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Where They Least Expect It: Product Placement in Children's Picture Books

Steven John Holiday

A thesis study submitted to the faculty of  
Brigham Young University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

John J. Davies, Chair  
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March 2015

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## ABSTRACT

Where They Least Expect It: Product Placement in Children's Picture Books

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Product placement has been intensely studied in almost every mass communications medium. One notable exception is in children's picture books where scholarship on the placement of products and brands has been severely underserved despite a steady presence in a medium integral to socialization and society. The present study recognizes the unique characteristics of the shared reading that takes place in this medium and explores its effects on memory for and attitudes toward product placements within children's picture books.

Using a laboratory experiment, quantitative statistical analysis of resulting data, and qualitative exploration of themes resulting from subjects' responses, the present study demonstrates that the practice of shared reading positively affects both recollection and attitudes toward product placement in children's picture books. It also discusses the results in the context of their ethical and practical applications and implications.

Keywords: product placement, parents, children's picture books, shared reading, cognitive busyness, persuasion knowledge, nontraditional advertising, dual sensory encoding, social context encoding

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

“Anyone who ever gave you confidence, you owe them a lot.”

-Truman Capote, *Breakfast at Tiffany's*

First and foremost, I am indebted to Addison and Jace, who, despite my crazy schedule these last two years, were always eager to close out the night by curling up together and reading a children's book (or five). Your love for stories inspired and propelled this research and your love for me propelled my commitment to it.

I am eternally grateful to Jillian Holiday, who held my hand as we jumped into this program and this thesis, kept holding it as we fought our way through it, and is still holding it as we climb back out. We accomplished another incredibly difficult life challenge, and once again we did it together.

I cannot imagine what my time in this program would have been like without Matt Lewis, Harper Anderson, and Rachel Nielsen—the frorority—who encouraged me, challenged me, humored me, loved me, and continue to inspire me. May we always have one more study.

Nor what kind of scholar I would have become without Dr. John Davies, who met me as a student and immediately saw me as a fellow scholar, worthy collaborator, and coauthor. Allowing me to be so involved in your line of research gave me tremendous insight and confidence in the theories, family dynamics, and experimental design research methods that would become the pillars of this study. I look forward to working together for many years to come.

Dr. Mark Callister and Dr. Dale Cressman embraced the crazy notion of researching product placement in children's picture books when I came to them, and were willing and eager join my committee and take this journey with me even though we were

charting a course for an undiscovered line of research. There were others who weren't as brave, optimistic, or forward-thinking, and your support meant the world.

Well before I officially began the program, Jack LaBaugh prepared me for what I was jumping into. He helped me sort through my very first research topic, and joined me as a coauthor. He mentored me through theories, methods, classes, conferences, thesis topics, and publication. Through each step of this program he believed in my potential and abilities, and honed my skills.

This research was made possible by generous support from the Wendell J. Ashton Communications Research Endowed Professorship and the David P. and Carmela T. Forsyth Graduate Replenishment Research Grant.

Finally, I was blessed with so many family, friends, professors, a cohort, coworkers, and perfect strangers who made my education and this study happen. Not listing you by name does not give you the proper recognition you deserve, but failing to recognize absolutely anyone would be an injustice. So let me just say thank you, thank you, thank you.

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**Where They Least Expect It: Product Placement in Children's Picture Books**

“Great illustration tends to wander from page to eye to brain,  
but always finds a way to ensconce itself into the soul.”

-Christy Ottaviano, children's book editor

**Introduction**

As consumers have become more aware of the persuasive intent of advertising, it has forced marketers to constantly look for novel and innovative ways to attract attention for their products without raising customers' defenses. This has led to the formation of nontraditional forms of advertising, from the new, hot topics of native advertisements and advergames, to program sponsorship and product placement (Buijzen, Van Reijmersdal, & Owen, 2010; Calvert, 2008; Friestad & Wright, 2005; Moore & Rideout, 2007; Sprott 2008).

Product placement has been extensively studied across virtually every medium. One notable exception has been in the field of literature, where its research has been underserved, and in children's picture books specifically, where its scholarship, to the best of my knowledge, has been absent. Despite the paucity in research, product placement does exist in children's picture books, a medium that is an integral part of emergent literacy, parent/child relational dynamics that result in the socialization of both the child and the parent, and some literature hints that it is an effective method of emotional coping for parents who read the books alone. Because of the incredibly vulnerable environment in which the reading of children's picture books take place, the study of product placement within this mass communication medium would be a significant contribution to the ongoing conversation about the practice and its ethics (see



Lee, 2008; Wenner, 2004), which some scholars argue needs additional investigation despite the generally large body of literature that it has amassed (see Taylor, 2009).

The current study seeks to understand the effects that parent/child shared reading have on parents' recall and recognition of product placements in children's picture books, as well as attitudes toward the practice. Implications in education, child and parent socialization, and marketing and advertising ethics are discussed.

## **Background**

### **The Pervasive and Persuasive Nature of Advertising**

The practice of advertising dates back at least as far as Egypt and Pompeii, where it was utilized in official proclamations and election posters (Seidman, 2008), and research has even discovered its existence manifested through rock art paintings in India, dating back to 4,000 BCE (Bhatia, 2000). In its many forms and incarnations, all advertising throughout time has shared the distinction of being mediated information from an identified sponsor that hopes to persuade an audience (Rodgers, Thorson, & Jin 2010). Although the ethics of advertising are a perpetual topic for debate among politicians, scholars, and consumers alike (see Lee, 2008; Wenner, 2004), the practice has become so integrated into culture that it has solidified its place in society. In recent years, however, marketers have begun adopting more furtive, interactive, nonintrusive forms of advertising, like brand placement in movies and games, advergames, product licensing, and program sponsorship to help increase exposure, awareness, sales, and returns on investments (Buijzen et al., 2010; Calvert, 2008; Friestad & Wright, 2005; Moore & Rideout, 2008; Sprott, 2008).

These forms of advertising, collectively referred to as *nontraditional advertising* and defined as forms of advertising that do not clearly delineate themselves from

entertainment content through the use of temporal markers (Owen, Lewis, Auty, & Buijzen, 2013), commonly appear in noncommercial mediums and blur the lines between advertising, entertainment, editorial content, and information (Mallinckrodt & Mizerski, 2007; Montgomery, 2001; Wright, Friestad, & Boush, 2005). Because they are often absorbed into the narrative, they are likely to persuade on a more subtle emotional or cognitive level (see Auty & Lewis, 2004; Owen et al., 2013).

### **Product Placement**

Product placement is one form of nontraditional advertising that has experienced a surge in usage by marketers (Shrum, 2004, 2012). Defined as the practice of inserting branded products into entertainment media (McCarty, 2004; McCarty & Lowry, 2012; Russell, 2002; Russell & Belch, 2005), product placement has been seen as an important source of revenue for more than a decade (Schneider, 2002), and according to PQ Media, an econometric research firm that has tracked branded entertainment since 1975, “Global product placement spending increased 9.8% to \$7.39 billion in 2011 and is on pace to grow at an accelerated rate [in coming years]” (“New PQ Media Data,” 2012, para. 1). The lucrative strategy benefits both entertainment programmers who need capital to offset production costs (Karrh, 1998) and want to keep consumption costs low for their audience (Pressgrove, 2013), as well as advertisers whose primary objective in the arrangement is to increase brand awareness (Karrh, McKee, & Pardun, 2003; Chang, Newell, & Salmon, 2009).

The topic of product placement has been intensely popular in recent years and has propelled studies across television (Avery & Ferraro, 2000; Russell, 2002), movies (Anderson, 2006; Gould, Gupta, & Grabner-Krauter, 2000; Delorme & Reid, 1999;

Nebenzahl & Secunda, 1993; for a review, see van Reijmersdal, Neijens, & Smit, 2009; for a history of the practice in film and television, see Newell, Salmon, & Chang, 2006), plays (Friedman, 1986a; Wilson & Till, 2011), music (Craig & Bichard, 2014; Delattre & Colovic, 2009; Friedman, 1986b), music videos (Chang, 2003), computer and video games (Cauberghe & DePelsmacker, 2010, Nelson, 2002, Schneider & Cornwell, 2005), and even novels (Brennan, 2008; Friedman, 1985; Manzano, 2010). Among the many effects of product placement are both explicit and implicit preferences for the featured products (Baker & Crawford, 1996; Gaffney, 2003; Law & Braun, 2000; Auty & Lewis, 2004), as well as recognition of brands and long-term influence (DeLorme & Reid, 1999). In a survey of 500 American TV viewers, Gaffney (2003) reported that one-fourth of the subjects admitted to trying products they saw advertised through product placement. Furthermore, in a study of 100 subjects, Auty and Lewis (2004) found that subjects exposed to product placement in a film clip were significantly more likely to choose the branded product than those who did not see the film clip. Finally, in a study consisting of 8 focus groups and 30 in-depth interviews with a total of 99 subjects, DeLorme and Reid (1999) found that people recognize that their purchasing decisions and brand preferences are influenced by the practice of product placement.

Taylor (2009) argued that, despite the recent surge in academic research on product placement, there is still a great need to investigate the topic. Friedman (1985) found that the incorporation of brand names in best-selling novels has continually and substantially increased since World War II. Despite this, there has been a relative absence of research on product placement in novels and other forms of literature (see Brennan, 2008; Manzano, 2010; Nelson, 2004) and an absolute absence in the field of children's

literature. To date, to the best of my knowledge, no studies have researched product placement within children's picture books, despite the practice's presence in the medium.

Furthermore, there is currently no research that examines the effects of the shared reading of children's books on parents. The effects of shared reading on children are another matter entirely. Within children, the joint reading of storybooks by parents and their young children has a strong positive relationship with everything from vocabulary development (Lonigan & Whitehurst, 1998; Pellegrini, Galda, Jones, & Perlmutter, 1995; Sénéchal & Cornell, 1993), literacy (Newman, 1996; Teale, 1981; for a review, see Bus & van Ilzendoorn, 1995), and memory for content (Cornell, Sénéchal, & Broda, 1988), to attention and engagement (Sénéchal, Cornell, & Broda, 1995), and interaction and communication (Brickman, 2002; Klimenko, 2011; Nathanson & Rasmussen, 2011). Teal (1981) found that reading in the home correlated positively with children's language development, growth of vocabulary, eagerness to read, and success in beginning reading in school. All of these effects cross socio-economical divisions and gender demographics. In short, the literature universally, exhaustively, and conclusively shows that joint reading of storybooks by parents and their children is a strong contributor to thriving cognitive and social development in children. What the literature largely overlooks is this activity's effects on parents.

The literature that does exist suggests that shared book reading provides parents with a facilitated opportunity to communicate with their children (Hindman, Connor, Jewkes, & Morrison, 2008), and elicits an increase in maternal communication (Nathanson & Rasmussen, 2011) and self-efficacy (Brickman, 2002), but nothing explores parents' recall of the contents of children's books. Because shared reading has a

positive relationship with attention, engagement, interaction, and communication (Brickman, 2002; Klimenko, 2011; Nathanson & Rasmussen, 2011; Sénéchal, Cornell, & Broda, 1995) and product placement positively affects recognition of, and preference for, products (Baker & Crawford, 1996; DeLorme & Reid, 1999; Gaffney, 2003; Law & Braun, 2000; Auty & Lewis, 2004), this study is interested in the effects that shared reading has on parents' recall and recognition of product placement in children's picture books.

