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PERCEPTIONS OF LITTLE PEOPLE, BIG WORLD

AMONG MEMBERS OF LITTLE PEOPLE OF AMERICA

by

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ABSTRACT

Perceptions of Little People, Big World among Members of Little People of America

Lauren Humphries

This paper examines the extent to which members of Little People of America perceive The Learning Channel's *Little People, Big World* as a positive, realistic representation of dwarfism. The literature review discusses various communication theories and their applications in social research, and the recent use of the media to create positive, realistic perceptions of people with physical differences and different abilities. Research measures the impact of *Little People, Big World*, a series that portrays the unique experiences of people with dwarfism. This study uses a quantitative survey of current members of Little People of America. Research questions examine the effect of *Little People, Big World* on levels of involvement in the organization, and the perceived realism and evaluation of the series by Little People of America members. The survey also collects data regarding what types of media are most effective in creating positive perceptions of individuals and families with dwarfism.

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INTRODUCTION

In modern society, the media are often viewed as a mirror of cultural beliefs, values and perceptions. Due to the rarity of the genetic condition that causes dwarfism, media content often shapes societal perceptions of people with dwarfism. Like many other cultural groups, people of short stature are often presented in character stereotypes or typecast categories rather than more diverse roles that reflect realistic depictions of their actual lifestyles and experiences (Perks, Winslow and Avital, 2008).

Historically, people with dwarfism have been cast as characters of fantasy or objects of derogatory humor. The propagation of stereotypes in the media stimulates the use of stereotypes as socio-cognitive mechanisms to define subjects in reality, thereby creating erroneous assimilations among audience members. But according to the stars and producers of The Learning Channel's (TLC) docu-reality series *Little People, Big World,* which aired from 2004-2010, the show has attempted to expand public awareness and change public perceptions by defying stereotypes and proving that options are not limited to people with dwarfism (Lee, 2006).

In the wake of the popularity of *Little People, Big World*, more realistic portrayals of people with dwarfism have percolated into the media, creating a new genre of programming. Other shows like TLC's *The Little Couple; Little Parents, Big Pregnancy; Dwarf Adoption Story; The Little Chocolatiers*; and Animal Planet's *Pit Boss* are examples of shows that focus on the ordinary yet extraordinary lives of individuals and families with dwarfism.

Under the influence of these realistic depictions of the everyday lives of people with dwarfism, we find ourselves at the onset of a new era, in which more positive attitudes about how people of short stature fit into society have started to form. However, the presence of these informative shows does not cancel out the overwhelming amount of stereotypes and caricatures perpetuated by the media.

There has been a limited amount of research published on the subject of media stereotypes of people with dwarfism. Nonetheless, with the recent surge in shows depicting more positive, realistic portrayals, it is also necessary to look at shows like *Little People, Big World* through a critical lens in order to determine the docu-reality series' ability to create realistic, positive perceptions among audiences who are themselves people with dwarfism and are active in a major organization for individuals and families with dwarfism. The study will use a survey to examine the impact, perceptions and evaluation of the series among members of Little People of America, a national non-profit organization that provides support and information to individuals with dwarfism and their families (Little People of America Website, n.d.).

Defining Dwarfism

In conducting this type of media study, it is first necessary to define dwarfism and what classifies a person as having dwarfism. The Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research (2007) defines dwarfism as a biomedical condition that causes short stature. People who are affected by dwarfism are generally 4 feet 10 inches or less, and the typical range in adult height is from 2 feet 8 inches to 4 feet 8 inches. Little People of America's Medical Resource Center (2008) elaborates on that definition,

adding that there is no distinction between men and women who are affected by dwarfism, and that skeletal dysplasia can affect people of any race, ethnicity, and gender.

In 2010, there were an estimated 30,000-50,000 people in the United States with some type of dwarfism (Wilking, 2012). There are more than 200 forms of dwarfism, and the most common types of these are achondroplasia, spondyloepiphyseal dysplasia congenita (SEDC), and diastrophic dysplasia (LPA Medical Resource Center).

Achondroplasia, which causes limbs to grow at a disproportionally shorter rate, accounts for almost 70 percent of all cases of dwarfism. Achondroplasia occurs in approximately 1 in 26,000 to 1 in 40,000 births (LPA Medical Resource Center, n.d.). People can inherit achondroplasia from their parents as an autosomal dominant gene, but according to the National Center for Biotechnology Information, 80% of the cases occur as a random genetic mutation in a child born to parents of average stature (LPA Medical Resource Center).

The Wheeless' Textbook of Orthopaedics (2008) defines spondyloepiphyseal dysplasia congenital (SEDC) as a type of short trunk disproportionate dwarfism, which affects the vertebra and epiphyseal centers. Like achondroplasia, SEDC can be inherited from a child's parents, but most often occurs as a random genetic mutation. SEDC can also cause delayed developmental milestones, diminished endurance, and respiratory dysfunction in people who are affected (Wheeles).

The National Organization for Rare Disorders (2007) classifies diastrophic dysplasia, also called diastrophic dwarfism, as a rare form of short-limb dwarfism.

Symptoms range from person to person, but typical symptoms include "progressive

abnormal curvature of the spine, (scoliosis and/or kyphosis); abnormal tissue changes of

the outer, visible portions of the ears (pinnae); and/or, in some cases, malformations of

the head and facial (craniofacial) area" (National Organization for Rare Disorders, 2007,

para. 2).

A fourth form of skeletal dysplasia relevant to this review is growth hormone

deficiency (GHD), also called proportionate dwarfism. GHD delays the growth rate of

skeletal bones, and is usually manifested in infancy or childhood. The condition delays

the growth of skeletal bones, resulting in a height that is significantly shorter than the

average height of chronological age of the individual. A person affected with GHD has

proportions that are the same as someone of average height (LPA Medical Resource

Center).

Appropriate Terminology

Terminology is also an important aspect of the experience of Americans with

dwarfism, because one term in particular is considered derogatory. In the past, the term

"midget" was assigned to this particular condition, but that term is outdated and

considered offensive due to its demeaning connotation. In 2009, LPA filed a complaint

with the Federal Communications Commission in response to objectionable content and

extensive use of the word midget during an episode of NBC's *Celebrity Apprentice*

(Harris, 2009). The complaint stated that people of short stature were reduced to objects

of derogatory humor on the show. LPA also claimed that the word "midget" is considered

highly offensive to the dwarfism community and should not be seen or heard on TV or radio (LPA website).

Most research has shown that individuals who have some form of dwarfism, whether proportionate or disproportionate, prefer the terms "little person," "dwarf," or "short-statured" (Campell & Dorren, 1998). Many people with dwarfism who are affiliated with the non-profit organization Little People of America (LPA), including the Roloff family of *Little People, Big World* and the Arnolds of *The Little Couple*, have accepted the term little people to describe themselves as a collective group. Members of the LPA also use the neologism LP, which stands for little person.

Other disability studies research has shown that some people prefer to be acknowledged as a "person with dwarfism" (Campell & Dorren, p. 3). The difference is that using "dwarfism" is descriptive, as in "a person with dwarfism," compared to using "he or she is a dwarf" as a defining and declarative statement (Campell & Dorren, p. 3). This type of language is consistent with the people-first language advocated in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990.

People-first language emphasizes the person first and the disability second, describing what a person has rather than what a person is. According to Temple University Institute on Disabilities (1992), examples of people-first language are using "a professor with a disability" instead of "a handicapped professor" (as cited in Haller, 2010, p. 57). Haller (2010) emphasized the value of people-first language, stating that

language has the power to shape self-perception and public perception of a cultural group.

With the goal of using consistent language throughout this review, this thesis will use "person with dwarfism" or "person of short stature" in comparison to "person of average stature" to refer to someone with dwarfism.

The literature review examines various communication theories and their applications in social research, including social learning theory, social cognitive theory, uses and gratifications theory and critical theory. The next sections will also explore the evolution of stereotypes, discursive structures of Othering and media stereotypes applied specifically to people with dwarfism.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction to Social Cognitive Theory

Social cognitive theory is rooted in the functions and processes of vicarious

learning (Bandura, 1986). This model of observation and imitation developed from the

framework of social learning theory. According to Bandura (1977), social learning theory

is often viewed as a bridge between behaviorist and cognitive theories.

A fundamental principle of social cognitive theory is that people learn through

personal experience and through observation of others. According to Terry, Hogg and

White (1999), individuals are more likely to model the behaviors of someone with whom

they can identify. Consequently, the higher the level of perceived similarities, the more

likely the observer will learn from the model (Terry, Hogg and White, 1999).

Social cognition is facilitated through mediated communication. According to

Bandura (2001), communication systems follow a dual path of influence. First,

communications media informs, enables, motivates and guides participants in order to

affect positive change (Bandura, 2001, p. 265). Second, socially mediated

communication links participants to social networks and communities (Bandura, 2001, p.

285).

Horton and Wohl (1956) came up with the name para-social interaction for the

phenomenon in which new mass media gives the illusion of a face-to-face relationship

with the performer (p. 215). According to social cognitive theory, viewers form

perceptions and attitudes about people in society based on people they see on television (Schiappa, Gregg and Hewes, 2006).

Schiappa, Gregg and Hewes (2006) investigated the impact of the NBC television series *Will & Grace* on how people perceive gay men. The series was critically acclaimed as a positive, realistic representation of gay men and earned tremendous popularity among television audiences (Schiappa, Gregg & Hewes, 2006). Results showed correlation between frequency of viewing the series and lower levels of prejudice toward gay men. The results also showed correlation between para-social interaction and lower levels of prejudice toward gay men. An alternative hypothesis proposed by Schiappa, Gregg and Hewes (2006) suggested that "viewers with more favorable attitudes toward gay men are more likely to watch the show and experience para-social interaction with the characters" (p. 10).

