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THE OTHER OR VISUALLY ALMOST THE SAME? A COMPARISON OF THE VISUAL COVERAGE OF ATHLETES WITH AND WITHOUT A DISABILITY

FRANTIŠEK GÉLA & VERONIKA MACKOVÁ
Charles University

ABSTRACT

The study introduces and discusses the differences between the visual presentation of successful Czech athletes who attended the 2016 Rio and the 2018 Pyeongchang Olympics and Paralympics. The research focused on the representation of athletes on the official Facebook pages of the Czech Olympic Team and the Czech Paralympic Team. The aim was to compare the portrayal of athletes with and without a disability and to find out if there are any differences from the previous studies which focused on so-called "traditional" print media. We examined both common (i.e., a subgenre of sports photography) and specific (i.e., visibility of a disability) aspects of the images. We focused on social media as an important source of information about Paralympic sports. The most widely read print and online media did not report on Paralympic sport consistently. Paralympic topics appear mostly only in the case of scandals or extraordinary stories. Thus, social media serve as an instant source of current information, as well as the primary source of Paralympic sports news. We have found out that there is a difference in the approach of portrayal of athletes with and without a disability. While athletes with a disability were mostly shown in active poses during their sports performance, the Olympic athletes were depicted primarily in emotional situations. We also discussed various aspects of (in)visibility of a disability on examples of specific pictures.

Keywords: photography ▪ Olympic Games ▪ Paralympic Games ▪ athletes with a disability – sport

1.   INTRODUCTION

Photography has become a natural part of contemporary media since its invention in the 19th century and the development of printing techniques at the end of the 19th century (Tausk, 1988). However, photography is only one element of what we call visual communication. A significant part of individuals' experience with visual

materials relates not specifically to photography but to a diverse array of visual materials, including medical records, satellite pictures, or CCTV images (Mirzoeff, 1999). This could illustrate the importance of visual communication in everyday life. In general, visual images create and shape the social reality (Mirzoeff, 1999; Sturken & Cartwright, 2009; Mitchell 2015). Nowadays, visually based content in any form (photos, videos, graphics, etc.) is the essence of the constantly growing communication via social media.

Visuals in sports consist of various materials such as photo finish camera records or educational materials which, on one side, serve as a tool in sports, and videos and photographs functioning as media or promotional elements on the other side. We will focus on images employed in media – specifically on photography. Photography is a necessary element within the sports clubs' and organizations' websites and social media pages. Due to the importance of visual communication in people's social reality, we focused on the photographically based images of Czech athletes with a disability on the most popular social network Facebook (Tankovska, 2021). For that purpose, we compared the differences between the portrayal of the Czech Olympic and Paralympic athletes.

The visual representation of athletes with a disability in the Czech context has not yet been thoroughly researched and described. In this article, we followed up on the research carried out by DePauw (1997) and the studies by Pappous (2008) and Pappous et al. (2011), which dealt with the development of Paralympic photographic coverage from Sydney 2000 to Beijing 2008 Paralympic Games. While Pappous et al. (2011) focused on printed media and the evolution of the number of photographs (considering the difference in the depiction of men and women), we decided to focus on social media as a contemporary way of communication. Additionally, we examined other variables beyond the number of photographs in a given Paralympic cycle.

Examining two Olympic and Paralympic Games (2016 Rio and 2018 PyeongChang), we were interested in how the Czech Olympic and Paralympic Committee presented the athletes on their official Facebook pages. We are aware that we analyze the production of dominant sports organization. However, there is no other relevant local source – the Czech media did not have any photographers present at the selected Paralympic Games. Thus, the only available pictures were produced by the Czech Paralympic Committee. For this reason, we focused on the official websites of these two Czech sports institutions. This study aims to analyze the differences between the portrayal of able-bodied athletes and athletes with a disability in pictures from the world's top sports events on the social media pages of the Czech Olympic and Paralympic teams.

2.   PHOTOGRAPHY AND REPRESENTATION

Tracing back to the essence of photography, there might be a certain general feeling that photography is a trustworthy, direct i mprint of reality. However, Barthes (1981)

remarked on the myth of the photographic truth against this idea. In this concept, Barthes combined the idea of the camera's objectivity and the photographer's subjectivity. The photographer chooses the frame and the moment which adjusts the positivistic perception of a camera as

a tool for the precise registration of reality. The credibility of photography was questioned even before the possibilities of digital image manipulation became easier and more advanced in the 1990s (Sturken & Cartwright, 2009). Historically, the power of photography was exploited, for example by different totalitarian regimes (Flusser, 2013). There are several cases when photography became a propagandistic tool, but on the other hand, photography has also served as a kind of proof that holds strong emotional meaning. A well-known example is an iconic picture by the AP photographer Nick Ut from the Vietnam war. In this picture, he captured a girl running from the napalm-attacked village in South Vietnam. The impact of the shocking image was strong and led to a change of the general public's view of the Vietnam conflict (Wallenius & Nilsson, 2019). Another example of an image with a strong emotional impact is the picture of a dead Syrian boy by photographer Nilüfer Demir. This image became a symbol of the suffering of the refugees in 2015 (Mattus, 2020). There are also examples from the field of sports photography – Děkanovský (2008) recalls sports images which became symbols in Czech culture. For example, images of Kateřina Neumannová's finish in 2006 Torino Olympic Games serve as a visualization of the races' happy end.

