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The romantic baby boomer: A successful aging analysis of romantic comedy film trailers

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Abstract

On any given Friday night, theaters across the United States are filled with teenagers and young adults, often to see the new Blockbuster that has just been released. The film industry has responded by producing content specifically targeted to this demographic. Unfortunately, this has left a major portion of the population waiting for material that is relatable. Even when there is a character over the age of 50, they are regularly for comic relief or portrayed as weak and incapable. The recent trend of romantic comedies incorporating storylines for older adults is still underrepresented in academic research. This thesis set out to understand the extent of successful aging content in romantic comedies with leading actresses and actors of the baby boomer generation. Content and textual analysis of 41 film trailers found a lack of individuality with many adhering to successful aging concepts and traditional gender roles. Additionally, age and associated effects including anxiety of death and the midlife transformation are supposed to be overcome, often with romance. Nevertheless, as directed in successful aging active engagement, sexual lives, high wealth and prime physical bodies was expected. However, the older characters are continuously compared to younger characters and both men and women desire the youthful bodies. This participatory research adds to the body of research on film trailers and aging in film, but is also applicable to the film industry as new films should include a variety of older characters in roles that embrace aging instead of pitying older adults.

Keywords: Film trailers, romantic comedies, successful aging, baby boomers, aging, romance, sex

THE ROMANTIC BABY BOOMER:

A SUCCESSFUL AGING ANALYSIS OF ROMANTIC COMEDY FILM TRAILERS

by

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Acknowledgments

This thesis grew out of a desire to understand how age was represented in modern film. It wasn't until I stepped back that I realized how much images meant to entertain affect how the world is viewed. Without studying entertainment media, it will be that much more challenging to promote content which represents the diversity of thought and experiences present in everyday life.

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Chapter One: Introduction

The music begins and for two minutes and thirty seconds, viewers are transported to another reality. For those few minutes, quick judgments are made that can determine whether the film has promised enough entertainment. Professionally, the film industry has taken time and significant financial capital to produce the films, and ultimately, film trailers are meant to help ensure audience attendance. Trailers are the distilled versions of films with each second specifically chosen to motivate viewers to see the film for the purpose of adding to the films' revenue. Trailers are the promotional pieces, but they are also a distinctive narrative video meant to combine entertainment and marketing aspects (Kernan, 2004). Analyzing trailers provides a unique understanding of what the industry producers believe will be effective messaging for the targeted audience.

Recent studies on film trailers have centered around the effective persuasive capabilities (Boksem & Smidts, 2015; Bartsch & Mares, 2014; Sauer, 2014; Greene, Johnston, & Vollans, 2014; Finsterwalder, Kuppelwieserb & Villiers, 2012; Devlin, Chambers & Callison, 2011), education applications (Hamel, 2012a; Bain, 2011), and technological developments (Johnston, 2008a; Johnston, 2008b; Chen, Su, Liao & Shih, 2003). Though these studies add to the understanding of the value and persuasive ability of film trailers, film trailers themselves provide an extensive amount of messaging seen by many more than those who end up viewing the full film.

French filmmaker Jean-Luc Godrad once suggested that trailers are "perfect films" that promote a film while entertaining the audience (Street, 2009, p. 433). Each trailer illustrates what the studios, filmmakers, and marketing companies believe will be the most persuasive images and audio to motivate an individual to attend the theatrical release (Kernan, 2004). A trailer's

purpose is to help "create a feature film's 'consumable' identity, and defin[e] historically distinct

changes in marketing, narrative and technology...the trailer establishes a visual and generic

identity echoed in later posters, TV spots, and lobby cards" (Johnston, 2008, p. 153-154). The

current study is not the first textual, critical analysis of trailers. Scholars in this area of

exploration have reviewed representation of the Irish Republican Army in United States and

international film trailers (Ivory, 2007), violence and sexual images in trailers (Oliver &

Kalyanaraman, 2002), and British television trailers (Johnston, 2011). Other research has been

dedicated to the history of film's main promotional item (Hamel, 2012b; Street, 2009; Johnston,

2008; Staiger, 1990). In the last thirty years, trailers have transitioned from the traditional,

theatrical releases to a broader and less restricted audience, thus revealing themselves to be texts

worthy of separate analysis (Johnston, 2009). Film trailers can be an excellent identifier of the

types of messages studios and the industry as a whole believe will be a most persuasive

advertisement (Kernan, 2004).

Although research has focused on baby boomers (Whitbourne & Willis, 2006), aging

(Kriebernegg & Maierhoffer, 2013), and aging in the media (Harrington et al., 2014), few studies

have focused on the content of recent romantic comedies. Furthermore, none have analyzed the

persuasive messages of the films' trailers themselves. With this in mind, this content and textual

analysis examined romantic comedy film trailers with leading actors and actresses of the baby

boomer generation. Accordingly, the purpose of this study was to explore how the trailers depict

aging relationships and the aging process from a promotional perspective. To do so, the study

employed a successful aging theoretical lens to interpret the trailer content. Social identity theory

and age identity theory support the purpose of this study, by understanding the impact media can

have on self-perception and stereotypes. Influenced by the underlying prejudices in successful

aging theory, these texts are contextualized through an awareness of aging expectations present

in the United States culture. This study revealed trends in this developing subgenre of older adult

romantic comedies, directly applicable to film studios and producers.

Representations in the media help viewers understand life experiences that influence their

perceptions of themselves and others. Since visual media provides distinctive portrayals, it

guides the narrative and principles of age (Wangler, 2013). Particularly because aging is often

stigmatized, images can affect societal, economic, and political policies for a major portion of

the population. In a society where the definition of old is defined by the standard of youth,

conflict has arisen in regards to the expectations of aging by both the younger and older

populations (Kriebernegg & Maierhoffer, 2013). The social construct of age is not solely based

on the biological changes during this period (Wangler, 2013). Social practices continuously

influence the way age is discussed and valued, while also providing a behavioral framework for

older people (Wangler, 2013).

When younger people are presented with images that devalue aging, they are likely to be

primed to expect certain behaviors, ultimately promoting communication between the younger

and older at a "very low intellectual and social level" (Wangler, 2013, p. 109). This can create an

ageist perspective defined as, "the devaluation and exclusion of old persons that occurs in

cultures that value being young and that make negative assumptions about what it is to be old,"

(Connidis, 2006, p. 126-127). Ageism is a combination of systems which exclude old people

from "full citizenship" by privileging the younger (Calasanti, Sorensen & King, 2012, p. 19).

This basis of ageism is two-fold: discrimination and prejudice referring to negative stereotypes

about aging (Quadagno, 2014). Ageism, like other discrimination, is not just beliefs, but reveals

group behavior that can intersect with other forms of inequality (Calasanti et al., 2012). Ageism

can be present in work discrimination, name-calling, or offering patronizing assistance

(Quadagno, 2014; Calasanti et al., 2012).

Age representations affect all of society, and baby boomers are the largest aging

population at this time (Werner, 2011). Due to the birth rate numbers, boomers provide a rare

view into the changing aging environment. Gerontology has changed dramatically with baby

boomers, since they are large enough sample to analyze how the past will affect the current aging

process (Quadagno, 2014). A major shift is the reevaluation of the definition of age. Old age is

elusive and socially constructed; in the United States age 65 is considered the line between late

middle age and early old age due, in large measure, to it being the age of eligibility for full

Social Security benefits, which is an arbitrary deadline (Cornman & Kingson, 1996). Today, full

retirement is age 66 for individuals born between 1943-1954, rising to 67 for individuals born

after 1960 (NASI, n.d.). Currently, there are four types of age identifications: chronological,

social roles, functional, and subjective (Quadagno, 2014). Chronological age is often used in

research and policy discussions since it is an easy way to categorize individuals, but it does

cluster large portions of the population who may not have as much in common. To use

chronological age as the definition of old age is skewed, especially since social security has

already increased to age 67 (Quadagno, 2014).

Social roles, such as grandparenthood or retirement, have been used to establish age, but

this is a highly flawed system since a person can be a grandparent at 40 or retire at 50 which are

not normally seen as old age. Functional age concerns the extent to which someone is able to

maintain normal activities of daily living. By this standard, a person is considered as getting

"older" if, independent of their chronological age, the capacity to do basic activities (bathing,

walking, etc.) and/or instrumental activities (pay bills, household chores, etc.) of daily living

declines. Finally, subjective age factors in activity and health quality. By maintaining a

subjective age identity, people view themselves as younger than their chronological ages

(Quadagno, 2014). All of these age categories influenced this study's understanding of old age

and how much self-categorization can vary. Even within constructed generations, smaller groups

of cohorts are used to further factor in the unique experiences. As an example, older boomers

will remember certain events, such as John F. Kennedy's death, more readily than later boomers

born in the 1960s (Cornman & Kingson, 1996). However, since this research is concentrated on

the current aging population, for pragmatic purposes it used the chronological age identification

of the baby boomer generation: persons born between 1946-1964.

Based in social psychology, social identity theory (SIT) focuses on the relationship

between individuals and society (Hogg & Abrams, 1988). "Social identity theory is intended to

be a social psychological theory of intergroup relations, group processes, and the social self,"

(Hogg, Terry & White, 1995, p. 259). At SIT's core, it states that when an identity becomes

salient, members of the group will protect and develop that group identity (Rivenburgh, 2000),

meaning that attitudes and self-esteem actively search for distinctiveness to separate the in-group

from the out-group (Rivenburgh, 2000). This separation can also cause distinct separations

leading to stereotyping. "Categorization can thus be considered to be the process underlying and

responsible for stereotyping," (Hogg & Abrams, 1988, p. 64). Tajfel (1974) explained that

categorization is the process in which a viewer can bring together items or situations that

corresponds with their "actions, intentions, attitudes and systems of beliefs" (p. 69).

By absorbing the persuasive images in the trailers, older viewers label themselves into

their age group and the stereotypes that are endorsed. Consequently, younger viewers also use

the trailers to create perceptions of their future aging process, while also constructing stereotypes

about the aging adults in their lives affecting behaviors and attitudes. Through cataloging, group

membership is emotionally solidified (Tajfel, 1974). Therefore, social categorization is how

individuals orientate themselves in society (Tajfel, 1974). When an individuals' group

identification becomes salient, the group guides behavior and attitude (McKinley, Mastro &

Warber, 2014). The trailers' content is meant to be entertaining and relatable enough for

audiences to become emotionally involved in the film. As SIT finds, the films demonstrate

situations that could be possible, thereby encouraging behaviors similar to what is exhibited.

This concept is supported by the work of a leading scholar in the area of aging depictions,

Jake Harwood (1999a; 1999b), whose study on age identity theory found that age representation

affected participants' television choices. "Individuals choose to view shows that bolster their

identification with the social groups that are important to them," (Harwood, 1999a). Age is a

social group binding individuals due to physical, social, and emotional changes which is the

basis of age identity theory. Similar to SIT's categorization leading to stereotyping, other

researchers have regarded stereotyping towards older adults as complex shaping attitudes of age

as "feeble, yet loveable, doddering but dear" (Cuddy & Fiske, 2002, p. 4). Research has shown

that these negative representations (further discussed in Chapter Two) directly affect self-

perceptions (Meisner, 2012; Eibach, Mock & Courtney, 2010; Sánchez Palacios, Trianes Torres

& Blanca Mena, 2009). For baby boomers, aging is not "the beginning of the end but the start of

life's second chapter" and film should be representing realistic images of this population

(Lauzen, Dozier & Reyes, 2007, p. 344). Aging is not a uniform process and baby boomers are

unique individuals. With the advances in nutrition, sanitation, public health, medicine and

technology, life expectancy at birth has risen to an average of 76.4 years for men and 81.2 years

for women, meaning adults have a sizable gap between middle-age, retirement, and elderhood

(Arias, Heron & Xu, 2016). Meaning that storylines do not need to only concentrate on coming of age and the end of life – there is plenty of material in between. Researchers have also suggested that media can affect perceptions of when certain stages begin and end, and the events or ages that define them (Barrett et al., 2014). Due to the nature of romantic comedies, it follows that these films alter the opinions of relationships, sex, and general life activities.

Film and television often portrays older adults in ignorant or incapable positions, if older characters are included at all. Hence, older adults are more likely to actively seek content that represent their group positively (Harwood, 1999a, 1997). Targeted content that portrays older characters in a positive and diverse context furthers the identification process, by providing relatable moments connecting the audience with the film. The current research was meant to discover if the trailers that represent older adults' experiences, specifically dealing with the next stage of life and the romance that can occur during this period, have subliminal messages rooted in an ageist/successful aging model or openly accepts the diversity of the individual.

The subsequent chapter, Chapter Two: Literature Review, provided the theoretical background beginning with the development of the successful aging model (Rowe & Kahn, 1997). Chapter Two also evaluated research on aging and ageism in society, the representations and finances of older adults, and a history of the romantic comedy genre. Chapter Three: Methodology, featured the research design used to strategically explore the trailers. Chapter Four: Results illuminated the analysis and subsequent results found in the study. Finally, Chapter Five: Discussion & Conclusion summarized the findings, provided implications, limitations, future research, and concluded the thesis.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter introduces the theoretical lens used in this study: successful aging theory. This theory is highly influenced by Robert Havighurst's development of successful aging theory (1961) and Jack Rowe and Robert Kahn's 1997 model. Representation research from the advertising and film/television industries is also reviewed. In addition, to fully understand the relevance and financial power of the baby boomer generation, finance-focused industry articles and research are analyzed. Finally, since the romantic comedy genre is so stylized and impacts how/what films are produced, the concept of genres and the history of romantic comedies is described.

