

# Integrated or segregated? Media Representations of Oscar Pistorius

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***Play the Game 09 Conference  
8 -12 June 2009  
Coventry - UK***

# Background

## Society viewed as inclusive:

- People with disability: archetype of incapacity
- Society and media prejudice
- Exploration of the image of the difference



## ▶ Media

- Media representations: pitiful handicapped and supercrip; reinforce prejudices.

## ▶ Success

- People without disabilities: talent, intelligence.
- People with disabilities: necessity to compensate the “evil” that afflicts them.



# aim

- assess how the Portuguese media depict athletes with disabilities.
- Dwelling on Oscar Pistorious' efforts to make the mainstream Beijing 2008 Olympic games



# Oscar Pistorius

- 21 years old South african
- born with a bad congenital formation and both legs amputated (11 months old)
- January 2004 started to practice athletics for medical advise
- August same year, participated at the Athens Paralympics Games - won 1 gold (200 meters) and 1 silver (100 meters)
- currently holds paralympics' records in all competing distances.



# Object and period of analyses:

- newspapers:

2 generalist (Jornal de Notícias; Diário de Notícias) and 2 sports (O Jogo; A Bola)

- ▶ 4 distinct moments:

- Meeting of Rome (14 and 15 of July 2007);

- IAAF announcement that Oscar Pistorius was not

apt to run in competitions for athletes without disabilities- in

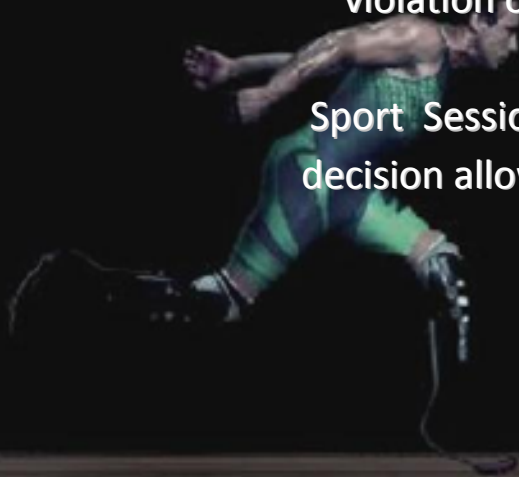
violation of the rule 144.2. of the Rule Books (15 and 16 of January 2008);

- Tribunal Arbitral du Sport / Court of Arbitration for

Sport Session (29 and 30 of April 2008) and TAS/CAS final

decision allowing Pistorius to compete (16 and 17 of May 2008);

- Pistorius' last attempt to make it to the Olympic games (20 and 21 de July 2008)



# Methodology:

Adapation of Entman's Framing to sports news

## analytical units:

- ▶ Categorization of the Athlete Oscar Pistorius;
- ▶ Categorization of IAAF;
- ▶ Categorization of the Fact;
- ▶ Typifying of Pistorius;
- ▶ Typifying of the other Athletes

