

DOWN SYNDROME AND SELF-ESTEEM: THE MEDIA'S PORTRAYAL OF SELF-
ESTEEM IN CHARACTERS WHO HAVE DOWN SYNDROME

Courtney Gee

Thesis Prepared for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS

December 2012

APPROVED:

Tracy Everbach, Committee Chair
James Mueller, Committee Member
Paul Leung, Committee Member
Roy Busby, Director of the Frank W. Mayborn
Graduate Institute of Journalism
Jean Keller, Acting Dean of the Frank W. and
Sue Mayborn School of Journalism
Mark Wardell, Dean of the Toulouse Graduate
School

Gee, Courtney. *Down Syndrome and Self-esteem: The Media's Portrayal of Self-esteem in Characters Who Have Down Syndrome*. Master of Arts (Journalism), December 2012, 68 pp., references, 51 titles.

Representations of people with a developmental disability are virtually not covered in the media. Although there is little coverage of people with developmental disabilities in the media, there are a few entertainment television characters who have Down syndrome and are represented in the media. This study will take a look at the history of how people with disabilities were represented in the media and examine how two television characters with Down syndrome were portrayed on the shows by examining their self-esteem. This study seeks to focus on portrayal of people with Down Syndrome because the physical features that people with Down Syndrome possess are easy to identify. Specifically, the study examines the portrayal of self-esteem in two television characters, Corky Thatcher (*Life Goes On*) and Becky Faye Jackson (*Glee*). The researcher will also examine how the portrayal of self-esteem in the two characters is similar or different in people who have Down Syndrome. In the study the researcher found that the representation of the character Corky was different from the character Becky. But both characters tackled issues that affected the Down Syndrome community and it affected their self-esteem. Corky and Becky were different from the interviewees in the way they realized their competencies. Although the interviewees who have Down Syndrome and the television characters used self-evaluation differently to evaluate one's own self-esteem, they all seem to exhibit a positive level of self-esteem.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Everbach for serving as my committee chairperson. Thank you for sending me in the right direction and helping me develop my ideas. I am grateful for the encouragement you gave me throughout the process. I would like to thank Dr. Leung for your suggestions. Your expertise on the subject was helpful and I appreciate the guidance. I would like to thank Dr. Mueller for serving on my committee and for your recommendations. I would like to thank Julie Scharnberg for all of the help received during my time as a Mayborn Graduate student. Thanks to all of the Mayborn Graduate Institute staff for managing a successful program and allowing me to be a part of such a wonderful program. Thanks to Roy Busby, Nann Goplerud, John Sparks and Cornelius Foote for giving me ideas while being a student in your class. Thanks to all of my family and friends for their love and support.

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INTRODUCTION

The television show *Life Goes On*, which aired from 1989-1993, was the first television sitcom to broadcast on a major television network with a real developmental disabled person as the main character. The character, Corky, played by Chris Burke was a high-functioning person with Down syndrome. He wrote about his desire and mission to become an actor despite his handicap. “From the time I was very young, I wanted to be an actor in Hollywood. I didn’t know how I would get there, but I knew I was going to keep trying to make it come true” (Cohen, Nadel, Madnick, 2002, p. 113). This excerpt from this letter implies that people with developmental disabilities have dreams and aspirations just like non-developmental disabled people. They desire to obtain a career and live independent lives as well. But why is it that people with developmental disabilities are not seen in the workplace? “The majority of people with Down syndrome today are capable of work if they are properly trained, if we adapt jobs to their real needs and if we give them the opportunity to do them. Experiences in this field show that work transforms their lives, enriches their personal experiences and gives them greater security and autonomy” (Rondal, Perera, Nadel, 1999, p. 21).

This raises the question of how do people with Down syndrome perceive other people with Down syndrome? Historically, people with disabilities were not treated well. They were viewed as a mistake and killing deformed babies was encouraged (Calculator & Bedrosian, 1988, p. 11). In the 16th century during the protestant reformation, people with disabilities were also viewed as evil and possessed by Satan, especially those that would have epileptic seizures which are common in some forms of cerebral palsy. Many people with disabilities were excluded from society (Calculator & Bedrosian, 1988, p. 12). For more than 35 years, organizations, family, policy makers and other advocates have stood up for the rights of the disabled and imposed some

laws that allow the disabled to be treated equally (Cohen et al., 2002, p. 18). But has the stigmatization that comes along with being disabled changed in the perception of the non-disabled community? The media annihilates and trivialize people with disabilities through the misrepresentation or lack of representation of this group. The media used the mentally ill in roles like clowns or babbling idiots (Calculator & Bedrosian, 1988, p. 12). The media can be used as the most influential way to give out information because people develop similar thoughts about the ideas and images viewed in media (Baran & Davis, 2009, pp. 188). If people saw more images of people with developmental disabilities living independent lives, then people might view people with disabilities differently than the stereotypical way they have been portrayed throughout history.

Also, the inaccurate representation or the lack of representation may be damaging to the self-esteem of the people who are disabled, especially those with a developmental disability. “In order for individuals with Down syndrome to build self-confidence, it is of paramount importance that they not be viewed as helpless” (Pueschel, 1996, p. 94). This implies that what people think of those who have Down syndrome affects the self-esteem of the person who has Down syndrome. Therefore, it is important to understand how people who have Down syndrome use their self-esteem and the media’s portrayal of people with Down syndrome and how the characters use their self-esteem.

Purpose

Historically, the media has portrayed people with mental disabilities as helpless, weak and ignorant (Calculator & Bedrosian, 1988, p. 12). It is a possibility that because people with mental handicaps have historically been treated poorly in media, then the media has also

portrayed those characters as having low self-esteem. This study seeks to examine two entertainment television shows, that were created twenty years apart. Both shows have a character that has Down syndrome. The purpose of examining the two shows is to determine how the character's self-esteem was portrayed. Also, this study seeks to find how television portrayal of self-esteem in a person with Down syndrome is similar or different from a person who has Down syndrome. The study hopes to gain information on how people with Down syndrome evaluate themselves in order to determine self-esteem.

Research Questions

R1: Reviewing the character Corky on *Life Goes On*, how does his self-efficacy influence his self-esteem?

R2: How have the issues that the characters Corky and Becky face affect self-esteem?

R3: How have Corky and Becky used their self-esteem as independent or dependent variables?

R4: How was the self-esteem of the character Corky similar or different from the self-esteem of the interviewees who have Down syndrome?

Definition of Terms

Self-esteem is defined as how one view or shows favor to oneself (Merriam-Webster Dictionary Online, 1657). The process of how one determines favor or not to oneself is called self-evaluation (Merriam-Webster Dictionary Online, 1842). Self-esteem can be seen through many characteristics, which will be discussed later in this research. Self-Efficacy is one's belief in the power one has to produce a behavior or perform a task (Merriam-Webster Dictionary Online, 13th Century). Personal Autonomy is one's desire to be self-governing and independent (Merriam-Webster Dictionary Online, 1623).

LITERATURE REVIEW

More than twenty years ago, many people with Down syndrome were viewed as eternal children. They were kept and sheltered in dependent positions. They were not given the opportunity to become responsible citizens in an accepting society (Pueschel, 1996, p. 90). It may be because there was a misconception that people with developmental disabilities are not capable of performing the same intellectual task as a non-developmental disabled people (Pueschel, 1996, p. 90). As Cohen, Nadel and Madnick (2002) write, “attitudinal barriers are put in place by the non disabled person. Attitudinal barriers subject the person with disabilities to lives of unjust dependence, segregation, isolation, and exclusion. Attitudinal barriers are the result of prejudice. It could be derived from two sources. One source of prejudice could be that people follow the ‘old paradigm’ of considering people with disabilities as ‘defective’ and in need of ‘fixing.’ The other source is at times, these barriers are the result of thoughtlessness, indifference, or lack of understanding” (2002, p. 17-18). People with developmental disabilities deserve an equal chance at life like everyone else. Nadel, Cohen and Madnick also talked about a new paradigm being set in society where disability is considered natural and normal. The idea is instead of trying to change or convert the disabled person so that he or she fits society, the new paradigm suggest that people should change the society, culture and the social environment that is around the person with the disability (Nadel et al, 2002, p. 18).

The media could be the most effective tool to use to enforce the new paradigm. “Clearly, television has the power ‘to play a part in the formation of social opinion and ultimately the removal of discrimination and barriers to disabled people’”(Proudlock, 1997, p. 72; Stibbe, 2004, p. 24). People’s perception of reality is defined by images that are represented in media. Although people learn from people they socialize with, many people look to other influences to

guide their behavior. Television and Internet may be the most dominant representation of reality. There are more than 2.4 billion internet users worldwide and more than 600 million households with internet. (International Telecommunication Union,2011). More than 77% of American households have internet access (Internet World Stats.com, 2011). Ninety-eight percent of American households have at least one television. Television is different from other mass media because it is visual and engaging. It is free, anyone at any age can use it, and one does not have to travel to use it (Baran & Davis, 2009, pp. 325). George Gerbner's cultivation analysis theory says that "television 'cultivates' or creates a worldview that, although possibly inaccurate, becomes the reality because people believe it to be so" (Baran & Davis, 2009, pp. 324). People gather their facts and pass judgment based on the information obtained while watching television. Cultivation Analysis says that heavy television watchers are more likely to hold a certain belief that coincides with information portrayed in television. Television is repetitive. It often follows a formula which is designed to cater to the same type of audience. This reinforces social patterns and cultivates resistance to change (Baran & Davis, 2009, pp. 326). Gerbner mentions that there are the 3 Bs of television. "Television *blurs* traditional distinctions of people's views of their world; Television *blends* their realities into television's cultural mainstream; Television *bends* that mainstream to the institutional interests of television and its sponsors" (Baran & Davis, 2009, pp. 329). Because television has an enormous effect on the worldview, it is important for television to give an accurate representation of the world. This includes race, ethnicity, culture, religion and all other elements known that make individuals different.

The content on television has the capability to annihilate and trivialized certain social groups. "When the media consistently fails to represent a particular social group, it becomes easy

for us to assume the group either doesn't exist or doesn't really matter" (Lind, 2004, p. 5). This may be because the social elites operate in the media to earn a profit and exercise influence in the society. The elites use hegemonic culture, which is a culture imposed from above or outside that serves the interest of those in dominant social positions, to maintain their status. Any other social group who interferes with this goal is annihilated or trivialized. Karl Marx believed that "hierarchical class was at the root of all social problems...Marx saw culture as something elites freely manipulated to mislead average people and encourage them to act against their own interest" (Baran & Davis, 2009, pp. 207). Many people are unaware of the influence that media have on them. When people begin to carry the same beliefs as those perpetuated in the media, then perspectives and information that differs becomes lost. If the elite controls the media,-which also controls the ideas presented to the viewers, then people may begin to believe that the ideas are a reality, according to cultivation analysis. This coincides with the priming effect theory which is "the idea that presentations in the media heighten the likelihood that people will develop similar thoughts about those things in the real world" (Baran & Davis, 2009, pp. 188).

Framing

The media's use of language is the most prevalent way to define cultural groups. According to Haller, Dorries, and Rahn, Entman, "media texts contains frames, 'which are manifested by the presence or absence of certain keywords, stock phrases, stereotypical images, sources of information, and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgments'" (1993, p. 52; 2006, p. 62). Words have power and meaning behind them and depending on the context in which words are used, the meaning could be harmful and oppressive to certain racial, sexual or cultural group. For example, the term nigger means ignorant, but when

used in certain contexts, it becomes derogatory and offensive. For people who suffer from a disability of some sort may consider the term “handicapped” to be offensive. Handicapped means a person is disabled and not capable of doing some task that normally people would know how to do. But people who are disabled no longer want to be defined only as handicapped. This is because the media’s use of the word has given the term handicap more power than it gives to the person. In societies, some people see a handicap and they automatically assume stereotypes are true about that person. People with disabilities want to be defined as people first in media’s use of terminology. “A person with a disability is a person first...and he or she has as disability. Especially in a headline [of a news story], the distinction is seldom made” (Henry, 2007; Tallent, 2007, p. 34). If they are defined as people first, then the consumers of media will view people with disabilities as people first. The media’s declining use of the word “retard” which has become the slang word for mental retardation, may be proof about the power the media. The word can now be used to put-down any individual. In 2011, public service announcements aired on television to encourage people to stop the use of the word. Public service announcements attempted to take the power out of the word during the commercial by referring to the term as the r-word (EndtheRword, 2011). There has not been a research study to prove whether the use of the word has declined and if the public service announcements had anything to do with it.