Theoretical Framework

This section outlines the main principles of successful aging theory. This concept provides the theoretical lens for the textual analysis. The theory is used to guide the study and provide a structure to scrutinize the trailers. Using this model based in gerontology, the current study discovers the significance of romantic comedy film trailers in relation to disseminating messages based in successful aging.

      Successful Aging Theory

Amid the technological and medial advancements, aging adults are under even more pressure to maintain their youthful physical appearance and high activity levels. Successful aging theory perpetrates this ideal. Proposed in 1961, Robert Havighurst believed gerontology required a theoretical frame within which researchers could give advice to the discipline (Martin, Kelly, Kahana, Kahana, Wilcox, Wilcox & Poon, 2014). This theory combined two contradicting concepts already developed: activity theory and disengagement theory (Martin et al., 2014). Activity theory requires aging adults to maintain activities and behaviors from middle age

onwards (Havighurst, 1961). On the other hand, disengagement theory allows for the acceptance

of the natural process of disengaging as one ages (Havighurst, 1961). Havighurst's (1961)

definition of successful aging consisted of four components: "a way of life that is socially

desirable for this age group...maintenance of middle-age activity...a feeling of satisfaction with

one's present status and activities...a feeling of happiness and satisfaction with one's life" (p. 9-

10). Initially, research focused on the physical aging aspects of the theory, then emotional

components were further incorporated (Martin et al., 2014). Hoping to clarify and unify the

theory, the MacArthur Network on Successful Aging was developed in 1984 led by Jack Rowe

and Robert Kahn. Rowe and Kahn began to focus on three components: "low probability of

disease and disease-related disability, high cognitive and physical functional capacity, and active

engagement with life" (1997, p. 433). They highly emphasize high activity levels concentrating

on productive activity and interpersonal relations (Rowe & Kahn, 1997). An activity is

productive only if it supports society, such as volunteering (Rowe & Kahn, 1997). This theory

assumes a certain level of high financial ability and accessibility to proper health care, leaving

those who must postpone retirement or have retired from arduous employment less likely to be

labeled as successful.

Katz & Calasanto (2014) have described successful aging as one of the most popular

concepts in gerontology. This theory has continued to be prevalent in a variety of research

avenues including health (Chard et al., 2016; Romo et al., 2013; Moore, Moore, Thompson,

Vahia, Grant & Jeste, 2013; Einstein & McDaniel, 2004; Seeman, McEwen, Rowe, and Singer,

2001); affects in how LGBTQ individuals identify (Fabbre, 2015; Van Wagenena, Driskellb &

Bradford, 2013); social aspects of aging (Versey & Newton, 2013; Heo, Culp, Yamada & Won,

2012; Bergstrom & Holmes, 2000; Fisher & Specht, 1999); intergenerational perceptions (Kelly

& Lazarus, 2015; Ferrario, Freeman, Nellett & Scheel, 2007), and content analyses of aging

depictions (Sawchuk, 2015; Rozanova, Miller & Wetle, 2014). Since the current study includes a

content analysis, these aging content analyses are particularly relevant. Sawchuk's (2015)

qualitative content analysis evaluates portrayals in Roman Catholic magazines. The study found

that the images centered around successful aging persuading their readers toward more

"meaningful activity" (Sawchuk, 2015). Rozanova et al. (2014) used the criticisms of successful

aging to conduct a qualitative content analysis on United States newspapers' discussions on

nursing homes. The researchers found a significant connection between successful aging and

financial capital; those who could afford facilities with resources were suggested to have

succeeded more. These studies illustrate the applicability of successful aging theory and how

researchers have utilized this model, but there are many that are critical of this theory.

Though everyone wants to protect against negative age-related disability/disease and low

cognitive function, this high active engagement level does not allow for individual preference.

On the surface, successful aging theory has been a positive concept promoting life-long health.

In fact, it is one of the most popular and most frequently cited concepts in gerontology history

(Bengtson & DeLiema, 2016). Rowe and Kahn's model is the most extensively used, but does

not recognize that a disease-free life is not possible for the average person (Bowling & Dieppe,

2005). Studies have also found that under the criteria very few would be categorized as having

successfully aged, though more than half would categorize themselves as successful (Depp &

Jeste, 2006; Bowling & Dieppe, 2005). By setting a standard for success that does not encompass

a majority of the targeted population, it ignores the diversity in healthy and positive living. Since

researchers have moved away from Havighurst's (1961) original motivation of life satisfaction

with the purpose to alter perceptions towards a positive view of aging, the research community

has become more critical of Rowe & Kahn's model (Calasanti, 2015; Katz & Calasanti, 2014).

Through deeper analysis, the theory that was meant to eradicate ageism has been found to

not only not have the intended consequences, it actually may be increasing negative age relations

(Calasanti, 2015). In Calasanti's (2015) study, respondents understood the model, but still feared

aging while also blaming themselves and others who did not meet that successful criteria. The

Rowe & Kahn model was meant to give control to the aging on whether they succeed or fail,

focusing on individual choices (Katz & Calasanti, 2014). Baltes & Baltes (1990) described youth

as the standard, going so far as associating growing older with negative consequences and little

to no positives. These views ignore outside factors, such as economic status, culture, community,

and environment, that could limit the ability to choose the most beneficial lifestyle (Katz &

Calasanti, 2014).

By employing a model which blames the individual for disease or disability and sets a

standard for engagement (Rowe & Kahn, 1997; Baltes & Baltes, 1990), the implication is that

the natural process must be altered to be extraordinary. "In this sense, the concept of successful

aging suggests a vigorous examination of what might in principle be possible," (Baltes & Baltes,

1990, p. 4), but is unrealistic for most aging adults. These perceptions affect interactions between

young and old, by disconnecting how researchers would rate individuals from how those

individuals would rate themselves on a success scale (Bowling & Dieppe, 2005). This youthful

standard was used to evaluate the film trailers to determine whether this underlying ageism is

used to motivate potential audiences.

Aging in Society

Baby boomers are defined as those born between 1946–1964 in the United States (Mather & Jarosz, 2013). After World War II, the United States experienced one of the largest increases in population at one time and that has been changing the "age structure" ever since (Colby & Ortman, 2014, para. 1). The economic confidence during this period was improving and the return of the soldiers created a dramatic population spike that was sustained over the following 18 years. Factors including "demobilization, economic prosperity, suburbanization and intensified gender pressures" shaped the unique coming-of-age environment that has caused this generation to continuously redefine each life stage (Stewart & Torges, 2006, p. 26). Though a similar age structure would probably have occurred gradually, boomers caused a dramatic increase in the aging population.

In 2010, the United States government conducted the most recent Census. The report estimated the current American population at 308.7 million individuals (Werner, 2011). Of the total population, individuals aged 45-64 make up 26.4% (81.5 million) and individuals aged 65+ make up 13% (40.3 million) (Werner, 2011). This spike in the aging population is mostly due to the Baby Boom. This period is due to one of the largest increases in birth rate and generation in U.S. history (Werner, 2011). There were 76 million Americans born during this 19-year period (Pollard & Scommegna, 2014). By 2012, nearly 11 million had died leaving about 65.2 million boomers (Pollard & Scommegna, 2014). In 2015, adjusting for the number of immigrants, there is an estimated 74.9 million boomers (Fry, 2016). Projected numbers indicted roughly 20% of United States residents will be 65 and older by 2027 (Ortman, Velkoff & Hogan, 2014) meaning boomers will continue to affect the economy, politics, and societal values for decades.

The following sections detail the social impact on the romantic comedy genre and past literature on racial, gender, and age representation in the areas of advertising, television, and film. To determine the composition of race and gender on screen in films targeted towards baby boomers, the current study incorporated these aspects into a content analysis. These factors help illuminate the cultural comfort level and acceptance with representations of different races, genders, and the intersection within age relations.

The Social Impact of Sex

The nature of romantic comedies is highly influenced by the historical perceptions of sex and women's place in society. Key changes during the 1960s helped to normalize the inclusion of sexual conversations and independent women in films. When Congress passed the Equal Pay Act of 1963 (Strain, 2017), women were still highly discriminated against and suppressed in society. Young women involved in the other social and anti-war movements of the time decided to join together to discuss issues unique to women, devising the term "sexism" (Strain, 2017, p. 98). Books such as *The Feminist Mystique* (1963) and *Sex and the Single Girl* (1962) discussed the restrictiveness of marriage and domestic life. *Sex and the Single Girl* even explained to readers that they can have a career, marriage/domestic life, plus a pleasurable sex life (Strain, 2017). These types of outward dialogues on sex and a life outside of the home were innovative and led to the sexual revolution, and an overall challenge of gender roles in family and society. Young adults were also the first generation to have more reproductive control with the birth control pill entering the market in 1960 (Strain, 2017, p. 100). Sex was no longer meant to be shameful, rather the human body was natural and enjoyable (Strain, 2017). The greater women's movement, including the sexual revolution and second-wave feminism, continued throughout the 1970s and changed the way society viewed women and sexuality (Strain, 2017).

Sexualizing a "third age" of life, boomers have been linked to the changing expectations of expression and identity (Marshall, 2014). Sexuality has historically been connected to reproduction for men and women, and once those years have passed, a person has then entered a sexless part of life (Marshall, 2014). Individual life choices and self-identification are now a greater determinate over chronological age (Marshall, 2014). And with researchers finding that boomers have had more sexual partners than Millennials (Clark-Flory, 2015; Paquette, 2015), defined as those born between 1980-2000 (Goldman Sachs, n.d.), and sexually transmitted diseases in older adults is on the rise (Nagourney, 2013; Jaslow, 2012), it is clear that the "*resexing* of the aging body" has begun to occur (Marshall & Katz, 2006, p. 76).

Hollywood has taken note of this sexual and relationship transformation for older adults. While the aging process (both in terms of the physical and psychological changes) is still not discussed, older women's bodies have been rejuvenated sexually and are now seen as desirable (Marshall & Swinnen, 2014). However, older men are more often represented as successful and having more common sense than older women (Gerbner, Gross, Signorielli & Morgan, 1980), and when older men have wealth it increases their abilities to enjoy activities such as sex (Calasanti & King, 2005). Recent films, principally romantic comedies, that have used well-known baby boomer actresses who have benefited from long careers, tend to capitalize on their "real lives" and the audience's ability to relate to them (Tally, 2006, p. 40). This inclusive trend, beginning with films like *As Good As It Gets* (1997) and *Something's Gotta Give* (2003), has continued to expand and accumulate critical review in recent years (Tally, 2006). In fact, *As Good As It Gets* (1997) was nominated for seven Academy Awards (and won three) and six Golden Globes (and won three) ("As Good as It Gets Awards," n.d.). *Something's Gotta Give* (2003) was also nominated for one Academy Award, two Golden Globes (and won one), and

three AARP Movies for Grownup Awards (and won two) ("Something's Gotta Give Awards,"

n.d.). As common with different media industries, the film industry is not alone in its more

inclusive portrayals. In fact, the advertising industry is one of the leaders in producing competent

and more dynamic images of aging individuals. Since the current study analyzes film trailers and

the primary purpose of a film trailer is to advertise, it is important to explore previous research in

relation to age and advertising.

Advertising Old Age

Research on representation has spanned a variety of areas in television commercials

embracing gender (Scharrer, Kim, Ke-Ming, Zixu, 2006; Ganahl, Prinsen & Netzley, 2003;

Bartsch, Burnett, Diller & Rankin-Williams, 2000; Iijima Hall & Crum, 1994), and race (Mastro

& Stern, 2003a; Larson, 2002; Li-Vollmer, 2002). Research into the area of gender in television

commercials has even spanned the globe reaching Pakistan (Khan, 2015), Belgian (Verhellen,

Dens, de Pelsmacker, 2016), Romania (Stoica, Miller & Ardelea, 2011), and India (Anuradha,

2012), as a few examples. Generally, the research has found that traditional gender roles persist

in contemporary television commercials. In regards to race in commercials, researchers have

found white characters to be the standard, while other racial groups are typically shown in

stereotypical roles.

These studies provide an example of the immense literature on race and gender in

television advertising. Conversely, research does not often focus on portrayals of age groups

(Baumann & de Laat, 2014). The enduring finding of academic and professional research is that

older adults are continuously underrepresented in advertising, and the media as a whole

(Baumann & de Laat, 2014). However, this does not mean that age representation in advertising

has not been discussed.

Many researchers have concentrated on age-related differences in drug advertising (Ball, Manika & Stout, 2016), purchasing preferences and time of day (Goodrich, 2013), native advertising (Howe & Teufel, 2014), and commercial priming (Bellman, Robinson, Reid & Varan, 2015). Rather than comparing the meaning of advertising, this line of research is mostly for the purposes of understanding how to better market to this growing demographic. Other studies have focused on portrayals of older adults in advertising (de Andrés & Maestro, 2014; Ylänne & Williams, 2009; Stern & Mastro, 2004; Mastro & Stern, 2003b) and found older adults underrepresented and older women portrayed in more stereotypical roles. Even in cross-cultural research it was found that older adults are still underrepresented, particularly older women (Simcock & Sudbury, 2006; Lee, Kim & Han, 2006; Harwood & Roy, 1999).

