

THE PORTRAYAL OF OLDER ADULTS IN
BASAL READING TEXTBOOKS OF THE 1960S AND 1980S

By

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by

Rita Emily Meadows

Dedicated to
Grandma and Uncle Luther,

Minnie Shomo Haydon and Luther Shomo,
who endowed my brothers, my dozens of
cousins, and me with a heritage of love
and altruism that helped instill within
us an appreciation for the beauty of
living by traditional values

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Major Department: Instruction and Curriculum

This study analyzed basal reading textbooks of the 1960s and 1980s to evaluate the way older characters are presented in the readers. Specifically, the following primary questions were addressed:

1. How are older characters portrayed in five sets of representative basal reading textbooks of the 1960s?
2. How are older characters portrayed in five sets of representative basal reading textbooks of the 1980s?
3. Are there any significant statistical differences between the portrayal of older adults in the readers of the 1960s and the portrayal of older adults in the textbooks of the 1980s?

Further, secondary questions comprising twenty-one separate categories of information were organized into a checklist to ascertain whether there was evidence of stereotyping and discrimination against older adults in the readers. (These categories included total number of characters in stories, total number of elderly characters in stories, references to elderly, ethnic origin, role in the story, characterization, occupation, image, mentality, physical well-being, personality, personal appearance, dress, posture, general characteristics, activities, genre, illustrations, overall impression of the aged, marital status, and household.)

The results of the content analysis revealed that older adults were not discriminated against in either the readers of the 1960s or reading textbooks of the 1980s. It was found that they were underrepresented in relation to their actual proportion in the population, but no significant prejudicial or unfavorable characterizations were observed.

Significant differences in the basal readers of the two periods were observed as follows: (1) more females and fewer males were included in the total characters in the current series than were included in the earlier readers; (2) a greater number of elderly females and fewer elderly males also appeared in the newer readers; (3) a greater number of elderly female references and fewer male

references were noted in the current textbooks; (4) more blacks and fewer "other groups" such as imaginary characters were presented in the stories of the 1980s; (5) more illustrations in the contemporary readers were cartoon-like, rather than realistic; (6) more information selections were noted in the current basal readers; and (7) more wrinkled portrayals were depicted in the 1980s textbooks.

CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION AND JUSTIFICATION

Introduction

Today, a phenomenon which is changing the face of the nation is often referred to as the graying of America, or the aging of America. The country is "undergoing a transformation from a youth-oriented society into a nation in which middle-age and elderly people set the pace by sheer force of numbers" (Sanoff, 1984, p. 40). Correspondent Hugh Downs of ABC News stated recently that the aging of America is effecting a social revolution and "is a transformation of such magnitude that it has caught us critically unprepared" (Sendley, 1985, p. A-30).

In 1900 the total population (including Alaska and Hawaii) numbered 76,303,387 (Bureau of Statistics, 1901), and older Americans totaled only 3 million. By the year 2000 it is expected that the over 65 age group will reach 32 million, an increase from 4 percent to over 12 percent of the population (Ulin, 1982). The United States Bureau of Census (1984) reports that the population of the nation in 1983 was 233,981,000; the older adults numbered 27,384,000, which represents 11.7 percent of the total population. The total population has tripled since 1900; however, the over 65 age group has grown more than seven-fold, and the "75-plus age group is the fastest growing

segment in the United States" (Butler and Lewis, 1977, p. 5). "The 85-and-older group is expected to double by the year 2000" (Sendley, 1985, p. A-30). Conversely, it is projected that the group under 25 years of age will continue to decline sharply by 2000, while the 65 years and over group will continue to increase steadily (United States Bureau of the Census, 1984). "At the turn of the century one could expect to live on the average only 47 years; today the figure is 70 for men and 78 for women" (Skinner and Vaughan, 1983, p. 20).

Reasons for the increase in the number of older adults include a combination of factors: a tidal wave of pre-World War I immigration, a dramatic increase in the birth rate during the latter decades of the 19th and the early decades of the 20th centuries, and a sharp rise in life expectancy during the last 50 years (Ulin, 1982); advances in medicine, increased availability of medical services, and an improved standard of living (Skinner and Vaughan, 1983). The percentage of elderly people is expected to increase further in response to new medical discoveries, improved health care, and the presently declining birth rate (Butler and Lewis, 1977). Comfort (1978) also predicts that advances in medicine by the year 2000 will extend life expectancy of Americans.

One of the concerns associated with the current trend in the increased number of older persons is the frequent reporting of subtle and pervasive stereotyping of the aged

that has evolved in our society. Numerous investigators have identified prejudice and negative attitudes directed toward older people which have been propagated (perhaps unintentionally) in literature and other mass media. "In our culture with its emphasis on youth and speed, old people are expected to play a decreasingly active role in our social and industrial life. These cultural expectations encourage the formation of misconceptions and stereotypes about old age" (Tuckman and Lorge, 1953, p. 249). Nuessel (1982) states: "The language used to depict the elderly is overwhelmingly negative in its scope" (p. 273). In the general population negative attitudes toward the aged are common (Jantz, Seefeldt, Galper, and Serlock, 1977). Stereotyping of the elderly creates negative attitudes toward both the aged and the process of aging; widespread prejudice has been verified (Fillmer, 1984). McTavish (1971) reviewed the literature to determine the orientations (perceptions, attitudes, views) others, including the elderly, have toward old people in social contexts. He reported that most investigators remarked on the prevalence of erroneous and negative impressions about the elderly. "Study and observations spanning several decades have led social scientists and practitioners to conclude that . . . a social problem of great magnitude has evolved: the creation of a significant minority of disadvantaged elderly persons" (Wass, Fillmer, and Ward,

1981, p. 355.) Ansello (1977) laments, "The cumulative stereotype of age to emerge: noncreative and boring" (p. 270).

Alexander Comfort (1978) synthesized the characteristics he believes American society ascribes to the elderly person. He conceptualized this profile in the following parody:

He or she is a white-haired, inactive, unemployed person, making no demands on anyone, least of all the family, docile in putting up with loneliness, rip-offs of every kind and boredom, and able to live on a pittance. He or she, although not demented, which would be a nuisance to other people, is slightly deficient in intellect and tiresome to talk to, because folklore says that old people are weak in the head, asexual, because old people are incapable of sexual activity, and it is unseemly if they are not. He or she is unemployable, because old age is second childhood and everyone knows that the old make a mess of simple work. Some credit points can be gained by visiting or by being nice to a few of these subhuman individuals, but most of them prefer their own company and the company of other aged unfortunates. Their main occupations are religion, grumbling, reminiscing and attending the funerals of friends. If sick, they need not, and should not, be actively treated, and are best stored in unsupervised institutions run by racketeers who fleece them and hasten their demise. A few, who are amusing or active, are kept by society as pets. The rest are displaying unpardonable bad manners by continuing to live, and even on occasion by complaining of their treatment, when society has declared them unpeople and their patriotic duty is to lie down and die. (pp. 23, 24)

"Old age has been so negatively stereotyped that it has become something to dread and feel threatened by" (Bragger, 1976, p. 4). "As many people have pointed out, everyone wants to live a long time, but no one wants to be old--or think about being old" (Skinner and Vaughan, 1983, p. 21).

Statement of Problem

Stereotypes reflect injustices in a society and become deeply ingrained in the fabric of a culture. It is charged that negative attitudes toward specific groups in American society are often displayed. During the civil rights struggle, awareness of stereotypes in the form of racism unfolded. After these offenses surfaced, the women's movement sponsored efforts toward illuminating injustices directed toward females in the form of sexism. In addition to racism and sexism, other "anti-human values" have been scrutinized during the past two decades, including ageism, elitism, individualism, materialism, and competitiveness (Council on Interracial Books for Children, 1976). "Awareness of such stereotypes has escalated since the early 1960s" (Applebee, 1979, p. 451).

In recent years interest in age stereotyping conveyed through the mass media has mushroomed. Attention has been given to the way elders are portrayed in newspapers, television, magazine advertisements, magazine cartoons, popular music, and books. Other sources where older people may be misrepresented are greeting cards, jokes, and various types of pictorial illustrations.

Some studies indicate that children's literature frequently transmits discriminatory impressions of older people; it is believed that children have formed an aversive disposition toward the elderly and toward aging. Other

writers have concluded that stereotyping of the elderly is not as prevalent as some researchers claim. Investigations of the depiction of older people in children's books have focused on juvenile picture books and easy readers (Ansello, 1977); picture books, including Caldecott Award winners (Hurst, 1981); books for ages 5 through 12 (Rutherford, 1981); realistic fiction (Blue, 1978); books for preschool through grade three (Barnum, 1977b); and elementary basal reading series (Fillmer and Meadows, in press; Kingston and Drotter, 1981; Ribovich and Deay, 1979; and Robin, 1975).

Specifically, the purpose of this study is to analyze the content of basal reading textbooks which are representative of readers used in the 1960s and 1980s to see how the aged are portrayed. Primary questions to be considered are the following:

1. How are older adults portrayed in five sets of representative basal reading textbooks of the 1960s?
2. How are older adults portrayed in five sets of representative basal reading textbooks of the 1980s?
3. Are there any significant statistical differences between the portrayal of older adults in the readers of the 1960s and the portrayal of older adults in the textbooks of the 1980s?

Categories which are considered in the analysis comprise the following: total characters in stories, total elderly characters, references to elderly, ethnic origin, role in the story, characterization, occupation, image, mentality, physical well-being, personality, appearance, dress, posture, general characteristics (bespectacled, wrinkled, etc.), activities, genre, illustrations, overall impression of the aged, marital status, and household situation.

Significance of the Study

"There is a need to educate Americans of all ages about age and aging" (Madison, 1980, p. 599). After conducting an extensive review of the literature on the portrayal of older people, McTavish (1971) concluded that more research is needed: "Much of the work in this area has only been suggestive" (pp. 100, 101). "Because it is difficult to test the assumption that the media are influential in determining many of the attitudes and stereotypes we develop, including those on aging, researchers usually confine themselves to content analysis" (Ulin, 1982, p. 51). "Far from being trivial, content analysis of children's literature is most meaningful" (Ansello, 1977, p. 271).

The data obtained from this study will assist educators in their understanding of the ways the elderly are portrayed in current basal readers as compared to basal series of the past. The results should indicate whether there has been improvement in the treatment of older

people in contemporary series. The analysis may also produce some insights for teachers to guide them in dealing with images portrayed in children's literature, and it should disclose curricular implications for the elementary practitioner. "Aging education is already part of the curriculum and always has been. Students can't read literature or history without being exposed to models and issues of aging" (Ulin, 1982, p. 19).

Theoretical Rationale

Albert Bandura, an educational psychologist, presents a view of the way people learn, which is known as social learning theory. This perspective emphasizes the prominent roles played by vicarious, symbolic, and self-regulatory processes in psychological functioning. He contends that human thought, affect, and behavior can be markedly influenced by observation, as well as by direct experience.

In the social learning view, modeling is an important process in the attainment of knowledge. New response patterns can be acquired by direct experience or by observation; it is believed that most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling. Models who possess engaging qualities are sought out, while those lacking pleasing characteristics are generally ignored or rejected. It is surmised that social learning occurs through casual

or direct observation of behavior as it is performed by others in everyday situations.

The overall evidence thus reveals that modeling influences can serve as instructors, inhibitors, disinhibitors, facilitators, stimulus enhancers, and emotion arousers. . . . Modeling also plays a prime role in spreading new ideas and social practices within a society, or from one society to another. (Bandura, 1977, p. 50)

Numerous expectations are derived from vicarious experience, and people are inclined to perform according to what they have observed. If the behavior they observed was well received, they are apt to do it; if the response was negative, they are prone to avoid doing it. Humans tend to gravitate toward things that are associated with pleasant experiences, and flee those that have aversive connotations. Therefore, contingent experiences create expectations, as anticipated consequences are inferred from the observed outcomes of others, from what one reads or is told, and from other indicators.

The capacity to use symbols provides humans with a powerful means of processing and preserving experiences in representational forms that serve as guides for future behaviors. It is not uncommon "for individuals to react emotionally toward things and people cast into stereotypes without having had any personal contact with them. . . . Words that arouse emotions often function as vehicles for expectancy learning" (Bandura, 1977, pp. 63, 64). "Evaluations of places, persons, or things often originate from

exposure to modeled attitudes" (Bandura, 1977, p. 65). These affective influences are perpetrated through interpretation of symbolic representations.

Bandura further explicates that knowledge concerning oneself and the environment is represented in symbolic constructions and is frequently extracted from vicarious experience. Symbolic modeling by verbal or pictorial means greatly expands the range of verification experiences that could not be secured otherwise (because of prohibitions or limitations of time, resources, and ability). Social verification (through books, for example) can foster beliefs toward individuals or groups. However, "appearances can be misleading, especially to young children who lack the experiences necessary to interpret accurately what they see [or read]" (Bandura, 1977, p. 182). Biased conceptions and distortions may be formed observationally, and inferences that are deductively valid may be factually erroneous. Social learning theory purports that many of the misconceptions that people develop are cultivated through symbolic modeling of stereotypes.

The self-regulatory process in social learning theory is based on the idea that there is reciprocal interaction between personal, behavioral, and environmental determinants. In other words, man is not at the mercy of the environment. "Behavior partly determines which of the many potential environmental influences will come into play and

what forms they will take. . . . The environment is influenceable, as is the behavior it regulates" (Bandura, 1977, p. 195). The "animal" is capable of regulating the environment, rather than being controlled by the environment. Social learning theory encompasses both the behaviorist's concept of environmental control, and the humanist's philosophy of personal control--it is a "bidirectional influence process" (Bandura, 1977, p. 206).

Social learning theory impacts on children's literature in that children internalize information, values, perceptions, and impressions which are communicated through books. "One of the central tenets of the symbolic interactionist approach to social psychology is that the mental constructs which go to form what we call the mind intervene between stimulus and response and influence both" (Seltzer and Atchley, 1971, p. 226). Attitudes and stereotypes are two important types of mental constructs, and it is thought that these constructs are learned early in life through subtle teaching processes of socialization. Books serve as vehicles for vicarious experience, transmit societal values, provide children with role models, and influence the formation of attitudes and future images (Ansello, 1976b, Seltzer and Atchley, 1971; Wass et al., 1981; and Weitzman, Eifler, Hokada, and Ross, 1972).

"Like any concept, that of old age is learned through a combination of direct concrete and indirect vicarious

experience" (Ansello, 1977, p. 262). Research conducted through the Center on Aging determined that less than 22 percent of the children interviewed in a study were able to identify an older person they knew outside the family unit. Even though they had no contact with older persons, a large majority of the children stated that they preferred not to be with aged individuals, and they characterized older adults as sick, tired, and ugly (Ansello, 1976b). Since children frequently have little contact with elderly people, they may base many of their ideas about the elderly on characters in books they read, and their attitudes may reflect cultural stereotypes rather than personal experiences (Taylor, 1980). Attitudes and perceptions are transmitted by parents, teachers, and children's textbooks (Wass et al., 1981). (Other socializing agents include the mass media.) "With limited direct concrete experience with older adults, children's vicarious experience with old age becomes significantly more important in shaping concepts and attitudes toward growing older" (Ansello, 1976b, pp. 6, 7). "Children do love books, and books are wonderful conveyors of information--yet they are only vicarious aids (Seefeldt, Galper, Serock, and Jantz, 1978, p. 126).