Nabi and Clark (2008) examined the effects of watching sexually promiscuous characters on television. Their results were consistent with social cognitive theory in that subjects who had direct experience with the behavior did not model their behavior on sexually promiscuous television characters. However, their findings were inconsistent with social cognitive theory in that subjects without direct experience were more likely to participate in unsafe behavior in the future, regardless of depicted consequences of the behavior (Nabi & Clark, 2008, p.423).

While social learning theory and social cognition theory extrapolate the effects of mediated communication, uses and gratification theory outlines how subjects actively seek out media for self-actualization purposes (Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch, 1974).

Uses and Gratifications Theory

Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch (1974) identified seven areas of uses and gratifications theory:

> 1. The social and psychological origins of 2. needs which generate 3. expectations 4. of mass media or other sources, which lead to 5. differential patterns of media exposure (or engagement in other activities), resulting in 6. need gratifications and 7. other consequences, perhaps mostly unintended ones (p. 510).

Raymond Bauer (as cited in Berger, 1995) proposed that audiences are not passive but active, purposive and goal-directed in seeking and using media (p. 99). Audiences increase involvement by seeking out specific media outlets and content. According to Rubin and Perse (1987), involvement is "the extent to which audience members attend to and reflect on content" (p. 59).

According to Blumler (as cited in Rubin, 2009), audience activity includes use of media, motivation, selection and imperviousness. Barton (2009) conducted a study on the influence of competition-based reality shows on audience gratification. Results showed correlation between the specific content of reality programming and viewer-obtained gratification and uncovered a new gratification for reality programming: personal utility (Barton, 2009, p. 474).

In order to be able to critically examine and reflect upon *Little People, Big World* as a realistic portrayal, it is necessary to explore the foundations of critical theory. The next sections will cover the major concepts and important variations of critical theory, Critical Race Theory, feminist theory, black feminist theory, and disability theory in order to create and apply a critical theory specific to media stereotypes of people of short stature.

<div align="center">Introduction to Critical Theory</div>

Critical theory encompasses an interdisciplinary tradition of thinking which originated at the Institut für Sozialforschung (Institute of Social Research), in the mid-twentieth century. The social theorists at the Institute who developed the earliest forms of critical theory, collectively known as the Frankfurt School, are Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, and Jurgen Habermas. The Frankfurt School fused together social philosophy and scientific research to create an interdisciplinary school of thought grounded in social critique.

Finlayson (2005) listed four characteristics of the Frankfurt School's critical theory: first, that it was interdisciplinary; second, that it reflected the social context that it was created in; third, that it was dialectical; and fourth, that it uncovered the wrongs of contemporary society and identified progressive solutions to transform society. The nominal characteristic of critical theory demanded that the task of theory was twofold: first, it was diagnostic, and then it was remedial (Finlayson, 2005, p. 3).

Horkheimer and Adorno wrote about the industrialization of culture and its control of consumers as in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, the core text which outlined the Frankfurt School's paradigm of critical theory. Horkheimer and Adorno (1947/2002) propose that culture not only mirrors society, but also takes an important role in shaping society through the processes of standardization and commodification, creating objects rather than subjects.

Habermas' critical social theory was a form of self-reflective knowledge involving both understanding and theoretical explanation. Habermas conceptualized critical knowledge as an emancipatory tool that enabled human beings to prevail over various forms of domination (Mertens & Ginsberg, 2009, p. 56).

Habermas defined communicative rationality as communication which is "oriented to achieving, sustaining and reviewing consensus - and indeed a consensus that rests on the intersubjective recognition of criticisable validity claims" (Habermas, 1981/1994, p.17). He explained that communicative action occurs when the actors "seek to reach an understanding about the action situation and their plans of action in order to coordinate their actions by way of agreement" (Habermas, 1981/1994, p.101). According to Held (1980) Habermas' critical theory "aims to further the self-understanding of social groups capable of transforming society" (p. 250).

Other Critical Theories

Given that the purpose of critical theory is to utilize social inquiry in order to decrease domination and increase freedom, several offshoots of critical theory have

emerged over the past 50 years. According to Mertens and GInsberg (2009), these newer forms of critical theory were formed in consequence of various social movements associated with human emancipation. In order to determine if *Little People, Big World* fits within the paradigm of critical theory in that it is emancipatory and empowering, the next sections will examine concepts from other pre-existing forms of critical theories and relevant principles of each offshoot.

<div align="center">

Critical Race Theory

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The critical race theory movement is a collaboration of activists and scholars whose inherent aim is to study and transform the cross-functional relationships between race, racism, and power. The early foundations of critical race theory (CRT) took shape during the mid-1970s as a response to the failure of Critical Legal Studies (CLS) to fully counter the effects of race and racism in U.S. jurisprudence. According to Delgado and Stefancic (1993), CRT was created to explore the "complex interplay of race, racism, and American law" in post-Civil Rights America (p. 461).

The principle developers of CRT were legal scholars Derrick Bell and Alan Freeman. Derrick Bell, a law professor and former civil rights lawyer, developed the theme of interest convergence, which is rooted in the idea that white elites will only promote racial advances for blacks when the advances also benefit the interests of whites (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Delgado and Stefancic (1995) built on this theory, adding that a culture "constructs its own social reality in ways that promote its own self-interests" (p. xvii).

Freeman (1995) wrote about a utopian integrated society in which racial identification would still be possible, but no longer relevant (as cited in Crenshaw et al, eds.). In this society, race would carry no more importance in defining a person than eye color.

According to Delgado and Stefancic (2001), the theme of race as a social construct is manifested in how physical traits are often used to group people. Delgado and Stefancic explained that the traits by which people are categorized typically "have little or nothing to do with distinctly human, higher-order traits, such as personality, intelligence, or moral behavior" (p. 8).

According to Delgado and Stefancic (2001), CRT not only tries to understand our social situation, but to change it. Some of the issues Delgado and Stefancic suggest that society must address in order to combat include deconstruction of race, economic boycotts aimed against people in the media who continue to perpetuate negative caricatures of minorities, and an increase in positive media representations of minorities (p. 132).

Critical Feminist Theory

Like scholars and advocates of CRT, proponents of critical feminism hold capitalist media accountable for sustaining oppression through the propagation of stereotypes. Schott (1997) stated that to impose a stereotype on a woman is to view her as embodying a limited set of physical and intrinsic qualities "falsely taken to be exclusive, definitive, and paradigmatic of a certain kind of individual" (p. 57). Collins

(2000) argued that dominant groups use stereotypes to foster oppression by manipulating, disguising, or mystifying social reality through controlling images. According to Collins, these images are used "to make racism, sexism, and poverty appear to be a natural, normal, and inevitable part of everyday life" (p. 69). In accordance with Delgado's theory that racism is a normal, not aberrant, part of American life, Collins cited media stereotypes as tools that dominant groups used to perpetuate racism and other preponderant ideologies.

In the same way that feminist theorists have sought to understand and destigmatize the identities of women outside the dominant stereotypes, critical disability theorists seek to examine the identities of people with disabilities with the integration and disability consciousness as its overarching goals.

Critical Disability Theory

Because skeletal dysplasia affects people of all races, ethnicities, and genders, CRT and feminist theory may apply specifically to a percentage of the population of people of short stature. Though there is dissent among the short-statured community about the classification of people with dwarfism being categorized as having a disability, legally dwarfism is recognized as a disability under the Americans with Disabilities Act (Little People of America Web site). Some forms of dwarfism require multiple corrective surgeries, or the use of crutches or a wheelchair, but many people who are affected by milder forms of dwarfism, such as achondroplasia or GHD, can lead healthy, active lives. However, the notion of disability comes into play when considering the height of

everyday objects such as ATM machines, gas pumps, and grocery store shelves (Perks et al, 2008).

The U.S. Department of Justice (2005) gives a detailed explanation of what is considered disability in its guide to disability rights laws:

> An individual with a disability is defined by the ADA as a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a person who has a history or record of such an impairment, or a person who is perceived by others as having such an impairment (para.3).

Members of the deaf community, who, like people of short stature, are reluctant to accept the label of having a "disability," react strongly to the last sentence of this definition, which essentially states that the categorization of a person as disabled is relegated by another individual's perceptions. According to Shakespeare (2006), the social model of disability redefines disability as a form of social oppression.

Similar to the way that some critical race theorists perceive race to be a social construct, some critical disability theorists also view disability as a social construct. These critical disability theorists shift their focus onto the environmental and attitudinal barriers imposed by society upon people who have a disability instead of the physical impairments caused by the disability. Though somewhat controversial, the social model of disability has been at the forefront of bringing positive social change and equal rights to people with disabilities.

The social model of disability was developed by British activists in the Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS) in the 1970s. UPIAS' vision of the social model of disability is outlined below:

> In our view, it is society which disables physically impaired people. Disability is something imposed on top of our impairments by the way we are unnecessarily isolated and excluded from full participation in society. Disabled people are therefore an oppressed group in society (as cited in Oliver, 1996, p. 22).

Corker and Shakespeare (2002) explain that the social model of disability "denies that any particular attributes or functionings of individual bodies should be thought to constitute a problem or disadvantage apart from the social environment within which the individuals live" (xii). Their example is that having to use a wheelchair to get from place to place only becomes a disadvantage in a world that is full of stairs. This model can be applied to short stature, in that being 2'8"-4'8" tall in a world that was designed for people between 5'4"-6" tall, presents challenges on many levels.

> Because disability constitutes a variety of impairments, Asch (2004) proposed:
>
> Instead of discussing which kinds people have impairments and disabilities and which do not, instead of saying that some members of society are disabled and others are not, we should consider which people cannot perform which activities in given environments and question how to modify the environments so that they are not disabling (p. 19).

