Down Syndrome Essay, Research Paper

Down Syndrome1. Definition of Down SyndromeDown Syndrome, congenital malformation accompanied by moderate to severe mental retardation, and caused by a chromosomal abnormality. The chance of getting Down syndrome is approximately one in 700 births, but the risk varies with the age of the mother. The incidence of Down syndrome in children born to 25-year-old mothers is approximately 1 in 1200; the risk increases to approximately 1 in 120 for women older than 40 years. Prenatal tests like amniocentesis and chorionic villus sampling can be used to detect the chromosomal abnormality causing Down syndrome. Maternal blood tests can also suggest the presence of a fetus with Down syndrome when levels of alphafetoprotein are lower than usual, or when levels of unconjugated estriol and human chorionic gonadotrophin are abnormal. The chromosomal abnormality which generally causes Down syndrome is trisomy-21, or the presence of three 21st chromosomes. As a result, the affected person has 47 chromosomes in all body cells instead of the normal 46. Scientists assume that the reason for the abnormally is the fertilization of an ovum having 24 chromosomes by a sperm with a normal assortment of 23, but they have also found that the sperm can carry the extra chromosome as well. The abnormal ovum or sperm is derived from a germ cell in which the pair of 21st chromosomes holds together and passes into the same sperm or ovum instead of separating. There are two types of Down Syndrome: translocation and mosaicism. Down syndrome can not yet be treated, but medical care of the disease results in an almost normal life for the persons affected. In the past, many children with Down syndrome were put in institutions. Today, Most children with Down syndrome participate in public-school programs, and most adults with Down syndrome hold jobs of different types in our society. Persons with Down syndrome are often short in stature and have a small, round head with a high, flattened forehead. A typical feature is a fold of skin, the epicanthic fold, on either side of the bridge of the nose.. Such persons are also subject to heart defects many of which can be corrected surgically and are more likely to develop leukemia than “normal” people. 2. Life with Down Syndrome1. The ostracism related to Down SyndromeFirst of all, even if it sounds very logical, it s important to say that Down Syndrome isn t usual; it s not something that occurs in everybody s life . A minority of people have this disease, and therefore, we re not used to this. Maybe it scares us, maybe it makes us laugh, or maybe it makes us feel sorry. Anyway, we feel uncomfortable in these people s company. We re not used to confront them in our everyday life ,so it makes it difficult for us to share our lives with them in the same unique society. This is when the phenomenon of ostracism makes it s entrance. Here are two major factors to this ostracism:- People with Down Syndrome are mentally handicapped, and can therefore not accomplish the same intellectual tasks as “normal” people. Of course, it depends on how severe the handicap is, but in most of the cases, this is true. So the society does not accept from the intellectual point of view. – Persons with Down Syndrome don t look the same way as we do. Sometimes, they re even physically handicapped. This makes it difficult for them to participate in our physical activities , which sometimes even run our lives. Sports are one of these activities. One can say it s a good thing there has been arranged games for these people, but doesn t this attend to separate them even more from our society ?In a way ,it does. I will conclude by saying that it s a fact , this ostracism really exists . But isn t it human ? Sometimes one just cannot control their feelings. It s nature, it s the way we are .And actually , there s nothing more to it . At least , for the moment .A change of mentality is a long process. The people concerned must in a way accept this, as long as they re not made fun of or discriminated. And again, as in the issue of racism, tolerance is the key. We can t be asked to like them, but respect is the least they can expect. And I m not talking about avoiding people with Down Syndrome, but about violating ethical laws. Using people because of a problem they may have is not good. What I m saying is that ostracism cannot be compared with discrimination. In two of the sources required, both from the Wall Street Journal , the issue of advertising is discussed. Two TV ads featuring people with Down Syndrome are brought up. And here is when ostracism appears again. It s obvious that “normal” people will be affected by this sight. The “fear of the unknown” actually makes us want to watch these commercials. Mrs. Ewing says in one of the articles: “We use children in commercials because they are appealing.” “In that sense, Halley is no more exploited than any other child appearing in any other commercial.” Isn t this a bit easy ? I think so. We certainly fin children appealing, but people with Down Syndrome are even more appealing. The reason is simple: We all know children. Generally, they become a part of our life. But not the disease. It remains something we little about, something we have prejudice for. So one may say that the advertisers take advantage of people s mentality toward Down Syndrome. The more original the ad!

