



Content Analysis of Children's Books

TEKLA K. BEKKEDAL

ADULTS who read widely in children's books cannot escape noticing differences between books published in recent years and those published thirty years ago. This is no less true for realistic fiction than it is for informational books, picture books, or other types of writing for children. As one journalist said in a recent magazine section of the *Milwaukee Journal*:

Different world, different children, different books

But once the shock of seeing "hell" wears off; once the death of the main character on the final page no longer surprises; when open-ended endings become commonplace, you come to the inevitable conclusion: The Goody Two-Shoes Twins aren't dead after all. They're alive and well and growing up in the ghetto. It's the same old moralistic pill in a new candy coating.¹

A thought-provoking description, to be sure, but the judicious reader cannot help but wonder about its accuracy. Is the reader to assume that this description is representative of a substantial proportion of contemporary children's books or of a few books selected by the writer for any number of reasons?

Statements about changing content are commonplace in recent professional literature about books for children and are also found with some frequency in newspapers and other widely circulated publications. The 1940s have been frequently described as the beginning of a new era in children's literature; this new era has been characterized by increased realism in writing children's literature. For example, Viguers notes the obvious inclusion of social mores and economic trends in fictional stories, a growing number of realistic and accurate stories about children with physical handicaps, and many regional stories with authentic backgrounds. She also mentions the inclusion in children's books of contemporary subjects such as the

Tekla K. Bekkedal is Associate Professor, Department of Library Science and Media Education, University of Wisconsin, Eau Claire.

immigration from Puerto Rico to large mainland cities, civil rights legislation, school integration, and nonviolent demonstrations.²

Smith points out the emphasis on depicting ordinary children in their own homes in varying cultures within our country or elsewhere in the world.³ Pellowski also notes this emphasis on ordinary children and in addition points out an increase in the number of books about minority groups, especially the Negro.⁴

CONTENT ANALYSIS AS A TOOL

Content analysis offers a sound approach to research on children's books because it is an objective, systematic, and quantitative method of describing content.⁵ The investigator can move away from subjective opinions based on recollections of individual titles to an objective description of the contents of a systematically selected group of books.

Only a limited amount of research has been done on content in children's books. A recent bibliography prepared by Lukenbill listing doctoral dissertations in both children's literature and literature for adolescents done during the last forty years indicated that the bulk of the research in this area is recent and relatively limited in scope.⁶ Studies in the specific area of content analysis are even fewer in number, and results of research in the content of children's books are inconclusive and limited. However, content analysis has provided interested adults with concrete information about various aspects of content in children's books, and there are indications that recent and ongoing research will provide information about an increasing variety of subjects.

This article will briefly review the pertinent research which indicates the direction being taken in content analysis of children's books. Studies which deal with content only incidentally or with books other than trade books will not be included. The majority of the content studies can be grouped into one of three subject areas: studies of human relationships depicted in books, studies on values and cultural content incorporated into books, and studies concerned with the portrayal of specific racial and ethnic groups in books. The few studies which do not fit into one of these groups will be described separately.

STUDIES OF HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS

Studies on the relationships of people as described in children's

books are few in number. Three of them are concerned with realistic fiction, one with picture books, and another with books frequently chosen by children for their recreational reading.

Green did an analysis of American family life as described in contemporary realistic fiction.⁷ The twenty-seven books used for detailed analysis were chosen from recommended titles on widely accepted book lists and in reviewing journals. All of the books were primarily family stories with an American setting. Green looked at settings, members of the family, family activities, and family situations and problems. The family described most frequently in these books was the immediate family unit, parents and children, with the mother a full-time homemaker. Most of the books were set in rural areas or small towns, with a few examples of life in a modern city or suburb.