"An issue currently discussed within circles of children's literature and gerontology is the portrayal of elderly men and women in literature for children" (Watson, 1981, p. 792). "Children's textbooks represent a kind of

literature that is of special importance because such texts are required reading for every child and . . . a high degree of legitimacy and authority is attributed to them" (Wass et al., 1981, p. 357). "In the past decade numerous content analyses of children's literature, picture books, and elementary textbooks conclude that children's books present biased and prejudiced images of people" (Hurst, 1981, p. 138). However, Watson (1981) notes that some researchers discovered that negative stereotypes were not as common as was expected. Latimer (1976) insists that messages are "telegraphed" to students through the use of textbooks and other teaching tools, and concludes that "children do have the inalienable right to have healthy and authentic impressions" of people in minority groups and of people with whom they may have little or no contact (p. 151). Jose and Richardson (1980) observe that people in every society share expectations (often stereotypes) of how people behave, think, and relate, which may be a way of condensing information and reducing identification to a semantic labeling process. The Council on Interracial Books for Children emphasizes that it is "crucial that we eliminate stereotypes from children's books if we hope to change society. This holds particularly true for the materials we give children at a time when their images of what society is and should be are beginning to take shape" (1976, p. 3).

"Children need the multigenerational perspective old people can provide. They also need models for treating people with dignity and respect, no matter what their age. Books can aid in the development of a mutually rewarding interaction with old people" (Rudman, 1984, p. 308). This study investigates the way older adults are portrayed in basal reading series of the 1960s and in basal reading textbooks of the 1980s. Twenty-one categories are designated to provide an in-depth analysis of the way each older character in the reading stories is depicted. It is expected that this examination will elucidate areas where there may be discriminatory problems concerning the aged, and will help determine if there have been changes in the way older adults are portrayed in today's basal reading series. "As a society, we should examine and understand our cultural views of growing older so that we may overcome cultural barriers to aging and promote a more healthy perspective of what it means to age in America" (Jose and Richardson, 1980, p. 419).

Limitations and Assumptions

Because it is difficult to measure mental constructs such as attitudes and stereotypes, a content analysis is often the means chosen to obtain information about the way people view particular concepts. In examining the

portrayal of older adults in children's readers, one assumes that this research method provides an acceptable method to determine whether or not children's stories discriminate against older people.

The definitions of ageism, attitudes, and stereotypes comprise the foundation for analyzing the depiction of older characters in elementary readers. Various researchers differ in the areas they study when attempting to identify ways older people may be represented in literature. Some investigators consider the grooming of older characters in illustrations, their ethnic origin, and the kinds of jobs they hold, while other writers seem more concerned with words used to describe the elderly and the kind of interaction in which they are engaged in the stories (e.g., leadership, political participation). The categories identified for this investigation were selected by the researcher after having perused previous studies. It is believed that these areas are appropriate for scrutinizing the way older people are depicted in basal readers and that the categories are comprehensive enough to provide valid insights, regarding ageist tendencies in readers, for educators.

There are no standardized instruments available for determining stereotypical characteristics in literature. Therefore, each investigator uses some subjectivity in the process of identifying positive and negative features of

older characters. For example, what constitutes fashion? What is the difference between an active and a passive activity (is fishing active or passive)? Although the researcher tried to be objective in the analyses, the results of this study cannot be directly compared with the findings of other studies.

Because children's readers include many animal characters, and these story members convey messages to the child, it was decided to include animals in counting the total number of characters and the number of older characters. The results of the study, however, are generalized to humans.

Definition of Terms

Ageism. The prejudices and stereotypes that are applied to older people, based solely on their age (Butler and Lewis, 1977).

Aging. "A continuous process of growth throughout life" (Clearwater, quoting Maggie Kuhn, 1982, p. i).

Attitudes. "Predispositions to respond toward a person or thing in either a positive or a negative way" (Seltzer and Atchley, 1971, p. 226).

Character. Person or animal included in the text and/or illustrations in a basal reader selection.

Distortions. "The use of myth or outright falsehoods to depict old age as an either idyllic or moribund stage of

life" (Council on Interracial Books for Children, 1976, p. 19).

Older adults. Persons 65 years of age, or older; also referred to as the aged, older people, older individuals, and the elderly.

Omissions. "The exclusion or avoidance of older people, of their life concerns and of the positive aspects of aging" (Council on Interracial Books for Children, 1976, p. 19).

Stereotype. A standardized mental picture that is held in common by members of a group and that represents an oversimplified opinion or judgment (Anderson and Fialkoff, 1983).

Summary of Chapter One

An important trend in American society can be observed in the increasing number of older people comprising the total population. Numerous writers have expressed concern over the way the elderly are depicted in various forms of mass media. Discriminatory depictions of the elderly causes them to develop negative self-concepts, and young people who assimilate fallacious impressions of the aged dread aging and become victims of their own prejudice. Because books are socializing agents and provide vicarious learning experiences for children, it is important to examine story content to determine if there is evidence of

ageism in children's literature. This study analyzes basal readers of the 1960s and basal reading textbooks of the 1980s to ascertain how older adults are portrayed, and to see if there have been changes in the depiction of older people in current reading series.

CHAPTER TWO
REVIEW OF RELATED RESEARCH

Introduction

Since the Civil War, two historical trends have impacted on contemporary American life: emphasis on a youth-oriented culture and an increase in the size of the population of older people in the United States (Seltzer and Atchley, 1971). Numerous writers have been involved in analyzing various aspects of the effects of these trends (e.g., Anderson and Fialkoff, 1983; Comfort, 1978; Sanoff, 1984; Skinner and Vaughan, 1983; and Taylor, 1980). The emphasis on speed and youth in the nation has resulted in the expectation that older people assume a decreasingly active role in social and industrial productivity (Butler and Lewis, 1977; Tuckman and Lorge, 1953). Anderson and Fialkoff (1983) quote Dr. Daniel F. Detzner of the University of Minnesota who "reminds us of the Greek ideal, in which our society has its roots, that puts youth and its qualities on a pedestal. Throughout our history youth has been equated with beauty, vitality, hope; age with the opposite" (p. 8). This observation is consistent with the conclusion made by McTavish (1971): "Most investigators report findings which support the view that attitudes toward the elderly are most favorable in primitive societies and decrease with modernization to the

point of generally negative views in industrialized, Western nations" (p. 91). Jose and Richardson (1980) refer to this expectation as evidence of class distinction by the youth-oriented ruling class which produces a perception of weakness in the elderly.

The American society has begun to recognize many of the issues associated with aging (Madison, 1980). Stereotyping of the aged has been identified and studies of ageism in children's books and in reading textbooks have been conducted.

Stereotyping of the Aged

Ansello (1978) charges that stereotypes regarding growing older are so subtle and pervasive among the public that remediation is an enormous task. Three instruments which have been used to discern the attitudes of society toward the elderly are the Attitudes Toward Old People scale, the Older Workers Questionnaire, and the Old People Scales (Shaw and Wright, 1967). The characteristics of ageism, effects of ageism, and efforts to combat ageism have been described in the literature.

Characteristics of Ageism

Ageism has been defined by Butler and Lewis (1973) as a process of systematic stereotyping of and discrimination against people because they are old, just as racism and sexism accomplish this with skin color and gender. Old people are categorized as senile, rigid in thought and manner, old-fashioned in morality and skills. . . . Ageism allows the younger generation to see older people as different from themselves; thus

they subtly cease to identify with their elders as human beings. (p. 9)

Stereotyping and conveying negative images of the elderly persist when

1. Elderly people are depicted as inactive, or are shown as engaging in housework, fishing, walking, listening, or storytelling;
 2. Such adjectives and adverbs as "old," "wrinkled," "crippled," "hobbling," "mean," and "crabby" are used in referring to the elderly; and
 3. White hair and bent-over bodies typify the physical characteristics ascribed to the elderly.
- (Storey, 1977, p. 528)

Applebee (1979) identifies other forms of stereotyping which occur when a group is presented with condescension or an unrealistic "do-gooder" image, and he notes that stereotypes can be reflected as much in what is not depicted as in content which is objectionable in itself.

Why would society frown upon older adults? Comfort (1978) claims that society assigns a role to the aged of being physically and intellectually infirm, slow on the uptake, and rigid in their ways; older adults are not granted a positive image--"ageist terms are derogatory and demeaning because they depict the elderly as possessing largely undesirable traits and characteristics" (Nuessel, 1982, p. 273). Bandura (1977) espouses the belief that people shun that which is negative or aversive and gravitate toward positive role models. Therefore, younger people would be prone to avoid older adults who are perceived as being burdens to society. Tuckman and Lorge (1953) and Robin

(1977) assert that the value placed on youth and speed in this nation is another reason the aged suffer from discrimination. It is also predicated that ageism allows the younger group to rationalize the expulsion of the elderly from the work field.

Prejudice toward the elderly is an attempt by younger generations to shield themselves from the fact of their own eventual aging and death and to avoid having to deal with the social and economic problems of increasing numbers of older people. It provides a rationalization for pushing the elderly out of the job market without spending much thought on what will happen to them when they are no longer allowed to work. Ageism is the sacrifice of older people for the sake of "productivity" and the youth image that the working world feels compelled to project.
(Butler and Lewis, 1977, p. 141)

Americans may also reject the elderly because of other distorted views the public has assimilated. Carter (1979) identifies some of the distortions and delineates between myths and facts:

1. Most elderly people are living in institutions--only 5 percent do.
2. The aged can live on less because they do not need as much for clothing, transportation, entertainment, etc. In reality, their financial problems are more serious because they live on fixed incomes.
3. Most old people are pretty much alike--evidence shows that as people age they tend to become less alike.

4. Old people must be institutionalized because of senility--only 3 percent of those 65 and over are institutionalized as a result of psychiatric illness.
5. Aged drivers have more accidents--the National Safety Council affirms that they have fewer accidents.
6. They are set in their ways and are unable to change--they do adapt and their political and social attitudes shift with the rest of society.
7. Old adults have no interest in or capacity for sexual relations--Masters and Johnson found that the capacity for satisfying sexual relations continues into the 80s for healthy couples.
8. They cannot work as effectively as younger people--consistency of output tends to increase with age as does accuracy. Older workers have less job turnover, fewer accidents, and less absenteeism than younger workers.
9. Most of the elderly are not healthy enough to carry out their normal activities--more than 80 percent are able to engage in normal activities.
10. Older people can't learn--developmental psychologists have found that they can learn when allowed time to respond in situations which require the

application of newly learned information and/or skills.

Needless to say, it is difficult to be an individual in a stage of life that is negated and rejected by the culture. Life cannot be pleasant when one is not shown respect and when one is expected to be senile, childish, and generally out of touch. (Page, Olivas, Driver, and Driver, 1981, p. 46)

If the myths regarding the elderly are dispelled, then society may begin accepting the aged as productive citizens quite capable of making positive contributions in various areas of life. As keener awareness of the talent and experience available via the older group develops, the aged may assume a more prominent role in solving some of the social, political, and economic problems our nation faces.

Effects of Ageism

Researchers who have used content analysis to investigate ageism in children's literature have typically based their studies on three underlying assumptions.

One basic assumption is that an individual's attitudes and stereotypes influence not only one's behavior toward others, but also toward oneself. A second assumption is that although there is still much to be known about the actual processes of attitude formation and acquisition, it is generally believed that many attitudes and stereotypes are learned early in life. A third assumption, difficult to test empirically, is that literature is one important agent of social transmission and thus may both reflect and direct the attitudes and beliefs held by a given society. (Blue, 1978, p. 187)

Seltzer and Atchley (1971) concur with the first assumption: the attitudes and stereotypes people acquire

"have consequences for both the behavior others direct toward older people and the development of one's self-concept as an older person" (p. 226). Elderly people who have incorporated the negative cultural view of themselves form "self-hatred," become depressed and passive, and participate in self-denigration (Butler and Lewis, 1977); "if the words are said often enough, the victims half believe it themselves" (Comfort, 1978, p. 10). Although there is little systematic attention given to the possible effects of negative views of older people, general comments in the literature suggest that others' views may affect an older person's feelings of adequacy, usefulness, security, or depression (McTavish, 1971). When media images are overwhelmingly negative, comical, and/or idiotic, young people's perception of old people becomes warped, old people suffer from the stereotyped image, and middle-aged people fear the thought of getting older (Bragger, 1976).

The second assumption is affirmed by numerous writers: "Children's attitudes evolve from value systems established early by their families and are modified by interactions with people, influences of institutions, and information from mass media" (Page et al., 1981, p. 43). At a young age children are socialized through books which serve as vehicles through which they are exposed to societal values and role models which present children with future images of themselves and influence their aspirations

and goals (Barnum, 1977a; Hurst, 1981; Latimer, 1976; Taylor, 1980; and Weitzman et al., 1972). Jantz, Seefeldt, Galper, and Serlock (1976) developed and administered The Children's Attitude Toward the Elderly (CATE) scale, and learned that children's feelings were a mixture of positive responses related to the affective characteristics of older persons and negative reactions concerning the physical aspects of age. The CATE scale was administered to another group of students (Page et al., 1981); they expressed a reluctance to grow old and they used negative physical characteristics (e.g., wrinkles, grey hair, false teeth) to describe the elderly. Other investigators have recognized that children manifest unfavorable attitudes regarding the aged (Fillmer, 1984; Fusco, 1981; Hopkins, 1978; and Seefeldt, Galper, Serock, and Jantz, 1978).

"The assumption is commonly made that the media are influential in determining many of the attitudes and stereotypes we develop, including those on aging" (Ulin, 1982, p. 51). It is assumed that "literature serves as a major agent of socialization and culture transmission" (Seltzer and Atchley, 1971, p. 227). "There is a potency in the messages carried in children's stories. Often there are hidden agendas. The values the stories convey, the way they depict people and the images they give children are what count" (Anderson and Fialkoff, 1983, p. 18). It is generally believed that the books children read influence

children's attitudes and behaviors and introduce them to the norms, roles, and values of society (Ansello, 1977; Barnum, 1977a; Estensen, 1946; Latimer, 1976; Rudman, 1984; Seefeldt et al., 1978; Storey, 1979; and Taylor, 1980). Because this assumption is difficult to test empirically, some researchers rely on scholarly opinion to determine that a positive relationship exists between the portrayal of attitudes and values in books and the personality development of children. Rutherford (1981) cites the following authorities who concur that this assumption is accurate: Bess Porter Adams, Dewey W. Chambers, Jerome Bruner, Montgomery Johnston, Paul Hazard, Phyllis Fenner, Louise Rosenblatt, May Hill Arbuthnot, Zena Sutherland, Charlotte S. Huck, Doris Young Kuhn, David Russell, Myra Pollack Sadker, David Miller Sadker, and Ruth Strickland.

It is evident that the effects of ageism harm children, adolescents, the middle-aged, and older adults.

This separation of the elderly from the mainstream of American society has had serious consequences in terms of the elderly as well as children and young people. Present conditions have deprived the elderly of opportunities to contribute their knowledge and expertise in appropriate areas because they are "too old." Children, on the other hand, are deprived of opportunities to develop healthy attitudes toward their own aging, or even to recognize that they themselves are part of the aging process. (Parnell, 1980, p. 187)

Fillmer (1982) explains that the self-concepts of elderly persons suffer from their being viewed as inferior.

Younger persons suffer because their stereotyping of the

elderly becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, as those who view the elderly as inferior consider themselves to be inferior when they grow older. In recent years older adults have organized to study the problems inherent in ageism, to alert society of ways in which the aged are stereotyped, and to present a realistic representation of the elderly.