To accomplish this, this study will focus on the differences in brand recall and recognition of product placements in children's books between adults who read these books alone and adults who read them aloud with their children. My belief is that these two reading experiences will provide both qualitatively and quantitatively different environments of interaction, attention, retention, and recall. And while it may seem odd to test the memory of a parent who reads children's books alone, some literature suggests that adults turn to these books to deal with hardship, sorrow, and stress of their own (see Eckler, 2013), but additionally—and in support of the current study—parents pre-read children's books alone on a regular basis in bookstores and libraries to determine appropriateness and decide whether their children would enjoy a given book enough for the parent to invest money and time in the product (Mackenzie, 2013). If there is a difference in levels of recall and recognition between parents who read alone and parents who read aloud with their children, it could carry some pretty weighty implications about how aware parents are about product placement when they are prescreening material versus when they are engaged in reading with their child.

Before we examine these differences, it is necessary to review the origins of product placement within literature, as well as the theoretical foundations for the effects they have on individuals.

### **Context and Historical Overview**

#### **Product Placement in Literature**

When French author Jules Verne set out to write *Around the World in Eighty Days*, he had already become world renowned for his previous works *Journey to the Center of the Earth* (1864), *From the Earth to the Moon* (1865), and *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* (1870). It is little wonder why transport and shipping companies approached him to be named in his upcoming adventure (Butcher, 1995; Yuan, 2011). And although there is still disagreement between scholars and biographers about whether he made agreements, or was even paid for them (see Butcher, 1995, JMa, 2013), Butcher (1995) argued that the details with which Verne described the railways and shipping lines warrant suspicions that the author knowingly promoted these companies in the book. The fact that the story was first published as a serial in a newspaper (Chaplin, 2012), certainly would have made the prospects understandably attractive to advertisers of the time. Ultimately, whether or not Verne was paid, the fact that he explicitly included names and descriptions of railways and shipping lines made *Around the World in Eighty Days* (1872) arguably the first book of brand integration, or product placement.

Since that time, product placement has appeared steadily throughout literature. Charles Dickens incorporated it into *Pavilionstone* (1902); David Ogilvy's *Confessions of an Advertising Man* (1963) is arguably a novel length advertisement; and recently, works by Beth Ann Herman, Maureen F. McHugh, Bill FitzHugh, and Fay Weldon have included corporate sponsored placement (Nelson, 2004). It is reasonable to assume that

even the debut of Truman Capote's *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (1958) must have attracted the comparable attention that an actual Tiffany's advertisement would have garnered for the jewelry company, when the book was first published in the pages of *Esquire*. Critics have argued that product placement in literature celebrates corporations (Rose, 2001) and "erodes reader confidence in the authenticity of the narrative" (Kirkpatrick, 2001); while proponents argue that it creates a more personal relationship with a book (Kirkpatrick, 2001; Nelson, 2004).

Within young adult literature, books like Sean Stewart and Jordan Weisman's *New York Times* bestselling *Cathy's Book, If Found Call (650) 266-8233* (2006) and Tina Wells' *Mackenzie Blue* (2013) series have openly embraced the relationship between corporate sponsorship and literary art (see Rich, 2006, 2008). Rich (2006) points out that "product placement in books is still relatively rare. The use of even the subtlest of sales pitches, particularly in a book aimed at adolescents, could raise questions about the vulnerability of the readers" (para. 5). Both of these literary examples are particularly intriguing because they deal thematically with adolescent issues like identity and socialization at a time of life when the target readership of adolescents actively "draw materials from media that contribute to their socialization" (Arnett, 1995, p. 525) and are especially vulnerable to the effects of media, because they are in a delicate developmental social period in life where "important aspects of socialization are taking place, especially with regard to identity-related issues such as occupational preparation, gender role learning, and the development of a set of values and beliefs" (Arnett, 1995, p. 520). In the examples of both *Cathy's Book* and *Mackenzie Blue*, the implied character endorsements

of popular name brands carries an added measure of persuasive efficacy with this demographic (see Babin & Carder 1996; Smit, van Reijmersdal, & Neijens, 2009).

Product placement in literature, however, does not stop at the young adult level. It has even become a hotly contested topic within children's books (see Kirkpatrick, 2000). Snack brand children's books have become a popular genre in which publishers and authors make financial arrangements with food companies to incorporate their brands into pre-school activity and math books. These deals have resulted in the publication of *The Cheerios Counting Book: 1, 2, 3* (McGrath, Bolster, McGrath, & Mazzola, 2000) and *The Hershey's Milk Chocolate Multiplication Book* (Polotta & Bolster, 2002), as just two examples of the more than 40 such books currently on the market (Nelson, 2004). Perhaps because of the educational value incorporated into these picture books, there are just as many advocates of them as there are critics (see Nelson, 2004).

Taking product placement one step further within children's books, the marketing strategy extends beyond educational books, to award-winning books (see Schachner, 2005; Sweet, 2011; Van Dusen, 2007), as well as popular books by bestselling authors (see Drummond & deGroat, 2013; Rocco, 2014; Seinfeld & Bennett, 2002) and illustrators (see Salley & Stevens, 2002), where brands and products like Jell-O, Animal Crackers, Cap'n Crunch, TV Guide, Cheetos, Oscar Mayer, Arm & Hammer Baking Soda, Blockbuster, Cadillac, Butterfinger, KitKat, Reese's, Hershey, Sun-Maid Raisins, and even Macy's and Skullcandy are given varying levels of integration and prominence. Although advocacy groups and booksellers have used their own branding to label this use of product placement a revolting abuse and manipulation of children (see Nelson, 2000), one PTO head argued, "Any book that [children] recognize for whatever reason and read



and enjoy is a good thing” (Nelson, 2004, para. 11). This comment is incredibly insightful because it was not made by a pediatrician, head of a children’s advocacy group, or even an educator, it was made by a parent reacting to the practice of product placement in books targeted directly at young children.

The effects that the reading of children’s picture books has on parents are profoundly intriguing; perhaps even more intriguing than the discussion about any potential effects they may have on the preschool-aged children who read them. Part of this can be attributed to the effect that joint reading has on parents (see Nathanson & Rasmussen, 2011; Vygotsky, 1962). An equal measure can be attributed to the large body of research that asserts product placement’s effects on adolescents and adults (see Owen et al., 2013; Wilson & Till, 2011), while equally asserting its limited effects capability on children (Valkenburg & Cantor, 2001).

Although empirical research suggests that children as young as three years old can recall content from children’s books (Cornel, Sénéchal, & Broda, 1988; Evans, 1998; Stein, 1975), an equally strong body of literature argues that until age five, children cannot distinguish between a narrative and an advertisement integrated into the flow of the story, and before age eight, children do not understand commercial, advertising, and marketing intention (Acuff, 1997; Friestad & Wright, 1995; Valkenburg & Cantor, 2001; for a review, see Buijzen & Valkenburg, 2000). Therefore, children may be able to recall product placements in children’s books, but they do not recognize it as an advertisement with persuasive intent. It is simply part of the engaging narrative. It should be noted here that the irony in this is that even though children under age eight do not understand marketing intention, advertising and marketing efforts exact the highest impact on this

age group (Acuff, 1997). So, for whom are the product placements in children's picture books intended?

Children do develop brand loyalty at a very young age, and they carry favorable attitudes into adulthood (McNeal, 1992), informing their purchasing decisions as they age. Additionally, as they get older, they influence parents' purchasing decisions (Gunter & Furnham, 1998; McNeal, 1992; Smith, 2010). A longitudinal study of very young children who are exposed to product placement in picture books may yield some support for product placement effects on children themselves, but it is much more reasonable to assume that product placements within the intensely intimate experience of shared book reading, that takes place between a parent and a child, have greater potential to immediately affect the parent in the dyad, a group for whom 25% admit that product placements influence their purchasing decisions (Gaffney, 2003).

Cognitively, there are a number of theories that help to explain the persuasive effectiveness product placement within children's books has on parents. This study explores just a few of them here as it builds a literature review that will support the current study.

### **Theoretical Overview**

#### **Persuasion Knowledge**

When adults encounter ads in magazines or television commercials, they are able to separate the flow of the magazine articles or television shows from the advertisements, recognize the persuasive intent of the advertising, and form counterarguments to the persuasive episodes (Avery & Ferraro, 2000).

This "persuasion knowledge" about how, why, and when a message is intended to influence is developed over time in individuals and helps them adapt and respond to

persuasive episodes (Friestad & Wright, 1994). Cognitively, according to Friestad and Wright (1994), this accumulated knowledge remains inactive within the individual until triggered by a message, sales pitch, or other stimulus, but it is always in a state of readiness so it can be efficiently accessed when the individual needs to form an attitude, opinion, or response to an agent that is attempting to persuade or influence (for a conversation on knowledge accessibility and activation, see also, Higgins, 1996). When persuasion knowledge is activated, individuals engage in central route processing, which can lead to awareness of persuasive intent and decreased persuasion (Shrum, Liu, Nespoli, & Lowery, 2013). Research argues that the average person (as early in age as middle school) indeed understands how persuasion tactics work and what their purposes are (Friestad & Wright, 1995), and this understanding increases with age and becomes positively correlated with skepticism toward advertising (Boush, Friestad, & Rose, 1994) and resistance to persuasion (Campbell & Kirmani, 2000; Carlson, Bearden, & Hardesty, 2007). Clearly this mechanism poses a serious obstacle to marketers, and it all but marginalizes overt forms of advertising that the individual is opposed to. This assertion is supported throughout the literature on persuasion knowledge (see Campbell & Kirmani, 2000; DeCarlo, 2005), and with advertising in particular, research has found that specific ad characteristics like biased endorsers (Kirmani & Zhu, 2007), overuse of rhetorical questions (Ahluwalia & Burnkrant, 2004), negative comparison (Jain & Posavac, 2004), and borrowed interest appeals (Campbell, 1995) can all make an audience feel like advertisers are trying to manipulate them, and consequently activate consumers' persuasion knowledge. However, if advertising can occur without the activation of

product knowledge, persuasion can proceed through the peripheral route (Shrum et al., 2013) and achieve a modicum of success.

**Persuasion Knowledge and Nontraditional Advertising.** Although Richardson (2013) argued against it, there is sufficient empirical evidence to support the notion that if a brand is included as part of dramatic entertainment, and the promotional intent is not explicit, it can enhance the narrative in which it is featured, and may not be perceived as persuasive messaging with promotional meaning (Balasubramanian, 1994; Balasubramanian, Karrh, & Patwardhan, 2006; d'Astous & Chartier, 2000; LaPastina, 2001; see Pressgrove, 2013). However, when a brand is prominently placed, persuasion knowledge is activated, the audience starts thinking about the reasons for the brand's presence (Matthes, Schemer, & Wirth, 2007; Russell, 2002), understands the promotional meaning (Lorenzon & Russell, 2012), and those who were highly involved in the program develop a negative attitude toward the brand or product (Cowley & Barron, 2008).