Shepard analyzed the treatment of characters portrayed in books and limited his study to sixteen books described by adults as being frequently chosen by readers in the middle and upper elementary grades.⁸ Characters were described by six categories such as race, nationality, and socio-economic status; each category was divided into positive and negative traits. Shepard's findings were not unexpected. He concluded: "And what are the characters like in these books? In summary, heroes and heroines strongly tend to be clean, white, healthy, handsome, Protestant Christian, middle-class people. Villains much more often turn out to be ugly, physically undesirable persons of non-Caucasian races, often either very poor or of the wealthy classes."⁹

Homze assessed the relationship between adults and children and child-to-child relationships described in books and also looked at background information such as number and sex of child characters, family units, occupations of adults, socio-economic status of characters, and ethnic identification of characters.¹⁰ Her study was based on a sample of seventy-eight realistic fiction books with United States settings listed in selected volumes of *Book Review Digest* from 1920 to 1960. The final sample included the books judged by three experts to be the best examples of believable behavior. Homze found that the books analyzed described a child's world where children direct their own activities, a world predominantly populated by white, middle-class Americans. She also noted increased mobility of characters and a trend from rural locations to urban locations as well as a trend toward smaller families.

Like Homze, Ziegler studied interpersonal behavior of characters in children's books and background information such as age and sex of characters, ethnic group, socio-economic status, and occupation of adult characters.¹¹ However, Ziegler concentrated exclusively on books of realistic fiction which contained at least one physically handicapped child or adult character. The final sample consisted of forty-seven books published from 1940 to 1969. Among other things, Ziegler found that children's books about the physically handicapped are increasingly diverse in type of handicap depicted. Books analyzed also include more honest criticism by other children of the handicapped child's behavior and appear to mirror a more realistic life situation. Ziegler, like Homze, found a stress on the immediate family and a change from rural to small town settings.

Bildman analyzed picture-storybooks and based her study on fifty titles from recommended book lists plus fifty titles randomly selected from the shelves of public libraries in suburban New York.¹² All books used presented a main theme of child-adult relationships and were published between 1950 and 1970. Three areas of concern were studied: the image of the six-through-nine-year-old child, the interaction between children and adults, and the effect of environment on interaction. What emerges from an analysis of these books is a positive picture of the obedient, lovable, intelligent, creative child in harmony with his parents. He is more often from a middle-class, white, unbroken family and also more often a boy. The adults are most frequently pictured in a child-rearing role. The environment pictured in the books is diversified, and the lifestyle of the characters is closely related to the particular environment described.

STUDIES ON VALUES AND CULTURAL CONTENT

Several studies have been done on the treatment of values in children's books and the cultural content incorporated into books. In most cases, data were collected and interpreted in relation to a particular educational philosophy or a particular curriculum and, therefore, are not attempts to assess the total content of the books. However, they do illustrate an application of content analysis to children's books and give the reader an in-depth look at content.

The earliest of the studies is a landmark in the field. Martin's study of nationalism in children's books is, to the author's knowledge, the first intensive study of the content of children's

books done in this country.¹³ It can best be described as an intensive study of twenty-four books chosen through the application of highly selective criteria such as the number of languages into which the book was translated. Martin's purpose was to "analyze the symbols of nationalism as they appear in twenty-four selected titles and to relate the frequency of the presentation of these symbols to their popularity among children of seventeen national groups."¹⁴ Martin found that nationalistic emphasis was the factor most positively related to popularity, hostile attitudes made a book unpopular in the nation criticized, and the presence and frequency of dialect in a book were positively related to its unpopularity outside the country of origin. She also concluded that the home or family story tended to be more nationalistic than the other types studied.

Another early study was Jacobs's study of democratic acculturation embedded in American historical fiction for children written during the first half of the twentieth century.¹⁵ In this study, analysis of the content played a secondary role to the investigation of democratic acculturation evidenced in the data and analyzed in terms of the philosophy of experimentalism. Jacobs used a sample of thirty-nine titles drawn from recommended book selection aids plus two then-recent Newbery Medal Award books. Jacobs analyzed three different aspects of each book: historical setting, material culture, and nonmaterial culture. In examining background data, Jacobs found an emphasis on northern locales, primarily rural and small town settings. The family portrayed was most frequently white, middle class, and rather small, with the father as the chief breadwinner.

