympic athletics than in Olympics. And even looking at the rankings, I think it's a little confusing, because you have to see if the number of countries that are participating is the same.

CSD3 - CI-C: Paralympic sports in Brazil are more productive than the Olympics – S22; S23

Because if you compare, we are much better

than Olympic athletes. We're 7th in the general Paralympics table, and which place were the Olympic teams at? What I'm comparing is the medals table. I'm 7th. And where is the Olympics? So as I see it, Paralympics are more successful.

The comparison between Olympic and Paralympic universes is a latent topic both in the media and the academy. In this scenario, the Paralympic movement emerges as a heir to the Olympics, especially regarding organization, coverage and marketing of symbols and objects (MARQUES *et al.*, 2009). The topic emerged in the discourses of some athletes interviewed in this study. The subjects who compared Olympics and Paralympics media coverage stressed the predominance of the former over the latter (CI-A).

It is possible to find reports in the literature that are consistent with this stance. Of Brazilian and Portuguese news related to the 2008 PG and Olympics (OG), 27% referred to the former and 73% to the latter (NOVAIS; FIGUEIREDO, 2010). Other authors explain the difference by the low value given by the media to the Paralympic movement (SCHANTZ; GILBERT, 2001; BRITAIN, 2004; FIGUEIREDO; GUERRA, 2005), illustrated by the lower importance given by political authorities to Paralympic events over Olympic ones, hence its secondary place (GONÇALVES; ALBINO, VAZ, 2009).

Moreover, Novais and Figueiredo (2010) say that Olympic news are more loaded with drama and details about athletes' performances and scenes of disputes, while Paralympic ones just describe results. This emerges as a problem, since the sports market requires a contribution by the media for coverage and news that go beyond competitions times, allowing a stronger link between consumers and athletes (COAKLEY, 2008).

Some disagreement could be found in the discourses of some athletes, especially when comparing Brazilian Olympic and Paralympic sports performance (CI-B, CI-C). S22 and S23 demanded most media space, justified by Brazilian Paralympic

athletes' better performance over Olympic ones. On the other hand, S13 suggests caution in that comparison because of differences in criteria for award and quantification of the medals table between OG and PG. That athlete's view is supported by the literature (HOWE, JONES, 2006; MARQUES *et al.*, 2009).

The lack of consensus about the issue shows two different perspectives when looking for greater appreciation of the symbolic capital of Paralympic sports within the sports field: a) the first one places greater emphasis on the amount of Paralympic achievements; b) the second one focuses on the Paralympic movement as an important phenomenon in itself, regardless of any comparison with the Olympics. Those discourses show a similar tendency to search for improving media and commercial potential of the Paralympic movement, something that, according to the data found in this study, seems to be characteristic of the habitus of athletes interviewed.

In any case, in absolute terms, Novais and Figueiredo (2010) show that the number of news items about Olympic and Paralympic sports in Brazil and Portugal is not proportional to the medals won by athletes in both countries. That reflects greater exposure of Olympic athletes, regardless of any meritocratic comparison as to the number of medals won, which corroborates CI-A.

4 FINAL REMARKS

There is a historical dispute over the inclusion of PWDs in several segments of society (DUARTE; SANTOS, 2003). The process ranges from conservative adoption of a medical perspective to an innovative greater appreciation of the social model of disability from the late twentieth century on. Some agents act in this process, especially through the media, as disseminators of ideals of change – including athletes.

The media has the power to influence the way people take stances in the social space, including on issues related to PWDs

(COAKLEY, 2008; PEREIRA; MONTEIRO; PEREIRA, 2011). Athletes interviewed in this study show that the sports media is an important factor for their practice and their career expectation, since it influences their possibilities for social recognition and financial gain.

Their discourses suggest a habitus typical of Paralympic athletes that symbolizes the spread of a perspective emphasizing efficient participation by PWDs in society. Speeches linked to greater appreciation of athletic achievements, associated with dissatisfaction with the supercrip discourse, demands for more space in the media and consequent greater possibilities of social and financial gains all point to habitus linked to sports practice of highly critical agents in search for social change.

Speeches such as those presented in this work can contribute to promote the social model of disability in order to change the way society perceives and includes PWDs in its different environments. Therefore, the research method used highlighted the views of respondent athletes in order to group consensus and elucidate some differences of opinions between subjects.

Respondents' lack of consensus about their preference for certain types of coverage demonstrates that this is a hot issue that demands further study, since different perspectives can result in different consequences for PWDs, mainly regarding their social inclusion as full citizens.