The depictions of diverse social groups in advertising are informed by prevalent cultural schemas; these rules are normally unconscious and affect everyday decisions and behavior (Baumann & de Laat, 2014). These schemas provide expectations which create perceptions on where individuals should be placed within social categories (Baumann & de Laat, 2014). While there are still stereotypical messages which reflect the societal view on aging, there are older characters that do have healthy and capable qualities (Roberts & Zhou, 1997; Simcock & Sudbury, 2006). This has caused Harwood to propose that "[o]verall though, advertising does appear to be one area in which positive portrayals are fairly common. Indeed, there are some indications that advertising may be at the leading edge of genuinely positive, and even liberating portrayals of older adults" (2007, p. 167). This positive trend may continue as age in reconfigured in society.

Film Industry Representation

Representation analysis of different groups in film is a common research topic. The recent social media campaign #OscarsSoWhite also illustrated the public's interest in diverse content and on-screen representation which resulted in industry discussion and action (McWhorter, 2016; Ford & Kit, 2016; Cox, 2016; Anderson, 2016). Even with these debates, data still shows large disparities between the population, film roles, and Oscar nominations (J.T., 2016). Although positive and diverse imagery is not a universally agreed upon truth, film can have an effect on identity creation (as social identity states) and by including a variety of visual perspectives, it sends a message of acceptance and inclusion. Though this debate centered around racial representation it isn't the only representation topic in Hollywood. The inclusion of women is another issue in the industry, especially after the 2015 Oscar speech by Patricia Arquette (Cohen, 2016; Lang, 2015). After the Oscars in 2015, Patricia Arquette, Tina Fey, and Julia Louis-Dryfuss guest starred in a parody sketch for the *Inside Amy Schumer* show (Schumer, 2015). The comedy sketch celebrates Louis-Dryfuss' "last fuckable day;" a day in which the media decides when a woman is no longer sexually desirable. Though this is a satirical clip, it does analyze the different aspects in which older women specifically are marginalized and viewed in Hollywood.

Coinciding with the industry's perspective, academic research has evaluated a multitude of diversity inequalities in film. Content analysis research specifically focused on women has steadily continued since the 1960s (Kharroub & Weaver, 2014). "The underrepresentation and stereotypical portrayals of women in the media are particularly important, as these gender portrayals socialize the viewers' gender beliefs and attitudes," (Kharroub & Weaver, 2014, p. 180). Media portrayals affect and shape how society views social groups, thereby affecting how

the groups views themselves. Other studies have evaluated gay characters (de Jesus, de Carvalho, & Nascimento, 2016; Bond, 2014; Pullen, 2011), male relationships (Ciasullo & Magill, 2015), hyper-masculinity (Lindgren & Leilevre, 2009; Clarke, 2006; King, 2005), and even race and gender in the James Bond franchise (Lawless, 2014; Racioppi & Tremonte, 2014; Neuendorf, Gore, Dalessandro, Janstova & Snyder-Suhy, 2009). Academic research has also often explored how gender and race are depicted in television (Dixon & Williams, 2015; Signorielli, 2009; Lauzen, Dozier & Horan, 2008) and film (Hasian, 2013; Hanying, 2013; Meyer, Stern, & Waldron, 2008; Stoddard & Marcus, 2006). Unfortunately, this research has shown that both women and racial minorities are still underrepresented in both television and film and are more likely to be portrayed in traditional or stereotypical roles.

Similar to race, gender, and age representation in advertising, older adults are underrepresented and depicted stereotypically across the media (Barrett et al., 2014; Robinson, Callister, Magoffin & Moore, 2007; Robinson & Anderson, 2006; Lauzen & Dozier, 2005; Signorielli, 2004). Though both older men and women are both underrepresented, roles are even more limited for older women (Hant, 2007; Bazzini, McIntosh, Smith, Cook & Harris, 1997). These representations affect attitudes towards aging and self-stereotyping (Barrett et al., 2014). Kathleen Woodward (2006) proposes "[t]he youthful structure of the look—that is, the culturally induced tendency to degrade and reduce an older person to the prejudicial category of old age," is a mainstream tool used in film (p. 164). Youth isn't just the ideal, it is also used to diminish the mental and physical abilities of older adults.

Ageist images are common in American film and youth "is valued at virtually all costs over age and where age is largely deemed a matter for comedy or sentimental compassion," (Woodward, 2006, p. 164). Furthermore, without careful understanding the viewer is likely to

accept the messages (Woodward, 2006). Older adults are believed to have less capabilities and

lower attractiveness which adheres to negative stereotypes (Kite, Stockdale, Whitley & Johnson,

2005). Unlike other "Otherness," such as racism or sexism, all individuals will grow old and

experience some form of ageism especially as media images center around unattractive medical

situations rather than competence (Marshall & Swinnen, 2014, p. 160). For these reasons, it is

important for older adults to see themselves represented in a variety of roles to destigmatize and

humanize the aging process, not just for their own self-identity, but also for how younger adults

view and treat their older counterparts.

   However, the 21st century has produced an explosion of films about older adults,

especially romance-focused stories targeted to older women (Marshall & Swinnen, 2014). A few

studies have specifically analyzed these romantic comedies (Marshall, 2009; Tally, 2006).

Hollywood has traditionally focused on young males and wide-audience Blockbusters,

neglecting the female audience (Tally, 2006). This began with the inclusion of the "older female"

demographic of women over 25 (Tally, 2006, p. 37). Romantic comedies like *Something's Gotta*

Give (2003) are risky as they focus on older adults finding love instead of a young person's fling

(Marshall, 2009). "*Something's Gotta Give*'s target demographic is interesting: Affluent aging

women who worry that they'll never find romance – or even basic human respect – in our youth-

obsessed society," (Tally, 2006, p. 38). The main purpose of these films focused on older women

is to show the independence and sexual freedom older women have beyond their traditional

motherhood roles, at least until the end of the film where they may return to marriage and the

family structure (Tally, 2006). Romantic comedies, as a genre, have been described as tired and

formulaic (Marshall, 2009), but the older romantic comedy trend allows audiences to view age

and love in a new and digestible way, thereby reshaping the conversation around how our society

ages. Hence, it is imperative to analyze media materials to ensure realistic and accurate

portrayals.

Financial Power of a Generation

In 2016, box office revenue released in the global market reached $38.6 billion, up 1%

from 2015 (MPAA, 2017). These numbers illustrate the influence the film industry has on the

market. In a big business, specific data points guide decisions on what is produced. Genre,

demographics, and similar films are analyzed to determine how well a film may do in the

contemporary market. This section focuses on the statistical information on the 50+

demographics' movie attendance and the market penetration of the romantic comedy genre.

Typically, the film industry has portrayed and targeted the 18-34 age group as the ones

with the influence and power. While numbers do show that the 25-39 age group is the largest

group of moviegoers with an average of 22% of all United States attendees, the 50+ group

maintained film attendance from 2016 to 2017 (MPAA, 2017). The data shows the 50+ group as

35% of the population, and 26% of the "frequent moviegoer" population (MPAA, 2017, p. 14).

This combined group still holds major wealth and now has the time to attend films at a higher

rate.

Although it is important to appreciate the trends of films targeted at the under 39 age

group, they are not the only generation to have financial power. Those in the 18-34-year-old

bracket, normally discussed as Millennials, are increasingly oppressed by debt and lack of

financial capital "making them more fiscally conservative" (Ellyatt, 2015, para. 3). Adults over

25 are purchasing the tickets even if the industry has concentrated on teens (Nicholson, 2014).

Older adults are spending more money than their children at the theater (Nicholson, 2014). *As*

Good as It Gets (1997) and *It's Complicated* (2009) both broke the $100 million mark, providing

further evidence of the older romantic comedies' financial power (Nicholson, 2014). AARP has

shown that boomers own approximately 63% of the United States financial assets and spend

about $3.2 trillion dollars a year (Bradbury, 2015). Baby boomers not only have the funds to

make targeted films worthwhile, but as Landmark's CEO Ted Mundorff explains, "When the

baby boomers were in college, they went and saw 'art film,' as it was called in those days. And

after they became empty-nesters, they returned to going to movies." (Jaffe, 2013, para. 13).

These numbers may very well increase as boomers retire and more free time becomes available.

The genre of romantic comedies is also being reworked with studios searching for a

different type of film (Siegel, 2013). Traditional romantic comedies were in the top 20 box office

in 1997, 1998, and 1999 (Nicholson, 2014). The 1990s experienced an increase in the traditional

romantic comedy with a market share of 9.85% (*The Numbers*, 2016). Presently, rom-coms hold

sixth place for total box office revenue by genre (*The Numbers*, 2016). With numbers from 2003-

2012, it was found that romantic comedies are seventh in return on investment compared to

eleventh for action films (Rampell, 2013). Box Office Mojo has identified 475 films since 1978

as "romantic comedies" with IFC's *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* (2002) at number one with a

total United States gross of $241,438,208 (*Box Office Mojo*, 2016).

Nevertheless, in the last three years, studio executives have moved away from the genre

hoping to tap into the less risky market of franchises (Nicholson, 2014; Brodesser-Akner, 2012).

"With the familiar formulas no longer working, studios have come to believe that the category

'rom-com' has become a stigma, and so they have been melding it with other genres,"

(Brodesser-Akner, 2012). This sigma that rom-coms can't make money and those attached to the

genre will be typecast is unfortunate as the recent films have broken the $100 million mark (*Box

Office Mojo*, 2016). This stigma has ultimately risen from a stale uniform plot not willing to

update for a modern world (Orr, 2013). When filmmakers have focused on other demographics

beyond the young, white, heterosexual couple traditional in the modern romantic comedy

formula, films can succeed both critically and financially (Orr, 2013). Like all film, the romantic

comedy formula has changed dramatically in the last century. However, this genre has had to

change definitions of loving partnerships, womanhood, and family.

The Creation of the Romantic Comedy

When categorizing films into subcategories, such as genres, each scholar and critic can

have a slightly different definition. This does not mean that they will always come to different

conclusions as they classify a film, but it does mean that research in this area requires an

overarching and historical analysis of the designation "romantic comedy." The Hollywood

production and distribution system has used the genre system as a way to entice potential

audience members to go to the movie theater (Grant, 2007). These "genre movies are those

commercial films which, through repetition and variation, tell familiar stories with familiar

characters in familiar situations" (Grant, 2007, p. 1). Though the commerciality of genre film has

been devalued as "popular culture" against the art film, categorization of films are shortcuts used

throughout the film industry (Grant, 2007, p. 2). For the modern audience, it seems as though

these genres have always been the standard, but even the romantic comedy stems from multiple

areas of film.

The modern rom-com as a genre developed out of "screwball comedy" dating back to the

1930s (Gehring, 1983) and "woman's film" which was at the height and prominence in the 1940s

(Graves & Engle, 2006, p. 279). From these two genres, the modern romantic comedy formula

arose. "Contemporary romantic comedies overlap with screwball comedies and woman's film in

their focus on love and marriage, with a contemporary version now referred to in popular culture

as the 'chick flick'" (Graves & Engle, 2006, p. 31). Although current films are rarely categorized

as a screwball or woman's film (especially as calling a film a woman's film would receive

feminist backlash), the definitions are applicable to a historical look of the transitions which

defined the genre.

Screwball Comedy

Screwball comedies were developed in the mid-1930s, during the height of the

Depression (Gehring, 1983). These films emerged from the Depression and the Production Code

inducted at the end of 1933 (Everson, 1994). To replace discussions and situations with sex,

especially with unmarried couples, filmmakers added greater violent and physical comedy which

became a key identifier for the genre (Everson, 1994). Like all genres, the formula was highly

influenced by its time, therefore resulting in light humor where the men generally lose the

comedic battle in the end (Gehring, 1983). This satirical version of the "traditional love story"

heavily relies on physical comedy and witty writing (Graves & Engle, 2006, p. 30-31; Gehring,

1983, p. 1). Often focusing on high society and the wealth disparity, audiences followed the rich

on a bumpy journey through conflict towards love and ultimately marriage (Graves & Engle,

2006).

Film scholar Wes Gehring (2008) determined five characteristics to identity the comic

antihero common in screwball comedies: "abundant leisure time, childlike nature, basic male

frustration (especially in relation to the women), a general propensity for physical comedy, and a

proclivity for parody and satire" (p. 29). When catalogued, screwballs frequently appear to be a

romantic comedy. In fact, critic David Shumway identifies the best screwball comedies as

romantic comedies with unusual characters (Graves & Engle, 2006). Two early films are worth

mentioning as they encompass the purity of this genre: Frank Kappa's *It Happened One Night*

(1934) and Leo McCarey's *The Awful Truth* (1937) (Gehring, 2008; Graves & Engle, 2006; Gehring, 1983). No one film has been identified as the first screwball comedy, though these two are mentioned for their breakthrough interpretations of relationships and comedy.

