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The Portrayal of Older Characters in Popular Children's Picture Books:
A Content Analysis from 2000 to 2010

Jessica L. Danowski

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

Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

The Portrayal of Older Characters in Popular Children's Picture Books:

A Content Analysis from 2000 to 2010

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Master of Arts

While picture books are often viewed as educational resources for young readers, it is crucial to not overlook the images and content this literary medium contains. Research suggests that repetitive messages encompassing a stereotypical nature cultivate lasting impressions on young audiences. One portrayal often associated with negative implications is the depictions of older characters in children's first literature. This investigation analyzed a selection of picture books from the *New York Times* best sellers list, the Book Sense best sellers list, and the Caldecott award winners for the years 2000–2010. In an attempt to provide a time spectrum communicating the levels of ageism that remain prevalent within the last decade, over 700 illustrated literary works were included in this exploration. Although conclusions supported a continuation of the under-representation of senior adults that is congruent to similar studies, findings suggested a significant improvement in the overall portrayal of older characters in illustrated books. This result communicates an optimistic outlook in continuing the promotion of positive attitudes for children regarding the aging process.

Keywords: older adults, children's picture books, ageism, cultivation

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

For years, parents and teachers alike have utilized children's picture books as effective teaching and learning tools. Research indicates that picture book reading promotes children's overall language and literacy skills (Scarborough & Dobrich, 1994), enhances the ability to relate and form sounds with words (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998) and is often associated with outcome measures such as "language growth, emergent literacy, and reading achievement" (Bus, van IJzendoorn, & Pellegrini, 1995, p. 15).

While great value is placed on the positive learning outcomes of reading children's books, studies have also suggested negative implications that could impact children's social perceptions. Some of the more popular research topics include stereotyping and unequal representation of gender within popular picture books. Anderson and Hamilton (2005), in their study "Gender Role Stereotyping of Parents in Children's Books: The Invisible Father," suggested an imbalanced representation of fatherly figures versus stereotypical motherly characters. With their review of 200 popular children's books, Anderson and Hamilton concluded that fathers were "significantly under-represented and presented as unaffectionate and indolent in terms of feeding, carrying babies, and talking with children" (p. 149). Similarly, Gooden and Gooden (2001) suggest that gender stereotypes continue to be present in children's literature, along with an unequal representation of females as main characters.

Another, less popular body of research for children's literature is the portrayal of aging and the concept of ageism. Ansello's (1977) foundational exploration of age and ageism in children's first literature focused on the extent of stereotyping regarding older characters in terms of roles, behaviors, and physical depictions. Ansello observed that children's literature depicted only a small number of older characters, most of whom did not possess major roles. In addition,

character portrayals of older adults illustrated them as dull, inarticulate, flat, inconsequential, unoriginal, noncreative and boring. “Old,” “sad,” and “poor,” were three adjectives consistently utilized to express characteristics of older individuals. Via an analysis of some 656 children’s books, Ansello argued that individuals could not permit the continuation of ageist theory and attitudes in a medium so fundamental to the formation of children’s perceptions.

Taking into consideration that consumers are spending nearly one billion dollars yearly on children’s picture publications (Children’s Book Council, 2002) and that many of these books are utilized as a jump start tactic for literacy and language acquisition skills, it is necessary to continue to analyze the messages this communication medium may offer. In an attempt to update and add to the literature of Ansello’s (1977) conclusions, this study focuses on older characters and their portrayal within popular picture books for children. Research for this investigation is based on the following inquiry: is there a continuation of Ansello’s findings regarding the negative portrayal of older figures within present-day picture books or has this claim been altered? In order to establish a basis for this query, this review of literature examines potential influences of ageists’ theory and stereotyping of older adults in relation to young children. The cumulative effect, cultivation analysis, the availability heuristic and mental models are also utilized in association with the potential impact ageist messages may unfold on children. In addition, this review discusses ageist investigations within various media with an overall focus on previous examinations of older adult portrayals in young children’s literature.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The Influences of Ageism on Young Children

As children mature, they develop notions regarding the world surrounding them. Klasmeier and Ripple (1971) proposed that, from a young age, children formulate attitudes and stereotypes that remain as a comparatively constant, lasting, and directing force. These forces can create long-term impacts on views of various subjects. One subject of importance continues to be how children are influenced by the concept of ageism.

Newman, Faux, and Larimer (1997) first defined ageism as a “set of social practices” formulated by society based on age differences between generations (p. 412). In essence, ageism accounts for the stigmatization of prejudices formed against older adults, as well as the impact this negativity has upon society (Blunk & Williams, 1997; Schwalbach & Kiernan, 2002). Gilbert and Ricketts’ (2008) synthesis of research—concentrating on children’s attitudes toward older individuals and the aging process—indicates that “the development of ageist attitudes toward older adults and general aging develop from information and examples that children observe” (p. 571). This development is often influenced through language, books, television, and other forms of media that provide information regarding the process and characteristics of aging (Chamberlain, Fetterman, & Maher, 1994; Fillmer, 1984).

Some studies suggest that children as young as 3 years old hold negative ideals of older adults (Aday, Aday, Arnold, & Bendix, 1996; Aday, Sims, McDuffie, & Evans, 1996; Rich, Myrick, & Campbell, 1983). Similarly, Isaacs and Bearison (1986) claim that children are already verbalizing negative stereotypes in relation to the older population by the time they enter elementary school. Further research proposes that while in school, children are exposed to even more negative stereotypes which can then be ascribed to older individuals (Seefeldt & Ahn,

1990). These stereotypes can influence children's feelings and the manner in which young children describe older people. For instance, when questioned on how older people look and act, Jantz, Seefeldt, Galper, and Serlock (1976) concluded children often respond with answers such as "all wrinkled and short," "don't go out much," "chew funny," and "have heart attacks and die." Similarly, Seefeldt (1984) further argues this notion suggesting that young children frequently exhibit dismay in thinking about growing old themselves; regarding older adults, children described them as dirtier, uglier, less healthy and less helpful than younger adults. Consequently, Miller, Blalock and Ginsburg (1984) culminated these findings suggesting that children believe overall, younger adults are nicer looking, more fun, more physically able, and are generally preferred in comparison to older adults.

In relation to the previously discussed research, Falchikov (1990) produced a study to evaluate what stereotypes children utilize when describing older people. In her investigation, Falchikov instructed a group of children to draw a picture of a young male and young female, as well as an older male and older female. Each picture was assessed through the calculation of standard scores generated through the usage of the Harris-Gooenough Draw-A-Person (DAP) scoring procedure. Interestingly, characteristics such as glasses, wrinkles, canes or wheelchairs, hearing aids, and slippers and other stereotypical elements were frequently noted in the children's drawings of older people. With the conclusion of her study, Falchikov argued that although the pictures of older people were no more stereotypical than those of younger people, the older adult images produced "were more negative in content" (p. 79). Overall, Falchikov concluded that the drawings of older people exhibited "a striking resemblance to the stereotyped portrayals of old men and old women in American children's literature" (p. 92).

Another intriguing investigation discussing children's perceptions of older individuals involves Lichtenstein et al.'s (2003) exploration assessing children's views of aging through a sentence completion technique. In this investigation, two middle schools located in the San Antonio, TX region agreed to participate in sentence completion exercises. Via an analysis of students' responses to prompts such as "Old is...", "You know you are old when...", "Most old people can't...", "When I am old, I...", and "Old people always act...", researchers recorded the characteristics of wrinkles (21.1%), having gray hair or being bald (20.0%) and being less active (17.5%) as the more common characteristics children often associated with aging. Furthermore, researchers noted that children communicated a much more positive view of their own future (55.4%) in comparison to the changes they observe in their parents and other older adults. Although this study does not directly address the impact the media may have on children's perceptions of aging, Lichtenstein et al. recognize the essentialness of promoting positive depictions of aging, suggesting that "these insights and gains in knowledge can translate into healthier habits and lifestyles that increase the chances of a maintained vigor across the life span" (p. 846).

Reflecting upon Falchikov and Lichtenstein et al.'s contentions, it is important to note that many of the characteristics children often associate to older people such as wrinkles, glasses, hearing aids, etc. are part of the normal aging process. However, many forms of media--including picture books illustrations--often drastically enhance these characteristics to create a more stereotypical image. Consequently, if the repetitive nature of such stereotypical content remains prevalent, explanations of how these stereotypes are influencing the general populace is necessary. Communication theories such as the cumulative effect, cultivation analysis, the

availability heuristic and mental models provide insight into potential consequences of this exposure.

Media Effects Theories and Illustrated Literature

The cumulative effect. In her Coretta Scott King Award acceptance speech, award winning children's author Virginia Hamilton (1986) stated, "Literature gives us images with which to think" (p. 684). The truthfulness behind this statement becomes evident with the review of scholarly publications regarding the latent influences of children's first literature. In reference to the possible psychological effects illustrations may elicit on children, Schwarcz (1982) discusses *visual literacy* (a term defined by Sinatra, 1986) as "the active reconstruction of past visual experience with incoming information to obtain meaning" (p. 57). Schwarcz argues that repeated visual stimuli found within images holds substantiation in the development and construction of ideas. Defined as the *cumulative effect*, illustrated books serve as a directing force of "humanization" for young children: "Such is the nature of the superior aesthetic message that it influences the whole child. . . . it develops [the child's] self-perception and his [/her] comprehension of the world he [/she] lives in, his [/her] ability to understand his [/her] own intimate experience and to relate more meaningfully to others" (p. 195). The influence of picture books is far greater than simple entertainment or educational value. They have the ability to direct children's perceptions of reality—and more specific to this study, how they view older people and interact with them. Congruent to Schwarcz contention, Shannon (1986) further argues the impact these fundamental resources often hold for young children. She states: "The books children read and those read to them contribute to their intellectual, emotional, and social development. Moreover, these books provide examples that confirm and challenge the decisions of children's daily lives" (p. 656).

As Schwarcz and Shannon contend, the books children interact with are fundamentally influential in shaping not only how children perceive the world, but also their role within it and the daily decisions they must make. Furthermore, the intensity of effects these messages enfold contain greater necessity for examination as many children regularly re-read, consider and discuss their favorite illustrated works, even to the depth of often being able to recall the content of these works over a period of a lifetime (Shannon, 1986; Cott, 1983; Inglis, 1981). This factor becomes increasingly vital in relation to the portrayal of older adults: as several researchers argue that today's young people may have little to no intergenerational contact with the older population (Seefeldt, 1998; Vasil & Wass, 1993; Ward, 1997), it is essential that these "humanizing" works be utilized to encourage positive associations that promote increased interaction between generations.