Not only can this be done through the use of words, but it also can be done through the use of pictures as well. One study conducted by Peffley, Shields and Williams manipulated the race of a suspect in a television news story. Participants were asked questions about social issues and later asked to identify the race of the suspect seen in a seven-second video. From this research, Peffley, Shields and Williams found that people with negative stereotypes of Blacks thought the Black suspect was more likely to be guilty and people with positive stereotypes of

Blacks thought the white suspect was guilty (Lind, 2004, p. 19). Pre-existing racial biases and prejudice are a contributor to beliefs. Greenberg's drench hypothesis says "stereotyped perceptions of groups can result from exposure to vivid portrayals of them in the media. The drench hypothesis suggests that particularly strong and memorable portrayals of minority characters may create more lasting impressions on viewers than cumulative exposure to portrayals that are more frequent but less significant" (Farnell & Smith, 1988, p. 660). This same type of judgment happens to mentally disabled people as well. The portrayals of people with a mental disability on television or on the Internet are rare; therefore, the ones portrayed become memorable. From that point on, a person may associate the actions of the first disabled person encountered to the actions of all disabled people.

Therefore, the media has the power to frame a story. For so long the media framed people with disabilities in various types of frames. The following is a list of some of the frames the media would use: "objects of pity, still epitomized by the annual telethons that raise money by playing on this instinct, as evil or sinister, as someone so afflicted they would be better off dead—or at the opposite end of the spectrum, as what is known in the disabled community as 'Supercrip,' someone who has excelled so much in spite of his or her handicap that others who do not measure up are to be regarded as inadequate" (Nelson, 2000, pp. 85-86). Still another stereotype portrayed in the media is the person with a disability who is a burden on friends, family, or society because of physical limitations or psychological problems he or she faces" (Farnell & Smith, 1999, p. 660).

Stereotypes and History

History suggests that the "old paradigm" ideas may have originated in the 1800s when

disabled people were regarded as entertainment in society. “Mainstream society continued to perceive people with physical disabilities as freakish and socially peripheral” (Norden, 1994, p. 10). The disabled person was used to make the healthy mind and body person seem stronger and more intelligent so that he could complete the provider role. Disabled people were either feared, pitied or used as a comic relief. People accepted the idea of using handicapped people as a comic relief in films and other sources of media as long as that person was not truly handicapped. It is almost as if this idea that the person is not truly handicapped lessens the severity of the offense. “Though it may be tempting to regard these brief films as relatively innocuous, they nevertheless reveal a deeply rooted prejudice against people with physical disabilities and represent a not-so-veiled assault against them” (Norden, 1994, p. 16). Also early films sometimes would display disabled characters who faked being disabled and begged for money. The role was always played by an able-bodied actor. The representation of disabled people as untruthful and dishonest was a perception that people began to believe was true in the real world. “Not only would physically disabled characters be typically played by able-bodied actors in subsequent films—a type of fraudulence akin to white actors performing in blackface—but their concerns and lifestyles as presented in the movies would take on an unreal quality as well” (Norden, 1994, p. 17).

People with mental disabilities were separated from others in society. Some believed in the extermination of mentally handicapped people. “Plato and Aristotle argued for the prevention of the union of marriage of inferior citizens, and for death of deformed children...In general, defectives were considered nonhuman, incapable of normal feelings, and undeserving of human compassion. Extermination of defectives, to the Greeks and Romans, was not an unreasonable proposal when the value structure of those societies was considered” (Calculator & Bedrosian, 1988, pp. 11).

Just like the physically handicapped people, to be mentally handicapped was to be evil or ungodly. “The Protestant Reformation brought in another view of the mentally ill and the mentally retarded. People of both groups were believed to be impure, without a soul, possessed by evil, and filled with Satan. The strange behavior of some individuals (e.g., epileptic convulsions or the writhing movements common in some forms of cerebral palsy) was interpreted with religious overtones as evidence of possession. As a result, many people with disabilities were tormented and tortured in an attempt to exorcise the demons within them” (Calculator & Bedrosian, 1988, pp. 12).

Down Syndrome

People with developmental disabilities rarely see themselves on television or on the internet, specifically people who suffer from Down syndrome disorder (DS). DS is detected at birth. It occurs when a person is born with 47 chromosomes instead of 46. The extra chromosome is called the chromosome 21 and it is an error caused in the sperm or the egg, when they were formed (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), para 8). This affects the person by changing or delaying the body and brain’s developmental functions. People who have DS are easy to detect because of their physical features. A person born with DS can be characterized by a flat face and slanted eyes, small feet and hands with a single crease across the palm of the hand. They can also be characterized by a short neck, small ears and a large tongue (CDC, para 3). It is estimated that there are more than 6,000 babies in America who are born with Down syndrome every year. Not every person who is born with DS experiences the same health problems and symptoms. People can be diagnosed with high or low functioning Down

syndrome. This is based on the Intelligence Quotient test which will suggest whether the person's intellectual disability is mild to severe (CDC, para 4-6).

Cognitive Skills

Two skills that are mostly affected by mental retardation are the motor and cognitive skill. The motor skill is the ability move a limb or body part and the cognitive skill is the ability to perceive, judge, memorize, and reason. These two activities may come naturally for most people, but for those who are mentally disabled, these skills must be practiced (Weeks, Chua, Elliot, 2000, p. 177). Although they are practiced, it doesn't guarantee that the skill will become a natural activity that is done without effort.

The cognitive skill is broken down into three parts so that it may be studied more carefully to understand people with developmental disabilities capabilities. Encoding is the ability to convert a message. It deals with the way a person evaluates a situation then extracts information from the environment and transforms it into significant memory (Weeks, Chua, Elliot, 2000, p. 178). "Skilled motor and cognitive performance depends not only on the ability to scan complex environments and to identify and select for further processing specific bits of information that are relevant to the task at hand, but also the ability to filter out irrelevant bits of information that have the potential to interfere with performance" (Weeks, Chua, Elliot, 2000, p. 178). One study conducted by Merrill, Goodwyn and Gooding "examined the development of automatic search processes for member of a target category (e.g., animals). Individuals without mental retardation were able to automatize their detection of targets in the display after approximately 500 trials of practice, whereas individuals with mental retardation required approximately 1000 trials of practice" (Weeks, Chua, Elliot, 2000, p. 181). Therefore, it takes

individuals who are mentally retarded twice as long to develop automatic encoding processes than people who are not mentally retarded. The ability to pay attention and focus on matters is believed to be the source of delays in cognitive functions. This hinders the perception before it even gets a chance to be processed and memorized. “Merrill and O’Dekirk inferred that individuals with mental retardation were not able to narrow their focus of attention as well as individuals without mental retardation. They suggest that individuals without mental retardation develop an attentional set that facilitates the focusing of attention, whereas individuals with mental retardation do not” (Weeks, Chua, Elliot, 2000, p. 182).

In the decision process, previous research has tried to find out how information is interpreted and how daily routines affect the decision process. Memorization and the disruption of automatic responses were examined to find out how one with a developmental disability responds in the decision-making process. In a memorization study that allowed the participants to scan their memory storage, “participants were evaluated over seven testing sessions. Practice resulted in decrease variability in the reaction times of individuals with mental retardation, and the slopes of the regression function were significantly reduced...Phillips and Nettelbeck emphasize that practice did, in fact, improve performance of memory-search tasks for individuals with mental retardation” (Weeks, Chua, Elliot, 2000, p. 183). This shows that people who experience mental retardation are capable of storing and retrieving information from their memory. When testing one’s ability to make a decision when one’s automatic response is disrupted, a different test had different results. In a test called the Stroop task, color words like red, blue, pink and etcetera were printed in colors that were not congruent with the name of the color. These different colored words were presented to people with developmental disabilities. The testers were instructed to ignore the word and to name the ink color quickly as possible. This

is a difficult task because activation of the word response is automatic and must be suppressed in order to name the ink color. Several studies have found that individuals with mental retardation exhibit a Stroop interference effect, which is an indication of an automatic reading response (Bergen & Mosley, 1994; Das, 1969, 1970; Ellis, Woodley-Zanthos, Dulaney, & Palmer, 1989; Weeks, Chua, Elliot, 2000, p. 184). Although studies show a positive result when testing memorization, this study has also shown that it is difficult for a person who is mentally disabled to suppress automatic responses and to create a new response.

The response process focuses on how decisions are translated into action. Studies were conducted by Nettelbeck and Brewer (1981) and Nettelbeck and Wilson (1997) that examined the reaction time in the response process. “They reported that the reaction times of individuals with mental retardation, when compared to those of individuals without mental retardation, are generally slower, more variable, and more positively skewed because of infrequent, exceptionally long responses” (Weeks, Chua, Elliot, 2000, p. 186). When a study to increase speed and accuracy on response time was conducted, results showed that response time decreased with individuals who were mentally disabled being able to respond quicker; however the number of errors in the response remained the same (Weeks, Chua, Elliot, 2000, p. 187). This means that with practice, a person with mental retardation may increase the response time, but accuracy will remain unchanged. This proves that what is learned can be maintained.

Therefore, cognitive skills may be delayed, but the skills are accessible. Research shows that mentally disabled people can encode, decide, and respond in situations depending on its environment. However, the mentally disabled did not perform at the same level as those tested who were not mentally disabled. But the results from the research can answer questions that seek to explain what people who are mentally handicapped are capable of accomplishing. Most people

are not educated about what people with developmental disabilities are capable of doing. It may be assumed that people with mental retardation are not capable of encoding, deciding, and responding to information. It is important that the public understands this fact about the mentally disabled. The portrayal of the mentally disabled in media could increase the acknowledgment of this fact.

People's Perception of the Handicapped

There are more than 130 million people worldwide with an intellectual disability (Hurst, 1995, p. 8). So it is possible that a person may know or have come in contact at some point in his or her life with a person who is mentally handicapped. This experience, along with pre-existing prejudices, may influence a viewer's opinion of a person of that group. In a 1992 study by Cumberbatch and Negrine, it was discovered that people who lived in the United Kingdom and the United States of America perceived that the attitude of characters on television shown toward other disabled characters were mostly positive. Fifty-seven percent of people surveyed in U.K and 71% of people surveyed in America said the non-disabled character attitude shown towards the disabled character on television was to treat them like any other person. Fifteen percent of people surveyed in the U.K and 17% of people surveyed in the U.S said the non-disabled character had an attitude of fear toward the disabled person. Thirty percent of people surveyed in the U.K and 34% of people surveyed in the U.S said the non-disabled character showed the attitude of attraction to the disabled character. Forty percent of people surveyed in U.K viewers believed that the non-disabled character patronized the disabled character. Forty-six percent of people surveyed in U.S viewers believed the non-disabled character respected the disabled character (Cumberbatch & Negrine, 1992, p. 78). The results of this study indicated that

American television viewers perceive more positive attitudes played by the non-disabled character to the disabled character than United Kingdom television viewers.

Personal Contact

People's perception of what is portrayed on television can manifest itself in real life (Proulock, 1997, p. 72; Stibbe, 2004, p. 24). For example, Americans who believed that the non-disabled person respected the disabled person, might also believe that they are respectful to the disabled in real life. Yuker and Bock's meta-analysis of research conducted on the topic of personal contact with people who are disabled showed various results. Out of the 274 studies, 51% reported positive effects of contact, 10% negative effects, and 39% nonsignificant differences. According to their analysis, positive effects of contact are most likely to occur when the person with the disability can communicate effectively, is perceived as competent, and is open to discussing his or her disability (Farnell & Smith, 1999, p. 661). If positive effects are associated mostly with the disabled who can communicate and are competent, then positive affects will not be associated with the mentally disabled because of their incapability to perform these tasks as well as a non-disabled person.

