

A Paralympic legacy? British newspaper representations of the Paralympic movement during the 2018 PyeongChang Winter Paralympic Games

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Abstract

Positioned within the assertion that the media's products can reflect public perceptions on account of newsworthiness and a desire to generate economic capital, this study set out to evaluate the British media's representations of the Paralympic Movement during the 2018 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games. To achieve this, a quantitative and qualitative content analysis was conducted on articles relating to the Paralympic Movement published online by the four UK national newspapers of *The Independent*, *the Mirror*, *The Telegraph* and the *Daily Mail*. The resultant key findings included that 1) many of the commonly referenced portrayals of Paralympians are still present within Paralympic reporting, 2) the Paralympic Movement/Games was positioned both as significant within world sport/politics and inferior to its Olympic counterparts, 3) the frequency of coverage was inequitable, and 4) evidence existed for new media shifts such as the sexualisation of Paralympians. Situating these within contexts specific to the UK and that of the medium under investigation, the overall determination was that while improvements have occurred within Paralympic coverage further evidence is required to speak of a Paralympic media legacy resulting from the 2012 London Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Keywords

Paralympic media representations, Paralympic Movement, Paralympians, British media analysis, new media.

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Introduction

The Paralympic Movement has been subject to a meteoric rise in terms of significance and related public interest throughout the last two decades (Brittain, 2016; Gold & Gold, 2007). Exemplifying this, the most recent edition of the Winter Games, the 2018 PyeongChang Winter Paralympics, saw the most athletes to-date (567 from 49 delegations) compete and attained a record of 47 rights-holding broadcasters to transmit coverage across 100 territories (IPC, 2018a, 2018b). Although this growth cannot be attributed to an individual determinant, where amongst others one can name the securing of the first host broadcaster for the 1996 Atlanta Paralympic Games, the signing of the cooperation agreements between the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) and the International Olympic Committee (IOC), or the initiative to launch the IPC's online Paralympic sport TV Channel (PSTV) (Flindall, 2018), the organisation of the 2012 London Paralympic Games and the British public-service broadcaster Channel 4's coverage package has been widely regarded as a significant milestone in the Games' representation (Claydon, Gunter, & Reilly, 2015; Van Sterkenburg, 2015; Walsh, 2015).

In view of this however, the mantra of 'the Paralympics still being in a stage of infancy' continues to persist (Young Chang, Crossman, Taylor, & Walker, 2011). Without doubt, this sentiment is also applicable when speaking of Paralympic research, although the academic community has witnessed a significant growth in studies conducted throughout the last decades (Darcy, Frawley, & Adair, 2017; Dickson, Benson, & Blackman, 2011; Schantz & Gilbert, 2001). One of the most frequent research topics therewith has been the role of the media within the Paralympic Movement and more specifically portrayals of Paralympians and disability (Beacom, French, & Kendall, 2016; Bertling, 2015; Howe, 2008a; Silva & Howe, 2012; Van Sterkenburg, 2015). Such enquiry began to take off at the end of the nineties, whereby findings posited that the reporting and coverage of the Paralympic Games and Paralympians was largely negative (Schantz & Gilbert, 2001; Schell & Duncan, 1999). Since then, studies have typically demonstrated an improvement in reporting, although some derogative portrayals of athletes continue to reoccur throughout the media.

Within the last editions of the Olympic and Paralympic Games, a great deal of emphasis has been placed on the importance of utilising the mega events to produce an 'Olympic or Paralympic

Legacy' - an aspect which is particularly pertinent to the IOC's Olympic Agenda 2020 (IOC, 2014). It has even been stipulated that this concept of developing a lasting positive outcome for the host city and/or nation contributed much to the awarding of the 2012 Games to London (Brittain, 2016; Jackson, Hodges, Scullion, & Molesworth, 2015). Of specific relevance here, a core component of the bidding committee's proposal was to foster a more inclusive society concerning disability (Walsh, 2015). It was this legacy aspiration in part and the concept of developing a Paralympic Legacy in general that provided the impetus for the conduction of this study.

Building on prior research, this study set out to analyse the British media's representations of the Paralympic Movement during the 2018 PyeongChang Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games. Differing from its predecessors however, whereby, to the author's best knowledge, all have either examined one of the mediums of print newspapers (Schantz & Gilbert, 2001), broadcast coverage (Schell & Duncan, 1999), online forums (Molesworth, Jackson, & Scullion, 2015), or other forms of print mediums such as brochures (Claydon, 2015), the published online articles of four of the UK's national newspapers were selected to undergo a quantitative and qualitative content analysis. The rationale for this decision as opposed to traditional newspapers in their print form was made on the grounds of online articles better reflecting the shift in how the general public consumes news today (Networks, 2018; Sweney, 2013). Accordingly, the four newspapers analysed included *The Independent*, the *Daily Mail*, *The Telegraph*, and the *Mirror*. These papers were selected on the basis of accruing an even representation in terms of newspaper form (broadsheet vs. tabloid) and political alignments. In addition to this, while the content analysis was not confined to articles only related to the Winter Paralympics, which have received far less attention to-date than those of the summer editions, this was certainly at its fore.