The myriad of forms of skeletal dysplasia present a wide variation of restrictions imposed on everyday tasks. Nonetheless, the proliferation of certain public accommodations such as the aforementioned ATM machines, gas pumps, and grocery store shelves would benefit a large percentage of the short-statured population. These modifications would also be beneficial to people who use

wheelchairs. However, according to Bell's interest convergence theme, the dominant average-stature population will renounce making these modifications unless they perceive that society as a whole will benefit from such changes (Delgado & Stefancic, 1995).

In addition to anti-discrimination legislation and architectural modifications, critical disability theorists argued that social barriers must also be dissolved in order to fully integrate people with disabilities into society. The theme of perception of human differences or social cognition is one of the key themes of disability studies, especially related to stigma or stereotype. Davis (2006) examined how stigma is a form of social categorization, which often results in assimilation of perception based on one single attribute or experience. Crocker and Lutsky (1986) claimed that studies of stereotyping and stigma reveal that beliefs about the inferiority of a person predominate in the thoughts of the perceiver (as cited in Davis, 2006, p. 145). Davis (2006) expanded upon this point, stating that the socio-cognitive practice of stereotyping allows people to feel that stigmatized persons are fundamentally different, thereby establishing greater social and psychological distance.

Disability studies theorists are critical of popular stereotypes such as the Tiny Tim or the supercrip, which they claim have slowed the progress of full inclusion in society. Nelson (1994) described each stereotype, illustrating the Tiny Tim figure as a "sad, unlucky disabled person in need of pity and charity" and the supercrip as a "courageous disabled person, celebrated for overcoming a

disability and performing seemingly superhuman feats" (p. 59). In addition to the characterizations of the Tiny Tim and the supercrip, Donaldson (1981) expressed the danger in perpetuating the stereotype that disability is the central focus of people's lives, rather than an incidental facet (as cited in Nelson, 1994, p. 10).

<div align="center">Media Stereotypes</div>

Each of the previously discussed critical theories is rooted in the idea that historically, dominant groups have controlled the media, and used the media as a tool to perpetuate their dominance over oppressed groups. In implementing such contrivances, dominant groups have used stereotypes and Othering.

American journalist, writer, and political commentator Walter Lippman first coined the term stereotype in 1922. Dyer (2000) defended Lippman's intention, stating that Lippman did not mean for the term stereotype to convey the same negative connotations that it holds today. Rather, Lippman's conception was meant to be positive, viewing stereotypes as extremely useful elements of communication (Dyer, p. 245). However, in his original text, Lippman (1922) made two strong points when he called stereotypes "the fortress of our condition, behind which we can feel safe" (p. 96) and cautioned that "the subtlest and most pervasive of all influences are those which create and maintain the repertory of stereotypes" (p. 89).

According to Mackie, Hamilton, Suskind and Rosselli (1996), stereotypes are cognitive structures derived from a common social context. These cognitive structures begin to form "when an aggregate of persons is perceived as comprising a group, an

entity" (Mackie et al, p. 44). In our society, where we're bombarded with information, stereotypes are considered useful due to their categorizing function, but dangerous risks include overlooking the fact that each individual is made up of many features, not just those described by common stereotypes.

<div align="center">Discursive Structures of Othering</div>

Simone De Beauvoir developed the concept of the woman as the Other. In describing how a woman is defined as the Other while a man is the normative center, De Beauvoir (1953) wrote:

> She is defined and differentiated with reference to the man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute – she is the Other (p. 18).

According to Wilkinson and Kitzinger (1996), Otherness is projected onto women by men. In conjunction with critical feminist theory, many feminists who believe that women are subjected to Othering have the dual goal of wanting to enable the voices of Others to be heard, and to create social and political change for or on behalf of those Others (Wilkinson and Kitzinger, 1996, p. 20).

Garland Thomson (1997) explains that people who are marked by visible physical differences and disabilities become spectacles of Otherness and are consequentially deemed inferior. Thomson describes how the disabled figure is "marked by socially determined stigmata, defined through representation, and excluded from social power or status" (8).

Perks, Winslow and Avital (2008) found that Othering "organizes various groups of people based on their differences from a normative center, whether that center be white, masculine, of average height, or another attribute that makes someone socially powerful" (p. 34). People with dwarfism and other groups who are subjected to Othering may be presented in character stereotypes or typecast categories rather than more diverse roles that reflect realistic depictions of their actual lifestyles and experiences. The explanation for this practice is that rather than make an attempt to understand people who may be different from the normative center, it may be easier to use oversimplified and often inaccurate representations of them (Perks et al, 2008, p. 33).

In their research, Perks, Winslow and Avital (2008) examined three discursive patterns of Othering on which mediated portrayals of people of short stature and African Americans are based: fantasy magic, anger and violence, and comic relief. Most of the stereotypes of people of short stature are harmful simply because they are inaccurate, but others are more dangerous manifestations of condescension and malevolence. Each of the aforementioned stereotypes of people of short stature will be examined in the next section of this review.

<div align="center">Media Representation of People with Dwarfism</div>

There are an estimated 30,000 people in the United States with some type of dwarfism (Wilking, 2010). According to Adelson (as cited in Perks, Winslow & Avital), there are over two-hundred films featuring people of short stature, and approximately 9%

of members of the organization Little People of America (LPA) are involved in the entertainment field (Perks, Winslow & Avital, 2008 p. 31).

In the documentary *No Bigger Than a Minute*, actor Peter Dinklage traces the roots of modern stereotypes and misrepresentations of little people back to mythology and fairy tales. Dinklage describes these caricatures, saying that they're "usually ethereal beings, they're asexual, they're either fools or they're filled with wisdom. They never get the princess" (as cited in Delano, 2006).

<p align="center">*Characters of Fantasy*</p>

People with dwarfism acting as fantasy characters who are otherworldly, mysterious, and sometimes possess magical powers, can be traced back through centuries of mythology, fairy tales, and folklore. These characterizations also appear in classic popular literary works such as *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs,* L. Frank Baum's *The Wizard of Oz*, C.S. Lewis' *The Chronicles of Narnia*, and J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*. In these stories and their film counterparts, people with dwarfism are often referred to as dwarfs or dwarves, and tend to be heavily differentiated from average-height actors through visual elements such as costume and make-up.

In the fantasy genre films, people with dwarfism are rarely cast as main characters, and instead are grouped with other fantastic characters, which may include witches and wizards, elves, and even dragons (Perks, Winslow & Avital, 2008). This representation of people with dwarfism as part of the magical world further ostracizes people of short stature by enhancing their visually different physical appearance and

creating a mystification around people with dwarfism. These media representations are not meant to be actual representations of people with dwarfism in everyday society; they belong to magical fantasy worlds that reside in the realms of imagination. However, the risk lies in audience members who have had limited interactions with people with dwarfism, particularly children, not being able to separate fantasy from reality.

While the literary and film fantasy genre tends to be medievalist, romanticized, and supernatural, these presuppositions are nullified when more instances of the stereotypical portrayal of people with dwarfism exist than instances of more realistic depictions. Although this representation may be perplexing to young children, most adults with common sense can separate fantasy from reality. Therefore, the media stereotype of people with dwarfism as creatures of fantasy are less detrimental than the stereotype of the angry, aggressive person with dwarfism, or the person with dwarfism who becomes an object of derogatory humor because of his or her size or dimwittedness.

The Angry, Aggressive Person

The angry, aggressive person with dwarfism is not meant to be a character from another world. This individual is an exaggerated representation of someone you may encounter in the modern world. Hardened by years of discrimination, ostracism or ridicule, this typecast character is consequentially short-tempered, overly aggressive, and attacks people who provoke him or her, regardless of the offender's size. These typecast characters provide comedic intervals because of their short-tempers, deviant behavior and readiness to attack other characters. The absurdly violent outbursts make a spectacle of

characters of short stature physically dominating opponents who may be much larger than they are (Perks, Winslow & Avital, 2008). Examples of this stereotype character include *Seinfeld's* Mickey Abbott and Mini-Me of the *Austin Powers* trilogy, whose uncontrolled anger and violent personalities reinforce discursive structures of Othering.

The Object of Derogatory Humor

A third common typecast of people with dwarfism is as the object of derogatory humor. Often these characters are portrayed as less intelligent and somehow less human. Sometimes subjected to verbal and physical abuse, as objects of derogatory humor, these characters are stripped of their dignity and their humanity. According to Perks, Winslow and Avital (2008) these characters can have harmful psychological effects on people of short stature and on society's perceptions of them.

This stereotype is a prominent theme in the 1981 film *Under the Rainbow,* starring Chevy Chase, Carrie Fisher and Billy Barty, the short statured actor who founded Little People of America. *Under the Rainbow* is a comedy about a large group of people with dwarfism gathering in Hollywood to audition for roles as Munchkins in *The Wizard of Oz.* Loosely, the plot revolves around the short statured characters getting drunk and running riot in the hotel, dressed in full Munchkin costumes and make-up.

Due to their ability to create mystification, stigma and negative impressions of people with dwarfism, the three aforementioned stereotypes can produce societal barriers. In order to diminish such barriers, these stereotypes must be replaced by more positive,

realistic portrayals of people with dwarfism. In 2004, The Learning Channel (TLC) tried to move past these stereotypes with a new reality show called *Little People, Big World*.

Little People, Big World

Little People, Big World is an acclaimed docu-reality series on TLC that follows the lives of the six-member Roloff family. Three of the Roloffs have dwarfism, while three are average stature.

Matt Roloff is a successful entrepreneur, husband and father of four. In 2003, Matt founded Direct Access Solutions, a company that provides accessibility products for businesses to accommodate individuals with dwarfism. Matt also formed the Coalition for Dwarf Advocacy (CoDA), a nonprofit organization that focuses on improving the lives of people with dwarfism through areas of medicine, vocation, education, adoption, and public accommodation (CoDA History, n.d.).