Woman's Film

The Depression also defined the woman's film genre. During this period, women flocked to the theater as men did to escape from the realities of the time which created a new market for films targeted directly to women (Graves & Engle, 2006). These films centered around emotional, romance, and home-based issues (Graves & Engle, 2006). For obvious reasons this genre's description is not accepted by everyone, especially feminist critics. Film scholar Molly Haskwell, criticized the genre believing, "the genre was framed within an avowedly conservative aesthetic that encouraged the (woman) spectator to accept rather than reject her lot, whilst taking on a pitying stance toward the tragic heroine" (Byerly & Ross, 2006, p. 19). In her 1973 study, Haskwell cites the idea of a woman's film to only further separate men and women in the United States (qtd. Graves & Engle, 2006). The modern romantic comedy is assumed to be targeted and consumed mostly by women while academics and film critics denigrate the genre; even in this century, women are supposed to be interested in gossip, relationships, and clothes than more masculine topics (McDonald, 2007).

Nevertheless, it would be detrimental to classify and market a film solely as a film for women. Beyond the labeling, by limiting the interests of women to the domestic, scholars forget the generalizability of the issues covered. Therefore, this description of film has faded into the film history and theory books, though this does not mean that these female-focused angles have disappeared, rather they have been altered. Feminist perspectives have reconsidered films into categories "based on the degree and nature of the women's sacrifice depicted," the purpose of the

film, or the narratives and storylines with leading female characters (Graves & Engle, 2006, p. 280-281). Through these categories, films better depict women without the sexist binary.

The Modern Day Romantic Comedy

With decades of past romantic comedies, contemporary filmmakers have modeled a formula to appease and entertain the modern audience. Rom-coms have developed over the last 80 years to reflect the beliefs and concerns on gender, even as they try to provide a solution to them (Haggerty, 2014). Influenced by popular culture references, 1990s films further romanticized the genre such as *My Best Friend's Wedding* (1997) and *Sleepless in Seattle* (1993). These films then transitioned back into the meet-cute variety. The modern genre relies on sexual storylines, rom-com parody, sentimentality, with some even positioning male characters over the capable woman (Grindon, 2011; Gehring, 2008; McDonald, 2007). Films across genres still tend to focus on the heteronormative standard (Cady & Oates, 2016; Cadwallader, 2012; Martin & Kazyak, 2009). Indeed, although there are more and more independent and studio films with LGBTQ plots (Reynolds, 2015), when researchers discuss the romantic comedy genre it is still described in a heteronormative manner (Gehring, 2008).

Sex used to be veiled and only implied as the endpoint of the romantic comedy; today, it is more likely the opening scene and an integral plot point (Orr, 2013). This has become a struggle for the rom-com filmmakers. Studios and audiences want a realistic picture of romance and relationships which includes sex – sometimes even pre-marital (Nicholson, 2014; Orr, 2013). Without destroying the happy ending, films must begin to include the accurate stages of relationships. Gehring (2008) even posited a mold for the post-1960s era: "emphasizing sentiment over silly, a tendency for serious and/or melodramatic overtones, more realistic characters (frequently employed), traditional dating pattern (more male influence), and slower

story pacing" (p. 167-168). Echoed by current themes posited by McDonald and Grindon, the

modern romantic comedy has become more emotional while introducing doubt and self-

reflexivity. Internal conflict and societal norms still drive the narrative, even as plots push

diversity-based stories. The dramatic influences over the decades have created an accessible and

malleable genre which continues to be compelling because it sensationalizes the conflict for the

entertainment of the audience (Grindon, 2011). Using this genre history, the current study chose

to evaluate the inclusion of older adults which is representative of the subtle alternative to the

youth standard.

Research Questions

Quantitative Phase One: Content Analysis

To place the textual analysis in context, a content analysis was completed to explore the

manifest content rooted in the film trailers.

RQ1: How often are the words "old" and "age" mentioned in the trailers?

RQ2: To what extent is there racial, gender, and age diversity visible in the trailers?

Qualitative Phase Two: Textual Analysis

Using past literature and a developed theoretical background, this study investigated the

following questions:

RQ1: In what ways do the trailers incorporate the aspects of successful aging theory

including low disease/disability, high physical and cognitive function, and active

engagement?

RQ 1a: Are these messages promoting individuality and diversity within the age

group or the successful aging model comparing the older characters to younger

characters or their younger selves?

RQ 2: How do the trailers use romance and sex to promote the ideals of active

engagement?

      RQ 2a: How does each trailer use the concept of a "second chance at life"

      to promote self-worth and confidence?

RQ 3: What are the trailers' overall messages in regards to how our society views aging

and older adults' relationships?

Chapter Three: Methodology

This chapter presents the methodology employed and the justifications for the design and theoretical lens: successful aging theory. The study utilized a mixed-method approach combining a quantitative frequency content analysis and a qualitative textual analysis (Creswell, 2015; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Through a mixed-method design, the researcher used the quantitative components to enhance the exploration of the texts' qualitative messaging (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). By enhancing the textual analysis with a content analysis including a word frequency and basic character demographics, the analysis better identified the trends in the marketing of romantic comedies and Hollywood as a whole. In the following sections, the procedures are detailed including the sampling procedure for the units of analysis, the specific processes for both the content and textual analysis, the possible validity limitations, and the researcher's role.

Sample

This study used a purposive sampling design for the film trailers. All the included films are meant to be of the romantic comedy genre. Since there is not a full list of modern romantic comedies released in the last decade, the researcher had to use scholarly material to create some criteria to determine an appropriate sample. Since the romantic comedy genre has incorporated thematic and plot devices traditional in other genres, such as comedy and drama, and there is no clear list of romantic comedies, the researcher used judgment influenced by genre scholars. As typical with film and genre studies, this list is based on the researcher's strategic interpretation. To determine if a film was acceptable for the study, a cursory evaluation of the trailer content was appraised using the criteria influenced from the romantic comedy books: Grindon, 2011; Gehring, 2008; McDonald, 2007; Graves & Engle, 2006. These criteria included discussions and

images around relationships and sex, a conflict, a supportive friend, seductive music, coded on the movie databases (IMDb or Movie Insider) as either comedy or romance, and an assumption that the characters will end up together. Appendix B details the full criteria.

The sample began in 2003, which has been identified as the beginning of the older adult romantic comedy trend (Begley, 2015; Tally, 2006). The initial sample of trailers was retrieved from the winner and nominees of the AARP's Movies for Grownups Award "Best Grownup Love Story" beginning in 2003 as this is the beginning of the study's sample (Newcott, 2003). For this category, AARP choses romantic films with leading actors and actresses over the age of 50. Since this is the romance category and not romantic comedy, films were rejected if it did not have typical comedic genre aspects. These lists provided the necessary framework which was then applied to the full list of IMDb's most popular romantic comedies and Movie Insider's exhaustive list of movies released from 2003-2016. The researcher went through the hundreds of films searching for codes of "Romance," "Comedy," or "Romantic Comedy." Both IMDb and Movie Insider code the films, but some were coded in various combinations or slightly differently. The researcher also generally reviewed IMDb's lists of films released through the sample period to safeguard against any missed content. Outside material on best films featuring older adults was also considered, finding many of the films discussed had already been complied on the sample list ("Romantic Comedy," 2015; Olivar, 2014; "30 Newer Movies," 2010). Therefore, the researcher completed the following to ensure an appropriate and relevant sample.

First, films were screened for the estimated generation of the characters and the actors/actresses that portray them. Using the criterion explained above and in Appendix B, films were reviewed for romantic comedy aspects. Biopic, or biographical, pieces were eliminated from the study as they follow an individual's life and are guided less by societal norms. Period

pieces were also removed since they follow the norms of a different era and do not show the

perceptions modern older adults can apply to themselves. Each film needed to be produced by at

least one United States production studio and be a theatrical release, not a television or third

window platform, such as a Netflix or HBO produced film. Television and other window

production companies typically do not aggressively promote their trailers beyond their own

platforms which limits the saturation of their advertisements. For this reason, only theatrical

releases were considered in the sample. This study's purpose was to inspect United States films,

especially since other countries may be subject to other cultural expectations and perceptions of

age, relationships, and sex. The influence of a U.S. production company provided a good

identifier that the film was meant to be released, included targeted material for Americans, and

therefore is guided by the traditional American impression of baby boomers and aging.

Consequently, a United States predisposition was essential when looking at baby boomers who

are a product of the United States post-WWII and 1960s culture.

     Once the sample list of approximately 40 films had been solidified, each trailer was

found using the films' IMDb pages. This confines the sample to studio distributed trailers,

whereas other platforms also list fan-produced trailers which would taint the sample and study

overall. Considering that some of the films only have one full trailer, at approximately two

minutes and thirty seconds, the first trailer was reviewed exclusively. This strategic

determination protects against international or teaser trailers which are meant for different

audiences and purposes while also placing each film on an equal level. Each feature film was

viewed as additional context to ascertain whether the trailer was representative of the film's

message.

Quantitative Content Analysis: Phase One

A quantitative content analysis was used for the purposes of enhancing the primary

textual analysis (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). This method was chosen to determine the

frequency of the words old and age (aging), while also evaluating three key demographic

components of the characters portrayed: age, race, and gender. A leading researcher in the area

of diversity representation on television, Nancy Signorelli, previously conducted a study which

coded for race, gender, age, and occupation (Signorelli, 2004). For the purposes of the current

study, Signorelli's definitions of race, gender, and age was applied. By using Signorelli's general

model, the content analysis was given greater credibility and validity.

On-screen race and gender, though not the main emphasis of this study, needed to be

coded as these features reveal the implied target audience and composition of the actors/actresses

the industry believed can headline a successful film production. Race is categorized into Black,

Native American, Asian, Latino, White, Multi-racial (racial ambiguity) and other. These

categories were slightly edited from Signorelli's model (2004). Signorelli included "unknown"

as a code, but since her study found less than 1% and was therefore deleted from analysis, the

current study combined any unknown into the other category. With the understanding that an

individual's "gender" and "sex" are two separate identifications (Delphy, 1993), this study

classified characters on their sex as male, female, or unknown.

Finally, the categorization of age was influenced by Signorelli's models of chronological

and social age (Signorelli, 2004; Signorelli & Bacue, 1999) and Census age group data (Howden

& Meyer, 2011). The two Signorelli studies measured age by an estimate of the chronological

age and a social age based on the stages of the life cycle. The purpose was to compare and

determine differences in the portrayals. Using this model as a foundation, the current study

defined age through a grouping of chronological ages. However, the Signorelli model had very large age groupings and since the current study was focused on older adults, a more detailed breakdown of age was needed. The researcher believed that due to the study's nature, a categorization ranging in two and a half decades for "adulthood" would miss the opportunity to understand the variety of ages portrayed. These groupings are also influenced by the understanding that Hollywood has been preferential to younger characters particularly neglecting women over the age of 40. Therefore, ages were categorized by groupings of 0-17, 18-30, 31-44, 45-64, 65-75, and 75+.

Characters who were on-screen for longer than 3 seconds were coded. For practical reasons, those in wide scanning shots were not coded, only the characters set in the frame were analyzed. This allowed the focus to be placed on the characters that filmmakers singled out and felt were the most important. A sample of the trailers was used in the pre-test to ensure intercoder reliability and validity. The research and an additional coder used a set of ten randomly selected trailers to evaluate the demographic quantitative aspects.

The second stage of the content analysis was a frequency count of the word "old" and "age (aging)." The purpose of this was to discover how often these words were used since they (1) address aging directly and (2) may be stigmatized causing them to be avoided in the trailers. The textual analysis method was used to evaluate and analyze the meaning behind the different scenarios that occurred in the trailers, but it was also important to calculate the numerical frequency. This word count was computed from the transcriptions with the NVivo software. This data provided a clearer understanding of how the trailers, and by proxy, the studios felt about outwardly discussing age and getting older in the promotional pieces.

NVivo is a qualitative data analysis (QDA) computer software package produced by QSR International. It was designed for qualitative researchers working with very rich text-based and/or multimedia information, where deep levels of analysis on small or large volumes of data are required. Since NVivo's system was built for text-based analysis, it eliminated the risk of a manual miscount, therefore only the diversity aspect of the content analysis was tested for reliability. The additional coder was given the codebook (Appendix C) and detailed instructions as a part of the training. Reliability was tested through Krippendorff's alpha assessment (Freelon, 2011) for an acceptable level of .80. The minor adjustments to the codebook were completed before another round of videos and a reliability test.

Qualitative Textual Analysis: Phase Two

For the second stage of the study, this research followed the methodology of a qualitative textual analysis to examine the underlying meanings in the film trailers. The use of this method was due to the strengths of analysis beyond the manifest content, typical in a traditional content analysis. Dating back to 1952-1953, critical theorist Siegfried Kracauer questioned the use of the singular content analysis approach in communication research since it omits the holistic impression of the text (Brennen, 2012). By reducing the analysis strictly to counting, the intended, and possibly unintended, meanings are lost. Through a textual analysis as Brennen (2012) described, texts are influenced by societal perspectives and expectations within different cultural contexts (p. 193). Since this study's purpose was to understand the messages that help create expectations for both older and younger adults regarding aging and relationships later in life, textual analysis was the perfect method. Brennen finds that through a textual analysis "we evaluate the many meanings found in texts and we try to understand how written, visual and spoken language helps us to create our social realities," (2012, p. 193). Texts can be a variety of

cultural items that a society takes meaning from including films, advertisements, books, and music (Brennen, 2012). With this in mind, the textual analysis methodology was strategically chosen.