Like the aforementioned studies examining media representations, this study drew on the field of mass media theories and critical concepts of exclusion and disability to evaluate the results and form categories to be included within the coding schema (Brittain, 2017; Murdock & Golding, 2005; Schantz & Gilbert, 2001). Beyond athlete portrayals and news factors relating to how sport for abled-bodied athletes are usually depicted, key themes included specific references to gender concepts/sexualisation

in consideration to disability, an exaggerated nationalism, and organisational economics. This evaluation provided the necessary data to make an attempt to answer the formulated research questions (see section 3) alongside reflecting back on previous studies' findings (RQ6). The latter here is in reference to analysing whether there has been a continuation in the British public's interest in the Paralympic Games post London 2012. The challenge for such, however, is that one cannot necessarily draw direct comparisons between the representations of the Summer and Winter Paralympic Games, especially considering that the UK is not deemed to be a 'winter sports nation'.

Literature Review

Contextualisation

Commencing with the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, the UK has played host to a number of major competitions for athletes with an impairment in recent years. To name but a few, these have included the highlights of the Invictus Games London 2014, the 2014 IPC Athletics European Championships, the 2015 IPC Swimming World Championships, and the 2017 World Para Athletics Championships. The general belief has been that these have demanded a great deal of interest from the media and public alike, cementing their success as well as the position of Para-sports within the nation (British Athletics, 2017; Davies, 2017). Faced with a lack of evidence concerning statistics such as disability employment rates however, it is difficult to base an argument on the organisation of large-scale competitions stimulating progression for people with an impairment (Brittain, 2016).

Whilst some evidence exists to suggest that UK societal perceptions have improved post London (Claydon et al., 2015), the prospects of meeting the aspiration to foster a more inclusive society should be situated within broader societal contexts. In particular, the London 2012 Paralympics were conducted during the midst of a turbulent political debate surrounding disability benefit funding. Capitalising on this situation – and potentially pushing its own agenda, the (right wing) media was strife with headlines portraying disability claimants as 'fraudsters', aiming to 'scrounge' off the taxpayer's 'hard earned' money (Molesworth et al., 2015; Trevisan, 2015). While this style of reporting quickly

changed once the nations' Paralympians began their campaign to secure medals, the right wing conservative party has maintained power - up until the time of writing. Accounting for the scarcity of research, however, little is known as to what role either this debate, or that of politics more generally, might play on the media's representations of the Paralympic Movement during a Winter Paralympics. The UK is not generally associated as being a 'winter sports nation', although its athletes performed respectively well at both the 2014 Sochi and 2018 PyeongChang Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games. In spite of these recent successes however, it could still be assumed that reporting on the Winter Paralympics varies from that covering the summer edition. Beacom, French, & Kendall's (2016) study on the London 2012 and Sochi 2014 (Winter) Paralympics, however, did not demonstrate a considerable difference between the themes represented within the media, although they were found to have occurred to a "[...] much greater extent [...]" for the Summer edition (p.52). Explaining this, it was argued that the difference in scale between the Summer and Winter Paralympics was the most probable cause.

Olympic and Paralympic Legacy

The concept of an Olympic legacy was established as a viable alternative to compensate for the negative propensities of commercialism and capitalism (Girginov, 2012). Therein, sport is seen as vehicle that can be utilised for reconciliation and when planned and managed strategically can act as a powerful catalyst for social development, including social change (Schulenkorf & Edwards, 2012). To-date, research focusing on legacies of the Olympic and Paralympic Games has usually tied the concept to bidding procedures and residents' support; the IOC first included legacy planning into the bidding application for the Vancouver 2010 Games (Preuss & Solberg, 2006; Sant & Mason, 2015). The main legacy benefits that have been reported, thus providing an impetus to host, include: the Olympic and Paralympic Games acting as a catalyst for infrastructure projects, which otherwise might take years to complete (Terret, 2008), enhancing the host city's destination-image (Preuss, 2004), improving social development (Kaplanidou, 2012), drawing attention to national politics (Beinart, 1997), building national pride (Kim & Petrick, 2005), and tourism and economic gains (Deccio & Baloglu, 2002). Since the start of the century however, a number of studies

have emerged dedicated to an 'isolated' Paralympic Legacy (see Legg & Gilbert, 2011). The issue that lies therein, however, is that it is challenging to derive to what degree a legacy benefit might have resulted solely from hosting the Paralympics. Bearing this in mind – and in relevance to the study at hand - one such legacy benefit could be that of an improvement in reporting on Paralympians and disability, given that media products act an indicator of societal perception (Walsh, 2015).