Fighting Ageism--The Gray Panthers

Prior to the 1970s, older people were presented in outdated and distorted images, and were characterized generally by inaccurate impressions (Storey, 1977). When Maggie Kuhn, founder of the Gray Panthers, was faced with mandatory retirement in 1970, she and five of her friends joined forces and formed an action group which included more than 100 people in one year. The media "playfully dubbed it the 'Gray Panthers' in recognition of the group's dramatic and sometimes radical techniques and philosophy" (Clearwater, 1982, p. 1).

The four goals of the Gray Panthers, enumerated by Clearwater (1982), are as follows:

1. to promote a positive attitude toward aging;
2. to expose inequities and injustices, based on age, and force them into the public policy arena;
3. to make an impact on social policies which often reinforce negative stereotypes of aging; and

4. to organize grass roots Gray Panther networks.

The group implements the goals with varied and distinctive techniques including massive education programs, petition drives, consciousness-raising groups, demonstrations, rallies, legislative letter writing, and telephone campaigns. They also initiate lawsuits; organize conferences, seminars and public forums; and serve on local, state and national committees. They "demonstrate their global concerns through activities within the United Nations . . . and have representation on the Executive Committee of the American Section of the World Assembly on Aging" (Clearwater, 1982, p. 6).

In 1971 the Gray Panthers participated in the White House Conference on Aging. By vocalizing their concerns, they were successful in initiating changes that affected minority groups.

The Gray Panther Media Watch Task Force was established in 1974 in cooperation with the Council on Interracial Books for Children and concerns itself with ageist portrayals in all media (Anderson and Fialkoff, 1983). The Gray Panthers seek to maintain an excellent image and to establish themselves as a reputable activist organization.

The National Administration on Aging funded another conference in 1981. Media experts and anti-ageism activists merged to plan for improvement in the quality and quantity of older people's representation in all aspects of

media operation. They decided to establish a Media Center and outlined the following goals for the center:

1. to educate the media to present positive and realistic images and combat stereotyping of older people,
2. to educate older people in order to improve their self-images, and
3. to educate children in order to give them a positive view of the aging process and of older people (The White House Conference on Aging, 1981).

"Today's average over-65 cohort has more economic independence and is healthier, more vigorous, better educated, better informed, and more active than any previous over-65 cohort" (Ulin, 1982, p. 11). Older adults have greater expectations and are making themselves heard both individually and collectively. "The maturing population is effecting changes in keeping property taxes down, even if it means spending less on schools; Social Security benefits; health care; and voting participation in the political realm" (Sanoff, 1984, p. 41). In regard to property taxes and public referenda, the "elderly have often been in the forefront of these movements, creating particularly strong frictions between younger and older residents on issues of school financing" (Logan, 1984, p. 7). It is speculated that the organized political power of the

elderly will grow every year (Skinner and Vaughan, 1983), and that "the major parties may compete for its favor, or it may develop its own lobby" (Comfort, 1978, p. 22). Comfort (1977) suggests that the problems associated with ageism may be remediated through organization, protest, and militancy.

Summary

It has been determined that "negative views about aging are predominately characteristic of our Western culture, which measures human worth in terms of individual productivity and power" (Jose and Richardson, 1980, p. 419). This stereotyping of the aged is destructive to the young and old alike, and the effects of ageism cause younger people to fear growing old and inflict a negative self-image on older adults. Rudman (1984) concludes, however, that

Fortunately, the aged population is not waiting for the rest of us to rescue them. Through such organizations as the Gray Panthers and The American Association of Retired Persons, and such activities as elder hostels, they have helped educate the rest of the population to their abilities and needs. (p. 307)

Ageism in Children's Books

It has been reported that over the past two decades, research

has established that older people in young people's literature are persistently presented as inactive and bland, roaming around in a doubtful limbo, relegated

to looking on from the periphery at exciting life dramas experienced exclusively by characters who are not old. (Vraney and Barrett, 1981, p. 487)

Out of a total of eight studies focusing on ageism in children's literature, five investigators agree that there is frequent stereotyping and discriminating against older adults in the stories; three researchers disagree with this allegation.

The earliest study to consider ageism in children's books was executed by Seltzer and Atchley (1971). They examined 40 books to determine changes toward old people and things in children's books from 1870 to 1960. Their findings did not support a generally negative picture about older people and things. They recommended further research of this topic, but predicted, "It is possible that we will find attitudes and stereotypes toward the old are not so negative as social gerontologists expected them to be" (p. 230).

Edward Ansello (1977) was another of the early researchers to analyze children's books to determine how the aged are portrayed. He scrutinized 656 books to identify the (1) presence of older characters; (2) sex of older characters; (3) racial composition; (4) relationship to main character; (5) occupational role; (6) behaviors; (7) illustrations; (8) physical descriptions; and (9) personality descriptions. He reports that "the cumulative impression of the older character to be derived from this

body of literature is one of a relatively unimportant, unexciting, and unimaginative entity" (p. 269). Ansello (1976b) contends that overt stereotyping, such as describing old people as ugly or portraying females as witches is not the problem; subtle stereotyping such as omission and failing to develop their character in the story is the insidious problem with ageism. Only 16.46 percent of the books he analyzed contained an older character.

One hundred books for children of preschool age through grade three were examined by Phyllis Barnum (1977b). It was found that the aged were disproportionately represented; the elderly made up only 3.3 percent of the characters in the stories and appeared in only 5.3 percent of the illustrations. "The aged were significantly more passive, less healthy and less self-reliant than other adults . . . which gives an unnecessarily gloomy cast to old age in children's literature" (pp. 304, 305). She concluded that "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" (pp. 304, 305).

A group of fifth-graders studied ageism in a collection of children's books, under the direction of D.C. Storey (1979), and reported that

1. grandparents in the books looked older than their own;

2. the book elderly and grandparents didn't work, have fun, or do anything exciting;
3. the book elderly led sad, lonely, and boring lives;
4. the book young people were mean to the elderly, and treated them as if they were stupid and responded to them as though they were children;
5. characters in the books did not seem to want to listen to or talk to the elderly;
6. sometimes the book elderly were mean, crabby, overly tidy, fussy, and unfair;
7. book elderly liked to remember the good old days or dream of better times; and
8. there were not many happy books about the aged.

Storey used the following techniques to help the students become aware of ageism and to help improve attitudes toward the elderly in a five-week unit with the fifth-graders: discussion, questionnaire, interviews with the elderly, older guest speakers, role-playing, and one-line expression writing.

Gladys Blue (1978) used a master list of 173 books which contained old characters in the area of realistic fiction to select a random sample of 125 books to probe. She determined that there was no evidence of stereotyping or negative portrayal of older people; the aged were characterized in these books in varied positions with diverse

styles of dress, personality, occupations, physical well-being, and situational roles. (The books she analyzed were for older readers and each book, to be eligible for the analysis, had to contain at least one older character.)

Forty picture books, including 20 Caldecott Medal winners, comprised a sample of children's literature to determine the extent to which characters portray positive images or sexist, ageist, and racist stereotypes in children's books. Hurst (1981) concluded that the "characters are involved in almost no decision-making or use of participatory skills (observing, supporting, persuading, bargaining, etc.); there are no major political figures, and the books present a bland, passive view of life" (p. 139). The findings support the proposition that children's picture books are biased, sexist, and prejudiced toward minorities.

An exploratory study of ageism in children's literature for ages 5 to 12, involving 80 books selected from a list of 117 possibilities, written between 1949 and 1978, was conducted by Wilma Marie Rutherford (1981). She evaluated nine personal characteristics pertaining to the aged: mobility, wealth, race, sex, state of health, employment status, stature, importance to the story, and personal appearance. In addition, she coded 14 behavior categories: routine-repetitive, nurturant, physically exerter, social-recreational, aggressive, expressions of

emotion, constructive-productive, self-sufficiency, avoidance, and dependency. She determined that the aged were not portrayed in a stereotypical fashion, but were presented with a diversity of roles and activities.

An investigation of the way the elderly who were widowed or never married were represented in children's books was performed by Vraney and Barrett (1981). They analyzed 131 books of which 64 contained a total of 80 older characters--39 were widowed and 41 were never married. Chi-square tests of association revealed no significant relationship between marital status and the frequency of positive and negative images, the frequency of particular roles (eccentric, serving the young, or other), or the frequency of main and minor characters. The findings supported other reports which indicate that older characters are bland, dull, and not very creative.

In summary, five research studies focusing on ageism in children's books, totaling 927 books plus another collection used in a fifth-grade classroom, supported the supposition that stereotyping of the aged was prevalent in children's literature. Three other investigations, totaling 245 books, indicated that stereotyping of older adults was not widespread in children's books. Two trends noted in the literature revealed that the aged were more prevalent in books published since 1967, even though

their numbers were still disproportionately small (Ansello, 1976a), and there was an increase in realism and frankness in children's literature with grandparents appearing in picture books in many different and often complex roles that offer young children a positive image of the elderly. "A frequent theme in modern books involving grandparents is that they can be fun" (Mavrogenes, 1982, p. 897). The earliest study of ageism, cited in children's books, was conducted in 1971; the next investigation occurred in 1976; the last three studies were performed in 1981. Interest in ageism in children's literature has been gradually increasing since the early 1970s.

Examination of Basal Reading Series

For decades, the content of basal reading series has been analyzed. As far back as the 1940s, frequency counts and percentages were computed for specialized categories to ascertain various messages which were communicated in reading textbooks (Estensen, 1946). Within the past decade, four studies have been conducted to determine how the aged are portrayed in elementary readers (Fillmer and Meadows, in press; Kingston and Drotter, 1981; Ribovich and Deay, 1979; and Robin, 1977). It appears that "the maturing society" has been effective in generating awareness of the image perpetuated by printed media, and has been able to

engender interest in assuring that older adults are depicted in a realistic, nonstereotypic role as valuable members of American communities.

Ellen Page Robin (1977) compared 47 basal readers, published from 1953 to 1968 with 33 readers published in 1975, with regard to the presentation of older characters. Even though she found that 70 percent of the books contained stories with old characters, less than 6 percent of the total characters in each set of texts were old, and older adults were portrayed in fewer than 5 percent of the illustrations. It was discovered that 66.8 percent of the total characters in the pre-1970 books were male, and 61.3 percent of the total characters in the 1975 series were male--a definite sexist distinction was apparent for both time periods.

The majority of the aged represented were white in both the earlier books and the 1975 series (66 percent and 50 percent, respectively); the more recent series contained more elderly who were American Indian (8 percent in the newer books, as compared to less than 2 percent in the earlier basals). More of the older characters were animals in the 1975 series (25 percent, as compared to less than 16 percent in the pre-1970 textbooks). Robin also found that fewer grandparents were portrayed in the 1975 texts; however, there were more grandmothers than grandfathers in these same readers. In terms of occupation, the older

adults in both sets of books included farmers, housewives, fairy godmothers, wise men, kings, and judges.

The aged were sometimes described as old, happy, cross, kindly, silly, fat, little, rich, poor, sick, and cruel. They were generally presented in a positive or supportive manner, and they were actively engaged most of the time. While less than 5 percent of the elderly were widowed in the pre-1970 books, 11 percent were widowed in the more recent series; failure to note marital status among the old accurately was a serious exclusion.

Overall, Robin concluded that the "presentation of old characters is generally consistently positive in content and form across the grade levels of the textbooks, but appears to be quite neutral and bland in the more recent set" (p. 275). She expressed concern that the impact of misleading and inaccurate pictures of age may influence the future personal desires of children, and may affect their treatment of those who are currently members of the older generation.

Six basal reading series, published between 1976 and 1978, were selected by Jerilyn Ribovich and Ardeth Deay (1979) for analysis of the portrayal of the elderly, especially aged characters who assumed a central role in the story. It was learned that 16 percent of the 1600 selections contained an older character, and 6 percent of those

selections assigned an older adult a role as a main character.

Of the total number of elderly characters, 41 percent were female and 57 percent were male--the proportion of elderly characters who had a central role in the story was 35.5 percent female and 64.5 percent male. The ethnic composition of the older characters was 44 percent white, 10.3 percent native American and Hawaiian, 8.8 percent black, 4.7 percent Asian American, and 1.8 percent Spanish American. "When an elderly character assumes a role of importance in a story, the role is most frequently as a white male" (p. 35).

Over one-third of the older characters assumed some form of meaningful responsibility, about 11 percent were in poor health, and 27.9 percent possessed positive personal characteristics, but 7.6 percent had negative characteristics. Over two-thirds of the aged were stereotypically illustrated, and 24.9 percent were nonstereotypically illustrated.

When primary readers were contrasted with intermediate texts, it was noted that there was a much higher incidence of stereotypic physical descriptors given by the authors of the intermediate books. Primary materials contained more illustrations than did the intermediate levels.

Although females were outnumbered by the males in the stories, women were shown to achieve success more often than men (75 percent and 54 percent, respectively). When only intermediate texts were considered, the range increased to 80 percent of the females and 46 percent of the males.

The researchers concluded that the elderly were presented as healthy, successful, self-starters, and were responsible citizens who were able to contribute to others. "Continuing what may be a recent trend, the elderly might appear more frequently as central characters" (Ribovich and Deay, 1979, p. 39). It was determined, though, that the illustrations depicted the elderly with stereotypic symbols; men were shown as having mustaches or being bald and women were depicted with their hair in buns. "Current basal materials reflect a growing awareness of the various roles and contributions of the elderly as functioning members of society" (Ribovich and Deay, 1979, p. 40).

Six basal reading series were examined by Kingston and Drotter (1981) to determine how the aged were portrayed. An adjective checklist was developed to identify common descriptions of the aged; notations were also made concerning sex, evidence of age, occupation, relationship to the main character, and role in the story.

Out of a total of 188 older characters, 46 percent were females and 54 percent were males. About 43 percent

of the aged were grandparents (56.25 percent, grandmothers, and 43.75 percent, grandfathers). A number of aunts, uncles, and neighbors were portrayed, and the elderly were engaged in a variety of occupations.

Older adults were represented as active, kind, hard-working, affectionate, wise, and important. However, they were rarely described as being attractive, beautiful, fashionable, or practical. Women were shown with glasses, aprons, and their hair in buns. Men tended to smoke pipes and wear suspenders, and they were often bald.

The illustrations were frequently nonrealistic; cartoon-like drawings were used to depict aged persons. The men and women were plump, unwrinkled, and smiling in the pictures. A number of minority, racial, and ethnic older persons appeared in the illustrations, and the researchers indicated that publishers may be using pictures, rather than story content, to satisfy demands for greater representation of ethnic and racial groups.

The results supported the conclusions drawn by other investigators who have stated that some types of ageism are common (in basal reading programs). The aged were sometimes portrayed in stereotypical garb and tended to be unimportant characters whose personalities were not fully depicted. Generally, the older persons were shown in a positive manner, but they were usually associated (as a

relative or neighbor) with the child protagonist in the stories.

A detailed checklist was used to analyze the treatment of older people in stories and pictures of five sets of basal readers, published from 1975 to 1983, by Fillmer and Meadows (in press). All the stories from primer through sixth grade were scrutinized, and older adults who appeared in the text, the illustrations, or the text and illustrations were included in the study.