Cumberbatch and Negrine (1992) found that 71% of Americans believed the non-disabled character treated the disabled character like any other person and 46% said that the non-disabled characters respected the disabled characters. It is possible that the Americans felt this way because most of the disabled characters on television could communicate effectively, were competent and talked about the disability on television. It coincides with Yuker and Brock's analysis. The Cumberbatch and Negrine study fails to distinguish if the characters were physically or mentally disabled. However, application of the meta-analysis report to

Cumberbatch and Negrine's research gives insight into how a person may perceive attitudes on television and how that can be reflected in real life. But why are people more comfortable about certain disabilities and not others? "Donaldson theorized that positive attitudes are produced when exposure to persons with disabilities is powerful enough to overcome a stereotyped perception by either reducing the discomfort or uneasiness of the nondisabled person or providing enough information to 'unfreeze' a stereotype. But when experience with a person with a disability results in discomfort or confirms a stereotype then negative attitudes can be reinforced or strengthened" (Farnell & Smith, 1999, p. 661). If the stereotype or negative attitude is reinforced in the media, then this attitude will be reflected during the personal contact of person who is mentally disabled.

Problem: In Need of Environment Change through Media

On television, people cannot always tell just by looking at someone if that person has an intellectual disability. However, people who have Down syndrome are easily detected because of the physical features they have. Because people with Down syndrome can automatically be detected, the media must be cautious how that person is framed. "Too often the media goes for the 'supercrip' story rather than looking at the individual or the issues. Many issues such as employment and insurance for people with disabilities are largely ignored by the media" (Rowlett, 2007; Tallent, 2007, p. 36). Stereotypes like this have caused viewers to see the intellectually disabled a certain way on television and expect that same behavior from them in person. "Television's overconcentration on a disability per se to the exclusion of the individual concerned and his/her humanity was the source of many critical comments. As one young

woman with a disability remarked; ‘my disability does not worry me but it worries other people’ (Cumberbatch & Negrine, 1992, p. 91).

Entertainment television has an opportunity to show people with developmental disabilities in an environment that is accurate yet is not stereotypical. For example, with the exception of *Life Goes On*, there has not been a television show that allowed a person with a developmental disability be the main character. Now there seems to be a hierarchy of how disabilities are represented on television, especially in the news. “There are the physical disabilities which get the most attention; then the hidden disabilities, such as pain or a learning disability, the ones where most people think the person is just trying to beat the system; finally there are the mental illnesses, which get virtually no attention” (Mitchell, 2007; Tallent, 2007, p. 36). Therefore, broadcast and online journalist must be aware of the video, photographs and language used to portrays the person with a developmental disability. “Reporting on people with disabilities has not improved since passage of the ADA because journalists still use words that are inaccurate and damaging” (Rowlett, 2007; Tallent, 2007, p. 36). Therefore, it is the media’s responsibility to represent people with developmental disabilities more accurately and show them being included in social settings. For example, the Fox show *Glee* has a supporting cast member who has Down Syndrome. Lauren Potter plays Becky Jackson on the show. Lauren’s character is a cheerleader and is the cheer coach’s assistant. On the show Becky seems very confident and cheerful but is not a push-over. She is a normal teenager and every other character treats her as such. On the show, Lauren’s character is integrated with the rest of the students. *Glee* does a great job of not showing Becky in the stereotypical roles, of being the victim or as mentioned before, “Supercrip.” Shows like this could help change the “old paradigm” perspective that many people still have about people with disabilities. “Disability activists and

scholars believe that new terms promoted by the movement...would soon be stigmatized by the larger culture; therefore, efforts should concentrate on improving perceptions of people with disabilities” (Haller, Dorries, & Rahn, 2006, p. 64).

Social Cognitive Theory

People who are mentally disabled are also affected by the environment in the same manner as non-disabled people. Social cognitive theory says “things [people] experience in their environments (e.g. mass media) can affect people’s behaviors, and that affect is influenced by various personal factors specific to those people and their situations” (Baran & Davis, 2009, p. 184). This theory is experienced through one of these three processes: observational learning, inhibitory effects, and/ or disinhibitory effects. Observational learning is self explanatory. It is when the observer learns new patterns of behavior by watching the behavior represented (Baran & Davis, 2009, p. 184). Inhibitory effect is when the observer sees the consequence as a result of a behavior and determines that the punishment is unwanted. This decreases the likelihood that the observer will mock this behavior (Baran & Davis, 2009, p. 184). Disinhibitory effects is the opposite of inhibitory effects. This is when the observers sees a reward or praise as a result of a prohibited behavior and determines the reward is wanted. Although the behavior may be prohibited or threatening, the action is done anyway to receive the reward or praise (Baran & Davis, 2009, p. 184-185). “Further, social cognitive theory suggests that a person must believe in his/her ability to perform a behavior (i.e., self-efficacy) and must perceive a benefit to the behavior; moreover, a person must place value on the consequences or outcomes associated with the behavior” (Chisolm-Burns & Spivey, 2010, p. 97). Once that person has placed value on the outcome associated with the behavior, the individual will desire to repeat that behavior if the

outcome is positive. Also, if the individual believes he or she is good at the behavior (self efficacy) then he or she will continue to do the behavior in order to receive the expected outcome (reward) (Nota, Ginevra, Carrieri, 2010, p. 251).

Self-Esteem

Defining one's self-worth is an integral part of life. How people view themselves will determine their life value, which leads to success, which leads to happiness. Self-worth can be measured by how one favors him or herself, which is self-esteem. "Cummins and Nistico (2002) argued that self-esteem is crucial for individuals' life satisfaction. Accordingly, self-esteem can be regarded as one of the main factors that affect life satisfaction. Individuals who have high levels of self-esteem are better at organizing the goals they want to achieve and strive for success to the extent their individual value allows" (Oztas, 2010, p. 321). It is also believed that self-esteem affects one's self-occupational-esteem. When people aspire to obtain a career, they usually pick occupations they believe they can be trained or can develop the skill to obtain. Self-esteem plays a role in the type of career one inspires to obtain because it is thought of that people with high self-esteem tend to take risk and aspire to do the more complicated jobs. Whereas people with lower self-esteem usually aspire to do something that is practical and easier to accomplish. According to Oztas, high self-esteem can be defined by these characteristics: being an extrovert, optimism, communicative, open to criticism, good at problem solving and respectful of other's differences. Low self-esteem can be defined by these characteristics: having low self-confidence, criticizing themselves in all aspects, being unable to have close and meaningful relationships, pessimistic, fatalistic, withdrawn, lonely, inflexible, indecisive, too sensitive to criticism, afraid of failure, always skeptical of change (2010, p. 321-322).

Self Esteem vs. Self-Acceptance

It is believed that everyone has self-esteem, but is it still true for someone who has a developmental disability? Could it be that the person doesn't know how to regard or favor him or herself, but has self-acceptance instead? "Theorist differentiates between self-esteem (which is conditional on the outcome valence) and unconditional self-acceptance (the person regards herself as worthwhile no matter of a particular outcome, because he or she accepts the idea of fallibility) (Sava, Maricutoiu, Rusu, Macsinga, Virga, 2011, p. 99). This means that whether a person has high or low self-esteem, it can be determined by the person's attitude. Unconditional self-acceptance is when the person thinks of him or herself as a good or important person no matter what happens. The environment and situations that happen to people daily is an influence on people's attitudes and behavior, according to social cognitive theory.

Some researchers believe focusing on increasing self-esteem, instead of unconditional self-acceptance is unhealthy and to be avoided. In a study that focuses on increasing self-acceptance instead of self-esteem, the researcher found that the individual needed to give up self-evaluation practices. The individual must replace the notion that humans need value or self-esteem with one that seeks to promote self-acceptance unconditionally, regardless of individual traits or behaviors (Sava, Maricutoiu, Rusu, Macsinga, Virga, 2011, p. 99). However, it may be more helpful to people who have a mental disability if they explored their values and aspirations. "How people with DS view themselves and how confident they are in dealing with the world are fundamental to successful adaptiveness" (Bandura 1971; Beck, 1976; Cohen et al., 2002, p. 225). People with developmental disabilities should be encouraged to obtain independence. Teaching and person with a developmental disability not to think independently and to accept their condition could be troublesome for the individual. Because of this people with developmental

disabilities “may develop passive, dependent, unreflective, close-minded behaviors, lack of critical thinking, and may tend to reject new ideas” (Magno, 2011, p. 2). Therefore it is important for those present in the intellectually disabled lives to give information and to encourage learning and independence.

Intellectually disabled people are aware of their differences. But most do not allow their disability to define them. This attitude can be interpreted to be self-acceptance, which is an idea that most people with disabilities obtain. But a person needs more than self-acceptance to be motivated to live an independent life. In explaining to a disabled person who he or she is, one must also find ways to encourage self-esteem, which can ultimately lead to the intellectually disabled person being a contributor to society. “People with DS often become aware of the realities of their lives, particularly when they compare themselves to siblings who go to college, move out on their own, or get married...It is our experience that although some reaction to these stigmatizing realities is inevitable, people who have more choices and opportunities in their work, social, and recreational spheres are less likely to be seriously affected by limitations and stigma in their lives” (Cohen, Nadel, Madnick, 2002, p. 226).

Independence and Personal Autonomy

It is important that people with developmental disabilities exercise social skills and motor abilities. Social and recreational activities can help keep the developmental disabled healthy and increase the likelihood to live longer (Cohen et al., 2002, p. 223). People with developmental disabilities want to live independent lives. People with developmental disabilities want to feel needed and working is one of the best ways to provide that feeling. However, finding a job has been difficult for a person with a developmental disability because of the limited number of jobs

available (Cohen et al., 2002, p. 227). Often times the jobs that are available, people with developmental disabilities find that those jobs are not challenging enough and easily become bored with their job responsibility and feel they are being demoralized (Cohen et al., 2002, p. 227). Therefore people who have Down syndrome do not reach their maximum potential on the job, thus do not meet life goals, which could trigger a decline in self-worth and self-esteem. “Most people are demoralized when they have had no say in where they work. Meeting family expectations is not nearly as important as meeting the needs and wants of the person with DS [Down Syndrome]” (Cohen et al., 2002, p. 227). One way to decrease demoralization is to introduce the person to a job while in high school and he or she will be more likely to get and maintain a job in adulthood (Cohen et al., 2002, p. 227). Even if the job is without pay, when people, not just those with a developmental disability, have a responsibility they tend to feel important and live happier lives (Cohen et al., 2002, p. 227).

How to Measure Self-Esteem

Theorist William James (1890/1983) believed that self-esteem could be measured by actions. Desires and aspirations provoke action, and action can be done successfully or competently to influence self-esteem (p. 296). The desires and aspirations are one’s value. Values, which are things an individual finds important or interesting, is what individuals use to measure accomplishments and failures. James looks at desires and aspirations as pretensions and one’s ability to realize the pretensions requires competence (Mruk, 2006, p. 13). “James went on to considerable length to make sure we understand that general success or overall competence is not what constitutes self-esteem. Rather, it is competence in areas that matter to the individual as

a unique and particular human being that determines whether success (or failure) in them has meaning for one's self-esteem" (Mruk, 2006, p. 13).

James created the following equation to further explain how pretension and success can influence self-esteem.

$$Self - esteem = \frac{Success}{Pretensions}$$

If a person is able to accomplish a task, it is viewed as success. If success is greater than pretensions, what a person believes he can do, then this will increase one's self-esteem. As well as if pretensions are decreased to be smaller than success, this will also increase self-esteem (James, 1890/1983, p. 296).

James goes on to say that our social roles and identities are created by external and internal environmental factors. External factors are history, culture, circumstances: things that affect people, but people do not have control over it. Internal factors are family and interests: factors that can be specific to an individual and the individual is capable of controlling. The things we believe and take interest in tend to become priority over other issues. People have expectations of themselves and over time they will analyze whether the expectation was met or not. This answer to this influences self-esteem (James, 1890/1993, p. 292). "Thus self-esteem is something that involves areas of life that matter to a person in terms of the individual's identity, how well the person has done in them, and the fact that the person must continue to be concerned with them over time" (Mruk, 2006, p. 108).

