**Inspiration Porn, Please Stop:   
Disability Services’ Role in Promoting the Social Model of Disability  
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1. Who am I?
   1. 2nd Year M.S. Student Affairs in Higher Education ~ Graduation May, 2017
   2. Assistant Resident Director, Office of Residence Life
   3. Student Disability Services Practicum Student
   4. Disability Studies Co-Instructor
   5. DREAM Board Member, National Coalition for College Students with Disabilities
   6. 20-year long wheelchair user, Spinal Muscular Atrophy II
2. Why am I here?
   1. To inform on a topic I think is running rampant in our society
   2. To initiate dialogue on the social model of disability in our field
   3. To offer my perspective as a disabled individual
3. I am not here…
   1. Because I know everything about this topic
   2. To say my opinion is the only valid one and correct one
   3. To speak for all disabled people
4. Learning Objectives
   1. Understand and describe what inspiration porn is in today’s society
   2. Articulate the difference between the medical and social model of disability
   3. Develop ideas around stopping the growth and popularity of inspiration porn through the work of their office
   4. Conceptualize role of promoting the social model of disability while working in a predominantly medical model focused field
5. What is this picture? (image of athletic runner with double amputee and young girl also double amputee running side by side on an indoor track field)
   1. What’s the first word that comes to mind when you see that little girl?
      1. Inspirational, happy, courageous!
   2. Obviously, having no legs is a bad thing. Right?
      1. Not really. There are plenty of people who have no legs or no arms or are otherwise disabled.
   3. And why, precisely, would I not want to be defined by my disability?
      1. Disability is constructed to be a bad thing.
   4. “The only disability in life is a bad attitude.” -Scott Hamilton
6. Stella Young- “I’m not your inspiration, thank you very much”
   1. Passed away in December of 2014
   2. “I really want to live in a world where disability is not the exception, but the norm.”
   3. “It’s not a bad thing, and it doesn’t make you exceptional.”
   4. “I wasn’t doing anything that could be considered an achievement if you took disability out of the equation.”
7. Inspiration Porn Defined
   1. Porn defined as sensationalizing and objectifying a group of people
   2. Inspiration porn is when disabled people are called inspirational or brave for doing anything that able bodied people do
   3. Image text “Never ignore somebody with a disability, you don’t realize how much they can inspire you!! Share if you agree” Image description- female sitting in manual wheelchair in front of an ocean
8. Based on the premise that
   1. Disabled people must have been so much worse than the rest of society
   2. “Well, if she can get up in the morning and do this without complaining, so can I!”
      1. Underlying assumptions that complaining is occurring
   3. Image text “Before you quit. Try…” Image description- young female drawing on a piece of paper using a pencil controlled by her mouth
9. “You’re so inspiring!”
   1. For just being you?
   2. What makes getting out of bed in the morning and going to the gym so inspiring? Nondisabled people do it.
   3. Inspires nondisabled people to feel good about their lives and makes them do something. Disabled people are not tools.
   4. Image text “Excuses. Let’s hear yours again” Image description- side by side depiction of an average built man who looks like a bodybuilder, while only having one leg
   5. Image text “The only disability in life is a bad attitude” Image description- elderly man in a wheelchair
   6. Image text “Your excuse is invalid” Image description- young boy running on the track with two prosthetic legs
10. Why is it so bad if someone with a disability motivates me to become a better person?
    1. They are not doing anything particularly motivating ~ No societal expectations
    2. They don’t exist to motivate you
    3. Reducing a human being – and a stranger, at that – to “inspiring” or “brave” is problematic
11. How we/society view(s) disability
    1. Medical Model
       1. Deficiency
       2. Personal problem
       3. The goal is to cure or fix
       4. The cure requires professional intervention
       5. Professionals are the experts
    2. Social Model
       1. Neutral difference
       2. Interaction between the individual and environment
       3. Focus is on the environment/ attitudes
       4. Access facilitated by everyone (designer)
12. Medical vs. Social Model of Disability (image)
    1. Image description- cartoon character sitting in a wheelchair in front of a set of stairs with a sign beside it that reads “Way in, everyone welcome” with an arrow pointing up the stairs.
    2. On the left side of the image there is a callout bubble that reads “Her impairment is the problem! They should cure her or give her prosthetics” This is the medical model of disability.
    3. On the right side of the image there is a callout bubble that reads “The stairs are the problem! They should build a ramp” This is the social model of disability.
13. Inspiration porn in our society
14. Meet before You (2016)
    1. Have you seen this film?
    2. What message does it send?
    3. Why was it so popular?
15. Traditional Disability Stereotypes
    1. Object of charity
    2. A fate to be feared
    3. A fate worse than death
    4. Our heroes

And these come from…

* + 1. Language
    2. Media
    3. Social construction

1. Jerika Bolen (2016)- Image description- young girl in wheelchair dress for a prom surrounded by individuals
   1. Cheering her on to die
   2. Where’s the suicide prevention hotline?
   3. Better dead than disabled
   4. What’s the message this sends to other adolescents who want to die?
      1. If only they had a disability they could have a parade.
2. What’s the message? (image)
   1. Sketched image of stairs leading to a doorway with a sign above it that reads “suicide prevention program” and around the corner is a person sitting in a wheelchair with a ramp leading to a doorway with a sign above it that reads “assisted suicide”
3. High school QB takes friend with Down syndrome to the prom- Image description- a school quarterback and a friend with Down syndrome standing dressed up outside
   1. A person with Down syndrome is given some award or nice treatment by their peers, and the coverage fixates on how that makes those peers feel great.
   2. The articles use the word “friendship,” even though there’s no indication that the two have an ongoing reciprocally rewarding relationship.
   3. Has he seen her since the fourth grade? Do they hang out together? What does Mary think?
4. Couple with Down Syndrome go to Homecoming- Image description- twitter screenshot of a girl with Down syndrome being asked to homecoming in full shock surrounded by able-bodied classmates taking pictures and video. Image text- if anyone’s having a bad day here’s a video of Jake asking Emily to homecoming
   1. Would this be a newsworthy story if the teenagers were nondisabled? People of color? Members of the LGBTQA community?
5. Where do we go from here?
6. Group Discussion
   1. What are 2 strategies to stop inspiration porn on your campus?
7. How do we stop inspiration porn?
   1. Educate
      1. Find venues to show Stella Young
      2. Pay attention to language we use
      3. Take time to educate oneself on ally behavior
   2. Activism to eliminate physical/social barriers
      1. Goal being to not have distinction between disabled and nondisabled
      2. Insist on universal design on campuses
      3. Educate faculty on UDL in classroom
      4. Workshops for faculty and staff
   3. Personal Commitment
      1. Challenge family/friends/colleagues on what they believe is “inspirational”
      2. Stop reposting inspiration porn
      3. Comment and educate on social media when visible
      4. LISTEN to the disability community
8. Disability Services Role
   1. Decreased distinction between disabled and nondisabled by promoting UD and UDL
   2. Attention to language use in campus marketing/brochures
   3. Creating disability pride student organizations
      1. Awareness/advocacy campaigns
   4. Creating an inclusive environment (safe space) where university community can explore disability rights
   5. Developing materials for dissemination about disability law and Disability Studies
   6. Educate about disability as human diversity not as deviance
9. “Inspiration porn turns the disabled individual into an object for your (nondisabled) consumption.” Image description- female sketch pushing a manual wheelchair forward with the words “Liberation In Progress” above her
10. Questions?