A total of 553 older characters were identified; 36 percent were females and 64 percent of them were males. Almost three-fourths of the elderly were white. Fewer than 20 percent of the older characters were portrayed as grandparents and fewer than 2 percent were aunts or uncles. Approximately one-third of the aged were main characters in the stories, and an additional 24 percent were supportive story members. About one-fourth of the older adults occupied white collar positions, but the occupational status of 45 percent of the older characters was not indicated. Older characters were depicted as being intelligent and capable; also, they tended to be in good health. Elderly characters were portrayed negatively only 5 percent of the time. Such incidences occurred mainly in folklore, with characters such as giants and Rumpelstiltskin.

Older people in the stories demonstrated qualities of kindness, cheerfulness, and friendliness. Only 5 percent

were shown to be irritable, grouchy, or mean. Over 90 percent of the time they were actively engaged, and were rarely portrayed as passive and lazy. They were seldom shown watching television, rocking, knitting, or storytelling.

Only 2 percent of the elderly were portrayed as dowdy in appearance. The characters frequently had white or gray hair and wrinkled skin; approximately one-half of the males were bald or balding.

Elderly men and women appeared most often in modern/realistic fiction. Few older characters appeared in fantasy or poetry. Many stories showed older adults providing information to the reader, such as writing, teaching, inventing, or explaining how to do something. Almost three-fourths of the illustrations showed older people in cartoon-like pictures, rather than in a realistic art style. The overall impression of the aged was positive--94 percent of the time the elderly were presented favorably.

In summary, four studies focusing on elementary basal reading series have been published since 1977. The results of each study indicated that the aged were underrepresented in the readers, and the number of males predominated over the number of females in the selections. The ethnic origin of the older characters was white most of the time, and minority members were disproportionately represented.

These researchers concurred that the aged were presented with a positive image. Older adults were shown to be kind, friendly, and affectionate. The aged were also in good health and were generally active, rather than passive in the roles in which they appeared. They were usually engaged in some form of meaningful task, but their occupations often were not indicated.

The majority of older characters assumed roles in the stories as main or supportive characters, according to Fillmer and Meadows (in press) and Robin (1977). However, Kingston and Drotter (1981) and Ribovich and Deay (1979) reported that there were few main characters in the basal readers they examined who were older adults. Grandparents and relatives seemed to be portrayed more often in the pre-1970 readers than they were in the more recent sets of basal series.

It was generally agreed that the aged were often bespectacled and wrinkled (although Kingston and Drotter, 1981, reported that they were unwrinkled), and they frequently had gray or white hair. The males were often bald or balding. Fillmer and Meadows (in press) found only 4.5 percent of the elderly carrying a cane or walking stick, but Kingston and Drotter (1981) reported that the aged were often shown carrying a cane.

More than two-thirds of the older adults were portrayed in cartoon-style illustrations, rather than in realistic pictures. However, younger characters also

frequently appeared in the nonrealistic art style--the textbook artists did not misrepresent the aged with caricatures.

While the researchers tended to agree that the aged were generally presented with a positive image, concern was expressed that their personalities were not fully developed in the stories. They tended to be dull and bland as story members, and there was some stereotyping in the illustrations in which the elderly appeared. Since the over-65 age group comprises over 11 percent of the total population in the United States, the number of older characters in the selections does not accurately reflect the proportion of older adults in American society.

Summary of Chapter Two

Stereotyping of the elderly occurs when older adults are presented as inactive, described with negative terms (wrinkled, mean), frequently associated with the same behavior (e.g., housework), left out of decision-making, shown to be dependent upon others, or assigned roles in the literature in which their personalities are not fully developed.

Ageism is the notion that people cease to be people, cease to be the same people or become people of a distinct and inferior kind, by virtue of having lived a specified number of years . . . it is prejudice . . . based on fear, folklore, and the hang-ups of a few unlovable people who propagate these [images] . . . it needs to be met by information, contradiction and when necessary, confrontation. (Comfort, 1978, p. 35)

Stereotyping of the aged is detrimental to the young because it inflicts a fear of growing old, and it is unfair to the elderly because it imposes a negative self-image on older adults. The Gray Panthers is a group of individuals who have organized for the express purpose of combating ageism.

Out of a total of eight studies concentrating on ageism in children's literature, five indicated that there was discrimination against the aged. The investigators generally agreed that the elderly story characters were boring people who led dull, uneventful lives. A modern trend was noted in the depiction in children's stories of more grandparents who were fun and who were regarded with favor, thereby presenting children with positive role models of older adults. The past decade has witnessed an increased interest in probing children's books to determine the portrayal of the aged.

In addition to studies focusing on ageism in children's literature, some researchers narrowed their concern to the way older adults were depicted in elementary basal reading textbooks. Four studies determined that although the older adults were usually presented with a positive image in the readers, they were underrepresented, and the percentage of males predominated over the percentage of females. The older characters were mostly white with few minority representations in the stories, and the aged were

kind, healthy, active, and responsible individuals. Most older characters fulfilled roles as main or supportive characters, and grandparents were portrayed less often in recent readers than they were in the pre-1970 textbooks.

General characteristics of the appearance of older adults included glasses, wrinkles, gray or white hair, and balding males. On occasion, the elderly were shown carrying a cane or walking stick. They often appeared in expressionistic pictures, rather than in representational illustrations; younger characters were also included in cartoon-like illustrations. As in other types of children's books, it seemed that the personalities of the older characters in basal reading stories were not fully developed.

Research over the past two decades has revealed that older people are not presented in a mean, vicious light; however, the impression is left with young readers that old age is a dull time of life in which one is restricted in activities and dependent upon family for happiness (Vraney and Barrett, 1981). The Gray Panthers state that the image of older people has improved, and that book publishers are conscious of the work of the Council on Interracial Books for Children (The White House Conference on Aging, 1981). There are signs that the obnoxious stereotype of age is becoming out-of-date and that more stories now picture old

people as unique individuals, capable of normal social interaction (Comfort, 1978; Rudman, 1984).

This chapter has reviewed the literature on stereotyping of the aged, ageism in children's books, and the depiction of the elderly characters in basal reading series. The present research project is intended to investigate the way older adults are portrayed in five sets of basal reading textbooks of the 1960s and in five sets of basal series of the 1980s. A comparison of the results of the analyses will show if there are differences in the portrayal of older adults two decades ago, as contrasted with portrayals in today's basal reading textbooks. If there has been improvement in the way older people are portrayed, then it will be evident that efforts of social gerontologists, the Gray Panthers, and recommendations of research investigators from the 1970s have been effective in generating not only awareness of the problems of stereotyping of the aged, but also progress in helping to correct misconceptions of the past.

CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH DESIGN AND PROCEDURES

Introduction

Interest in exploring the concept of ageism increased as the author participated in a basal reader study with her major professor, and co-authored a report given at the International Reading Association in 1984. Later the report was expanded into an article which identified the results and implications of an in-depth analysis of five basal reading series, published from 1975 to 1983 (Fillmer and Meadows, *in press*). After pondering whether the contemporary readers differed markedly from readers published a couple of decades ago, the author decided that a comparative analysis would reveal how older adults were represented in the readers of both time periods, and any differences between them would emerge. The findings would indicate whether efforts of The Gray Panthers and recommendations of educational researchers had been productive in achieving fair, realistic, nonstereotypic portrayal of the aged, as reflected in elementary reading textbooks.

Research Questions

This investigation was designed to collect data on ageism from 10 sets of basal reading series, spanning grades one through six. Five sets of the readers were

published in the 1960s and the other five sets, published by the same five companies, were issued in the 1980s. Three primary questions and numerous secondary questions were posed to ascertain whether any significant differences could be determined between the way older adults were portrayed in reading textbooks of the 1960s and the way they were portrayed in basal reading textbooks of the 1980s.

Primary Questions

The major concern of this analysis addresses the following questions:

1. How are older adults portrayed in five sets of representative basal reading textbooks of the 1960s?
2. How are older adults portrayed in five sets of representative basal reading textbooks of the 1980s?
3. Are there any significant statistical differences between the portrayal of older adults in the readers of the 1960s and the portrayal of older adults in the textbooks of the 1980s?

It was determined that each older character who appeared in the text or in the illustration of a basal reader selection would count as an older adult during the tabulation process. Totals of the five sets of readers for each time period would be compared to answer these major questions.

Secondary Questions

Areas of categorical interest which had surfaced in previous content analyses of children's reading materials were identified to help detect whether the aged were portrayed in discriminatory, stereotypic fashion or not. The following questions represent a comprehensive compilation of issues germane to the study of ageism in children's literature:

1. How does the total number of older characters relate proportionately to the total number of characters in the stories?
2. What is the proportion of males to females, as pertains to the number of elderly characters? as pertains to the total number of characters?
3. How many references to the aged occur in the stories?
4. What is the ethnic origin of the older character (white, black, Hispanic, American Indian, Eskimo, other)?
5. What role in the story is assigned to the older character (main character, supporting character, minor role)?
6. How is the older adult characterized (grandmother/grandfather, aunt/uncle, neighbor, other)?
7. What is the occupation of the aged individual (white collar/professional, blue collar/manual work, housekeeping, retired, unknown/unclear)?

8. What kind of image does the older character reflect (positive, negative)?
9. What is the mentality of the older individual (intelligent, capable, dull/silly)?
10. How is the older character portrayed with regard to physical well-being (healthy, sickly, injured, handicapped)?
11. What kind of personality does the older adult have (pleasant, unpleasant, neutral)?
12. What kind of personal appearance is depicted (attractive, unattractive, neutral)?
13. What kind of style describes the older person's dress (fashionable, dowdy, neutral)?
14. What type of posture does the older character project (normal, bent-over/decrepit)?
15. What general characteristics typify the older adult (bespectacled, wrinkled, gray/white hair, hair in bun, balding/semi-balding, cane, apron, suspenders, tie or bowtie, beard, big nose, plump, double chin, hat, cap, turban)?
16. In what kind of activities is the older person engaged (active, passive)?
17. In what genre does the elderly person appear (fiction, folklore, autobiography/biography, information, fantasy, history/historical fiction, poetry/songs)?

18. In what kind of illustrations is the older adult shown (representational, expressionistic)?
19. What is the overall impression of the aged (positive, negative)?
20. What is the marital status of the older adult (single, married, divorced, widow/widower, indeterminate)?
21. In what type of household does the older person live (lives alone, lives with spouse/family, lives with son/daughter, lives with roommate(s), lives in nursing home, indeterminate or other)?

Design and Statistical Analysis

Ten sets of basal reader series were selected for this study--five series representative of the 1960s and five series of the 1980s. The table of random numbers was used to select 25 percent of the stories from each reader for analysis. The "Checklist for Analyzing Older People" (located in the appendix), consisting of classifications which were gleaned from the literature, was used to examine the portrayal of each older character who appeared in the narrative and/or pictures in each of the randomly selected stories.

The chi-square statistical technique was used to compare relative proportions from earlier texts to later editions.

$$\chi^2 = (f_o - f_e)^2 / f_e$$

$fe = (\text{row total})(\text{column total}) / \text{sample total}$

$df = (r-1)(c-1)$

The chi-square table provided the p-value, and any p-value less than .05 represented a statistically significant difference between the major categories which were compared in the 1960s readers and the 1980s textbooks.

In addition, the standard error of the difference between two percentages was computed for individual variables where a difference of 5 percent or more was noted. This procedure was applied to identify statistically significant differences between variables within the major categories of the 1960s and 1980s readers. The significance of the difference between two percentages was computed by using the following formula (Garrett, 1966, pp. 235, 236):

$$P = N_1 P_1 + N_2 P_2 / N_1 + N_2$$

$$Q = 1 - P$$

$$\sigma_{P\%} = PQ (1/N_1 + 1/N_2)$$

$$CR = (P_1 - P_2) / \sigma_{P_1 - P_2}$$

When the critical ratio (CR) exceeded 1.96 in the "Table of t, for use in determining the significance of statistics" (Garrett, 1966, p. 461), the obtained difference was significant at the .05 level of confidence.

Development of the Checklist

In order to assess ageism in children's textbooks, the author scrutinized research studies which had already been performed. Notation was made of the various kinds of

issues which were considered by previous investigators to identify forms of discrimination against the aged. This procedure helped to validate the theoretical content universe by outlining the topics, skills, and abilities that made up the content area, as suggested by Ary, Jacobs, and Razavieh (1979). After identifying the topics and specific characteristics which had been used by other researchers to analyze ageism in children's literature, the author organized these variables into categories which were representative of the variables used in other studies. These areas of concern were synthesized into a four-page checklist which contained 21 major categories and 76 individual variables. Sections were divided on the checklist to delineate male and female tabulations.

The original checklist was used by the author in a former basal reader analysis. Based on insights gained from this experience, the current checklist was revised in some areas to permit more precision in quantifying the categorical constructs.

Validation of the Checklist for Content Analysis

In trying to insure that the checklist would produce the desired information, the author deliberated to determine how well the concepts actually fit the measurements of them. Budd, Thorp, and Donohew (1967) explain that in the literature of content analysis, little attention has been paid to validation procedures.

Judging from the literature, direct validity is often assumed by the content analyst. This method of validation presumes that a measure self-evidently measures what it is supposed to if the categories are rigidly defined and the coding has a high degree of reliability. (p. 69)

Some investigators use this method in combination with the "known-group method, which uses known attitudes and characteristics of a group" (Budd et al., 1967, p. 69).

Ary, Jacobs, and Razavieh (1979) also confirm that there are no direct means of measuring constructs and state that researchers must develop indirect means to measure complex attributes.

These indirect means involve tests and scales consisting of a number of tasks that are selected to serve as indicators of the complex constructs. One is never sure that these indirect procedures measure what they are supposed to be measuring. The question of an instrument's validity is always specific to the particular situation and to the particular purpose for which it is being used. (p. 196)

"Only the user of a test [instrument] can ultimately judge its content validity for his/her own purpose" (Ary et al., 1979, p. 198).

Deriving the major categories on the checklist from previous research, carefully defining the meaning of each category, and establishing reliability among coders were procedures employed by the author to validate this content analysis. The following explanations of each major division on the checklist provide further details to help substantiate validation of the instrument.

Total number of characters in stories. All story members, including animals, who appeared in the text and/or pictures were tabulated. In crowd scenes, only the discernible characters in the foreground were counted. If the context of the story did not make it clear whether a character was male or female, this character was registered as indeterminate.

Total number of elderly. The aged were identified by (1) descriptive terms in the text, (2) pictures in the readers, and (3) designation of grandparents in the story.

References only. Each time an older person was mentioned in a story, a notation was made, even though the person was not a character. For instance, if a story character referred to an old lady, a grandma, or a grandpa, the reference was recorded on the checklist.

Ethnic origin. All aged characters were classified according to the following groups: white, black, Hispanic, American Indian, Eskimo, or other (Oriental, imaginative, etc.). Names, pictures, and conversation in the stories helped in identifying the country or race to which the individual belonged.

Role in the story. Story members who had a major part in the story and throughout the story were recorded as main characters; sometimes there were several main characters. Older characters who had a dominant influence in the story, but did not have a major role were rated as

supporting characters. All other characters were designated as having minor roles.

Characterization. The elderly were classified as grandparents, aunts or uncles, neighbors, or other. A neighbor was designated as a person in the community who lived or worked near the other characters.