Along with the cumulative effect, another area of concern relates to children's ability to perceive and comprehend the artistic intent an image communicates. Schwarcz and Schwarcz (1991) argue that illustrations are rarely simplistic: "Their structure, proportions, configurations, colors, angles of lighting, perspective, and many other components hold allusions, associations, and overtones, which may eventually turn into metaphors and symbols expressing points of view." (p. 2). In response to this statement, other scholars suggest that young readers do not possess the maturity to evaluate colors, shapes and moods. Rather, children, especially smaller infants, are frequently impacted by the emotion that first empowers them, leaving little room to conceptualize the feelings they are experiencing (Roediler, 1998). This issue causes concern if young readers unknowingly associate negative emotions derived from images with a particular group or concept, only to cultivate these associations for an extended period of time. If true, this

implication suggests a substantial role in continuing ageist thought among the younger populations of today.

Media Effects Theories: Cultivation Analysis and Mental Models

When a child is flipping through a picture book with a parent, teacher, sibling, or even by themselves, what images are they encountering? Furthermore, what are the possible impacts of these images and character portrayals? Robinson, Callister, Magoffin, and Moore (2007), in their exploration of how older people are portrayed in Disney films, stated: “Because negative representations and stereotypes in media productions targeting young children can influence perceptions, exposure to media images and portrayals during a young child’s formative years can leave indelible impressions that are carried into adulthood” (pp. 204–205). Due to these potentially lasting impressions, further examination is needed for the latent effects of repeated exposure to ageist images of older individuals. One central theory that relates to the influence of ageism on children and provides framework for this investigation is Gerbner’s cultivation theory (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, Signorielli, & Shanahan, 2002).

Cultivation theory. Children often merge ideas of fantasy and reality; therefore, they are vulnerable to the socializing effects of the media (Miller, 2003). Derived from the cumulative effect, cultivation theory (Gerbner et al., 2002) advocates that the continual viewing of unvarying images cultivates basic assumptions and common conceptions of societal facts, norms, and values in viewers, and that such exposure influences viewers’ conceptions of reality, standards of judgment, attitudes, thoughts, and behaviors. In essence, the more an individual affiliates with media sources, the greater the probability that he or she will come to acknowledge the views and attitudes depicted within that media.

Although Gerbner's original research focused on violence within television programming, the theory itself provides broad adaptation capabilities as it searches for patterns in themes, images, lessons and values to which audiences are being exposed. With the implication that media has the ability to form descriptive norms for young children, it is reasonable to apply this theory to repetitive images portraying older individuals in illustrated books. In fact, further research brings depth to cultivation analysis by discussing how repetitive information elicits influence on the creation of individual judgment, thus impacting social perceptions of reality.

In applying cultivation analysis to the construction of social perception, one might question if media exposure influences individuals' perceptions to the extent that they utilize this information when making a judgment of reality. Shrum and O'Guinn (1993) offer insight on this issue, arguing that individuals formulate judgments based upon the availability or accessibility of specific information. Termed as the *availability heuristic* (Tversky & Kahneman, 1973), the more frequently information is stored, the easier it is to access, and therefore the more likely it is utilized in making judgments—particularly those with numerical value.

In relation to cultivation theory, Shrum (1995) record a specific correlation between heavy viewers of media and the speed at which judgments are made. Essentially, those that viewed media more frequently gave faster response times to various cultivation questions and usually overestimated the frequency or probability of an occurring event. This factor is potentially vital in relation to children who are encouraged to read picture books daily for literacy acquisition purposes. Perhaps unknowingly, picture book reading exposes children to information that provides knowledge regarding population, ethnicities and overall prevalence of older people. This implication may seem alarming when correlated to Ansello's and other

scholars conclusions of limited representation of the older people in comparison to overall populations.

Mental models. While the availability heuristic provides further support to media's potential impact regarding numerical judgments or *first order judgments*, it does not sufficiently account for media portrayals that influence a person's attitudes or beliefs (*second order judgments*; Weimann, 2000). Interestingly, however, Shrum's (1995) research on cultivation analysis and the availability heuristic propelled other scholars to evaluate correlations between the media and personal attitudes and beliefs. Based from Shrum and O'Guinn's research, Roskos-Ewoldsen, Davies and Roskos-Ewoldsen (2004) utilize *mental models* (a dynamic mental representation of a situation, event or object as observed by van Dijk & Kintsch, 1983) to suggest that cultivation theory serves as a potential predictor of media influences and social perceptions. Researchers argue that individuals construct mental notes on or models of the media they are exposed to. This model is then stored as available information within the memory system. If activated, these models are often utilized to form perceptions of reality, thus impacting how a person will respond to a similar situation. For instance, if children are consistently exposed to images and content of an older adult who is stereotyped as the "old, grumpy neighbor who lives down the street," these constructed mental models will become more accessible, especially when individuals are presented with circumstances analogous to the fictionalized character. These implications drive the necessity of providing children with positive images of older figures, particularly in a medium that is so accessible to the younger population.

Portrayals of Older Characters in Various Communication Media

As the cumulative effect, cultivation analysis, the availability heuristic and mental models explore the impact of present-day media, investigations continue to be conducted in various mediums regarding the concept of ageism, stereotyping and misrepresentations of older individuals. Vasil and Wass (1993) compiled a general review of literature that examined 28 explorations relating to the portrayal of the older population in numerous media contexts. Via an exploration of television, magazines and books, patterns suggesting underrepresentation of older people—particularly females—and age stereotyping were consistent throughout. Vasil and Wass conclude,

The majority of the studies reviewed found that the quality of media representation of the elderly was poor and inadequate. Elderly characters both in television and print media were typically marginalized. They rarely appeared in major roles or positions, were rarely developed fully as characters, and were frequently described in stereotypical terms. (p. 80)

Coinciding with this research, content analyses of various mediums continue to be explored in aims of illuminating patterns and themes between various communication domains.

Analyses of television/film. One communication domain that encompasses potential impact for influencing an audience is television. Research suggests that television often relies on the stereotypes of characters due to the limited amount of time available to appeal to a viewer's emotion (Signorielli, 2001). In efforts to analyze present stereotypes regarding older people, several investigations of animated television series and movies have assessed the depiction of aged characters and their influencing role on a child's perception (Bishop & Krause, 1984; Robinson & Anderson, 2006; Robinson, Callister, Magoffin, & Moore, 2007). For instance,

Bishop and Krause (1984) conducted an examination of older characters portrayed in Saturday morning cartoons. Derived from three of the major networks of the time (NBC, ABC, and CBS), a sample of 106 cartoons were analyzed in terms of older character frequency, quality of life depictions, age-related themes and general references to older people. Characters were first categorized into “non-human” and “human” categories, followed by three age groupings including “young,” “adult,” and “old.” As defined by Bishop and Krause, “old” characters were “those characters with an appearance and manner that definitely depicted old age (e.g., wrinkled skin, white hair, cracking voice)” (p. 92). Consequently, once an older character was identified, Bishop and Krause argued that assessing the character as either “positive” or “negative” was not a difficult task. As stated by the researchers,

Children’s cartoons are not subtle or complex; they contain good people and bad people, especially in the characterizations most relevant to this study. For instance, it is not difficult to assign a negative status to a character who is attempting to destroy the world, to steal secrets from the government, or to devour the hero. (p. 92)

Congruent to positive and negative evaluations, Bishop and Krause go on to apply similar ease in identifying and classifying characteristics often associated with age or aging. However, if discrepancies did arise during the coding process, the data was placed in the “positive” category to avoid potential over-estimations of negativity in the overall assessment.

Drawing from research discussing older depictions in children’s literature, Bishop and Krause’s findings communicated that many of the older characters assessed not only followed expected ageist stereotypes, but also placed older characters in roles with minor to no significance. Results suggested only a 7% presence in terms of total population. Of this population, nearly half of these characters (48%) were depicted with negative characteristics;

interestingly, however, despite the relatively minimal presence of older characters, Bishop and Krause recorded that references to age occurred typically in one out of five cartoons as an “incidental topic.” Sadly, however, of the 21 remarks recorded, 19 of these statements contained “negative” connotations, thus perpetuating general ageist contentions. Overall, as older characters were often viewed as non-essential to the action that transpired around them, Bishop and Krause conclude that these “partial people” depictions assist in the development of ageist attitudinal beliefs among younger audiences (p. 94).

Robinson and Anderson (2006) conducted an updated version of Bishop and Krause’s investigation. In this study, researchers recorded a total of 45 hours (121 different episodes) of observations of cartoons from 5 major networks including ABC, ABC Kids, the WB, FOX and Cartoon Network. To assist in the coding process, Robinson and Anderson devised a coding sheet via information compiled through similar content analysis studies (Bishop & Krause, 1984; Robinson et al., 1995; Swayne & Greco, 1987; Ursic et al., 1986). Two coders were trained in the analytical process. Coders utilized the following characteristics to identify older characters that appeared to be of the age of 55 or older: “(a) an appearance of retirement, (b) extensive gray hair, (c) wrinkles of the skin, (d) extensive loss of hair or balding, (e) cracking voice, (f) use of an aid such as a cane or wheelchair, (g) the parent of a son or daughter who is middle-aged or older, and (h) evidence of grandchildren or great-grandchildren.”

Comparable to other investigations, Robinson and Anderson observed only an 8% overall presence of older characters with the majority of these characters portrayed as Caucasian males (75% Caucasian; 77% male). Similar to Vasil and Wass’ conclusions, older characters were featured predominately in minor roles (68%) and often depicted with little to no significance. Although Robinson and Anderson reported an overall positive portrayal (62%—which stands as a

10% increase from Bishop and Krause's original research), researchers continued to issue concern, suggesting that many older characters were associated with negative physical and mental characteristics that were "identical to the characteristics children reported to past researchers when asked to describe older people" (p. 287). As Robinson and Anderson argue, children are "highly susceptible to the socializing effects of television" (p. 287). Thus, descriptive characteristics such as "angry," "evil," or "ugly" often placed characters in negative stereotypical roles that were deemed influential to young audiences. For instance, 11% of the analyzed older characters were portrayed as the villain. In correlation of this finding, Robinson and Anderson state, "this role of villain is an extremely negative stereotype of older people and one that affects not only the way children see and feel about older people, but also adds to their level of prejudice" (p. 297). These conclusions provide insight into future research as a great deal of the media frequently relies on stereotypes—whether positive or negative—to generate audience connection and response.