, the more effect it has. And what isn t more original for us than something we never confront or deal with ? We watch the people with the disease because we are curious. What do they do ? What will happen ? I once lived in China. Over there, people used to stare at me because I was different. A TV ad with me in China would have made the same effect as these TV ads with Down Syndrome affected persons did in the US. And then again, few are the people who watch these ads without a reaction. Whether it s positive or negative, it makes us think. I think these articles are good examples of where we should draw the line between avoiding and using people with Down Syndrome. Making them appear in commercials to shock people is certainly going too far. 2. Growing up with Down SyndromeTo have a baby with Down Syndrome can be a great disappointment. But do the parents have the right to eliminate their own child ? In Canada, 90% of the women pregnant with a Down Syndrome child take abortion . Is this ethically right ? I think it really depends on how severe the disability is. There are some cases in which there s practically no hope for the child to grow up as a part of our community. If this is discovered early enough, I actually think it can be a good solution to take abortion. Not for the parent s sake, but for the child s sake. If it s no good to itself, it s not necessary to go through all the pain it s education will represent. However, if the child is capable of reasoning practically normally, abortion should be illegal. These are children who s parents finally become proud of. Why not give them a chance ? Of course, this is a huge challenge, as well for the parents as for the child. The difficulties are many and of varied nature. But the biggest is the moral one. A child may feel rejected as a cause of the already mentioned ostracism related to Down Syndrome. I think it s important to give these children a chance to make it in our society. But, and this may sound rude, if they don t succeed, they don t. I don t think the society should adapt itself totally to people with Down Syndrome. Some adjustments are possible, but just as long as it doesn t bother “regular” people. After all, the majority rules in a democracy, and there is no such thing as a perfect society for everyone, not on this earth, at least. If a child with Down Syndrome wants to be apart of our society, he has to be treated almost as a normal child. If something perfectly tolerable upsets him, then he isn t supposed to be there. Of course, we have to be tolerant and caring, but at one point, this does no longer work out. Jason Kingsley and Mitchell Levitz are good examples for the rest of the community. Their parents are, in my opinion, excellent ones. They never expected anything from anyone when their child went out in the society. They treated them as normal persons, human beings, in public. This is the way every parent with a Down Syndrome child should do. The first years especially, affection is very important, just as for children without the disease . The love they show for their child should not depend on its medical situation. This way, when the child grows up in the family, he doesn t feel special because of his disease, but because he s a special human being who is cared for. I think this is the only way to make their Down Syndrome child become someone with ambitions in our society, like Jason and Mitchell. Now that they have become adults, they don t expect special help, and this makes them a part of our society, thanks of course to their parents, who were able to raise them! exceptionally well.3. Conclusion: should persons affected by Down Syndrome be included in our society ?This really depends on the individual and his abilities. Some Down Syndrome affected people don t get any pleasure at all out of staying with “normal” people. However, there are some people with this disease who are totally capable of living in our society. With a little good will from everyone, and a bit tolerance, it can work out just fine. But again, the best relationship for a “normal” person may be one with a person at a similar mental level. And I don t blame people who don t want to get involved in work with Down Syndrome affected persons. I understand them, and I may even be one of them too. However, what we must improve, is our attitude, which for the majority of the population is slightly negative. Nobody is asking anybody to take a huge step and getting involved in some kind of activity against discrimination of people with Down Syndrome. All we need to do is to show a little respect and tolerance toward these people. But we also need these organizations who fight for the disabled s rights. Because sometimes there really is abuse of people with Down Syndrome. And this is unacceptable. Fortunately, organizations like the Down s Syndrome Children Right to Live Society exist. In Palestine, it helps these children get away from a certain death they re facing in our society. However, some of these children will never be capable of managing in our community. And I really don t think they should try if the odds are completely against them. There are certain mental requirements for the members of our society, and if someone can t live up to them, his encounter wi!th the society may be a very painful experience. Both for the disabled and his co-citizens.