Hall (1997) considers photography as a representational system that uses images as a language for communication. Especially, when representing a difference, like in our case of athletes with a disability, it affects the reader's feelings, emotions, and attitudes. Furthermore, Sturken and Cartwright (2009, p. 23) have postulated that visuals in everyday life are one aspect of social learning, which serves to build ideologies. Hall (1997, p. 39) considers them to be "general beliefs, conceptual frameworks and value systems of society". In this context, photography has been used for this purpose, even though it is unintentional.

An image can have several meanings depending on the manner of reading, especially, when we talk about the connotative meaning. Barthes (1957) labeled this phenomenon "myths". According to Barthes (1981), photography may also hold strong emotional meaning. In his book Camera Lucida (Ibid.), he developed the concept of *studium* and *punctum*. *Studium* is the first phase of the picture reading process. It holds cultural, linguistic, and political denotation. During studium, the reader should figure out the author's intention. On the other hand, punctum is the affective denotation that stimulates emotions and depends solely on the reader. One picture can have different effects on different readers. Every picture has its connotation, but Hall (1997, p. 231) suggested that similar representational practices and figures repeat in the case of difference or otherness which he illustrated by examples of race, ethnicity, color, gender, or sexuality in sports photographs.

The research on representation in sports photography conducted over the past

25 years follows Hall's work (1997) on difference and otherness. Relating to the purposes of our study the most important is the work by Pappous (2008) and Pappous et al. (2011), which show predominant shifts in the portrayal of athletes with a disability. Pappous (2008) focused on the image of athletes with a disability in European newspapers during the 2004 Paralympic Games in Athens. According to his research, athletes with a disability were mostly portrayed in passive poses, their impairments were not visible, and pictures showing emotions were published more often than pictures showing sports action (Pappous, 2008). Pappous continued with research on the portrayal of athletes with a disability from the 2000 Sydney to 2008 Beijing Paralympic Games. The findings suggested a shift towards depicting athletes with a disability in a more subdued manner (Pappous et al., 2011). The growth of the Paralympic sport is the topic of Buysse's and Borscherding's (2010) study, which examined representations of Paralympic athletes in print media worldwide. They pointed out that the newspaper coverage did not match the growth of Paralympic sport, but rather marginalized Paralympic sport, and media outlets tend to stereotype athletes with a disability. Visual representation in sports in general is the central theme of other studies. Female sport and its representation in photos in daily newspapers in Florida during the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games was the subject of the work of Hardin et al. (2002). In this case, the researchers found out that the ratio of men's and women's pictures published in the selected newspapers corresponded to the ratio of participants. Predominantly, the published photos showed women in a neutral way which meant that the newspaper coverage was moving away from stereotypes. Wolter (2015) conducted a qualitative study on the representation of female athletes in ESPNW's feature article photographs. The author revealed an unprecedented difference between the representation of women and minorities in the mainstream media compared to the specialized website, ESPNW.

2.1.   Sports Photography

Sports photography is a natural part of contemporary media – whether in the so-called traditional print or online forms. Generally, the focus is on sports, although various approaches take place. Andrews (2005) noted that a sports photographer is not able to compete against another visual medium – television – which broadcasts sports events live and has more opportunities to cover different angles and aspects of the game. A sports photographer's task is to capture the greatest moments of a single match, a championship, or the spirit of sports. On the other hand, during major sporting events, the biggest photo news wires (Reuters, Getty, AP, AFP) also offer images from remote cameras placed in unusual places such as on the roof, behind the goal, etc. (Perez, 2010; Easton, 2016). Kobré (2008) considers sports photography as one of the most challenging photographic disciplines. The photographer must be able to combine three traits in their pictures – technical skills and visual and journalistic qualities. Technically, sports photography is a highly demanding genre. Major

photographic equipment producers (Canon, Nikon) release the high-end professional cameras and lenses before the Olympic Games (Artaius, 2019; Sarkar, 2019). This expensive, high-end equipment, including long and fast telephoto lenses, allows photographers to capture essential details (Horton, 2001). This work often takes place under physically demanding conditions (Andrews, 2005). On the other hand, sports photography struggles with limited visual components, especially the usage of gestures and compositional devices, for example, an athlete separated via a small depth of field from the background (Hagaman, 1993).

The type of content in a picture, however, allows us to define several sub-genres of sports photography. A sports action picture is an image where the essential aspect is the action. One of the pioneers of documentary photography, French photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson, introduced the concept of the *decisive moment* – a fraction of a second when the most important characteristic moment happens (Cartier-Bresson, 1951). The quality of a picture is measured by the appropriate timing of the peak action. Another approach is to capture the emotions or gestures of an individual athlete or team. In sports photography, common gestures are, for instance, up or down positions of the head as well as more people responding to each other (Hagaman, 1993). On the other hand, *feature sports photography* does not target the peak action but rather background action (Hoy, 1986; Kobré, 2008; Parrish, 2002) or it can artistically visualize the sports action using various photographic techniques. We can include backstage photos, fans, coaches, or moments that are not directly connected to the game in this category. One of the most common genres within media is a *portrait* with a wide range of approaches, including a spontaneous reportage portrait or a stylized studio portrait (Hoy, 1986). However, according to Parrish (2002) and Hoy (1986), the photographer should go beyond a simple reproduction of face. They note that, due to the limited space, single pictures are the most common image materials in daily newspapers. Picture series, which consist of more interconnected pictures (one game, one event, etc.), have their place mainly on media websites, sports club websites, social media, or in specialized print magazines. Both, single pictures and picture series are parts of international photographic competitions such as World Press Photo, NPPA Best of Photojournalism, and local counterparts such as Czech Press Photo or Hungarian Press Photo.

