Historically, persons with disabilities have been regarded as damaged—as less than whole and thus perhaps less than fully human. They have been categorized among the sick and consigned to institutions, they have at times been exploited as entertainment, and, more commonly, they have been viewed as personal tragedies, as people who are deserving of pity but are fundamentally “other,” not worthy of inclusion in society except as victims or misfits. Paralympians have arguably contributed to changing these perceptions. In fact, athletes with disabilities suddenly seem to be in vogue, not the least because of the notoriety of Oscar Pistorius, the South African runner who, in 2012, competed in both the Olympic and Paralympic Games in London, earning two gold medals and a silver in the latter. Similarly, American Amy Purdy, who won a bronze medal in snowboarding at the 2014 Winter Paralympic Games in Sochi, has garnered much media attention. How we communicate about athletes with disabilities has thus evolved, but the question remains how far these changes reflect a genuine shift in public consciousness.

The phrase “athletes with disabilities” is often used to refer not only to Paralympic athletes but also to athletes who compete in the Deaflympics and those with intellectual disabilities who compete in the Special Olympics. However, although the International Craig R. Hall, Andrew M. Johnson, Lorie A. Forwell, Molly Driediger, and Elaine N. Skopelja et al. Committee of Sports for the Deaf was at one time under
the Paralympic umbrella, it chose to separate, in part because members of the Deaf community do not see themselves as having a disability. Rather, they regard themselves as people who use a different language and share a distinctive culture. Athletes with intellectual disability (ID) have, on occasion, competed in Paralympic events, but they are predominantly served by the Special Olympics. For the most part, then, the Paralympics feature athletes with a physical disability.

The beginning of sporting opportunities for those with physical disabilities is linked to rehabilitation centres, primarily those created for World War II veterans who had sustained spinal injuries. Prior to World War II, 80 percent of paraplegics died within three years of their injury, and this low rate of survival discouraged efforts at rehabilitation. Following World War II, however, medical knowledge regarding spinal cord injuries improved dramatically, resulting in more effective rehabilitation techniques. In 1944, Sir Ludwig Guttmann, a neurosurgeon at Stoke Mandeville hospital, north of London, decided to use wheelchair sports for war veterans with spinal cord injuries as a form of treatment.

The success of sport as remedial exercise and clinical treatment provided the incentive for Guttmann to hold a day of formal competition, on 28 July 1948. The village of Stoke Mandeville thus became known as the birthplace of wheelchair sports. This original foray quickly grew into an annual international competition known as the Stoke Mandeville Games, first held in 1952 on the same day as the opening ceremonies of the London Olympic Games (likely by no coincidence). In 1960, Guttmann moved the Games to Rome, where they followed on the heels of the Olympic Games, which Rome was also hosting. Thus began a pattern for the Paralympic Games, which have been held approximately two weeks after each Olympic Games ever since.

Initially, Paralympic events were only for those with spinal injuries, but eventually the Games expanded to include athletes with visual impairments, cerebral palsy, and amputations. At the Rome Paralympic Games in 1960, which are considered to be the first official Paralympic Games, Pope John XXIII, speaking of the event’s effect on the public and setting a precedent for communication about the Paralympics, stated: “You are the living demonstration of the marvels of the virtue of energy. You have given a great example, which we would like to emphasize, because it can be a lead to all: you have shown what an energetic soul can achieve, in spite of apparently insurmountable obstacles imposed by the body.”

From the first Summer Games in 1960 and the first Winter Games in 1976, the Paralympics were usually (but not always) held in the same country as the Olympic Games, but not in the same location. On the occasion of the 1988 Games in Seoul,
however, this changed, as the Korean royal family determined that the Paralympic Games should be accorded the same status as the Olympics—held in the same venues, with similar opening and closing ceremonies. This, too, set a precedent, which was followed in 1992 for the Barcelona Summer Games, in 1994 for the Winter Games in Albertville, France, and for every Paralympic Games thereafter. The pattern became formal policy following an agreement signed in 2001 between the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the International Paralympic Committee (IPC), specifying that cities bidding to host the Olympic Games were also required to host the Paralympics.