Another noteworthy investigation regarding older individuals' portrayal on television involved a cross-cultural examination of frequently viewed televised children's programs in the United States and Japan. Conducted by Holtzman and Akiyama (1985), this exploration incorporated children's viewing preferences when formulating the sample selection as this method "was considered desirable because children are affected only by the programs they actually view rather than what simply appears on television at a given time" (p. 63). To accomplish these premises, investigators formulated their selected sample via the results of a nationwide survey assessing viewing preferences for children ages 2 to 11 in the United States and Japan.

In terms of methodology, the top 10 programs from each country were selected for content analysis. “‘Specials,’ cartoons, variety shows, wildlife programs and programs depicting the lives of imaginary creatures were excluded” from the coded sample (p. 63). Four episodes of each selected program were obtained, generating a total sample of 80 episodes. Regarding analysis, a team of five coders was established for each country. In efforts to establish intercoder reliability, the percentage of .80 was achieved amongst each member of the coding team. Coders were instructed to exclude non-speaking characters from the analysis. All speaking characters were categorized and evaluated by age (youth, adolescents, young adults, middle aged, and aged), sex, health, socioeconomic status, central or supporting roles, and regularity of appearance.

As communicated by comparable explorations, the frequency and quality of older characters’ portrayals in both Japanese and American television remained deficient. Holtzman and Akiyama reported that older characters represented 9.4% of all older characters in popular children’s American television, and only 4% in popular children’s Japanese television. Furthermore, contrary to what might have been expected to cultural beliefs relating to older persons in non-western cultures, older individuals interestingly appeared for a greater length of broadcasting time in the United States than in Japanese children’s television. Holtzman and Akimiyama argue that “American children were routinely exposed to older persons over twice as often as their Japanese age mates.” Researchers go on to suggest that both popular American and Japanese children’s television contained a gender imbalance, with older females being classified as “virtually absent” (p. 65). Holtzman and Akimiyama conclude their investigation by suggesting the following contention:

The opportunity exists, through continued cross-national study, to evaluate the impact of differential frequencies and styles of portrayal on younger television viewers. Further work is necessary in order to determine whether such portrayals have direct or important indirect effects on both behavioral and attitudes toward the aged. (p. 67)

As described by Holtman and Akimiyama, further investigations—including explorations of children’s literary works—will continue to serve useful in assessing the direct and indirect effects of various media for children around the world.

Similar to Robinson and Anderson’s (2006) and Holtzman and Akiyama’s (1985) findings, another relevant exploration focused on a sample selection of Disney films. In this study, Robinson, Callister, Magoffin, and Moore (2007) analyzed 34 films in terms of older adult depiction. Analogous with Robinson and Anderson’s cartoon research, Robinson et al. utilized similar operational definitions and coding sheets to distinguish and assess present older characters. Activity level, physical depiction, and personality descriptors were also employed to form a more complete summation of the character. Once the character was assessed, coders utilized prevalent stereotypes describing older characters (i.e. “perfect grandparent,” “sage,” “John Wayne conservative,” etc.) to assist in the overall evaluation process. Outlined by Schmidt and Boland (1986), these dimensions were found helpful in the evaluation process through the allowance of either a positive, negative, or neutral assessment.

With the execution of this methodology, Robinson et al. report several conclusions that provide insight to future explorations. One intriguing result suggests that although overall representation of older characters was minimal in comparison to the portrayed population, older characters were not nearly as underrepresented in more recent Disney films. Robinson et al. suggest that these findings communicate an overall increased awareness as producers of

significant influential media (such as Disney films) have become more conscientious of materials that are being distributed to mass audiences. Other significant findings communicated that the older characters assessed were predominately Caucasian males (83% Caucasian; 77% male), with the total number of older adults in relation to the population classified as “underrepresented.” As with previous research in other mediums, conclusions stated that several older characters were placed in a villainous role, thus possessing significant negative stereotypes. The investigation concluded by suggesting that negative portrayals in Disney films may stand as a significant source in relation to children forming and maintaining ageist views regarding older people.

Analysis of children’s magazines. Another medium that serves as a potential influencer on youth perceptions relates to the representation of older individuals in children’s magazines. As Almerico and Filmer (1988) argue, “Children’s magazines, like other types of media, are important sources of socialization for children who read them” and should not be disregarded from this field of study (p. 16). Via a content analysis of a random sample of the most circulated children’s magazines, Almerico and Filmer (1985) report prevalence of underrepresentation of the elderly population. In relation to this underrepresentation, sex ratios of older characters were distorted, and minority groups were severely under-represented—even to the point of non-existence. One of the more distinct findings indicated that older characters lacked emotional range, thus providing older characters in children’s magazines with an “undimensional quality” (p. 20). In relation to personality, older characters were portrayed in a “superficial manner with an average of fewer than one attribute given per character” (p. 21).

Although much of Almerico and Filmer’s research focuses on negative implications, researchers do report that older characters played proportional share in major roles and were

portrayed with active levels of activity in the sample analyzed. However, these findings are not significant enough to extract concern. Authors contend that although older characters in children's magazines were not blatantly discriminated against, subtle hints of prejudice remained present. Almerica and Filmer conclude their evaluation by providing recommendations to editors, publishers, writers and illustrators of future publications. Themes of involvement, education, and youth awareness emerged from their recommendations, contending that "stories in children's magazines should provide children with realistic role models upon which they can base their personal expectations of their lives beyond the age of 65" (p. 23).

Previous Investigations of Older People in Children's Literature

In conjunction with television and children's magazines, research concerning children's literature also communicates negative representations of the older population. As previously mentioned, Ansello's (1977) foundational analysis of "the presence of older characters, their sex and race, relationship to main character, occupational role, behaviors exhibited, illustrations, physical and personality descriptions" (p. 265) within 656 children's books set the standard for further interest in investigating ageism within children's first literature. The sample for this 18 month investigation included Juvenile Picture (JP) or Easy Reader (E) books aimed for young children ages 3-9. Books collected for the study were derived from the Montgomery County (Maryland) Library system, noted by Ansello as "a system fairly representative of county systems in the county" (p. 265). Over 27,000 pages were analyzed for older characters. Ansello defined the term *older* as "any story member who met two of the three criteria: being drawn, verbally described, or socially positioned—e.g., 'retired' —as older" (p. 265). Characters coded were required to verbalize at least one word in the piece to be accounted; thus, characters

depicted in large crowds were eliminated from consideration. This methodology proved vital in setting the standard for other investigations regarding the portrayal of older figures.

In an investigation similar to Ansello's research, Hurst (1981) focused on the presentation of positive images and role models to young readers with an emphasis on the sexist, ageist, and racist stereotypes present. One half of the analyzed content included Caldecott Medal winner titles from the years 1958-1978. The second half of the sample was derived from a table of random numbers listing picture books in a children's library collection. Content analyzed included the following: "(1) quoted passages; (2) illustrated actions and physical attributes of characters; and (3) a descriptive narrative related to the actions, thoughts, feelings, occupations, characteristics and roles of characters" (p. 139). In terms of analysis, older adult' gender, activity, roles, physical characteristics, and content descriptors were noted. Unique to other studies, older character interactions with other adults, animals, and children were also accounted and outlined in the results section. In retrospect of this observation, Hurst records that older characters were depicted interacting with children in only 3% of the sample. This intriguing finding lays the foundation for concern, communicating that not only are many children receiving limited interaction with older adults in reality, but that this element is further being patterned in acclaimed, children's first literature.

With the conclusion of his analysis, Hurst stresses that overall, "The picture books sampled provide a bland, passive view of life. Their illustrations, quoted dialogue, and author narratives present almost no role models of democratic participation or participatory behaviors" (p. 138). In regards to older adults, Hurst argued that 48% of the older figures analyzed were described as *old*. "In one of the forty books the adjective *nice* is used and in two books elders are *wise*. The remainder of the adjectives include such words as 'funny, small, little, grumpy, lonely,

poor, and weak” (p. 142). Hurst also accounted for a misrepresentation of the population of older adults within illustrative children’s books, suggesting that 79% of older characters depicted were male. Other significant findings claimed that older characters were often “stripped of their family and occupational roles,” and none of the older adults analyzed were shown as grandparents. Comparing Ansello and Hurst, Vasil and Wass (1993) suggest that both explorations revealed negative depictions within children’s picture books.

Coinciding with Ansello and Hurst, other scholars have produced explorations assessing children’s literary works that are often associated with containing exceptional educational value. Barnum (1977), for instance, employed 100 titles derived from the *Children’s Catalog*—a catalog designed to compile book titles that are selected and voted on by distinguished librarians and educators across the United States—in her assessment of older adult portrayal in children’s literature. To generate data that captures a representative sample for the years 1950 to 1959 and 1965 to 1974, Barnum randomly selected five titles for each year. In terms of methodology, both human and non-human characters were evaluated in this investigation; only characters who elicited distinguishable characteristics through text or illustrations were assessed. In regards to analysis, Barnum utilized three criteria to judge the portrayal of older adults. These included “the frequency of occurrence of old people (sixty-five years and older) in text and in illustrations, the nature of their social participation, and their behavioral traits” (p. 302).

In representing the findings of this assessment, Barnum argues two classifications of older adults including “the insignificant old person” and “the social outcast.” Describing “the insignificant old person,” Barnum concludes a minute representation of the older character, arguing that older characters were depicted in only 3.3% of the assessed population and appeared in 5.3% of all the evaluated illustrations. In regards to male to female ratio, Barnum records a

27% representation of older females. Parallel to “the insignificant old person,” Barnum communicates coinciding disheartening factors, suggesting that older adults engaged in significantly less social interaction than other adults, only interacting with another character in 13.6% of over 2,500 examined illustrations. In reference to roles, Barnum notes that older characters were most often placed in roles / jobs that required little to no mental acuity including janitors, servants, elephant riders, and store keepers. From this assessment, Barnum contends that the analyzed literature perpetuates not only a fear of aging, but also a feeling of discrimination against older adults as a whole. Barnum states:

This literature, then, helps educate young children to the belief that old people are unimportant and that old age is not an enjoyable time of life. In many instances, other adults, compared with children, also appear at a disadvantage. It is for the elderly that this unfavorable depiction is especially damaging, because there are negative feelings in society toward old age. Young children's literature provides reinforcement for the message about old people that children get in other ways from society and thus contributes to the devaluation of the elderly. (p. 305)

Concluding this argument, Barnum suggests that it is vital for parents, educators and anyone involved with young children to be conscious of the themes and content given to young children, especially in an educational environment. Optimistically, Barnum contends this awareness will encourage children and adults to look forward to this period of life, emphasizing all the positive characteristics old age may hold.