While sport is a natural part of contemporary print and online Czech media, photographs of Paralympic sports are not a subject of much attention. The media ignore the Czech Paralympic athletes even when they become successful (Němcová Tejkalová, 2012). Some athletes with a disability gain attention when there is an especially compelling personal story. An example of this represents the Czech para ice-hockey player and boxer Zdeněk Šafránek who was the subject of Michael Hanke's photo essay which received the second prize in the Sports Series category at World Press Photo 2019 (Vocelka, 2019), or the most successful Czech Paralympic cyclist Jiří Ježek who became a celebrity (Macková & Trunečka, 2015).

2.2.   Disabled Body

The Ancient ideal of perfection was represented by the so-called *kalokagathia*, consisting of two words, *kalosand* and *agathos*, meaning beautiful and good (Eco, 2004). Although these two terms are positive, physical exercise or physical fitness were often developed during wars and thus influenced the structure of physical fitness training (Šíp, 2008). The concept of kalokagathia also appeared in the Czech territory (Ludvíkovský, 1923). Miroslav Tyrš was a promoter of the harmony of body and soul and participated in the establishment of the gymnastics organization *Sokol*. Moreover, kalokagathia has been an important element of the modern Olympic idea since the 19th century (Zamarovský, 2003) and continues to be until today. The ideal athletic body is represented as a strong, sporty, able-bodied male figure, not a body with a disability (DePauw, 1997; Apelmo, 2017). Athletes with and without a disability have separate competitions. The sport of people with a disability has not been in the awareness of fans for a long time. The disabled body was perceived as the opposite of the "hegemonic ideal of the athletic body" (Promis et al., 2001; Berger, 2008). The sport of athletes without a disability was a space for building masculinity. People with a disability were considered vulnerable, weak, and incomplete (Berger, 2008). However, the bodies of athletes with a disability are compared to the bodies of non-disabled athletes (Vanlandewijck & Thompson, 2011). "Historically, individuals with disabilities were excluded from sport given their 'inability' to meet the socially constructed ideals of physicality, masculinity, and sexuality," noted DePauw (1997, p. 421). She also adds that those "who were initially somewhat 'included' were those who seemed the closest to the ideals, usually the White male with lower spinal cord injuries who competed in wheelchairs" (Ibid., p. 421).

Hargreaves (2000) argued that disabled bodies are in opposition to the ideal of perfect corpus. However, DePauw (1997) noted that some individuals with disability insist on considering their bodies to be normal and perfect. However, it has not always been that way. "Key to the importance of the body in sport is the argument that the natural inequality of one's body (e.g., male vs. female body, able body vs. disabled body) provides the basis for social inequality and, therefore, marginal status in sport," explained (DePauw, 1997, p. 420). Those who were initially omitted (e.g., women, individuals with disabilities) were "excluded from sport due, in part, to the 'nature of the body' argument" (Ibid., 1997, p. 420).

Women can show in competitions for disabled athletes that they are not only "the weak and disabled", but they can prove that they are able to achieve very high-quality sports performances.

Elite performers transform the stereotypes of disabled women as weak, inactive victims into incredible, dynamic sports performers, blurring the able-bodied/disabled body divide. The female stars of disabled sport signal an identity which is a challenge to ableist ideology, a reinvention of the possible. (Hargreaves, 2000, p. 199)

Purdue & Howe (2012) suggested the exclusion of individuals with severe

disabilities from the Paralympic Games because some sports do not contribute to the perception of athletes with a disability as representatives of elite sports. Neverthe-less, there is also a contra opinion supporting the inclusion of Paralympic athletes among Olympians. Athletes with a disability would compete at the Olympic Games (Purdue & Howe, 2012). Several Paralympic athletes have already participated in the Olympic Games. Among the most famous are, for example, Oscar Pistorius (South African runner) and Natalia Partyka (Polish table tennis player).