By analyzing the messages in romantic comedy film trailers, the aim was to comprehend what viewers observe in relation to successful aging. The restriction on the dates of the films was due to the emphasis on modern-day romantic comedies. Though there have been older adult rom-coms in past decades, they were eliminated from the sample as the genre has morphed in recent years. The purpose was to determine themes relevant in the genre's current films specifically centered around aging, older adults' relationships and the concept of a second chance at life. It is with the changing romantic comedy genre, the researcher posited that these films reflect a larger shift away from the formulaic plot and character composition (McDonald, 2007). This study followed an inductive approach, guided by the research questions for data analysis.

Successful aging theory is often used in gerontology to categorize aging adults. Research frequently centers around how individuals identify themselves and what successful aging means to them (Duay & Bryan, 2006; Knight & Ricciardelli, 2003; Bergstrom & Holmes, 2000; Fisher & Specht, 1999; Fisher, 1995). By focusing on lay participants instead of academics, it offers new conceptualizations on how the theory is viewed in the public. As previously mentioned, participants typically rate themselves as successful even though they would not meet the criteria in the Rowe & Kahn (1997) model. The successful aging concept has been incorporated into how aging is viewed in society. The current study critically used successful aging theory to determine if successful aging was promoted in films targeted towards older adults. Successful aging theory satisfied the needs of this content and textual analysis by exploring the trailers' potentially ageist content which could affect how older and younger individuals view the age.

Each trailer was transcribed including identifiable music lyrics and musical styles. Music

is an integral feature of the trailers and while it is not the study's focal point, this data was

collected. Transcriptions were reviewed and edited side-by-side each trailer. The transcriptions

were then noted line-by-line during another viewing to guarantee all data had been contemplated.

After each trailer was analyzed, a final viewing of all trailers was conducted to solidify the

themes and data. With the information from the trailer viewings and researcher notes, specific

annotations were written for each line of the trailer, further clarifying the messages latent in the

text. Attention was given to successful aging as it pertained to romance, wealth, physical

appearance/abilities, and sex aspects specified in the research questions. Through this analysis,

themes relevant to the theoretical lens and research questions were identified. Annotations and

transcription quotes were then coded using NVivo software. Theme labels, such as "Gender

Roles – Power" and "Romance – Successful Aging," were created to illustrate what each

segment portrayed and to better categorize the material. This organization provided clear theme

labels which became the themes detailed in the results section. Similarly, watching the films

enhanced the analysis. By knowing the ending of the films, it was clear some of the trailers took

the most humorous moments to better persuade the romantic comedy viewer, which illustrated a

preference for humor. This process systematically collected data which "is essential to

maintaining the integrity of research," (Creswell, 2015).

Validity

This method is not without some weaknesses. Although "AARP" and "Movie Insider"

provided a framework and basis for the sample of films, this research was based in a purposive

design. This means another researcher could very well have considered a different sample. The

fluidity of romantic comedies as a genre is also a limiting factor seeing how a single film could

be placed in multiple genre categories depending on the perspective and criteria.

As with all research, both academic and professional, there were potential impacts to

validity that limit a study. In this case, even though this research can be used to gain an

understanding of the themes of recent older adult romantic comedies, the findings should not be

expected to illuminate generalizable current or future trends. Qualitative, unlike the classic

quantitative, is meant to explore complex dynamics in cultural texts (Creswell, 2015).

Additionally, the researcher was the data collection instrument and as such was shaped by

previous experiences and by a specific background. These finding are the researcher's

interpretation of the data and trailers altogether.

Researcher's Role

Qualitative research requires reflexivity and awareness which is guided by the

researcher's background and affected the study overall (Creswell, 2015). As age was the main

factor of this study it is important to note that the researcher is a member of the Millennial

generation who was raised in a family and community primarily of individuals born into the

baby boomer generation. Because of this, the researcher was exposed to discussions about aging

very early on. This perspective has driven the researcher towards this area of study. As someone

who feels that older adults' viewpoints and stories are often disregarded or devalued, this has

been calculated into the researcher's subjectivity. The researcher's background also colored the

choice of theoretical lens, as the researcher has personally witnessed the excitement when aging

is discussed in realistic and natural terms, rather than ignored or in comparison to younger adults.

Also, as an individual with a background of professional video marketing and academic

film studies, the researcher recognized the methodical approach filmmakers and film marketers

took during the promotional process. Ultimately, this research is meant to promote films

reflecting older adults' experiences and opinions free of stereotypical messaging. Combined

these positions affect the interpretation of the texts.

Chapter Four: Results

The root of perpetuating young romance in Hollywood films is the discomfort of visualizing romance, and ultimately sex, between older couples (Shary & McVittie, 2016). To the "objective cultural observer" it may be surprising to believe older adults wish for companionship and love later in life due to the little time devoted to these experiences on the silver screen (Shary & McVittie, 2016, p. 138). In film, "[t]he ideology of a genre can both reflect and contest the anxieties, assumptions and desires of the specific time and specific agencies making the film," (McDonald, 2007, p. 13). The romantic comedy genre is primed to be a conduit for normalizing thoughts about romance and sex. Without the growing aging population, films, such as the ones in this study's sample would not have been as appealing to Hollywood or general audience standards (Shary & McVittie, 2016). As trailers are meant to influence audiences, the themes discovered in this analysis related to aging discourse are reviewed within the context of their persuasive marketing purpose.

While the presence of older relationships is beneficial towards the inclusion of stories from all life stages, the results found that the trailers include both ageist content and content lifting the aging stigma, meaning the data is complex in its representation of age, successful aging, and relationships. Therefore, the analysis is broken into specific exemplars to illustrate the intricacy present in the data. The following sections exemplify the four major themes discovered through data analysis: (Successful) Aging and the Mid-Life Reevaluation, It's About the Passionate Sex, The Traditional Gendering of Romance, and Relating Class, Race and Wealth in Successful Aging. Both qualitative and quantitative analysis will be presented throughout the themes to best illustrate the results of the study.

(Successful) Aging and the Mid-Life Reevaluation

It is constantly astounding the amount of messaging that occurs even within the first few seconds of the study's sample of trailers. Meant to entertain and persuade audiences, the trailers speak to different experiences ultimately leading towards romance, but not necessarily culminating in that traditional happy ending. Aging has been a complex topic to portray and discuss in American cinema (Shary & McVittie, 2016). When the marketers are brought into the project, they must decide what will be most digestible and interesting to potential viewers.

Within the trailers themselves, classical romantic comedy devices emerge to alter the characters' lives and stories. Each film chose a catalyst to launch the plot. The trailers also use humor to address aging to reduce any uncomfortableness. Unlike other kinds of romantic comedies, aging rom-coms have developed certain themes unique to the portrayals of characters and situations common throughout the aging process and especially later in life. As with any artistic material representing a certain period of life, things characteristic of that period will often be interconnected. This material is found to be intended to increase the dialogue and further the roles older actors, and particularly older actresses, have the opportunity to depict. However, the results of this study demonstrate a deeper meaning that includes more intricacies. These trailers have three main themes related to aging: Age is More Than Just a Number, What is Left in Life, and Using Romance to Combat Struggling. These subsections detail the direct age discussions and the surrounding substantive subjects.

Age is More Than Just a Number

When researching films that have leading actors and actresses over the age of 50, it is not unusual to anticipate characters will have scenes surrounding topics of age. This section has identified that the trailers themselves center around, and in some circumstances directly address

aging. Language is an important component to determine the extent to which the trailers are

willing to address age openly. Using quantitative analysis to identify the number of times the

words "old" and "age" were used, this study found that "age" or "aging" was only used in five

trailers a mere ten times. On the other hand, "old" or "older" was used in fourteen trailers thirty-

one times. There is no conclusive answer to why "old" was articulated more than "age."

Although both are used in similar situations in the trailers, old's frequency could also be in part

because of the variety it provides.

In both film and real life, asking someone how old they are is fairly common, though

there is a stigma to ask a woman's age. Interestingly, in the trailers' cases it is the older person

starting the conversation, not the younger person.

Rosie:	How old are you?
	[to her younger date, Adam]
Adam:	Why how old are you?
Rosie:	37
	I Could Never Be Your Woman, 2007
Robbie:	She's your soulmate, right? Go get her back.
	[talking to his dad about his mom]
Calvin:	Wow. How old are you?
	Crazy, Stupid, Love, 2011

In *I Could Never Be Your Woman* (2007), Rosie initially lies to Adam about her age. Feeling that

being in her thirties is more attractive, she starts with thirty-seven only to increase to her true age

of forty. In four cases, the term old was used to describe the age of a character.

Roz:	You're taking dating advice from a thirteen-year-old.
	[talking to Doris about Roz's granddaughter, Vivian]
	Hello, My Name is Doris, 2015
Arnold:	This is insane. We're not 22 years old anymore.
	[talking to Kay about their relationship]
	Hope Springs, 2012
Jackie:	You were once a 20-year-old male person. What did you want from your mother?
	[talking to Ian about her son, Angelo]
	Ride, 2014
Nancy:	You can't cheat death, no matter how many 19-year-olds you talk into your bed.
	[talking to her ex-husband, Ben]
	Solitary Man, 2009

What is unique about these four instances is that they do not just mention a character's age, but also relate the age of the younger person back unto themselves. The moments are a judgement of the older characters' behavior and a realization that their attitudes may be childish. This discovery causes the characters to reflect on their desires, particularly in relation to their family and romantic lives. Like the young, the older characters do not have all the answers and are in fact questioning who they are and what they want from the rest of their lives.

The rest of the uses of "old" are descriptors of the aging process. The characters are surprised by how much they have aged, continually reflecting the conversation back to youth.

While youth and aging are naturally linked, by noting fear the trailers allow for honest reflection

about the stigma of age.

Carol:	Growing old was the furthest thing from my mind.
	I'll See You in My Dreams, 2015
Jean:	Look at us. A group of self-deluding old fossils tramping around as
	if we are on some bloody gap year.
	[talking to the Marigold Hotel residents]
	The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel, 2011
Ruth:	You're older than her in dog years.
	[talking to Alex about their aging pet who is at the vet]
	5 Flights Up, 2014

Getting to old age proves survival through the difficulties of growing up, but instead of comfort

the trailers express a sense of anxiety. This fear shows introspection, allowing audiences to

process how quickly time passes and further connect with members of the aging population. The

tone of the realizations is either sadness or anger, two strong emotions that are common when

characters are presented with fear or anxiety. One trailer even went as far to worry about of

finding the perfect companion for the rest of their lives.

Jean:	Why doesn't he just show his face and say hello? All I know is he is
	a beautiful idea, but you can't grow old with a beautiful idea.
	[describing her secret admirer, Ben]
	The Perfect Man, 2005

This exemplifies the fear that exists in romantic comedies with aging characters. Unlike other

kinds of romantic comedies, the question is not whether an individual will find the right person,

but these trailers illustrate the concern that older adults have aged out of romance, even though

having a partner is extremely desirable both by the characters and to ensure they are deemed a

success by society. Interestingly, fear is not the only response within the instances directly open

about being "old."

In a few occasions, "old" is used positively to lift the stigma. While the context conveys

self-consciousness, ultimately the idea is to encourage the main character to view themselves

differently. Often this is represented between romantic partners (or potential romance partners),

but also is associated with forwarding one's career or intellectual pursuit.

B'Ella:	You're never too old to learn.
	[talking to Larry]
	Larry Crowne, 2011
Ruth:	Ugh. Why are you still painting this old lady?
	[pointing to her husband's painting]
Alex:	What old lady?
Ruth:	Oh. Good answer.
	5 Flights Up, 2014
Chloe:	I'm not beautiful, I'm nearly old.
	[sitting on her bed]
Mathias:	A perfect is nearly old.
	My Old Lady, 2014

These exemplars emphasize that being old is more a mindset that can be accepted and potentially

overcome and seen as a positive. In the romantic examples, the man is explaining to his female

interest that he sees beyond the physical (aging) body and towards something more meaningful.

There is also an aspect of this which could be negative; becoming old is something needing to be

overlooked in order to be deemed beautiful or attractive. Nevertheless, the overall addition of the

word old is progressive for its openness, especially in regards to romance, staying attractive and

self-worth.

　　　　Of the ten utterances of "age," only two are related to something other than romantic

interplay.

Jack:	A man reaches a certain age when he realizes what is truly important. Do you know what that is?
	[talking to his future son-in-law, Greg]
Greg:	Love? Friendship? Just love, I think.
Jack:	His legacy.
Greg:	That too.
	Meet the Fockers, 2004
Narrator:	Her ex refuses to act his age.
	[defining Nathan, Rosie's ex-husband]
	I Could Never Be Your Woman, 2007

The fascinating part about the two cases is that they are both about family. The implication is

that inside the romantic comedy world, the times when age come into the forefront are with

romance and family – both meant to enhance the main character's life and value. This rare

introspective moment in an otherwise gimmicky trailer, *Meet the Fockers'* character, Jack, hopes that Greg and his daughter, Pam, will continue his legacy even after he has passed. Whether they maintain what he believes to be a beneficial and worthwhile legacy, will help deem his level of successfulness in life and his family. By not allowing his children to have independent successes and lives, he limits them to what he believes is best.