Media Dynamics

The role of the media is to transmit information to the public; where in the instance of sports reporting this refers to cultural information as highlighted by Murdock and Golding (2005). In view of this, numerous authors have noted the sport-media nexus's significance to the promotion of mega events such as those of the Olympic and Paralympic Games (Brittain, 2017; Eagleman, Burch, & Vooris, 2014; Maguire, Butler, Barnard, & Golding, 2008). Studies in this field have typically implemented either a qualitative or quantitative content analysis to assess the media's reporting under the premise of media production and consumption (Beacom et al., 2016; Hall, 2006; Young Chang et al., 2011). Journalists, especially those who hold regarded positions, are thus key to this process because they pertain the influential ability to not only determine what issues and topics their readers think about but also how they think about them through the framing of their publications (Murdock & Golding, 2005). This statement must be placed within the debate concerning media effects and to what degree the media can influence public perception. Schantz & Gilbert (2001) made the assertion that by analysing media products one can determine societal views on account of the concepts of newsworthiness and generating income. However, it can be argued that this only reflects one side of the coin, partially neglecting the media's desire to frame their own agenda. Taking this into consideration and adopted from the works of Joseph Maguire (et al.) (e.g. Falcois & Maguire, 2006; Maguire, Butler, Barnard, & Golding, 2008), this study opted to base its analysis within the theoretical conception of Critical Political Economy (CPE). This decision was made on account of CPE acknowledging that media reporting is heavily influenced by economic factors and newsworthiness while still allowing for the opinions of journalists alongside their media proprietors to impact production (Murdock & Golding, 2005).

Paralympic Media Representations

Ever since the securing of a first host broadcaster for the 1996 Atlanta Paralympic Games, namely the American television network *CBS*, the academic community has witnessed a continual growth in the number studies analysing Paralympic media representations (Schantz & Gilbert, 2001; Van Sterkenburg, 2015; Young Chang & Crossman, 2009). A general tendency of this line of enquiry has been to situate their conduction within the ideals and aspirations of the IPC, as the Paralympic Movement's leading institution. This remark concerns the IPC's stance that transmitting the achievements of Para-athletes can lead to enhanced societal perceptions and therefore greater inclusion for people with an impairment (IPC, 2015). In congruence with this, the main focus of these studies has been on the representations of Paralympians, alongside that of the 'equality' of coverage afforded to the Paralympic Games in relation to the Olympic Games.

Whilst variation exists between the results of studies analysing broadcast or print media, the general finding has been that the Paralympic Movement is inequitably represented in terms of both quantity and quality (Schantz & Gilbert, 2001; Schell & Duncan, 1999). One must take into account, however, that there has been a marked improvement in recent years, with Paralympians being more frequently depicted as just athletes (Maika & Danylchuk, 2016; Van Sterkenburg, 2015; Young Chang et al., 2011). Besides possible improvements in societal perceptions, it has been proposed that this shift constitutes a response to the growth of the Paralympics and establishment of sport stars; as with the rise of Oscar Pistorius prior to the murder of his girlfriend Reeva Steenkamp (Bertling, 2015). Researchers are, however, divided as to whether this focus on entertainment benefits the Paralympic Movement. Whereas one's initial response might be to view this enhanced transmission positively, opponents claim that the IPC in cooperation with the IOC have achieved this to the detriment of its athletes, especially those more severely impaired. This can be explained due to the 'cutting' of categories and sports viewed as less interesting to the general public from the Paralympic Programme (Howe, 2008b).

Representations of Paralympians

The approach usually implemented to evaluate representations of Paralympians has been to categorise the media's coverage

under the stereotypical portrayals of disability established within the field of disability studies. Although there is a lack in consensus regarding best practice, Woodhill's (1994) and Cumberbatch & Negrine's (1992) findings have been widely cited. As the latter concerned television portrayals, however, only Woodhill's metaphors of disability will be expanded upon here. Therewith, Woodhill's study determined through an evaluation of popular culture, which included newspapers, that people with a disability are represented under the metaphors of: the medical ("disability as sickness"); the humanitarian ("disability as misfortune"); the social control ("disability as threat"); the retribution ("disability as punishment"); the outsider ("disabled person as other"); the religious ("disability as divine plan"); and the zoological ("disabled person as pet, disability as entertainment") (p.209). It should be noted that while these metaphors, as with the findings of other research, can form an evaluative basis, it is most likely impossible to categorise all representations within a limited scope (Beacom et al., 2016). That said, such portrayals have contributed greatly to understanding how athletes with an impairment are represented and can provide a reference point on which to assess temporal shifts.

Impairment Classification and Gender-related Discrepancies

It has been determined that more severely impaired and female Paralympians are subject to an even greater level of neglect by the media (Brittain, 2016; Hibberd, 2015; Schantz & Gilbert, 2001). Grounded within the marginalisation of athletes with an impairment, it is argued that Para-athletes receive less media attention due to their bodies, by association of their impairments, contradicting images of 'athleticism' and 'normality' (DePauw, 1997). Athletes using a wheelchair, as the most commonly associated representation of disability, or amputees thus receive greater coverage than those deemed to further deviate from such representations (Goggin & Newell, 2000). Furthermore, female Para-athletes are subjected to an even greater level of discrimination because of their bodies neither conforming to 'normal' conceptions of athleticism nor femininity/sexualisation; as the common (negative) frame under which, particularly female, abled-bodied athletes are often portrayed (Schantz & Gilbert, 2001; Young Chang & Crossman, 2009; Young Chang et al., 2011).

Beyond omission, both female athletes and those lower down the 'hierarchy of disability' are usually depicted differently than athletes who are male and/or less impaired. The most pronounced example of this can be seen when observing athlete photographs. As opposed to the typical depictions of abled-bodied athletes portraying athleticism or the whole body in motion, Athletes with an impairment are generally captured in a passive pose. Further, these photographs often focus on athletes' faces, especially for female athletes, as to hide their impairments (Brittain, 2016).