I first attended the Paralympics in 1996, in Atlanta. Since then, I have attended four other Paralympic Games—in Salt Lake City (2002), Athens (2004), Vancouver (2010), and London (2012)—as well as four Parapan American Games, in Mar del Plata, Argentina (2003), Rio de Janeiro (2007), Guadalajara (2011), and Toronto (2015). In 1999, I became a board member of the Canadian Paralympic Committee (CPC), serving from 2011 to 2013 as the organization’s president and as CPC representative on the board of directors of the Toronto 2015 Pan American and Parapan American Games Organizing Committee. This experience has afforded me ample opportunity to observe and reflect on the media portrayal of athletes with disabilities.

As the Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund rightly notes, people with disabilities have, over the decades, endured “misrepresentation, defamation, and lack of representation” at the hands of the news and entertainment media. That said, especially over the past five years or so, they seem to have acquired greater visibility. For example, in 2011, in a post-Christmas ad for children’s clothing, Target quietly included a boy born with Down syndrome among the children pictured in the ad. And, in 2012, Katie Driscoll and Steve English created a website titled “Changing the Face of Beauty” in order “to promote the use of special-needs models in mainstream ads.” Yet people with disabilities are a long way from achieving equity. Those who do acquire a public profile tend to be exceptionally attractive individuals, such as the strikingly beautiful Aimee Mullins, a former Paralympic athlete who has had a successful career as a model and actress (and recently signed a major contract with L’Oréal).

Amy Purdy—whose sponsors include Kellogg’s, Coca-Cola, Duracell, and Procter and Gamble—has, in particular, become a corporate and media darling. After winning her bronze medal at the Sochi Paralympic Games, she returned home to compete on Dancing with the Stars and has since been featured in a commercial for the Toyota Camry, which aired during the 2015 Super Bowl. She has
also been interviewed on television talk shows. Another example is Noah Galloway, who, in November 2014, became the first person with a disability to appear on the cover of *Men’s Health* magazine and was a guest on *The Ellen DeGeneres Show*. A former US Army serviceman, Galloway lost a leg and an arm as a result of injuries sustained in Iraq.\(^1\)

Prosthetics themselves have also been the focus of media attention, not merely as examples of cutting-edge technology but as objects of interest and beauty. In April and May 2012, London’s SHOWstudio mounted an exhibition that aimed to “engage directly with prosthetics’ ability to adorn, equip and enhance.”\(^1\) More recently, *Dezeen*, a British design and architecture magazine, profiled Canadians McCauley Wanner and Ryan Palibroda, who design and manufacture fashionable covers for prosthetic limbs. For the article, two Calgary-based athletes, snowboarder Michelle Salt and cyclist Jaye Milley, were photographed wearing these new prosthetic covers. A month later, *The Guardian* also featured an article about the design team.\(^1\)

Despite the newfound visibility of athletes with disabilities, however, challenges remain. Critics argue that the focus falls not on the quality of the athletic performance but instead on the overcoming of a handicap. The public is encouraged to view Paralympians not simply as highly skilled athletes but as moral heroes, whose “strength” and “courage” have allowed them to triumph over daunting circumstances. The achievements of Paralympic athletes are thus reduced to a series of “feel good” stories, which, for William Peace, “is nothing short of demeaning.”\(^1\) Such stories are not really about the athletes, who merely serve as symbols for the generic underdog—and, while they may restore our faith in the human potential, they arguably do little to alter underlying social attitudes. In London, only days before the 2012 Paralympic Games began, the *Guardian*’s Frances Ryan noted that media coverage for the Games would probably not challenge, much less change, prevailing views of disability but would instead find ways to accommodate them. “An Olympian,” said Ryan, “is deemed inspirational because of what they have achieved. A Paralympian is an inspiration because, despite it all, they’ve made it this far. It is, in part, a reflection of the unspoken thought that lurks in perceptions of disability: a disabled life is a dire existence that only the most courageous could ‘overcome.’”\(^1\)