3.   THE PARALYMPIC SPORT AND MEDIA

The history of Paralympic sports began in 1944 when Sir Ludwig Guttmann estab-lished a rehabilitation center for spinal cord injuries in Stoke Mandeville, England (Brittain, 2016). Before 1944, para sports were only performed as part of therapy for people with a disability. Stays in rehabilitation institutions helped patients to become more independent and to take better care of themselves (International Paralympic Committee, n.d. a). Four years later, as explained by Brittain, athletes with a disabil-ity could participate in the first games in Stoke Mandeville. Even in the Czech Repub-lic, the sport for people with a disability started relatively recently. Physiotherapist Vojmír Srdečný founded the first sports games in Kladruby in 1948. These games were organized four months before the Stoke Mandeville Games and were attended by athletes in four classification groups (Němcová Tejkalová, 2012). Nowadays, the Paralympic Games are one of the world's mega sports events (International Paralym-pic Committee, 2020). They have helped change attitudes toward the people with a disability. Athletes with various disabilities – visual impairments, intellectual disabil-ities, physical disabilities (e.g., paraplegia, quadriplegia, muscular dystrophy, spina bifida), impaired range of movement, limb deficiency, leg length difference, hyperto-nia, etc. (International Paralympic Committee, n.d. c). – can compete in the Paralym-pic Games in a wide range of disciplines. However, people with a disability still face stereotypes (Charlton, 1998) and the mega sports events for athletes with a disabil-ity also have a social overlap. "The Paralympic Games are the pinnacle of the career of Paralympic athletes and motivate others to participate or engage in Paralympic events." (International Paralympic Committee, 2020) Sport can thus be an element that dispels stereotypes (DePauw & Gavron, 1995), but athletes with a disability still evoke emotions such as pity or fear. On the other hand, some viewers and readers admire them and see them as superhumans (Macková, 2020; Thomas & Smith, 2009). The superhuman model challenges the notion of disability and highlights the courage and perseverance of athletes leading to success (McGillivray et al., 2019).

The media and social media also advertise and provide information about people with a disability. With some exceptions, the Paralympic Games are often the only opportunity for athletes with a disability to be a part of world news (Brittain, 2016). "The IPC has invested heavily in social media as a means of spreading its message and providing wide-ranging access to information about the Paralympic Movement

and Games. This includes the use of Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Google…" (Brittain, 2016, p. 108)

According to Lippmann (2004), stereotypes influence public opinion and people use their biases to interpret different messages. Stereotypes in relation to people with a disability have been addressed in several academic papers (Rubin & Strauss Watson, 1987; Haller, 1995; Berger, 2008 or Němcová Tejkalová, 2012). The majority of people in society are non-disabled and thus the disability is considered and perceived as something different from the rest of the population (Tejkalová, 2008). Over the past few decades, attitudes towards people with disabilities have changed, but negative stereotypes remains. In media, they often appear, for example, as victims (dependent on others for help), heroes (able to succeed), representatives of evil (given negative roles), etc. (Block, 2007). However, the media can play a positive role in this process by presenting people with a disability in the same way as the mainstream society is represented (Kama, 2004). Interest in the sport of athletes with a disability has gradually evolved, with an increase observed after the Paralympic Games in Beijing in 2008 and then in London in 2012. 2.7 million people visited the venue during the London Paralympic Games. It was estimated that in the United Kingdom alone, more than 11 million spectators watched the opening ceremony. The Paralympic tickets were sold out, the biggest event for athletes with a disability was watched by 3,8 billion TV viewers (International Paralympic Committee, 2012). As Daniel Jackson mentioned, British TV Channel 4 made live broadcasts during the 2012 London Paralympic Games. They taught television viewers to watch athletes with a disability, gave them the vocabulary of sport and disability, and educated the audience about special rules and classifications (Macková, 2017). Companies have changed the perception of athletes with a disability and began to present them as full-fledged athletes (as well as Olympians). During the London 2012 Paralympic Games, athletes with a disability began to appear in the advertising campaigns of major brands and thus came to the attention of television viewers (Jackson-Brown, 2020).

Hodges et al. (2015) described how the audience perceived the Paralympic Games in London in 2012. They found that television viewers' perceptions of athletes with a disability changed during this mega sports event. At first, they were afraid of the unknown (they do not encounter athletes with a disability often) and then their feelings turned to amazement (they admired their sports performances). The Paralympic Games in London were epoch-making, but they have already been surpassed. The number of hours broadcast from the Paralympic Games and the number of television viewers watching athletes with a disability is increasing worldwide. The 2016 Paralympic Games in Rio became the most viewed in history and broke the audience record. From the Paralympic Games in 2004 to 2016, the number of TV viewers has increased by 127 % (International Paralympic Committee, 2017). The number of countries that broadcast the top event for athletes with a disability has also increased. While only 25 countries had purchased broadcasting rights in the 2004 Athens Paralympic Games, the number of broadcasters grew to 154 countries in the 2016 Rio

de Janeiro Paralympic Games (International Paralympic Committee, 2020). However, this increased TV broadcasting interest is not reflected in print media. There, the Paralympic Games remain without considerable media coverage. Němcová Tejkalová (2012) hypothesized that the amount of media coverage of the athletes with a disability would develop, but this claim was not confirmed in her research.

The media play an important role in the perception of athletes with a disability (Ellis & Goggin, 2015). This does not apply to traditional media only (e.g., newspaper, radio, TV), but also to new and social media. The International Paralympic Committee works with the media, as well as with athletes with a disability and their representative associations. Social media help popularize athletes and allow them to stay in touch and interact with their fans (Nicholson et al., 2015; Real, 2006). Social media thus allow athletes with a disability to influence media content (Ellis & Goggin, 2015) and to share the topics they want to present, such as sports and competition results. Social media help build athletes' personal brands as well (Walsh et al., 2013). Facebook and Twitter directly connect people with organizations through public or semi-public profiles (boyd & Ellison, 2007; Fuchs, 2017). Social media were used as a standard communication tool during the Paralympic Games in London. The increase in Twitter followers and Facebook likes was enormous. The International Paralympic Committee confirmed increase of around 30% on Twitter and 130% on Facebook (Gassewitz, 2020). Paralympic athletes used Twitter to promote their sport during the London 2012 Paralympic Games and in many cases replaced journalists, as they were the direct source of information from this mega event (Pate et al., 2014).