Nathan, in *I Could Never Be Your Woman,* is obsessed with youth and being younger, perhaps due to the film's Hollywood setting and the fact that he married a much younger woman. Either way, he spends the trailer trying to reinforce a youthful appearance and equating himself to highly famous actors. Though no other trailer explicitly mentions a tendency not to act one's functional age (which is an arbitrary marker of age), the sentiment is echoed throughout and will be further detailed in later sections. There is also a gendered component to the narrator's statement, as the ex-husband is allowed to not take the full responsibility associated with growing older and all the parental obligations that are required. The short moment in the trailer pokes fun at Nathan while maintaining that this male/female interaction is not abnormal within American society.

All other cases of age remarks center around romantic interactions, speculating into the abilities of the aging characters or whether the relationship is right.

Madge:	You're not worried about the dangers of sex at your age?
	[talking about Carol to Norman]
Norman:	If she dies, she dies.
	The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel, 2011
Billy:	I've got something important here. I'm getting married.
	[talking to his best friends about his fiancée]

Archie:	What?
Sam:	Uh, wow.
Archie:	To that young lady who's half your age?

<div align="center">Last Vegas, 2013</div>

Harry:	I've never seen a woman that age naked before.
	[to his doctor, Julian, about Erica]
Julien:	You're kidding.
Harry:	Hey! We're not all doctors, baby.

<div align="center">Something's Gotta Give, 2003</div>

In all the cases, including the above exemplars, age is something surprising and worrisome. It is a divider between what is acceptable and what is abnormal. In these instances, the question is whether the characters can have sex, marry outside of their age bracket, or find older women desirable? Norman is pointing out the potential risks involved with older adults having sex as he decreases the audience's discomfort with the subject, continuing to illustrate the importance of continuing to be sexually active, and thereby successful. While Carol and Norman (*The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel*) are within a few years of each other, Billy (*Last Vegas*) and Harry (*Something's Gotta Give*) have been dating women thirty to forty years their junior. Throughout the trailers they are praised for their sexual escapades, though the younger women rarely speak and the men eventually seem more interested in the romantic interest their own age. This age-gap theme is not exclusive to these two trailers and will be discussed further in later sections.

The overall result from the word frequency analysis is that while "old" and "age" are not often employed, they are strategically placed meant to engage and connect with the audience on

an emotional level. Though it may seem that the marketers are completely targeting an older

demographic, in most of the trailers the appeal is wide enough to draw younger audiences,

however, the scenes above are material directed to be relatable for those of an older age. By

reducing the focus on age, some of the trailers maximize their appeal across age groups. Whether

in a humorous or disheartening situation, the language identifies the film in the aging romantic

comedy genre.

What is Left in Life?

In the trailers, age identifiers are not just meant to classify characters, but can also be

used to comment on the experiences of aging adults. A theme that emerged when identifying age

was how the trailers used younger people to separate the different generations, while also

implying the older characters should hope to achieve that level of youthfulness. This analysis

confirmed that the trailers did illustrate the concept of successful aging. Characters were

encouraged to mimic the behaviors and clothing/looks of the hip youth. Successful aging

supports the idea that preserving a youthful appearance can help escape the negative trials that

can accompany age. The trailers' messages center around the uncertainties of physically aging

and the misguided approach to use age to outdate the older characters.

Lily:	I don't know how you and Alex do it. I've gotta join a gym...This is a young person's building – you know, the stairs. [talking to her aging Aunt Ruth and Uncle Alex about their apartment]
	5 Flight Up, 2014
Jogger:	Get in the slow lane, ladies.
Doris:	She gave us the finger, Roz.

Roz:	Fascist, fascist!
	[runs after the jogger in the gym]
	Hello, My Name is Doris, 2015
Narrator:	Every day mother nature reminds her, she's getting older.
	[Rosie sadly watches a clip of a young actress in a bikini]
Mother Nature:	You could jog and peel and nip and tuck, but your insides are still rotting away.
	I Could Never Be Your Woman, 2007
Sam:	So, we are going to have a bachelor party in Vegas?
	[talking about Billy's engagement]
Archie:	I can't smoke, drink, eat salt, or stay out past nine, but…
Billy:	Alright, I love it!
	Last Vegas, 2013

The trailers assume the older characters are restricted by physical ability and societal expectations. To combat ageism, the trailers intend to show the anxiety and ridiculousness of these pressures, but to varying degrees. By the end of the trailers, the characters have conformed to aspects of successful aging, particularly embracing youthfulness. By also using humor to depict the physical attributes of aging, the audience can become more comfortable and open to relating to the characters. This relation would not diminish the audience's self-image or impression of age, since it is portrayed lightheartedly.

　　　5 Flights Up and *Hello, My Name is Doris* both focus on getting slower and address a younger person's perception that aging adults should move aside to provide room for the new

generations. This abrasiveness also illustrates an insensitivity and lack of understanding of how it feels to age. Positively, the older characters push back, standing up for their lifestyle and rejecting the aggression directed towards them. Other trailers are more direct in their expression of age. *I Could Never Be Your Woman* is consumed with negatively defining the physical process of aging in explicit terms. By equating aging with rotting away, the trailer's tone appears to expect an immediate response to try and alter the natural progression. This reflects a successful aging position that individuals should put energy into ways to avoid looking and feeling the effects of old age. However, the Mother Nature character's hostile tone exposes a pessimistic outcome that Rosie must battle. *Last Vegas*' limitations on a youthful activity such as a Las Vegas bachelor party further classifies the characters in the older age group. Throughout this trailer the characters engage in youthful behavior and desires, including heavily drinking, sleeping with much younger women, and getting into fights, only to face repercussions in the end in the form of an extreme hangover.

The trailers also abstractly acknowledge age, conveying more negative impressions than with the physical descriptors.

Grandkid:	Grandpa!
Susan:	Dad!
Ben:	Don't call me Grandpa and don't call me Dad. She was checking me out. Give me a hug; maybe she will think we are married.
	Solitary Man, 2009
Sarah:	Grandma.
Katherine:	I told you never to call me that in public.
	Rumor Has It, 2005

Goya:	Niles, can you get her digits?
Doris:	My what?
Niles:	We need your phone number.
Doris:	Have you got a pencil?
Niles:	Nah, nobody has pencils anymore.

Hello, My Name is Doris, 2015

Mae:	Mom, why do you wear the high tops?
Daphne:	I just got these. What is wrong with these?
Maggie:	They are just kinda depressing.
Milly:	Mom, for your 60th birthday we are going to buy you something beautiful, something Grandma Moses would not wear.

Because I Said So, 2007

Narrator:	If you think your parents are embarrassing...
Jack:	Is that your father?
Bernie:	Boom.
	[Jack and Greg watch Greg's father, Bernie, practicing the martial art of Capoeira]
Greg:	That is my father.

Meet the Fockers, 2004

Surprisingly, two trailers (*Solitary Man* and *Rumor Has It*) have characters who dislike the grandparent label because they feel it classifies them as old and undesirable to younger potential

romantic interests. By rejecting the term, they are associating age with unattractiveness. Though

both Katherine and Ben are attractive, they spend the trailers preoccupied with their outward

appearance, rather than diverting the attention towards their family or internal conflicts. Youth is

given the highest power and marked as the level to strive for and achieve.

The generational difference is apparent in how older adults exchange contact information

versus younger adults. Goya and his manager, Niles, are interested in using Doris as the cover of

their new album since she is wearing a bright yellow jumpsuit, therefore an original dresser by

their evaluation. That compliment only goes so far since they then aggressively explain to Doris

that phone numbers are not typically written down anymore. Pointing out this negative attitude

from Goya and Niles is beneficial for audiences to reconsider their reactions to age differences.

In the scene, the younger group takes the position of power, without respectfully taking the

number into their phone.

Likewise, Daphne in *Because I Said So* is subject to a young person's assessment that her

underwear is not only unattractive, but aging her to the status of her mother. This opening scene

in the trailer begins with lingering shots of Daphne's three daughters' youthful butts and sexy

underwear with sexual music playing in the background. The shot ends with Daphne's white

high top underwear and a discordant chord indicating the humorous difference between the

generations. Daphne is upset by her children's statement, but is more concerned with the parallel

drawn to her own aging mother. Daphne's stereotypical "granny panties" are seen as an

illustration that she has given up on fashion, and is potentially not sexually active. On the

opposite side of the coin, Bernie in *Meet the Fockers*, is quite sexually active with his wife, but

this youthful and successful attribute is initially disregarded in the first meeting of the two sets of

parents since Greg is embarrassed by his parents' open and emotional nature. Hoping they will

conform to meet his future father-in-law, Jack's, conservative standards, Bernie and his wife,

Roz, are asked to restrict their uniqueness. Being embarrassed by parents is another stereotypical

element older characters are sometimes placed in for humor purposes.

Humor is the underlying formula for these trailers in dealing directly or surrounding

topics of age. The alleviation it provides can allow for realistic or conventional moments to occur

depending on the plot line and intention of the film. Discussing age with humor makes the topic

more comfortable for viewers. Though aging should be openly examined and humor can assist in

those dialogues, humor can also hide the ageist and successful aging content. Instead of lending a

critical voice to how age is represented, often the trailers use humor to make fun of aging

characters further separating them from younger characters.

Although death is evitable for every living thing, it continues to be an uncomfortable and

emotional topic in American culture, especially for young people who have been isolated from

the process (Shary & McVittie, 2016). "The ways in which movies have depicted death and

dying for elder characters thus reveal a matrix of cultural and industrial concerns that are often in

conflict with actual geriatric existence, pointing to the ultimate contradiction between the aged

on screen and in life," (Shary & McVittie, 2016, p. 177). The drama genre is primed to develop

the matter surrounding death, but with the modern romantic comedy genre expanding to

encompass other aspects of life (Grindon, 2011) it may not be surprising that aging romantic

comedies have begun to include dialogues of death.

Of the ten trailers that openly mention death, only three actually have characters that

died. This tendency relates to the research that has shown that Hollywood films will either end

before a character's inevitable death, thereby sparing the audience of the sadness, or the

character will escape death and live to fight another day (Shary & McVittie, 2016). The results of

the current study found an uneasy comfort with the subject of death. Interestingly, there were

three trailers actively hoping their characters could avoid death, as if it was possible with enough

mind power.

Mathilde	The buyer must pay a fee until the seller dies.
	[talking to Mathias, the buyer of the Paris home]:
Mathias:	Until you die?
Mathilde:	Until I die.
Dr. Horowitz:	French women can live a long time.
	My Old Lady, 2014
Sonny [the hotel owner]:	I have a dream to create a home for the elderly so wonderful that they will simply refuse to die.
Sonny:	This man is dead. (putting a handkerchief over Norman's face) We must preserve his dignity.
Norman:	Coughs. Did I nod off?
	The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel, 2011
Muriel:	The Marigold Hotel has been going properly for eight months now. People come and go, but there's been a core of regulars from the beginning. And Sonny takes a roll call every morning.
Sonny:	A most valuable precaution to ensure nobody has died in the night.
	The Second Best Exotic Marigold Hotel, 2015
Lloyd:	Excuse me.
Carol:	Gasps.

Lloyd:	You seemed um...
Carol:	You thought I was dead?
	I'll See You in My Dreams, 2015

In *My Old Lady*, until Mathilde, a ninety-year-old English immigrant living in Paris, dies, Mathias must pay her a monthly fee which goes towards the payment of the house. Meaning that after Mathilde dies, Mathias will own her home. While he is hoping for her death since he needs to sell the house for money, the message from Mathilde and her doctor is that she could live for many years to come. In the initial few seconds of the trailer the audience is made to believe that Mathilde may already be dead in her chair. This troupe is also used in *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel* and *I'll See You in My Dreams*. The implication with the above *My Old Lady* exemplar is almost that she may never die or that at the very minimum the audience will not have to watch the process. The two exotic marigold hotel movies speak of death from the perspective of the younger hotel manager and owner, Sonny. By using a younger person's perspective, the film's tone is that death should be avoided and hided at all costs, as in the exemplar's case which hides death under a handkerchief. Using humor, the trailers relieve the anxiety normally associated with death, but by sanitizing they miss an opportunity to change the perception or add to the discourse.

Intriguingly, other trailers addressed the characters' fear and anxiety in a more realistic fashion. Within these moments, the audience is given an opportunity to step back and potentially relate to the situation or character.

Dr. Diane:	How do you feel since your husband died?
Marnie:	There are a lot of hours in the day, so sometimes I call Laurie.

The Meddler (2014)

Doris: I hope I don't end up like one of those weirdo New Yorkers that

                chokes on a peanut and dies and no one even misses me.

Roz: Honey, I would miss you.

Hello, My Name is Doris (2015)

Ben: I say a whole bunch of stuff. Some of it is even the truth.

Nancy: You can't cheat death, no matter how many 19-year-olds you talk

                into your bed.

Solitary Man (2009)

In the film *The Meddler*, Marnie's husband recently died, leaving her with enough money to live

the rest of her life wealthy in Southern California. After moving from Brooklyn to California to

be nearer her daughter, Marnie openly discusses with her therapist the loneliness that occurs after

the initial grief has passed. Doris, in *Hello, My Name is Doris*, explains her fears of dying alone

and forgotten – not uncommon with characters who match the stereotype of single, older women

with cats. Though the fear of dying alone is natural, being without a partner in Doris' scenario is

enough to cause her anxiety that no one would miss her or realize she had died. Ben and Nancy's

interaction in *Solitary Man* is abnormal since the two of them are a divorced couple discussing

Ben's sex life with much younger women. Not only is he using sex to escape his anxiety, he is

choosing to sleep with an age group unlikely to become a realistic relationship partner. In a rare

moment on screen, Nancy explains that Ben's relationships will not maintain a semblance of

youth and avoid his evitable death.