When studying self-esteem it is important to explore the idea of motivation for behavior. Values are believed to be motivation because it inspires people to achieve success. "Success must be in a domain or area that matters to the individual in terms of their identity before it has any value for self-esteem. For example, brushing one's teeth is not a particularly significant act

for most of us, but it may be a great personal achievement for an intellectually or physically challenged individual” (Mruk, 2006, P. 78). What people want to accomplish may differ but Mruk states that people’s values are the same because they all want to gain success. But what makes each person different is how each person expects to obtain success (2006, p. 68). Mruk goes on to say that people with high self-esteem are pretentious enough to feel competent in accomplishing a task no matter how great the risk. People with high self-esteem feel that they are worthy enough to accomplish the goal and can handle a failure should it occur. They set high goals from the beginning. People with low self-esteem may feel competent enough to obtain the goal, but the thought of failing and avoiding the loss of worthiness supersedes pretensions. Therefore the expectancy of reaching goal and the effort used in competency is limited (Mruk, 2006, p. 68). James already established that success and pretensions can be divided in order to equal the amount of self-esteem one carries. A new equation was developed to elaborate on James’ basic approach and functions from Mruk were added. The new equation:

$$Self - esteem = \frac{Competence+Expectancy}{Values+Worth} = Self - esteem = \frac{Success\ or\ Failure}{Pretension}$$

Note: Pretensions in self-esteem are what a person believes he can do whether he can do it or not. This goes along with worth. If a person feels confident or believes that he or she deserves to reach a goal or is worthy enough, then this will fuel the desire to obtain the goal. Value is what a person thinks is important and motivates pretensions. Competence is what a person is actually capable of doing. Expectancy is how likely the person believes she or he will achieve the goal.

This equation works the same as the James equation. Positive competence plus high expectancy must be greater than value and worth in order to achieve self-esteem. Competence and the expectancy of achieving a goal equal success or failure. Values plus worth equal pretensions. If values and worth are greater than actual competence and expectancy then

competence and expectancy becomes a failure thus self-esteem will decrease. For example, if a person values money, that person may believe he is worthy of obtaining the goal of being a millionaire, but does not have the skills to become a millionaire, therefore is not competent in that area. Because the person is not competent, the person's expectancy of becoming a millionaire diminishes. Success is less than values and worth (pretensions). Competence and expectancy becomes a failure. Therefore self-esteem is lower in a person who does not accomplish success than a person whose success is greater than pretensions (James, 1890/1988, p. 296).

Also, if values and worth are low, then goals will be set low, too. When goals are set low, it is so that the individual can achieve success and achieve a high self-esteem. When values and worth are higher than competency, then the goals are set too high. But competency plus expectations must be equal to values and worth or higher. When everything equals then self-esteem equals one. When the values and worth are greater than competency and expectancy, which is a failure, the self-esteem is less than one. If success (competency and expectancy) is greater than pretensions (value and worth), then self-esteem is greater than one (James, 1890/1988; Bradshaw, 1981; Mruk, 2006, p. 7).

Self-esteem can also be observed as an independent or dependent variable. Self-esteem is the independent variable when it influences one's decisions or actions. When someone has high self-esteem, then that person may believe that he or she is capable of accomplishing a challenging task. Therefore the more the self-esteem increases, the attempts to perform the tasks will increase and/or the success in the tasks will increase. When self-esteem is dependent variable the success and/or failures influence self-esteem. Also the environmental issues can affect self-esteem (Kitano, 1989; Mruk, 2006, p. 36). Kitano (1989) mentioned that "from a

socioculture perspective self-esteem is the dependent variable because it is the result of a person's ethnic, social class, or gender group... Individuals are perceived and judge themselves in relation to yet-to-be fulfilled goals and activities" (Kitano,1989,p. 318; Mruk, 2006, p. 36). Self-esteem is the dependent variable because people's values and morals are what shape people's desire to obtain success. Once success is obtained then, self-esteem will follow. Self-esteem as the dependent variable is what James theory focuses on. James equation is based on the fact that people have aspirations which are pretensions and if competence falls behind, meets or exceeds those pretensions, then self-esteem is modified.

Stanley Coopersmith (1967) studied the sources of self-esteem and determined that there were four principles that contribute to self-esteem. Seymour Epstein (1979) further defined the principles. Coopersmith's four foundations were: "competence, significance, virtue, and power. That is persons come to evaluate themselves according to how proficient they are in performing tasks, how well they meet ethical or religious standards, how loved and accepted they are by others, and how much power they exert" (Coopersmith,1967, p. 262). Epstein further breaks down each principle by adding a dynamic to the principle. Competence is successful if done correctly and if done incorrectly it becomes a failure. Therefore, Epstein breaks down competence into achievement and loss. Significance is dynamically defined as acceptance and rejection because whether one feels accepted or rejected will determine one's significance. Virtue, which is one's moral-acceptance of oneself, is also united with vice. Shame or guilt is the emotions that accompany vice. Pride is the emotion that accompanies moral-acceptance. Power is paired with powerlessness (Epstein, 1979; Mruk, 2006, p. 75-76). Power is the ability to influence or impact others and powerlessness is the inability to do so. One could also be powerless if others constantly have an influence over one.

Values and what people believe to be important to them is what supports virtue. Values are used to determine if a person cares about a specific thing and if so, then that person will do what he can to protect that thing, or keep the integrity of that thing. Intrinsic worth is how one evaluates oneself. One will examine oneself to see whether one is deserving of praise or not. Praise or admiration usually follows after accomplishing an assignment. When one determines whether an entity is praise worthy or not, thus being intrinsically worthy, depends on the values one uses to judge the entity. Richard Keshen (1996) said that when an entity is valuable, then one is less willing to destroy, damage, harm or replace the entity with an equal entity because it is intrinsically worthy. But when one looks at an entity as having instrumental value then one will not regret replacing the entity because one can look past the entity itself and instead can focus on the purpose that the entity serves. Therefore, as long as the purpose is continuing to be served, one who has instrumental value can replace the entity without regret. Keshen goes on to use the example of one valuing a quilt either for its purpose of keeping one warm or for the beauty and workmanship. If the reason one wants the quilt is to stay warm, then any quilt will serve that purpose. But, if one cares about how the quilt looks or maybe the quilt was stitched by a deceased relative and it gives sentimental reasons, then the quilt is irreplaceable and has intrinsic worth (p. 76-77). If a person feels intrinsically worthy and deserving of praise then feeling significant is sure to follow.

Self esteem is often referred to as self evaluation. In order for one to evaluate oneself, one must understand oneself: self-concept. Self-understanding starts with self-recognition or awareness, which leads to self-description, then one begins to self-evaluate. After one evaluates himself, he will self-regulate (Des Rosiers, Vrsalovi, Knauf, Vargas, & Busch-Rossnagel, 1999; Lewis & Brooks-Gunn, 1979; Stipek, Gralinski & Kopp, 1990). An infant explores himself and

the objects around him. “Self awareness emerges slowly as the infant uses and acts on his environment. In his explorations from which he makes eventual sense of the world, the child notices and manipulates things that are not him” (Burns, 1979, p. 149). At 18 months, a baby can achieve self-recognition and according to Lewis & Brookes-Gunn (1979), children at the age of 2 to 3 will begin to show awareness of gender. At the age of 7 to 8, Harter (1983) believed that self-evaluation and the ability to make social comparison emerge in this age group. “She argues that children younger than 7 to 8 years do not have the cognitive abilities to evaluate their own behavior across different situations and times in order to make an overall judgment of their worth as a person. Young children generally believe that they themselves or others are either all good or all bad, and cannot simultaneously possess apparently contradictory attributes...It is not until around the age of 8 years that they develop a sense of global self-worth, and start to compare themselves to others in terms of relative attributes” (Harter, 1983; Glenn & Cunningham, 2001, p. 164). Children with intellectual disabilities are believed to reach the same milestones but not at the same time as other children. Children with intellectual disabilities will reach developmental milestones when they reach these mental ages. Mans, Cichetti, and Sroufe (1978) reported that children with Down Syndrome who could recognize themselves in the mirror accomplished this task when they were at the mental age of 18 months (Glenn & Cunningham, 2004, p. 364). “To have a self concept, the child must come to view himself as a distinct object and be able to see himself as both subject and object, distinguishing himself from other objects. He must then become aware of other perspectives, for only in that way can he be aware of the evaluations of others about him” (Burns, 1979, p. 149-150).

One’s self-concept, which is what one thinks of oneself, is the result of self-esteem, which is also referred to as self-evaluation. Self awareness, self-worth and self-esteem or self-

evaluation are a part of self-concept. Burns defines the difference between self worth and self evaluation. "Self worth is the feeling that 'self' is important and effective, and involves the person being aware of himself. Whereas notions of self evaluation suggest that a person's sense of self esteem derived from measuring up to certain standards, reward for meeting this owns and others' aspirations for him is self esteem. On the other hand self worth is more fundamental, involving a view of oneself as being master of one's actions, a sense of competence which is intrinsic rather than depending on extrinsic support" (Burns, 1979, p. 56). If self-evaluation involves measuring oneself up to certain standards, then what is the source of those standards? Burns goes on to say that many people evaluate themselves based on how they think others will perceive them. People also base their perceptions of themselves on the abilities of others and compare their abilities to that person. This shapes one's pretensions and expectations.

"Expectations are self imposed and refer to our personal levels of aspirations, for what is a success or enhancing experience for one can be a failure or deflating experience for another" (Burns, 1979, p. 9). The idea to expect a certain goal can come from observing the external environment. When one begins to base one's evaluations of oneself off of the evaluations of others then this is called the looking glass self. C.H. Cooley stated the "looking glass reflects the imagined evaluations of others about one" (1902, p. 152; Burns, 1979, p. 13). When one constantly use the 'looking glass' to evaluate oneself, then this will create insecurities within oneself. One would always use the looking glass to validate one's actions because one wants to do what is socially acceptable and not be rejected. "If a person is accepted, approved and liked for what he is and he is aware of this, then a positive self concept should be his. If others, parents, peers, teachers, ridicule him, belittle him, reject him, criticize him, for his behavioral or

physical attributes, then little self respect or self worth is likely to accrue. As a person is judged by others so he comes to judge himself” (Burns, 1979, p. 183-184).

METHODOLOGY

The researcher watched four episodes of *Life Goes On* and two episodes of *Glee* for the purpose of analyzing how the characters with Down syndrome were portrayed. *Life Goes On* was an-hour long television show about a young man with Down syndrome and how he adapted to the world. Charles “Corky” Thatcher was the name of the character played by actor Chris “Corky” Burke who has Down syndrome. Corky was a main character in this television show that lasted from 1989 to 1993. *Glee* is an-hour long current television show about a high school glee club trying to fit in with the other students while preparing to win a national title. The series premiered in 2009. A character named Becky Faye Jackson who has Downs, is a minor character on the show. Becky Faye Jackson is played by actress Lauren Potter, who also has Down syndrome. Potter’s character is usually present in almost every episode but only a few episodes are centered around Becky per season. There were only two episodes of *Glee* viewed because these were the only episodes from Season 3 that the character Becky was in the main storyline. The two episodes of *Glee* were viewed and analyzed along with the four episodes from Season 1 of *Life Goes On*.

An equation or chart was used to answer the first two research questions. The first research question seeks to find out how self-efficacy influenced the *Life Goes On* character, Corky’s, self-esteem. The equation $Self\ esteem = \frac{Competence+Expectancy}{Values+Worth}$, which is equivalent to James original equation $Self\ esteem = \frac{Success\ or\ Failure}{Pretension}$, was used to determine how Corky’s self-efficacy affected the self-esteem.

In Season 3 of *Glee*, Becky faced issues that may have affected her self esteem and this research seeks to examine those situations. After watching the episodes of *Life Goes On* and *Glee*, common themes present in both characters were identified and placed into categories.

Based off of Coopersmith (1967) and Epstein's (1979) theory that self-esteem is composed of power vs. powerlessness; significance vs. insignificance; virtue vs. vice; and competence vs. incompetence, common themes identified in one or both characters were placed into one of the four categories. The second research question seeks to know how the themes identified have affected the character's overall self-esteem.

