

## **ABSTRACT**

Scholars across various disciplines are increasingly concerned about the impact of the pervasiveness of consumer culture on children in the U.S. and other affluent nations. The many detrimental effects of consumerism are attributed to exposure to television, advertisements, and toys, but little research has been conducted on the role of children's literature in shaping material and consumer values at a young age, despite that it is a crucial medium for development. This study explored how children's picture books potentially deter or reinforce materialism and consumerism in young children. To do so, I conducted a content analysis of a carefully selected sample of 30 picture books from three source lists: Caldecott Medal Winners, *The New York Times* Bestsellers, and librarian-recommended books. Text and illustrations were coded using an original coding system, which measured the occurrence of indicators of consumerism or counter-consumerism across five themes: individual material orientation, interpersonal material orientation, social norms, commercialization, and environmental messages. I identified 50 indicators that represent different ways in which picture books can either promote or discourage consumer socialization and subsequently determined which indicators occurred most frequently across a variety of parameters. In addition to providing evidence for which books and source lists might lead to more positive behavior, I concluded that picture books reflect, reinforce, and deter consumerism simultaneously, though environmental messages were the most frequent ways to counter consumerism and social norms were more strongly materialistic. This research contributes to the literature on children and consumer socialization and also offers a newly developed coding tool for further research on material values in literary media. It, lastly, identifies leverage points for shaping consumerism through more careful selection of children's picture books by parents, educators, and children alike.