The tendency to exclude Paralympians from the realm of genuine sport—to treat them as some sort of sideshow—is, of course, nothing new. Scholars Maria Hardin and Brent Hardin note that “Jean Driscoll’s seventh win in the wheelchair division of the Boston Marathon was framed as a ‘social event’ in a 1996 edition
of Runner’s World, and CBS’s airing of the 1997’s ‘World’s Fastest Man’ competition included all events except one: a race between amputees.”

Anne Golden, who interviewed sports reporters at the 2002 Salt Lake City Olympic and Paralympic Games, found that many US sports reporters did not view Paralympic sport as legitimate. Golden quotes one American reporter who remarked about Paralympic athletes and the Games: “They can’t compete on the same level as the Olympic athletes, so it’s a bone they throw to them to make them feel better. It’s not a real competition, and I, for one, don’t see why I should have to cover it.”

In 2008, Ivo van Hilvoorde and Laurens Landeweerd wrote that “for many people in disability sport, the athlete is still a ‘patient combating their limitations,’ instead of an elite athlete with specific talents or virtuosity.” This theme was taken up in a paper by David Purdue and David Howe titled “See the Sport, Not the Disability,” which examines the tension between elite athletic competition and social perceptions of disability. While Purdue and Howe acknowledge that media coverage of Paralympic events is increasing, they argue that a Paralympian still tends to be presented as an impaired athlete rather than as an athlete (who, as it happens, has a disability).

This was the perspective to which I had grown all too accustomed and that I expected to encounter at the 2012 Paralympic Games in London. What actually ensued there, and again during the 2014 Winter Games in Sochi, was in many ways a welcome change. The first surprise at the Games in London was the degree of public engagement. In comparison to the four Paralympic events I had attended in the past, the level of interest in London from local fans seemed extraordinary. In particular, I reflected on the sparsely attended Paralympic Games I witnessed in 1996 in Atlanta, where the gigantic Centennial Olympic Stadium held only several hundred spectators. In London, I sat with eighty thousand.

The television coverage in London was also exceptional, with Channel 4 showing more than 400 hours of coverage, 150 of it in prime time. One exceptionally memorable late-night talk show on Channel 4 featured hosts with disabilities interviewing athletes about sport and disability. In a recent conversation with Ian Troop, the former CEO of the Toronto 2015 Pan Am and Parapan Am Games, he and I reflected on this show, speculating that it may have helped to secure, or at least to encourage, a shift in societal attitudes toward disability.

Even though television coverage of the London Paralympics was better than it had been for prior Games, criticism ensued. IPC president Sir Philip Craven requested that the word disabled be dropped from Games coverage. David Howe, a former Canadian Paralympic athlete now living in the United Kingdom, lamented
that Paralympians are still viewed as “others” and as “supercrips.” Channel 4’s visually powerful “Meet the Superhumans” ad campaign—which included a television commercial that depicts Paralympic athletics training and competing, in the midst of which we suddenly see a bomb exploding, an ultrasound image and an anxious-looking pregnant woman, and a car flipping over on a highway—also provoked concerns. As a board member of the Canadian Paralympic Committee, I had participated in a similar discussion concerning two of our own promotional campaigns. One was our “Unstoppable” commercial, which shows an athlete with a prosthetic leg running on a track past scenes that trace the origins of his disability in a serious car accident, of the sort in which anyone could be involved. The second was CPC’s promotional campaign titled “Super Athletes.” The critics argued that Paralympic athletes should be portrayed not as victims of tragic circumstances who have managed to overcome their handicaps or, at the other extreme, as superhumans but simply as highly accomplished athletes.