### **Cognitive Busyness**

One such theory that explains how nontraditional advertisements circumvent persuasion knowledge is a process called *cognitive busyness*, and it is supported by a strong body of literature in cognitive psychology that supports the argument that individuals possess a limited capacity to focus their attention, and efforts to devote attention to a primary task result in a division of cognitive resources that leaves less ability to process peripheral stimuli (Enns & Akhtar, 1989; Kahneman, 1973; Yantis & Johnston, 1990; for a review, see Cohen, 2014). When applied to marketing within entertainment media, this theoretical body of work would suggest that when individuals

are engaged, advertisements inserted into the flow of the entertainment receive limited attentional capacity because primary cognitive resources are being devoted to the show, video game, news article, or storybook. The more attention that the entertainment requires or receives, the less attention there is available for processing brand information (Grigorovici & Constantin, 2004; Lee & Faber, 2007). An additional, relevant component of this concept argues that when people are cognitively busy with a given task, they are actually less able to regulate processes, like response to persuasive advertising intent, that they would otherwise intentionally try to control (Cralley, 2005; Devine, 1989). Thus, if a marketer could design an advertisement that was concealed—readers would be less likely to centrally process the advertisement because they would be cognitively busy with the central message; they would be less able to regulate defenses against the content if they were opposed to it; and they would be less likely to object to it when they became aware that it was an advertisement. This is clearly illustrated within the realms of the shared reading of children's books, where parents are heavily involved in interacting with their children, engaging their children, and involving their children in emergent literacy. If a parent was exposed to product placement within this environment, they would theoretically be heavily influenced by the advertisements, and have little defense against them, or objection to them.

### **Shared Reading**

So what power does shared reading of children's books possess? To properly answer this question, it is necessary to take a side step into a pair of cognitive psychology theories known as visual encoding and socialization and their role in emergent literacy.

**Visual Encoding and Socialization.** Literacy emerges in part through exposure to, and interaction with, the environment (Brickman, 2002; Vygotsky, 1962). Society is filled with environmental print on billboards and signs, cereal boxes and T-shirts. Its existence is cultural, and exposure to it is inevitable. Children learn to read these types of environmental print well before they receive any formal literacy education (Goodman, 1980; Mason & Allen, 1986). In these situations, children begin by seeing words attached to an associated object. Gradually, they start to separate the letters and words from the environmental object, through a process called decontextualization of mediational means, and begin to actually read the words instead of the word as a symbol in the context of the environmental object (Vygotsky, 1962). Children's earliest experiences with literacy and their environment are visually based.

Cognitively, the process involved in this event is known as encoding, or the storing of a perceived item of interest within the brain so it can be retrieved and used for some future purpose (Hochberg, 2006; also see Anderson, 1976; Tulving & Thomson, 1973), and is a key component of literacy (Hochberg, 2006). One applicable type of encoding that pertains to the conversation of literacy through environmental print is known as *visual encoding*, or the encoding of images and visual sensory information (see Baddeley, 2003), and has been associated with literacy in recent scholarship (see Maurer, Blau, Yoncheva, & McCandliss, 2010; Wu, Li, & Anderson, 1999). It can be deduced that during literacy learning, children are hyper-aware of visual information and are constantly storing it, encoding it, and retrieving it later, for use in appropriate context.

The integration of visual cues into literacy learning is only one facet of *emergent literacy*, or the developmental stage of childhood before a child becomes an independent

reader (see Clay, 1979). Vygotsky (1962) asserted that children also rely on socialization to become literate members of society. This is to say that children depend on other literate individuals to support, encourage, and build their skills until they can become fully literate themselves.

Because children actively learn to read through visual encoding and socialization, the shared reading experience of children's picture books is an exceptionally vulnerable time when a) children are open to the content of the story as they develop vocabulary and internalize the meanings of the stories; and b) parents are open to the needs and forming schema of their children.

The effects that children have on their parents during this time carries another hypothetical reason for why product placement could influence the parent reader.

### **Child Effects**

Child effects is a particular line of research in behavioral science that has grown a small but steady body of support over the past fifty years (for a review, see Bell & Chapman, 1986; see also Bell, 1968, 1971; Gerwitz, 1961, 1968; Harper, 1971; Kerr, Stattin, & Özdemir, 2012; Maccoby, 2000; Moss, 1967; Osofsky, 1971; Osofsky & O'Connell, 1972; Shanahan & Sobolewski, 2003). Through this line of research, scholars have been able to assert that parents not only raise children, but that children actually raise parents, or more appropriately socialize parents. Although child effects literature spans the effects of both genetic and environmental variables, the literature that is relevant to the current study is primarily concerned with the effects that arise from shared interactions.

Within this narrowed spectrum, a few representative examples stand out. First, by studying the mother-infant relationship in the home, Moss (1967) found that infants quantitatively and qualitatively affect the amount and nature of maternal behavior. Specifically, the study found that mothers increase in confidence, affection, and social behavior as they are socialized to their children's needs and temperaments.

Beyond infancy, Osofsky conducted a pair of studies that focused on the socialization of parents through specific interactions with children. In the first study, Osofsky (1971) found that behavior differences in children, while role-playing, affected mothers' responses. Following this study, Osofsky and O'Connell (1972) observed fathers and mothers in structured interaction with their children. In this study, children were given puzzles of varying degrees of difficulty to construct. The results demonstrated that children became more dependent on parents when they encountered a task with which they were unfamiliar and identified as difficult. When the children displayed dependence, it elicited more interaction and control from parents. In these instances, mothers were found to be more supportive and encouraging of their child's efforts, while fathers were more apt to intervene. In either case, parents' level of involvement and interaction increased when their children were not competent enough to perform a task. These findings can intuitively be broadly applied to emergent literacy and shared reading. When a child is learning to read, parents are more involved and interactive, respond to different behaviors, and in turn increase in confidence and social behaviors themselves.

This conclusion is supported by Heath (1982), who observed changes in shared book reading dynamics as parents' children developed. Heath found that parents interacted heavily with infants by pointing to items and encouraging their children to



participate by naming, describing, and comparing the items to familiar objects. Beginning around age three, mother-oriented conversation decreased, and mothers began to encourage their children to listen and store what was read and answer questions about the content of the storybooks. This study supports the notions that a) the shared reading experience is highly-focused and demands attention to detail by both parent and child, and b) parents are socialized to respond to the expressed and perceived needs of their children.

### **Dual Coding Framework**

Because shared book reading is both an audio and visual activity, Paivio's (1983, 1986) dual coding framework seems especially applicable to this study. In this philosophy, memory for a target increases because subjects are using two sensory modalities to encode information into memory. Current research has applied this framework to product placement (Balasubramanian et al., 2006; Brennan & Babin, 2004; Russell, 1998) and has employed tests of recall to assert that individuals remember brands more when visual and audio placements are combined (see Sabherwal et al., 1994). There is some scholarship that challenges this argument (see Gupta & Lord, 1998; Russell, 2002; Steertz, 1987), but these studies all found that recall for audio-only placements was higher than visual-only placements. Law and Braun (2000) did find the reverse, but they noted that their sample size may have contributed to the contradiction in results.

While placements in children's books are largely visual in nature, the practice of shared reading allows these placements to be dual coded into memory, either by reading their names in the text of the book's prose/lyrics or by pointing them out during added

verbal conversation about the contents of each page. One could expect that this dual coding process would be absent when a parent reads a children's book alone, an activity in which encoding would be largely visual only in nature. Consequently, because recall of both audio and visual and audio-only content is greater than visual-only content (Gupta & Lord, 1998; Russell, 2002; Sabherwal et al., 1994; Steertz, 1987), one could also expect that recall for product placement in children's books would be lower among adults who read them alone than among those who read them aloud with their children.

But, what of the adults who read children's books aloud to themselves? Couldn't they also be exposed to dual sensory encoding? Because this study is also interested in the effect that the unique dynamic of shared reading has on memory, we must also explore how these effects differ from those that occur without social interaction. Because there is currently no literature in this area that applies to product placement, we must explore a broader body of scholarship as it applies to advertising and shared experiences.

### **Social Context Encoding and Retrieval**

Research asserts that an individual's ability to recall words, pictures, and stories is superior following shared attention to an object, than when it is viewed alone (see Rajaram & Pereira-Pasarin, 2007; Weldon & Bellinger, 1997). While this argument may seem to defy the notion of collaborative inhibition (Basden, Basden, Bryner, & Thomas, 1997; Karau & Williams, 1993; Weldon, 2001), it is important to note that collaborative inhibition is a phenomenon that affects individuals who have been previously subjected to group recall tests, and in itself does not apply reliably to dyads (Meudell, Hitch, & Kirby, 1992). Rajaram & Pareira-Pasarin (2007) were able to demonstrate, through a study of 60 subjects, that individuals more readily recognized pictures and words after

viewing them with others than they did when they viewed them alone; and they went on to further reveal, through an experiment with 216 subjects, that these influences were still present after a delay that allowed for memory sensitivity to decline. These results were supported within the parent child dyad (Tessler & Nelson, 1994) and in advertising (Puntoni & Tavassoli, 2007; Ritson & Elliott, 1999).

Researchers in advertising have also found that a person's feeling of involvement, which stems from social interaction, has a positive effect on the amount and focus of attention given to marketing messages, which results in stronger encoding in memory (Celsi & Olson, 1988). But social context not only improves encoding processes, it affects retrieval as well (Greenwald & Leavitt, 1984; Puntoni & Tavassoli, 2007).

Burgess and Hitch (1992) argued that retrieval cues compete for cognitive attention as individuals attempt to access information stored in memories, and Gillund and Shiffrin (1984) asserted that one such retrieval cue is the link between the memory and where it was encountered. Based on this, Greenwald and Leavitt (1984) found that cognitive associations between a stimulus and an encoded object are stronger when the stimulus reflects an object that was encoded through social context. Put more straightforwardly, individuals are more apt to remember something they saw or read while in the presence of others than they are when they are alone.

Because of this, one should expect that recognition of product placements in children's books would be greater for individuals who read the books in collaboration than for individuals who read them on their own.

## **Hypotheses & Research Questions**

### **Recall and Recognition**

Generally, research has found success in employing tests of recall for product placement (see Babin & Carder, 1996; Baker & Crawford, 1996; DeLorme & Reid, 1999; Karrh, 1994; Og & Meri, 1994). This method has been used because memory of product placement endures and influences recognition and preference for brands (DeLorme & Reid, 1999). DeLorme and Reid (1999) conducted a qualitative study of movie viewers' accounts and experiences with product placements through a series of eight focus groups and 30 interviews. Through constant comparative analysis, they recognized that participants openly discussed how product placement affects recognition of brands and long-term influence in selection of products. The willingness of subjects in this study seems to somewhat support the notion that recall for product placements is either not moderated by judged appropriateness, as is common in other tests of recall in general cognition studies (see Bar-Hillel, 1980; Higgins, 1996; Martin, 1986; Sherman & Corty, 1984), or subjects do not see product placement as inappropriate. The latter notion may be supported by the findings that individuals actually feel that product placement enhances a narrative (Balasubramanian, 1994; Balasubramanian et al., 2006; see Pressgrove, 2013) and that viewers have generally neutral attitudes toward product placement (Baker & Crawford, 1996; d'Astous & Chartier, 2000; DeLorme & Reid, 1999; Gould et al., 2000; Gupta, Balasubramanian, & Klassen, 2000; Nebenzahl & Secunda, 1993).