Perhaps another means of evaluating older adult depiction in children’s literature is through selecting a sample via a specific genre or classification of content. Blue (1978), for example, analyzed a sample of “125 realistic fiction trade books, including picture books,

published in the United States during 1945-1975.” In this investigation, Blue provides a definition of an *aging person*, suggesting that “any individual who is at least of the age that he or she could be a grandparent of the child for whom the books are written’ as well as any character described in the books as *old, aged, elderly*, or variant forms of these adjectives” should be classified as an older adult. Regarding the methodology for this investigation, Blue selected to focus on eight categories of analysis including “(1) demographic portrayals; (2) physical characteristics; (3) state of health; (4) personality traits; (5) activities; (6) situational aspects of choice, dependency, and change; (7) conveyance of the concept of aging or old; and (8) relationships and patterns of social interaction” (p. 188). Each of these categories contained more pinpointed subcategories in aims to further assess the depicted older person.

Unique to previously discussed explorations, Blue offers a more positive outlook for young realistic fiction, suggesting that conclusions indicated a lack of negative stereotypes. Overall, Blue argues that older characters were generally developed on a multidimensional level, presenting “quite accurate and adequate depictions from the standpoint of realistic presentation.” Furthermore, Blue contends that the assessed depictions of older characters were not “disparaging, derogatory, or otherwise negative, nor were they stereotypic, since many diverse styles of life and varying types of behavior were portrayed throughout.” Overall, she states that the literature analyzed “seemed to indicate a general humanistic concern for understanding the elderly as individuals in diverse styles of life and circumstances, responding accordingly” (p. 191). With these conclusions, Blue acknowledges that the selected sample may have influenced the overall positivity of assessment as all books analyzed were known to contain at least one older adult (76 % of which were major characters) prior to the evaluation process.

Another relevant study specifically discusses the representations of grandparents within children's first literature. Janelli (1988) focused her research on grandparents through the review of 73 children's storybooks. For this investigation's methodology, the coding instrument constructed by the author provided the necessary framework in determining descriptive adjectives for characters viewed as a grandparent within the plot. The sample for this study was selected via an urban library children's section. All books catalogued under subject titles of either "grandmother" or "grandfather" was reviewed. Copyrights for the selected sample ranged from 1961-1984. Furthermore, both "real" and "unreal" grandparent characters were analyzed; while the term "real" signified a character that was portrayed in a realistic sense, "unreal" characters possessed imaginary, embellished, or magical attributes that often influenced their descriptive nature.

In this investigation, Janelli examined not only the stereotypical roles attributed to a specific group within the older population, but also the similarities between males and females in an illustrator's physical depictions. One of her more noted findings suggested that although in reality the older population is considered a diverse group, this diversity is not reflected within early children's literature. Janelli commented that older individuals "are believed to be more unlike and more heterogeneous than any other segment in our society. If older persons are in fact more differentiated, then this is in direct opposition to what has been noted in children's literature" (p. 200). Janelli concludes that older figures in children's literature, regardless of gender or race, are not only illustrated similarly but are also engaged in activities of like nature. In her final paragraph, she discusses the potential educational implication of stereotyping in relation to children. She states that it is not her intention for children's literature with negative

implications to be withheld; rather, supplementation of these negative attitudes that encourage children to differentiate reality from fiction is necessary.

In addition to the mentioned examinations (see Table 1 for general overview), other scholars drew conclusions concerning older people in children's literature. Dodson and Hause (1981) asserted that, similar to other "isms," "ageism appears in subtle ways and probably most often is not intentional on the part of the author or illustrator" (p. 3). In their observations, researchers concluded that ageist views and stereotypes of older individuals remain an issue of concern. Older characters were often depicted as "unhealthy, ugly, eccentric, passive, and dependent on others" (p. 3). Adjectives such as *old* and *little* were regularly used to characterize old people. Interestingly enough, the "adjective 'old' was used so frequently that they [Dodson and Hause] concluded that no other generation is so completely described by the use of a single word" (qtd. from McGuire, 1993). Overall, Dodson and Hause advocate that measures needed to be taken to alter prevailing, repetitious, ageist portrayals of older figures.

McGuire (1993) communicated comparable results in her efforts that to promote positive attitudes towards aging that concur with earlier findings. She offers the following conclusions concerning portrayals of older people:

The literature is almost void of older people; frequently fails to fully develop older characters; often focuses on illness, disability and death; and gives children little to look forward to as they age. When older people are portrayed, they are usually characterized as grandparents. There is a scarcity in the literature of portrayals of: aging as a natural and lifelong process, older people outside of the family, older workers, older people in the community, older leaders, famous older people, active and capable older people,

Table 1: Overview of the Portrayal of Older Characters in Children’s Media
Adapted and Updated from Vasil & Wass (1993)

Type of Media	Study	Sample	Quantity of Portrayal of the Older Adults	Females Under-represented	Quality of Portrayal (positive / neutral or negative)	Character Roles (major/minor)	Evidence of Age Stereotyping
Picture Books	Ansello (1977)	656 books	16.5 % of coded books	X	Negative	Minor	X
	Hurst (1981)	40 books	6.2 % of all characters	X	Negative	Major	X
	Dellmann-Jenkins & Yang (1997)	95 award winning books	12% of all coded books		Positive	Major	X
Children’s Literature	Barnum (1977)	100 books	3.3 % of all characters	X	Negative	Minor	X
	Blue (1978)	125 realistic fictions books		X	Positive	Major	
	Janelli (1988)	73 books					X
Children’s Magazines	Almerico & Filmer (1988)	2186 stories / 101 magazines	5.6% of all stories	X	Positive	Minor	
Children’s Television Programs and Cartoons	Holtzman & Alkyama (1985)	n=253 total characters	9.4% of all characters	X	Positive		X
Cartoons	Bishop & Krause (1984)	n =378 total characters	7 % of all characters		Negative		X
	Robinson & Anderson (2006)	n=1356 total characters	8 % of all characters	X	Positive: 62% Negative: 38%	Minor: (68%)	X
Disney Animated Films	Robinson, Callister, Magoffin, & Moore (2007)	n= 93 coded older characters		X	Positive: 52% Negative: 48%	Minor: (61%)	X

intergenerational activities, planning for old age and similarities between young and old.

(p. 5)

Similar to Dodson and Hause, McGuire writes that while America is not getting any younger, depictions of growing older within children's literature are not helping individuals' perceptions of the aging process. In her endeavors to advocate change, McGuire provides recommendations in selecting positive literature for young readers in attempts to combat attitudinal beliefs encouraging ageism.

One of the more recent investigations of older adult portrayals examined children's books that received the prestigious Caldecott Medal. Dellmann-Jenkins and Yang (1997) compared a total of 95 award winning books (1972–1983 and 1984–1995) for the presence of older people in main or secondary roles. After an older character was identified, a content analysis was conducted based upon 36 features. 24 of these features were adapted from the semantic differential section of the Children's Attitudes toward the Elderly (CATE) scale first developed by Jantz et al. (1976). This scale is often utilized in the assessment of young children's perceptions of the characteristics and capabilities of older individuals. Its main premise is to evaluate literature based upon accuracy in portrayal while promoting older characters in a variety of roles; thus, through this system, children are able to assess their own perceptions of the aging process and see potential influencing factors. In addition to the CATE scale, features 25 through 36 were added after a pilot analysis of the older characters in 4 picture books. Inter-rater reliability was established (over 90%) through two outside sources analyzing a random portion of the sample.

In this study, authors expressed a more positive outlook regarding to older adult images. Although older persons appeared within only 12% of the reviewed literature (11 books), findings

argued that award winning illustrators of more recent years are “more sensitive to showing their young readers an array of positive and respected attributes that older people possess” (p. 99).

Dellmann-Jenkins and Yang’s observations suggested that newer picture books illustrated more sensitivity to the effects of ageism through descriptions of older people as clean, healthy, happy, good, caring and interactive with others.

Although Dellmann-Jenkins and Yang suggest improvement regarding ageist portrayals of older adult—specifically in comparison to Ansello’s seminal research—repetitive findings of inaccurate representations in terms of population, gender, and race and the continuation of overall negativity perpetuates need for further research. As described by the cumulative effect and a deeper look into cultivation analysis, these flawed depictions do influence children’s perceptions and attitudes toward reality. Therefore, an analysis of the content many young audiences are being exposed to for educational purposes is necessary. Optimistically, results from this exploration will promote awareness in preventing ageist attitudes and addressing inaccurate representations of older people. The following inquiries will serve as a basis for this investigation:

- RQ₁: What percentage of older characters appears in children’s picture books?
- RQ₂: Among the older characters present, how is race and gender depicted?
- RQ₃: With what types of roles do older characters appear in?
- RQ₄: What are the physical characteristics of the older characters depicted?
- RQ₅: In the illustrations, what is the level of activity the older characters are involved in?
- RQ₆: In the illustrations, what are the predominate personality traits observed of older characters?

RQ7: Is the overall portrayal of older characters in children's picture books positive or negative?

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

To further comprehend the relationship between exposure to children's picture books and accompanying attitudinal beliefs regarding older adults, the following methods were used in this study.

Sample

The core sample selected for this investigation was derived from the *New York Times* Best Seller picture book list for the months of September 2000 to April 2010 (selection of these months reflect when *The New York Times* commenced publication of the best sellers list for children's picture books to present day). *The New York Times* Best Sellers list is based on weekly sales reports gathered from selected independent and chain bookstores, as well as wholesalers throughout the United States. Furthermore, once a publication achieves *The New York Times* list status, sellers often display the book in more prominent areas as well as discount the acclaimed titles heavily to increase consumer purchase. Additionally, because of popularity in consumption, *New York Times* Best Sellers are often carried in non-book retailers such as supermarkets and discount stores, and are therefore more accessible to the public (Miller, 2000). Due to these factors along with its widespread popularity, many view this list as the preeminent publication for the best-selling books within the United States (Bear, 1992). Therefore, it is plausible to suggest that books associated with this record reflect what American audiences are reading and the messages they are receiving.