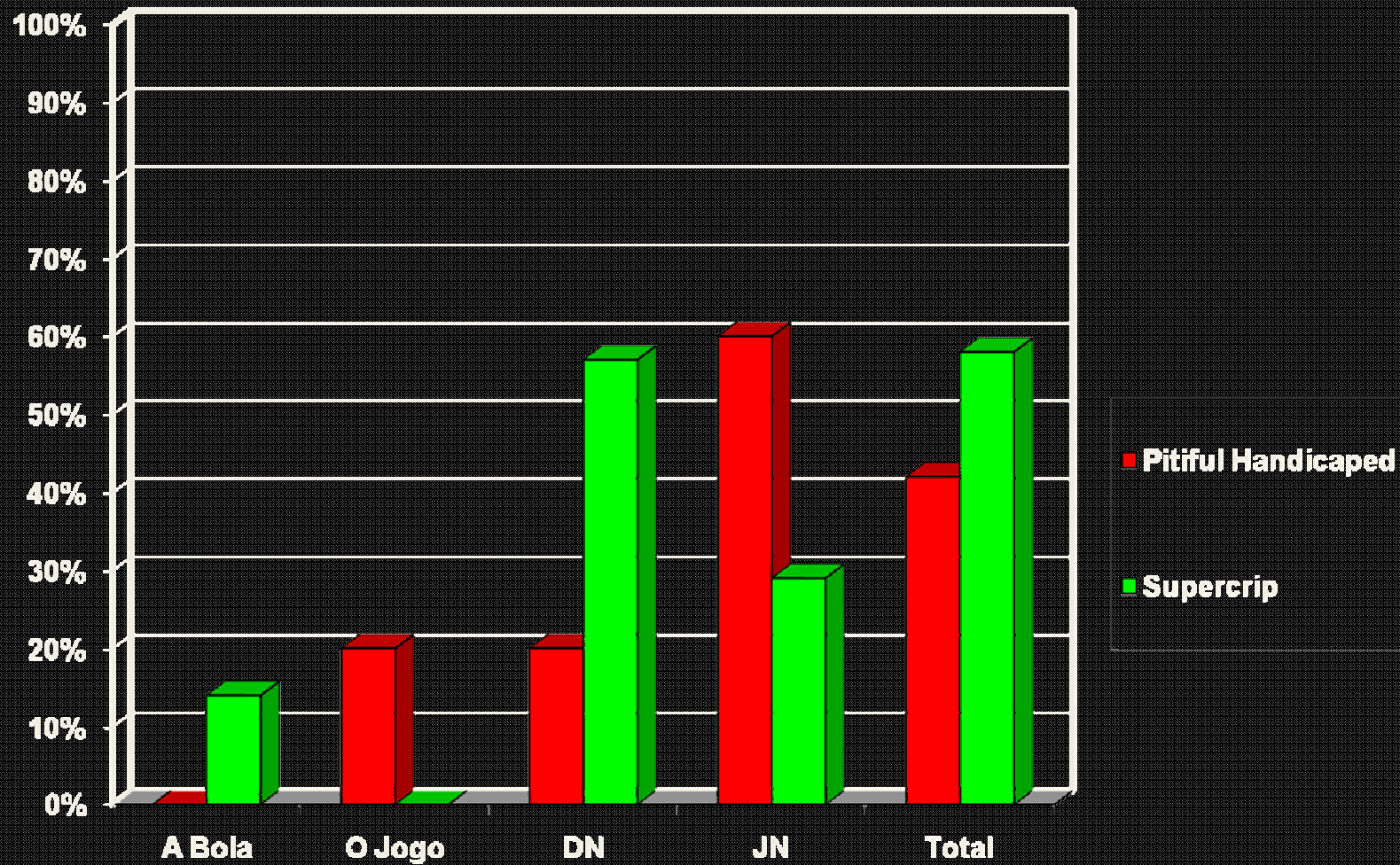


## **Hypothesis:**

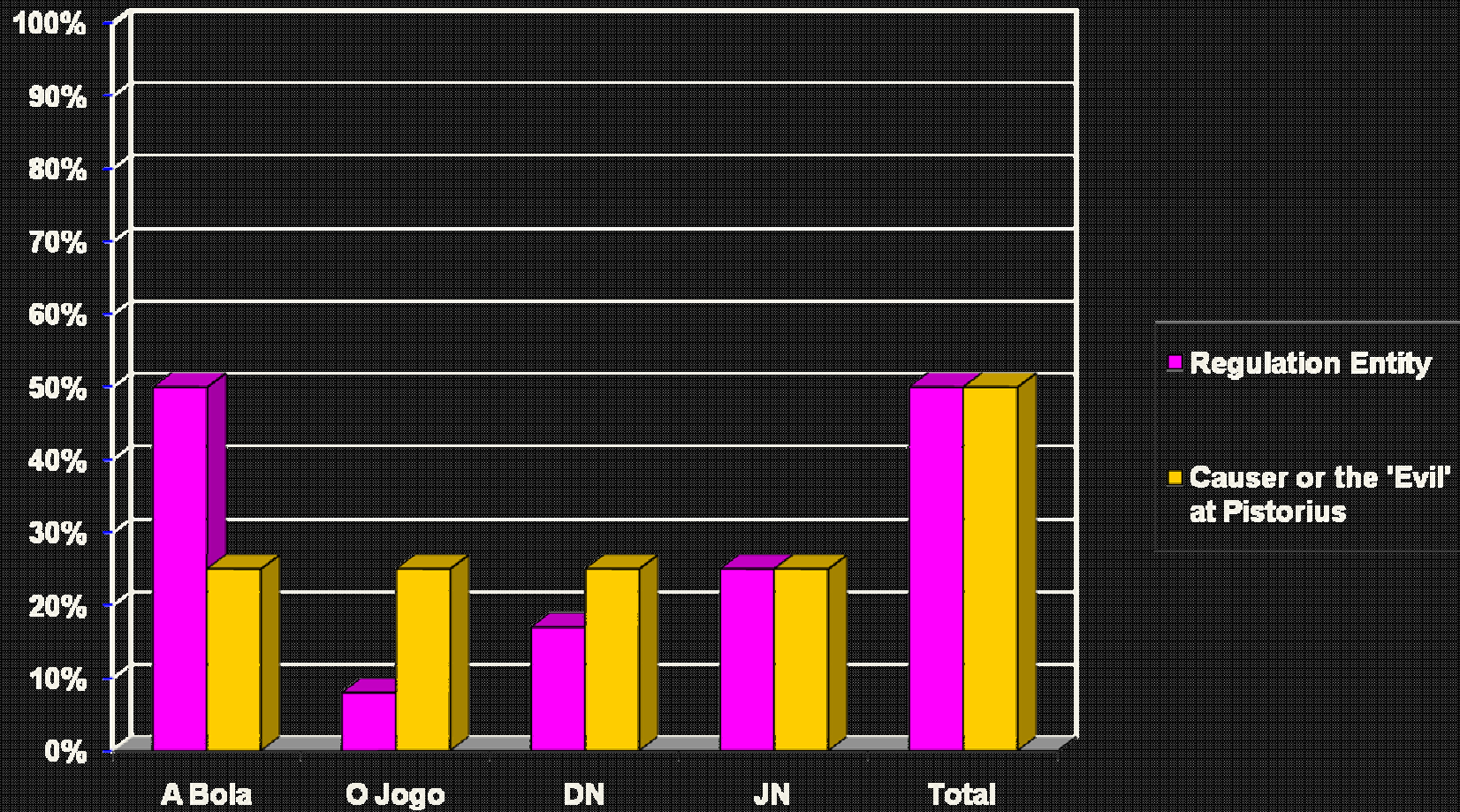
- 1) The terminology employed by the Portuguese media will be revealing of a growing sensitivity towards athletes with disabilities;**
- 2) Media representations will alternate between the pitiful handicapped and supercrip stereotypes according to the context of the different episodes**