Nationalism

Like studies on Olympic reporting, research has uncovered that variations exist between the number of stories dedicated to domestic or international athletes within Paralympic media (Claydon, 2015; Schantz & Gilbert, 2001; Young Chang & Crossman, 2009). It should be stated, however, that this variation is heavily one-sided. International (Para) athletes are seldom represented within the media aside from medallists or those that can be considered sporting stars; although, differences in this variation may occur between the media organisation or medium under investigation (Hibberd, 2015). Nevertheless, when accounting for the discrepancy between Olympic and Paralympic coverage, it can be regarded that Paralympic media is subject to an exaggerated nationalism which almost exclusively reports on 'home nation' athletes.

Research Questions

Guided by the findings and theoretical considerations outlined within the literature review, the following six research questions were formulated:

- 1) How much attention was the Paralympic Movement/Games afforded by the four British newspapers analysed during the 2018 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games?
- 2) How was the Paralympic Movement/Games represented within the four British newspapers analysed during the 2018 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games?
- 3) How were Paralympians represented within the four British newspapers analysed during the 2018 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games?
- 4) What was the role of nationalism within the four British

newspapers' representations of the Paralympic Movement/ Games and Paralympians?

5) Were male and female Paralympians represented differently within the four British newspapers analysed during the 2018 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games?

6) How do the representations of the Paralympic Movement/ Games and Paralympians within the four British newspapers analysed during the 2018 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games compare to the findings of previous related studies?

Methodology

Corpus

Utilising an advanced Google search, which enabled the author to look within specific websites for publications under the timeframe of 26th January to 1st April 2018, a total of 134 articles referencing the Paralympic Movement were selected to form the corpus. These articles came from the UK domain websites of four British national newspapers, namely *The Independent*, the *Mirror*, *The Telegraph*, and the *Daily Mail*. The selection criteria for the newspapers constituted readership, political leniency, and that two represented (former) broadsheets and two tabloids. Respectively, *The Independent* can be considered a former broadsheet newspaper positioned to the centre left, the *Mirror* a tabloid on the left, *The Telegraph* a broadsheet to the centre right, and the *Daily Mail* a tabloid on the right (Smith, 2017). Although newspapers published online can fall under the classification 'compact', a form possibly more so reflecting the journalistic style of tabloid newspapers, it was considered that the articles published would be more in line with their (former) print counterparts. Linked with readership, the decision to use online articles was made on account of 1) a shift in news consumption, whereby there are now more people consuming news and that consumption is more evenly distributed by paper (Networks, 2018; Sweney, 2013) and 2) the trend of many newspapers, including *The Independent*, to shift the focus of their production efforts to online content.

Content Analysis

Facilitated by the qualitative data analysis software NVivo for Mac (Version 11.4.3), the downloaded articles were subject to

both a quantitative and qualitative content analysis. While it has been contested if frequency statistics can signify a derived value, the decision to also implement a quantitative approach was made in consideration of the constructs of omission and the marginalisation of disability (Schantz & Gilbert, 2001). The category formation implemented an inductive approach based on the findings of previous research and theoretical considerations. This resulted in a total of 67 variables being considered for analysis. Grouping the variables together, these were divided into the main categories of news factors, the focus of sports-specific reporting (e.g. depicting emotions, athleticism, reporting results, or aggression), aspects related to the athlete represented (e.g. gender, nationality, impairment etc.), and portrayals of disability. Concerning this latter category, the portrayals included came from a culmination of prior research, whereby Woodhill's (1994) metaphors were first selected and then expanded upon. On top of this, the photographs depicting athletes included within the articles specific to the Paralympic Movement/Games or Paralympians underwent a semiotic analysis with notes being included within the memo tabs of the NVivo project data files accordingly.

Study Limitations

The study's main limitations were in relation to the content analysis. Although the author pertained prior experience in undertaking similar research, it was not possible to have another person with the required expertise cross-tabulate the coding. Taking this into consideration, a great deal effort was put into maintaining consistency throughout. The next limitation concerns the author, also the coder, not constituting a person with an impairment and as such probably lacking a required insight perspective. To combat this, the coding and the overall conduction of the study was heavily grounded in the findings of related academic research.

Results/Discussion

Paralympic Presence

From the advanced online Google search for the time period ranging from 26th January to 1st April 2018, a total of 134 articles were identified as pertaining (some) relevance to the Paralympic Movement. Of these, 59 articles (44%) focused specifically on

either the Paralympic Movement/Games or Paralympians. The remaining articles generally only gave mention to either the Paralympics in association to the Olympic Games, e.g. that they were to follow them, or to a Paralympian as a point of reference when covering another story. Contrasting this with the frequency of articles covering the Olympic Movement, a total of 1,067 featured either the Olympic Games, Olympians, or the IOC throughout the same duration.