Returning to the effectiveness of recall, Baker and Crawford (1996) specifically found that tests of aided and unaided recall resulted in high levels of product placement recall. Combining tests of aided recall with sensory coding processes, in an exit survey of

304 moviegoers for 29 brands in 6 films, Steertz (1987) found that subjects recalled 51 percent of audio-only endorsement, while only 33 percent of visual placements, and only 8 percent of background visual placements, were recalled. Saberwahl, Pokrywczynski, and Griffin (1994) similarly tested the recall differences between visual/audio placements and visual only placements in 62 college students. They found that 65 percent of subjects recalled product placements that were presented both visually and auditorily, while just 43 percent were able to recall visual only placements.

Additionally, in a study consisting of three experiments of a total of 181 college students, Puntoni and Tavasoli (2007) consistently demonstrated that the recall of advertisement information was higher when the information was learned in the presence of others, than when it was learned alone.

With this background in place, this study hypothesizes that

H1: Free recall of brand names will be higher among parents who read children's books together with their children than among parents who read children's books alone.

H2: Recognition of brand names will be higher among parents who read children's books together with their children than among parents who read children's books alone.

H3: Parents will recognize significantly more product placements than they freely recall.

### **Attitude Toward Product Placement**

Additionally, given the divided nature of parents' previously stated feelings about product placement in children's books on principle (Kirkpatrick, 2001; Nelson, 2004),

and the existing literature which suggests that ad content which is absorbed into a narrative elicits fewer concerns and more positive evaluation from those who are exposed to it (Kim, Pasadeos, & Barban, 2001; Nebenzahl & Secunda, 1993; Owen & Karrh, 1996; Van Reijmersdal et al., 2009), this study further seeks to discover

RQ1: What are parents' attitudes toward product placements in children's picture books?

RQ2: Do parents who are exposed to brand placement within the context of an actual children's book and a shared reading experience feel that product placement in children's books is more or less appropriate than parents' conceptual attitudes without context?

RQ3: Do the attitudes toward product placement differ between parents who recalled the placements and parents who did not recall the placements?

RQ4: Do the attitudes toward product placement differ between parents who recalled the placements and parents who did not read the children's picture book?

RQ5: Do the attitudes toward product placement differ between parents who did not recall the placements and parents who did not read the children's picture book?

### **Method**

Prior to the experimental portion of the study, an initial online survey was conducted to establish parents' general attitudes toward product placement in children's books.

For the study, the product placement samples came from the book *When I Was Little: A Four-Year-Old's Memoir of Her Youth* (Curtis & Cornell, 1995). This particular

children's book incorporated placements of the following brands and products at the noted levels of encoding: TV Guide (peripheral visual), Barnum Animal Crackers (visual only), Cap'n Crunch (textual and visual), and Cheetos (textual only).

An initial survey was distributed to personal contacts and contacts of personal contacts through email and Facebook messages. Respondents were asked a series of questions to assess their attitudes toward the practice of product placement in children's picture books (questions are described subsequently in the Survey Instrument section of this chapter). Respondents were not assigned a particular book to read. A total of 42 subjects completed the survey of conceptual attitudes.

Following this initial survey, and prior to conducting the experiment, the baseline of twelve initial subjects was assessed to rule out floor effects and ceiling effects, potentially confounding conditions where a substantial number of test subjects' results coalesce around the extreme ends of the testing spectrum, rather than conforming to normal distribution (see Tolmie, Muijs, & McAteer, 2011). In the current study, I was particularly watching to see whether the subjects unanimously recalled or recognized (or failed to recall or recognize) the product placements within the selected children's picture book.

### **Experiment Design**

For the experiment, subjects were solicited through the use of Facebook, Craigslist, and email communication to personal contacts, contacts of personal contacts, and strangers who received and chose to respond to the messages. Subjects who were selected resided in or around the city in the western United States where the experiment was conducted, with a stipulation that they be a parent of a child who is currently four,

five, or six years old. This child demographic was selected because these children would be developmentally interactive in the shared reading experience, and they would be in the developmental state of emergent literacy. They were told that they would receive 20 dollars cash for participation in the experiment and completion of the survey.

Eighty-nine subjects participated in this portion of the study. Of these 89, 62% were age 25 to 34 and 33% were age 35 to 44; 63% were female, while 37% were male; and 13% reported an annual household income of \$0-\$24,999 and 38% reported an income of \$25,000-\$49,999, while 42% reported an income of \$50,000-\$99,999.

Subjects participated in the study in a laboratory setting. Upon arrival, they were given a copy of the selected book. Subjects were told that the subsequent survey would be interested in the story-based engagement of their child. Those who read the book alone were instructed to read the book silently to themselves and were asked to consider, while they read, how engaged their child would be in a reading of the book. Subjects who read the book in a dyad with their child were asked to read the book to their child and consider, while they read, how engaged their child was during the shared reading of the book. With the latter subjects, the study prescreened subjects to ensure that only dyads were incorporated into the study. Subjects were left alone to read the book.

### **Survey Instrument**

Following the reading of the book, subjects were given a survey to complete (see Appendix A). The survey was done on a computer, through Qualtrics. The survey instrument did not allow the participants to return to a previously completed portion of the survey or see forthcoming portions of the survey. This was done so that the



participants would not alter prior parts of the survey or be influenced by later parts of the survey.

**Confederate Questions.** Confederate questions were created for use in this study, to limit participant bias toward testing. The confederate questions began with demographic questions, ascertaining age of parent, gender of parent, household income, age of child, gender of child, and how often they read to their child. These questions were asked of both experiment subjects and initial survey respondents. Experiment subjects were then asked whether they had previously read the book. The survey then determined experiment subjects' level of engagement during the reading and opinions about the quality of the book's illustrations, prose, plot, and theme, and overall interest in the book, as well as perceptions of whether their children enjoyed/would enjoy the book. These questions were asked to minimize intervening variables, and so that the subjects would be unassuming, would feel they were providing objective responses, and would not initially focus on the aspect of product placement. Other than the question that determined whether subjects had previously read the book, none of these questions were used in the analysis of data for the current study. The data from subjects who had previously read the book were eliminated from the study since there is support, in movies, that previous exposure to the tested movie affects recognition of the brand (see Auty & Lewis, 2004), a notion that is supported in the literature on accessibility in cognition (see Brunner, 1957; Higgins, 1996).

These confederate questions were followed by product placement questions. The data on recollection and recognition of product placement, as well as attitudes toward product placement, were the parts of the survey that were pertinent to the current study.

**Recall Question.** The first question pertained to product recall. This question consisted of an open-ended prompt that asked participants “Please list any products/brands/logos that you observed in the book that appeared in either the illustrations or the written words.” Subjects had the additional option of selecting that they recalled “None” of the product placements.

**Recognition Question.** The subjects were then asked to select which products they remembered from a list of products and brands, where the incorporated products were interspersed with 10 non-relevant products. The list of options also included “None” and “Other,” where the subjects could list additional products they believed they recognized.

Precedence for the use of sequential recall and recognition tests in consumer research has been validated in previous scholarship (see Anderson, 2006; Krishnan & Chakravart, 2003; Singh & Rothschild, 1983). Furthermore, the current study did not use false recall measures (see Brennan & Babin, 2004). Matthes, Wirth, Schemer, and Kissling (2011) argued that these measures are only necessary when the research is interested in true recall, not when it is interested in the differences between conditions, like the current study.

**Attitude Questions.** Next, subjects were asked how often they have conversations with their child about media/advertising, and how they feel about product placement advertising to children. The former was measured on a 4-point scale that ranged from “Never” to “Often,” and the data was collected, but was not used in this particular study. The latter question asked subjects, “How do you feel about the use of product placement in children's picture books, generally?” Subjects selected an option

from a five-point semantic differential scale that ranged from “Inappropriate” to “Acceptable.” Subjects were also asked, “Why do you feel this way?” to which they could provide an open-ended response. The use of a five-point scale to quantitatively determine attitudes about product placement has been used in previous scholarship (see Gupta, Balasubramanian, & Klassen, 2000) as has the use free responses to qualitatively assess attitudes (see DeLorme & Reid, 1999). This last set of questions was asked of both experiment subjects and initial survey respondents.

### **Statistical Comparison of Means**

Results were scored by calculating the frequency with which each group recalled the product placements within the selected book, how their responses changed from test of recall to tests of recognition, as well as the attitudes toward product placement, and comparing the mean frequencies between the groups using an independent sample *t*-test, a paired-sample *t*-test, and a oneway ANOVA, respectively.

### **Qualitative Analysis of Expressed Attitudes**

Parents' open-ended responses about their attitudes toward product placement were analyzed using the process of constant comparative analysis (Eaves, 2001), a method where themes emerge organically through analysis and comparison of information (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and recurring themes become representative.

## **Results**

### **Pretest Results**

In assessing potential floor and ceiling effects, the preliminary study data revealed that 58% of subjects ( $n=7$ ; 2 who read with child, 5 who read alone) could not freely

recall any of the placed products, 42% of subjects ( $n=5$ ; 4 who read with children, 1 who read alone) freely recalled at least one placed product, .8% ( $n=1$ , who read with child) recalled two placed products, and no subjects freely recalled more than two placed products. The mean recall of the four placed products for all pretest subjects ( $n=12$ ) was .42 ( $SD=.67$ ).

In a test of recognition, 100% of subjects ( $n=12$ ) recognized at least one placed product, 83% of subjects ( $n=6$ ; 4 who read with child, 2 who read alone) recognized at least two placed products, 33% ( $n=4$ ; 3 who read with child, 1 who read alone) recognized at least three placed products, and 17% of subjects ( $n=2$ ; 1 who read with child, 1 who read alone) recognized all four placed products a mean of 2.33 ( $SD=.99$ ) of the four placed brands. The mean recognition of the four placed products for all pretest subjects ( $n=12$ ) was 2.33 ( $SD=.99$ ).

While the initial test of recall yielded very low results, this was not unexpected, since the study hypothesized that cognitive busyness would moderate initial recall. The study was primarily interested in the difference between recall and recognition, and the pretest demonstrated a difference that was acceptable enough to undertake the subsequent experiment.

### **Hypotheses Results**

In response to H1, an independent-sample  $t$ -test of recall of brands incorporated in children's picture books through the practice of product placement revealed that the recall of product placements among parents who read with their children ( $n=45$ ;  $M=.84$ ,  $SD=.77$ ) did not statistically differ from recall among parents who read alone ( $n=44$ ;

$M=.61$ ,  $SD=.78$ ;  $p=.164$ ; see Table B1). The notable aspect of these results was that neither group initially recalled a substantial number of products.

In response to H2, an independent-sample  $t$ -test of recognition of brands incorporated in children's picture books through the practice of product placement revealed a significant difference between parents who read with their children ( $n=45$ ;  $M=2.4$ ,  $SD=.84$ ) and parents who read alone ( $n=44$ ;  $M=1.9$ ,  $SD=1.14$ );  $t(87)=-2.32$ ,  $p=0.023$  (see Table B1). These results suggest that shared reading really does have an effect on recognition of placed brands. Specifically, when parents are engaged in the shared reading of children's picture books, their recognition of products that were placed in the medium increases.