Athletes with a disability are not presented in the Czech media very often. The amount of reporting does not reflect the significance of the success of athletes with a disability (Tejkalová, 2008), which is the reason why the Czech Paralympic Committee presents itself via social media. On the other hand, this means an almost unlimited access policy for photographers. In the interview, the sports photographer Jan Povýšil explained: "Media coverage at the Paralympic events is not as extensive as at events for athletes without a disability, which means that the photographer is also able to capture photos from places where it is not usually allowed. Fewer photographers at sporting events for athletes with a disability also contribute to better photos, as they can choose better places to take their pictures." (Povýšil, personal interview, August 19, 2018)

The International Paralympic Committee tries to highlight the performance of athletes with a disability during the Paralympic Games in an attempt to draw attention away from their disabilities and focus on their sports performance (International Paralympic Committee, 2017). For example, this situation was achieved with para ice hockey, which the Czech audience understand as a full-fledged sport. The Czech TV rating of para ice hockey is close to the most popular sports for athletes without a disability such as ice hockey, football, or tennis (Macková, 2020). On the other hand, para ice hockey is an exception in the Czech environment. According to research conducted by Macková (2020), television viewers perceive other

para-sports only as a therapeutic element and thus para sport symbolically returns to the very beginning to Stoke Mandeville, where the sport was part of rehabilitation (Brittain, 2016). Purdue and Howe (2012) argue that we should talk about the disabled every day during the mega sporting events, because people should not distance themselves from others with a disability.

4. METHODOLOGY

There are researchers who focus on images of athletes with a disability, yet dealing with pictures published in print media (e.g., Hardin et al., 2001; Pappous, 2008; Buysse & Borscherding, 2010; Pappous et al., 2011; Beacom et al., 2016; Rees et al., 2017), therefore we focused on images published on social media. While these studies were based on media in Western countries (United Kingdom, USA, Germany, etc.), our aim was to analyze the situation in the Czech Republic as a Central European country (sometimes ranked among Eastern European countries). The main question of the research was: How do the photographs on Facebook pages of the world's top events for able-bodied athletes and athletes with a disability vary? In addition to the main research question, we had two related questions that guided this study: Which was the dominant subgenre of sports photography among the pictures of athletes with and without a disability? What are the practices of (not) showing the athletes' impairments in the pictures taken from the Paralympic Games?

For the comparison of the pictures of athletes with and without a disability, we performed a content analysis of the images that were published on the Facebook pages of the national committees: Czech Olympic Team[1] and Czech Paralympic Team[2]. The examined images consisted of any photographically based visuals (photography, photography with graphics, etc.). In April 2022, the Facebook page of the Czech Olympic Team had over 400,000 followers and the Czech Paralympic Team over 16,000 followers.

We examined the pictures that were published by both committees during the 2016 Summer Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro (5th August – 21st August 2016), the 2016 Summer Paralympics in Rio de Janeiro (7th September – 18th September 2016), 2018 Winter Olympic Games in Pyeongchang (9th February – 25th February 2018) and the 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Paralympic Games (9th March – 18th March 2018).

Our sample consisted of 209 pictures (see Table 1) of Czech athletes with and without a disability who won medals in the 2016 Rio Olympic and Paralympic Games and the 2018 PyeongChang Winter Olympic Games. In Rio in 2016, the Czech Olympic team gained 10 medals including one gold, two silver and seven bronze (International Olympic Committee, n.d.). The Czech Paralympic team won seven medals – one gold, two silver and four bronze (International Paralympic Committee, n.d. b). In the

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1   Český olympijský tým – https://www.facebook.com/olympijskytym/

2   Český paralympijský tým – https://www.facebook.com/paralympicsCZ/

2018 PyeongChang Olympic Games, the Czech team won seven medals, including two gold, two silver and three bronze (International Olympic Committee, n.d.). However, the Czech Paralympic team did not gain any medal in the 2018 PyeongChang Winter Paralympic Games; therefore, we focused on the most successful Czech athletes with a disability (International Paralympic Committee, n.d. b). All the images included in the sample were posted on the timeline of the Facebook pages of the Czech Olympic Team and the Czech Paralympic Team. We focused on regular posts, not on Facebook Stories which were introduced in 2017 (Newton, 2017).

Table 1. Image sources.

	n	%
Rio 2016 Olympics	68	33 %
Rio 2016 Paralympics	28	13 %
PyeongChang 2018 Olympics	81	39 %
PyeongChang 2018 Paralympics	32	15 %
Total	209	100 %

Source: Authors of the article

We collected the data in two phases – the first part consisted of pictures from the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Rio 2016 that were downloaded in June 2017. The second part consisted of pictures from the winter Olympic and Paralympic Games in PyeongChang 2018 and was collected in June 2018. Within these pictures, we focused on elements that would differ when comparing the sport of athletes with and without a disability a) the size of the shot, b) the subgenre of the sports photography and c) the visibility of the disability in case of athletes with a disability.