In an analysis of New York Times coverage of the Paralympics, Jeremy Tynedal and Gregor Wolbring identified a similar pattern: athletes were stereotypically cast as “suffering entities,” on the one hand, or as “supercrips,” on the other.

In North America, meanwhile, criticism was based simply on the dearth of television coverage. NBC televised only 5.5 hours of the London Paralympics, with two of those hours broadcast after the Games ended. In both the United States and Canada, the national Paralympic committees remained the official rights holders for broadcasting, since no private broadcasters were interested in purchasing the rights. Out of the twenty-seven nations that broadcast the Games, only in one other (Pakistan) did this situation exist. One might argue that the lack of interest on the part of North American broadcasters simply reflected a concomitant lack of enthusiasm of the part of sponsors, who were in turn reacting to what was predicted to be a low level of audience demand. In the UK, however, Channel 4 was able to attract more than fifty non-Olympic sponsors to bid on advertising slots for its broadcast, including Apple, Google, Kellogg’s, and Volvo. Furthermore, Channel 4 has already secured advertising for the broadcast of the 2016 Paralympic Games in Brazil.

The unprecedented success of the London Paralympics evidently prompted North American broadcasters to rethink their approach. NBC’s coverage of the 2014 Winter Paralympic Games in Sochi ran to over fifty hours, which were also fully streamed on the US Olympic Committee website, and the network plans to broadcast close to seventy hours from Rio de Janeiro in 2016. As Gary Zenkel, head of NBC Olympics, pointed out, the increased coverage was made possible by the
relative ease with which the network was able to find sponsors. Although Zenkel admitted that comparative data from previous Games were sparse, he indicated that the viewing audience for Sochi 2014 was 40 percent higher than anticipated on NBC and 60 percent higher on NBC's cable network. “We have found a diamond in the rough with this amazing event,” he enthused, “that is full of incredible human interest stories to tell.”28 While the result has been greater coverage of Paralympic events, Zenkel’s reference to “human interest stories” is worth noting in light of the criticisms discussed above.

In Canada, meanwhile, CBC/Radio-Canada led the Canadian Paralympic Committee Broadcast Consortium in Sochi, providing more than 300 hours of multiplatform coverage including more than 90 hours of fully accessible TV broadcasts and more than 250 hours of digital streaming across all CPC broadcast consortium platforms.29 An estimated 5.3 million Canadians tuned in to the English-language CBC broadcast during the first three days alone.30 In addition, SendtoNews reported that its News Partnership Network “delivered 7.6 and 3.8 million broadcast impressions via CTV and Global Television, respectively, through the first days of competition.”31 By the end of the Sochi Games, estimates were that at least 8.8 million Canadians, essentially one quarter of the nation's population, had tuned in.32