The results of this research are believed to provide insight to a discussion about a habitus typical of the media approach to Paralympic sports. However, because it is an analysis of the views of a specific group, such considerations point to the reality typical of that social field, with its capitals in dispute, the habitus of different agents and relative autonomy within the Paralympic movement.

REFERENCES

BAILEY, S. **Athlete first**: a history of the paralympic movement. West Sussex: John Wiley, 2008.

BERGER, R. J. Disability and the dedicated wheelchair athlete: beyond the “supercrip” critique. **Journal of contemporary ethnography**, Fayetteville, v. 37, n. 6, p. 647-678, 2008.

BOURDIEU, Pierre. **Questões de sociologia**. Rio de Janeiro: Marco Zero, 1983.

BOURDIEU, Pierre. **Coisas ditas**. São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1990.

BOURDIEU, Pierre. **O poder simbólico**. Rio de Janeiro: Bertrand Brasil, 1989.

BOURDIEU, Pierre. **Sobre a televisão**. Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar, 1997.

BRITTAIN, I. Perception of disability and their impact upon involvement in sport for people with disabilities at all levels. **Journal of sport and social issues**, Boston v. 28, n. 4, p. 429-452, 2004.

COAKLEY, J. **Sports in society**: issues and controversies. 10th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2008.

COSTA, A. M. da; WINCKLER, C. A Educação Física e o esporte Paralímpico. *In*: MELLO, M. T. de; WINCKLER, C. (Ed.) **Esporte Paralímpico**. São Paulo: Atheneu, 2012.

DUARTE, E.; SANTOS, T. P. dos. Adaptação e inclusão. *In*: DUARTE, E.; LIMA, S. M. T. **Atividade Física para pessoas com necessidades especiais**: experiências e intervenções pedagógicas. Rio de Janeiro: Guanabara Koogan, 2003. p. 93-99.

FARIA, M. D. de; CARVALHO, J. L. F. Uma análise semiótica do potencial mercadológico da imagem de atletas paraolímpicos. **Revista Gestão e Sociedade**, Belo Horizonte, v. 4, n. 9, p. 657-686, 2010.

FIGUEIREDO, T. H.; GUERRA, M. D. Olimpíadas e Paraolimpíadas: uma correlação com a mídia. *In*: CONGRESSO BRASILEIRO DE CIÊNCIAS DA COMUNICAÇÃO, 2005.

Anais eletrônicos... 2005. Available at: < <http://www.portcom.intercom.org.br/pdfs/90923980742584942862936767243914154873.pdf>>. Accessed on: July 1st, 2013

FIGUEIREDO, T. H.; NOVAIS, R. A. Atletas com deficiências na mídia: a cobertura noticiosa dos jogos Paraolímpicos de Atlanta a Pequim nas imprensas portuguesa e brasileira. *In*: **Anais eletrônicos...**, São Paulo: USP, 2011. Available at <<http://confibercom.org/anais2011/pdf/354.pdf>>. Accessed on: July 2, 2013.

GONÇALVES, G. C.; ALBINO, B. S.; VAZ, AL. F. O herói esportivo diferente: aspectos

do discurso em mídia impressa sobre o Parapan-americano 2007. *In*: PIRES, G. L. (Ed.) **Observando o pan Rio/2007 na mídia**. Florianópolis: Tribo da Ilha, 2009. p. 149-167.

HARDIN, M. M.; HARDIN, B. The “supercrip” in sport media: wheelchair athletes discuss hegemony’s disabled hero. **Sociology of sport online**, Wellington v. 7, n. 1, p. 1-14, 2004.

HOWE, P. **Sport, professionalism and pain**: ethnographies of injury and risk. New York: Routledge, 2004.

HOWE, P. D. From inside the newsroom: paralympic media and the “production” of elite disability. **International Review for the Sociology of Sport**, Los Angeles, v. 43, n. 2, p. 135-150, 2008.

HOWE, P. D.; JONES, C. Classification of disabled athletes: (dis) empowering the paralympic practice community. **Adapted Physical Activity Quarterly**, Los Angeles, v. 23, p. 29-46, 2006.

LEFÈVRE, F.; LEFÈVRE, A. M. C. **O discurso do sujeito coletivo**: um novo enfoque em pesquisa qualitativa (desdobramentos). 2. ed. Caxias do Sul: EDUCS, 2005.