The third research question seeks to find out if Corky and Becky used self-esteem as an independent or dependent variable. Examples of accomplishments performed by Corky and Becky will explain if they use self-esteem and independent or dependent variable.

The fourth research question seeks to find out how the self-esteem of Corky was similar or different from the self-esteem of the interviewees. Five adults (two females and three males) over the age eighteen years old with Down syndrome and one parent were interviewed (total of six adults). In the interview process participants were asked 21 open-ended questions. The questions were approved by the International Review Board before the first interview session. Each interview ranged from five minutes to eight minutes. The interview with the parent was approximately sixteen minutes. The interviewees signed an agreement stating that they were a willing participant in this study and they were not compensated for their participation. The names of the interviewees will remain anonymous and will not be used during the study. The interviewees will be referred to as interviewee one, two, three and so forth. The topic of internet and television consumption was discussed. Interviewees were also asked about their interests and if they felt competent in performing tasks seen on television or the internet.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: Reviewing the Character Corky on *Life Goes On*, How Does His Self-Efficacy Influence His Self-Esteem?

In the pilot episode of *Life Goes On*, the character Corky is 18 years old and has begun his first year at a public high school instead of going to a separate institution for students who need special education. His parents are nervous about him being mainstreamed but, they have faith that Corky can do it. Corky is initially nervous about going to school, but is calmed by a familiar face who is in his first class, his sister. Immediately Corky meets a girl named Rona whom he begins to have a crush on. He also meets a guy named Tyler, whom his sister, Becca, has a crush on. Tyler and Corky become friends. The first couple of days at school seem to be going well as far as making friends. Academically, Corky struggles to understand math and needs extra help with his homework. His older sister, Paige, helps him at home. Corky wants to ask Rona if she will go to the spring fling dance with him. Becca tells Corky that Rona is not interested in him. But Corky does not listen to Becca and daydreams about Rona while taking a test in their English class. He dreams he takes Rona to the spring fling dance and sits at the popular table with Rona, Tyler and Becca. He dreams that he would win spring fling king and Rona would win spring fling queen. His parents are there to congratulate him and everyone in the room cheers for them. Rona stares at Corky too, but it is because she is trying to look at his paper and copy the answers to the test. The teacher catches Corky and Rona looking at each other and asks them both to come to his desk. The teacher asks the both of them if they were cheating. They both deny cheating, but the teacher allows Rona to go back and finish her test and sends Corky to the principal's office. Corky is not aware that Rona has cheated off of his test and does not believe Becca when she tells him so. While in the principal's office Corky tells his teacher and the principal that he studied for the test. They ask him to recite a poem that is on the

test and Corky recites the poem from memory. Corky convinces the teacher and the principal that he did not cheat and later Rona is called to the principal's office.

$$Self - esteem = \frac{Competence+Expectancy}{Values+Worth} = Self - esteem = \frac{Success\ or\ Failure}{Pretension}$$

Using this equation to answer the research question, it explains if and how Corky's self-esteem was high or low.

In this episode Corky valued friends, family and a girlfriend. He wanted to fit in and he valued the approval of his parents and peers. He valued his academics because he studied and put in the extra time to do well in his classes. Corky's self-worth seemed high in this episode. He was not familiar with the social order and did not believe that he could not date a popular girl like Rona or be friends with a popular football player like Tyler. He knew he was worthy enough to be friends with the popular group in spite of what his sister thought. He also knew that he was worthy enough to be mainstreamed into a classroom with normal students because he knew he was smart enough to keep up with the work. Corky's expectancy of success seemed high because he was very confident that Rona liked him as well. The night before the English test he studied and knew that there would be some information that he did not grasp, but also knew that there were some things on the test he knew about abundantly. Also he knew that with the help and support of his family, he would succeed in a regular high school. Corky's competency was high. He struggled in math but he attempted to overcome what he did not understand by going over it at home with Paige. He was already familiar with some topics in English class which helped him. But the information he didn't know, he studied up until it was time to take the test. Then he later successfully proved to the teacher and the principal that he studied for the test and didn't have to cheat off of Rona's paper. Corky proved to the principal and his teacher that he was competent enough to be in a class with non-developmental disabled students. Corky also solidified his

relationship with Tyler, when Tyler and his brother who also have Downs came over to Corky’s house to help celebrate Corky’s mother birthday.

Research Question 2: How Have the Issues that the Characters Corky and Becky Face Affected Self-Esteem?

The character Corky Thatcher and Becky Faye Jackson experienced issues that affected their self-esteem. These issues were identified and placed into a category from Epstein (1979) and Coopersmith’s (1967) four foundations of self-esteem (Mruk, 2006, p. 75-76).

Power vs. Powerlessness	Significance vs. Insignificance (Acceptance vs. Rejection)	Virtue vs. Vice (Moral acceptance vs. Vice (Shame & Guilt comes along with it))	Competence vs. Incompetence (Achievement vs. Loss)
Power-desire to solve one’s own problem	Pairing Disabled or social misfits together	Pass as normal	Protection
Power-The need to prove oneself to others	Feeling Burdensome or rejected		Battling to Overcome Barriers
Power-the need to educate people	Pass as Normal		
Powerlessness-Cannot detect sarcasm/believes all people are sincere			

Power vs. Powerlessness

In the first category, Power vs. Powerless, four themes were pinpointed in the character Corky or Becky. The themes were: the need to prove oneself to others, the desire to solve one’s own problem, the need to educate people, and the inability to detect sarcasms and/or the inability to detect one’s sincerity. The desire to solve one’s own problem, the need to prove oneself to others, and the need to educate people are themes which fall into the power category. They fall into the power category because this is an opportunity for the character to influence and persuade others that the character is powerful enough to accomplish a certain task. If they can prove it, then it gives the character power. The inability to detect sarcasm and/or sincerity falls into the

powerlessness category. This falls into the powerlessness category because this is a weakness for the characters and they often have to rely on others to help them with that issue. Because it is a weakness it diminishes the power the two characters have to make an impact on others. The following are examples of each theme identified in the episodes.

(Power) The Desire to Solve One's Own Problem

In the beginning of the "Corky for President" episode, Corky is tricked by three football players. The three players switch the boys' restroom sign with the girls' restroom sign. One football player asks Corky to go into the boys' restroom and blow the whistle to signal the beginning of football practice. Corky walks into the girls' restroom, blows the whistle, and scares the girls. Corky is not punished at school for this incident because the school administrators believe his side of the story. However, Corky refuses to reveal the identities of the three football players who tricked him. Corky's mother demands to know who tricked him so that she can handle the situation. Corky insists that the situation is under control and he wants to solve his own problems.

In the same episode, Corky runs for president of the freshman class. He has to make a speech and he is nervous about doing it. His mother volunteers to come to the school election for support. But Corky does not want his mother to come. Getting over his nervousness of saying a speech in front of hundreds of students for the first time is something he wants to prove that he can do on his own. These two opportunities give Corky power to know that he does not have to depend on his parents to solve all of his problems. This gives him a sense of independence.

(Power) The Need to Prove Yourself to Others

In the “Babysitter” episode, Corky wants to babysit a little boy named Billy that his sister Rebecca usually babysits. Rebecca wants Corky to do it, but Billy’s parents, the Gravers, are reluctant to allow Corky to babysit. Mrs. Graver is familiar with Corky because she is the school counselor. She suggests that Corky come over to her house to meet and talk to her husband. This is Corky’s opportunity to prove to the Gravers that he is responsible enough to babysit Billy. When Corky meets Dr. Gravers he is intimidated by him. Dr. Gravers asks Corky questions about what he would do in case of a fire, or if Billy got sick. Corky gives him great answers. But this is not enough for Dr. Gravers to say yes. He tells Corky that he does not think that Corky babysitting will work. It hurts Corky’s feelings. But through some convincing from Corky’s father, Dr. Graver gives Corky a chance to babysit Billy. Corky takes his job of not allowing people to come over and keeping Billy safe, seriously. At the end of the episode Dr. Gravers is not completely satisfied with Corky’s work, but he does prove to his parents and the Graver’s neighbor that he is responsible and smart enough to take care of a child.

(Power) The Need to Educate Others

In the “Corky for President” episode, Corky has to make a speech about why he should win the freshman class presidential election. But, Corky is nervous and cannot remember his speech. His sister Rebecca tells him that if he cannot remember, to speak from the heart instead. When Corky approaches the podium he recites these words, “I’d like to win, but if I don’t, I have some wishes. First I wish that everyone could stand in the shoes of handicapped people and see that we have a life, we have dreams, we have hopes, we laugh and cry just like you. All we want is a chance to be your friend. Thank you very much” (Braverman,1989, Disc 1,). Corky uses his

campaign speech to educate students that he wants to be regarded as a normal teenager and does not want to be treated differently than other students. He wants people to understand that people with Down syndrome experience the same emotions as everyone else.

Another opportunity for people to be educated about people living with Down syndrome arises when Corky witnesses the football coach slapping another student. In an attempt to testify at a school board hearing about the incident, the school board moderator speaks to Corky in a condescending tone. Corky's father uses that as an opportunity to tell the school board moderator to give Corky respect and to treat him like an equal human being. The dialogue goes as follows: The school board moderator tells Corky "Now Charles, I know that you have a special problem and this is a new experience for you; going to school alongside children who aren't retarded." Dad replies, "Could you please just ask him the question without trying to humiliate him." The school board moderator responds, "I run this board my way and you can wait out in the hall if you like." Dad-"Just show him a little respect, he is here because he is trying to do the right thing, ok" (Braverman, 1989, Disc 2). Although the school board administrator continues to be rude to Corky, others in the school board hearing are allowed to assess the situation and to treat Corky according to how he should have been treated. Also this scene is a good example for audiences to see that people shouldn't assume that a person who is mentally challenged cannot comprehend anything and is totally incompetent.

In *Glee*, the character Becky often uses her British accented inner-voice to communicate to viewers how she really feels. She uses this as an opportunity to educate the audience. When Becky wants to become prom queen she expresses her desire to be nominated. Becky knows that her peers would not typically nominate a girl like her to be prom queen. But she hopes that she can use Downs to gain sympathy and a nomination. She wants to use Downs as a way to gain

votes. But, her inner-voice lets the audience know that she really just wants to be treated equally and looked at as normal teenager. She says, "I, Becky Faye Jackson, was born to be queen. But my crown has been stolen. Queens don't always have to look the same you know. Sometimes they look different. Sometimes they're shorter, or wear glasses... And stop staring at me! It's not fun to be stared at!" (Murphy, 2012, DVR) Corky and his father educates people by addressing the problem to the people. Becky on the other hand only educates television viewers because she never says how she really feels to any of her peers. Some students think Becky is a sassy, mean and rude girl. Becky uses this persona to her advantage so people will not pick on her or make her feel inferior. In order to maintain this reputation, or not show any weaknesses, Becky cannot tell people how she really feels.

(Powerlessness) Cannot Detect Sarcasm/Believes All People are Sincere

Corky has a crush on a girl named Rona Liverman and he really believes that she likes him back. Rona often flirts with Corky and does things to make him feel good about himself. For example, she makes up a cheer and performs it for him when he was running for school President. However Corky's sister, Rebecca, and Tyler (Corky's friend) know that Rona is being facetious with Corky. For example, Corky wants to go to the spring fling with Rona. Rebecca tells him that Rona would say no. But Corky asks her anyway. "Rona, are you going to the spring fling dance?" asks Corky. "Are you asking me, chuck?" answers Rona. "Yes," says Corky. "Aww, aren't you sweet, let me check my book and I'll get back to you ok," says Rona. "Yeah," says Corky. "Count on it you sexy thing," says Rona with a flirtatious look. Corky begins to smile and blush. "Cut it out Liverman", says Tyler. Corky has a hard time trying to figure out who are his true friends. Some football players are nice to him but others often times

take advantage of him and abuse his friendship. Tyler is a loyal friend who understands Corky because he has a brother with Down syndrome. Although Corky trusts everyone and thinks everyone is his friend, the audience know that Tyler and Rebecca are the only ones that can be trusted. Corky's inability to detect people's sincerity is a weakness. This takes away his power and gives people the opportunity to betray Corky. Without the ability to discern people's intentions, he always has to rely on others to distinguish the difference for him.