Occupation. White collar or professional workers were doctors, dentists, lawyers, scientists, professors, inventors, teachers, ministers, writers, and businessmen. Blue collar or manual workers were truck drivers, construction workers, farmers, storekeepers, or characters who had jobs requiring physical labor. Housekeepers were characters who cooked, cleaned, or took care of the home. Retired characters were story people who were not presently employed, but the context of the story indicated that they had worked in earlier days. When it was not clear what the occupation of the older character was, this data were marked in the category labeled unknown/unclear.

Image. When a character appeared to be helpful, skillful, hardworking, or competent, he/she was designated as being portrayed with a positive image. If the person was depicted as being a villain or seemed to be incompetent, harmful, dangerous, or helpless, this older adult was classified as being portrayed in a negative way.

Mentality. Those characters who were astute, keen, alert, or had jobs requiring use of the mind were

classified as intelligent. If the older adult displayed common sense and used normal logic, he/she was marked capable. The elderly characters who seemed dense or thick or used ridiculous reasoning were registered in the dull/silly category.

Physical well-being. Characters demonstrating a normal state of physical vigor were designated healthy, while the ones who were frail or weak were categorized as sickly. If one had a broken bone or cut, this was marked in the injured group, and characters in wheelchairs and ones who had some other physical limitation (blind, deaf) were classified as handicapped.

Personality. Happy, kind, and friendly characters were identified as having a pleasant personality, while those who were irritable or unfriendly were marked as being unpleasant. If there was no indication of personality in the context of the story, the neutral category was marked.

Appearance--personal. Characters who were noticeably pretty or handsome were classified as being attractive. Those who had average appeal were designated in the neutral category. Characters who had exaggerated features or who appeared ugly or uncomely were registered as being unattractive.

Dress. Older adults who were dressed in a stylish manner with blended colors or wearing scarves, jewelry, or other accessories, were considered fashionable. Those who wore ordinary apparel were classified in the neutral group. Those who looked shabby or frumpy were classified as dowdy.

Posture. Characters who were standing, sitting, or walking in an upright position were designated as having normal posture. Those who were hunched over or seemed to be weakened by age were marked in the category labeled bent-over/decrepit.

General characteristics. Older adults wearing glasses were designated as bespectacled. Those who had lines in their skin were categorized as wrinkled. When their hair was white or gray, this was also noted on the checklist. All hairdos in a bun were registered. Older adults with receding hairlines or obvious loss of hair were marked as balding or semi-balding. When an aged person carried a cane, wore an apron, wore suspenders, wore a tie or bowtie, had a beard, had a big nose, was plump, had a double chin, or wore a hat, cap, or turban, a notation was made.

Activities. When an older character was engaged in an event requiring alertness or physical exertion, he/she was designated as being an active person. When a character was portrayed sitting, rocking, or lying down, he/she was considered to be engaged in a passive activity.

Genre. Modern, general, and realistic fiction stories comprised those selections that were representative of life and could really happen; they often dealt with problems that people must handle. Folklore consisted of epics, fairytales, and animal stories; they often had a moral or

communicated a truth. Autobiography and biography were stories of people's lives. Information stories comprised the areas of physical science, social science, biological science, religion and the arts, and reference works. Fantasy included adventure stories, science fiction, and selections with other worldly settings, often characterized by magical power and the manipulation of time. History and historical fiction stories had settings prior to World War II, and depicted life in the past. Poetry and songs comprised limericks, haiku, free verse, and selections with rhyme and meter.

Illustrations. Pictures that were true to life, such as realistic art and photography, were classified as representational. Expressionistic art leaned toward abstraction and included cartoon styles and cubism.

Overall impression of the aged. When the older characters were presented in a supportive manner (healthy, capable, active, etc.), the overall impression of older adults was positive. When the elderly were presented in a denigrative manner (frail, decrepit, dependent, irritable, etc.), the overall impression was negative.

Marital status. When an older adult was depicted as never having married, he/she was recorded as being single. Married people were characters who had a living spouse; divorced characters were those who were no longer married. A widow or widower was an aged character whose spouse was

deceased. In those instances where the context of the story did not indicate the marital status of the aged character, the indeterminate category was marked.

Household. Tabulations were made for all aged characters regarding their living situation. Did they live alone? with a spouse and their children? with son or daughter? with roommate(s)? or in a nursing home? When the story did not indicate the household situation, the indeterminate/other category was marked.

Each of the 21 categories on the checklist was carefully defined. When conditions appeared in a selection that were not defined or explained on the checklist, the coder used personal judgment to classify the instance.

Reliability of Coding Procedures

The author obtained permission to offer a reading research practicum at the college where she teaches. Two students enrolled in the course and were trained to use the checklist to analyze older characters in the basal reader stories.

To confirm the reliability of the checklist, the author and the two students independently marked the checklist for three stories portraying older characters from a basal series. Inter-rater agreement was then computed by check coding the responses of the investigator and the two independent coders on the three stories. The following

formula (North, Holsti, Zaninovich and Zinnes, 1964) was used to compute the degree of agreement:

$$R = \frac{2(C_{1,2} \dots)}{C_1 + C_2}$$

where the number of category assignments on which coders agree was divided by the sum of all category assignments by the coders. Three sets of coder comparisons were made: A with B; A with C; and B with C. The reliability coefficients were then averaged to reveal an overall reliability of .82.

Because one of the students experienced ill health in the early part of the semester and withdrew from college, all the sets of reading series were analyzed by the investigator and the remaining student. The reliability coefficient between these two coders was .89.

Sources of Data

The Catalog of State Adopted Instructional Materials, 1984-85, distributed by the Department of Education in Tallahassee, Florida, was consulted for a list of the basal reading series which were on current state adoption. All of the series in this reference were published in the 1980s and were available in numerous districts. Therefore, the author began searching for sets of basal readers of the 1960s which were published by the same companies. After contacting numerous publishing companies, The Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., Teacher's College at Columbia University (where some sets were located), and school

district book depositories, the 1960s readers were finally located intact in the curriculum laboratory of Southeastern College of the Assemblies of God in Lakeland, Florida. Five sets available from the 1960s which matched five sets by the same publishers of the 1980s are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Ten Sets of Reading Series Used in Analysis

1960s Basal Series	1980s Basal Series
1. The Ginn Basic Readers (1966)	Ginn Reading Program (1982-1984)
2. (Heath) Reading Caravan (1968)	(Heath) American Readers (1983)
3. (Holt) Sounds of Language Readers (1964)	Holt Basic Reading (1983)
4. The Macmillan Reading Program (1965)	Series r: Macmillan Reading (1983)
5. (Scott, Foresman) The New Basic Readers (1962)	Scott, Foresman Reading (1983)

Because these 10 sets of basal series are representative of books used to teach reading in the elementary classroom during the 1960s and the 1980s, they were considered appropriate for conducting this investigation of the way older adults are portrayed in reading textbooks of each time period.

Collection and Treatment of Data

After the 10 sets of readers were obtained, the table of contents for each reader, grades one through six, were duplicated. The stories were numbered and the table of random numbers was used to select 25 percent of the stories in each reader for analysis.

All the characters, including animals, in each selection were counted to find the total number of all characters in the randomly chosen stories. If an older character appeared in the selection, each of the relevant categories on the checklist was marked. A character was considered an older adult for analysis if it was clear that he/she (1) was 65 years of age or older, (2) was characterized as a grandparent, (3) appeared to be older by being described contextually as "wrinkled," "gray-haired," etc., (4) was referred to as "The old person who lived down the street," or (5) was illustrated as being an old person.

If the older character appeared in the text only, a "T" was used to mark the checklist; if the person appeared in the picture only, a "P" was used to mark the categories; if the person assumed a role in the text and also was depicted in the illustration, a "TP" was used to make the notations on the checklist. When a point of special interest was noted but was not provided for on the checklist, the coder wrote remarks on the back of the form. (For example, it was noted that females were referred to as

"Ms.", rather than "Miss" or "Mrs." in a series of the 1980s.)

When all the randomly selected stories in the 10 sets of readers had been analyzed, the Lotus 1,2,3 computer program was used to tally the results and display the data on spread sheets. These enumerations were subjected to the chi-square statistical technique and to procedures for determining significance of the difference between two percentages to ascertain if any statistical differences had occurred when the contemporary readers were compared to the earlier textbooks.

Summary of Chapter Three

In summation, this project was designed to find out how the aged were portrayed in basal reading series of the 1960s and the 1980s, and to determine if there were any differences in the portrayals of these two periods. A checklist was developed to collect data relevant to 21 categories of information pertaining to the concept of ageism.

Five sets of basal readers of the 1960s and five sets of basal readers of the 1980s were obtained for the analysis. Coders were trained to analyze portrayals of older characters in the selections and to mark the checklist. Reliability coefficients were then computed. The chi-square statistical technique and formulae for determining

significant differences between two percentages were applied to the data to see if there were any significant differences between the portrayal of older adults in readers of the 1960s and readers of the 1980s.

CHAPTER FOUR RESULTS OF THE ANALYSIS

Introduction

Data for this study were collected from a total of 77 elementary basal readers used in grades one through six--36 textbooks comprised five sets of basal readers of the 1960s and 41 readers were included in the five sets of reading textbooks of the 1980s. Out of a total of 2001 stories from readers of the 1960s, 25 percent were randomly chosen for analysis; therefore, 504 selections (stories, poems, articles, etc.) were examined. From a total of 2240 stories from books of the 1980s, 563 were randomly selected for examination. The purpose of this content analysis was to determine the portrayal of older adults in basal reading series of the 1960s and of the 1980s, and to compare the results to see if there were any differences in the way the aged were portrayed in basal readers for the two time periods.

A coding checklist was used to gather data pertaining to older adults in the basal reading selections. Specific categories of information concerning the depiction of the aged were identified to help in determining if older adults were victims of ageism in the readers. Areas of special interest comprised the following: demographic data,

literary depiction, personal characteristics, and general representation.

The chi-square statistical technique was applied to 21 separate categories to determine whether there were any significant differences in the portrayal of older adults in the readers of the 1960s when compared to the reading textbooks of the 1980s. The alpha level was set at .05 and any p-value of .05 or less indicated that there were statistically significant differences in the categories which were compared in the readers of the 1960s and 1980s.

In addition to using the chi-square procedure, the formula for determining statistical differences between two percentages was employed when individual variables reflected a difference of 5 percent or more for the two time periods. This procedure was applied to the data to find any significant differences between specific areas within major categories of the 1960s and 1980s. (An asterisk in the tables signifies statistical significance.)

Presentation of Findings

The total number of characters in the 25 percent of stories selected for analysis in readers of the 1960s was 3040, and the total was 3536 for the 1980s. Of these sums, 795 female characters, 1752 male characters, and 493 indeterminate characters were tallied for the 1960s. For the 1980s, there were 1259 females, 1776 males, and 501 indeterminate characters. The chi-square statistic implies

a significant difference in the proportion of male, female, and indeterminate characters between the readers of the 1960s and those of the 1980s, as displayed in Table 2. A follow-up CR indicates that the increase in the proportion of females and the decrease in the proportion of males in the newer readers are significant when compared to the 1960s textbooks.

Table 2

Total Number of Male, Female, and Indeterminate Characters
in Basal Readers of the 1960s and 1980s

Periods	Female		Male		Indeterminate		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
1960s	795	(26)	1752	(58)	493	(16)	3040
1980s	1259	(36)	1776	(50)	501	(14)	3536
Total	2054		3528		994		6576

$\chi^2(2, N = 6576) = 68.16, p < .01^*$

Demographic Data

Vital social statistics considered in this study were sex, nationality, occupation, marital status, and household situation. The portrayal of the elderly in these areas communicated a message that helped identify what status the older adult had obtained in life. The position assigned to the aged in the literature indicated whether the character was a productive, self-sufficient individual or whether the older character was dependent and needed to be helped.

These data also helped to determine if there was discrimination against older characters in the readers.

The total number of elderly characters in the readers of the 1960s was 154 out of 3040 characters, representing 5.1 percent of all characters. The elderly female characters comprised 22 percent of this total, and the older males made up 78 percent of elderly characters. The number of elderly characters in textbooks of the 1980s was 216 out of 3536, comprising 6.1 percent of the total number of all characters. Female elderly in the 1980s readers numbered 74 (34 percent) and the male elderly numbered 142 (66 percent). These percentages reveal that there was a preponderance of elderly male characters compared to elderly females in readers of both periods. Chi-square figures suggest a statistically significant difference, and the CR indicates that the increase in the proportion of older female characters and the decrease in the proportion of elderly males in the contemporary readers are significant. Table 3 shows the numbers and percentages for the elderly female and male characters.

(It was also noted that 8 percent of all elderly characters were animal characters in the readers of the 1960s and 7 percent were animal characters in the 1980s texts. The proportion of elderly in primary and intermediate levels was almost evenly distributed in the 1960s readers--48 percent of the elderly characters appeared in

primary stories and 52 percent comprised the intermediate levels. In the 1980s textbooks, 44 percent of the older characters appeared in primary stories and 56 percent were present in the intermediate levels.)

Table 3

Total Number of Female and Male Elderly in Reading Textbooks of the 1960s and 1980s

Periods	Female		Male		Total Elderly
	No.	%	No.	%	
1960s	34	(22)	120	(78)	154
1980s	74	(34)	142	(66)	216
Total	108		262		370

$\chi^2(1, N = 370) = 6.51, p < .02*$

In addition to tallying the total number of elderly characters, the number of references to older people in the texts was also counted. In the readers of the 1960s, 19 percent (5) of the references were female and 81 percent (21) were male. In the textbooks of the 1980s, 39 percent (23) of the references were female and 61 percent (36) were male. The chi-square statistic and the CR indicate that there was a significant difference. There was a greater proportion of male references in the 1960s, but there was a substantial increase in female references in the stories of the 1980s. Table 4 provides the totals for the number of elderly references.

Table 4

Number of Male and Female Elderly References

Periods	Female		Male		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	
1960s	5	(19)	21	(81)	26
1980s	23	(39)	36	(61)	59
Total	28		57		85
$\chi^2(1, N = 85) = 3.96, p < .05^*$					

Ethnic origin was another demographic concern which was computed in this analysis. The majority of older characters in both periods were white--69 percent in the 1960s and 68 percent in the 1980s. However, there was a higher percentage of black, Hispanic, and American Indians portrayed in the contemporary readers. The chi-square calculation indicates significant differences in this category. The CR signifies that the increase in the proportion of blacks and the decrease in the "other" category are significant. Table 5 provides the numerical distinctions among these variables.

What occupation was assigned to older characters in the readers? The results showed that about one-half of the time the occupation of the older person was not clear, or that the occupation did not fit the typical categories of white collar, blue collar, housekeeping, or retired. Books

Table 5
Ethnic Origin of Older Characters

Periods	White		Black		Hispanic		Am. Indian		Eskimo		Other		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
1960s	106	(69)	3	(2)	2	(1)	2	(1)	0	(0)	41	(27)	154
1980s	147	(68)	20	(9)	6	(3)	8	(4)	0	(0)	35	(16)	216
Total	253		23		8		10		0		76		370

$\chi^2(5, N = 370) = 15.29, p < .01^*$

of the 1980s depicted more elderly white collar workers than did the readers of the 1960s, 27 percent and 21 percent respectively. There were more elderly blue collar workers in the texts of the 1960s, 23 percent compared with the books of the 1980s, 19 percent. More older adults performed housekeeping duties in the 1960s readers (6 percent compared to 2 percent in the recent texts). More retired characters were identified in the contemporary readers--2 percent compared with .6 percent in the older series. The data pertaining to occupation presented in Table 6 indicate that there are no significant differences between the books of the two periods.