Reporting on the number of articles focusing directly on either the Paralympic Movement/Games or Paralympians, *The Independent* published a total of 6 articles (43% of its published articles referencing the Paralympic Movement), the *Mirror* 6 articles (32%), *The Telegraph* 4 (22%), and the *Daily Mail* 43 (52%). Whilst this discrepancy concerning the *Daily Mail* could certainly be perceived as an anomaly or that the newspaper had a greater interest in the Paralympics, this can rather be explained by the media landscape and that of the role of new media: *The Daily Mail's Wires* section of its website publishes articles from international news corporations, with a large proportion being represented by *Associated Press's* (AP) US and Australian branches. Whereas an argument could have been made to exclude these articles from the analysis, their inclusion was deemed necessary on account of their publication under the *Daily Mail's* UK domain.

While the photographs are taken into consideration within the following sections' evaluations, it is important to briefly comment on them here. Accordingly, those that were subjected to the semiotic analysis included the athletes depictions represented in the articles specific to the Paralympic Movement. In total, this consisted of 175 athlete photographs, whereby 129 (m=3 per article) came from the *Daily Mail*, 27 (m=4,5 per article) the *Mirror*, 11 (m=1,8 per article) *The Independent*, and 8 (m=2 per article) *The Telegraph*. Based on screen coverage (%), the average photo size per newspaper was 26,5% for the *Daily Mail*, 32,6% the *Mirror*, 31% *The Independent*, and 21,5% for *The Telegraph*. On account of this study analysing online articles as opposed to those within the print media, comparisons cannot be drawn to the photo frequencies and image sizes of previous studies; with the results presented here being significantly larger. What was apparent, however, was that these figures pale in comparison to those found within online articles dedicated to Olympic athletes.

Publication Dates and Sections

Concerning publication dates, the results reflected the common trend of the media devoting little attention to the Paralympic Movement outside of the Paralympic Games' conduction (Brittain, 2017; Claydon et al., 2015; Schantz & Gilbert, 2001). Of the articles published referencing the Paralympic Movement, 37,8% of the those prior to the PyeongChang Paralympic opening ceremony, 65% during the times of the Games, and 21,1% post the closing ceremony focused specifically on the Paralympic Movement/Games or Paralympians. It is important to note here that the period of investigation was longer prior to the opening of the Paralympics as to assess the impact of the Olympics on reporting. Interestingly, unlike the tendency noted by Brittain (2016) that there is usually a significant increase in the number of articles posted within the week leading up to the Games, a similar number of articles referencing the Paralympic Movement were published prior to the opening ceremony when dividing these into individual weeks (4 weeks prior = 16 articles, 3 specific; 3 weeks = 18 specific; 2 weeks = 16 specific; 1 week = 17 specific). Lastly, the data also confirmed the general finding that reporting on the Paralympic Movement all but ceases post the closing of the Paralympics; only four articles specifically focusing on the Paralympic Movement were published on 27th March 2018 (almost one week after the closing ceremony). Moreover, none of these four articles were in relation to the Winter Paralympic Games, whereby three that were featured within all newspapers, except *The Telegraph*, covered the British summer Paralympian Sophia Warner's story of distress relating to her "devastating" experience as a customer of the airline company *EasyJet* (Barr, 2018; Gibb, 2018; Robinson, 2018).

For the publication sections, when assessing the articles focusing specifically on the Paralympic Movement, the majority came under either the news tab (Total = 16, 27,1%), the *Daily Mail's Wires* (17, 28,8%), sport (15, 25,4%), or lifestyle sections (7, 11,9%). Thus, these results did not explicitly reflect the general trend of newspapers to position Paralympic articles within the sports or lifestyle sections. One issue with the results here, however, was that of the *Daily Mail's Wires* section. Due to that these articles were produced by international partners of the organisation, the sections in which they would have been published under on the contributors' websites are unknown to the reader. Taking this

into consideration, when splitting the data by newspaper, the composition of the articles referencing the Paralympic Movement within *The Independent* was sport (42,9%), news (7,1%), lifestyle (28,6%); the *Mirror*, sport (36,6%), news (47,4%), lifestyle (5,3%); *The Telegraph* sport (33,3%), news (38,9%), lifestyle (11,1%); the *Daily Mail* sport (9,6%), news (26,5%), lifestyle (8,4%), *Wires* (42,2%). Although, the results regarding the *Daily Mail* thus do not reveal a great deal, it is interesting that *The Independent*, as a former broadsheet with a left-centred political leniency, was found to have the largest proportional representation for lifestyle. Whilst this was also true for sport, this emphasis within the lifestyle section contradicts the general findings of previous research concerning political alliances (Schantz & Gilbert, 2001; Young Chang & Crossman, 2009).

Paralympic Framing

Turning attention to how the articles portrayed the Paralympic Games, the main way in which this could be assessed was on the basis of their focus. This was due to that, whilst stylistic composition provided further evaluative insight, stories covering the Games without framing it under an alternative lens were almost non-existent. In fact, only four articles solely focused on the Paralympic Games, with two each published on the *Daily Mail's* and the *Mirror's* websites respectively. These four could all be categorised under the media's informative function; two articles (one each for the *Daily Mail* and the *Mirror*) covered the Paralympic Schedule in the lead up to the Games, another similar article reflected on the Games and detailed what the closing ceremony would entail (*Daily Mail*), and the last article explained how to stream the 2018 Paralympic Games' opening ceremony (the *Mirror*). Surprisingly, neither *The Telegraph* nor *The Independent* opted to cover the opening or closing ceremonies for PyeongChang. Generally speaking, opening and closing ceremonies have been found to constitute a central feature of Paralympic reporting, whereby they often receive disproportionately greater coverage (Brittain, 2016; Van Sterkenburg, 2015). The most probable rationale for this could be the media's perspective that the UK is not viewed as 'a winter sports nation', although further studies are needed to either confirm or revoke this assumption.

