



**CALIFORNIA STATE SCIENCE FAIR
2012 PROJECT SUMMARY**

Name(s) Sayoni Saha	Project Number S0425
Project Title A Doll That Looks Like Me: A Study of Self-Concept in Children with Down Syndrome	
<p style="text-align: center;">Abstract</p> <p>Objectives/Goals The study primarily attempts to explore: 1) which specific factors such as chronological age, gender, and developmental level are associated with the construction of self-concept in children with Down Syndrome (DS); 2) which doll do they prefer; 3) which qualities and attributes do they associate with each doll; and 4) how do they view themselves in a social context. By encouraging participants to actively compare the two dolls, this research hopes to elucidate more about self-concept in children with DS and can potentially serve as a foundation for further studies among developmentally disabled or physically distinct populations.</p> <p>Methods/Materials This study is the first of its kind to assess the self-concept of children with Down syndrome (DS) by analyzing their responses towards two dolls, one with a "typical" appearance and one with features of DS. Forty-one children with DS participated in a play session with both dolls and were then interviewed to assess doll preference, resemblance, and attribution of specific qualities. To characterize the sample, all participants were assessed on two measures of intellectual functioning, completed a simple self-recognition test and had demographic and history questionnaires completed by a participating parent.</p> <p>Results We found that regardless of age, awareness of their condition, gender, or level of functioning: 1) children with DS preferred the typical doll over the DS doll; 2) the majority thought the typical doll most closely resemble themselves; and 3) attributed more positive qualities to the typical doll than to the DS doll. In addition, the participant was more likely to assign a positive attribute to the doll that he or she thought most closely resembled them. We also found that compared to boys, girls were more likely to indicate the DS doll was smarter than the typical doll and the older participant was significantly more likely to indicate the dolls appeared different.</p> <p>Conclusions/Discussion The significant preference for the typical doll may reflect internalized stereotypes of DS. The relationship between such societal views of DS or developmental disabilities and the self-concept of children with DS should be further explored.</p>	
Summary Statement My project explored self-concept in adolescents with Down syndrome through the use of dolls and found this population preferred and attributed positive qualities to the societal norm rather than to themselves.	
Help Received I was the lead researcher of the project at the University of California Irvine and was mentored by Mr. Eric Doran and Dr. Anne Tournay	