Examining the marital status of the older characters disclosed that the context of the stories of both periods usually did not make it clear whether the person was single, married, divorced, or widowed. Marital status was indeterminable in 79 percent of the instances in the early readers and in 83 percent of the instances in the recent stories. Fewer older adults appeared to be married in the 1980s readers, 10 percent compared to 15 percent in the older textbooks. More elderly were widowed in the current readers, 4 percent compared to 1 percent in the early series. Information provided in Table 7 suggests that there is no significant difference in the depiction of marital status of the elderly in texts of the 1960s and 1980s.

Table 6 Occupation of Older Characters

Periods	White		Blue		Housekeeping		Retired		Other		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
1960s	32	(21)	36	(23)	9	(6)	1	(.6)	76	(49)	154
1980s	59	(27)	41	(19)	5	(2)	5	(2)	106	(49)	216
Total	91		77		14		6		182		370

Table 7
Marital Status of Elderly Characters

Periods	Single			Married			Divorced			Widowed			Ministrate			Indeter-		
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	Total	
1960s	8	(5)	23	(15)	0	(0)	2	(1)	121	(79)	154							
1980s	7	(3)	22	(10)	0	(0)	8	(4)	179	(83)	216							
Total	15		45		0		10		300		370							

$$\chi^2 (4, \underline{N} = 370) = 4.46, P > .05$$

Analyzing the household situation of the older characters revealed that their roles in the story usually did not indicate whether they lived alone, with a spouse and their children, with one of their children, with a roommate, or in a nursing home. None of the aged characters in the books of the 1960s or 1980s lived in a nursing home, while 3 percent of the older adults lived with a son or daughter in stories of both time periods. About 3 percent of the older people lived with a roommate in the books of the 1960s and about 4 percent had a roommate in the readers of the 1980s. More elderly lived alone in the earlier readers (18 percent compared to 6 percent in the current readers). More of the older characters dwelled with a spouse and children in the 1960s textbooks (17 percent compared to 13 percent in the newer series). There were more indeterminate household instances in the newer readers (77 percent compared to 60 percent) than in the earlier textbooks. The data in Table 8 imply that the differences regarding where older characters lived in the stories of both time periods are significant. The CR indicates that the decrease in the proportion of older adults living alone and the increase in the proportion of indeterminate household situations in the 1980s readers are significant.

Literary Depiction

This comprehensive analysis of the portrayal of older people in children's basal readers investigated the

Table 8
Household Where the Older People Lived

Periods	Lives		Spouse/		Son/		Room-		Nursing		Inde-		
	Alone	No.	Family	Daughter	mate	No.	%	Home	No.	%	No.	%	No.
1960s	27	(18)	26	(17)	4	(3)	4	(3)	0	(0)	93	(60)	154
1980s	12	(6)	29	(13)	6	(3)	9	(4)	0	(0)	160	(77)	216
Total	39		55		10		13		0		253		370

$\chi^2(5, N = 370) = 16.16, p < .01*$

literary depictions of the aged in the stories. Specifically, it was important to identify the role of the older person, the character he/she was assigned, the genre in which the older adult appeared, and the type of illustrations in which the older characters were depicted.

The results showed that there were more elderly main characters in the books of the 1960s than there were in the readers of the 1980s, 38 percent and 34 percent, respectively. There were more older adults with minor roles in the stories in the books of the 1980s, 43 percent compared to 34 percent in the older readers. More aged characters were shown in supportive roles in the early readers, 27 percent compared to 23 percent in the current textbooks. Tabulations displayed in Table 9 reveal that there are no significant differences in the roles the elderly characters assumed in the stories of the two periods.

Table 9

Role in the Story

Periods	Main		Supporting		Minor		Total
	Character	No.	Character	No.	Role	%	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.
1960s	59	(38)	42	(27)	53	(34)	154
1980s	74	(34)	50	(23)	92	(43)	216
Total	133		92		145		370

Characterization of the older adults was ascertained by tallying the number of aged characters who were grandparents (or great grandparents), aunts and uncles (or great aunts and uncles), neighbors, or other story members.

There were 2 percent more grandparents in the readers of the 1960s, 13 percent compared to 11 percent in the recent series. There were also a few more aunts and uncles, 2 percent in the 1960s and 1 percent in the textbooks of the 1980s. More older people were portrayed as neighbors in the earlier textbooks, 15 percent compared to 10 percent in the contemporary readers. The current series contained more older characters who were classified in the "other" category, 78 percent compared to 70 percent in the early readers. Table 10 displays the characterization categories and shows that there are no significant differences between the two periods.

Table 10

Characterization of Older People in Elementary Readers

Periods	Grandpts.		Aunt/Uncle		Neighbor		Other		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.
1960s	20	(13)	3	(2)	23	(15)	108	(70)	154
1980s	23	(11)	2	(1)	22	(10)	169	(78)	216
Total	43		5		45		277		370

$\chi^2(3, N = 370) = 3.4, p > .05$

The genre in which older adults appeared was also considered. It was found that the reading texts of the 1980s favored more information selections than the books of the 1960s, 13 percent and 6 percent, respectively. The contemporary readers also included more biography (11 percent compared to 8 percent in the 1960s), more fantasy (5 percent compared to 2 percent in the earlier editions), less fiction (40 percent compared to 45 percent in the 1960s), fewer historical fiction stories (3 percent compared to 6 percent in the 1960s), and fewer poetry selections (4 percent compared to 5 percent in the older readers). The chi-square calculations detected no significant differences between the readers of the 1960s and the 1980s. However, when the formula for determining statistical differences between two percentages was employed, the CR indicated that the difference between the proportion of information selections in the readers of the 1960s and of the 1980s was significant. The data providing the classifications by genre, presented in Table 11, reveal the differences between the basal readers of the 1960s and the readers of the 1980s.

Two categories of art style were designated to analyze the types of illustrations in which the older adults were included. Representational art referred to illustrations which were realistic in nature, such as photographs and true to life drawings, while expressionistic

Table 11

Genre in Which the Elderly Appear

Periods	Folk-			Infor-			Hist.								
	Fiction	Lore	Biography	mation	Fantasy	Fiction	Poetry	Total	No.						
No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.					
1960s	70	(45)	42	(27)	13	(8)	10	(6)	3	(2)	9	(6)	7	(5)	154
1980s	87	(40)	52	(24)	24	(11)	29	(13)	10	(5)	6	(3)	8	(4)	216
Total	157		94		37		39		13		15		15		370

$\chi^2(6, N = 370) = 9.38, p > .05$

Information Only: CR = -2.26, D < .05*

art referred to illustrations which were cartoon-like in style. It was learned that the readers of the 1980s contained more expressionistic illustrations than those of the 1960s, 69 percent and 49 percent, respectively. The chi-square calculations, shown in Table 12, indicate that this difference is statistically significant. The CR confirms that the increase in the proportion of expressionistic illustrations in the newer readers is significant.

Table 12

Illustrations in Which Older Adults Are Depicted

Periods	Representational		Expressionistic		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	
1960s	76	(51)	73	(49)	149
1980s	65	(31)	146	(69)	211
Total	141		219		360

$\chi^2(1, N = 360) = 15.23, p < .01^*$

Personal Characteristics

Much of the research regarding ageism concluded that older adults were shown in stereotypical garb and were depicted unrealistically. This study analyzed personal features, including posture, mentality, physical well-being, personality, personal appearance, dress, and general characteristics. If the older characters were repeatedly associated with the same description or consistently

represented with the same symbols, then the accusation of stereotyping would be verified.

The coders carefully scrutinized the pictures and the text to determine whether the older adult had normal, upright posture or whether the character was bent-over or decrepit. It was found that in the readers of the 1960s and of the 1980s, the elderly were generally portrayed with normal posture. Bent-over appearance was noted in only 7 percent of the instances in the 1960s, and only 6 percent of the time in the readers of the 1980s. (In both time periods, older adults used a cane in about 1 out of 20 occasions.) Table 13 shows that the results of the analysis regarding the way the older characters in the stories carried themselves reveal no significant differences between periods.

Table 13

Posture of the Older Characters

Periods	Normal		Bent-over		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	
1960s	143	(93)	11	(7)	154
1980s	202	(94)	14	(6)	216
Total	345		25		370

$\chi^2(1, N = 370) = .18, p > .05$

This investigation was also concerned with the way older characters were portrayed regarding their ability to participate in decision-making and problem-solving situations. The stories were probed to determine how the elderly were depicted mentally. They emerged as capable and/or intelligent in over 90 percent of the occurrences in both the readers of the 1960s and in the textbooks of the 1980s. The earlier books portrayed 3 percent of the aged characters as dull or silly, while only 1 percent of the later selections presented them in this light. Table 14 provides these data which show the differences between readers of the two periods.

Table 14

Mentality of the Aged in the Readers

Periods	Intelligent		Capable		Dull/Silly		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
1960s	40	(26)	109	(71)	5	(3)	154
1980s	63	(29)	150	(69)	3	(1)	216
Total	103		259		8		370

$\chi^2(2, N = 370) = 2.51, p > .05$

The physical well-being of the older characters was studied in the elementary readers. For both time periods, the elderly were shown as healthy individuals in 94% of the cases. They were sickly in only 5% percent of the

instances in the 1960s stories, and in only 4 percent of the instances in the 1980s readers. Very few injured or handicapped aged were represented in the stories of the 1960s or 1980s. The physical condition of the older adults is presented in Table 15 and no significant differences between periods is indicated.

Table 15

Physical Well-being of the Older Characters

Periods	Healthy		Sickly		Injured		Handicapped		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
1960s	145	(94)	8	(5)	1	(.6)	0	(0)	154
1980s	203	(94)	9	(4)	3	(1)	1	(.4)	216
Total	348		17		4				370

$\chi^2(3, N = 370) = 1.24, p > .05$

The personality of the older characters was examined to determine whether they were portrayed as happy, kind, and friendly people or whether they were irritable and unfriendly. The results indicate that the majority of aged characters were pleasant, while only a few were unpleasant in the stories of both time periods. Sometimes they were classified as neutral, when it was hard to tell from the context of the story what kind of personality they had. Older characters fit the neutral category in 23 percent of the instances in both the 1960s and 1980s textbooks. Table

16 displays the data on the personality of the aged which show no significant differences between periods.

Table 16

Personality of Older Adults in the Stories

Periods	Pleasant		Unpleasant		Neutral		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
1960s	107	(69)	12	(8)	35	(23)	154
1980s	151	(70)	15	(7)	50	(23)	216
Total	258		27		85		370
$\chi^2(2, N = 370) = .15, p > .05$							

The text and illustrations were analyzed to see how the older adults were presented in regard to personal appearance. Judging whether a character was pretty or handsome or ugly or uncomely involved some subjectivity on the part of the coder, and only those story members who appeared to be more attractive than average or less attractive than average were classified in a category other than neutral (average appeal). The tabulations show that most of the older characters were average in appearance, 76 percent in the books of the 1960s and 70 percent in the stories of the 1980s. More attractive than unattractive older characters were included in the books of both time periods, and more attractive older adults were found in the stories of the recent series, compared with the readers of

the past (21 percent compared to 15 percent). The results, showing no significant differences regarding personal appearance in texts of the two periods, are given in Table 17.

Table 17

Personal Appearance of the Aged Characters

Periods	Attractive		Unattractive		Neutral		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
1960s	23	(15)	14	(9)	117	(76)	154
1980s	45	(21)	20	(9)	151	(70)	216
Total	68		34		268		370

$\chi^2(2, N = 370) = 1.9, p > .05$

In analyzing the personal portrayal of the older characters, this investigation carefully noted the way they were dressed. Most of the aged wore ordinary apparel in books of the 1960s and of the 1980s. Women wearing jewelry, color-coordinated clothes, or stylish accent pieces were classified as fashionable; men wearing suits, ties, or contemporary clothing were designated as fashionable. The results show that older characters in the recent series were fashionable in 41 percent of the instances, compared to 34 percent in the earlier series. Older adults who wore shabby clothes or who looked frumpy were classified as dowdy--only 4 percent of the characters fit this

category in the books of the 1960s and of the 1980s. Table 18 records the data which show no significant differences for the dress observations in the texts of the 1960s and 1980s.

Table 18

Mode of Dress of the Older Characters

Periods	Fashionable		Dowdy		Neutral		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
1960s	52	(34)	7	(4)	95	(62)	154
1980s	89	(41)	8	(4)	119	(55)	216
Total	141		15		214		370
$\chi^2(2, N = 370) = 2.4, p > .05$							

To obtain a total picture of the portrayal of the aged in the reading series, numerous characteristics were considered. The tabulations revealed that gray and/or white hair was the most common characteristic in the textbooks of the 1960s and the 1980s--68 percent in the older books compared to 66 percent in the newer readers. Wrinkled skin was more common in the contemporary series (42 percent) compared with the older texts (27 percent). The earlier series depicted the elderly more frequently with their hair in a bun (11 percent compared to 8 percent), bald or balding (27 percent compared to 22 percent), and with beards (23 percent compared to 16 percent). (These

figures are based on the total number of elderly characters; however, the percentages would be higher for both periods if they were based on only the number of males or females. For example, males usually do not wear their hair in a bun and women do not wear beards.) Older characters were bespectacled in 29 percent of the instances in the 1960s and in 25 percent of the instances in the 1980s textbooks. Few older adults carried canes (6 percent in the 1960s and 5 percent in the 1980s), or wore suspenders (only 3 percent in the older books and in the newer series). More aged wore ties in the 1960s (21 percent compared to 17 percent); however, more hats were worn by older characters in the 1980s (36 percent compared to 32 percent). More elderly were plump in the stories of the 1980s than in the selections of the 1960s (29 percent compared to 22 percent), and big noses were more noticeable in the books of the 1980s (21 percent compared to 15 percent). However, double chins were recorded in only 7 percent of the cases for both the 1960s and the 1980s. The chi-square procedures do not indicate any statistical differences between the two periods; however, the CR identifies the increase in the number of older characters with wrinkled skin in the contemporary readers as significant. Tabulations for general characteristics of the aged are displayed in Table 19.

Table 19

General Characteristics of the Elderly Characters

	Bespec-tacled	Wrinkled	Gray/White Hair	Hair in Bun	Bald or Balding	Cane	Apron	Suspenders
Periods	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1960s	44	(29)	41	(27)	105	(68)	17	(11)
1980s	53	(25)	91	(42)	142	(66)	18	(8)
Total	97		132		247		35	

Table 19 (continued)

	Tie	Beard	Nose	Plump	Chin	Hat	Total
Periods	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.
1960s	32	(21)	36	(23)	23	(15)	34
1980s	37	(17)	34	(16)	45	(21)	63
Total	69		70		68		97

$\chi^2(13, N = 1109) = 17.24, p > .05$

Wrinkled Only: CR = -2.38, $p < .02^*$

General Representation

This final set of analyses concentrated on the image that the older characters projected in the stories, the activities in which they were engaged, and the overall impression of the aged in the readers. An attempt was made to ascertain whether the older adults were portrayed as positive role models and normal citizens conducting daily business, or whether they were shown to be out of step with the rest of society, individuals who would not be desirable as friends or companions.

When the elderly were shown to be competent or helpful, they were classified as positive; when they were portrayed as villains or as being helpless, they were classified as negative. In at least 90 percent of the cases in the stories of the 1960s and of the 1980s, the aged characters were portrayed in a positive manner. They were depicted in a negative way in 10 percent of the instances in the 1960s and in 9 percent of the 1980s. But, as Table 20 records, there are no significant differences in the data for the image ascribed to the older adults.