In response to H3, a paired sample  $t$ -test indicated that parents who read the book recognized ( $M=2.16$ ,  $SD=1.02$ ) significantly more product placements than they recalled ( $M=.73$ ,  $SD=.78$ ),  $t(88) = -13.328$ ,  $p<.001$ ,  $d=1.57$ . These results suggest that parents may not be able to initially freely recall very many product placements in children's picture books, but they are encoding them and storing them in memory, and are significantly more able to recognize that the products were incorporated when later confronted with the products.

To summarize the results of the study's hypotheses, H1 was not supported, while both H2 and H3 were supported.

### **Research Questions Results**

The results of RQ1 are best divided into three groups—those who felt the practice to be at least Somewhat Inappropriate, those who felt Neutral about the practice, and those who felt it was at least Somewhat Appropriate (see Appendix C for a complete list

of provided responses). Forty-seven respondents felt that the practice of product placement in children's picture books was either Inappropriate or Somewhat Inappropriate. These subjects' responses included feelings that identified child vulnerability as the primary source of their concerns. One representative respondent of this recurring theme expressed that "it's taking advantage of an easily influenced, captive audience," while another felt that "it just seems wrong to start advertising to them at such a young age in such a subtle way." Many of the parents who opposed the practice also felt that the reading of children's books should be a respite from the world. As one parent explained, "I read with my kids to 'escape' the world, learn, and explore." Another parent with similar sentiments felt that, "The time I spend reading with my children is meant to bring us closer together and to be a pleasant learning experience reading things of our choosing with good messages." Interestingly, although the parents in this group almost unanimously felt that the practice was "a sneaky way to advertise to children in a way that is appealing to them," none of these parents showed any indication of recognition that the product placements could be directed toward them as parents. The responses unanimously focused on child response and influence.

Continuing with RQ1, 48 of the respondents had a neutral attitude toward the practice. These responses largely did not make reference to child vulnerability or the environment of the reading experience. Instead, these responses included the first references to the fact that actual products are identifiable to children and make the stories more relatable and realistic. One parent admitted that, "It has never really bothered me, but it kind of makes the book seem somewhat more realistic because you would see those products in real life. I think if he noticed the product, he might get excited because it's

something he's familiar with." Another respondent felt that the placements "seem to reflect what life is like and so to me it is just a picture or an attempt to show something that we can relate to." This group of respondents also included the first mentions of support for the brands' efforts to make a profit. One parent felt that, "I know they are just trying to make money and my kids see it everywhere anyway so if there is just a mention here or there I am fine with it." The overwhelming sentiment among this group of parents was, "If it fits into the story and is appropriate for children, I don't mind."

The final group of parents included 38 subjects who felt that the practice was either Somewhat Appropriate or Appropriate. This group built upon the previous group's sentiments that the practice "helps the story feel more personal and real," and "make the book more authentic." These parents were the only group that recognized the possibility that the products might be directed toward them as parents. One representative parent in this group expressed that, "it is our responsibility to decide or not to buy," while another said "If they get away with it and parents fall into the trap...good for advertisers and sorry crappy parents." Many of these parents also defended publishers' right to manage the contents of their books and corporations' rights to market their products, through statements like, "publishers can choose to put anything they want in their books...we shouldn't push our ideas into the free market," and "They are a business and have the opportunity to do what they want." Furthermore, numerous respondents in this category agreed that, "Our lives are full of marketing," and that the products they see are products "my child sees in the store any way [*sic.*]." Many parents in this group, though, felt that the practice was only appropriate if it enhanced a sense of connection to the story and the real world without blatantly advertising. One parent felt that "I think if it relates to things

they see around them in the world, then it is fine. I wouldn't want it to become full-blown advertising.”

Using a Oneway ANOVA to compare means and answer RQ2, a statistically significant difference was found among the three levels of involvement with children's picture books on attitude toward product placement in children's picture books,  $F(2,128)=19.373, p<.001$  (see Table B2). The mean attitude toward product placement was 2.07 among those who did not read a book ( $n=42, SD=1.05$ ), 3.27 among those who read with a child ( $n=45, SD=.94$ ), and 3.34 among those who read alone ( $n=44, SD=1.18$ ). Post hoc Tukey HSD Tests indicate that those who did not read differed significantly from those who read with a child ( $p<.001, d=1.21$ ) and those who read without a child ( $p<.001, d=1.14$ ) in how appropriate they felt the practice of product placement in children's picture books is. Those who read with a child did not statistically differ from those who read alone ( $p=.942$ ). These results suggest that parents' attitudes toward product placement in children's picture books are affected by whether they are exposed to the product placements, in context, while reading the books either alone or jointly with their 4, 5, or 6 year old child. Specifically, parents are conceptually significantly more opposed to the practice of product placement in children's picture books, but when they are exposed to product placement in the context of an actual book, it is viewed to be much more appropriate.

To answer RQ3, RQ4, and RQ5, I used a Oneway ANOVA to compare means, and found a statistically significant difference among the three levels of recall of product placement in children's picture books on attitude toward product placement in children's picture books,  $F(2,128)=19.366, p<.001$  (see Table B3). The mean attitude toward



product placement was 2.07 among those who did not read a book ( $n=42$ ,  $SD=1.05$ ), 3.27 among those who read the book and freely recalled products ( $n=48$ ,  $SD=.96$ ), and 3.34 among those who read the book and did not recall products ( $n=41$ ,  $SD=1.18$ ). Post hoc Tukey HSD Tests indicate that those who did not read differed significantly from those who read and recalled products ( $p<.001$ ,  $d=1.198$ ) and those who did not recall products ( $p<.001$ ,  $d=1.14$ ) in how appropriate they felt the practice of product placement in children's picture books is. Those who read with a child did not statistically differ from those who read alone ( $p=.942$ ).

To summarize the results of this study's research questions, RQ1 identified specific attitudes that individuals have about product placement. Those who felt the practice was inappropriate thought that it was a manipulation of a vulnerable audience, but unanimously failed to associate effects with themselves as parents; those who felt the practice was acceptable thought that it enhanced the realistic nature of the narrative and identified the practice's potential effects on both children and parents. RQ2, RQ3, RQ4, and RQ5 demonstrated that parents' attitudes toward the practice are moderated by the act of reading children's picture books that contain product placements.

### ***d* Family of Effects**

It must be noted that the *d* family of effects were used in the current study rather than the Pearson correlation coefficient, or *r* family of effects sizes that often include associational statistics such as rho, phi, and eta. This was used because the current study was more concerned with differences in variables rather than correlations, and "the *d* family focuses on magnitude of difference rather than strength of association" (Morgan,

Leech, Gloeckner, & Barrett, 2007, p. 93). According to Cohen (1988), *d* values greater than or equal to 1.00 represent effect sizes that are much larger than typical effects.

### **Discussion**

The shared reading of children's picture books is a unique experience. It combines visual and auditory encoding of content in a social context, and it takes place during a stage of emergent literacy for the child half of the dyad that has demonstrated cognitive effects on the parent half of the dyad. When product placement is infused in this intensely particular mass communication experience, the effects on attitude and memory are clear—shared reading enhances parents' memory for product placements and moderates their attitudes toward the practice. Many of the effects identified in the current study support the existing literature on product placement and transfer them to the previously unstudied medium of children's picture books, while some appear to be as unique as the medium itself. A discussion of these effects will hopefully aid in initiating conversation and scholarly interest in this previously unexplored medium. And while I will certainly attempt to initiate this discussion here, I openly recognize that there is a much larger conversation that should be propagated beyond the realms of this study. The unique nature of the medium of children's picture books combined with the practice of product placement demands the further attention of invested scholars.

#### **Effects on Attitude**

First, and perhaps foremost, the present study supports a number of the product placement effects on attitude that have been found in other mediums. Since the bulk of the academic work on product placement concerns itself with attitudes toward the

placements and the practice (see van Reijmersdal et al., 2009), this seems a natural place to start.

To begin with, consumers of the content in which product placement has been inserted 1) have historically had neutral attitudes about the practice (see Baker & Crawford, 1996; Nebenzahl & Secunda, 1993), 2) have been found to be less concerned about the placements, and 3) have judged them more positively than other types of advertisements (see Nebenzahl & Secunda, 1993; Van Reijmersdal et al., 2009). The current study supports each of these findings and extends them into the medium of children's picture books. Specifically, parents who read children's picture books, either alone or with their children, have predominantly neutral attitudes toward the practice, but find the practice, applied specifically to children's picture books, significantly more appropriate than parents who judge the appropriateness of the practice conceptually, without the context of a book.

The first historical finding in the scholarship, as stated above, is that consumers have predominantly neutral attitudes about the practice. The results of the current study support this in demonstrating that those exposed to the product placements had mean attitudes that fell within the Neutral range of the spectrum. However, the current study also discovered, through qualitative analysis of subjects' explanations of these attitudes, that there are distinct attitudes about the practice that add dimension to this statistical result. These findings also spoke directly to the finding that consumers of the content judge product placement more positively than overt advertisements, and added an additional layer that found that consumers who are exposed to the content judge it more positively than individuals who are not exposed to the content.

There is some literature which suggests that people view the practice of product placement in children's picture books as inappropriate, to put it mildly (see Nelson, 2000). The present research supports that parents feel this way, but stipulates that this emotion prevails among parents who do not have the shared reading experience or the context of the book as a frame of reference. These parents' qualitative responses to the survey in this study revealed that they felt that this "distracting," "manipulative" practice "is taking advantage of an easily influenced, captive audience."

Those who read the book for this study felt that the practice was significantly more appropriate, though, and they maintained this difference in attitude whether or not they recalled the placements. Qualitatively, these subjects argued that "publishers can choose to put anything they want in their books, it is our responsibility to decide to buy or not to buy, but we shouldn't push our ideas into the free market," "It is part of the storyline and I think it is ok," and "having them in children's books could help the child to learn to read just by product recognition alone." The latter statement also supports past literature on exposure to environmental print and decontextualization of mediational means (see Vygotsky, 1962) as well as previously established qualitative sentiments from supporters of product placement in children's literature who feel, once again, that "any book that [children] recognize for whatever reason and read and enjoy is a good thing" (Nelson, 2004, para. 11).

And although this study did not specifically measure concern for product placement, qualitatively a definite trend emerged among those who read the books that did not occur as prevalently among those who were surveyed about their conceptual feelings about the practice without a book for context. Respondents who read said that "I

don't think it creates a problem," "I prefer the exposure to be in a time and place [like this] when I have some control," and included a strong theme that "kids will learn from parents" and not from the book. Furthermore, one parent outright said that, "not only am I not concerned about it...I think it has the potential [to] lend itself to kids relating to the story." Clearly the academically identified product placement effect of a mediated sense of concern in consumers (Nebenzahl & Secunda, 1993; Van Reijmersdal et al., 2009) exists in the children's book medium.