Coverage of the London Paralympics in North American newspapers was also subject to critique. In a report focusing on persons with disabilities, Canadian senator Mobina Jaffer noted that during the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, Canadian newspapers ran 332 front-page stories about the Olympics and only 22 about the Paralympics.33 A similar pattern was identified by Tynedal and Wolbring in their assessment of Paralympic coverage in the New York Times from 1955 to 2012.34 The stark difference in the amount of coverage was not unique to North America, however. In an analysis of three New Zealand newspapers, Toni Bruce found that, although Olympians actually outnumbered Paralympians by a ratio of only six to one, papers carried forty-seven times more photos of the former. At the same time, Bruce discovered a striking difference. Most of the photos of Paralympians from countries other than New Zealand highlighted their disabilities—focusing on missing limbs, for example. When it came to New Zealand athletes, however, the photos portrayed the Paralympians as athletes first, with the focus falling on their power and precision—that is, on their athletic prowess.35 If at least some Paralympians can be depicted as athletes rather than as “defective” athletes, this may be a sign of hope.
The fact remains, though, that the relatively scant coverage dedicated to Paralympians focuses, for the most part, on the disability or on how technology has enabled sport performance. Unlike Greg Wells’s popular study Superbodies, which was inspired by some of the amazing feats of able-bodied athletes during the Vancouver Olympics, discussions surrounding Paralympic athletes tend instead to emphasize the amazing feats of technology that help them to overcome their disability, rather than their exceptional physiological ability or their long hours of rigorous training. The focus on disability may in fact be purposeful, suggests Danielle Peers, a Canadian wheelchair basketball player who won a gold medal in Athens and is now completing her PhD at the University of Alberta. In an interview with the Independent’s Peter Popham, Peers pointed out that Paralympic marketers have in fact “drawn from the specific structures, stories and techniques of the freak show.” As she notes, although the freak show originated as fairground entertainment, the same spectacle of deformity resurfaced in the form of travelling medical shows, which often featured the same individuals. But, as Popham himself suggests, perhaps those who promote the Paralympics are merely “appealing to the same ‘gawking’ tendency when they focus on the ‘tragic’ bodies and back-stories of ‘deformed’ heroes, instead of their athletic achievements.” As we saw earlier, both Channel 4 and the CPC aired commercials in which images of athletic performance are juxtaposed to scenes that associate disability with tragedy—tragedy that produces physical deformity. But, Peers asks, if Paralympians are athletes, then “why is that the most important thing you have to say about them?” She argues that this emphasis on physical difference may simply reinforce familiar attitudes and prejudices. “Focusing on bodies as the root of disability,” she says, “is like seeing racism as a problem of skin color.”

These criticisms may have been warranted, since reports of changes to attitudes toward persons with disabilities following the 2012 Paralympic Games are mixed. UK Paralympian Sophie Christiansen notes “a huge gap between how Paralympians are perceived and how the rest of the disabled community is seen.” She suggests that the Games themselves may be partially to blame. “The public may assume they understand disability because of the Games,” she says, but “they do not see the everyday lives of disabled people behind the scenes.” A UK-based study conducted by Scope, a charity focusing on disability, asked more than one thousand UK adults with disabilities about public attitudes toward disability. An overwhelming majority—81 percent—reported that people’s attitudes toward them were not improving, and one in five believed that life had actually worsened in the twelve months following the Paralympic Games. In a Guardian article, Ian Birrell
recognized this lost opportunity, suggesting that attitudes to disability “are so deep-rooted that the euphoria over the 2012 heroes could not spark a sea change. . . . Life remains difficult for a minority still segregated from the rest of society, the tide of intolerance strong.”

Journalists Peter Walker and Alexandra Topping confirm that British Paralympian success in 2012 brought celebrity status for some but did little for the daily life of members of the disability community.

It is possible, however that the positive legacy of the Games is still to come. Tim Hollingsworth, CEO of Paralympics Great Britain, hopes that the lack of attitudinal change will be a generational challenge and that the positive implications of the Games have simply yet to emerge: “I hope we can look back at London as a real catalyst for change in young people’s attitudes towards disability. The way our athletes are treated as role models and heroes in schools has been one of the greatest positives to come out of London 2012.” Citing a survey conducted by the BBC’s Newsround in July 2013, Hollingsworth noted that over half of children aged eight to twelve “found the Paralympics more inspiring than the Olympics, while almost 70% said the Paralympics had changed their attitudes towards disabled people.” He also indicated that “the Parasport website, where people can find disability sports clubs, has had 800 more clubs registered since the Paralympics, and an increase in traffic of 300%.”

Other findings have likewise challenged the view that the 2012 Games had little real impact. In a UK government study conducted in 2014, 68 percent of Britons agreed that, among the general public, attitudes toward people with a disability had improved since the London 2012 Paralympic Games. An August 2013 online poll, which surveyed 2,606 adults from all across the UK, detected a similar improvement in workplace attitudes: 39 percent of the respondents felt that their colleagues at work were more aware of disability, while 35 percent were of the opinion that, since the 2012 Games, people with a disability encountered fewer barriers with regard to work and promotion. All the same, 18 percent of those surveyed felt that “companies were less supportive of the needs of disabled people since the Paralympics.” In short, it is not easy to measure how far the Games may have contributed to a permanent shift in attitudes.