Two coders proceeded to code a total of 209 images during two phases (Rio 2016 events and PyeongChang 2018). Before the coding of each phase, coders tested the coding of 10% (21 random pictures in total) sample data with the total percentage of agreement 0.96 (Neuendorf, 2002).

We also carried out semi-structured interviews with photographers of athletes with a disability. The aim of these additional interviews was to discover if there were any changes in the way how the photographers approached their subjects when dealing with athletes with or without a disability in general. Both examined Facebook pages have not indicated the authorship of published pictures so we could not precisely connect specific pictures with a specific photographer. Therefore, we selected three sports photographers – Jan Malý (an official photographer of the Czech Paralympic Committee at the 2016 Rio Summer Paralympic Games and the 2018 PyeongChang Winter Paralympic Games), Martin Malý (a sports photographer who also focuses on athletes with a disability) and Jan Povýšil (a Paralympic athlete and a sports photographer). All three photographers participated in the media outputs for the Czech Paralympic Committee. Due to the interviewees' heavy workload,

we conducted the interviews via e-mail. We asked 15 questions regarding photographing Czech athletes with a disability. The discussion included the specifics of portraying athletes with and without a disability, the selection of particular photos, the expectations of contractor. In a follow-up e-mail, we asked additional questions to gain more detailed answers.

4.1. SIZE OF THE SHOT

The size of the shot (also the size of the frame) is one of the basic properties of a single shot and it is the key aspect of the photographic composition of an image. The particular size of the shot can be achieved through the technical settings of a camera, the editing process (specific lens, crop factor, postproduction cropping), and the position of the photographer. The size of the shot fulfils the photographer's intention. Via its properties, it exactly defines what and how will be portrayed. The size of the shot is defined through the relative size of objects that are included in the picture and is based on the properties of various shots as defined in the motion picture theory (Bordwell & Thompson, 2012; Rose, 2016). There is not a convention in the used size of a shot in the sports photography genres, but sports photographers have tendencies to use a tighter crop (Hagaman, 1993).

For this research, we chose a simplified classification due to the usage of various shots in motion pictures (film, TV) and specifically in journalism photography (Bordwell & Thompson, 2012). For example, so-called extreme long shot is widely used in motion pictures as well as the extreme close-up, which is also widely used in macro photography of nature, but it is rarely used in photojournalism (Kobré, 2008). In addition, Bordwell & Thompson (2012) emphasize that the boundaries between various sizes of shots are not clearly defined and are rather a matter of the intention of an individual shot.

The long shot (LS) shows the entire body. Its main function is to contextualize the object in the environment. The size of the figure within the frame can vary, but the whole figure is visible. Medium shot (MS) refers to the size of the shot where the body of the main object is cropped (usually from the waist up). This type of shot mainly shows the action and identifies particular people. Close-up (CU) shows only a fragment of the situation or figure (usually face, hands, legs, etc.). It identifies specific visible properties of the object. When a part of the body is captured, the close-up usually emphasizes emotions (Bordwell & Thompson, 2012).

4.2. Type of the picture

Type of the picture means the subgenre of sports photography. Each picture was classified into one category. In case a picture met the criteria for more than one category, we chose the most fitting category. Action sports picture shows an athlete during a competition. Usually, the athlete uses sports equipment and shows the typical

movement in particular sports art. A picture showing emotions or gestures mainly focuses on positive or negative emotions in reaction to the athletes' own performance, other athletes' performances or to the final results of the competition. We are aware that every picture can carry an emotional message. Thus, we listed the pictures where the main theme contained emotions or gestures into this category. The feature picture focuses on moments excluding the athlete's sports performance. Typical examples of this category are "behind the scenes" moments or moments with fans. Portraits are pictures that focus on people. Portraits should focus not only on the physical look of the portrayed individual but also on his or her personality. There are various subcategories of portrait depending on various aspects (level of stylization, location, etc.) (Horton, 2001; Kobré, 2008). In addition to the subgenres mentioned above, we added an additional category, miscellaneous, which addresses other phenomena appearing in the social media profiles of the Czech Olympic Team – picture montages and 360-degree pictures. The Czech Olympic Team's Facebook page published these kinds of pictures because of their sponsorship by a 360-degree camera production company.

4.3.   Visibility of the disability

The last category deals with the visibility of the disability in the picture. If one or more of the athletes have a visible disability in the picture, the value is visible. Otherwise, we considered the disability as not visible. We considered the visibility of a particular disability through the presence of a particular compensatory aid, the visibility of a deformed or missing body part. Visibility of the disability is a category that can be partly determined by the size of the frame. Pappous (2008) noticed that with the shift towards "more near" shots (close-ups), the disabilities are not often visible. We explain the limitations of this category in the results.

5.   FINDINGS

5.1.   Sports Photography Subgenres

Table 2 shows the number of pictures within various photographic subgenres. We can see that most pictures both from the Olympic and Paralympic Games can be ranked in three subgenres – sports action picture, picture showing emotions, and feature photo. We classified only a few images as a portrait or miscellaneous.