LEFÈVRE, F.; LEFÈVRE, A. M. C.. **Pesquisa de representação social**: um enfoque qualiquantitativo: a metodologia do Discurso do Sujeito Coletivo. 2. ed. Brasília: Liber Livro, 2012.

MARQUES, R. F. R. *et al.* Mídia e o movimento paraolímpico no Brasil: relações sob o ponto de vista de dirigentes do Comitê Paralímpico Brasileiro. **Revista Brasileira de Educação Física e Esporte**, São Paulo, v. 27, n. 4, p. 583-596, 2013.

MARQUES, R. F. R. *et al.* Esporte olímpico e paraolímpico: coincidências, divergências e especificidades numa perspectiva contemporânea. **Revista Brasileira de Educação Física e Esporte**, São Paulo, v. 23, n. 4, p. 365-377, 2009.

MARQUES, R. F. R.; GUTIERREZ, G. L. **O esporte paraolímpico no Brasil**: profissionalismo, administração e classificação de atletas. 1 ed., São Paulo: Phorte, 2014.

MARQUES, R. F. R.; GUTIERREZ, G. L. _____. Contribuições teóricas da obra de Pierre Bourdieu à educação nutricional. *In*: MENDES, R. T.; VILARTA, R.; GUTIERREZ, G. L. (Eds.). **Qualidade de vida e cultura alimentar**. Campinas: IPES, 2009. p. 97-106.

MARQUES, R. F. R.; GUTIERREZ, G. L.; MONTAGNER, P. C. **Novas configurações socioeconômicas do esporte contemporâneo**. Revista da Educação Física/UEM, Maringá, v. 20, n. 4, p. 637-648, 2009.

MASSA, M; UEZU, R; BÖHME, M. T. S. Judocas olímpicos brasileiros: fatores de apoio psicossocial para o desenvolvimento do talento esportivo. **Revista Brasileira de Educação Física e Esporte**, São Paulo, v. 24, n. 4, p. 471-481, 2010.

MINAYO, M. C. de S. **O desafio do conhecimento**. Pesquisa qualitativa em saúde. 9. ed. São Paulo: Hucitec, 2006.

MORATO, M. P. et al. A mediação cultural no futebol para cegos. **Movimento**, Porto Alegre, , v. 17, n. 4, p. 45-63, 2011.

MUNSTER, M. de A. V. et al. Goalball: uma proposta inclusiva. In: ALMEIDA, J. J. G. et al. (Ed.) **Goalball**: invertendo o jogo da inclusão. Campinas: Autores Associados, 2008. p. 9-15.

NOVAIS, R. A.; FIGUEIREDO, T. H. A visão bipolar do pódio: olímpicos versus paraolímpicos na mídia on-line de Brasil e de Portugal. **Logos 33** – Rio de Janeiro – v. 17, n. 2, p. 78-89, 2010.

PEREIRA, O.; MONTEIRO, I; PEREIRA, A. L. A visibilidade da deficiência: – uma revisão sobre as representações sociais das pessoas com deficiência e atletas paraolímpicos nos media impressos. **Sociologia**, Porto Alegre, v. 22, n. 2, p. 119- 217, 2011.

PURDUE, D. E. J.; HOWE, P. D. See the sport, not the disability: exploring the Paralympic paradox. **Qualitative research in sport, exercise and health**, Loughborough, v. 4, n. 2, p. 189-205, 2012.

SCHANTZ, O. J.; GILBERT, K. An ideal misconstrued: newspaper coverage of the Atlanta Paralympic games in France and Germany. **Sociology of sport journal**, Champaign, v. 18, p. 69-94, 2001.

SILVA, C. F.; HOWE, P. D. The (in)validity of supercrip representation of Paralympic athletes. **Journal of sport and social issues**, Boston, v. 36, n. 2, p. 174-194, 2012.

VON SIKORSKI, C.; SCHIERL, T. Effects of news frames on recipients' information processing in disability sport communications. **Journal of media psychology**, Colonia, v. 24, n. 3, p. 113-123, 2012.

Funding agencies: Núcleo Interdisciplinar de Pesquisas sobre Futebol e Modalidades Lúdicas (USP) and Brazilian Paralympic Committee

Correspondence address:

Renato Francisco Rodrigues Marques

Escola de Educação Física e Esporte de Ribeirão Preto – Universidade de São Paulo.

Avenida Bandeirantes, 3900, Monte Alegre, Ribeirão Preto/SP

CEP 14040-907.

Received on: October 7, 2013

Approved on: May 1, 2014