Some accounts have reported the older characters in children's literature to be non-involved and passive. This study explored the way the aged spent their time to see whether or not they were actively participating in some form of useful activity. When they were shown walking, conversing, working, fishing, or involved in some other

Table 20

Image of the Older Characters

Periods	Positive		Negative		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	
1960s	138	(90)	16	(10)	154
1980s	196	(91)	20	(9)	216
Total	334		36		370
$\chi^2(1, N = 370) = .14, p > .05$					

physical experience, they were classified as active. When they were portrayed sitting, rocking, knitting, or unoccupied, they were classified as passive. The results indicate that the older characters were actively involved in over 90 percent of the occurrences in the readers of the 1960s and of the 1980s. They were seldom depicted in passive circumstances. Table 21 expresses the findings which were nonsignificant regarding the activities in which the aged were involved.

The portrayal of each character was carefully considered to determine whether the older adults were presented in a favorable view with supportive documentation, or whether the aged were represented in a non-supportive, denigrative way. The overall impression of older people in the readers of the 1960s and of the 1980s

Table 21

Activities of the Aged

Periods	Active		Passive		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	
1960s	142	(92)	12	(8)	154
1980s	204	(94)	12	(6)	216
Total	346		24		370
$\chi^2(1, N = 370) = .74, p > .05$					

was generally positive, 88 percent in the 1960s compared to 91 percent in the 1980s. They were presented in a negative way in 12 percent of the instances in the 1960s readers and in 9 percent in the 1980s series. The results, which indicate no significant differences, of the overall impression of the older characters are displayed in Table 22.

Table 22

Overall Impression of the Older Characters

Periods	Positive		Negative		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	
1960s	136	(88)	18	(12)	154
1980s	196	(91)	20	(9)	216
Total	332		38		370
$\chi^2(1, N = 370) = .48, p > .05$					

Summary Comparisons of 1960s and 1980s Readers by Major Categories

The reader will recall that four major categories were delineated to analyze the portrayal of older adults in reading textbooks of the 1960s and of the 1980s: demographic data, literary depiction, personal characteristics, and general representation. The chi-square statistic and the CR detected significant statistical differences in several areas of comparison.

After counting all characters (not just elderly), it was learned that there was a 10 percent increase in the total number of female characters portrayed in the books of the 1980s when compared with the earlier series. There was an 8 percent decrease in the total number of males portrayed in the current textbooks, and a 2 percent decrease in the number of indeterminate characters.

Demographic data pertaining to the portrayal of the elderly revealed a substantial increase of 20 percent in the number of references to females in the newer readers, while a 20 percent decrease in the number of elderly male references was noted. In addition, there was a 12 percent increase in the number of elderly female characters in the books of the 1980s, while the number of elderly male characters decreased by 12 percent in these readers. Black elderly characters in the newer series rose by 7 percent. There was an 11 percent decrease in the number of elderly

characters who were recorded as "other" nationalities in the later texts. Elderly characters who lived alone decreased by 12 percent in the 1980s stories, and the number of elderly characters whose household situation was indeterminable increased by 17 percent.

An analysis of literary depiction showed that 20 percent more illustrations in the current readers were expressionistic (cartoon-like), rather than representational (realistic). Chi-square statistics did not find any significant difference between the readers of the 1960s and 1980s regarding genres in the series. However, the critical ratio test for determining significance in the difference between two percentages detected a significant difference in the number of information selections included in the textbooks. There was a 7 percent increase in the number of information selections in the contemporary readers, compared to the stories in the 1960s texts.

No statistical differences in personal characteristics were identified by the chi-square technique in the stories of the 1960s and of the 1980s. Posture, mentality, physical well-being, personality, dress, and general appearance were consistent in the readers of both periods. However, the CR found significance in the number of wrinkled depictions in the selections of the two time periods. There was a 15 percent increase in the number of wrinkled characters in the contemporary readers when compared to the earlier textbooks.

Tabulations for general representation of the elderly in the basal reading textbooks of both periods yielded no significant differences. The image, activities, and overall impression of the elderly characters were primarily positive in the stories of the 1960s and 1980s.

Summary of Chapter Four

Five sets of basal readers of the 1960s, comprising 36 textbooks, and five series of the 1980s, totaling 41 readers, were analyzed to assess the portrayal of elderly characters and to ascertain whether any differences between the texts of the two time periods were evident. Random selection of 25 percent of the stories in the readers yielded 504 out of 2001 possibilities, which represented the population for the 1960s books, and 563 out of 2240 stories were representative of the 1980s series.

Topics relating to the concept of ageism were identified on a four-page checklist and included 21 separate categories and 76 subdivisions. This checklist was used by two coders to gather information in the following areas: demographic data, literary depiction, personal characteristics and general representation.

The results indicated that there was no apparent discrimination against the aged characters in either the textbooks of the 1960s or the series of the 1980s. However, the older adults were underrepresented in proportion to the American population. Males also predominated in the texts

of both time periods, but a significant increase in the number of females was observed in the newer series.

The older characters were not depicted in menial jobs, but their occupation was not clear in about half of the instances. They were generally self-sufficient and did not live with family members who would be responsible for supporting them. They were often portrayed as main or supporting characters and were frequently characterized as general citizens, not just relatives and neighbors. They were represented in various genres and appeared in illustrations which were typical of other age groups in the readers. They had normal posture, were mentally capable, were healthy, and often had pleasant personalities. They were not portrayed as being unattractive or dowdy in appearance. General characteristics of the older characters appeared to be realistic in regard to people who are 65 years of age and older, and none of the characteristics was repeated enough to cause stereotyping. They were shown as active, competent adults, and the overall impression of the elderly characters was positive.

Statistically significant differences in the readers of the 1960s and the textbooks of the 1980s were recognized primarily in the area of demographic portrayal. More female characters, female references, and female elderly story members appeared in the contemporary series. There were more blacks in the newer textbooks. Fewer older

characters were shown living alone in the 1980s texts; however, their household situation was not clear in most of the stories. The elderly characters were depicted in more expressionistic illustrations in the current readers. More selections focusing on information were noted in the 1980s textbooks. The newer series also portrayed the aged with wrinkled skin more often than did the earlier sets of basal readers.

Other changes representing a (nonsignificant) difference of 5 percent or more were also noted. The newer series showed more white collar workers and fewer married elderly characters. The older adults appeared less frequently in fiction in the 1980s books. The aged were characterized as neighbors more often in the earlier series, and assumed minor roles more often in the newer books. They appeared to be more attractive and fashionable in the recent texts; however, these books also portrayed them with large noses and as being plump more frequently than did the earlier stories. The 1960s readers included more balding aged characters, and more beards were observed.

The categories and subdivisions which reflected a difference of 5 percent or more were subjected to both the chi-square technique for determining significance and to the formula utilizing the critical ratio test for determining statistical significance in the difference between

two percentages. Only two additional areas (information and wrinkled skin) were found to be significantly different by using the critical ratio test; both of these areas represent subdivisions within major categories. A summary of the variables, percentages, and values obtained by using the critical ratio test on all variables with a difference of 5 percent or more is displayed in Table 23.

Table 23

Variables with a Difference of 5 Percent or More between 1960s and 1980s Textbooks

Categories	1960s %	1980s %	Difference %	CR	p-value
Total Female Characters	26	36	1.0	-9.09	<.01*
Total Male Characters	58	50	8	6.67	<.01*
Elderly Female Characters	22	34	1.2	-2.55	<.02*
Elderly Male Characters	78	66	1.2	2.55	<.02*
Elderly Female References	19	39	2.0	-1.82	>.05
Elderly Male References	81	61	2.0	1.82	>.05
Blacks	2	9	7	-2.80	<.01*
Other Ethnic Groups	27	16	1.1	2.62	<.01*
White Collar Workers	21	27	6	-1.33	>.10
Married	15	10	5	1.47	>.10

Table 23 (continued)

Categories	1960s	1980s	Difference	CR	P-value
	%	%	%		
Lived Alone	18	6	1.2	3.64	<.01*
Household Sit. Indeterminate	60	77	1.7	-3.54	<.01*
Minor Role in the Story	34	43	.9	-1.76	>.05
Characterized as Neighbors	15	10	5	1.47	>.10
Characterized as "Other"	70	78	8	-1.78	>.05
Fiction (Genre)	45	40	5	.96	>.10
Information (Genre)	6	13	7	-2.26	<.05*
Representational Illus.	51	31	20	3.77	<.01*
Expressionistic Illus.	49	69	20	-3.77	<.01*
Attractive	15	21	6	-1.46	>.10
Neutral in Appearance	76	70	6	1.28	>.10
Fashionable	34	41	7	-1.37	>.10

¹⁰⁴

Table 23 (continued)

Categories	1960s %	1980s %	Difference	CR	p-value
Neutral in Dress	62	55	7	1.35	>.10
Wrinkled	27	42	15	-2.38	<.02*
Bald/Balding	27	22	5	1.11	>.10
Beard	23	16	7	1.71	>.05
Large Nose	15	21	6	-1.46	>.10
Plump	22	29	7	-1.52	>.05

*Critical Ratio Indicates Significance

Note: Chi-square was used to test for significant differences between major categories, and the formula for determining statistical significance between two percentages, utilizing the critical ratio (Garrett, 1966), was used to test for significance between two individual variables within major categories in basal readers of the 1960s and 1980s.

CHAPTER FIVE
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Since the turn of the century, a trend has emerged in American society in the form of a growing number of older adults who comprise the total population. As this increase has become evident, a keen awareness of the way the elderly are treated has developed. This content analysis was conducted to examine the way older adults were portrayed in basal reading textbooks. Aged characters in basal reading selections of the past two decades were analyzed by two independent coders. A summary of the problem, the findings and conclusions of the study, and recommendations, based on this investigation, follow.

Summary of the Problem

Beginning in the 1960s, sensitivity toward tendencies of the media to create and perpetuate stereotyping of various groups has been developing. Efforts have been mounting to identify and remedy discrimination of others because of race or sex. Special groups have also formed to explore the ways the mass media depicts the elderly. There have been numerous reports reflecting strong concern that the aged are portrayed as bland, dull, uninteresting people who are often dependent on others, and who are characterized by antiquated attire and symbolic lineaments such as

wrinkles, plumpness, gray hair, balding, and hair styled in a bun. It has also been proclaimed that older adults are assigned minor roles by the media and are represented as passive and unemployable.

Conflicting conclusions have been derived by investigators of the portrayal of older characters in children's literature. This study analyzed basal reading textbooks of the 1960s and of the 1980s to evaluate the way older characters were presented in the readers. Specifically, the following questions were considered:

1. How are older characters portrayed in five sets of representative basal reading textbooks of the 1960s?
2. How are older characters portrayed in five sets of representative basal reading textbooks of the 1980s?
3. Are there any significant statistical differences between the portrayal of older adults in the readers of the 1960s and the portrayal of older adults in the textbooks of the 1980s?

Summary and Discussion of Findings

This content analysis focused on demographic data, literary depiction, personal characteristics, and general representation of characters who appeared to be 65 years of age or older. Twenty-one separate categories of information were identified and investigated.

Demographic Data

It was discovered that the number of elderly characters presented both in the readers of the 1960s and of the 1980s was disproportionate to the number of older adults in American society. Although the elderly comprised almost 10 percent of the total population in the 1960s, only 5.1 percent of the story members in the earlier readers were older characters. The textbooks of the 1980s included 6.1 percent elderly characters; however, older adults comprise nearly 12 percent of today's population. There was a slight increase in the number of elderly characters in the newer readers, but the ratio of elderly characters compared to the total number of characters is only about half the proportion observed in social reality. Therefore, it is clear that older adults are underrepresented in the reading stories.

A significant difference was found in the number of females comprising the number of characters in the current readers, as compared to the number in the earlier series. There was a 10 percent increase in the number of female characters presented in the newer readers, and these stories also presented 12 percent more elderly female characters than did the 1960s books. These figures may indicate that the efforts of the women's movement have been effective in generating the inclusion of more female characters in children's stories, helping to reduce sexism in the

readers. However, there was still a preponderance of male characters, even though there are more females in the population than there are males. (The United States Bureau of the Census reported in 1984 that the number of males per 100 females was 94.6, and the number of elderly males was 67.1 per 100 elderly females.) Butler and Lewis chide: "The mistreatment of older women is a national habit that has yet to be challenged by older women themselves" (1977, p. 99).

Most of the older characters in the readers were white; however, a significant change was noted in the inclusion of more blacks in the newer books. These statistics imply that organized protests against racism which originated in the 1960s have caused writers and publishers to keep alert in their attempts to avoid discriminating against groups through omission. The achievements of various individuals who were members of minority groups were applauded in biographical sketches and stories of famous people.

The occupational status of about half of the older characters was not clear in either the books of the 1960s or of the 1980s. In addition, very few of the characters were designated as retirees. Often, older characters were not portrayed in positions which indicated that they were employed, or that suggested they were ever employed. Since a person's job influences self-esteem and self-image,

and tends to provide identity, it appears that the elderly in the readers often lack occupational status that is typical of productive citizens. However, the United States Bureau of the Census reported in 1984 that 82.6 percent of aged males and 92.2 percent of older females were not in the labor force. The number who were retired from employment was not given. Therefore, elderly characters in the readers tended to be depicted with higher employment than is representative of contemporary life in the United States.

Literary Depiction

Older characters usually assumed major or supporting roles in the stories and did not appear as grandparents, aunts, uncles, or neighbors in the majority of instances. Diversity was manifested in their roles and in their characterization. This evidence contradicts some writers' findings that the aged generally have a minor part in the story (Ansello, 1977; Kingston and Drotter, 1981), and that they are usually portrayed as relatives (Blue, 1978; Rutherford, 1981). It seems that elderly characters are frequently cast as grandparents in realistic fiction books and other children's books, but this is not the case in basal reading stories. However, Hurst (1981) did not find one grandparent in 40 picture books he examined. Elderly characters appeared in a variety of genres. An increase of 7 percent was noted in their inclusion in information selections of the 1980s when compared to the 1960s.

It seemed that more basal reader selections in current textbooks were didactic in nature--information dealing with careers, reading skills, special people, and selected topics was presented in the newer series. There were also more biographical selections in the 1980s series. This finding may be representative of a trend of the "back to basics" era to place more emphasis on the acquisition of knowledge during this current period of information explosion.

The readers of the 1980s incorporated more cartoon-like art, rather than realistic illustrations. It was noted that the artist sometimes determined the age of the characters in the pictures. Elderly characters appeared in pictures only, not in the narrative, in the the textbooks of the 1980s more often than in the readers of the 1960s (18 percent and 7 percent respectively). Publishers may be attempting to present more elderly by using them in illustrations rather than finding stories that include them. Although there are a few more (1 percent) elderly characters in the current readers, almost one in five of the older characters did not have a role in the story. (Of course, there were characters of other age levels who also appeared in pictures only.) This finding would account for some of the elderly characters who had minor roles in the stories.

Personal Characteristics

This study found no discrimination against elderly characters in their personal portrayal in the stories. The elderly generally maintained normal posture, demonstrated capable or intelligent mental ability, manifested healthy physical well-being, displayed pleasant personalities, and dressed in accordance with the styles and customs of the setting. They were portrayed as unattractive in fewer than 10 percent of the instances in the series of the 1960s and 1980s. These findings corroborate reports by Blue (1978), Fillmer and Meadows (1986), Kingston and Drotter (1981), and Rutherford (1981). Older characters were seldom depicted wearing their hair in a bun, wearing aprons, carrying canes, or using suspenders.