Matt has diastrophic dysplasia, which caused him to endure several surgeries during his adolescence and adulthood. Since diastrophic dwarfism is one of the more physically limiting forms of dwarfism, Matt uses crutches and a motorized scooter to move around. Matt is a former president of Little People of America and remains active in the organization with his wife, Amy, and their four children.

Amy Roloff 's career has spanned early-education teacher, farm owner, founder and president of a non-profit organization, philanthropist and author. Amy's current projects revolve around the Amy Roloff Charity Foundation, public speaking engagements and balancing the responsibilities of raising a family and managing Roloff

Farm with Matt (Amy Roloff Profile, n.d.). Amy has achondroplasia, and is actively involved with LPA and Dwarf Athletic Association of America (DAAA), a nonprofit organization that provides quality athletic competition opportunities for short-statured athletes in the United States (Dwarf Athletic Association of America, n.d.).

Matt and Amy have four children. When the series premiered in 2006, their youngest son Jacob was nine, their daughter Molly was 13 and twins Jeremy and Zach were 15. Out of Matt and Amy's four children, Zach is the only one affected by a form of skeletal dysplasia. Like Amy, Zach has achondroplasia and stands 4'2, while his twin brother Jeremy is 6'1. The series featured scenes from traditional family life, including Amy coaching Jacob's soccer team, Molly making dean's list and Jeremy and Zach navigating their first romantic relationships, struggling determinedly for their independence and graduating from high school.

Matt and Amy purchased their 34-acre farm in Hillsboro, Oregon in May 1990. While the Roloff children were growing up, Matt turned his dreams for the farm into reality, adding features like a full-scale pirate ship, a three-story tree house and a replica Western Town to the working farm (Roloff Farm History, n.d.). In present day, Roloff Farm is a tourist destination and successful agricultural business.

Little People, Big World depicts scenes of everyday life interspersed with commentary from each of the Roloffs about the advantages and disadvantages of living in a world built for people of average stature and how it affects the lives of all six family

members. TLC is known for programming that portrays the unique perspectives of

people and families living in extraordinary circumstances.

The idea for *Little People, Big World* was developed after the Roloff family was

featured in a 2004 Discovery Channel special called *Little People, Big Dreams*. The

special generated such positive feedback that TLC approached the Roloffs to create a

docu-series profiling their family life. According to Monfort (2009), the docu-series is a

genre of reality television that portrays subjects in natural environments and situations,

presenting accurate representations of reality.

During pre-production, the show's producers consulted with representatives from

LPA to determine the optimal way to frame the series. They concurred that "fleshing out

the quotidian and the extraordinary in the lives of the Roloffs would allow viewers to

know the family as individuals and would also demystify dwarfs" (as cited in Lee, 2006,

para. 15).

The producers of *Little People, Big World* described the show as "the most

comprehensive television documentary ever about the lives of little people" (as cited in

Lee, 2006, para. 4) The first season was shot over a period of almost seven months, as

TLC's cameras captured the daily lives of the Roloff family. Footage was edited into 20

30-minute episodes depicting moments that range from the mundane to the meaningful.

The show produced such high ratings that TLC and the Roloff family extended the series

for five subsequent seasons. Over the course of 229 episodes, *Little People, Big World*

portrayed traditional American family life juxtaposed with the unique experiences of people with dwarfism and their families.

Leotta (2007) quoted the producer of *Little People, Big World*, Brooke Runette, stating that TLC's research and focus groups showed that the Roloffs were inspiring to average height viewers. Runette explained that viewer response to the show was very positive and the show had great ratings (as cited in Leotta, 2007, para. 18).

<div align="center">

Little People, Big World as Positive Representation

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As Riley (2005) explains, viewers are intrigued by the day-to-day coping mechanisms of people with disabilities. Perhaps in considering the popularity of *Little People, Big World*, viewers are drawn to intrinsic traits of each family member, such as Matt's elaborate scheming, Amy's pragmatism, Jeremy's insouciance, Zach's dark humor, Molly's intelligence or Jacob's boyish love of adventure. But for some, perhaps the appeal of the show lies in simply in watching in awe of how Matt, Amy, and Zach face multiple challenges each day, living in a world designed for people much taller than they are. Some even argue that *Little People, Big World* is a modern, less offensive version of the sideshows of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and claim that people's desire to watch stems from an innate desire to stare at people who are different (Kennedy, 2006).

According to Christian Drobnyk, former programming director at TLC, *Little People, Big World* drew accolades for "opening up a dialogue about what it means to be different" (as cited in Strauss, 2007). Drobnyk explained, "the more you know about

people's differences, the more that becomes a topic of conversation and the easier it is to transform people's perspective" (as cited in Strauss, 2007, para. 31).

Little People, Big World as Mediated Voyeurism

Kennedy (2006) wrote an essay questioning the ability of *Little People, Big World* to change society's perception of people with dwarfism. He presented both sides of the argument: first, that *Little People, Big World* depicts the Roloffs as a family who, like their average height counterparts, engage in everyday activities, run their own business, attend school, carpool to soccer practice, argue, laugh, cry, and love and support each other unconditionally. Kennedy, who has a daughter with achondroplasia, also claimed that while the show's producers and cast may have good intentions about creating a positive, realistic portrayal of the family, part of the show's appeal is that it allows viewers to gawk and stare without consequence from the privacy of their own homes as Matt, Amy, and Zach's anatomical differences are put on public display.

Calvert (2000) studied the growing phenomenon of mediated voyeurism in the 1990s and wrote the following definition:

> "Mediated voyeurism refers to the consumption of revealing images of
> and information about others' apparently real and unguarded lives, often
> yet not always for purposes of entertainment but frequently at the expense
> of privacy and discourse, through the means of the mass media and
> Internet" (p. 2).

While the benefits of a show like *Little People, Big World* may have a farther reach than other informative media, the Roloffs have become somewhat of an educational exhibition. In essence, by allowing people to stare at them indirectly on television, the

Roloffs will hopefully remove some of the stigma surrounding people of short stature, so that viewers will be less inclined to stare or partake in other offensive behaviors in real life.

According to MacKay (2010), Little People of America supports TLC's various programs about families and couples with dwarfism. In an interview with Fox News, Gary Arnold, Vice President of Communications at Little People of America, said,

> We are pleased that reality programming on The Learning Channel portrays people with dwarfism pursuing a wide variety of professions…We hope that such programming empowers others with dwarfism to pursue their interests and that such programming sends a message to the general public that dwarfism, something we take pride in, is just one component of who we are (MacKay, 2010, para. 14).

Delano (2006) comments that due to the randomness of the genetic mutation that causes dwarfism and fear of social discrimination, for a long time most people with dwarfism and their families didn't know other people with dwarfism. According to Delano, that isolation gives media images an exceptional power to define the condition, even in the minds of people with dwarfism themselves.

Examining Little People, Big World Through a Critical Lens

Horkheimer (1982) declared that he goal of critical theory is "to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them" (p. 244). Bohman (2005) said that in order to be consistent with Horkheimer's definition, critical theory must do three things: first, it must explain the problem that exists in the current social reality; then it must identify the actors who have the power to implement change; and finally, the theory must

provide both "clear norms for criticism and achievable practical goals for social transformation" (p. 190).

People with various forms of dwarfism represent the social group that is directly affected by traditional media stereotypes of short stature and by the recent docu-reality genre of programming, catalyzed by *Little People, Big World*. Therefore, it is imperative to research their perceptions of both types of media representation.

The overarching focus of this study is to examine the perceived impact of *Little People, Big World* on the current social reality of people with dwarfism. The inherent aim of the research is to determine the degree to which *Little People, Big World* inspires greater involvement in the LPA organization. A secondary goal is to shed light on what additional action is needed in the media to bring about desired social change.

Based on the literature review, four research questions are proposed:

RQ1: Did *Little People, Big World* inspire greater involvement in the LPA organization?

RQ2: Do members of Little People of America view *Little People, Big World* as a realistic or unrealistic portrayal of dwarfism?

RQ3: Do members of Little People of America view *Little People, Big World* as a positive or negative portrayal of dwarfism?

RQ4: What types of media are most effective in creating awareness of issues facing individuals and families with dwarfism?

METHODOLOGY

This section will outline the study's research methods, research instruments, the construct and measures, and procedures. The next section will provide an analysis of the results of the study and discuss the implications.

In order to determine the perceptions of *Little People, Big World* among people with dwarfism, it is necessary to select a method appropriate for measuring attitudes of a social group. The research design must also be conducive to measuring behaviors in order to determine the impact of the show on members of the social group.

Qualitative and Quantitative Research

According to Babbie (2007), qualitative analysis is non-numerical and is useful for interpreting observations and discovering underlying meanings and patterns of relationships (p. 378). Comparatively, quantitative analysis is a numerical representation of observations that examines cause and effect among variables in an observation (Babbie, 2007).

Bryman (2004) defined quantitative research as having an objectivist conception of social reality (p.62). The purpose of the present study is to use statistical data to assert validity of objective phenomena. Bryman (1984) differentiated between quantitative and qualitative methodologies using "empiricist" as a synonym for quantitative and "interpretive" as a synonym for qualitative (p. 77). Quantitative methodologies can be used to verify or disprove claims through empirical data, therefore are useful for studies that infer specific hypotheses.

Frangos (2009) explained that quantitative research "provides the fundamental connection between empirical observation and mathematical expression of quantitative relationships" (p. iii). For the purpose of this study, social data must be quantified in order to facilitate statistical analysis. Therefore, a quantitative research method will be used to answer the research questions derived from critical stature theory.

Surveys

According to Babbie (1990), survey research involves the collection and quantification of data. Babbie (1990) explained that empirical research is a logical operation that uses statistics to describe data analysis (p. 283).