To expand the sample size, illustrated books included in the Book Sense Bestseller lists (now recognized as the Indie Bestseller lists) were also incorporated in this research. Published by the American Booksellers Association, this record compiles popular sales from numerous independent bookstores across North American. It was developed to provide a more accurate

method in calculating bestsellers suited to independent bookstores rather than outside manufacturers (grocery stores, gift shops, large chains etc.). The list commenced publication in 2000 and continues to publish reading lists on a weekly basis (American Booksellers Association, 2010).

In addition, Caldecott Medal and Honor winners from the years 2000 to 2009 were also included in this investigation. Presented by the Association for the Library Service to Children, the Caldecott Medal annually recognizes the artist of the most distinguished American picture book for children published in the preceding year. This standard of excellence award for children's illustrated books is well respected and books awarded this prize are often utilized as educational tools by teachers, librarians, and parents. Because books that receive this recognition often remain in print due to popularity (American Library Association, 2009), several of these titles appeared on *The New York Times* Best Sellers list and were therefore recorded once.

With the compilation of *The New York Times* Best Sellers list, the Book Sense bestsellers list, and the Caldecott Medal winners, a total of 710 books were analyzed in this exploration. These results served comparable to Anselmo's seminal investigation of over 600 children's picture books.

Measuring Instrument

In order to note observed patterns of older adults within popular children's picture books, a coding sheet was utilized to assist in recording data. The information used to establish this aid was formulated and adapted from Robinson and Anderson's (2006) content analyses on older characters in animated television programs geared toward children (see Appendix A). All characters that are physically depicted over the age of 55 were coded as "older."

Criteria utilized for determining if a character was over the age of 55 included the following characteristics: (1) extensive gray or white hair, (2) wrinkles or sagging of the skin, (3) apparent loss of hair or balding, (4) the parent of a son or daughter who is depicted as middle aged or older, (5) evidence of grandchildren or great-grandchildren, (6) use of a physical aid such as a cane or wheelchair, (7) use of glasses or a magnifying glass (Robinson & Anderson 2006). In order to be deemed “old,” the character had to exemplify two or more of the described attributes unless the individual was specifically categorized as “old” in the text. “Young old” (ages 55 to 64), “middle old” (ages 65-74), and “old old” (age 75 and older) were classified in relation to the quantity of wrinkles present in the illustrated image (“young old” characters had few to no wrinkles; “middle old” characters exhibited limited to moderate wrinkles; “old old” characters were depicted with moderate to heavy wrinkles;), along with any description indicators present in the content of the illustrated work. For instance, if a character was described as “old” with moderate wrinkles, this character was defined as “middle old.” Likewise, descriptors such as “ancient,” “very old,” and/or “great-great grandmother” placed characters in the “old old” category. In addition, characters were only coded if depicted within the foreground of an illustration where their physical traits were obvious to an audience. If major physical traits were difficult to identify (i.e. gender, age, degree of wrinkles, etc.), the character was excluded from the sample.

Procedures

Older characters were first identified as either “human” or “nonhuman.” Characters that were classified as “nonhuman,” such as animals or inanimate objects, exemplified human-like qualities such as talking or wearing clothes (Robinson et al., 2007). After an older character was acknowledged, coders then determined the role of the character as either major or minor. A

character was classified as “major” by the following elements: being illustrated on numerous instances, using dialogue, and contributing to the plot. A minor or indeterminate character was defined as having limited physical depictions, with few to no speaking lines or interactions with the main character (e.g. man on the street, woman driving a car, storekeeper in a shop, etc.). If a character was illustrated in a crowd or their role was unknown in relation to the plot, coders classified these figures as “indeterminate” and therefore included this classification within the “minor” category.

After assessments of both human/nonhuman and major/minor role were made, physical characteristics and personality traits were observed (see Appendix B for operational definitions). The definitions utilized to assess personality traits and physical attributes were derived from a similar content analysis (Robinson & Anderson, 2006). Activity level was also noted by the following classifications: (1) characters that were involved in some form of activity that requires excessive physical movement (e.g. a sport, running/jogging, gardening) were classified as “very active”, (2) characters that were depicted as having the ability to move and walk around were recorded as “active”, and (3) characters that were depicted as only sitting, immobile or bedridden were noted as “inactive.” In some instances, only the face or upper portion of the character was present. Therefore, activity level for these characters was classified as “indeterminate.”

Based on the findings of a character’s physical and personality depiction both in the illustrated and written content, an overall evaluation of the older character was made as either positive, negative, or neutral. Schmidt and Boland (1986) argued that characters who were depicted as “despondent, mildly impaired, vulnerable, severely impaired, shrew/curmudgeon, recluse, nosey neighbor, and bag lady/vagrant” should be classified as a negative portrayal (p. 258). Contrastingly, portrayals of older people with attributes such as happy, content, friendly,

loving, caring, and intelligent received an overall positive rating. A character's physical and personality traits allowed for the formulation of an overall assessment.

Reliability

To increase reliability, four coders underwent extensive training in this research. The coders discussed all operational definitions and asked questions when potential discrepancies occurred. In order to establish reliability, 10% of the sample was coded separately and then compared using Cohen's Kappa inter-rater reliability formula (Cohen, 1960). For each variable, the statistic was calculated, and all variables achieved above the accepted 0.70 agreement. Reliabilities were accounted in the following categories: chronological age (0.727); race (0.771); role of character (1.0); activity level (0.838); health status (0.8889); primary role (0.714); wrinkles (0.702); attractiveness (0.836); characteristics of hair and facial hair (0.903 and 0.909); presence of teeth (0.769); presence of glasses (1.0); presence of hearing aide (1.0); presence of saggy breasts (0.833); use of a physical aid (0.922). The personality descriptors of "object of ridicule," "sad," "humorous," "overly affectionate," "helpless," "angry/grumpy/stern," "nosey," "sexy/macho," "dirty," "lonely/recluse," and "forgetful" all received a reliability of 1.0 (100%) agreement. All other personality descriptors received above 0.70 agreements (senile/crazy: 0.920; intelligent/wise: 0.70; eccentric: 0.919; happy/content: 0.742; loving/caring: 0.743; friendly: 0.724). The characters' "overall evaluation" resulted in a 0.722 (72%) agreement.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

RQ₁: Older Character Representation in Children’s Picture Books

Of the 710 books assessed, 286 (40.2%) of the analyzed books contained at least one older character (see Appendix D for full list). RQ₁ addressed the total number of older characters that appeared in the selected children’s picture book sample. In response to this inquiry, there were a total of 10,620 characters assessed, with 605 (5.6%) coded as “older” characters.

Once a character was identified as being “older,” the character’s age was assessed. The given sample indicated that that majority of older characters were depicted with characteristics in the range of “middle old” (ages 65-74) qualities. Table 2 provides a complete breakdown of age.

Table 2: Age of Older Characters in Popular Children’s Picture Books

Age Classification	Total Characters	Percentage
Young Old (ages 55-64)	203	33.6%
Middle Old (ages 65-74)	287	47.4%
Old Old (age 75+)	115	19.0%

RQ₂: Gender and Racial Representations of Older Characters

Consistent with other research, the majority of older characters identified were male (60.0%) as compared to female. Table 3 shows that Caucasian (77.0%) was the predominantly portrayed race in the examined picture books. There are also several characters (74, 12.2%) where race could not be determined because 60 (9.9%) of the characters were depicted as non-human and a number of other characters were illustrated in an unnatural color (such as light blue or green) that does not imply a particular race. Additionally, 30 (5.0%) of the older characters analyzed were depicted as being of African American descent, with only 10 (1.7%) older characters illustrated as being of Hispanic descent.

Table 3: Race of Older Characters in Popular Children’s Picture Books

Race	Total Characters	Percentage
Caucasian	466	77.0%
Indeterminate	74	12.2%
African American	30	5.0%
Asian	16	2.6%
Hispanic	10	1.7%
Other	9	1.5%

RQ3: Roles of Older Characters in Children’s Picture Books

In terms of major and minor roles, 158 (26.1%) out of the total 605 older characters were portrayed in a major roles (see Table 4). After the major/minor role of a character was identified, the primary role of the older character in relation to plot was assessed. Overall, the domineering primary role was that of “indeterminate” (28.4%). This factor was directly related to the majority of the older characters assessed who were depicted in minor roles (73.9%). The top classification of character roles included indeterminate (28.4%), grandparent (16.2%) and friend (116.2%; see Table 5). Characters categorized in “other” roles (13.9%) were often depicted as a witch or wizard (non-villains), a person(s) of knowledge (goddess, wise man, advisor), or a neighbor. A chi-square indicated that males were significantly more likely to be in the worker and boss role $\chi^2(9, N = 48) = 49.765, p = .001$ and least likely to be the in the grandparent role $\chi^2(9, N = 43) = 49.765, p = .001$. Females, on the other hand, were significantly more likely to be in the parent/grandparent role $\chi^2(9, N = 55) = 49.765, p = .001$ and least likely to be in the worker/boss role $\chi^2(9, N = 4) = 49.765, p = .001$.

Table 4: Role of Older Characters in Popular Children’s Picture Books

Role	Total Characters	Percentage
Major	158	26.1%
Minor	447	73.9%

Table 5: Primary Roles Portrayed by Older Characters

Primary Role	Total Characters	Percentage
Indeterminate	172	28.4%
Grandparent	98	16.2%
Friend	84	13.9%
Other	84	13.9%
Worker	60	9.9%
Boss	40	6.6%
Teacher	23	3.8%
Husband/Wife	15	2.5%
Villain	12	2.0%

RQ4: Physical Characteristics of Older Characters in Children’s Picture Books

RQ₃ evaluated the physical characteristics of the analyzed older character. All traits were observed separately. In terms of overall appearance, the majority of the older characters coded were depicted as “moderate or average looking” (89.8%); only 22 characters (3.6%) were portrayed as “attractive.” Table 6 illustrates the specific physical characteristics of older characters in the coded picture books. The most common physical characteristic was “gray hair” (78.8%), followed by “wrinkles” (75.2%), “glasses” (39.2%), and “facial hair” (32.6%). Of those with facial hair, 174 (91.0%) had gray or white facial hair. Other common physical characteristics included “bald/balding” (27.4%) and “hunched over” (16.0%). Physical aids observed were all illustrated in association to a character’s physical movement (canes, braces, walkers, and wheelchairs).