Chambers also studied the social values treated in books.¹⁶ He analyzed a limited sample of twenty-nine books—the juvenile fiction titles for ages five through nine published by two publishers, Viking Press and Harcourt, Brace and World, in 1963-64. His purpose was to collect evidence of the presence of content in books which may influence the development of children's social values. Chambers used seven values described by experts in the field of child growth and development and child psychology as a basis for his analysis. He concluded that, on the whole, social values identified as important by experts were treated in a uniformly weak manner in the books analyzed. He also found that there was little opportunity to explore and accept either racial or religious differences in these books, friendships described were most often between middle-class

Caucasian children, and the books were set in middle-class neighborhoods in "Anywhere USA." In addition, very few family members beyond the immediate family were introduced into these books.

Lowry and Chambers did a related study on the presence of American middle-class moral and ethical values in Newbery Medal Award books.¹⁷ They analyzed winners from 1922 to 1965 for the presence of fifteen values derived from an examination of the writings of ten experts in the fields of education and sociology. Values tabulated included such concepts as sexual morality, good manners, and justice and equality. The data collected in this study, like that of Chambers's earlier study, led the researchers to conclude that these values were treated positively but in moderate measure in the books analyzed.

Bard's study was essentially curriculum-oriented, but he did analyze content to ascertain whether selected social studies themes were treated in the books.¹⁸ His sample consisted of twelve books randomly selected from a list of Newbery Medal Award winners and honor books for the years 1960-70. The list of themes included such concepts as natural conservation, communications, and interdependence. Bard found that some of the themes were illustrated in all of the books analyzed, and all of the themes were illustrated in some of the books. The themes most frequently illustrated in the books were human conservation, change, interdependence, self-realization, and social environment.

Greenlaw also did a curriculum-oriented study.¹⁹ She considered the use of literature to help children develop critical thinking and analyzed the content of science fiction books for children to ascertain whether it actually reflected the impact of technology on human values. The sample of 133 books consisted of all available science fiction titles written by fifteen selected authors for children ages nine to fifteen and published from 1945 to 1970. The authors were randomly selected from science fiction writers listed in two book selection aids: *Elementary School Library Collection* and *Best Books for Children*.

Greenlaw analyzed the books for both theme and content. The data collected indicated that children's science fiction books did include aspects of values such as privacy and individualism and also problems related to modern technology such as nuclear power and could be a useful resource in teaching social studies, history, and science.

Carmichael, like Chambers, investigated the treatment of selected social values and corresponding value themes in children's books.²⁰ Specifically, she analyzed the treatment of four values: justice, work, obedience, and knowledge. The sample of 126 books was chosen from selected issues of two annual lists, *Notable Children's Books* (American Library Association) and *Outstanding Children's Books of the Year* (*New York Times*), from 1949 to 1969. One of the four themes was a major theme in fifty of the books analyzed, and 94 percent of the books mentioned at least one of the four themes. The theme most emphasized in these books was the acceptance of responsibility, and the least emphasized theme was the belief in equal opportunity for all people.

One recent study differed from all its predecessors in focusing on the treatment of specific social institutions rather than social values. Noble investigated the treatment of the family, the church, and the school in American realistic fiction for children.²¹ She analyzed a sample of 125 books randomly picked from selected recommended book lists. Data were collected in four categories: the importance of family and family structure, the importance of religion and religious education, the importance of education, and the development of personal responsibility. As observed in so many of the previous studies, the family most frequently described in these books was a middle-class, white family. The attitude toward the family was primarily positive, although Noble found a strongly negative attitude toward stepfamilies and stepparents. Very little information about religion and religious activities was included in these titles. The school and education were mentioned in three-fourths of the books, and the treatment was predominantly negative. Both school and teacher were stereotyped, and modern educational methods were seldom described. The child characters in these books were responsible to an overwhelming degree, with only one example found of nonresponsible behavior.