According to Babbie (1990), two types of statistics are appropriate to survey research: descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics are used to present quantitative descriptions in manageable form through data reduction and measures of association. Data reduction uses matrixes to summarize univariate data while measures of association summarize the associations between variables. Inferential statistics are used to make associations about the larger population from which the sample has been selected in terms of confidence levels or confidence intervals (Babbie, 1990, p. 291). Tests of statistical significance are used to estimate the relationships between variables in the population.

Bryman (1984) listed three conditions under which the survey is an appropriate means of gathering information: when the goals of the research call for quantitative data, when the information sought is reasonably specific and familiar to respondents, and when

the researcher has substantial knowledge of particular problems and the range of probably responses (p. 81).

Berger (2000) outlines several advantages of survey research. In addition to providing quantitative or numeric data, surveys can enable the researcher to collect a large amount of current information at one time (Berger, 2000, p. 191). Due to the size of the population under consideration, the survey is an appropriate methodology for accumulating information on this scale.

Babbie (2007) says that surveys are effective tools to measure attitudes among individuals who are part of a population too large to observe directly (p. 244). Research questions 2 and 3 are designed to measure attitudes toward *Little People, Big World* among members of LPA. It would be impossible to directly observe all members of LPA, therefore survey research is an effective tool to capture the responses of a sample of the population.

In addition to measuring attitudes and awareness, this study will also attempt to determine patterns or existing relationships among specific subgroups within the sample population. According to Lazarsfeld and Rosenberg (as cited in Glock, 1967), modern survey analysis allows "the study and interpretation of complex interrelationships among a multiplicity of characteristics" (p. xv).

Glock (1967) outlined three steps to survey research: problem definition, sample selection, and design of measurements. In the literature review of this study, the problem was defined in three parts: first, the requirement for statistical data that measures attitudes

toward *Little People, Big World* among the short-statured community and their allies; second, the impact of the show on LPA activism; and finally, a framework for future positive media representations. Four research questions were devised and quantitative data was collected to address the aforementioned problems.

The next sections will expound upon the sample selection and the survey design.

Data Collection

The data for this survey was collected from members of the Little People of America (LPA) organization through an online survey.

LPA has over 6,000 members in the United States and internationally. LPA is comprised of 14 Districts and 70 Chapters. Each district is managed by a district director and each chapter is administered by a chapter president.

Districts are made of one to five states. District 1 includes Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont. District 2 includes New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania. District 3 includes Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina and Virginia. District 4 includes Florida and Puerto Rico. District 5 includes Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio and West Virginia. District 6 includes Illinois and Wisconsin. District 7 includes Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri and Oklahoma. District 8 includes Louisiana and Texas. District 9 includes Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota and South Dakota. District 10 includes Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, Wyoming, El Paso and Texas. District 11 includes Alaska,

Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Washington. District 12 includes California and Nevada.

District 13 is Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi and Tennessee. District 14 includes Hawaii.

Chapters are more locally based and are comprised of an area of the state or

county.

The overall organization is run by a Board of Directors, made up of six executive

officers and one executive director. A committee, made up of 27 committee chairs

manages a variety of functions within the organization. At the time this survey was

distributed, there were 24 committee chairs and three vacancies on the committee.

Overall, LPA had 115 officers at the time this research was conducted. An email

was sent to each LPA officer with a description of the purpose of the research and a link

to the survey. District directors received a unique message asking them to send the

surveys out to their district email distribution lists. Appendix 2 shows the email sent.

Prior to sending out the survey, the research was approved by Towson

University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Participants.

A copy of the IRB letter of approval is included in Appendix 1. The online survey was

programmed to record each computer's physical address so that once a respondent

completes the survey, he or she will not be allowed to access the survey from the same

computer. This prohibited multiple responses from an individual participant. The link to

the survey was also published in the Summer 2011 and Fall 2011 issues of the *LPA*

Today newsletter, which was sent to approximately 3,000 households on the LPA mailing

list. A copy of the survey is included in Appendix 3 of this thesis.

According to Babbie (1990), a census is an enumeration of an entire population, while survey research typically examines a sample from a population. Because the distribution lists do not include all 6,000+ members of LPA and because members who are on the distribution list will be able to self-select to participate in the survey, this research will reflect a sample of the population. According to Sapsford (2007), a sample is a subset of the population that resembles the population closely on key characteristics. Sapsford (2007) noted "if the sample is representative of the population, then what is true of the sample will also be true of the population within a calculable margin of error" (p. 7).

Survey Questions

Glock (1967) lists three types of survey questions: descriptive, correlational, and explanatory. Descriptive questions are created to study the distribution of data among a population or subgroups of a population. The data can then be used to make comparisons between subgroups without applying theory or testing cause and effect. Correlational questions ask about the relationship between variables from a theoretically grounded expectation as to why the variables ought to be related (Glock, 1967). Explanatory questions suggest that the relation between variables is causal.

The first question is a consent agreement that outlines the purpose of the study, directions, confidentiality, risks or discomforts, how to withdraw from participation, how the findings will be used and an incentive.

The second question determines current affiliation with Little People of America. Because the target sample of this study is current LPA members, respondents who are not current members will be disqualified from the remainder of the survey.

Questions three through 10 are designed to capture demographic information about the respondents in order to examine trends in later questions.

Question 11 ranks issues facing individuals with short stature in order from most important to least important. Issues include discrimination, education, family, medicine, vocation/career, public accommodation, romantic and social.

Question 12 measures the frequency level that respondents watched *Little People, Big World*. Questions 13 through 15 capture perceptions of *Little People, Big World* including visibility of issues from Question 11, perceived realism and evaluation of the series.

Questions 16 through 21 determine whether watching the show influenced respondents to become involved with the LPA organization or increase their level of involvement.

Question 22 examines what types of media respondents believe can have the greatest impact on people outside of the LPA community. Question 23 lists other series that focus on individuals and families with dwarfism. And finally, question 24 collects e-mail addresses for the survey incentive.

RESULTS

Descriptive Results

Overall, 366 respondents began the survey. One respondent did not agree to the consent information in the first question and was redirected to the disqualification page.

Thirty-two respondents are former members and 67 were never members of the organization. Those 99 respondents were directed to the disqualification page. Of the remaining 264 respondents who are LPA members, 31 (8.5%) currently hold an executive, district or chapter officer position

One hundred fifty-three respondents (58.6%) indicated that they are individuals with skeletal dysplasia. Ninety-one (34.9%) respondents indicated that they are allies. Allies consist of family members and/or friends of individuals with dwarfism. Eighty-seven (33.3%) of respondents are family members of one or more individuals with skeletal dysplasia. Four (1.5%) indicated that they are friends of one or more individuals with skeletal dysplasia. None indicated that they are professionals who work with individuals with skeletal dysplasia. Seventeen (6.5%) selected none of the above. Three respondents skipped this question.

Of the 257 respondents who answered question 4, ten (3.9%) are from District 1; 39 (15.2%) are from District 2; 33 (12.8%) are from District 3; 8 (3.1%) are from District 4; 39 (15.2%) are from District 5; 14 (5.4%) are from District 6; 6 (2.3%) are from District 7; 20 (7.8%) are from District 8; 5 (1.9%) are from District 9; 13 (5.1%) are from

District 10; 13 (5.1%) are from District 11; 39 (15.2%) are from District 12; 18 (7.0%)

are from District 13; and no respondents(0.0%) are from District 14.

Because respondents must be 18 or older to participate, the nine respondents who

indicated that they are 17 or under in question 5 were redirected to the disqualification

page. Of the remaining 255 respondents, 54 (20.5%) are 18-29 years old and are part of

the Millennial group; 109 (41.3%) are 30-45 years old and are part of the Generation X

group; 81 (30.7%) are 46-64 years old and are part of the Baby Boomer group; and 11

(4.2%) are 65 or older and are part of the Silent Generation group. 255 respondents

moved on to questions 6-11.

Sixty-one respondents (24.0%) indicated that they are male, while 192 (75.6%)

respondents indicated that they are female. None selected gender variant (0%). One

(0.4%) respondent selected prefer not to answer and one respondent skipped question 6.

Four respondents (1.6%) indicated that they identify as African American/Black.

Two (0.8%) selected Asian/Pacific Islander. 230 (90.2%) selected Caucasian/White. 11

(4.3%) selected Hispanic/Latino. 0 (0.0%) selected Native American. Four (1.6%)

indicated that they identify with Multiple Races. Four (1.6%) indicated that they identify

as Other. Of the four respondents who selected Other, two identified as Asian Indian, one

as Eur-Asian and one as European American/White.

Two respondents (0.8%) indicated that their highest level of education is some

high school. 21 (8.4%) have a high school diploma. 66 (26.3%) stipulated that that they

have some college. 26 (10.4%) have an Associate's degree. 88 (35.1%) have a bachelor's

degree.48 (19.1%) have an advanced degree (Master's, PhD, etc.). Four respondents skipped question 8.

One hundred thirty-eight respondents (54.3%) revealed that they are married. Nine (3.5%) disclosed that they are in a domestic partnership. Eighteen (7.1%) are divorced or separated. Six (2.4%) are widowed. Eighty-three (32.7%) have never been married. One respondent skipped question 9.

One hundred thirty-nine respondents (54.5%) have children. One hundred sixteen (45.5%) do not have children.

Respondents (N=235) ranked types of issues facing people of short stature from most important (1) to least important (8). Discrimination had the lowest response average score (2.95), indicating that this issue is regarded as the most important, while Social Issues had the highest response average score (5.67), indicating that respondents generally view this issue as least important. The other issues were ranked in the following order from most important to least important based on average scores: Medical (3.87) and Public Accommodation (3.87); Vocation/Career (4.25); Education (4.92); Family (5.17); Romantic (5.29). 20 respondents skipped question 11.