It was not entirely unexpected, however, that there was little reporting on the Paralympics as an event alone. Even when concerning the Olympic Games, where there is a vast difference

in the number of related articles, studies have generally found that traditional stylistic frames permeate its coverage (Eagleman et al., 2014; Moore, Hesson, & Jones, 2015). In concurrence with this, the main frames through which the analysed articles were depicted included politics, conflict, celebrity, dramas, negativity, interest stories, and opinions or reflections. On the side of sports specific coverage, these included emotions, behind the scene stories, personal profiles, reporting results, and organisational matters. As to avoid repetition and accounting for that the majority of these topics were more in line with representations of Paralympians (see section 6.4.), only those of politics, and, although lesser represented, economics and disability concerns will be elaborated on here.

With the 2018 PyeongChang Winter Olympics being branded the 'Peace Games' in relation to North Korea's participation and the fallout from the Russian doping scandal - alongside that of the alleged ties between the Russian Government and current US President Donald Trump's administration, recent reporting on world sports has been dominated by political discourse. This statement is certainly not restricted to articles covering sport for abled-bodied athletes, whereby a total of 37 (27,6%) articles referencing the Paralympic Movement were categorised under politics. Even within those where this was not the central focus, as with the aforementioned coverage of PyeongChang's opening and closing ceremonies, political discourse was found to be one of the most represented themes. One way in particular through which this occurred was the overrepresentation of the athletes from North Korea and the neutral Paralympic team, under which the IPC permitted 30 Russian Paralympians to compete. The question that this finding raises, however, is: what did the use of political framing reveal about the newspapers' representations of the Paralympic Movement?

In answer to this question, it was found that the Paralympic Movement/Games were portrayed in several different ways. It is only when taking these different depictions together, as a whole, that one can begin to form an overall picture. Accordingly, these portrayals could be categorised into those in relation to the Paralympic Movement independent from and in comparison to the Olympic Movement. As to the former, the content devoted to the IPC on whether it would permit the Russian Paralympic Committee to compete in PyeongChang was perhaps the best

example, although this usually coincided with how the IOC handled the issue. That said, one could infer from the use of language and stylistic composition of these articles that the media represented the IPC as a significant player within the governance of world sport. Taking the same story into consideration with the latter category, although the reporting style on the IPC's actions was similar to those covering Russia's inclusion within the Olympic Games, there was an evident discrepancy between the number of stories ran and their lengths. This finding was even more pronounced when analysing the role of the Paralympics in relation to the participation of North Korea. With the 'success' of the Winter Olympics in facilitating the two Koreas to unite – as with the unified Korean team marching into the opening ceremony, one could have expected that the nations' decision to enter the Paralympics' opening ceremony separately would have demanded significant media attention. However, only one article under the news section of the *Daily Mail's* website by *Reuters* was published explicitly on this story (Green & Reuters, 2018). What stands out here was that of the publisher, *Reuters*, being international. Once again, this omission of the British newspapers lends itself to the assumption of the British media believing the nation to lack an 'appetite' for winter, especially Para-winter, sports.

For the themes of economics and disability concerns, evidence existed suggesting that these topics were significant to the newspapers' representations of the Paralympic Movement. Such aspects, when situated within the wider societal discourse, concerned factors specific to the British perspective. Commenting on economics first, perhaps the most significant finding was that of some articles focusing on UK Sport (the body responsible for the distribution of the nation's sport funds) either financing or withholding investment for athletes with an impairment. Although this topic was not heavily reported on, the fact that 3 articles by the *Daily Mail* and 2 by *The Telegraph* were ran demonstrated a continuation of the turbulent debate surrounding disability funding witnessed during the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. It should be highlighted that both of these two newspapers share a 'similar' political leniency, i.e. being situated on the right, as the debate is commonly considered a bipartisan political issue. Intertwined with this observation, a number of stories were run on disability-related social concerns and disability campaigns. Amongst others, some examples of this included the *Mirror's* story on an "outrageous" sign that had been

installed at the PyeongChang Winter Olympics banning access to “[d]runk and mentally ill [...]” people and two stories by the *Daily Mail* on Oscar Pistorius’ “special treatment” in prison and the negative experiences of visitors with a disability at PyeongChang (Associated Press, 2018; Flanagan, 2018; Mcstay & Selby, 2018). The majority of the articles under these themes appeared within the tabloid papers and the difference in reporting styles between the *Mirror* and the *Daily Mail* was evident. Even accounting for the fact that most of those published by the *Daily Mail* came from its international contributors, the newspaper was found to, on the whole, frame disability concerns negatively. One can reference the story on Oscar Pistorius’s ‘special exemption’ as a prime example therein: Disability was portrayed as a threat to society as it was suggested that people with an impairment might factor in a presupposition of receiving a lesser punishment when contemplating whether to break the law. Combining the two themes outlined here, economics and disability concerns, one can see that both Para-sport and disability appear to still be a divided political issue in the UK.