Table 2. Photo genres across the pictures from the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

	Rio 2016 Olympics		Rio 2016 Paralympics		PyeongChang 2018 Olympics		Pyeong-Chang 2018 Paralympics		Total	% Grand Total
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Action	9	13%	15	54%	19	23%	23	72%	66	32%
Emotions and gestures	36	53%	11	39%	40	49%	1	3%	88	42%
Feature	19	28%	1	4%	14	17%	8	25%	42	20%
Portrait	1	1%	1	4%	7	9%	0	0%	9	4%
Miscellaneous	3	4%	0	0%	1	1%	0	0%	4	2%
Total	68	100%	28	100%	81	100%	32	100%	209	100%

Source: Authors of the article

The biggest difference was identified among the usage of action sports pictures and photos that show emotions. While most of the photos from the Summer and Winter Olympic Games was listed in the category emotions (51 % in total), the pictures from the Paralympic Games mostly focused on the sports so that the ratio of the sports action pictures (63 % in total) to the Paralympic Games compared to other genres is higher. Stereotypes about athletes with a disability persist in media (Němcová Tejkalová, 2012).

The Czech Olympic Team pages did not publish very often feature sports action pictures during either the 2016 Rio games (13 %) or the 2018 PyeongChang games (23 %). On the Paralympic Team page, there were 15 of 28 pictures (54 %) during the 2016 Rio games and 23 of 32 (72 %) during the 2018 PyeongChang games. During the 2016 Rio Olympics, 53 % photos showed emotions and 49 % during the 2018 PyeongChang Olympics. During the 2016 Rio, there were 39 %, and during the 2018 PyeongChang Paralympics, only 1 of 32 pictures (3 %).

Emotions are mostly seen on the Facebook page of the Czech Olympic Team as it is assumed that sports fans had already seen the sports achievements of medalists (i.e., on TV). It is different in case of Paralympic sports. Athletes with a disability do not get in front pages of media so often, so it is also important to show the sport discipline. Paralympic sports photographer Martin Malý claims it as well. "The most important thing is to capture sports performance, rather than the emotions and efforts behind it." (personal interview, August 8, 2018). Jan Povýšil adds: "It depends on the client and on the target group. However, if it is possible, I do not suppress anything." (personal interview, August 19, 2018). As a result, the Czech Paralympic Committee shows more sports action in photos than emotions or gestures.

Among other genres, only feature photos had noticeable representation, especially on the pages of the Czech Olympic Team – 28 % during the 2016 games in Rio and 17 % from the PyeongChang games in 2018.

Both committees used photos as a part of graphics – especially in moments when

an athlete won a medal. The Olympic Committee's page also used photos in posts that presented the daily program.
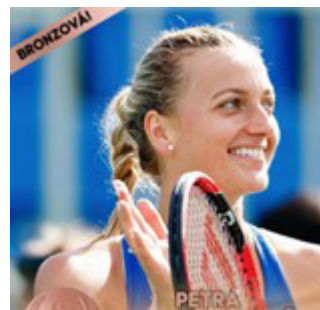
Pictures 1-3: Petra Kvitová. Source: Facebook / Czech Olympic Team

Pictures 1–3 show the usual image content on the Facebook page of the Czech Olympic Team during the Olympic Games. Via examples of pictures of Petra Kvitová, a tennis player and the bronze medalist from the 2016 games in Rio, various photos showing emotions are visible. As Hagaman (1993) notes, there are several gestures, which act as elementary visual components. Usage of fists and clapping is one of the widely used visual elements.

5.2.   The Visibility of Disability and Size of a Shot

The visibility of disability (see Table 3) among the photos of the Paralympic Games was one of the key aspects that we examined. The visibility of a disability and the size of a shot usually related. However, there were different results from the 2016 games in Rio and the 2018 games in PyeongChang.

Table 3. Visibility of a disability in pictures from Paralympic Games

	Rio 2016 Paralympics		PyeongChang 2018 Paralympics	
	n	%	n	%
Disability – visible	9	32%	19	59%
Disability – not visible	19	68%	13	41%
Total	28	100%	32	100%

Source: Authors of the article

During the games in Rio in 2016, a disability was visible in 9 of 28 pictures. In the pictures from the PyeongChang games in 2018 a disability was shown in 19 of 32 pictures. One explanation for this would be to take into consideration the different characteristics of the disciplines – e.g., para ice hockey (the disability is always visible via sledge except in cases of an extreme close-up). Para ice hockey is a popular sport among audiences in the Czech Republic. This sports discipline was ranked by TV viewers as

a full-fledged sport (Macková, 2020), which is proven by the TV viewership of the Paralympic ice hockey tournament in 2018 or the high number of Facebook likes related to the images of para ice hockey players, that have received over one thousand Facebook likes compared to the pictures of the most successful skier Patrik Hetmer. Hetmer's Facebook likes do not reach such numbers. His most successful photo from PyeongChang in 2018 received 384 likes (Český paralympijský tým, n.d.).