Chant's research represents another departure from the pattern of previous studies.²² She confined her study of social-personal values to a sample of mass-produced fiction books for children, trade books costing \$1.00 or less. The final sample consisted of in-print books on the lists of Follett, Golden Press, Rand McNally, Whitman, and Wonder publishing companies which were shelved in the Library of Congress and totaled sixty-five titles. Ten social-personal values such as ambition, compassion, cooperation,

individuality, and honesty were chosen for analysis. The most frequently illustrated value in these books was cooperation, and the two values least frequently reflected were selflessness and honesty. Chant concluded that, with the exception of cooperation, these books were limited in the presentation of values. However, she did find that the values which were presented were treated in a realistic fashion in a majority of the books analyzed.

STUDIES ON RACIAL AND ETHNIC GROUPS

A number of studies have been done on the treatment of various racial and ethnic groups in children's books, mostly within the last ten years. Many of them could better be described as descriptive bibliographies than content analyses.²³ The studies described here are those which make detailed examinations of the contents of the books studied and are considered, by the author, as most pertinent to this paper.²⁴

Five studies dealt with a single racial or ethnic group. Dober investigated the social life and customs of Southern Appalachia as described in children's books.²⁵ She discussed various aspects of Southern Appalachia, such as its history, economic conditions, and people, and then analyzed the books in terms of these descriptions. Books were analyzed by categories such as setting, home conditions, farm situations, education, and culture. The limited sample consisted of thirteen books with Southern Appalachian settings listed in nine recommended book selection aids. Dober concluded that the authors of these books tended to represent more backward and least typical situations in describing material and economic conditions in Southern Appalachia.

Napier studied the treatment of the North American Indian character in a selected group of children's books.²⁶ She chose her sample of twenty titles from a group of forty-seven highly recommended books. The books, all by American authors, included both fiction and biography and were not limited in time. The categories used were physical description, use of language, and status. Thirty-five characters representing fifteen different tribes were analyzed. The data collected indicated that the portrayal of North American Indian characters in these books was positive and favorable, and no traditional stereotypes of Indians were found. The characters in the books analyzed were physically attractive, had fluent and grammatical speech, and had acceptable status. However,

the Indian was seldom portrayed in contemporary settings.

Investigations of the treatment of black characters in children's books formed the basis for three of these studies. Carlson compared the treatment in two periods, 1929-38 and 1959-68.²⁷ She based her study on a preliminary sample of 545 available titles out of a possible 703 published during these periods by three major publishers of juvenile trade books: Thomas Y. Crowell; Harper & Row; and Holt, Rinehart and Winston. The sample was limited to prose fiction recommended for grades kindergarten through six. Only fifty-six titles were used for the detailed analysis since they were the only titles out of the 545 which presented Negro characters with sufficient information for analysis.

Carlson developed a four-level treatment scale to measure the treatment of Negroes in the content analyzed: caricature, stereotype, individual with a race problem, and individual with a human problem. She found no trend toward including more Negro characters but found less racial stereotyping in the later period. Carlson also noted a trend toward more frequent portrayals of Negroes as main or major characters in the later period as opposed to their portrayal as background characters in the early period.

Bingham also studied the Negro and investigated the treatment of Negroes in picture books by analyzing the content of illustrations rather than text.²⁸ Her sample consisted of picture books containing illustrations of one or more Negro characters which were listed in various editions of *Children's Catalog*, *Elementary School Library Collection*, and seven other recommended titles. She limited her sample by taking only contemporary realistic fiction recommended for ages three through eight and published between 1930 and 1968 in the United States. The final list consisted of forty-one books which contained 1,067 illustrations, 867 of them picturing Negroes. Bingham analyzed the illustrations in terms of physical characteristics of the people, environments pictured, roles of Negro adults, and interaction of characters. She compared her findings for four time periods. No striking differences were found in these four periods, although the amount of physical interaction among a variety of characters did increase over the time span.

