The (In)Visibility of DisAbility: Reflections and musings 20+ years later

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Body

- Focal point of identity
- Medium through which messages of identity are transmitted
- Focus on body because it is the means through which identity is defined, viewed and perceived
Individuals with disabilities

- Identified and judged primarily through one’s body
- Heightened attention to body
- Conspicuous
- Compared to “normal” and “perfect” body

the stare and spectacle
"My body is in no way ugly.
It is unusual and very individual."

"Completely Unperfect"

a photo exhibition at the Marriott Marquis Hotel – Imperial Room A
from August 18 - 26, 1996

Rasso Bruckert
Sport

• Reflection of society & societal values
• Reproduction of status quo & social inequality
• Site for resistance & production of social equality
Sport has contributed to the social construction of

- normal
- disability
- body and
- sporting body
“Fit” within traditional model of sport

who is in and who is out
Images of ‘sporting body’

Ability
Perfect
Beauty
Athleticism
Normal
Sport

• Reflection of society & societal values
• Reproduction of status quo & social inequality
• Site for resistance & production of social equality
Sport as site for access, equity & social change ....
Views of disability sport

Rehabilitation
Freak Show
Empowerment

Soeder, 1995
Invisible: invisibility of disability in sport

Visible: visibility of disability in sport

Visible as athletes in sport

the paradigm shift
views of body and ability
evolving image of (dis)Ability
Who is the top amateur athlete?

Ballots for the 77th Sullivan Award are being sent this week to AAI officials, US Olympic Committee members, college sports information directors and others. Fans, too, can join in the voting for the nation's top amateur athlete by going to sportsusa2day.com. The total fan votes count one-third toward the final tally Voting ends March 31. The winner for athletic excellence in 2006 will be announced April 13. The finalists:

Brady Quinn, football

He led Notre Dame to No. 2 in the No. 19 ranking in the final USA TODAY Coaches' Poll. Quinn also is a Heisman Trophy finalist. Quinn's performance in the Sugar Bowl, turned the Irish into national champions.

Joss Christensen, skiing

A back injury kept her from competing in two seasons, but Christensen placed fourth in her first major international competition at the 2006 Salt Lake Games, the 2006 World Cup. She wrote her first book last year. By winning her first national title in 2006, Christensen was named to the U.S. team for the 2006 Winter Olympics.

Troy Dumais, diving

The former University of Texas All-American was named USA Diving athlete of the year in 2006. In 2006, he partnered to win the 3-meter synchronized diving title at the 2006 national championships in Indianapolis. He also won silver in the 3-meter springboard event at the FINA World Cup in July.

Jessica Long, paralympian swimming

At age 16, Long has 18 world record-breaking performances and holds the record in 15 events for paralympic swimming. Long, who has never appeared below the hips, learned to swim in her grandmother's pool and has won at least three medals in every Paralympic Games since 2004.

Hannah Teter, snowboarding

Born in Park City, Utah, her grandparents taught her to ski at age 2. At age 17, Teter was named to the U.S. ski team and snowboarder of the year.
“Fit” within Paralympic model of sport?

who is in and who is out

equity issues in disability sport
Intersection of gender and disability
Type of impairment
Severity of impairment
Sport event
Socio-economic status/global location
??

equity issues in disability sport
Ableization of “para” sport?
Sport as site for access, equity & social change ....
Vision of the IPC

Make for an inclusive world through Para sport
To conclude and more

• Sport is a highly visible and influential social institution
• Body, ability and disability are social constructs portrayed through a ‘sporting body’
• Views of ability have changed through the inclusion of ‘others’ in competitive sport
• Views of disability have changed due to the presence of athletes with disabilities in competitive sport
• To what extent have we achieved institutional change? or social deconstruction of able?
• How do we move meaningfully to inclusion?
words and actions do matter…

A day at the beach:
A walk in the sand
Reflections and musings
Thanks!