This could be due to misconceptions about what product placement actually is among those who do not physically see how the products are incorporated. Exposure to the actual practice may cause people to revise their attitudes. The catch-22 here is that if marketers did better at educating consumers about what product placement is (generally, an infusion of the product into the narrative, rather than a blatant sales pitch), people may respond more favorably to the practice generally. However, the very act of doing this would increase consumers' persuasion knowledge and potentially alter the effects this type of nontraditional advertising has and perhaps decrease ad efficacy among viewers.

The last parent above touched on the most prevalently consistent theme among parents in this study. Parents believed that product placement made the story more relatable and more realistic. This sentiment that appears throughout the literature on product placement (Balasubramanian, 1994; Balasubramanian et al., 2006; Berkowitz, 1994; Pressgrove, 2013; Wenner, 2004) was willingly put forth by parents in this study who felt that the practice "makes the book engaging for the child as they can relate to the items the characters are interacting with." One parent echoed the less directly articulate feelings of many others by saying that "I think it adds a sense of reality to the book," while

another wrote that “it helps the story feel more personal and real.” Although this study did not quantifiably measure perceived realism, the qualitative results clearly demonstrate that parents who read the children’s picture book in this study felt that the product placements enhanced the reality of the narrative. Even though past literature has argued that product placement “erodes reader confidence in the authenticity of the narrative” (Kirkpatrick, 2001), this does not appear to be the case among parents who read the children’s picture books for this study. Future studies should tease out this variable to identify whether the presence of product placements truly makes the narrative more realistic than when branded, recognizable products are left out or substituted with generic brands.

### **Effects on Memory**

Many of the established cognitive effects of product placement (see Baker & Crawford, 1996; DeLorme & Reid, 1999; Gaffney, 2003; Law & Braun, 2000; Auty & Lewis, 2004) occur within children’s picture books as well. Since studies that measure recall and recognition are a definite minority in the field of product placement, compared to those that study attitude (see van Reijmersdal et al., 2009), the following discussion seeks to add to this underserved body of scholarship.

As demonstrated at length in the literature review for this study, scholarship suggests that because product placement gets absorbed in the narrative of the medium in which it is used, consumers are less aware of its presence. These consumers are already devoting attention and cognitive resources to the narrative, so they have limited resources available to recognize the ads or their persuasive intent (see Balasubramanian et al., 2006; Grigorovici & Constantin, 2004; Pressgrove, 2013). This was readily demonstrated

in the little free recall of product placements that occurred among either group of test subjects. The results would suggest that cognitive busyness affected both those parents who read alone and those who participated in shared reading. Furthermore, the fact that such a low rate of free recall occurred in both groups, without significant difference between the groups, may suggest that this cognitive busyness is attributable to the narrative involvement, and not group unique factors like the absence or presence of dual coding or social context encoding. Future research should hone in on these variables to identify if this is indeed the case.

However, whether or not audiences are immediately aware of its presence, past research shows that product placements that are absorbed in a narrative are still being encoded and have the ability to inform future recognition and preference of brands and influence selection of products (see Auty & Lewis, 2004; DeLorme & Reid, 1999; Gaffney, 2003). This is an additional effect of cognitive busyness, which renders the consumer less able to regulate defenses against the placements (see Cralley, 2005) and effectively persuades on some subconscious level (see Auty & Lewis, 2004; Owen, et al, 2013).

The results of the current study demonstrate that product placements in children's picture books are being encoded, and show that retrieval and recognition occurs at substantial rates, especially among those engaged in shared reading. These individuals recognized the placements at a significantly higher volume than those who read alone. Since one primary objective of product placement is to increase brand awareness (see Karrh et al., 2003; Chang et al., 2009), it would seem that the practice of product placement is a successful venture with parents who read with their children.

The study does not identify which variables that are unique to shared reading foster increased recognition, but rather recognizes that all variables exhibited in the shared reading between parent and child, such as the dual coding framework, social context encoding, and child effects, make up a composite operational definition of the phenomenon.

However, it is worth noting that children's picture books are a unique medium that can incorporate the combination of a textual and a visual sensory encoding process that is unique to this medium. If children's picture books are read during shared reading, they also include the added auditory element that accompanies the textual element out of necessity. While novels can incorporate product placements textually, music can incorporate them in an auditory manner, and movies, television shows, and video games can incorporate them in a visual and auditory manner, only children's picture books can incorporate all of these sensory encoding processes in a single experience. Shared reading between parent and child adds to this by incorporating social context encoding and child effects, both of which can be present on some level in other mediums, but which add to the multiple factors that drive this action in this medium.

The unique combination begs further research, though, and should analyze which aspects of shared reading are responsible for increasing product placement recognition. Future research should also compare placement effects across mediums.

### **Ethics**

The current study researched product placement effects in parents as they read children's picture books. Because the study was interested in the effects of shared reading on product placement in *children's* picture books, I also recognize that one half of the



shared reading dyad is a child. During the literature review I debated whether the study of product placement in children's picture books should focus on the child, and concluded that—for the purposes of this non-longitudinal study and the exploratory nature of this study in introducing research on product placement in this medium—it would not be pertinent to examine this demographic. I also recognize that product placements may affect children in some way. I do not necessarily agree with broadly applying the scholarship on product placement to children's picture books or the shared reading that takes place in this medium.

I believe that a nuanced study of children as they engage in this medium, especially during the emotionally and cognitively sensitive conditions of shared reading, may result in informed awareness among children that may not be exhibited in product placement effects in other mediums. After all, as previously argued, children who typically engage in shared reading can adequately recall content from children's books (Cornel, Sénéchal, & Broda, 1988; Evans, 1998; Stein, 1975), and some can even identify ads that have been integrated into a story (Buijzen & Valkenburg, 2000; Valkenburg & Cantor, 2001).

Marketers have long identified the benefits of advertising to children. As early as the late nineteenth century, marketing efforts were focused on creating brand consciousness within children (Jacobson, 2004; Smith, 2010) because advertisers recognized that children had habitual purchasing tendencies (Garvey, 1996; Jacobson, 2004; Rhodes, 1921; Schor, 2005; Smith 2010) and an uncanny ability to influence parents' purchasing decisions through persistent requests (Jacobson, 2004; Schor, 2005). A few indicative pieces of sales training to store owners during this era even proudly

proclaimed, "When the youngster has bought one he always comes for more" ("The Bubble Books," 1919, p. 153), "The easiest way to win the good-will of customers is through their children" and "When you sell one you sell a habit" (both "Bubble Books Sell," 1923, p. 57), and "How many children do you have working for you?...in your customer's homes. The dealer that sells Bubble Books has one or more persistent salesmen in every home in his town" ("How many children," 1921, p. 63). Clearly marketers recognize the return that comes from marketing directly to children.

Because of this, modern society is highly invested in, and concerned about, protecting children from the world of commodities (Smith, 2010). Jacobson (2004) even argued that children's media has been viewed as a "sacralization of childhood" that has led to the determination by adults that "children should be shielded from commercial exploitation of any kind" (p. 23). Specifically within the realms of product placement, consumer activists and social critics have fought for regulation (see Adler, 1999; Siegel, 2004; Snyder, 1992), and academics have discussed the ethical (Lee, 2008; Wenner, 2004) and legal (Shears, 2014; Siegel, 2004) nature of the practice. And yet the practice of product placement remains legal in the U.S. (Siegel, 2004) and legal but limited in the U.K. (Shears, 2014).

Currently the practice of product placement in children's picture books is not regulated. Advocates for the rights of advertisers will certainly echo one parent in this study who argued the practice was acceptable because "it's the parents [*sic*] responsibility to preview books for their children, if they don't like it, don't buy it." However the results of this study have clearly illustrated that parents who pre-read children's picture books are consciously aware of very little of the product placements that are incorporated

in children's books. What is more, even after they take the book home and engage in shared reading, they are still consciously aware of very little. However, once they have engaged in the shared reading experience they lower their persuasion knowledge defenses, encode the product placements at a significantly higher level, and retrieve them more readily. This may be one of the reasons that parents who engage in shared reading find the practice significantly more acceptable than the average conceptual attitude about the practice, and that consumers within society readily acknowledge that they are aware that product placement is happening (DeLorme & Reid, 1999; Ebenkamp, 2001). Scholarship suggests, however, that having this opinion and awareness, and having control of the processes that prevent persuasion, are very different matters (see Cralley, 2005; Wenner, 2004). Thus, concerns of critics of the practice who seek to protect both parents and children from unwitting manipulation may have merit, and their urges to brand the practice in this medium as a manipulative celebration of corporations (see Nelson, 2000; Rose, 2001) may not be entirely unfounded, even though these people are most likely making their recommendations without actually having engaged in the act of shared reading of children's picture books.

### **Limitations**

There are a number of limitations to this study that must be acknowledged or discussed.

The use of volunteer sampling in the current study limits generalizability of the results (see Wimmer & Dominick, 2011) due to the potential for self-selection bias. To minimize this possibility, demographic questions sought to ensure the participation of subjects of assorted ages and genders, and from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds.

Additionally, subjects in this study were told that the survey which followed the readings would be interested in story-based engagement of their children, and were asked to consider the hypothetical (if they read alone) or actual (if they engaged in shared reading) engagement that their children would experience or actually experienced. There is a possibility that those who engaged in shared reading may have actively campaigned for their children's engagement during the experiment, and that those who read alone may have been more attentive to the content because of this instruction. This could have increased both groups' engagement with the content of the book above normal levels of interaction and awareness, but given this experiment's findings on free recall in both groups and the fact that both groups were exposed to a similar instruction, any potentially confounding effects were most likely somewhat moderated and they would have affected both groups.

Furthermore, even though the experiment conducted in this study did not account for false recall and recognition among test subjects because it focused on differences between conditions, rather than true recall (see Matthes et al., 2011), future scholarship, which continues the research of product placement in children's picture books, and focuses on true recall should seek to include these recall measures (see Brennan & Babin, 2004).

Osofsky and O'Connell (1972) identified that a parent's gender may influence the engagement and involvement dynamic between parent and child while performing an activity jointly, and this could conceivably affect outcomes of variables like recall, recognition, and attitude toward a target. Although the current study did ascertain subjects' genders, it did not control for these variables in any of the test groups. This is

primarily because, after controlling for test conditions, gender sample sizes in each group were fairly low, and I did not believe that the resulting groups would be large enough to provide sophisticated data on this focused of a level.

Although I examined many children's picture books that incorporated product placement, during the actual experiment, all subjects read from the same book. This was done intentionally, but there is a definite possibility that a different children's picture book could yield different results. Future studies should preserve consistency in the book that is tested with subjects, while experimenting with books that have different types of text (e.g., lengthy prose or verse), different artistic mediums, varying levels of product placement recurrence, and even different kinds of products (e.g., healthy food, brand name toys, or brands of athletic shoes that encourage physical activity). This will expand the generalizability of research on product placement in children's picture books.

The current study also did not measure child attitudes. It did measure parents' perceptions of child enjoyment and engagement, but it did not control for these variables. Determining child attitudes from the child perspective, and applying this data to the results could provide more nuanced data that could provide additional detail about the results found in the current study.