Table 4. Visibility of a disability across size of shot

	Long shot		Midsize shot		Closeup	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Disability – visible	5	31%	23	56%	0	0%
Disability – not visible	11	69%	18	44%	3	100%
Total	16	100%	41	100%	3	100%

Source: Authors of the article

In the cases of pictures of athletes with a disability, the size of the shot and visibility of the disabilities are aspects that are worth looking further. Table 4 shows how many pictures among the images from the Paralympic Games (both Rio 2016 and Pyeongchang 2018) were of which size and if a disability was visible. The results show how the size of the shot can influence the visibility of a disability. In long shots, the disability was mostly not visible. This is a match with Pappous' (2008) results. He found out that there was progress in portrayal of athletes with a disability. In 2008 more "near shots" appeared which meant "preventing possibility of distinguishing any visual markers of disability" (Pappous, 2008: 350). Among the midsize shots, a slight majority of the shots show a disability. In none of the close-ups a disability was visible. However, the results of the close-ups are limited due to the small absolute number of shots. Also, various aspects of the disability must be considered – the presence of compensation or its severity.

Picture 4: Eva Berná.
Source: Facebook / Czech Paralympic Team

Picture 5: Běla Třebínová.
Source: Facebook / Czech Paralympic Team

In Picture 4, we can see an example of Eva Berná (Datinská) who competes in the shot-put and discus throw. Her disability is not visible on her body regardless of the scope of the photograph. There is no difference if we compare it to the pictures from field disciplines at the Olympic Games (her body construction corresponds with the body construction of discus throwers or shot-putters). In this case, the visibility depends on the type of disability. Eva Berná (Datinská) has cerebral palsy (which is not visible at first sight). On the other hand, Picture 5 shows wheelchair user Běla Třebínová, the silver and the bronze medalist from the games in Rio in 2016. We cannot see the disability on her body in the picture, but she does not have a "perfect and skillful body" (Apelmo, 2017) composition such as would be expected in a top-level swimmer. "The bodies of impaired athletes have continually been judged in relation to an able-bodied 'norm', and the standards of play and performance are compared with those of mainstream competitions." (Vanlandewijck & Thompson, 2011).

Pictures 6-7: Arnošt Petráček. Source: Facebook / Czech Paralympic Team

At first glance, we encounter the same case in the portrayal of Paralympic gold medalist Arnošt Petráček during the competition. Despite his severe physical impairment, it is not visible in the sports action picture from the race (Picture 6). Picture 7 shows Petráček on the podium at the medal ceremony. In this picture, his impairment is clearly visible. Another similar example is wheelchair table tennis player Jiří Suchánek (Picture 8). While Petráček's disability is hidden by the water, Suchánek's wheelchair is usually not visible behind the table. As Pappous (Brittain, 2016) described in the book, *The Paralympic Games Explained*, the disability is hidden in the photos from the Paralympic Games and this was noticeable in the sample of our research and also confirmed by one of the photographers. "It is not that I, as a photographer, want to deliberately hide something, but there are moments when the disability is not visible." (Povýšil, personal interview, August 19, 2018).

Picture 8: Jiří Suchánek. Source: Facebook / Czech Paralympic Team

6.   DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results of our research showed that there were notable differences between the presentation of athletes with and without a disability on social media. The pictures on the Czech Paralympic Team page focused more on the sport when compared with the page of the Czech Olympic Team. The athletes thus were mostly shown during their sports performance. The official Facebook page of the Czech Olympic Team primarily focused on emotions or gestures. For the images of athletes with a disability, the responsibility of a creator and an editor of communication channel is crucial as they control the visibility of the disability (Pappous, 2008).

Furthermore, according to Maas and Hasbrook (2001), Pappous (2008) and Pappous et al. (2011), the disability in the examined pictures is either not visible or there are no photos with disabled athletes. As was shown in our research, the selected framing of the picture hid even a severe disability. This might lead to the denial of an athlete's identity and the suppression of the differences between the athletes with and without a disability. However, the selection of framing was not intentional by the creators. Jan Malý, a photographer of the Paralympic events, expressed his approach: "Definitely, I do not try to alter the athlete's disability. The most important thing is to capture the action, emotions, and effort of the athlete. Our (photographer's) task is

to document the (Paralympic) event just as any other. The only difference is in the specifics of each discipline." (Jan Malý, e-mail interview, 2018).

The social status (the prestige or the acceptance of an individual in society) could be determined by the disability (DePauw & Gavron, 1995). "I am just like everyone else" (Apelmo, 2017) can serve as a motto of athletes with a disability. The success of Paralympic athletes works as a stimulus to other people with a disability and encourages them to be involved. However, there remains the question if the visual hiding of disability and the possible identity suppression is the most desirable way to reach this objective.

Hopefully, our research will lead to further investigation in this field. There are several potential areas that could be explored, especially, a comparison of these results with results coming from the highly developed countries in terms of the Paralympic movement.

František Géla is an academic researcher and lecturer at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University in Prague. His areas of research interest include photojournalism, sports photography, new technologies in TV journalism, and multimedia journalism.
ORCID 0000-0003-1631-0604

Veronika Macková is an academic researcher at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University in Prague. Previously, she held a position as a journalist at Czech Television, which is why she mainly teaches practical journalism-oriented courses, and was a Director of Communication in Czech Paralympic Committee. Her areas of research interest include sports journalism and artificial intelligence journalism. In her academic publications, she focuses mainly on para sports and athletes with a disability. She also belongs to the research team of two international projects.
ORCID 0000-0003-2442-4011

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