The third study of Black characters focused on the daily activities of the children as portrayed in books. Fisher investigated the image of Black American children in contemporary realistic fiction with an American setting.²⁹ The sample of forty books consisted of titles

listed in one of four sources, three current bibliographies of books about Black Americans and the James Weldon Johnson Collection in Countee Cullen Library in New York City. Content was analyzed in terms of six main categories such as home and family life, school experiences, and emotional lives. Fisher found a wide variety of homes portrayed, with location in all parts of the United States (one-fourth of them in New York City) and in all kinds of neighborhoods from slums to middle-class suburbs. The value of education was stressed in these books; and the main characters were frequently concerned with career plans, personal development, and reactions to situations unique to Black children.

Broderick's just published book, based on her research on the image of Blacks in children's books, should supply additional information to enlarge our current knowledge of how this group of people has been portrayed in stories for children.³⁰

The other studies on racial and ethnic groups investigated the treatment of two or more minority groups in children's books. Kahn analyzed the treatment of four groups: North American Indians, Jewish-Americans, Mexican-Americans, and Chinese-Americans.³¹ She picked groups which she felt represented a combination of racial, ethnic, and/or religious prejudices. The sample consisted of books with U.S. settings listed in *Publishers Weekly* and *Children's Catalog* which were published in 1948 and aimed at readers in kindergarten through tenth grade. A total of eighty-two books containing references to these minority groups was chosen for analysis. Kahn considered cultural values, physical descriptions, occupations, attitudes of characters toward each other, role of minority group characters, author's viewpoint, and acceptance of minority group. She found that the treatment of minority groups in the books analyzed was chiefly one of omission. When such characters were included, they were frequently not fully developed.

Gast investigated the treatment in children's fiction of five groups: North American Indians, Chinese, Japanese, Negroes, and Spanish-Americans.³² He based his sample on all the fiction titles about these minority groups listed in *Children's Catalog* and four recommended book lists published by the ALA. All books included in the final sample of forty-two titles had contemporary U.S. settings and were first published between 1945 and 1962.

Gast used two approaches. He first analyzed major and minor

characters according to seven characteristics such as physical traits, status position, and social origin. He then examined each story as a whole to ascertain the explicit and implicit concepts contained in it. Gast found that the books did contain stereotypes but not the traditional ones. Instead he found the stereotypes to be complimentary and positive emphasizing dominant middle-class values. There were occupational stereotypes for all the groups except the Negro. On the whole, Gast found that the books analyzed dignified the differences in race, beliefs, and customs and emphasized the similarities between majority and minority Americans.

Böger analyzed the content of a selected group of children's books on Negroes and Japanese.³³ His sample was the books listed under Negroes and under Japan in the *Children's Catalog* (1941-1965) which were classified as fiction or "easy" and designated for grades kindergarten through four. After elimination of all books without main child characters, the final list totaled sixteen. Böger concerned himself primarily with a discussion of various modes of thought employed by children and the development of a system of coding "thought-units" of the child characters. He used four categories: symbolic, empirical, ethical, and synoptic thought. Böger concluded that books on Japan contained a proportionately greater number of ethical and synoptic thought-units than books on Negroes and that most of the books analyzed showed a low potential for the development of diverse modes of thought in children.

Elkins's study on minorities had a slightly different slant.³⁴ She termed minorities as all groups other than native-born white Americans in the United States whose parents were also native-born. Elkins classified her groups as Anglo-Saxon-Nordic, Other White, American Indian, Negro, and Other Non-White. She selected for analysis all the Newbery and Caldecott winners which were not general history and which had one or more human characters, and her final list consisted of forty-four Newbery books and twenty Caldecott books. Elkins classified each character according to ethnic group, social class, moral position, and stereotype. She concluded that native-born Americans were not unduly favored in these books and that all minority groups except Negroes were well represented. Elkins also found that lower-class people were greatly underrepresented in these books and that the majority of the characters were described as middle-class.