General Representation

Most of the elderly characters were shown to be competent and helpful. They were also presented as active individuals communicating with other characters in the stories, living normal lives, and behaving as typical citizens in community affairs. The overall impression of the older characters was positive in 88 percent of the instances in the readers of the 1960s and in 91 percent in the readers of the 1980s.

Conclusions

The following conclusions were derived from the results of this investigation. They should be considered

in terms of the procedures and methodology used in this study.

1. The checklist developed to analyze the portrayal of older characters was thorough and provided enough detail to assess the treatment of aged characters in the reading stories accurately.
2. Elderly people were underrepresented in the basal reading textbooks in comparison to the actual proportion of the American population they comprise.
3. There was a trend to include more females and more elderly female characters in the recent stories, but the ratio of females to males is still disproportionate when considering actual population statistics.
4. There was a trend to include more members of minority groups in the readers.
5. The occupational status of the older characters tended to be higher than is representative of contemporary society.
6. Aged persons were engaged in diverse roles and characterizations; only about 1 out of 10 older characters was portrayed as a grandparent.
7. Elderly characters appeared in a variety of genres. A trend was observed in the 1980s textbooks which indicated that publishers are

- including more informational and biographical selections in current readers.
8. Contemporary readers included more expressionistic (cartoon-like) illustrations than did the earlier textbooks.
 9. Artists often portrayed characters with features that were not described in the narrative. The illustrators also determined the age of the characters in many instances.
 10. No discrimination was found in the portrayal of elderly characters regarding their personal characteristics such as posture, mental ability, physical well-being, personality, dress, and appearance. The women were not shown wearing their hair in buns, wearing aprons, carrying canes, rocking, or knitting in most of the selections. Neither were the men shown wearing suspenders, carrying canes, or fishing in most of the stories. Many of the older characters were depicted wearing ties and hats.
 11. The elderly characters were presented as competent, helpful, positive members of the community.
 12. The results of this study indicated that the older characters were not stereotyped in the basal reading stories of the 1960s nor of the 1980s, except for their underrepresentation.

Neither the writers nor the illustrators discriminated against the aged.

Recommendations

Tuckman and Lorge (1953) wrote: "It is true that visual and auditory acuity, physical strength, and reaction time reach a peak comparatively early in life and then show a slow but steady decline with age" (p. 249), and Barnum (1977b) explained that one would expect the aged to be depicted as less healthy than other adults. However, Comfort (1978) differentiated between biological aging and "sociogenic aging"; the latter, he contended, is a negative, discriminatory role that society imposes on people as they reach a certain chronological age. Emphasizing the negative aspects of aging and presenting older characters in the literature in stereotypic patterns creates unfavorable attitudes toward the elderly and toward the aging process. Landau asserted, "There are countless cases of individuals over sixty-five who have created new, exciting, and stimulating lives for themselves" (1985, p. 20). Others have affirmed that older people are of value to society and lead productive, creative lives, and children need to be exposed to contributions of the elderly and to the valuable attributes age brings (Seefeldt et al., 1978).

Some researchers alleged that children's literature discriminated against the elderly and declared that society perpetuates negative attitudes toward aged citizens. Other

investigators indicated that stereotyping of the aged is not as common in the literature as some writers claim. This study did not find stereotyping of older adults in basal reading stories, except for underrepresentation. However, the following recommendations are addressed to writers, illustrators, and publishers of children's books, to teachers, and to researchers, for the purpose of (1) creating an awareness of problems associated with ageism; (2) preventing the infiltration of ageism into children's readers; and (3) presenting older adults as positive role models to youngsters who internalize information and impressions conveyed in reading materials.

Recommendations to Writers, Illustrators, and Publishers

1. Because the elderly are underrepresented in children's readers, more older characters need to be included in the stories.
2. To mirror social reality accurately, there should be more females than males in the stories--the reverse is presently true. The ratio of elderly characters should also be more realistic.
3. Continued efforts to present more older characters with diverse ethnic origins should be exerted to insure fairness in representation.
4. Readers' impressions of older characters in the stories might be improved if stories provided some indication of former or current employment of these characters.

5. The role of elderly characters needs to be fully developed, with adjectives describing the older adults providing detailed information which ascribes some importance to the individual.
6. The marital status of the elderly characters needs to be provided, especially of married and widowed adults, to give a realistic portrayal of older persons.
7. Since the illustrator is influential in depicting older adults in children's literature, care must be taken to depict older characters as active, productive citizens who are dressed according to the style of the times.

Recommendations to Teachers

Numerous writers have asserted that teachers need to become more conscious of negative remarks about the aged in children's books and intervene through instructional planning to help children acquire accurate information and form positive images and attitudes about older adults (Ansello, 1976b; Applebee, 1979; Fillmer, 1982; Fusco, 1981; Jose and Richardson, 1980; Kinchloe and Bull, 1982; Madison, 1980; Page et al., 1981; Vraney and Barrett, 1981; and Wass et al., 1981). While there were some instances of negative portrayal of the elderly in the stories analyzed in this study, none occurred with enough frequency to cause stereotyping. Teachers, however, do need to be aware of forms of

discrimination against older adults and point them out when they appear in reading stories.

The only statistically significant form of unfairness toward the elderly noted by this study was disproportionate representation. Since children have limited contact with the aged (in real life and vicariously in reading stories), the following recommendations are proposed.

1. It would be of value to invite aged volunteers into the classroom or implement projects whereby the student would be visiting older adults. Older adults could participate as mentors, assistants, readers, and in other roles which would help the elementary student acquire firsthand experience with the elderly (John, 1977; Seefeldt et al., 1981; Storey, 1979; Taylor, 1980; Wass et al., 1981; and Watson, 1981). Successful, active older people could describe their work, display their productions, or demonstrate their talents to students. Older adults "need new outlets for their many skills and talents as well as an opportunity to feel useful" (Landau, 1985, p. 132).
2. Intervention strategies may be employed through the implementation of intergenerational programs at the national, state, and local levels that

bring the young and the old together (Hopkins, 1978; Parnell, 1980).

3. Units of study may be designed to examine the entire human life cycle. Visiting grave sites, creating timelines, and writing poetry about aged book personalities may be incorporated into the plans (John, 1977 and Storey, 1977).
4. Children's theatre may be used to help youngsters relate to problems of the aged (Pearson-Davis, 1983).
5. Research strategies may be employed by asking students to develop and administer questionnaires and interview older adults.

Recommendations to Researchers

Researchers need some means of standardizing their analyses so that direct comparisons can be made among the various studies. Presently, there tend to be a number of different emphases in the investigations, sometimes reflecting contradictory results of studies designed to detect whether there is stereotyping and discrimination of the elderly in the literature. Contradictory conclusions are published. For example, a journal carried an article entitled, "Aged Not Stereotyped in Children's Books" (Lehrer, 1978a, p. 272); a subsequent issue reported, "Stereotypes of Aging in Children's Books" (Lehrer, 1978b,

p. 13). The following recommendations are offered to help remedy obfuscation in the area of ageism.

1. A standardized instrument needs to be developed that will be comprehensive enough to identify ageist tendencies in the media. "Attitudes toward Old People" and the "Older Workers Questionnaire" by Tuckman and Lorge and "The Old People Scales" by Kogan provide clues for the detection of negative attitudes directed toward older adults (Shaw, 1967). In addition, checklists used by researchers such as Ansello (1976b), Rutherford (1981), and the one included in this report need to be consulted to (1) define categories which are crucial for recognizing ageism in the literature, (2) identify criteria which constitute stereotyping, and (3) provide consistency in frequency counts.
2. Further studies need to be conducted (1) to clarify if some children's literature does discriminate against the aged, (2) to discover children's attitudes toward the aged, and (3) to determine the effect reading has had in forming those attitudes.
3. This study may be replicated and adult raters and children raters could perform the analyses to provide insights into the way each group

perceives the portrayal of older adults in the readers.

4. Current series need to be examined to see if there is too much emphasis on informational selections; more attention to folklore and fantasy may encourage imaginative thinking and make reading more enjoyable for youngsters.

Final Comment

Literature is replete with charges that the aged are stereotyped in our society and in children's books (Ansello, 1976a, 1976b, 1977, 1978; Applebee, 1979; Barnum, 1977b; Carter, 1979; Clearwater, 1982; Comfort, 1977; Fillmer, 1982, 1984; Hurst, 1981; Jantz et al., 1977; Jose and Richardson, 1980; Latimer, 1976; Nuessel, 1982; Page et al., 1981; Parnell, 1980; Seefeldt, 1978; Storey, 1977; Tuckman and Lorge, 1973; Vraney and Barrett, 1981; and Waas et al., 1981). On the other hand, some writers have rejected the proposition that the aged are presented with erroneous impressions and blatant misconceptions (Blue, 1978; Fillmer and Meadows, in press; Robin, 1977; Rutherford, 1981; and Seltzer and Atchley, 1971).

This content analysis supported the view that the aged were not discriminated against--older adults were not misrepresented in basal reading stories of the 1960s or of the 1980s. While they were underrepresented in relation to their actual proportion in the United States population, no

prejudicial or unfavorable characterizations were observed in this study. One of the series (Scott, Foresman, 1983) dealt with the topic of aging in an 11-page selection entitled: "How Old Is Old?" This information article compared the life span of mayflies (three days) and tortoises (150 years) to a young boy's grandmother and her friend, who are 60 years old and 80 years old, respectively. They concluded, "You are as old as you feel" (p. 315).

These findings are consistent with reports of improvement in the way the elderly are depicted. "There are in fact encouraging signs that the obnoxious stereotype of age, at least in its blackest form, is already out of date" (Comfort, 1978, p. 22). "More stories are now available that picture old people as unique individuals. This includes their social interaction" (Rudman, 1984, p. 309).

We are mindful of the fact that the image of older people portrayed in the media has improved; that several programs have depicted older people realistically and with sensitivity; . . . that excellent books and articles have appeared about the growing numbers and higher percentage of people past 65 within the nation and their changing interests and needs. (The White House Conference on Aging, 1981, p. 3)

"Although in the past bias might have occurred unconsciously, book publishers in particular have become very conscious of the work of the Council on Interracial Books for Children" (The White House Conference on Aging, 1981, p. 1).

Because there are contradictory findings in the research, and because of the seriousness of the problems connected with ageism, further studies are needed to clarify the portrayal of the elderly in children's literature. It is important for schools to prepare youth to accept and value elders for the knowledge, expertise, ideals, and emotions they offer in a mutual relationship of sharing. The self-concepts of older persons suffer when they become victims of stereotyping, and young people who internalize negative attitudes and develop prejudice against the aged and against aging also become victims as these attitudes set the stage for depression and rejection as they grow older. Skinner and Vaughan extolled, "If you, yourself, have constructed the world that permits you to live a tranquil, dignified, and enjoyable life, you will be doubly admired--not only for a great performance, but for writing a last act that plays so well" (1983, p. 153). Since the future is an inevitable destination projected from the past, it behooves those aware to remediate the errors of the present.

APPENDIX
CHECKLIST FOR ANALYZING OLDER PEOPLE

Title of Basal Reading Series: _____ Grade Level: _____ Publisher: _____

Date of Publication: _____ TP=Text and Picture P=Picture Coder: _____ (A)=Animal

Categories	Male	Female	Indeterminate
TOTAL NUMBER OF CHARACTERS IN STORIES:			
REFERENCES TO ELDERLY CHARACTERS:			
ETHNIC ORIGIN:			
White			
Black			
Hispanic			
American Indian			
Eskimo			
Other (Oriental, Imaginative, etc.)			
ROLE IN THE STORY:			
Main Character			
Supporting Character			
Minor Role			
CHARACTERIZATION:			
Grandmother/Grandfather (Great)			
Aunt/Uncle (Great)			
Neighbor			
Other			

Categories	Male	Female	Indeterminate
OCCUPATION:			
White Collar/Professional			
Blue Collar/Manual Work			
Housekeeping			
Retired			
Unknown/Unclear			
IMAGE:			
Positive (Competent, Helpful)			
Negative (Villain, Helpless)			
MENTALITY:			
Intelligent			
Capable			
Dull/Silly			
PHYSICAL WELL-BEING:			
Healthy			
Sickly (Frail, Weak)			
Injured (Broken Arm, etc.)			
Handicapped			
PERSONALITY:			
Pleasant (Happy, Kind, Friendly)			
Unpleasant (Irritable, Unfriendly)			
Neutral			
APPEARANCE--PERSONAL:			
Attractive (Pretty, Handsome)			
Unattractive (Ugly, Uncomely)			
Neutral (Average Appeal)			

Categories	Male	Female	Indeterminate
DRESS :			
Fashionable (Stylish, Jewelry, etc.)			
Dowdy (Shabby, Frumpy, etc.)			
Neutral			
POSTURE:			
Normal (Upright)			
Bent-over/Decrepit			
GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS:			
Bespectacled			
Wrinkled			
Gray/White Hair			
Hair in Bun			
Balding/Semi-balding			
Cane			
Apron			
Suspenders			
Tie or Bowtie			
Beard			
Big Nose			
Plump			
Double Chin			
Hat, Cap, Turban			
ACTIVITIES:			
Active (Fishing, Conversing, etc.)			
Passive (Sitting, Rocking, etc.)			

Categories	Male	Female	Indeterminate
GENRE:			
Fiction (Modern, General)			
Folklore (Epics, Fairytales, etc.)			
Autobiography/Biography			
Information (Social Sciences, etc.)			
Fantasy (Science Fiction, etc.)			
History/Historical Fiction			
Poetry/Songs			
ILLUSTRATIONS:			
Representational (Realistic)			
Expressionistic (Cartoon-like)			
OVERALL IMPRESSION OF THE AGED:			
Positive (Supportive of the Aged)			
Negative (Denigrative Presentations)			
MARITAL STATUS:			
Single (Never Married)			
Married			
Divorced			
Widow/Widower			
Indeterminate			
HOUSEHOLD:			
Lives Alone			
Lives with Spouse/Family			
Lives with Son/Daughter			
Lives with Roommate(s)			
Lives in Nursing Home			
Indeterminate or Other			

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Born in Beckley, West Virginia, Rita E. Meadows grew up in a home with supportive parents and three younger brothers. After graduating from Woodrow Wilson High School in Beckley, she attended Southeastern College in Lakeland, Florida, where she received her Bachelor of Arts in Christian education. She also earned a Master of Science in elementary education specializing in reading from Florida State University in Tallahassee, a Specialist in Education in reading/language arts from the University of South Florida in Tampa, and plans to receive the Doctor of Philosophy in curriculum and instruction from the University of Florida in Gainesville in May, 1986.

She began her teaching career at Frostproof Elementary in Frostproof, Florida. Four years later, she served as a PL 89-10 reading teacher at Dundee Elementary in Dundee, Florida; she also taught third grade three years at Eagle Lake Elementary in Eagle Lake, Florida. After acquiring this experience, she accepted a position as an education methods instructor at Southeastern College where she is currently teaching and supervising student teachers. She has conducted numerous teacher education workshops and Christian education conferences.

Among her interests are cooking, entertaining, shopping, reading, and traveling. She also enjoys physical exercise such as walking and playing racquetball.

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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