The exemplars are unique in that it is women who are addressing the topic of death. Perhaps filmmakers feel when bringing up a such a sensitive topic audiences would better respond to a female's presence, possibly because research has found women are thought to be more empathic (Wood, 1994). Though the trailers tackle the topic differently with varying degrees of realism, largely they represent society's fear of death without causing too much discomfort.

Death and aging are topics not just young people avoid, but these matters become difficult to ignore as individuals get older. A possible effect of this awareness is the mid-life crisis. Known for its stereotypical depictions of the convertible and an extramarital affair, the mid-life crisis can develop a positive reaction resulting in reevaluations about the next stage in life. The comfort in routine is intoxicating, therefore starting over is challenging and uncomfortable. A perfect plot device, this process in film usually begins with a life-altering situation. This may be the introduction of a new person, typical in the romantic comedy genre, but it can also be the death of a loved one, a loss of career, or a major move. Whatever the twist, the characters must adjust to this new environment and decide whether they want to stay on their path or change the trajectory. Many of the trailers employ this concept, especially since it emotionally connects the audience who may be experiencing similar things and it can be very compelling to watch on screen. The theme of starting over is direct in many ways, far more than expected. Either the trailers use a narrator to introduce the premise or allow it to unfold through dialogue. The narrator, screen, or major characters are straightforward, emphasizing a positive tone to instill hope for the characters.

Screen:	it's never too late to open your heart...it's never too late to change your life...it's never too late to take a chance

Last Chance Harvey, 2008

Screen: IT'S NEVER TOO LATE...FOR THE PARTY OF A LIFETIME

Last Vegas, 2013

Screen: rewrite your story...rewrite your destiny...rewrite your future

The Rewrite, 2015

Daphne: One wrong decision can change your whole life.

                   [talking to her daughter, Milly, about Milly's dating life]

Milly: There is still time, Mom.

Daphne: Not if you waste another minute of it.

Milly: I meant for you.

Because I Said So, 2007

Mathias: I don't have a friend in the world, except for this apartment I have

                   nothing.

Mathilde: You have life left. There is no greater wealth.

My Old Lady, 2014

Narrator: Sometimes it takes a second chance to realize...the ones that never

                   fit it...are the ones that really stand out.

                   [describing Mary's eccentric personality]

All About Steve, 2009

Screen: DORIS MILLER HAD NOTHING TO LOSE...BUT HER

                   INHIBITIONS

Hello, My Name is Doris, 2015

> Screen: THIS YEAR COMES A STORY ABOUT LETTING GO AND
>
> TAKING BACK YOUR LIFE
>
> *Ride*, 2014

The characters have questioned their current path and now that they have reached a certain age it is time to make a change. The main characters in *Last Chance Harvey*, *The Rewrite,* and *My Old Lady* all have lost their jobs, a connection to their families, and no longer have a clear path for the future. At this low point, the men had to decide what was most important to them, either a chance at love or further isolating themselves from their community. The other exemplars all have characters that are struggling with what they want in life, but have careers and families. This second chance that is offered allows them to reconsider what they had deemed an adequate life. The main characters have friends and family that they have spent their lives focused on, while disregarding their own interests and desires. In *Because I Said So* and *Ride*, the older women have spent their whole adult lives raising and instructing their children on the best ways to succeed. It isn't until their children push back that they realize they now have the opportunity to live separate and equally fulfilling lives. *Hello, My Name is Doris* and *All About Steve* follow two eclectic women obsessively falling for younger men. Doris and Mary spend the trailers figuring out how to gain the attention of the men they instantly had attraction for. After putting their lives on hold, they are pushed forward towards their fantasies. Coasting along without much personal development the trailers offer an older coming of age plot. With current technological advances in medicine, older adults have more flexibility to decide how they want to spend the rest of their lives.

Though these messages may be inspiring, there is a lack of individualism comparable to successful aging social expectations. The characters are held to societal expectations of success which include a financially stable career, connected family, and a romantic relationship. These benchmarks do not happen for everyone; having major second chances is often only offered to those who have the resources (financial and emotional) to change. When relying on others, all aging adults may not be able to meet the successful standards of family and relationships. By no means should individuals be remorseful or pitied for the life they have. Due to these standards and audiences' anticipation that romantic comedies will end on a positive, even if not genuine note, the trailers fall short of true realism.

Using Romance to Combat Struggling

Since silent films, romance has continued to be of interest to audiences (Graves & Engle, 2006). Young couples have dominated the screen with specific plot devices and formulas. This study found that when there is aging leading actors and actresses in romantic comedies, there are unique romantic themes. In the trailers, couples are either rejuvenating their relationship or beginning new relationships. Potentially due to age of the characters, they deal with situations of divorce, extra-marital affairs, death, empty nest, alcoholism and the fear of being alone forever. These add a layer of depth and drama to the plotlines, which makes sense since romantic comedies in the last thirty years have been influenced by other genres to enhance the interest (McDonald, 2007).

Due to the nature of trailers, the observer will not know the conclusion of the film or whether the characters ended up together. However, after viewing the films to assess the extent to which the trailers are truly representative, it was found that while the love interests previewed in the trailer often stay together, not all do. In life, everything doesn't always work out as

initially envisioned, so adding this concept enhances the realism. Some trailers are not as representative of the films, either perhaps to hide the plot twist as in *Last Vegas* and *I Want Someone to Eat Cheese With* or to overemphasize the humor and romance, as in *The Magic of Belle Isle* and *My Old Lady*. In the non-representative trailers, films add a tone of darkness, further requiring characters to push through their suffering to find love. Two themes appeared when analyzing the romantic portions of the trailers that were far more pervasive than was initially anticipated: depression and transformation.

Depression is not often the expectation in a romantic comedy. Although some characters could be identified as having clinical depression, such as in *Solitary Man* and *Shopgirl*, most films err on the side of caution and use humor to describe depression. Instead, the characters exhibit situational depression – where a situation, not a mental disability like depression, has made it difficult to move forward.

Screen:	LIFE HAS A WAY...OF CATCHING UP WITH YOU
Ben:	Hey, you want a drink?
	[talking to a young college woman]
Maureen:	Aren't you a little old for this?
Ben:	Yeah that's cool...Your lowest moments, you're alone.
	Solitary Man, 2009
Sally:	Guys ask about you all the time, Carol.
Carol:	Don't start with the second husband talk. You couldn't pay me.
Sally:	But they do pay you, when they die.
	I'll See You in My Dreams, 2015

Screen:	it's been a bad day for james... he's lost his agent...he's lost his girlfriend... and his dignity
James:	The big thing for me is I need somebody to love...That's the thing that is missing.

I Want Someone to Eat Cheese With, 2007

Terry:	You are a disaster, Arlen.
	[Arlen's literary agent]
Arlen:	It's all meaningless bullshit.
	[talking about life]

The Answer Man, 2009

Andy:	Are you okay?
Terry:	I'm a wreck.
Terry:	He doesn't live here anymore, Denny.
	[talking about her husband to their neighbor, Denny, who becomes her love interest]

The Upside of Anger, 2005

Boss:	You're getting a divorce?
Calvin:	Yeah.
Boss:	Amy heard you crying in the bathroom. We all thought it was cancer.
Calvin:	Oh.
Boss:	Thank god man.
Calvin:	Yeah, just my relationship.

Crazy, Stupid, Love, 2011

Depression is a serious mental illness, but when the films soften the disease, it allows the audience to laugh at the humor without feeling uncomfortable. Though this may not be beneficial to those who would appreciate authentic representation of mental illness issues, it is a common troupe in romantic comedies. By also using humor, the trailers have an easier time showing how love can better an individual and remove them from the unsuccessfulness of mental instability. Since successful aging is based in activity and disengagement theory, maintenance of attitudes while accepting the natural process of one's life and the socially desirable way of life for older age groups (Havighurst, 1961). When Rowe and Kahn (1997) redesigned the theory, they developed the social engagement aspect further. "While active engagement with life takes many forms, we are most concerned with two – interpersonal relations and productive activity," (Rowe & Kahn, 1997, p. 433). The interpersonal relations involve transactions and emotional support, and activities should provide some sort of societal value (Rowe & Kahn, 1997). Utilizing depression as a plot device, the trailers illustrate the change that can occur when active engagement is introduced. Havighurst (1961) also argued that successful aging is dependent on what society has deemed appropriate for older people. The presence of romantic comedies with older characters indicates that either society has begun to expect older people to be active in romantic relationships, or in an effort to gain an older audience marketers incorporated these themes as a good marketing strategy. These films confirm the premise that romance is an appropriate interpersonal relationship which can help deem an individual successful.

As discussed previously, the *Solitary Man*, Ben, is struggling financially and emotionally. Not only is Ben using sex with young women to avoid facing the topic of death, he is avoiding

his underlying depression and anxiety, which is not as funny since the implication is he has a

serious condition. One of the darker films, *Solitary Man* follows Ben who actively cannot move

forward to develop meaningful and emotionally-based relationships. This trailer suggests that he

may not have a happy ending unless he chooses a different path. Maureen, the voice of society in

this scene, explains to Ben that his behavior is not suitable for a man his age. In the exemplar and

trailer, Ben does not conform and change to focus on a more emotional relationship which could

help him be categorized as successful.

Contrarily in *I'll See You in My Dreams*, Carol is directly told to increase her engagement

with a second husband. Carol lost her husband years ago and when she talks with her daughter

she opens up about the sadness she feels about her future, "It's all in the past tense. You're the

best of what I had, you and dad." To mitigate Carol's loneliness her close friend, Sally, brings

her to a speed dating session for seniors. A relationship is the solution and plan for the rest of her

life, even if she is not as interested as her friends. The second husband discussion is also cynical

since it implies that feelings are secondary to making sure the character is not alone. This echoes

a successful aging societal expectation of finding a life partner, where the standard, not the

individual, decides. This exemplar also shows that aging relationships must deal with inevitable

death, but replaces emotions for money as the benefit of marriage.

James, in *I Want Someone to Eat Cheese With*, on the other hand is looking for that first

love at an older age. He is struggling not only with loneliness, but is also still living with his

mother and has few job prospects. Following the successful aging standard, his solution is

finding romance. This societal expectation has caused James to look for love with women who

do not care for him and become depressed. However, to be considered fully successful in the

trailer and successful aging, he would need to address his lackluster career and be more

independent as is expected from someone of his age. Wanting to discover the true love he has

been waiting for is an understandable response from someone who has never found that;

however, the trailer doesn't offer solutions. *I Want Someone to Eat Cheese With* is more focused

on the initial attraction James feels, not on the development of relationship. Whereas, *The*

Answer Man trailer provides a full outline of Arlen's new relationship with Elizabeth. This

couple is brought together after Arlen experiences a back injury and visits Elizabeth's new

chiropractic business. This chance meeting allows Arlen to use the relationship to see a way out

of his decade-long depression. He has been hiding in his house, completely disengaging with

friends and fans alike. His aggressive and rude behavior to his friends and fans of his book

illustrates his struggle to find meaning in life. After writing a book based on his conversations

with God, Arlen withdrawals into his home hiding from the world. His depression has kept him

from having romantic relationships, as well as a supportive group of friends. A successful aging

cautionary tale, Arlen discovers happiness once he actively commits to Elizabeth.

The last two exemplars show the depression that arises after extra-marital affairs lead to

divorce. Terry and Calvin are visibly upset upon learning of their partners' affair, both in shock

leading to anger and sadness. Terry has four teenage daughters who she expresses her emotions

in front of, after her husband left her to be with his Swedish assistant. Her depression quickly

escalates to anger and alcoholism. She continuously lashes out at her neighbor, Denny, who also

is struggling with life after retiring from his successful career in baseball. Once they become

drinking buddies, it is clear Denny is looking for more. He finds that the interpersonal

interactions have allowed him to focus on the positives in his life. At the end of the trailer Denny

even tells Terry, "When I'm with you Terry, with your girls, I feel like there is a big chunk of my

life still left to be played out." Again, a character is using a romantic relationship to pull

themselves out of their decade-long depression and use it as a guiding force for their future,

another validation of successful aging's engagement component.

Calvin and his boss' interaction can be evaluated from multiple angles. First, after Emily

confesses that she slept with a co-worker, Calvin is overwhelmed with sadness. Emily started to

look for affection elsewhere after Calvin began to disengage from their relationship. Although,

Havighurst (1961) believed successful aging must accept the natural disengagement that occurs

as individuals age, Rowe & Kahn (1997) argued that individuals will have less risk of disease

and disability when they continuously focus on their emotional activity. Emily did not accept the

withdraw, which ended up breaking their relationship. Second, it is interesting that showing tears

at work is questioned and discussed by his co-workers. Often it is uncharacteristic for male

characters to show sadness and later in the trailer he is even shamed for that expression.