Finally, the present study compared the results of subjects who engaged in shared reading against subjects who did not read and subjects who read alone. While this does provide insights into the differences between the given groups, it would be incredibly insightful to test a subject on the outset of the study, then have the same subject read alone, and finally have the same subject engage in shared reading. Unfortunately, the nature of cognition does not allow tests of product placement awareness and attitudes to

be repeated on the same subject since those subjects would become progressively more aware of the nature of the study and the placements within the books. Ultimately these confounding effects prevent scholars of product placement effects from testing the effects of product placement on the same subject across conditions.

The current study should not be seen as a definitive, generalizable statement on the effects of product placement in children's picture books, but rather as a starting point from which to build a new line of scholarship within the world of product placement research. Future studies should seek to support, expound, contradict and generalize the results of this research in the hopes of better understanding this medium.

### **Conclusion and Implications**

Many mass mediums that incorporate product placement are directed toward a youth audience. Unlike those mediums however, children's picture books are intended for a very specific youth demographic, and when shared reading is considered, the demographic is even further refined to usually include children who are in a sensitive emotional and cognitive state of development and socialization. Additionally, the parents in the dyad are uniquely tuned in to the needs of the child and engaged in the narrative. Both of these variables make the parents vulnerable to the effects identified in this study.

This is great news for marketers whose primary objective is to increase brand awareness, sell products, and perpetuate a stable economy in which they operate by identifying new opportunities and spaces in which to advertise their brands and products. The current research is a first step in identifying that there are quantifiable effects of product placement within the world of children's picture books. If an advertiser can arrange to include their brand and products in children's picture books, the unique

environment could yield favorable effects that support marketers' primary objectives. Because of this, advocates for product placement should seek to protect the autonomy under which they currently operate, which allows them to use the medium of children's picture books to further their goals and objectives. They should be sensitive to the need to confine their product placements to instances that further the plot and enhance the environment of the story, since even parents who defend the advertiser's right to place products within this medium admit that overt advertisements would be going too far.

If advertisements are incorporated in this way, publishers should consider the potential benefits that may come from incorporating product placements into their books as a means of enhancing realism without detracting from the central narrative, thus creating a positive evaluation of their books among adult readers.

It may also be cause for concern among activists and social critics of product placement who seek to protect both consumers and children from any place where persuasion knowledge and conscious defense against advertising could be compromised. These individuals should continue to seek regulation of the practice on the grounds that parents are potentially defenseless to the effects of product placements.

In our current economic system, under the laws of freedom of expression that we enjoy, each of these voices should be allowed and encouraged in order to perpetuate conversation and further research that helps us better understand the world in which we live and the cognitive processes under which we operate. It is my hope that the current study may propel future research and scholarship and assist in encouraging and perpetuating these practical and ethical conversations.

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*Appendix A: Survey Instrument*

1. What is your age?

- | # | Answer      |
|---|-------------|
| 1 | 18 to 24    |
| 2 | 25 to 34    |
| 3 | 35 to 44    |
| 4 | 45 to 54    |
| 5 | 55 or older |

2. What is your gender

- | # | Answer |
|---|--------|
| 1 | Male   |
| 2 | Female |

3. What is your approximate annual household income?

- | # | Answer              |
|---|---------------------|
| 1 | \$0-\$24,999        |
| 2 | \$25,000-\$49,999   |
| 3 | \$50,000-\$99,999   |
| 4 | \$100,000-\$149,999 |
| 5 | \$150,000 or more   |

4. Did you read a book for this survey?

- | # | Answer |
|---|--------|
| 1 | Yes    |
| 2 | No     |

5. Have you previously read *When I Was Little: A Four-Year-Old's Memoir of Her Youth* either alone or with a child?

- | # | Answer |
|---|--------|
| 1 | No     |
| 2 | Yes    |

6. While reading this book for this study, did you read the book alone or with your child?

- | # | Answer                  |
|---|-------------------------|
| 1 | I read it alone         |
| 2 | I read it with my child |

7. Do you have a child who is 4, 5, or 6 years old?

- | # | Answer |
|---|--------|
| 1 | Yes    |



2 No

8. What is the age of your child with whom you read the book?

# Answer

1 Under 4 years old

2 4 years old

3 5 years old

4 6 years old

5 over 6 years old

9. What is your child's gender?

# Answer

1 Male

2 Female

10. How often do you read children's picture books with your child?

# Answer

1 Never

2 Less than Once a Month

3 Once a Month

4 2-3 Times a Month

5 Once a Week

6 2-3 Times a Week

7 Daily

11. Do you feel your child would enjoy this book?

# Answer

1 No

2 Yes

12. Do you feel your child enjoyed the book?

# Answer

1 No

2 Yes

13. Why do you feel this way?

Text Response

14. Please rate your opinion of the following aspects of the book on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being poor and 5 being excellent:

Answer

Overall opinion of the book

Quality of the illustrations

- Quality of the written words
- Quality of the story's plot
- Quality of the story's themes

15. Please explain why you rated the book the way you did:

Text Response

16. How engaged were you with your child during the reading (talking about content, interacting with your child by pointing to content, etc.)?

- |   |                   |
|---|-------------------|
| # | Answer            |
| 1 | Not Engaged       |
| 2 | Little Engagement |
| 3 | Some Engagement   |
| 4 | Heavily Engaged   |

17. How involved was your child during the reading?

- |   |                    |
|---|--------------------|
| # | Answer             |
| 1 | Not Involved       |
| 2 | Little Involvement |
| 3 | Some Involvement   |
| 4 | Heavily Involved   |

18. Please list any products/brands/logos that you observed in the book that appeared in either the illustrations or the written words:

- |   |               |
|---|---------------|
| # | Answer        |
| 1 | Text Response |
| 2 | None          |

19. Select any products/brands/logos that appeared in the book:

- |    |                   |
|----|-------------------|
| #  | Answer            |
| 1  | Oreos             |
| 2  | TV Guide          |
| 3  | Animal Crackers   |
| 4  | Doritos           |
| 5  | Cap'n Crunch      |
| 6  | People magazine   |
| 7  | Cheerios          |
| 8  | Hershey's         |
| 9  | Cheetos           |
| 10 | Trix              |
| 11 | Apple             |
| 12 | Jell-O            |
| 13 | Jif Peanut Butter |

- 14 Twizzlers
- 15 None
- 16 Other:

20. How often do you talk to your child about the media and/or advertising?

- # Answer
- 1 Never
- 2 Rarely
- 3 Sometimes
- 4 Often

21. How do you feel about the use of product placement in this children's picture book, *When I Was Little: A Four-Year-Old's Memoir of Her Youth*, specifically?

- # Answer
- 1 Inappropriate
- 2 Somewhat Inappropriate
- 3 Somewhat Acceptable
- 4 Acceptable

22. Why do you feel this way?

Text Response

23. How do you feel about the use of product placement in children's picture books, generally?

- # Answer
- 1 Inappropriate
- 2 Somewhat Inappropriate
- 3 Neutral
- 4 Somewhat Acceptable
- 5 Acceptable

24. Why do you feel this way?

Text Response

25. How do you feel about the following brands on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being Hate It, 3 being Neutral, and 5 being Love It?

- # Question
- 1 TV Guide
- 2 Animal Crackers
- 3 Cap'n Crunch
- 4 Cheetos

*Appendix B: Tables*

Table 1

*Mean Recall and Recognition Scores of Parents with Different Levels of Engagement with Children's Picture Books*

Level of Cognition	Read w/ Child (n=45)	Read w/o Child (n=44)	<i>t</i>
	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	
Free Recall	.84 (.77)	.61 (.78)	
Cued Recall (Recognition)	2.4 (.84)	1.9 (1.14)	-2.32*

\*Differ by independent sample *t*-test by  $p=.023$

Table 2

*Means and Standard Deviations Comparing Attitudes Toward Product Placement of Parents with Different Levels of Engagement with Children's Picture Books*

	Did Not Read (n=42)	Read w/Child (n=45)	Read w/o Child (n=44)	<i>F</i>
	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	
Attitude	2.07 (1.05) <sup>a</sup>	3.27 (.94) <sup>b</sup>	3.34 (1.18) <sup>b</sup>	19.373*

\*Means with different superscript differed significantly by Tukey HSD post hoc test by  $p<.001$ .

Table 3

*Means and Standard Deviations Comparing Attitudes Toward Product Placement of Parents with Different Levels Recall of Placements with Children's Picture Books*

	Did Not Read ( <i>n</i> =42)	Read, Recall ( <i>n</i> =48)	Read, No Recall ( <i>n</i> =41)	
	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>F</i>
Attitude	2.07 (1.05) <sup>a</sup>	3.27 (.96) <sup>b</sup>	3.34 (1.18) <sup>b</sup>	19.366*

\*Means with different superscript differed significantly by Tukey HSD post hoc test by  $p < .001$ .

***Appendix C: Expressions of Attitudes toward the Use of Product Placement in Children's Picture Books***

Inappropriate, Somewhat Inappropriate

(*n*=47)

- Picture books are a child's first introduction to literature, as in thought provoking, character developing learning, it is not a place for companies to market to children.
- There needs to be a place where I can get my child away from the influences, negative or positive of advertising. On a daily basis, we are bombarded by the media with ideas on how we should look, how we should act, who we should friends with. When I read a book to my child, it's partially to get away from those influences. I feel that product placement in a children's picture book is just another way to make convince my child that in order for him to happy, he must have said product. Thank you, but no.
- I think there is better avanues other than children's picture books
- Children should be able to enjoy a book without being advertised to.
- Books should be a place that is safe from advertisements.
- I suppose it is no more inappropriate than advertisements placed during a children's TV program. However, it feels more intrusive and less expected in a book than on TV or in a magazine. That being said, the practice of using manipulative sales advertisements on children seems ethically questionable altogether.
- A young child such as a four your old is not old enough to know his own mind when it comes to perfects getting pushed on him. It's the same way with commercials on tv. Young kids see products and how appealing the media make them look and suddenly they want to have it. As an adult I am aware that some products and brands are not as healthy or right for him. I do not think it's appropriate to have products advertised in child books.
- Children are already subject to too much advertising, and are, in general, easily influenced by it. I would like this arena to be free of advertising, especially since my child is at such an impressionable age.
- Children aren't old enough to purchase products, or make decisions about purchases so advertising to them seems inappropriate
- Children's books should not play a part in advertising at all. They should be for the benefit and enjoyment of the child.
- kids are over advertised, books are a way to explore, learn and grow, let's keep it at that! .
- I read with my kids to "escape" the world, learn, and explore. It would seem distracting. We didn't even watch network or cable tv commercials being one reason.
- I think children's books should be generic and not cluttered with advertising.
- They get enough of it on tv and in movies

- It's distracting, it can detract from a great story and great pictures, and it's taking advantage of an easily influenced, captive audience.
- they are too impressionable to make rational decisions about products. it's basically brainwashing to expose a child to that. and I don't want to be hassled to buy a certain brand of something he has seen in a book.
- Advertising is a nuisance and I don't feel like children need to have to have it explained to them when they're trying to hear a story.
- I haven't really noticed it in the books we read, but I want my kid to be in independent thinker and feel like product placement hamper that.
- I don't want businesses to use books to influence my child as a consumer, rather books are for enjoyment and reading
- Really bad idea
- I think that if a specific product were placed in a picture book for marketing purposes, it would be a crude advantage taken of highly impressionable minds. Our children are precious and the knowledge incurred of the power of impressions on the under-developed mind should be kept sacred and never used for a purpose of profit or gain.
- it's totally intrusive into the relationship and experience. if i want to deal with advertisements, i turn on the tv or leave the house. i would not buy or read a book to my child with advertisements for other products
- My first reaction is 'no' there shouldn't be product placement in children's books. . . although I can't exactly explain why. Other than children are so impressionable, it just seems wrong to start advertising to them at such a young age and in such a subtle way.
- can't we wait for kids to grow up before we start inundating them with advertising already!!
- A children's picture book should be a story that promote literacy and learning. It should not be an advertising campaign.
- It's a children's book - they should be as innocent as possible
- books should not be used as advertisements
- Same response as the prior question. I guess my opinion may change depending on the type of product being advertised.
- they dont know those products because we rarely eat process food and dont watch TV
- I feel as though it is unnecessary and can prejudice the child from making more informed selections as they grow up.
- I don't want my children advertised to without my consent. When I read to my child it's not assumed there are ads, so there's no passive consent.
- Unnecessary to telling the story
- It really isn't needed
- If it is used deliberately as a marketing tool, it makes me feel as though they are trying to manipulate my child.
- I think children are molded too much by messages in the media as it is. Although these weren't necessarily negative images, I don't think they were necessary.