Twenty-nine respondents (12.1%) indicated that they watched all six seasons of *Little People, Big World*. Fifty-three (22.1%) watched 4-5 seasons. Seventy-eight (32.5%) watched two-three seasons. 67 (27.9%) watched one season or less. Thirteen (5.4%) have never watched the show. The 13 respondents who selected Never (0

episodes) were redirected to question 22, since questions 13-21 are about *Little People, Big World*. Fifteen respondents skipped the question.

Two hundred twelve respondents selected which issues from question 11 were visible on *Little People, Big World*. Respondents could select multiple answers. Based on the responses, Family and Public Accommodation are the most visible issue, with 152 selections for each (71.7% of respondents said that these issues is visible on the show). Education is the least visible, with 80 selections (only 37.7% of respondents said that this issue is visible on the show). One hundred thirty-seven respondents (64.6%) indicated that social issues are visible; 128 respondents (60.4%) indicated that romantic issues are visible; 102 respondents (48.1%) indicated that vocation/career issues are visible; 95 (44.8%) indicated that discrimination issues are visible; and 11 respondents indicated that other issues are visible. Thirty respondents skipped question 13.

Question 14 captured levels of perceived realism of *Little People, Big World* in order to directly address Research Question 2. Results showed that 63.9% of respondents perceive *Little People, Big World* as Realistic or Somewhat Realistic, 10.8% indicated a neutral perception, and 25.3% selected Unrealistic or Somewhat Unrealistic (see Table 1).

Table 1.

Perceived Realism of Little People, Big World

Response	Number of Respondents (N=242)	Percentage
Realistic	52	23.4%
Somewhat Realistic	90	40.5%
Neutral	24	10.8%
Somewhat Unrealistic	45	20.3%
Unrealistic	11	5.0%
Skipped Question	20	--

Question 15 measured attitudes toward *Little People, Big World* as a positive or negative representation of individuals and families with dwarfism. This question predominantly captured the evaluation of the series queried by Research Question 3. Results showed that 79.1% of respondents perceive *Little People, Big World* as Positive or Somewhat Positive, 12.4% indicated a neutral perception, and 8.5% selected Negative or Somewhat Negative (see Table 2).

Table 2.

Evaluation of Little People, Big World

Response	Number of Respondents (N=242)	Percentage
Positive	101	44.9%
Somewhat Positive	77	34.2%
Neutral	28	12.4%
Somewhat Negative	17	7.6%
Negative	2	0.9%
Skipped Question	17	--

Questions 16-21 measured the impact of *Little People, Big World* among respondents on awareness and involvement. Question 16 measured level of agreement with the statement that *Little People, Big World* made respondents more aware of issues facing people of short stature. Fifty-nine (26.7%) indicated that they "Strongly Agree". Fifty-seven (25.8%) indicated that they "Somewhat Agree". Fifty-three (24.0%) indicated a "Neutral" position. Twenty-nine (13.1%) indicated that they "Somewhat Disagree". And 23 (10.4%) indicated that they "Strongly Disagree". Nineteen respondents skipped question 16.

Forty-six respondents (20.6%) indicated that they "Strongly Agree" that *Little People, Big World* made them more aware of the LPA organization. Forty-three (19.3%) selected "Somewhat Agree". Sixty-seven (30.0%) signified a "Neutral" position. Twenty-

three (10.3%) indicated that they "Somewhat Disagree". And 44 (19.7%) selected "Strongly Disagree". Nineteen respondents skipped question 17.

One-hundred fifty-three respondents (68.6%) indicated that they became members of LPA before the series premiere of *Little People, Big World* on March 4, 2006. Seventy (31.4%) indicated that they became members after the series premiere. Nineteen respondents skipped question 18.

Questions 19-21 are relevant to Research Question 1 regarding the effect of watching *Little People, Big World* on involvement in the LPA organization. For this study, levels of involvement were measured by membership, frequency of attending LPA events and pursuing an officer position in the organization.

The first involvement question examined whether the series had a causal effect on becoming a member of LPA. Question 20 examined the influence of *Little People, Big World* on obtaining LPA membership. Only the data from respondents who selected "False" for Question 19 was analyzed for Question 20. Of the 70 respondents who became LPA members after the series premiere of *Little People, Big World*, 10.0% indicated that they Strongly Agree, 12.9% selected Somewhat Agree, 17.1% selected Neutral, 11.4% selected Somewhat Disagree and 47.1 indicated that they Strongly Disagree that Little People, Big World influenced their decision to obtain membership in the organization (see Table 3).

Table 3.

Little People, Big World's Influence on LPA Membership

Response	Number of Respondents (N=70)	Percentage
Strongly Agree	9	13.0%
Somewhat Agree	7	10.1%
Neutral	12	17.4%
Somewhat Disagree	8	11.6%
Strongly Disagree	33	47.8%
Skipped Question	1	--

The second involvement question examined the series' influence on LPA event attendance. Forty-eight respondents (21.8%) Strongly Agree or Somewhat Agree that *Little People, Big World* influenced their decisions to attend more LPA events. Sixty-four (29.1%) indicated a "Neutral" position. One hundred and eight respondents (49.1%) revealed that they Somewhat Disagree or Strongly Disagree (see Table 4).

Table 4.

Little People, Big World's Influence on LPA Attendance

Response	Number of Respondents (N=244)	Percentage
Strongly Agree	16	7.3%
Somewhat Agree	32	14.5%
Neutral	64	29.1%
Somewhat Disagree	20	9.1%
Strongly Disagree	88	40.0%
Skipped Question	24	--

The final involvement question examined the series' influence on pursuing a leadership role in LPA. Three respondents (1.3%) Strongly Agree or Somewhat Agree that *Little People, Big World* influenced their decisions to pursue an officer position in LPA. Eighty-three (37.2%) indicated a "Neutral" position. One-hundred thirty-seven (61.4%) revealed that they Somewhat Disagree or Strongly Disagree (see Table 5).

Table 5.

Little People, Big World's Influence on LPA Leadership

Response	Number of Respondents (N=223)	Percentage
Strongly Agree	2	0.9%
Somewhat Agree	1	0.4%
Neutral	83	37.2%
Somewhat Disagree	14	6.3%
Strongly Disagree	123	55.2%
Skipped Question	19	--

In Question 22, respondents ranked six types of media from most effective (1) to least effective (6) in making a positive impact on how people outside of the organization view people with dwarfism.. Informational documentaries had the lowest response average score (2.93), indicating that this type of representation is regarded as the most effective, while print news had the highest response average score (4.50), indicating that it is generally viewed as least effective by respondents. The other types of media were ranked in the following order from most effective to least effective based on average scores: non-stereotypical roles in scripted films (3.60); TV news programs (3.54); non-stereotypical roles in scripted television series (3.28); and docu-reality shows (3.17). Thirty-five respondents skipped question 22 (see Table 6).

Table 6.

Media Efficacy in Creating Positive Awareness

Response (N=220)	Response Average	Ranking
Informational Documentaries	2.93	1
Docu-Reality Shows	3.17	2
Non-Stereotypical Roles in Scripted Television	3.28	3
News Programs	3.54	4
Non-Stereotypical Roles in Scripted Film	3.6	5
Print News	4.5	6
Skipped Question	35	--

Question 23 revealed what other shows respondents watch that focus on individuals or families with dwarfism. One hundred sixty-three respondents (85.8%) watch *The Little Couple* on TLC. One hundred and eight respondents (56.8%) watch *Pit Boss* on Animal Planet. Seventy respondents (36.8%) watch *Little Chocolatiers* on TLC. Forty respondents (21.1%) watch *Little Parents, Big Charlie* on TLC. And five respondents (2.6%) watch *Half Pint Brawlers* on Spike. Sixty-five respondents skipped question 23.

Analysis Results

Research Question 1 sought to determine the effect of watching L*ittle People, Big World* on involvement in the Little People of America (LPA) organization. Additional

analysis was run to determine whether there was correlation between the frequency of watching *Little People, Big World* and levels of involvement in LPA, which include becoming a member, attending more events and pursuing an officer position. First, a reliability test was run on the questions designed to test the effect of *Little People, Big World* on levels of involvement.

The results of the Alpha Reliability test show the questions designed to test involvement are reliable (Alpha=.806; see Table 7). The three questions were computed into one variable, named "involvement" in order to run correlation between the frequency of watching *Little People, Big World* and levels of involvement in LPA.

Table 7.

Reliability of Involvement Variable

Cronbach's Alpha	Chronbach's Alpha based on standardized items	N of items
.806	.811	3

Based on bivariate correlation (r=.327, $p < .01$; see Table 8), the more frequently respondents watched *Little People, Big World*, the more likely he or she would increase their involvement in LPA (see Table 8)

Table 8.

Correlation between Frequency of Consumption and Involvement

		Frequency	Involvement
Frequency			
	Pearson Correlation	1	.327
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	224	224
Involvement			
	Pearson Correlation	.327	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	224	240

Research Question 2 measured respondents' perception of *Little People, Big World* as a realistic or unrealistic representation of individuals and families with dwarfism. Additional tests were run to uncover trends among three comparative groups. The first comparative group is members of Districts 11 and 12, which the Roloffs are active in, compared to the other 12 districts. A new dichotomous independent variable was created in which members of Districts 1-10 and 13-14 were coded as a "1" and members of Districts 11 and 12 were coded as a "2."

A t-test was run to compare the two means and to test whether members of Districts 11 and 12 think *Little People, Big World* is more realistic than members of other districts. According to Urdan (2005), a t-test determines "whether the differences in the

two sample means are large enough to suggest that there are also differences in the two

populations that these samples represent" (p. 90).

Based on the results of the t-test, t(215)=.202, p>.05 (see Table 9), members of

Districts 11-12 (M=2.43, SD=1.19) did not have more realistic perceptions of *Little*

People, Big World than members of the other 12 districts (M=2.38, SD=1.16).

Table 9.