OTHER STUDIES

Three recent studies deal with aspects of content other than those described above. Bernstein analyzed the treatment of a particular childhood experience, the primary school experience, in books for the young child from three to seven years of age.³⁵ Her sample consisted of ninety-eight stories with school settings written between 1935 and 1970. The content was analyzed in terms of ten major categories such as the child's initial school experience, curriculum, instructional methods, rules and regulations, and school personnel. While the settings in these stories tended to be modern, Bernstein found the prevalent image to be that of the traditional neighborhood school with the traditional grade structure, the emphasis on reading, writing, and arithmetic, and group instruction. The image of the teacher was basically positive as were the images of other school personnel. All but six of the teachers portrayed were female. The attitudes of the students were most frequently highly positive, and the teacher's approach to classroom behavior was primarily that of guidance. Bernstein noted an increase in the inclusion of non-white children in the school stories published after 1960.

Although Blatt's study is only partially devoted to content analysis, it offers an in-depth look at a subject being discussed in current professional literature; it is included here because it contains information not available elsewhere.³⁶ Blatt analyzed the treatment of violence in historical and modern realistic fiction and used as her sample the books of realistic fiction selected as Notable Children's Books by the ALA between 1960 and 1970. The analysis was concerned with the total space devoted to violence, the details and intensity of descriptions of violence, the characters involved in the violence, the kinds of violent deeds, the relationship of participants in violent actions, and the judgmental expression about the violence contained in the books. The investigator also studied the reactions of children to the reading of violent episodes from these books.

Concerning content, Blatt concluded that there was no substantial increase in violence in the books over the ten-year period. Among other findings were: historical fiction, on the average, was two times as violent as modern realistic fiction; books published in the United States and the British Commonwealth countries contained approximately the same amount of violence; and the great majority of value judgments about violent acts were against such behavior.

This author's doctoral research was designed to analyze the contents of a representative sample of contemporary realistic fiction for children published in the United States since World War II.³⁷ As indicated above, the professional literature has repeatedly mentioned a trend toward more realism or a new realism in children's stories. This study sought to determine whether this assumed trend is discernible in the mass of books published or only in books memorable for their content and/or literary quality. Content analysis of children's books has concentrated chiefly on titles appearing on one or more recommended book lists. The samples in seventeen of the twenty-five studies described above were drawn from lists of children's books in recommended selection aids and/or from suggestions and recommendations by experts in the field. Three were based on the output of selected publishers, two on combinations of recommended titles with either publishers' output or a random sample from library shelves, and two on lists of books on specific subjects. One (Martin)¹³ was based on a set of special and highly selective criteria.

In an effort to analyze a cross section of the mass of children's books published in the United States, the author compiled a preliminary list of the books of contemporary realistic fiction for children listed in six volumes of *Book Review Digest* published at five-year intervals, beginning with the 1940 volume. There was no screening of books by subject or theme. The final sample of 180 titles consisted of thirty titles randomly selected from each of the six years studied. It is recognized that only a portion of the children's books published are listed in *Book Review Digest*. This study, like Chant's, was regarded as a preliminary effort to widen the base of materials used in analyzing the content of books available to children.

The analysis focused on background material contained in the books, rather than on one specific aspect, such as social values or relationships between adults and children. Four aspects of content were studied: physical settings, group membership of the characters, structure of the main character's family unit, and selected literary characteristics. Data were collected and analyzed in terms of twenty-four categories such as racial and/or ethnic identification of the main character(s), number and sex of children in the family, occupation of the father and/or mother, and primary and secondary theme of the story. The data were compared with statistical sources

(primarily census data), wherever possible, to ascertain how closely the society pictured in the books matched actual contemporary society.