Athlete Representations

Excluding a few articles, where reference was predominantly limited to mere ‘name-dropping’, the stories that mentioned Parathletes either focused on the Paralympic Games/Movement more broadly or the athletes themselves (the 59 articles categorised with a Paralympic specific focus). Therein, the content analysis was able to categorise Para-athlete representations into those of the frames/topics under which the athletes were covered (i.e. those mentioned in the previous section), portrayals of disability, and athlete-specific variables such as nationality, type of impairment, gender, or sport type practiced.

Picking up from where section 6.3. left off, the topics/frames under which stories covering Para-athletes were identified could also be divided into those not-specific and specific to sport. The former included negativity (featured in 62 different articles), opinions and reflections (58), disability-related (40), reporting on the media (32), and interest stories (30), whereas the latter those of informative (57), sports-specific negativity or problems (31), emotions (31), organisational aspects (22), and reporting results (20). A particularly insightful finding here included that of there being almost the same number of on athletes outside of their participation in sport as within (26 to 33 respectively).

However, this figure drastically changed when factoring in stories on summer versus winter Paralympians; there were 26 articles featuring athletes within their sport versus 9 outside for winter Paralympians and 7 articles within sport versus 16 outside for summer Paralympians.

Whilst many of the articles covering summer and winter Paralympians were framed in the context of emotions (21 winter, 8 summer) and had an informative role (41 winter, 12 summer), there was an evident disparity between them. Those in relation to winter Paralympians were almost exclusively confined to their experiences and competition in South Korea, for which the style of writing could be considered as punctual. The way in which the articles represented the athletes as emotional was accomplished through direct athlete quotes; a tactic implemented to possibly distance the author from assuming responsibility. In contrast to this, although some could be classified as celebrities, the fact that summer Paralympians were devoted considerable coverage posits them as something newsworthy. Unfortunately, what this finding does not reveal, however, is whether the summer Paralympians were afforded more attention than they might normally have received on account of the Winter Paralympics' conduction.

Relating the athlete representations to previous studies, the results reaffirmed the general tendency of the media to frame Para-athletes based on their impairments (Beacom et al., 2016). Evidence existed depicting the Paralympians under the portrayals of defined by or associated with their impairment (25 representations), victims or "the humanitarian" (22), "the medical" (20), and within "the Supercrip" representation (11), although the largest category was that of Paralympians as just athletes or the same (41). One should not afford too much meaning to this last finding on face value alone, however. While the frequency of articles placing the athlete first might imply an improvement in media reporting, this could largely be attributed to the lack of detail they were afforded. Thus, one could also interpret many of these same representations also within "the outsider" category (37 representations). Although these portrayals surfaced most frequently, the fact that "the zoological" (7) and "the social control" (3) themes appeared at all within the analysis is gravely worrying, in the author's opinion. Whereas it has been contested whether the commonly referenced portrayals of disability should be considered as positive or negative – as athletes themselves

might hold a different opinion (Beacom et al., 2016) - it is hard not to perceive such framing negatively. Depictions of disability as a threat in particular should not be taken lightly as it appears from the evaluated articles here that such reporting was perhaps intentionally framed to coerce reader perceptions: A prime example of this was the aforementioned article on Pistorius' special treatment in prison. Reflecting on the representations of the Paralympians as a whole, the claim can be made that reporting still has long way to go before it can be considered equivalent to Olympic coverage, although advancements concerning Paralympians as athletes first should not go unappreciated.

Nationalism and Gender Depictions

Of the articles specifically focusing on either the Paralympic Movement/Games or Paralympians, 31 covered stories on female athletes, 14 on male athletes, and 12 for both. Whereas these results oppose the general finding of female Para-athletes receiving disproportionately less attention (Schantz & Gilbert, 2001; Van Sterkenburg, 2015), the overrepresentation could mostly be explained by the even greater tendency of Para-sports reporting to be nationalistic. Evidencing this, when further dividing the articles into those representing domestic versus international athletes, 21 and 7 of the articles covered British female and male Paralympians respectively. The majority of these 21 articles on the UK's female athletes reported on the Paralympic medallists Menna Fitzpatrick and Millie Knight alongside their guides; all of who compete in the sport of alpine skiing for people with a visual impairment.

The British media's near exclusive confinement to the scope of home nation medallists as with the example above - and when reporting on the former 2014 Sochi gold medallist Kelly Gallagher - had some large implications for the content analysis. Besides gender related variations, this mostly concerned the 'hierarchy of disability'. Dividing the articles by impairment classifications, 20 articles reported on athletes with a visual impairment, 19 with an amputation, 9 who use a wheelchair, 6 with cerebral palsy, and only 1 gave mention to athletes with an intellectual impairment. Whilst this finding variably conforms to the 'hierarchy of disability' when accounting for nationalistic tendencies, a possible nuance arose therein. This nuance concerned the breadth of articles dedicated to athletes with an amputation: It was quite remarkable that more than twice as many articles covered athletes with an amputation

in comparison to athletes with the use of a wheelchair. Once again, this can be partially explained by nationalism, as the UK delegation's flag bearer was a single leg (right) below the knee amputee, but this alone did not account for the discrepancy. Rather, this can be better explained by a shift in media reporting to sexualise Para-athletes.

