**REPRESENTATION MATTERS: PORTRAYALS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH INTELLECTUAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES ON TV**

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**Objectives:** Individuals with disabilities are vastly underrepresented in primetime, cable, and streaming television shows. While the portrayals of characters with various disabilities has increased in recent years, storylines regarding these characters continue to present and stereotype individuals with disabilities as victims or objects of pity, as heroes or objects of inspiration, or as villains. This interactive workshop will provide conference attendees with the opportunity to view, analyze, and discuss television depictions of characters with disabilities, including Autism (*Atypical, The Good Doctor*, and *Parenthood*), Cerebral Palsy (*Speechless*), Down Syndrome (*Glee*), and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD; *Shameless*).

**Methods:** Informed by writing in both disability studies and film studies, the present study aimed to explore the television portrayals of characters with disabilities in current mainstream and primetime television shows (*n* = 6), including representations of characters with disabilities framed by common disability tropes (e.g., the supercrip, deviant, exotic, comical, pitiable, asexual, feminized, tragic), as abnormal, and as other. Thematic analysis was used to read and understand the storylines of main characters with various disabilities. As part of this interactive workshop, conference attendees will work through various clips from each show in groups, followed by a large group discussion.

**Results:** Our readings of these shows demonstrate several overarching themes regarding the representations of, and narratives around, character development and disability. For example, Carl Gallagher (*Shameless*) – a character with FASD – is framed as a sociopath (i.e., as a villain) who engages in deviant and criminal behaviours. This is a common stereotyped understanding of FASD in the public sphere. However, not all representations adhere to such tropes, sometimes actively pushing back against them. For example, Becky Jackson (*Glee*)is often framed as a villain – a marked departure from public framing of Down Syndrome via the victim stereotype, or as understood through the lens of kindness and compassion. Furthermore, other shows, such as *Speechless*, address broader disability-related issues, such as inspiration porn and the use of the ‘R’ word, which serve as a positive vehicle for realistic representation that can address the needs of individuals with disabilities. In other cases, the concept of disability is more implicit – for example, in stories about mental health or illness. On *Shameless,* characters struggling with mental illness are often used for comedic purposes. Additionally, many of these shows are not primarily *about* disability, but focus on how other characters (e.g., family members) may respond to disability. Differences in portrayals across disability types will be discussed, including the significance of other show elements, such as the intersecting influences of the social determinants of health.

**Discussion:** The results of this study provide further evidence for the significance of disability tropes and stereotypes in media. Only 2.4% of all speaking or named characters on primetime television from 2007 to 2015 had a disability, compared to the estimated 6.2 million Canadians and 40.7 million Americans with disabilities. Consequently, a large segment of the population remains underrepresented on screen, and even when a role calls for such unique qualifications, actors with disabilities are often left unconsidered. There is a clear, demonstrated need for complex characters on television that do not reflect these stereotypes. Our workshop will allow for discussion of good, bad, and complex or messy portrayals of disability on TV to help conference attendees think through how key drivers of social norms, such as media, need to improve how individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities are portrayed.

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