Table 6: Physical Traits of the Older Characters

Physical Trait	Observed Trait	Total Characters	Percentage
Hair Color	Gray Hair	477	78.8%
	Not Gray	33	5.5%
	Partial Gray Hair	20	3.3%
Hair Status	Full Hair	262	43.3%
	Indeterminate	177	29.3%
	Bald/balding	166	27.4%
Facial Hair	No Facial Hair	414	68.4%
	Facial Hair (bear and/or mustache)	191	31.6%
Facial Hair Color	Gray/white	174	28.8%

Teeth	Indeterminate	477	78.8%
	Has teeth	102	16.9%
Glasses	No Glasses	368	60.8%
	Glasses	237	39.2%
Hearing Aid	Presence of Aid	3	.4%
Saggy Breasts	Presence of Saggy Breasts	57	9.4%
Hunched Over	Presence of Hunched Over	97	16.0%
Use of a Physical Aid	Presence of Physical Aid	36	6.0%
	Cane	28	4%
	Wheelchair	3	.4%
	Walker	2	.3%
	Staff	1	.2%
	Brace	1	.2%

RQ₅: Level of Activity for Older Characters in Children’s Picture Books

In terms of overall health, the majority (90.9%) of older characters in the selected sample were portrayed in “good” health. Only 10 characters (1.7%) exhibited elements that classified them as having “poor” health and 45 characters (7.4%) were identified as having “minor limitations” that often elicited influence on the character’s mobility. Thus, activity level for older characters in this sample was exceptionally positive: 485 characters (80.2%) were depicted as being “active,” 67 characters (11.1%) as “very active,” and 23 characters (3.8%) were portrayed as being “inactive” (see Table 7).

Table 7: Activity Level for Older Characters

Level of Activity	Total Characters	Percentage
Active	485	80.2%
Very Active	67	11.1%
Indeterminate	30	5.0%
Inactive	23	3.8%

RQ₆: Personality Characteristics of Older Characters in Children’s Picture Books

As previously discussed, characteristics associated with the older character’s interactions with others and overall emotional state were recorded via a character personality assessment (see

Appendix B for operational definitions). Table 8 outlines the top communicated traits. Of the personality traits examined, the three most prevalent traits of older characters in this investigation were “friendly” (80.3%), “happy/content” (56.2%), and “loving/caring” (16.7%). A chi-square indicated that males were less likely to be categorized as “loving /caring” than expected $\chi^2(1, N = 45) = 12.052, p = .001$ where females were more likely to be depicted as “loving /caring” than expected $\chi^2(1, N = 63) = 12.052, p = .001$. Similarly, females were more likely to be portrayed as “friendly” than expected $\chi^2(1, N = 56) = 10.337, p = .001$. No significance was noted between males and the personality characteristic of “angry/grumpy/stern.”

Table 8: Personality Traits of the Older Characters

Personality Type	Total Characters	Percentage
Friendly	486	80.3%
Happy/Content	340	56.2%
Loving/Caring	101	16.7%
Intelligent/Wise	84	13.9%
Angry/Grumpy/Stern	76	12.6%
Eccentric	37	6.1%
Sad	26	4.3%
Helpless	20	3.3%
Object of Ridicule	18	3.0%
Senile/Crazy	16	2.6%
Lonely/Recluse	13	2.1%
Humorous	11	1.8%
Dirty	9	1.5%
Nosey	9	1.5%

RQ7: Overall Portrayal of Older Characters in Popular Children’s Picture Books

In comparison to television and film, picture book illustrations were a medium less conducive to developing stereotypes, especially when the majority of characters were minor. Consequently, physical and personality traits were used to evaluate overall portrayal. Coders were able to rate each character as positive, neutral, or negative based on these traits. The results

for RQ₆ indicate that 332 (54.9%) characters were portrayed with positive characteristics, 169 (27.9%) with neutral characteristics, and 104 (17.2%) with negative characteristics. Because a “neutral” character is considered average and accurate in depiction, it is not classified as a negative portrayal. Therefore, “neutral” assessments were combined with positive observations, leading to an overall positive evaluation of 82.8% (see Table 9). A chi-square tabulation indicated that females were portrayed significantly more positive and more neutral than expected $\chi^2(2, N = 159) = 21.727, p = .000$.

Table 9: Overall Portrayal of Older Characters

Portrayal Classification	Total Characters	Percentage
Positive	332	54.9%
Neutral	169	27.9%
Negative	104	17.2%
Positive / Neutral	501	82.8%

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

In the recently acclaimed, bestselling picture book *Zen Ties* (Muth, 2008), a giant panda bear named Stillwater comes to visit three young children. When one boy asks Stillwater what activity the panda has in mind for a warm summer's day, the bear suggests a visit to Miss Whitaker—an elderly widow who lives down the street. Immediately, the children respond stating:

“*That* Miss Whitaker?” asked Karl. “She hates us! She’s really old and she spits when she talks! Every time we walk past her house, she shouts at us. She scares me.”

“She’s *your* friend?” Michael asked.

Stillwater looked at them. “Yes,” he said. “She isn’t feeling well and we must bring her something to eat” ...

As they walked quickly down the street, Stillwater said, “Miss Whitaker is a good friend. You will see.”

Karl and Michael’s responses illustrates what Anselmo (1977) would describe in his seminal research as a negative, ageist attitude. Characterizations such as “really old,” “spits when she talks,” “shouts at us,” and “scary,” are all attributed to Miss Whitaker and therefore present audiences with a pessimistic portrayal of an older character. Based upon the cumulative effect and cultivation analysis, children have the potential to form negative views of reality from repeated exposure to a specific message or theme. However, a key point of interest regarding *Zen Ties* is that the primary character, Stillwater, implies the need for a transformation of thought, stating, “Miss Whitaker is a good friend. You will see.”

Insignificantly More Significant: The Growing yet Dwindling Older Character

The design of this investigation was intended to update and add to the literature concerning older character representations and portrayals in children's illustrated books. Congruent to the above passage from *Zen Ties*, the results from this investigation communicate findings that do hold some negative implications, but more importantly, findings that also signify significant improvement in comparison to previous explorations. For instance, one example relates directly to the overall presence of older adults in children's picture books. Of the 710 books assessed, 286 (40.2%) contained at least one older character. While this result may seem low—especially considering that more than half of the sample did not contain an older character—this conclusion communicates significant increase (16.46%) in comparison to Ansello's original findings. While room for improvement is still present, it appears that authors and illustrators are becoming more conscientious in including older adults in the general population of children's first literature, thus communicating a more inclusive message to general society.

In contrast to the increasing number of books that contained an older adult, however, other areas regarding population communicated less desirable conclusions. Past children's literature research has labeled representation of the older adult as “insignificant” (Ansello, 1977)—even to the degree of becoming “the social outcast” (Barnum, 1977). From this analysis, it does not appear that a great deal has been altered. Findings concluded only a 5.6% representation in comparison to the total population of characters. This result lies on the low end of the spectrum in association to similar research within various media (8% in Robison & Anderson, 2006; 7% in Robison, Callister, & Magoffin, 2009).

In evaluation of this representation, the present older character population suggests a minimal existence of older adults in general; however, this is an inaccurate representation of the

literal population growth. As the baby boomer generation increases in age, the population of older adults will grow to a record number. The Administration on Aging states that by 2030, the older population (ages 65-years-old or older) will represent 20% of America's populace (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2008). This statistic emphasizes the dramatic underrepresentation of older people within some of the most popular children's picture books.

Additionally, inconsistent with the current population of older males and females—where females represent a greater number in population than males (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008)—an unbalanced gender ratio still seems to be prevalent regarding older characters in picture books. Findings indicated 10% dominance of males in comparison to females with males being illustrated as 60.0% of the total number of older characters and females as 40.0%. This result remained comparable to Ansello's conclusions (55.17% male; 41.38% female; 3.45% indeterminate). Furthermore, the representation of older minorities is also distorted compared to U.S. population figures, in which minorities represent nearly one-third of the total population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). This investigation of children's picture books coded only 10.8% of characters as a minority race with African American (5.0%) being the domineering non-Caucasian ethnic background depicted. These conclusions are also consistent with previous research where females and minorities continue to be underrepresented in various communication mediums.

Accurate depiction in gender, overall presence and minority representation in a medium that is so central to the development of children is essential. As communication theories such as the cultivation analysis, the availability heuristic and mental models acknowledge, individuals are continuously recording and accounting for the information they are presented with—especially numerical data concerning populations and overall occurrence. According to Roskos-Ewoldsen,

Davies and Roskos-Ewoldsen (2004) this information in conjunction with real life experiences (or the lack there of) assist in generating the mental models that individuals draw upon when formulating judgments. Considering that many children share limited interaction with older adults (Seefeldt, 1998; Vasil & Wass, 1993; Ward, 1997), the portrayal of older people in various forms of media becomes increasingly valuable. Therefore, in application to this investigation, the lack of representation concerning older adults in general could elicit detrimental consequences. Although it appears that popular, present-day picture books are more often including older adult figures within the content of children's first literature as a whole, the results for this investigation in terms of gender, race and population representation generates similar negative conclusions as past explorations. Specific awareness of these factors may be critical in providing more representative depictions of older adults in mediums that often share direct influence on the mental images children formulate.

Older Character Roles in Popular Children's Picture Books

The review of past explorations indicates that older characters are frequently depicted in minor roles. As indicated by Table 1 in the review of literature for children's media, only 3 out of the 11 studies suggested that older characters appeared more often in major roles. Congruent to previous children's first literature explorations, older characters in this sample were predominantly placed in minor roles (73.9%). In regards to determining overall purpose, this factor creates difficulty when identifying a character's primary role in relation to the plot. Thus, indeterminacy was often associated with older characters because many were illustrated as minor or insignificant. For instance, while many older characters were identified as a grandparent (16.2%), friend (13.9%) or worker (9.9%), 28.4% of all older characters were identified as "indeterminate," placing them in minor to non-significant roles. *Figure 1* provides an example



Figure 1. Illustrated Depiction of Indeterminate Older Male (Willems, 2007)

of an older person who is considered an indeterminate or “background” character. In this example, this older character cannot be identified by name, illustrates no relation to the main character, and is potentially overlooked by many readers.