Pairing Disabled or Social Misfits Together

In *Glee*, Becky Faye Jackson is known as Sue Sylvester's side kick. She is the one who did all of Sue's dirty work whenever there is a scheme to sabotage the *Glee* club. Becky is co-captain of the Cheerios which is the name of the cheerleading squad Sue coaches. Many faculty and students do not like Sue because of her hurtful comments and devious ways. Becky can be insidious as well. Although they are both well-known, they are popular for unconventional reasons. They stick together because they have no one else; therefore they are the outsiders, or social misfits.

In the "Yes/No" episode of *Glee*, Becky decides she wants a boyfriend and roams the halls of her high school looking for one. The conversation that she has with herself in search of a man shows what Becky think of others and the type of person that is acceptable to her. In the episode Becky walks down the hall in slow motion. Her inner-voice speaks, "I Becky Faye Jackson am the hottest Bitch in school. I'm not only co-captain of the cheerios. I'm president of the perfect attendance club and I won a participation award in rhythm gymnastics. You may be wondering why I sound like the queen of England. It is simple, in my mind I sound like whomever I want. So lay off haters. Ok let's get real. I could easily snag any dude east of the

Mississippi. But I'm extremely picky. For instance, Rory grins too much he looks like an insane person. Is that a Mohawk, Puckerman or did someone glue a squirrel to your head? No Chang-doo, I'm no rice queen (as she looks at an Asian boy). (She makes eye contact with Artie, who sit in a wheelchair) Now that's more like it! Sweet, sexy and handicapable like me. With a voice as velvety as my favorite Sunday dress. It's decided. Artie Abrams, you are my new boyfriend." (Murphy, 2012, DVR). Becky believes she is better than the first three guys that she considers to be her boyfriend. She convinces herself that she is more suitable with someone who is handicapped as well. It is not clear why she paired herself up with another disabled person. She may believe that he would understand her more than a non-disabled people would. Although the answer is unknown, this story suggests that people who are handicapped are more comfortable around others who are handicapped as well.

In one of the episodes of *Life Goes On*, Tyler brings his brother who also has Downs over to the Thatchers' home to meet Corky. Tyler assumes that Corky and his brother will get along because they appear to be just alike. Corky seems a little surprised at first, but welcomes Tyler's brother into the kitchen for cake. In the past, Corky is also paired with a student named Lester, who is considered a nerd according to the popular classmates. The nerd is a social misfit because he has no friends and is often made fun of in class. Corky befriends him and Lester helps Corky with his class presidential campaign.

When Becky and Corky paired themselves up with other disabled or socially misfitted people, they were trying to be significant. Although, the popular class rejected them and they were regarded as outsiders, Becky and Corky wanted to make other rejected students feel welcome to be a part of their social clique. However, when Corky and Becky sought friendship from those who may have been able to understand what they were going through then it gave

them a sense of belongingness. Corky and Becky sought friendship from the rejected to make them feel at ease in an environment that rejects them. However, when Tyler introduced Corky to his brother who was disabled, then Tyler was reinforcing the older stereotypes that the Greeks and Romans believed about the mentally handicapped. The stereotype that says Corky and Tyler's brother are insignificant people who should be together and excluded from the rest of society (Calculator & Bedrosian, 1988, P. 11).

Feeling Burdensome or Rejected

In the "Break a Leg Mom" episode of *Life Goes On*, Corky is feeling down about unsuccessfully learning how to drive and his struggles with math. In this episode Corky allows his limitations to depress him. These feelings lead to questions to his mother about whether he was an accident or not and if she ever regretted having him. Corky's math teacher describes his state of mind to his mother. The teacher says, "Mrs. Thatcher, the problem is, in his mind, Corky does not fit anywhere. He's so high-functioning he really doesn't belong in a special school. And now in a regular high school he is really coming face to face with his limitations" (Braverman, 1989, Disc 1). Corky believes that he ruined his mother's dream of becoming an actress. His mother constantly reassures him that he is not a burden in her life. Because Corky feels that he is a burden this leads to his feelings of rejection and insignificance.

In the "Yes/No" episode of *Glee*, Becky picks Artie who is physically disabled to be her boyfriend. Artie does not want to be Becky's boyfriend, but he does not have the courage to tell her. After gaining some advice from Sue Sylvester, Artie decides to tell Becky the truth. "Look, I haven't been clear with you. I really like being your friend, but I don't think we should date," says Artie. Becky looks a little disappointed. "Is it because I'm too intimidating," said Becky.

“Yes,” says Artie. “I get it. See you later,” says Becky. Becky walks away sad. Becky’s inner-voice begins to speak. “I didn’t ask him what I wanted to ask him. I didn’t ask the reason he doesn’t want to be my boyfriend is because I have Downs. I didn’t ask him because I know the answer is yes. Some days it sucks being me. This is one of those days. Focus Becky, don’t let them see you cry” (Murphy, 2012, DVR). Becky feels rejected by Artie and she knew that Down syndrome was the reason. It seems as if Becky’s condition has limited the possibility of her being in a relationship. When Becky recognized her disadvantage it made her feel insignificant.

Pass as Normal (Significance vs. Insignificance and Virtue vs. Vice)

The “pass as normal” theme works in conjunction with significant versus insignificant and virtue versus vice. The pass as normal theme bridges the gap between the two categories because when one can successfully or unsuccessfully pass as a non-disabled person, then this will influence the feeling of significance or insignificance. But, it is the moral decision that one makes in order to belong to an accepted social group that will determine whether a person is willing to obtain acceptance by being virtuous or unethical. Also whether a person is virtuous or not by the accepted group’s standards can lead to the determination of if a person is significant or insignificant. Examples from *Life Goes On* and *Glee* help the reader understand how the two categories are linked through the pass as normal theme.

Corky has a crush on Rona Liverman and she invites him over to her house for a party. Corky wants to attend the party but he is already expecting Lester (who was a nerd by social standards) to come over and help him with his class presidential campaign. Lester is not invited to the party and Corky does not want to hurt Lester’s feelings. He asks his older sister, Paige’s, advice on how to address the problem. Paige suggests to Corky that he tells Lester he is going to

the mall with her. But, Paige plans to drop Corky off at the party. She tells Corky that it is acceptable to lie to Lester as long as he did not find out the truth. Lester comes over and Corky initially tells Lester that he is going to the mall with Paige. But he cannot keep up with the lie so he eventually tells Lester the truth. Lester becomes very upset at Corky. He refuses to accept Corky's apology and stops being Corky's campaign manager.

In Corky's desire to be a part of the popular group and gain Rona Liverman as a friend, he was willing to hurt a friend. Corky saw the party as an opportunity to be accepted by people who typically would not accept him into their clique. But he used deceit to try to get what he wanted. However, his decision to be unethical made him feel guilty and ashamed for hurting a friend.

Corky experiences this once again while babysitting a boy named Billy for family. While Billy is asleep, Tyler and three friends come over. Corky knows that he is not allowed to have anyone over to the house. But, Corky allows them to come in to the house for a little while with the intentions that he will make them leave soon. Tyler's friends take food from the refrigerator, turn on the stereo and television, and play with Billy's toys. Corky asks them to leave, but Tyler's friend tells Corky that friends allow each other to hang out at their houses. Corky agrees with him, but later Corky realizes it is wrong to have them there. "Tyler I still want to be your friend, but you and your friends got to go," says Corky. "It's alright Corky, we are leaving," says Tyler. Tyler takes the toy away from the guys and tells them to leave. Tyler's friend tells Corky that he is a drag and says that his friends are not drags. Corky asks him, "We're still friends right?" The boy responds, "Yeah, I'll still be your friend" (in sarcastic tone). Tyler assures Corky that he still wants to be Corky's friend. Although Corky is grateful for Tyler's friendship, he seems upset that he did not gain Tyler's friends as his friends.

In this situation, Corky compromised what he knew what was right and allowed Tyler and his friends to come over to the house where he was babysitting. He did this in an attempt to gain acceptance from Tyler's friends and to be recognized as a friend of theirs. When Corky asked them to leave, he knew that they may decide not to be his friend anymore. Tyler assured him that he was still his friend, but Corky still seemed to be disappointed to see that he was correct about the others wanting to discontinue their friendship with him. He chose to have moral acceptance versus social acceptance. Corky gained virtue but he also became insignificant when he was rejected by that social group.

Corky experiences this for a third time when he witnesses the football coach physically assaulting another student. The football coach tells Corky not to say anything. But, Corky decides to tell the school board exactly what he saw. Some football players reject him, others accept him because they appreciated his courage to stand up to the intimidating football coach. Once again, Corky decides that moral integrity is more important than social acceptance. Although he may have felt insignificant to his peers and some school faculty members, he seemed to appreciate the virtue more because he did not have to worry about the shame or guilt that comes along with telling lies.

Becky always excluded herself from her peers. Sue Sylvester was the only person she allowed to have a relationship with her. Members of the glee club were nice to Becky but Becky believed that the glee club members were losers and that she did not need their friendship. The Cheerios Cheerleading Squad won a national championship and she was empowered by being a part of the squad. Becky protected her feelings by putting down others before they could put her down. But this strategy did not always work.

Becky feels rejected when she does not win the nomination for prom queen and decides not to go to the prom. Instead, she opts to go to the anti-prom, which is a prom for those who feel disenfranchised from the senior prom. At the anti-prom she plays strip poker with a male glee club member. She expresses her disappointment in not being nominated for prom queen. He makes her a crown and pronounces her queen of the anti-prom. He decides to take her to the official senior prom as his date. At the prom Becky creates a diversion while he pours alcohol into the punch. Her participation in strip poker and spiking the punch are actions that are considered immoral and illegal for teenagers. However, Becky does not feel shame or guilt because she would rather have the acceptance of the boy. She wants to pass as normal by being considered for prom queen. But instead she gets something better or as equally satisfying when she goes to the prom with a date. Her desire to feel significant outweighed her desire for virtue.

Protection (Competence vs. Incompetence)

Family and friends of Corky and Becky always felt they had the responsibility to protect Corky and Becky. People often gave unsolicited advice and wanted to keep information away from Corky and Becky in order to guard their feelings. Corky and Becky constantly reminded people that they could solve their own problems and that they would try to do something even when the odds are against them. When Corky was tricked by some football player to blow a whistle into the girls' restroom, Corky's mother wanted them to be punished. She was willing to go to the school and find them herself. Corky asked her to allow him to handle the situation. In the same episode, when Corky was feeling nervous about giving his speech, Corky's mother offered to go to the school for support, but Corky asked her not to come. It was an accomplishment he wanted

to achieve alone. Becky wanted to accomplish things and she didn't want others to remind her how hard it would be.

In one episode, a glee club member walks into the girls' restroom to find Becky waving in the mirror. She asks Becky what she is doing. Becky responds, "I am practicing my prom queen victory wave and I am going to win". Rachel responds, "You know that there is a lot of stiff competition this year Becky, I wouldn't want you to be disappointed." Becky responds, "Would you mind taking your loser talk somewhere else? I don't want to catch a failure." In both shows we the viewer can see the non-disabled person trying to help the person who is disabled by warning them of the possibility of failure. But, Corky and Becky never let the possibility of failing stop them and wants others to understand that it is important for them to try anyway.

Battling to Overcome Barriers (Competence vs. Incompetence)

Most teenagers desire to learn how to drive, date, participate in a sport or an extra-curricular activity, earn passing grades, and spend time with their friends. They want to go to football games and be invited to parties. When teenagers become adults, their desires change to finding a job, getting married and having children. These are all tasks that are harder for the mentally handicapped to achieve. But all are not impossible to achieve. These are barriers for Corky and Becky. But they work to try to overcome what they can. For Becky, being nominated for prom queen was a barrier because she knew that her peers would usually vote for the attractive, popular, cheerleader. She also knew that finding someone to date would not be easy. She may have thought she was leveling the playing field when she chose another handicapped person to date. However, she was disappointed to find out that her handicap may have been the reason the relationship was not successful.