- I don't feel it's necessary. I didn't notice half of the product placements. I'm sure my child wouldn't notice the specific products, just that there was junk food pictured, not necessarily the brand names.
- it depends on the product. some things you can relate to like cheetos, others aren't a health choice.
- I guess a simple reiteration of my previous statement suggests that there is not an appropriate place for this in children's literature. Children are already bombarded by commercials they see during cartoons and don't need to have this continue in their literature. This would be like selling products in A Tale of Two Cities.
- The time I spend reading with my children is meant to bring us closer together and to be a pleasant learning experience reading things of our choosing with good messages. I don't want the time to be needed for instruction on media/advertising.
- I don't really feel it's necessary in a lot of ways- although if it's age and content appropriate I don't really object per say. As long as it doesn't advertise to my child, I wouldn't be that opposed.
- I sort of spoke to this already. I don't like being advertised to. I would just rather not see it. Children's story books are not really the place for that anyway.
- because the books are a way to teach to the kids good habits not to buy things that are not healthy
- Because it will influence children toward wanting that product.
- It depends on how the purpose comes across to the reader. It can feel like the books are shallow, with bright flashy colors just to get advertisements into the home.
- I don't particularly want a child's book to be an advertisement, but sometimes it helps the child relate to the story.
- It's a sneaky way to advertise to children in a way that is appealing to them.
- I don't want my kid marketed to at this age, in any form. We rarely watch TV with her that had commercials for this very reason. A four year old doesn't know, or need to know, what brands are available for foods or other items.

Neutral

(n=48)

- It doesn't really bother me. Product placement is everywhere.
- never thought about it.
- Can provide an awareness or learning opportunity based on the storyline.
- Children are influenced throughout without it being bad or good.
- I don't think it would bother me.
- Screening books, etc is a necessary step. If I feel the product placement does not affect the story/message it won't keep me from buying the book.
- I am not author, and I am choosing to read the book
- I'm confused. I don't think there's ever been product placement in any of the children's books we've bought. I see product placement on TV and in magazines,



but not really in children's books. (unless the book comes free with the product, which doesn't happen very often).

- For me, the children's books we have do not have product placement in them. If they did, I may not be neutral.
- Until this survey, I did not know about product placement in picture books. I would have to see examples to know what I think. If the book is very focused on pushing a product, I probably wouldn't like it. But if the product is just in the background and there isn't mention of it then I don't think I would mind.
- I don't care unless it was obvious and out of place or inappropriate
- Ultimately, I can decide whether or not to read or purchase the books after viewing them--don't feel that it's forced upon me.
- I didn't feel like it was trying to sell you anything. It was just normal things that families use that the kids can recognize in a book.
- I guess I haven't noticed it or felt it distracted at all from the stories I have read.
- I think some product placement is ok as long as it doesn't go overboard. Our favorite stories have little to no product placement, so perhaps that is indicative of a bit of pure storytelling in classic children's stories.
- It depends on how it is presented. In this book, they fit with the overall feel of the story.
- I feel like it was pretty natural and subtle in this particular book. If it was the same product being plugged on every page it would might bother me.
- As long as it is not inappropriate I don't care
- Same as last
- I haven't really thought about it much. I can't think of any books we have that have obvious product placement. I probably wouldn't like it if there was a bunch or I felt like it was trying to make me buy that product.
- if it's things that are so generally known it doesn't bother me.
- I didn't feel like it was distracting or that they were trying to sell a product necessarily. It was a normal part of the book.
- When a product is placed in a book that possibly brings up a memory of the product and can reach the child more to what the author or illustrator is telling the child.
- I haven't noticed it too much and it wouldn't bother me unless it was way overdone and blatant
- It just depends on the context and on what the product is.
- I feel this way because I don't feel it matters if it's a product placement or a generic brand of whatever, it's still going to potentially get it in the child's head that they may want the product they see.
- I think if they were in all of the books, I wouldn't like it.
- It depends on why it's being advertised. If it's balanced in showing name brands as well as generic or healthy options, I'm fine with it.
- I don't want my kids to start demanding specific name brands because they are more expensive, but they are young enough they don't seem to care about labels anyway or even notice.
- I don't mind it if it's not heavily done or out of place.

- It can really be a good or bad thing depending on what they are advertising.
- In most illustrations things seem to reflect what life is like and so to me it is just a picture or an attempt to show something that we can relate to.
- Depends on the context of the product placement. If it's more the environmental print (easily recognized by kids) I don't mind. If it's just for advertising purposes I don't like it.
- Some children's books are fine with product placement, and don't make it overbearing. Others make it very obvious, and get the children thinking about toys and snacks rather than reading.
- In general I don't think it is inappropriate, but rarely do I buy or "love" the product being displayed. I tend to not want my kids to believe they have to have something because it is in a book they like. Media is a powerful tool and if you see it advertised, we are conditioned to think we want it. Or need it.
- I can see where product placement could get out of hand, but this book did a good job of being subtle.
- I think it would depend what the product is and how it's being placed in the book. I don't think it was put in a showy way in this book, so it was fine. However, kids can be easily swayed and I don't like commercials for that reason. As a parent it's annoying to have kids see something then beg to have it.
- I've never really thought about it
- I know they are just trying to make money and my kids see it everywhere anyway so if there is just a mention here or there I am fine with it although I would probably prefer it without.
- I don't really find it to be an issue to little kids.
- It depends on the product and if it fits naturally into the story. If it is product placement just for product placement, I'd rather not see it. If it fits into the story and is appropriate for children, I don't mind.
- I don't really see anything wrong with marketing to children.
- It depends on what the products are and how they are used. In this book they are things kids, (at least my kids) are used to even if we don't buy it a lot. I can see how products being in picture books could be used badly though.
- I select educational books recommended by schools. I don't think there is much product placement in the books I expose my son to.
- If it is appropriate for children, then I have no problem with the placement, if it is inappropriate, then it has no place. Product placement and sponsorship is part of life.
- I think if it happens in all children's books then it's inappropriate. But if it doesn't happen often, it's not that big of a deal...
- It has never really bothered me, but it kind of makes the book seem somewhat more realistic because you would see those products in real life. I think if he noticed the product, he might get excited because it's something he's familiar with.

Acceptable/ Somewhat Acceptable

(n=38)

- publishers can choose to put anything they want in their books, it is our responsibility to decide to buy or not to buy. but we shouldn't push our ideas into the free market
- They are a business and have the opportunity to do what they want - I am a consumer and can choose to buy what I want
- Kids will be exposed to products in one way or another. I prefer the exposure (however benign the product) to be in a time and place when I can have some control.
- Product placement can make the book more authentic but it can also be a distraction.
- Too much would be overbearing and take away from the story, but a little makes it relatable to the real world that children live in. On the other hand, I don't mind when books have things labeled generically, like "Peanut Butter" instead of "Jiffy." If it is part of the words it makes a bigger difference.
- there have not been many books that I can recall having to stop the story and explain what I feel to be hidden advertising or product placement.
- I think if it relates to things they see around them in the world, then it is fine. I wouldn't want it to become full-blown advertising.
- If the purpose of the book is to advertise some product, I think I'd be against that, but including products that are very common place in a home, in my opinion makes the book engaging for the child as they can relate to the items the characters are interacting with.
- as long as it is not inappropriate material I don't mind. I wouldn't want drugs, tobacco, alcohol, pornography advertised, but I don't think cereal or other "snacks" creates a problem.
- n/a
- It really depends on if the Author feels it is important to the story. If it is just for advertisement then it is not appropriate.
- I am a marketer and understand why they are there.
- I don't think it is always necessary to have products that they recognize, but it does make them point them out.
- I think it adds a sense of reality to the book.
- The same as with the previous question. Kids will learn from parents for the most part.
- Because looking back on the book I had to really think for a minute about any products that were included in it. So they didn't stand out enough for me to think of them right away.
- I feel it is fine in some cases as long as it isn't just there for the sake of advertising to kids. If it is part of the storyline and I think it is ok.
- It helps the story feel more personal and real.
- As long as it is not the whole way through, I don't mind it. It helps them recognize things more and helps them to interact more, I believe, because they understand what some of those things are.
- for the same reasons previously mentioned. To make the story seem more real.

- I don't see it affecting my child in any negative other than getting familiar with products. just as long as it would not affect her in a negative way.
- See previous answer.
- Our lives are full of marketing, having them in children's books could help the child to learn to read just by product recognition alone.
- I can't remember anything that offended me so I feel it must have been acceptable.
- If they get away with it and parents fall into the trap of their kids begging them to get things they see in books or tv good for the advertisers and sorry crappy parents
- It is a normal thing in life to see products that you use or come in contact with to be in a memoir about a four year old. If there wasn't any product placement then it would not seem realistic.
- My answer to this is a function of my beliefs of what is good or bad for my kids. If the books encouraged the use of products that I felt were particularly bad for my kids I would find it inappropriate. I suppose that a safe rule would be to say "no product placement in books", but that feels extreme to me. I think the author would need to work hard to understand what is considered right and wrong for the audience for it to be acceptable.
- They would only stand out or be significant to children that are already familiar with the products.
- children don't have to be distracted from the story
- I said in the previous question that it impressed me after the fact that my mind just accepted the brands in the book as normal and I didn't really think anything odd of it.
- all the books that I have read with my son I feel like they have all been acceptable
- cuss
- I don't mind if it's an appropriate brand that my child sees in the store any way
- because I wouldn't want my child to do certain things or behavior illustrated in the book
- If the entire idea of the story was based on a marketing scheme (and it was overt throughout the story), I might be concerned. However, if it's kept to a minimum, or if it's just coincidental, not only am I not concerned about it (it's not like our child makes the grocery decisions), but I think it has the potential to lend itself to kids relating to the story, especially if it's a realistic fiction genre.
- I guess it depends on the product. If it's something I want to avoid I suppose it might bother me.
- I've never had any issues with product placement that has made me or my child uncomfortable.
- I don't see anything wrong with this. It depends on the kinds of products they want to include.