Recognizing the power of the television and print media to shape attitudes, I and a number of my colleagues met one morning during the 2012 Games to discuss the question of what strategy the Canadian Paralympic Committee should pursue in order to develop the Canadian Paralympic movement. We identified seven potential options:

1. A focus on support from government or community-based institutions
2. Pity: asking for charitable support
3. Institutional guilt: comparing Paralympic sport to its better-funded and more visibly supported able-bodied Olympic peers
4. Inspirational messaging: emphasizing how much people with disabilities have overcome
5. Associative commercial: presenting disability as a good community brand
6. Indirect commercial: recognizing that people with disabilities, or their friends and families, buy stuff just like everybody else and therefore companies should market directly to this audience
7. Direct commercial: recognizing that we are all aging into disability of some form and that disability will thus become a growing market

The seventh strategy ultimately seemed to us the most promising. To varying degrees, the first four were becoming outdated. While the fifth and sixth approaches were still compelling, and might remain so for some time, we agreed that they would be rendered obsolete if the seventh option were pursued.

And it would appear that our instincts were right (or at least close to right). Since the 2012 Games, there has been a proliferation of companies using athletes with disabilities as spokespersons. A blog posted by the IPC presents several examples, some of which have already been noted, including Amy Purdy’s Toyota commercial. Another example, also showcased during the prime advertising Super Bowl slot, is Microsoft’s commercial titled “Empowering Us All,” which highlights the links between technology, innovation, and disability. Craig Spence, IPC’s director of Media and Communications, suggests that this newfound interest in having athletes with disabilities as spokespersons is a direct result of the 2012 London Paralympic Games: “Thanks to London 2012, Paralympic sport is now seen as sport, high performance sport that is practiced by some of the world’s best athletes. London 2012 also helped encourage large corporations to realize the benefits of aligning their brand with para-athletes and para-sport.” In Canada, a recent example of this new alignment is Gatorade’s use of sledge hockey in an ad in which several NHL players try their luck at competing with members of a Mississauga-based club.

In another advertisement, highlighted in an IPC blog, Guinness uses wheelchair basketball to help articulate the company’s values of devotion, character, friendship, and loyalty. Interestingly, the Guinness advertisement was created by BBDO, the same company that produced the Canadian Paralympic Committee’s “Unstoppable” and “Super Athletes” campaigns discussed earlier. As was the case with these two
CPC commercials, the Guinness beer advertisement became the target of criticism. Blogger Rachel Cohen-Rottenberg listed five objections:

1. The unlikelihood that real friends would buy “expensive lightweight wheelchairs so that they can play basketball with their disabled friends”
2. The unlikelihood of real friends “learning how to use a manual wheelchair well enough to play basketball in it”
3. The fact that the one disabled person is “called out as an object of charity with ‘Next week, buddy!’”
4. The patronizing manner in which the person in the wheelchair is addressed as “buddy”
5. The fact that a disabled person becomes “an opportunity to show what fine, noble, humanitarian people” the other able-bodied men are.

The media establishment, however, loved the advertisement, which again speaks to the complexities of communicating about people with disabilities. *Adweek* ran the headline “Guinness’ Wheelchair Basketball Ad Spun Circles Around Competitors in Q3,” while *Business Insider* proclaimed: “An Incredible New Guinness Ad Breaks the Industry Stereotype.” Again, the gap in perception points to the ambiguities of the message that has been communicated.

Ariel Schwartz, writing for Fast Company, also recognizes the growing convergence between disability and business. Schwartz profiles two companies—Altair, a product design and development company, and Eastman, a chemicals and plastics manufacturing supplier—that took up the challenge of creating “a series of concepts for next-generation blades” and together designed “a top of the line, premium set of blades that are fit for an Olympic or Paralympic athlete.” In essence, these companies were using disability as a marketing opportunity—a means to demonstrate (and advertise) their technological prowess.