When it came to overcoming the barrier of making friends, Becky was excluded from the other students because her only friend was an adult. She was incompetent in making friends her own age. However, Becky seemed to be content with Coach Sue Sylvester as her friend. When it came to overcoming the barrier of participating in an extra-curricular activity, she was co-captain of the Cheerios cheerleading squad. But she did not participate in the routines. She was more of an assistant to Coach Sylvester. Although her condition made her experience delays in her motor skills, she still felt competent because she was a part of the team. *Glee* has not shown how Becky will tackle her learning disability in the classroom or her desires for her future.

In *Life Goes On*, Corky faced more barriers than Becky. Throughout all of the episodes Corky had a difficult time making sincere friends. He was usually seen with his sister, Rebecca or Tyler at school. Corky had a crush on Rona Liverman, but he had never been on date nor had he ever had a girlfriend. He daydreamed about taking Rona to the spring fling but it never was a reality for him. He attempted to learn how to drive. He passed the writing portion of his test. But when he tried to drive, he experienced some cognitive delays and wrecked the driving vehicle twice. Also Corky struggled to pass math. He seemed to do well in his other classes. No matter how hard he studied and received tutoring, he could not grasp the concepts of math and do well on his tests. Because of his failing grade, he was not able to participate in extra-curricular activities. Corky daydreamed about playing football and being the best player on the team. But Corky knew that he could not play football because of the dysfunction in his neck (Braverman, 1989, Disc 2). Corky's grades and medical condition would not allow him to join the football team either, but the football coach talked the principal into allowing Corky to be the towel boy for the team. Corky's physical shortcoming did not stop Corky from being on the team. That was a barrier he overcame. However, it seemed as if Corky's barriers of relationships, driving, and

math had defeated him. While dealing with his shortcomings, Corky realized that he may never get married and certainly would not be able to conceive children.

When non-handicapped people do not meet a goal, then it can affect their self-esteem negatively. Corky and Becky showed that when they do not meet or excel in a goal, then it affected their self-esteem negatively as well. This leads to the third research question of whether Corky and Becky used self-esteem as an independent or dependent variable.

Research Question 3: How Have Corky and Becky Used Their Self-Esteem as Independent or Dependent Variables?

When self-esteem is used as an independent variable it is thought of to be the cause of behavior (Kitano, 1989, p. 318; Mruk, 2006, p. 36). It appeared that the character Becky used her self-esteem as an independent variable. Her high confidence level led her to believe and expect success whenever she wanted to accomplish a task. Her inner-voice on the show told the audience what she was thinking and how she really felt. Before Becky pursued Artie as a boyfriend, her inner-voice disclosed that Becky thought she was the most attractive girl in the school. She thought she had other attributes like her participation with the Cheerios, the perfect attendance club and rhythm gymnastics which made her more attractive. She stated that she “could easily snag any dude east of the Mississippi. But I’m extremely picky” (Braverman, 2012, DVR). She believed that she did not have to settle for anyone and her condition would not hinder her from finding a mate. It appears that Becky had high self-esteem which gave her the courage to ask Artie out on a date. During the brief relationship she even had the courage to text Artie a sexual photograph of herself. This meant that she did not feel insecure about her body image. When Artie broke up with her, the self-esteem decreased. She used self-evaluation to pinpoint

the reason why Artie did not want to date her. She knew it was because of Downs and immediately began to feel rejected and insignificant.

It appeared that Corky used his self-esteem as a dependent variable. Instead of self-esteem affecting the behavior, with dependent variable, the behavior or external factors affected the self-esteem. In the “Break a Leg, Mom” episode, Corky was failing a math class and had failed his driver’s education test. These events made Corky sad and he began to think of his other limitations. His behavior had a negative effect on him and his self-esteem seemed low. His family and math teacher encouraged Corky to think positively and to receive tutoring in math. While in math class, Corky was asked by the teacher to do a problem on the board. Corky completed the problem and became very excited when the teacher told him it was correct. Now confident that he could answer a math question correctly, he wanted to prove to himself that he could drive. Feeling competent and successful caused his self-esteem to increase and he was willing to try to master a once failed task again. He attempted to drive the driver’s education car at school without supervision. He hit a trash bin and a tree. He was not seriously injured, but being unsuccessful at learning how to drive hurt his confidence. His self-esteem decreased once more and he re-focused on how much of problem he was to others. Corky’s self-esteem depended on his competence; therefore self-esteem was a dependent variable.

Research Question 4: How was the Self-Esteem of the Character Corky Similar or Different from the Self-Esteem of the Interviewees who have Down Syndrome?

Mruk states that everyone wants to gain success. How one defines success and how one expects to gain success varies for each person (2006, p. 68). When talking to a group of adults who have Down syndrome, I noticed they all had values, interests, and desires. Their desires were influenced by family, friends, organizations and media. Some interviewees had something

in common with Corky and Becky, others did not. Interviewee two valued his family and learned about things while spending time with his family. For example, interviewee two developed an interest in watching wrestling shows like “WWE Raw” and “Smackdown” because he watched it with his older brother. Interviewee two aspired to be a wrestler and believed he could do anything he saw on television. Interviewee three, interviewee two’s father, confirmed that interviewee two was optimistic about all of his interests. Corky developed an interest in football because he watched it with his father. But Corky understood that he could not play football and instead could still be a part of the team as a towel boy. Corky was also interested in joining the drama club. He developed this interest from his mother who was once a theatrical actress.

Interviewee one valued helping people find their favorite items and wanted to obtain a job at Target. She learned about the job through a friend. Interviewee four also valued helping people with food and wanted to work for Meals on Wheels. He had worked with them before and enjoyed the experience. Helping others made the two interviewees feel significant and offered them intrinsic worth. Corky also valued helping people and wanted all students to feel important, which is the reason why he ran for freshman class president. Corky wanted those who did not feel a part of the popular social group to gain equality. The interviewees and the character Corky were competent enough to identify their interests and why they liked doing it. Although the interviewees had not yet accomplished their goals, these two interviewees believed that they could one day work for Target and Meals on Wheels.

But there were ways that the character Corky and the interviewees were different. Corky recognized his limitations which negatively influenced his self-esteem. He realized that some things in life were not possible for him. It made him think about his future and everything that he would not be able to do. When interviewing the subjects, they all seemed to have not recognized

their limitations. Most of the interviewees seemed to believe that they could do anything they saw on television or on the Internet. Limitations are recognized when standards are set and one finds out that one cannot meet the standard. But who sets the standard for the interviewees? Theorist would say people set their own standards by being exposed to external factors and other people's perspectives. These ideas shape a person's ideals and how he or she feels about himself or herself. Interviewee five was an example of how he set standards for himself and was able to achieve competence, thus self-esteem.

Interviewee 5 watched cowboy shows, listened to country music and dressed like a cowboy. When asked if he perceived television to be real, he responded "It's fake." A question was later asked if watching cowboy shows inspired him to be a cowboy. He responded, "Cowboy, that's my name." This answer was interpreted to mean that he believes he is a cowboy. He was asked to confirm this interpretation and he said it was correct. Although interviewee five said he recognized that scripted television shows are not real, it seems as if he did not recognize that cowboy shows are scripted as well. It is also unclear if he recognized his limitations in performing cowboy duties. He wouldn't be able to shoot a gun, or go chase bad guys while riding a horse as seen on television. However, it seemed as if simply looking like a cowboy and listening to country music was his standard for being a cowboy and if that is the standard, then mission accomplished. He achieved competence in being a cowboy. He was confident in who he thought he was. High confidence is a characteristic of high self-esteem (Oztas, 2010, pp. 321-322). The following chart is used to explain the similarities and differences among Corky, Becky, and the interviewees.

	Pretensions		Success or Failure		
	Values	Worth	Competency	Expectancy	Self-esteem
Corky	Helping people, friends, family, relationships, being honest	Felt worthy enough to integrate into a normal high school.	Competent in academics, except math. Incompetent in sports, driving and getting a girlfriend	Initially high expectations, later expectations decreased	Exhibited positive self-esteem when he is competent. Low self-esteem when he is incompetent
Becky	Being alone, putting down others, relationships and prom queen	Felt worthy to be in a relationship and to be prom queen	Competent as a Cheerio and other extra-curricular activities Incompetent in obtaining a boyfriend or winning prom queen	High expectancy of success	Showed positive self-esteem when competent and low self-esteem when incompetent
Interviewee 1	Helping people	Felt worthy enough to work at Target	Incompetent in obtaining a job at Target	High expectation that she will work there	Positive self-esteem
Interviewee 2	Spending time with family and wrestling	Felt worthy enough to be a wrestler	Incompetent in becoming a professional wrestler, but believed he was a wrestler	High expectations of being a wrestler	Positive self-esteem
Interviewee 4	Helping people	Felt worthy enough to work for Meals on Wheels	Competence because he had some experience as a volunteer with Meals on wheels.	High expectations that he will be hired by meals on wheels	Positive self-esteem
Interviewee 5	Cowboys, country music, and western clothes	Felt worthy enough to be a cowboy	Incompetent in being a cowboy.	High expectations that he will be a cowboy	Positive self-esteem

DISCUSSION

Research Question 1: Reviewing the Character Corky on *Life Goes On*, How Does His Self-Efficacy Influence His Self-Esteem?

Corky's self-efficacy is his competency. Self-efficacy is what a person can accomplish and how effective that person is. Therefore, using this equation, I would conclude that Corky's introduction into a mainstream high school was a success. His competency and his expectancy exceeded his values plus his worth. His ability to prove to his teacher and principal that he is capable of keeping up with the academic work as well as prove to himself that he could make friends was a great accomplishment for corky. This accomplishment increased the self-esteem.

Research Question 2: How Have the Issues that the Characters Corky and Becky Face Affected Self-Esteem?

The four sources of self-esteem are used in this research to determine if Becky and Corky have high or low self-esteem. If one exudes power, significance, virtue and competence, then one is thought of to have high self-esteem. Also, if one exudes powerlessness, insignificance, vice and incompetence, then one has low self-esteem. But, the research has found that Corky and Becky experience a mixture of high and low self-esteem within any given episode. After analyzing the themes, the level of self-esteem will be determined.

Corky and Becky's self-esteem is determined by their evaluations of themselves. Although internal and external factors may influence how they feel about themselves, they ultimately get to make the final decision. Therefore, Corky and Becky's self-esteem has been high and low, but mostly high. When self-esteem decreases, they find a way to focus on their achievements and continue to strive to reach new goals. Corky has found ways to gain power by solving his own problems, and proving to his parents and peers that he is as normal as a non-

handicapped person. Becky has taken the power away from her peers so that they won't use it against her, which makes her powerful. The both have felt rejected and insignificant from their peers. Yet, they both know their worthiness and have found significance with other social groups. Therefore, they view themselves as being significant. Being virtuous or using vice is different for the both of them. Becky uses vice as a defense mechanism to protect herself from her peers. Therefore she doesn't feel shame or guilt when she uses it because she has a justifiable reason to use it. This is different from one of the traditional portrayals of a disabled person. Disabled people were stereotyped as "friendly, happy, and affectionate. This is appears to be held by the general public with little recognition of the variation between people with Down Syndrome" (Carr, 1985; Gibson, 1978; Begley, 1999, p. 516). The character, Becky never allows any of her peers to mistreat her and view her as a victim. However, Corky is one of the traditional portrayals of a person with a disability. He has a friendly and loving personality. People often take advantage of his kindness or assume that he doesn't understand their condescension, therefore making him seem weak. No matter how people treat Corky, he prefers to be honorable than to get even with those who mistreat him. He strives to do what is ethical and being virtuous is more important than social acceptance. Both Corky and Becky have learned to do what they can to overcome difficulties they face with having Down syndrome. They have learned that they can still accomplish many goals. Those that they cannot accomplish, they have accepted it and moved forward to more new goals.

Research Question 3: How Have Corky and Becky Used Their Self-Esteem as Independent or Dependent Variables?

People will use self-esteem as an independent or dependent variable. It appears that Becky uses her self-esteem as an independent variable because it determines how she behaves.