However, results from this exploration do suggest improvement to Ansello’s (1977) findings which concluded that a character’s primary function within the plot was often classified as

“indeterminate” (53.1%). Additionally, Ansello recorded that older characters were portrayed as the main character in only

3.96% of the entire sample, which stands as a significantly smaller percentage in comparison to this investigation’s conclusions (26.1%). Although these comparisons signify advancement, older people are still often portrayed as insignificant to the plot, even to the point of non-existence within children’s picture books. Sensitivity of this situation is imperative as most children will one day age similar to the characters they view in these picture books.

Second to indeterminacy was the role of grandparent. Viewed as a more positive classification, this role encompassed 98 characters, who were portrayed in congruence to Schmidt and Boland’s (1986) stereotype as “the perfect grandparent.” Characters in this classification were frequently associated with traits such as “loving,” “friendly,” and “wise.” In fact, rarely was a grandparent ever depicted with an overall negative assessment. Interestingly, however, statistical significance was noted between the relationship of gender and grandparent. In this exploration, females were found to be significantly more likely to be in the role of grandparent/parent than males, and males were found significantly less likely to be in the role of grandparent. Furthermore, males were found to be significantly more likely to be in the role of

worker and/or boss, whereas females were found to be least likely to be in the worker/boss role. From these results, it becomes evident that some gender stereotyping among older males and females is prevalent in many of today's popular children's picture books. Although this stereotype isn't necessarily a completely negative finding, awareness of its presence may be helpful to parents and teachers in cultivating positive views of older adults among children.

Another finding of interest relates to the number of older characters portrayed as "the villain." While other media reported 10% to 15% of older characters were portrayed as "the villain" (Robinson & Anderson, 2006;

Robinson, Callister, Magoffin, & Moore, 2007), children's picture books contain far fewer villainous characters (less than 1% in Ansello, 1977; 2% in current study). Although this percentage is less than in other studies, this character role perpetuates a negative stereotype, which is

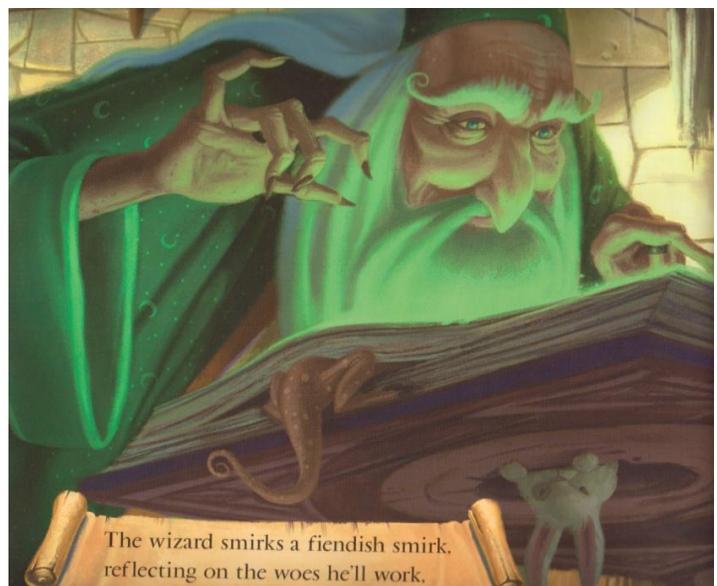


Figure 2. Illustrated Example of "The Villain" (Prelutsky & Dorman, 2007)

typically displayed in conjunction with exaggerated wrinkles and other negative facial distortions. For instance, the picture book *The Wizard* (Prelutsky & Dorman, 2007) relates the tale of an evil, old wizard whose sole purpose is to cause misery and woe to the town children below his tower. Hovering deviously over one of his spell books, one of the pages reads, "The Wizard smirks a fiendish smirk, reflecting on the woes he'll work" (see Figure 2). With the conclusion of the story, this older character has turned a small child into a lizard.

While the color and design of the illustrations brings a sense of lightness to the tale, the actions and images of this older character prove to engender negative implications. However, as authors and publishers seem to demonstrate added concern as represented by the relatively minimal usage of older villainous characters, perhaps children's picture books can stand as an exemplar medium in encouraging positive or neutral views that apply specifically to the older generation.

From Then to Now: The Increasingly Overall Positive Older Character

Perhaps one of this investigation's most noted conclusion stems from inquiries based upon RQ₆. Previous research noted that older people were most often associated with characteristics such as "poor," "sad" and "angry/grumpy/stern" (Ansello, 1977; Robinson et al., 2007). These traits potentially lead to an overall negative summation of older characters, thus providing concern for increasing ageist and stereotypical views of older people. Ansello concluded that only 2.26% of the coded population was categorized as "happy" and "nice," with 3.01% as "kind." However, in comparison to these conclusions, older adult characters in modern picture books have undertaken a significant transition regarding overall portrayal. In this sample, the top three personality traits described older adults as "friendly" (80.3%), "happy/content" (56.2%), and "loving/caring" (16.7%). Ranging from stories discussing children's visits to grandparents' homes to favorite holiday classics such as Van Allsburg's (1985) *The Polar Express*, these positive attributes were found in an array of illustrative works. For instance, the piece *What's Happening to Grandpa?* (Shriver, 2004) discusses the transition many children face as their grandparents' health begins to decline with increased age. At first, Kate (the child protagonist of the story) is somewhat confused and frightened by her grandfather's struggle with Alzheimer's disease. Yet, with the support of a loving family, Kate comes to realize that no

matter how the disease may influence her grandfather, she will always love and support him for being who he is—her grandfather. *Figure 3* illustrates the love and connection shared between Kate and her grandfather. Shoulder to shoulder, hand in hand, images such as these assist in promoting more positive attitudes towards older adults as they are portrayed as compassionate, loving individuals.

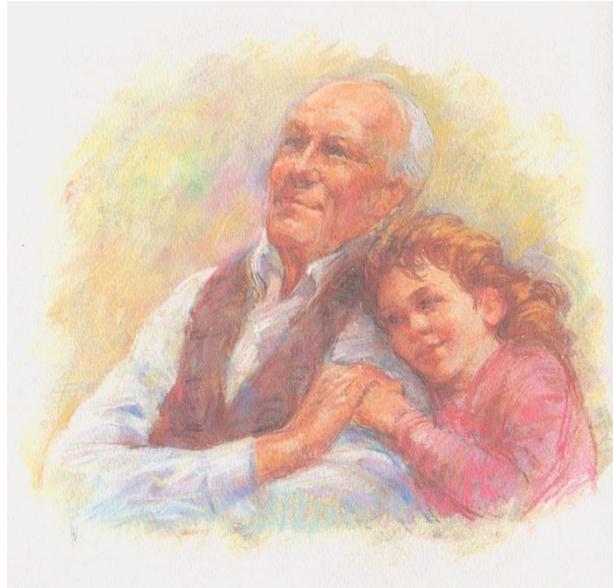


Figure 3. Illustrated Example of “Loving / Caring” (Shriver, 2004)

Along with personality, another considerable finding concerns the depicted activity level of older adults in the given sample. Of the 605 older characters portrayed, 552 (80.2%) of these figures were illustrated as “physically active.” Although this conclusion may seem a little low in comparison to other explorations (Robinson et al. 2007; 87%), positivity is noted as the vast majority of the sample was illustrated as physically healthy. Ward and Anderson’s (2003) work entitled *The Tin Forest* illustrates this result in the tale of an older man who finds joy in recreating the world around him through the use of tin. First described as “old” and “lonely,” the protagonist’s interest for life is reignited when he finds a broken lamp that resembles the image of a flower. As portrayed in *Figure 4*, the older man is seen as “sifting and sorting,” “burning and burying” as he works to recreate his world. With the conclusion of the story, great value and accomplishment is noted by the protagonist as he is viewed happily engaged in his “tin forest.” Along with many other titles, *The Tin Forest* stands as a positive portrayal of an older adult as it emphasizes older peoples’ ability to find pleasure in being active, regardless of age. These

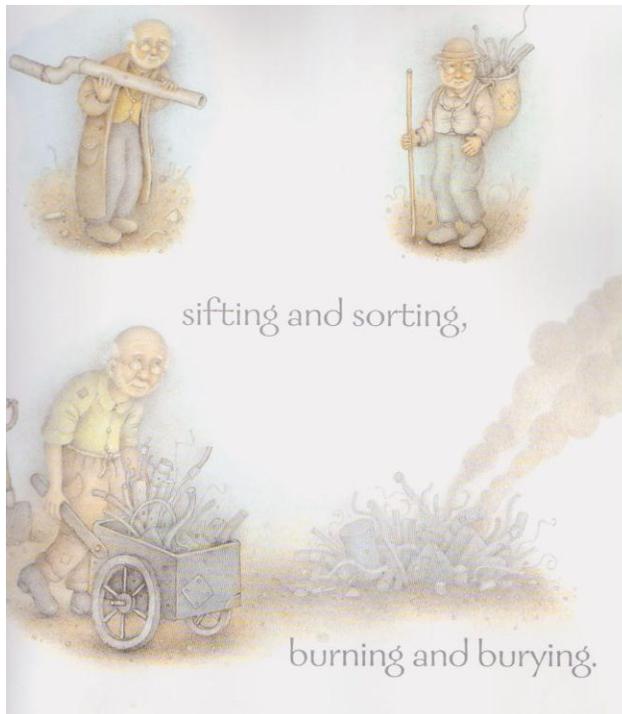


Figure 4. Illustrative Depiction of “Physically Active”
(Ward & Anderson, 2003)

portrayals stand as noteworthy contributions to the images of older adults in children’s illustrated works, especially considering that both activity level and personality descriptors held significant influence in the overall evaluation of each character.

Viewed as a medium that holds substantial influence—even to the degree that the content of favorite illustrated works can often be recalled over a lifetime

(Shannon, 1986; Cott, 1983; Inglis,

1981)—it appears that although older

characters may be sparse in some illustrated works, the overall depiction of the older character holds significant positivity that serves as a contrast to years past. Overall, results in this study argued a surprisingly dominating overall positive portrayal of older characters. 501 (82.8%) characters were depicted as either positive/neutral, while 104 (17.2%) were categorized as negative. As many children rely on the media as an informational source about the world, positivity in depiction and content becomes increasingly essential in all facets of media. This conclusion communicates exceptional optimistic value in combating ageist beliefs, especially if children are continuously being presented with positive exemplars that portray older characters as interactive, nice, and overall friendly characters. Furthermore, in many cases, the positivity found in this exploration exhibits a disparity in comparison to other children centered media. For instance, Robinson et al. (2007) reported 48% negativity in animated Disney films while

Robinson and Anderson (2006) reported 38% negativity in animated cartoons. In relation to this investigation, while 17.2% negativity still elicits some concern, Stillwater's comment "You will see" in the acclaimed picture book *Zen Ties* holds truth in continuing the battle of preventing ageist views among younger audiences.