A total of 12 articles, representing 20,3% of those specifically focusing on the Paralympic Movement/Games or Paralympians could be thought of as depicting the theme of sexualisation. There was a relatively large difference between article frequency when comparing by athlete gender, 8 female to 4 male respectively; although, the same story on *Sports Illustrated's* first feature of a female Paralympian, Brenna Huckaby, was ran in both *The Independent* and the *Daily Mail*. What could be considered as insightful into media dynamics therein was that of the (subtle) differences between the two newspapers' representations. While both appear to have been based on the same source material, the decision to either highlight or exclude certain information meant that they were framed (somewhat) individually. In accordance with this, both portrayed the themes of sexualisation, female empowerment, and disability issues, although the less frequent use of the word disability within the *Daily Mail's* article framed the story on the side of female empowerment in comparison to *The Independent's* focus on empowering women with an impairment. This choice of the *Daily Mail*, however, did not mean that the Brenna was represented merely as an athlete, whereby the paper included more references to "the medical" metaphor through explanations of her impairment. Concluding on the papers' usage of sexualisation, this finding was in stark contrast to that of previous research (Brittain, 2016; Howe, 2008b; Schantz & Gilbert, 2001). Thus, the analysis provided support for a possible shift in the sexual representations of athletes with an impairment. It must be stated, however, that the articles under this frame were irrefutably not the same as their Olympic counterparts given that the athletes' impairments constituted a central focus.

Conclusion

It can be considered that this study has made a significant contribution to further understanding the way in which the Paralympic Movement is represented within the media.

Building on prior research, evidence existed suggesting that many ‘stereotypical’ Paralympic representations are still prevalent today. In respect to the scope of the analysis, i.e. investigating British online newspaper articles, however, new trends concerning article frequency and stylistic composition were detected. These nuances consisted of a possible enhanced presence of international athletes within domestic coverage, although still disproportionate to domestic athletes, and a greater frequency of total articles. In addition to this, the new insight of Paralympians, especially female Paralympians, being represented under the theme of sexualisation indicates a possible media shift toward reporting Para-athletes in a ‘similar fashion’ to those of their able-bodied counterparts. These respective articles were, however, framed under alternative discourses such as female empowerment or disability rights and perceptions, thus focusing on disability and representing the athletes as ‘different’. It is difficult to isolate the rationale for these new discoveries, however, due to that, to the author’s best knowledge, this study was the first to conduct an analysis of online Paralympic newspaper articles.

Reflecting on the broader research question, evidence existed both supporting and rejecting a possible Paralympic media legacy following the conclusion of the 2012 London Paralympic Games. Whereas a large percentage of the athlete representations portrayed the Paralympians as athletes first and the Paralympic Movement/Games were presented as a significant player within world sport/politics, the findings suggested that the media perceived Para-sport as something not ‘especially’ newsworthy. This claim can be made due the lack of coverage on the whole, whereby, with the exception of stories published under the *Daily Mail’s Wires* section, the newspapers almost exclusively reported on British medallists. Further, reporting contained little detail and chose to focus on emotions as opposed to athletic feats. The use of images also added to this derivation, whereby the photographs largely depicted athletes either being awarded medals or celebrating, opposing common representations of athletes without an impairment.

Speaking of an overall evaluation, these remarks must be posited within the specific context relevant to the UK. Therein, while only a few articles referenced economic concerns, it could be determined that disability support and funding for athletes with

an impairment is still an unresolved issue for the British media/public. Although divided by political allegiances, this finding had a negative impact on the representations of Para-sport and could be deemed as an attempt to alter societal views. The second feature specific to the UK considered was that of its stance as 'more of a summer than winter sports' nation. Certainly, the small amount of coverage devoted to the 2018 PyeongChang Winter Paralympics given the evaluative timeframe implies that there is little interest in winter, especially winter Para, sport in the UK. However, one cannot say for certain that this was the sole reason for the British media's neglect due to the fact that prior research on winter sports for athletes with an impairment is limited. Nevertheless, what was interesting was that of the amount of coverage dedicated to summer Paralympians. This might indicate that the British public possibly views summer Para-athletes as newsworthy, although the role in which the Winter Paralympics played in this phenomenon is unknown.

In conclusion, this study highlighted that in spite of the recent media trend to position Paralympians/the Paralympic Games with greater congruence to their Olympic counterparts, significant changes in the breadth and style of reporting are needed for this to be equitable. As partially evidenced here, one way in which this could be achieved is through the use of new media as it pertains a greater capacity to reach audiences and produce detailed coverage. Considering the analysed newspapers' omission of detail and duration since London 2012 however, further evidence is needed to determine whether one can speak of a Paralympic media legacy. Expanding upon this study's findings, it is vital that future considerations continue to examine Paralympic media products on account of their ability to constitute a 'window' into societal perceptions. This study can only be considered as an 'initial step' into Paralympic new media analysis and one of the first evaluations surrounding a Winter Paralympics. Furthering both of these lines of inquisition could have far reaching implications in terms of policy decisions both in a broader and Olympic/Paralympic specific context; especially when determining the benefits of hosting.

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