She has high self-worth and confidence and it causes her to believe that she is more important than her classmates. This is why she separates herself from her peers and spends more time with another like-minded person, Sue Sylvester. It appears Corky uses his self-esteem as a dependent variable. He reacts to things that happen and it shapes his self-esteem.

Research Question 4: How was the Self-Esteem of the Character Corky Similar or Different from the Self-Esteem of the Interviewees who have Down Syndrome?

People with Down syndrome and people who are not handicapped all have goals and aspirations. The interviewees established what their interests were and why it was important to them. Although the interviewees seemed incompetent in some of their interests, the researcher realized that the interviewees standards of achieving competence was not the same as the researcher's standards of achieving competence. For the interviewees, if they could find any kind of way to enjoy their interests, that was sufficient for them. Interviewee four was not a current employee of Meals on Wheels, but he once volunteered with for the company. To interviewee four, he has accomplished a goal. Interviewee two was not a professional wrestler, but being able to watch the show and reenact the moves with family members was sufficient for him. Interviewee five was not a professional cowboy, but watching the television show and dressing like a cowboy made him think he was cowboy. James theory (1890/1983) states that when one's competency exceeds pretensions it leads to high self-esteem (P. 296). The interviewees were complacent with what they had accomplished and exhibited high self-esteem.

Interviewee three, which is the parent of interviewee two, mentioned that his son was not aware of his limitations. This sparked the thought that if people who have Down syndrome are not recognizing their limitations, then they may not be able to recognize when they are incompetent. James theory states that people have lower self-esteem when their competence or

success do not meet or exceed their pretensions. So it seems as if one needs to be able to distinguish between competence and incompetence to accurately determine self-esteem. But if people with developmental disabilities are not recognizing their incompetence, then what is their self-esteem? The interviewees did not recognize their incompetence and but they all seemed optimistic, which is a characteristic of high self-esteem (Oztas, 2010, p. 321-322). A study conducted by Sxivos-Bach (1993) tested children with developmental disabilities with a mean IQ of 51 to find out if IQ affected one's measurement of self-esteem. She based the questionnaire on Coopersmith's (1967) self-esteem measure. She developed a measure for stigma and aspirations. The results of the research found that students with greater awareness of stigma have lower self-esteem, and felt least likely to fulfill their aspirations. However, she found no relation to IQ (Glenn & Cunningham, 2001, p. 166). This study would be true for the interviewees as well. If they are not aware of their limitations or the stigma that comes along with being mentally handicapped, then they would have positive self-awareness which leads to high self-esteem.

CONCLUSION

This study was conducted to find out how people with Down syndrome are portrayed on television. The study evaluates the self-esteem of the characters and identifies the themes presented in the episodes. The study also sought to find whether one who has Down syndrome evaluates oneself in the same manner the characters on television did. Using theories created by James, Epstein and Coopersmith, the researcher was able to analyze the character's actions, determine the level of self-esteem and the specific category of self-esteem that was affected. The research determined that Corky's portrayal of his self-esteem was mostly high. Corky reacted to his environment and circumstances and instances of incompetency directly affected him and self-esteem decreased. Corky needed competence or encouragement from family to gain his confidence back. However, Becky responded to her circumstances differently than Corky. Becky's high self-esteem gave her the courage to partake in teenage experiences that historically she wouldn't be able to experience because of her condition. Becky used her confidence and high self-esteem as a way to protect herself. The portrayal of self-esteem of the characters was similar and different from the self-esteem of the interviewees. Responses from the interviewees who have Down syndrome indicated that people with Down syndrome have values, interests and aspirations, which are pretensions according to James' theory (1890/1983). This was the same for Becky and Corky. The interviews also indicated that the interviewees' felt competent in any task and exhibited high self-esteem just like Becky and Corky. However, Corky and Becky realized their inadequacies in some goals, which is what makes them different from the interviewees. During the interview process, it was noticed that the interviewees may not be aware of their limitations and differences from people who are not disabled. But the interviewees

are still defined as having high self-esteem because previous research stated that awareness of limitations lowered self-esteem.

This leads to the question of is it better to have high self-esteem and be unaware of the limitations or to have low self-esteem and be fully aware of the limitations? This question could be explored further in future research. Also another research topic that could be further explained is the relationship between the *Glee* characters Becky Jackson and Sue Sylvester. Sue is a non-disabled person who is rude, conniving, and deceitful. She doesn't get along with her colleagues and she is mean to all students. However, she has a loving relationship with Becky and Becky is often a part of her devious schemes and plans to sabotage the glee club. Because of Becky's condition, she could be viewed as the unknowledgeable sidekick that follows the commands of Sue. The relationship is reminiscent of the Warner Brothers' cartoon "Pinky and the Brain." Every episode the Brain tried to create a plan that would allow him to take over the world and Pinky was his stupid partner who performed whatever was commanded of him. Other television sitcoms, like *The Honeymooners* (Ralph and Ed) could be reviewed and compared. Also movies like *Frankenstein* (Dr. Frankenstein and his hunchback assistant) could be evaluated as well.

In the literature review, it was mentioned that people with disabilities desire to be self-sufficient and regarded as capable and competent human beings. Because of the powerful effect the media has on the audience (cultivation analysis), the media could be used to represent this idea. As a journalist, it is important to be educated on the capabilities and limitations of the developmental disabled in order to accurately represent the population in the news. Journalists need to represent people better with the language and visuals they use during a news story. Mitchell Rowlett says journalists take the angle to emphasize the disability as a story, not just as part of the story. The news portrays people as waiting for a cure (Rowlett, 2007; Tallent, 2007, p.

36). *Glee*'s portrayal of Becky is different because Becky doesn't look for validation among her peers whereas in *Life Goes On*, Corky greatly wants to be accepted. Becky is not a main character on *Glee*, but when she is a part of episodes, the show does not emphasize her disability. However in *Life Goes On*, the premise of the show is based on how the Thatcher family and Corky are dealing with his condition and how he is adapting to public school.

This research suggests that people who have developmental disabilities are still capable of self-evaluating. Before the research the researcher believed that successful competency was merely dependent on achieving the task. Answers from the interviewees suggest that people set their own standards for what they believe is competency. Completing the task may not be the standard for reaching the goal to an individual. Therefore competency can be achieved without reaching the point of execution. Because all people with Down syndrome do not evaluate themselves alike and have different personalities, like Becky, Corky, and the interviewees, the media should represent that diversity in people with developmental disabilities. As a journalist, the goal is to look for stories where people with disabilities can be a part of the story but the story does not focus on their handicap. "The disability doesn't have to be hidden, but it doesn't have to be highlighted, either" (Rowlett, 2007; Tallent, 2007, p. 36).

Entertainment television's representation of people with Down syndrome is different from what most people in real life experience. Becky and Corky are considered high-functioning, which means their case of Down syndrome is mild. They are portrayed as being capable of doing things that most people with Down syndrome find difficult to accomplish. The average intelligent quotient (IQ) score for people with Down syndrome is fifty. People who do not have a developmental disability have an IQ around one hundred. A large portion of people with Down syndrome have a severe case of the developmental disability (Grant, Goward, Ramcharan

&Richardson, 2010; Wikipedia, 2012, para 1). However, severe cases of Down syndrome are not represented on television. The interviewees questioned for this research displayed moderate cases of Downs. Interviewee six displayed symptoms of severe Down syndrome and answers from the interview could not be used due to the interviewee's inability to clarify information. Before interviewing the interviewees, they were asked to sign a consent form and everyone signed the form. They all were able to print their names and spell them correctly. However for a simple task that would only take a person a few seconds to complete, the interviewees took minutes to write their name. Also, none of the interviewees knew the day's date.

However, in *Life Goes On*, Corky is able to recite Edgar Allan Poe's *The Raven* from memory. Although people with Down syndrome are capable of storing and retrieving information, most people with Down syndrome would not be able to accomplish an assignment like this. Therefore sometimes, television portrays characters with Down syndrome as "supercrips" by portraying the person as either doing an extraordinary thing or the person does ordinary things but receives extraordinary credit (Tallent, 2007, p. 36). The lack of education about people with Down syndrome may allow these images to be misleading to the public who may assume that all people with Down syndrome have the same capabilities. Interviewee three, who is the father of interviewee two, said that he hoped his son would be as high-functioning as Corky was portrayed to be on *Life Goes On*. But he soon realized that Corky's level of intellect would not be the same for his son (personal communication, April 17, 2012).

Life Goes On was the first television show with a person who has Down syndrome as the major character. Although this milestone in television history is monumental for the developmental disabled, there has not been a show with a main character who has Down syndrome since the last season of *Life Goes On* in 1993. Minor characters with Down syndrome

have come along more than fifteen years later on cable networks like Luke Zimmerman who plays Tom Bowman in *The Secret Life of the American Teenager* and Jamie Brewer who plays Adelaide on *American Horror Story*. However, Lauren Potter's character as Becky Faye Jackson on *Glee* airs in primetime on Fox. Potter's character is better known than the other characters. *Glee*'s creation comes on the heels of a changing time in America. In 2008, the first African American president was elected; the stock market plunged sending the economy into a recession; and some states were changing the law to allow same-sex marriage. During all the changes in America, there seemed to have been a decrease in the self-esteem of students across the nation so much that they were committing suicide or killing others. The source of the low self-esteem appeared to have come from a growing epidemic of "bullying."

For the past few years, cases like the Rutgers University student who jumped off of the George Washington Bridge because of being bullied by his roommate have been receiving more coverage in the news. Stereotypically, when one thinks of the word bullying, one pictures a student in school who has a high social status picking on someone with a lower social status. "Because bullies tend to target individuals who are seemingly defenseless, students with disabilities emerge as potentially easy victims" (Rigby, 2002; Schoen & Schoen, 2010, p. 68). In *Life Goes On*, Corky is teased and is the victim of pranks by some football players. In 1989, there seemed to be a clear distinction between the bully and the bullied. However, these days anyone can be a bully and a victim. Research conducted in 2010, found that 47% of high school students surveyed had been "bullied, teased or taunted. But also 50% percent of the students surveyed said that they had been bullies themselves. This suggests some overlap between the victims and the bully" (Cloud, 2012). On February 27, 2012, T.J Lane walked into his high school cafeteria and began to shoot students randomly. Five students were shot and three of the

five died. As police investigated the shooting, many rumors swirled about what Lane's motive could have been. But quickly Lane was depicted as the "bullied outcast." The idea that the bullied kid had struck back seemed to be the theme for this case.

Originally bullying was thought of as something that every child experiences and a part of growing up. But due to the coverage of tragedies that resulted from bullying, there now has been a demand to stop acts of bullying all over the nation. Many school districts and non-profit organizations have created anti-bullying policies and initiatives to end the bullying plague. Celebrities like Lady Gaga ushered in a new wave of acceptance when she wrote songs to encourage individuality and acceptance of oneself and others to increase the self-esteem of those who may have been teased for his or her differences. In 2009, Ryan Murphy who is gay, created *Glee* at a time when people were fighting for gay rights and equal treatment by others. The show's recurring theme is based on how students who are socially rejected by the popular students bond together over their love of music. The characters in *Glee* are diverse in race, ethnicity, economic status, religion and sexual orientation. In the show every student in the glee club is accepting of everyone's differences and they all work together for the common goal of winning a national show choir title. While preparing for the competition, the glee club must endure the scrutiny from other organizations on campus, especially Sue Sylvester and her cheerios. Becky is depicted as an intimidator to the glee club members through her teasing, name calling and bossiness. The show represents the glee club members as accepting and tolerant of Becky and her differences, but Becky is portrayed as conceited and condescending to the other students. However, the students never complain about Becky's treatment because they feel sorry for her.

This representation on television is very different from twenty years ago when the disabled were the targets of bullying. However, it is the same as twenty years ago, when some people would treat disabled people nicely because they felt sympathy for their hardship.

Although, there may still currently be some people like Corky in schools who are victims because they seem defenseless, Murphy's representation of Becky as the superior student is an attempt to erase the stereotype that people with developmental disabilities can only be victims.

The representation of people with Down syndrome on television may never be perfect. However, more coverage, diversity in the personalities and diversity in the levels of intellect of the characters with Down syndrome will help viewers receive a more accurate picture of what reality is for a person with Down syndrome.

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