Perceived Realism among Subgroups

Group	Mean	SD	t-value	df	p-value
Districts 1-10, 13-14	2.43	1.19	.202	215	.840
Districts 11-12	2.38	1.16			
Married or Domestic Partnership	2.47	1.23	.769	220	.085
Never Married	2.34	1.12			
Has Children	2.37	1.20	-.864	220	.598
Does Not Have Children	2.51	2.51			

The second comparative group was respondents who have never been married

compared to respondents who are married or have been married or in a domestic

partnership. A new dichotomous independent variable was created and respondents who

selected "Married," "In a Domestic Partnership," "Divorced/Separated" and "Widowed"

were coded as a "1" and respondents who selected "Never Married" were coded as a "2."

A t-test was run to compare the two means and to test whether respondents who are married or in a domestic partnership or have been married perceive *Little People, Big World* as being more realistic than respondents who have never been married.

According to results of the t-test, t(220)=.769, p>.05 (see Table 9), respondents who have been married or in a domestic partnership (M=2.47, SD=1.23) did not have more realistic perceptions of Little People, Big World than respondents who have never been married (M=2.34, SD=1.12).

The third comparative group was respondents who have children compared to those who do not have children. Statistical analysis was run to test whether respondents who have children perceive *Little People, Big World* as a more realistic representation than those who do not have children. Whether respondents have children or not is already a dichotomous variable with 2 groups, so it was not necessary to recode the variable. Respondents who have children were coded as "1" and respondents who do not were coded as "2."

Based on the t-test results, t(220)=-.864, p>.05 (see Table 9), respondents who have children (M=2.37, SD=1.20) did not have more realistic perceptions of *Little People, Big World* than respondents who do not have children (M=2.51, SD=1.19).

Finally, A Pearson Correlation was run between question 12, which measured the frequency level that respondents watched *Little People, Big World,* and question 14, which measured the level of perceived realism. Based on bivariate correlation, (r=.235, *p*

< .01; see Table 10), the more frequently respondents watched *Little People, Big World,* the higher their level of perceived realism of the series.

Table 10.

Correlation between Frequency and Perceived Realism

		Frequency	Perceived Realism
Frequency			
	Pearson Correlation	1	.235
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	240	222
Perceived Realism			
	Pearson Correlation	.235	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	222	222

Research Question 3 examined the perception of *Little People, Big World* among respondents as a positive or negative representation of individuals and families with dwarfism. A Pearson Correlation was run between question 12, which measured the frequency level that respondents watched *Little People, Big World,* and question 15, which measured the level of positive or negative evaluation of the series. Based on bivariate correlation, ($r=.287, p < .01$; see Table 11), the more frequently respondents watched *Little People, Big World,* the more positive their evaluation of the series.

Table 11.

Correlation between Frequency and Evaluation

		Frequency	Evaluation
Frequency			
	Pearson Correlation	1	.287
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	240	225
Evaluation			
	Pearson Correlation	.287	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	225	225

Another Pearson Correlation was run between question 14, which gaged perceived realism and question 15, which extrapolated positive or negative evaluation of the series.

Based on bivariate correlation, (r=.504, $p < .01$; see Table 12), the higher the level of perceived realism, the more positively respondents evaluated *Little People, Big World.*

Table 12.

Correlation between Perceived Realism and Evaluation

		Perceived Realism	Evaluation
Perceived Realism			
	Pearson Correlation	1	.504
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	222	222
Evaluation			
	Pearson Correlation	.504	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	222	225

DISCUSSION

Limitations

The intent of this study was to capture Little People of America members' perceptions and evaluation of *Little People, Big World*. One possible limiting factor of the present study is subjectivity. More than 90% of the sample of the survey was made up of individuals with dwarfism and their friends and family members. Therefore, respondents' definitions of positive and realistic representations of individuals and families with dwarfism could be biased based on their own experiences. To minimize subjectivity or bias, survey questions were constructed objectively to collect data that would fulfill the purpose of the study.

Because the Roloffs are active members of the Little People of America organization, another level of bias may affect respondents who know the Roloffs personally. Their relationship or positive or negative feelings toward the Roloffs may affect respondents' perceived realism and evaluation of the show. Furthermore, since the survey was distributed through the LPA newsletter, listserv and social media and the Roloffs are active LPA members, the Roloffs would have been able to take the survey.

Limitations may also lie in the research instrument. According to Gable, survey research is inflexible because questions must remain the same throughout the study:

> Once the work is underway, there is little one can do upon realizing that some crucial item was omitted from the questionnaire, or upon discovering that a question is ambiguous or is being misunderstood by respondents (1994).

Babbie (2004) outlined several weaknesses in survey research, including the use of standardized questions, inflexibility, and an artificial nature, which leads to reduced validity. Babbie wrote, "by designing questions that will be at least minimally appropriate to all respondents, you may miss what is appropriate to many respondents" (p. 275).

According to Fowler (2009), "the limit of survey research is what people are able and willing to tell us in the context of the survey." In future research, other methods such as focus groups and interviews may present the opportunity to extract more detailed information from respondents.

CONCLUSION

Results of this study affirmed the media's power to shape perceptions and reality. The frequency of media consumption had a significant impact on involvement in Little People of America, perceived reality and positive evaluation of the series, while demographic factors such as geographic location, marital status and parental status did not.

Social cognitive theory posits that people learn through direct experience and observation of others. Based on social cognitive theory, members of Little People of America learn about issues facing individuals and families with dwarfism through their own personal experiences and from mediated representation. As a positive, realistic representation of dwarfism, *Little People, Big World* facilitated social cognition and served as a model for involvement in the Little People of America organization. Subjects were more likely to learn from *Little People, Big World's* model because of perceived similarities between subjects and the Roloffs.

Through mediated communication, the Roloffs and producers of *Little People, Big World* educated, empowered, inspired and guided participants, and brought about positive change as a result. Though *Little People, Big World* was not a product of Little People of America organization, the series still created links between *Little People, Big World* viewers and Little People of America. This study revealed correlation between frequency of watching the series and increased levels of involvement in Little People of America through membership, attendance and leadership.

According to uses and gratifications theory, audiences increase involvement by actively seeking and purposively using media. *Little People, Big World* was an enlightening and actualizing docu-reality series that focused on the Roloffs as individual family members and as a family unit. The appeal of *Little People, Big World* among members of Little People of America may have been viewer's ability to relate directly to the Roloff's experiences or to learn about issues facing individuals and families with dwarfism outside of their personal experiences.

Producers of *Little People, Big World* revealed that the overarching goal of the series was to inform audiences of the ordinary and extraordinary experiences of individuals with dwarfism. Corresponding to critical theory, the series may have also advanced the self-knowledge of individuals with dwarfism and their allies. Results of this study showed that *Little People, Big World* inspired greater involvement in an organization whose mission is to facilitate positive change in society. Therefore, *Little People, Big World* fits within the paradigm of critical theory as an emancipatory and empowering form of mediated communication.

Regarding the research questions that pertained to representation, this study revealed that members of Little People of America perceive *Little People, Big World* as a positive, realistic representation of dwarfism. The series counters negative, unrealistic stereotypes that can create mystification and stigma toward people with dwarfism. As a mediated representation, *Little People, Big World* has exceptional power to define dwarfism, even in the minds of people with dwarfism, which is why the series is so invaluable.

Little People, Big World cast the Roloff family into the limelight, generating fans and critics of Matt and Amy and their children. The publicity surrounding the show gave audiences unprecedented exposure to a family of short-statured and average-height individuals and deepened Matt and Amy's roles as advocates for issues affecting people with dwarfism.

In its six seasons, *Little People, Big World* gained critical acclaim and enduring popularity among television audiences. Similar to the way that *Will & Grace* is recognized as the forerunner of diverse portrayals of gay men, *Little People, Big World* is a predecessor for more positive, realistic portrayals of individuals and families with dwarfism. The success and impact of *Little People, Big World* inspired more positive, realistic portrayals of dwarfism in the media, including *The Little Couple, Little Chocolatiers*, *Little Parents, Big Charlie* and *Pit Boss*,. Little People, Big World laid the foundation for these and future mediated representations to be educating and empowering.

Following *Little People, Big World*'s success, the Discovery Networks created similar nonfiction media programs focusing on individuals and families with dwarfism. In July 2011, TLC announced that the network would air four new *Little People, Big World* specials to give viewers an update on the Roloff family members. According to Discovery Networks (July 7, 2011), Amy Winter, General Manager of Discovery Networks, said that the specials would provide an opportunity for fans of the show to "reconnect" with the Roloffs. The specials, titled *Big Changes*, *Holiday Surprise*, *Zach's New Love* and *Battle for the Farm* aired between October 2, 2011 and February 19, 2012.

The results of this study showed that Little People of America members believe that informative documentaries, docu-reality series like *Little People, Big World* and scripted roles in film, have the greatest ability to create positive perceptions of people with dwarfism among people outside of the Little People of America organization. Because existing literature consistently claimed that media are a cultural mirror of perceptions with an exceptional power to define subjects in reality, the findings of the media efficacy research question will provide essential information for individuals and the LPA organization when making decisions about media.

This is the first study to examine the impact, perceived reality and evaluation of *Little People, Big World* among members of the Little People of America. The sample is extremely specific and results are exclusive to this group. Therefore, this study will provide a unique base of comparison for future research to measure the effect of *Little People, Big World* on awareness and attitudes toward individuals and families with dwarfism.

Recommendations for Future Research

The sample for this study included current members of Little People of America organization. The data showed that the majority of respondents were individuals with dwarfism or a family member or friend of an individual with dwarfism. Therefore, respondents already had their own perceptions of the condition prior to taking the survey.