CHAPTER SIX: LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Investigation Limitations

As outlined in the methodology section, the procedures and format of this study were replicated and adapted from not only previous research concentrating on children's first literature, but also several other investigations that focus on assessing children's media. However, with this replication, one important limitation regards the influence of previous research. As much of the past research regarding older character depictions in the media suggest overall negativity, special care was given in remaining objective throughout the study. However, using previous research did limit the variables observed, therefore impacting the generated results.

Another drawback regards the selected sample. As this investigation selected to analyze a sample of the more popular children's picture books from 2000 to 2010, other categories of books may have been overlooked. For instance, Blue (1978) performed an analysis of older characters in 125 realistic children's fiction books that contained both picture and non-picture books. Perhaps forming other classifications of books such as genre, publication date, illustrated or non-illustrated titles etc. may serve helpful in assessing a broader range of materials accessible to young audiences.

One final limitation centers on the applicability of content analysis research. As content analyses are often considered helpful in evaluating children centered media, the level or degree of effect due to exposure to specific media remains unknown. The following section outlines two proposals for future investigations that may serve useful in evaluating possible mental models derived from picture books that elicit influence to the young readers, as well as insights into the overall effect of ageist media exposure.

Proposals for Future Research

As purposed by Ansello, future content analyses focusing on the depictions of older people in children's first literature will continue to serve useful. This claim is further echoed and reiterated via the results of this research as communicated by the significant areas of improvement in comparison to Ansello's original findings. However, I propose that future investigations be expanded in means that are not strictly limited to Gerbner's cultivation theory. As Gerbner's theory lends itself resourcefully in identifying "persistent cultural themes, images, lessons, and values" (Stacks & Salwen, 2009, p. 107) to the involved characters, it sometimes overlooks the underlying situations or mental models that are formulated via these characters.

Greater depth and precision in pinpointing these influencing factors is needed for future research. For instance, if an individual is exposed to repetitive images and/or content that depict older characters, what specific elements regarding these images is he or she influenced by? Is it the characters themselves; or, is it the situations and interactions that these characters are involved in? In conjunction to Roskos-Ewoldsen, Davies and Roskos-Ewoldsen's (2004) mental models system arguing that individuals are mentally tabulating situations and interactions, I believe that further content analyses of not only the characters, but also plot characteristics such as the setting, character interactions, motivations and intentions should also be accounted for. This research will not only serve valuable in identifying repeated patterns in the physical characteristics of an older person, but also the potential literary models or situations that could be associated to older adults.

In addition to the application of mental models' to content analyses, I propose that qualitative methodologies begin to be utilized in assessing parallels between children's perceptions of older people and similar depictions in the media. As described in this investigation's literature review, numerous quantitative content analyses argue negative

conclusions in relation to the older population; however, while these studies are useful in linking child perceptions to media portrayals, few studies have aimed specific focus on children's views of older people in comparison to media depictions.

I propose a project that will seek to gain further understanding regarding youthful ideas of aging through a constant comparative analysis of children's drawings of both young and older people. In this research, children will be asked to not only draw older characters, but also illustrate them in a setting with other characters, thus providing insight to the constructed situations children often associate older characters with. These drawings will then be utilized as an auto driving technique with the artist that prompts discussion regarding the processes and implications of the produced image. With the addition of these brief, semi-structure interviews, comparisons can then be made to the produced children's drawings and literal media depictions from children's literature, films, magazines etc. Optimistically, these comparisons can then be utilized to generate new theory regarding the processes children draw upon when exposed to ageist media content coupled with children's perceptions of older people derived from reality. This research will be exceptionally valuable to the communication's field as it allows children to express their views of older people both visually and verbally through a non-intrusive method, thus providing greater insight that is rarely achieved via an analysis of media content.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSIONS

This research offers additional insight concerning how the media cultivates ideas, attitudes, and beliefs regarding older adults in the minds of children. I suggest that noteworthy improvements in depictions of the older adults are on the rise; however, these improvements still leave room for further growth. Similar to the picture book *Zen Ties*, with assistance from an influential support figure, the end of the story concludes with characters Michael, Karl and Addy learning to serve, relate to and acquire knowledge from their elderly neighbor, Miss Whittaker. These children simply needed a positive influence in transforming Miss Whitaker from a scary old person to a caring friend. In parallel to this alteration of thought, perhaps remaining negative views of older people can be combated with an increased awareness of current ageist occurrences through research similar to the present investigation.

This study contributes to the idea that children are continuously exposed to stereotypes of older adults through different forms of media. Although picture books are not the sole source of these negative ideas, they certainly hold some merit as communicated by this investigation. Similar to other mediums, older adults are still overwhelmingly underrepresented and occasionally associated with negative characteristics that contribute to the cultivation of attitudes and beliefs regarding older people in general. Yet, in many instances, picture books provide children with positive perception of older adults in comparison to television and movies. Ideally, with the continual increase in positive trends that have been demonstrated in this study, the exposure of more uplifting images will hopefully cultivate an added positive attitude concerning the population of older figures.

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Appendix A

Older Character Coding Sheet

Book _____

Character Name _____

_____ Total # of Characters

_____ # of Older Characters

Chronological age

_____ young old (55-64)

_____ middle old (65-74)

_____ old old (75+)

Gender

_____ male

_____ female

Race

_____ human

_____ nonhuman

_____ W

_____ B

_____ H

_____ A

_____ other _____

_____ indeterminate

Role of character

_____ major

_____ minor

Activity level

_____ very active

_____ active

_____ inactive _____ indeterminate

Health status

_____ good

_____ minor limitations

_____ poor

Primary role

_____ husband/wife

_____ parent

_____ grandparent

_____ friend

_____ worker

_____ boss

_____ villain

_____ teacher

_____ indeterminate

_____ other _____

Physical Description

_____ wrinkled

_____ limited wrinkles

_____ no wrinkles

_____ indeterminate

_____ ugly

_____ moderate looking

_____ attractive

_____ gray/white hair

_____ partial gray

_____ dark/light hair

_____ indeterminate

_____ bald/balding

_____ full hair

_____ indeterminate

_____ facial hair (beard/mustache)

_____ gray/white

_____ neat

_____ unkempt

_____ toothless/missing teeth

_____ has teeth

_____ indeterminate

_____ glasses/magnifying glass

_____ hearing aide

_____ sagging breasts

_____ hunched over

_____ use of a physical aid _____

_____ other aid of old age _____

Personality description

_____ object of ridicule

_____ intelligent/wise

_____ happy/content

_____ sad

_____ angry/grumpy/stern

_____ loving/caring

_____ humorous

_____ nosey

_____ lonely/recluse

_____ senile/crazy

_____ eccentric

_____ friendly

_____ overly affectionate

_____ sexy/macho

_____ forgetful

_____ helpless

_____ dirty old man/woman

_____ other _____

Overall evaluation (based on physical and personality description)

_____ positive

_____ neutral

_____ negative

Appendix B

Definitions of Character Roles

Role	Operational Definition
Worker/Boss	Person is working in a place of business where he/she is helping customers or serving others—the Boss may own the business or have employees working under him/her
Teacher/Instructor	Person is teaching and has direct responsibility for student
Grandparent	Person shown in a family situation where he/she is the parent of a middle-aged person who is the parent of small children or teens
Villain	An evil character in an episode who is the enemy of the hero or main character
Parent	Person shown in a family situation where he/she is the parent of a middle-aged child

Definitions of Character Personality Traits

Personality Trait	Operational Definition
Angry	Person who is annoyed or irritated
Caring	Compassionate or showing concern for others, looking after others
Eccentric	Unconventional person, someone that is “over the top” in the way they act or react to situations
Evil	Deliberately causing harm or pain—very unpleasant
Forgetful	Forgetting small things like a person’s name, an appointment, or to take medication
Friendly	Caring about the well-being of another person
Grumpy	Grouchy—Person who is bad-tempered or complains
Happy	Showing contentment or joy
Helpful	Provides assistance, information, or aid to others
Helpless	Unable to manage without help from others
Humorous	A person with a humorous role or the one responsible for making a scene funny
Intelligent	Aware, knowledgeable, and informed (depicted teaching, giving wisdom or information to others)

Lonely/Recluse	Feeling sad by being without friends or company, isolated, rarely visited, shown in solitary
Loving	Showing positive affection
Mean	Person who is cruel, unkind, or uncaring
Nosey	Too curious about other people's business
Overly Affectionate	A person whose affections are to the extreme—repeatedly kissing, hugging, or touching in a caring loving manner
Sad	Showing unhappiness, grief, or sorrow
Senile/Crazy	Confused or mentally unaware of surroundings—Erratic or unusual in behavior
Sexy/Macho	Attractive, physically strong, arousing
Object of Ridicule	The person being made fun of
Overly Conservative	Believes in traditional values and against change
Uncooperative	Unhelpful, stubborn, or obstinate
Wise	Person who is knowledgeable about many subjects and able to make sensible decisions and judgments on the basis of knowledge and experience

Appendix C

Definitions of Character Physical Characteristics

Physical Characteristics	Operational Definition
Activity/Healthy	Person depicted in activities that require physical strength (e.g., exercising, jogging, golf)
Attractive	Clean, put together, make-up, over done; Purposely depicted overly beautiful or over the top
Bald/Balding	Person is shown without hair or losing hair—part of the normal aging process
Gray Hair	Hair is gray or silver in color—part of the normal aging process
Loss of Hearing	Not being able to hear well—may require a hearing aid
Loss of Sight	Not being able to see well—may require glasses
Overweight	Person shown exceeding the normal weight for his/her age, height, and build
Sagging Breasts	yes=smaller, lower on torso; no=full breast predominantly present
Sick	Person is in poor health—shown in bed or hospital
Slow Moving	Person moves slower than what would be considered a normal pace
Toothless	Person is shown without teeth or with dentures
Ugly	Person is not physically appealing—especially in face; Purposely depicted extremely ugly.
Use of Physical Aid	Person requires assistance from a wheelchair, cane, walker, or other aid (related to old age)
Wrinkles	Lines or creases in the skin of a person’s face—part of the normal aging process