## *Categorization of the Athlete Oscar Pistorius*

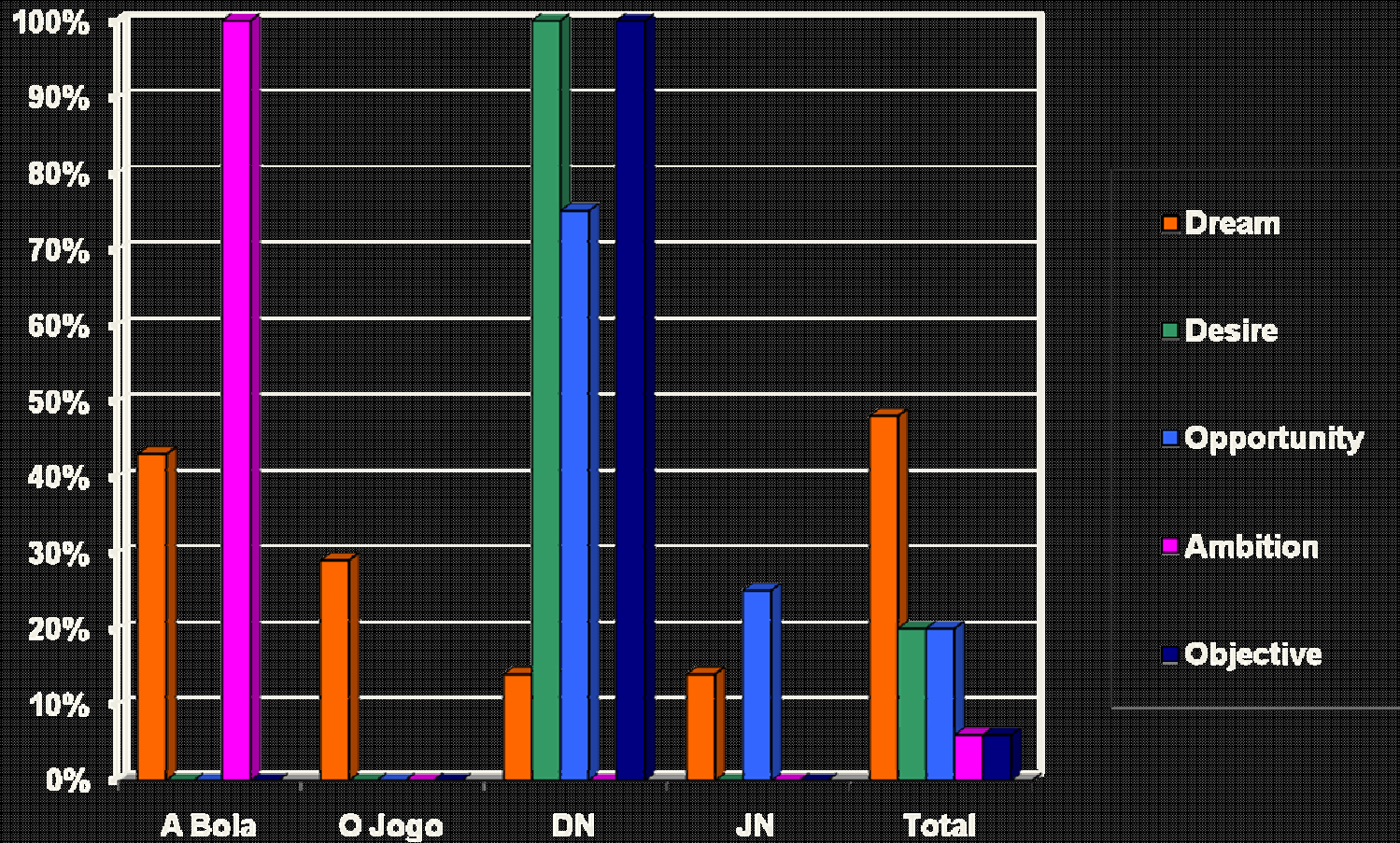


## *Categorization of the IAAF*



# Categorization of the Fact

U1

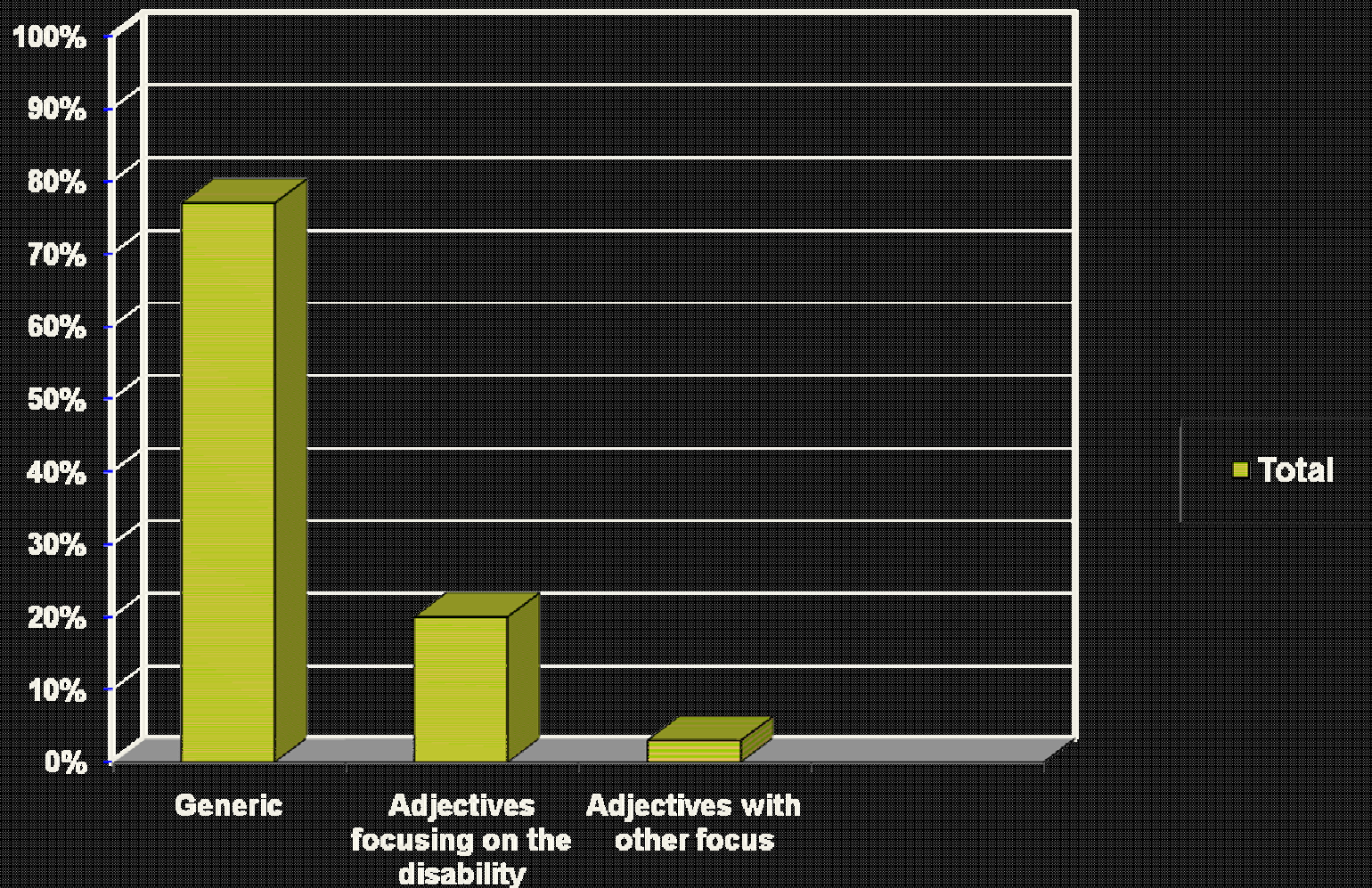


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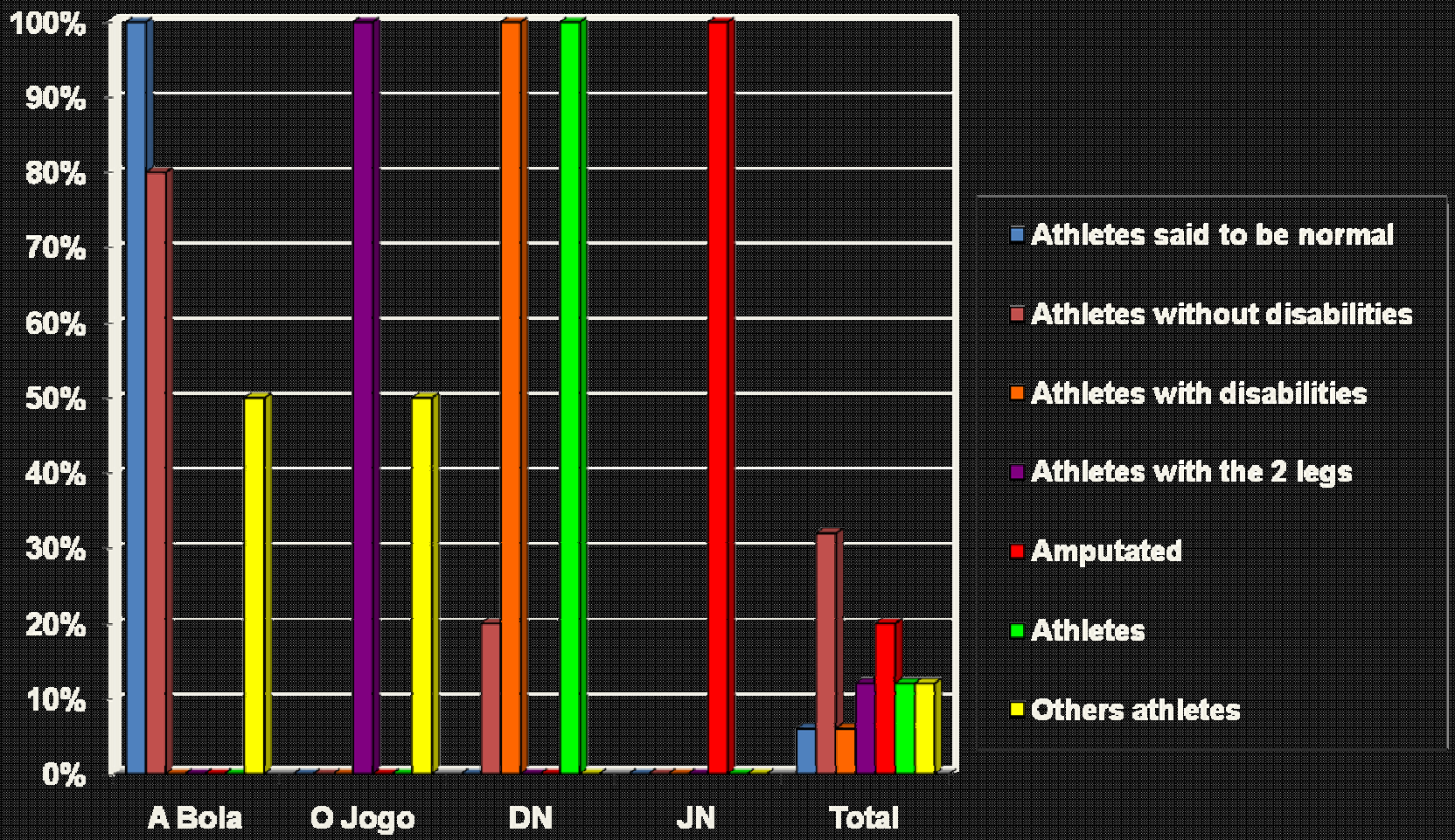
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**U1** esta categoria é problemática juntaria ao desire ou objective  
Utilizador; 29-05-2009

# Typifying of Pistorius



# Typifying other athletes



# Findings

- Hypothesis 1) The terminology employed revealing of a growing sensitivity towards athletes with disabilities was confirmed.

- Corroborates previous studies (Auslander and Gold, 1999, Brittain 2004; Kama, 2004; and Schantz and Gilbert, 2001) that point to the fact that a more adequate terminology is being employed by the media, due to the awareness of the importance that the words assume in the self-perceptions of the disabled people, and the general understanding about disability.



# Findings

- Hypothesis 2 - Media representations alternate between the pitiful handicapped and supercrip stereotypes according to the context of the different episodes

## Also confirmed

- Previous research highlights that both stereotypes frequently coincide in media reporting. The media culture approach of the disabled person as a 'journalistic fact', often results in a stereotyped and prejudiced view of individuals, ranging from two opposite extremes: 'inferiors' or 'incapables', and the 'super-heroes'.



# Conclusion

- **Media coverage of impaired athletes tends to be ambivalent to the extent that it juxtaposes positive descriptions and images with others that undermine and trivialize the efforts and successes of those sportsmen.**
  - **Notwithstanding such oscillations which are dependent upon the positive or negative nature of the distinct periods under analysis, the Portuguese press employed on the overall an adequate terminology when addressing Pistorius as a disabled athlete.**



# Thank you!



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