The scope of future research should be expanded to include the effects of para-social interaction on perception and attitudes among viewers who do not have direct

experience with dwarfism. A similar study on a sample of average-height individuals who are not the friend or family member of an individual with dwarfism and have no pre-conceived perception from their own experience could also produce interesting results. By conducting a pre-test, then exposing them to the *Little People, Big World* series, then conducting a post-test, one could measure the impact on their perceptions of individuals with dwarfism.

This study measured the impact of a specific docu-reality series. In order to further develop research question 4, regarding what types of media are most effective in creating positive perceptions of individuals and families with dwarfism, additional research could measure the effect of each type of media. The other media from question 4 include scripted roles in TV, scripted roles in film, documentaries, news programs and print news. Similar to the aforementioned study, this research would consist of administering a pre-test, exposing the sample to the specific type of media, then following up with a post-test. The sample would also consist of average-height, non-LPA affiliates who have no personal connection to individuals with dwarfism.

APPENDIX 1

TOWSON
UNIVERSITY

EXEMPTION NUMBER: 12-0X09

To: Lauren   Humphries
From: Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human
            Subjects, Steven Mogge, Member
Date: Thursday, August 18, 2011
RE: Application for Approval of Research Involving the Use of
            Human Participants

Office of University
Research Services

Towson University
8000 York Road
Towson, MD 21252-0001

t. 410 704-2236
f. 410 704-4494

Thank you for submitting an application for approval of the research titled,
Perceptions of Little People, Big World Among Members of Little People of America

to the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Participants
(IRB) at Towson University.

Your research is exempt from general Human Participants requirements
according to 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2). No further review of this project is
required from year to year provided it does not deviate from the submitted
research design.

If you substantially change your research project or your survey
instrument, please notify the Board immediately.

We wish you every success in your research project.

CC: B. Haller
       File

APPENDIX 2

Email sent to the LPA Board of Directors and District Directors

Subject: Little People, Big World Survey

Message:

Please take this brief online survey as part of a Master's thesis by an LP graduate student in Maryland. This study will examine perceptions of *Little People, Big World* and other media that focuses on individuals or families with dwarfism. Everyone who completes the survey will be entered to win a $50 Amazon.com gift card!

Here is the link to the survey https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/lpalpbw

Please send out the survey to members of your district via your district e-mail lists as well.

Thank you.

This survey has been approved by the Board of Directors of the Little People of America organization.

APPENDIX 3

Perceptions of *Little People, Big World*

Purpose Of The Study:

This survey research is part of a Master's thesis program by a graduate student at Towson University in Towson, Maryland. This study will examine perceptions of Little People, Big World and other media that focuses on individuals or families with dwarfism among members of the Little People of America organization.

Directions:

This study will use a 24–question online survey. The survey should take approximately 20-30 minutes to complete.

Persons who prefer a written version of the survey rather than electronic can e-mail laurenbhumphries@gmail.com to request a print version of the survey.
Persons interested in viewing results of the survey can e-mail laurenbhumphries@gmail.com.

Confidentiality:

The study is anonymous. No personal or contact information will be collected or stored unless participants wish to be entered in the Amazon.com $50.00 gift card drawing.

Risks Or Discomforts:

No risks or discomforts are anticipated from taking part in this study. If you feel uncomfortable with a question, you can skip that question or withdraw from the study altogether. If you decide to quit at any time before you have finished the questionnaire, your answers will NOT be recorded.

Decision To Quit At Any Time:

Participation is voluntary; you are free to withdraw your participation from this study at any time. If you do not want to continue, you can simply leave this web site. If you do not click on the "submit" button at the end of the survey, your answers and participation will not be recorded. You also may choose to skip any questions that you do not wish to answer.

How The Findings Will Be Used:

The results of the study will be used for scholarly purposes only. The results from the study will be presented as part of a Communications Management thesis at Towson University. Results may also be published in professional journals in the field of mass communications or presented at professional conferences.

Amazon $50.00 Gift Card Incentive:

Participants who complete ALL survey questions and enter their e-mail address in question 25 will be entered to win a $50.00 gift card to Amazon.com. The winner will be selected at random via SPSS from the list of e-mail addresses. The winner will be notified via e-mail prior to November 1, 2011.

Contact information:

If you have concerns or questions about this study, please contact Lauren Humphries at laurenbhumphries@gmail.com
By beginning the survey, you acknowledge that you have read this information and agree to participate in this research, with the knowledge that you are free to withdraw your participation at any time without penalty.

THIS PROJECT HAS BEEN REVIEWED BY THE INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN PARTICIPANTS AT TOWSON UNIVERSITY (410-704-2236)

Informed Consent

1. Do you agree to the consent information above?
   a. Yes
   b. No

2. What is your affiliation with Little People of America?
    a. Current executive board member, district officer or chapter officer
    b. Current member who does not hold an executive or officer position
    c. Former member
    d. I was never a member of this organization

3. Please select the response that best describes you
    a. I am an individual with skeletal dysplasia
    b. I am the family member of one or more individuals with skeletal dysplasia
    c. I am a friend of one or more individuals with skeletal dysplasia
    d. I am a professional who works with individuals with skeletal dysplasia
    e. None of the above

4. What district are you from?
    a. District 1 (Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont)
    b. District 2 (New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania)
    c. District 3 (Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia)
    d. District 4 (Florida, Puerto Rico)
    e. District 5 (Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio, West Virginia)
    f. District 6 (Illinois and Wisconsin)
    g. District 7 (Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma)
    h. District 8 (Louisiana, Texas)
    i. District 9 (Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota)
    j. District 10 (Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, Wyoming, El Paso, Texas)
    k. District 11 (Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington)
    l. District 12 (California, Nevada)
    m. District 13 (Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, Tennessee)
    n. District 14 (Hawaii)

5. What is your age?
    a. 17 or under
    b. 18-29
    c. 30-39
    d. 40-49
    e. 50 or over

6. What is your gender?
    a. Male
    b. Female
    c. Gender variant
    d. Prefer not to answer

7. What is your race/ethnicity?
    a. African American/Black
    b. Asian/Pacific Islander
    c. Caucasian/White
    d. Hispanic/Latino
    e. Native American
    f. Other
    g. Multiple Races

8. What is your highest level of education?
    a. Some high school
    b. High school diploma
    c. Some college
    d. Associate's Degree
    e. Bachelor's Degree
    f. Advanced Degree (Master's, Ph. D, etc.)

9. Marital status
    a. Married
    b. Divorced/Separated
    c. Widowed
    d. Never married

10. Do you have children?
    a. Yes
    b. No

11. Please rank the following types of issues facing people of short stature in order of importance:

    ___   Medical

    ___   Vocational

    ___   Educational

    ___   Social

    ___   Romantic (dating)

    ___   Family (marriage, children, adoption)

    ___   Public accommodation

    ___   Discrimination

    ___   Other

12. How often do you watch *Little People, Big World* (LPBW)?
    a. Always (6 seasons)
    b. Frequently (4-5 seasons)
    c. Occasionally (2-3 seasons)
    d. Seldom (1 season or less)
    e. Never (0 episodes)

If E is selected, go to Question 22.

13. What types of issues facing people of short stature were visible on LPBW (select all that apply):
    a. Medical
    b. Vocational
    c. Educational
    d. Social
    e. Romantic (dating)
    f. Family (marriage, children, adoption)
    g. Public accommodation
    h. Discrimination
    i. Other

14. Do you believe that Little People, Big World is a realistic or unrealistic representation of individuals of short stature?
    a. Realistic
    b. Somewhat Realistic
    c. Neutral
    d. Somewhat Unrealistic
    e. Unrealistic

15. Do you believe that Little People, Big World is a realistic or unrealistic representation of individuals of short stature?
    a. Positive
    b. Somewhat Positive
    c. Neutral
    d. Somewhat Negative
    e. Negative

16. Please select your level of agreement with the following statement: Little People, Big World made me more aware of issues facing people of short stature.
    a. Strongly Agree
    b. Somewhat Agree
    c. Neutral
    d. Somewhat Disagree
    e. Strongly Disagree

17. Please select your level of agreement with the following statement: Little People, Big World made me more aware of the Little People of America (LPA) organization.
    a. Strongly Agree
    b. Somewhat Agree
    c. Neutral
    d. Somewhat Disagree
    e. Strongly Disagree

18. I became a member of Little People of America before the Little People, Big World series premiered on March 6, 2004.
    a. True
    b. False

Please select your level of agreement with the following statements:

19. Little People, Big World influenced my decision to become a member of the Little People of America (LPA) organization.
    a. Strongly Agree
    b. Somewhat Agree
    c. Neutral
    d. Somewhat Disagree
    e. Strongly Disagree

20. Little People, Big World influenced my decision to become a member of the Little People of America (LPA) organization.
    a. Strongly Agree
    b. Somewhat Agree
    c. Neutral
    d. Somewhat Disagree
    e. Strongly Disagree

21. Little People, Big World influenced my decision to become a member of the Little People of America (LPA) organization.
    a. Strongly Agree
    b. Somewhat Agree
    c. Neutral
    d. Somewhat Disagree
    e. Strongly Disagree

22. Please rate the following types of media representation from most effective (1) to least effective (6) in making a positive impact on how people outside of the LPA community view people with dwarfism:

___   Non-stereotypical roles in scripted television shows

___   Non-stereotypical roles in scripted films

___   Docu-reality shows like *Little People, Big World*

___   Informational documentaries

___   News programs

___   Print news

23. Do you watch other series that focus on individuals or families with dwarfism? (Select all that apply)
    a. *Half Pint Brawlers*, Spike
    b. *The Little Couple*, TLC
    c. *Little Chocolatiers*, TLC
    d. *Little Parents, Big Charlie*, Discovery Health
    e. *Pit Boss*, Animal Planet

24. Please provide a valid e-mail address if you wish to enter to win the $50.00 Amazon.com gift card. The winner will be notified via e-mail prior to October 31, 2011.

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