It would appear that, on the whole, the books in this sample are a realistic representation of the majority of American families. What is missing is adequate representation of all those people who differ from the majority in some way—the child whose parents are divorced, the American Indian child, the lower-class family, the family with strong ethnic ties, the child whose family moves frequently, to name but a few. The trends toward increased realism in books in this sample appear to be either in those areas where changes are obvious accepted or where needs have been articulated. Subjects which could be considered controversial were, by and large, avoided.

THE NEED FOR CONTINUED RESEARCH

All of these studies have contributed valuable information on the content of children's books, and they provide a basis for further research. There is a need for more information on the content of children's books and on trends toward change in this content. Recent professional literature has discussed the great changes which have taken place in children's books since the mid-1960s. Systematic analysis of representative samples of books is needed in order to judge the validity of such conclusions.

For example, the overall impression given by the studies discussed here is that the dominant picture portrayed in the children's books analyzed is that of middle-class, white American society. Is there a substantial trend, as some writers indicate, toward children's books which portray a more heterogeneous society? Or is Cornelius correct when he points out the continuing lack of books for the Black child which give him an honest picture of the Black man's experience in America?³⁸ And how accurate is the representation of all the other racial and ethnic groups in our society? Systematic content analysis can begin to provide a valid answer to the question.

Because of the present interest in the women's liberation movement, there is a need for a group of studies in the area of the portrayal of male and female characters in books. Articles in the current professional literature on the issue of sexism in children's books point up the genuine need for informative articles based on careful research. The differing roles of boys and girls as portrayed

in books, the proportion of male to female characters, and the differing roles of mothers and fathers in the stories are only a few of the topics which need careful investigation. Beyond this collection of data, there is a need for thoughtful investigation of the question of the portrayal of men and women in children's books. Some criticisms of the portrayal of female characters have, for example, used stories drawn from traditional folk literature as samples of sexist literature without considering the cultures in which the stories developed. Content analysis in this area should focus not only on the identification of differing sex roles and the proportion of male and female characters but also on the cultural background in which the characters are portrayed. Such analysis could perhaps serve as the basis for developing criteria for evaluation of books which would take into account the different interpretations of sex roles held by diverse cultural groups.

Also, studies should be made which investigate one or a few related variables in greater depth. For example, a study might concentrate on the occupations presented in children's books using a sample drawn from biography and historical realistic fiction as well as contemporary realistic fiction. Another study might well focus on the portrayal of urban life in children's books of all types.

The need for analysis of content in terms of settings, composition of families, occupations, and the like has not diminished. However, her own research led the author to see the necessity of going beyond identifying characters and situations if the content of children's literature is to be explored in depth. The varying ways in which the same subject was treated in different books in the sample with which the author worked suggested that the manner in which a particular subject is handled in books may be a fruitful area for study. For example, although the subject received only limited attention in the sample, the ways in which a few authors handled the subject of war presented some interesting contrasts. One or two of the earlier books could best be described as blatant propaganda filled with racist remarks about the enemy and emphasizing the glory of battle. On the other hand, later books emphasized the misery of war and its devastating effect upon individual families. It would be useful to compare these changes with expressions of contemporary public opinion.

Little has been done to explore such changes in the treatment of social problems in children's books, and research along this line

could add to an understanding of changes in content. In order to more accurately assess the representation of racial minorities in books, for instance, it would be helpful to know not only if the proportion of characters representing such minorities increased but also how the descriptions of them changed. It would be useful to select any of the numerous social issues of contemporary concern and make an intensive study of how often and in what way the problem is treated in both historical and contemporary realistic fiction.

These suggestions are only a beginning, and the list of possible subjects for content analysis of children's books is both long and varied. Much remains to be done. If children do gain ideas and impressions about the world around them from the books they read, as is generally believed, it is surely important for adults to know what kind of world the books portray. Content analysis can help to provide a more comprehensive view of the contemporary world as it is pictured in children's books.

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