In 2014, CBC journalist Ioanna Roumeliotis reported on the growing convergence between business and disability. Products designed for disabled people can be good for everyone, she suggested. “The population of people with disabilities is the fastest-growing minority in the world when you include aging baby boomers. Globally, it’s about 1.3 billion people, a market roughly the size of China. Add their friends and family to the mix and the number doubles, to more than half the world’s population.” This was the market that we reflected on during our breakfast conversation in London discussed earlier, and Roumeliotis reaffirms what we concluded. “We all have some have kind of impairment at some time,” she notes. “Maybe we’re driving so we can’t put our eyes on the screen or we’re cooking and..."
our hands are filthy and we don't want to touch our phone. So making things that work without relying on all of our senses and all of our capabilities at all times is really helpful for the population at large.”

At the same time, an oddly thin line exists between inclusion and exploitation. In 2014, Procter and Gamble featured a dad with a missing forearm in an ad for a dusting device known as the Swiffer in order to illustrate how easy the device is to use. In 2015, Special Olympics athletes competed, for the first time, in ESPN's X Games, which showcase so-called extreme sports, while National Geographic named as its 2015 Adventurers of the Year Erik Weihenmayer and Lonnie Bedwell, two kayakers who have a visual impairment. While one can argue that such examples help to normalize disability, one can also argue that they represent cynical efforts to appear politically correct and to capitalize on the current hype surrounding Paralympic athletes.

The reality, then, is that mixed messages are rife. We seem to be struggling toward a new understanding, but we have certainly not achieved consensus regarding the most appropriate way to communicate about Paralympic athletes—or about people with disabilities in general. What is clear is that we are communicating about them more often. What is less clear is precisely what we are saying. In 2009, the Chicago 2016 Bid Committee created a video featuring Loul Deng of the Chicago Bulls and wheelchair basketball player Matt Scott. “What is the difference between an Olympian and a Paralympian?” the video asked. The answer: “Nothing.” This, I would argue, is the message that we must continue to communicate, in hopes that it will eventually sink in.

NOTES

1 For an excellent introduction to social perceptions of disability, see Colin Barnes and Geof Mercer, Exploring Disability, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2010).
2 Pistorius’s notoriety stems in part from his struggle to gain permission from the International Association of Athletics Federations to compete alongside able-bodied athletes, despite objections that his prosthetic legs allow him an unfair advantage. In 2011, Pistorius successfully competed at the IAAF World Championships in Athletics, earning a silver medal in the men's 4 x 400 relay event. More recently, of course, Pistorius became the focus of media attention of a different sort, having been charged with murder and subsequently convicted of homicide in the shooting death of his girlfriend, Reeva Steenkamp, on 14 February 2013. For an analysis of his rise and fall, see David Smith, “Oscar Pistorius's Fall from Grace Forced South Africa to Reflect upon Itself,” The Guardian, 21 October 2014.
3 For further discussion, see David Legg, Claudia Emes, David Stewart, and Robert Steadward, “Historical Overview of the Paralympics, Special Olympics, and Deaflympics,” *Palaestra* 20 (2004): 30–35.


10 For an example of the accompanying promotion, see “Meet L’Oréal Paris Brand Ambassador: Aimee Mullins,” *YouTube*, 12 January 2012, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MGPsP-aF4DM.


21 Personal communication, 4 September 2012.


34 Tynedal and Wolbring, “Paralympics and Its Athletes.”
35 Toni Bruce, “‘Us’ and ‘Them’: The Media Treat Paralympians Differently Depending on Where They Are From,” Athletes First: Sporting Abilities and Opinions, 22 August 2012.


For a more complete account of this discussion, see David Legg and Rob Hain, “Paralympic Positioning,” Global Sport Management News 4 (2012): 16–18.