Aggression is a more accepted emotion for men, sadness (and crying) are categorized as

feminine expressions abnormal for men (Wood, 1994). Finally, the office believes that the reason

for his sadness must be something life-threatening, like cancer. Divorce has become so

normalized that the discussion of it is laughed off, thankful that it isn't something deadly, even

though for Calvin it has completely affected his life. To remove the characters from this

depressed state, romantic comedies introduce a love twist and transform the characters

(sometimes quite quickly, while others can take the entire film) into more desirable partners.

Transformations can occur in a variety of different ways, whether it is physical or

emotional, with short effects or life-long alterations. In romantic comedies, a common theme is

to take a struggling character (or two struggling characters) and bring them together to realize

how much better their lives could be if they only changed. Of course, romantic comedies then

incorporated the fear that people can't change. Romantic comedies with older leads is no

different, except because they are older their experience and expectations affect the kind of

transformation. At the root, transforming is all about expectations and societal standards. Though

inspiring characters and audiences to search for happiness is important, happiness is subjective.

The trailers imply that without the trifecta of a good family life, career, and romance an

individual could not be labeled as having successfully aged. A life changing event, such as

discovering new love or losing a major love, has caused the trailers' characters to reevaluate

themselves and their lives.

These aspects coincide with the concept of the social clock, a timeline ordering certain

major life events that can affect how individuals feel when they enter a new life phase

(Quadagno, 2014). "Perceived timetables of the life course shape our experiences of growing

older by providing reference points and sets expectations about what we should be doing with

our lives," (Quadagno, 2014, p. 34). The social clock is a calculator for the successful aging

standards. Within the trailers, there are expectations of what is possible and accomplishable. Like

the exemplars that showed a resistance towards the grandparent label, these characters have a

vision of their lives based on others' lives. While the intention may be to combat ageism by

employing goals to work towards, it can also cause unrealistic expectations producing anxiety.

The films' objective is to be in a loving, committed relationship by the end credits. There are two

ways these transformations are triggered: with the guidance of a younger person or being

shocked into action purely by the introduction of a love interest.

The former is uniquely ageist since the implication is that to be desirable for a potential

romantic partner, the older characters must stay cool based on youth standards.

| Talia: | You are way cooler than you appear. |

[talking to Larry about changing his appearance to enhance his coolness factor]

Larry: I can't really afford all of these new threads.

Talia: Tis gradus. Take off your pants. My boyfriend's here, put your pants back on.

Larry: Grunting

[struggling to get skinny jeans on over his large, white briefs]

Larry Crowne, 2011

Calvin: Hey, ladies' man guy. You got any tips of the trade?

[drunk at the bar that Jacob has picked up many young women]

Jacob: Your wife cheated on you because you lost sight of yourself as a man. Take that straw out of your mouth. It looks like you are sucking on a

Calvin: Coughs. Okay.

Crazy, Stupid, Love, 2011

Narrator: The story of a man who never knew what he was missing

Charlene: Come, on. Let's go dance.

Peter: Alright.

Narrator: until one woman

Howie: You're the bomb.

Narrator: showed him everything he had.

Kate: He never danced like that with me.

Sarah: He's not the same guy anymore.

Bringing Down the House, 2003

Jackie: What are you doing here?

Angelo: Living my life! This is interesting to me and you could never do it!

Jackie: That's the stupidest thing I've ever heard.

Ride, 2014

Denny: I dial your number ten times a day and hang up.

                 [talking to Terry about his feelings for her]

Popeye: You should marry her, Denny.

Denny: I don't know. Your Mom, she's tricky.

The Upside of Anger, 2005

Talia, in *Larry Crowne,* is a young and fashionable student who Larry meets on his first day back to community college. After being fired from his retail position of twenty plus years, Larry decides to return to college, but being out of the game for so long, Talia offers her fashion and dating advice. Until he meets her it is implied he would continue to wear polo shirts and slacks for the rest of the film, which is looked down upon. Her evaluation of his coolness factor suggests that without her influence he may not successfully age in his personal life, especially when it comes to dating. Calvin also finds a fashionable younger person who takes him shopping for new clothes and to get a haircut. Jacob then teaches Calvin how to talk to women so they will sleep with him. He isn't teaching Calvin how to have meaningful relationships, especially since Jacob is still focused on short-term sexual relationships, but because of Jacob's status and age his advice is still taken. This exemplar instills traditional gender roles of men's place in relationships, while also expressing fear of being viewed as a gay man by sucking a straw as an

analogy for a penis. Even though this exemplar shows the aggressive nature of Calvin and

Jacob's relationship, Jacob is not vilified since his assistance matches the successful aging

standard; by adhering to societal norms of attractiveness and increasing activity, Calvin will not

be cheated on again.

In *Bringing Down the House*, Peter has become disconnected from his family, focusing

all his energy on the law firm he dislikes. It isn't until Charlene enters his life that he reassesses

his priorities. Charlene is never considered as a love interest for Peter, possibly because he is still

in love with his ex-wife and she is a younger, larger black woman. Either way, Charlene teaches

Peter how to be more open and expressive. This change garners attention from his children and

his ex-wife. Howie, Peter's co-worker and friend, becomes the interest for Charlene, intrigued by

her curves and black culture, which he tries to emulate through language like in the above

exemplar. In a rare moment in the study's trailer, this one outwardly discusses issues

interconnected with race, but has a difficult time balancing deconstructive, progressive sarcasm

and offensive appropriation and stereotypical images.

The last two exemplars use the characters' teenage children to push the adults to

transform. Jackie (*Ride*) is a successful businesswoman who follows her son to California after

he drops out of college to surf, a choice she vehemently disapproves. After an argument with her

son about the direction of his life, she decides to prove that she can do the simple sport he so

loves. What starts out as a way to get her son to go back to school becomes into her journey to

rediscover herself, separate from her role as a mother, while learning to accept her son's choices.

Though Jackie may have been categorized as successfully aging, she realizes she is unhappy

with her fast-paced life in New York City and has been disconnected from her desires for too

long. Similarly in *The Upside of Anger*, Popeye offers advice to Denny on his future and how to

gain the happiness he didn't know he was searching for. Since different generations see the

world from a distinctive viewpoint, intergenerational advice can illuminate answers better than

peers can. In the trailers, the youth see the situation simply – get a makeover and become more

emotionally open, and love will develop. Still this perspective is problematic, since the

implication is youth should be prioritized to be successfully aged.

The second part of the transformative theme centers on romantic relationships being the

catalyst for change.

Narrator:	She may just discover
Harry:	Brenda, out here men do that.
	[following Brenda as she takes out the trash]
Brenda:	Where I'm from, women do it all.
Harry:	Well then maybe you should live here.
Narrator:	the person she was always meant to be.
	Meet the Browns, 2008
Screen:	IT'S NEVER TOO LATE
Joe:	You seem different. You're not yourself.
Monte:	Right now, I'm seeing things with a clear eye. Quite frankly, I like the view.
Screen:	TO REWRITE YOUR OWN STORY
Charlotte:	What do you want out of life, Mr. Wildhorn?
Monte:	I'd settle for more nights like this.
	The Magic of Belle Isle, 2012

Screen:	he's divorced...and down on his luck...now he's looking for love...in all the wrong places
Richard:	You're smart, you're funny, you're beautiful, I'm sure you'll find someone. [talking to his ex-wife's sister]
Olivia:	Is that line successful for you normally?
Richard:	I have my moments with it. [he kisses her]
	Some Kind of Beautiful, 2014
Dina:	I'm impressed by the fact that he is always challenging. Last night I painted my first workable painting in 6 months. Something I thought I might never do again. [talking about Jack at a job hearing]
	Words & Pictures, 2014

Meet the Browns and *The Magic of Belle Isle* exemplify how love can facilitate self-discovery. After meeting Harry, Brenda finds herself moving down to Georgia from Chicago to live in her new house. As a single mother, she has solely taken care of herself and her children, but Harry's character is the catalyst for her emotional change. Harry consistently wants to take care of Brenda and her children, a prescribed role for men in a relationship. The traditional moment signifies that when a woman is in a relationship she is more successful and wouldn't have to do unpleasant things such as take out the trash. *The Magic of Belle Isle* is a re-coming of age story expedited by Charlotte's interest and company. A famous author, Monte, is brought out of his

depression and begins to write again. After disengaging from society and interpersonal

relationships, he is welcomed by Charlotte's children into their family. Without children, Monte

was left alone after his wife died. These new additions into his life allow him to let go of his

anger and move forward.

Richard (*Some Kind of Beautiful*) is experiencing sadness and loss of direction after his

divorce. To cope, he has started sleeping with his young college students again. He then is

arrested for a DUI charge, which causes his ex-wife, Kate, to call in her sister to care for their

child when she is on vacation. This begins their story from dislike to love, resetting Richard's

path and bringing him more direction in life. Though he met Olivia years before, after his

divorce it is clear their initial attraction is still there. Their love rejuvenates his interest in his

teaching career, while lifting his depression. A teacher as well, Jack in *Words & Pictures*, also

had a problem with alcohol which led to a review of his teaching position. After meeting Dina,

he realizes the full life he could have. Unlike some of the other trailers' love interests, Dina is

struggling with a physical disability limiting her movement and therefore her ability to paint.

Seeing a potential connection, the two of them try and pull each other out of their depression.

Although there is no cure for her disability, activity and engagement allows her to be more

productive and continue her career as a painter.

With these trailers, growing older creates emotional baggage and romance is the remedy,

thereby finally having a successful life. What is meant to be inspiring actually creates a standard

for audiences to measure themselves again. Instead of breaking the formula, the trailers reinforce

the successful aging model, especially in regards to active engagement. The presence of the

formula and the simplistic romantic solution constructs unrealistic expectations for viewers both

in older and younger age groups.

It's About the Passionate Sex

Romance is not just about love and emotional connections; it is also about the physical component of a relationship: sex. Sex in Hollywood has often been reserved for the young, healthy and attractive (Shary & McVitte, 2016). Older adults' sexual activity has caused discomfort, even though there is no age where the body loses all desire (Shary &McVittie, 2016). These trailers depict a change in the discourse about older adults having sex, mainly that the characters are interested in sex and are sexually active. With the cultural history of the sexual revolution in the 1960s and subsequent female empowerment movements in the 1970s and 1980s, boomers are an excellent generation to evaluate when considering portrayals of sex on screen.

Let's Openly Talk About Sex

In a study on a Canadian magazine targeted to aging adults, Marshall (2014) found that while increasing comfort with older adults' sexuality, sex has become an additional indicator of heterosexual successful aging. Marshall argues that Western culture is experiencing a "'postageist ageism,' where antiageist sentiments are embraced at the same time as old age is constructed as something to be resisted at all costs, and that an important component of this is the reentrenching and renaturalization of sex and gender difference," (2014, p. 169). Although waning sexual abilities were once seen as normal, it is now something that must be altered so an individual can be identified as successfully aged (Marshall, 2014). With this understanding, the trailers portray sex in both a realistic and successful aging manner. Most of the characters in the trailers are interested in sex, but like their younger counterparts they struggle to find that spark. It is important to note that all the romantic comedies focus on heterosexual couples and attractions.

The sexual explicitness does vary in the trailers, and characters' reactions also range from comfort with the topic to being fearful of the subject.

Speed Dater 1:	I'm going to cut to the chase here if that's okay. Sex is still very important to me. I don't have herpes, but it's okay with me if you do.
	[talking to an uncomfortable Carol]
	I'll See You in My Dreams, 2015
Oren:	Last time I had sex I tore my ACL.
Leah:	Is this some pathetic attempt at flirtation?
Oren:	Well, when you put it that way, yeah.
	And So It Goes, 2014
Daphne:	Adult friend finder. I like how they use the word friend. Friendship is the cornerstone of any good relationship. Gasps.
	[moaning in the background]
	Because I Said So, 2007
Doctor:	I'm going to ask you to take a leap of faith and try something.
Kay:	I'm looking for something: *Sex Tips for Straight Women from a Gay Man*.
Doctor:	It's most likely way out of your comfort zone.
Kay:	I'm just not. It's just not me. I just can't do that.
	Hope Springs, 2012
Sophie:	A melody is like sex.

Alex:	Well I so get that.
Sophie:	But then you get to know the person and that's the lyrics. Their story, who they are underneath.

Music and Lyrics, 2007

Richard:	We're about to make the biggest mess out of our lives and you're going to use sex to pretend everything is okay. Is that the plan?
Kate:	Yes.
Richard:	I like it.

I Don't Know How She Does It, 2011

Sonny:	Ladies and Gentlemen, this is the great Guy Timbers.
Madge:	Lordy, lord have mercy on my ovaries.
Carol:	First time in India?
Guy:	It was pretty much a dream until now.
Madge:	Any other dreams I could help you with?

The Second Best Exotic Marigold Hotel, 2015

In romantic comedies, sex is a normal topic, but because of the age of the main characters in these trailers, the way they discuss sex is worth analyzing. Overall, sex is an accepted part of relationships and it is assumed that the couples would be having sex, even if they aren't married. The first four exemplars illustrate the uncomfortableness the women have with outward mentions of sex. Carol in *I'll See You in My Dreams*, does not appreciate the direct attitude of her date. As a widower, Carol is not used to the dating scene, especially with such explicit descriptions. This

exemplar is also interesting because the date is not self-conscious to express his desires, and is open to risking a disease in order to have sex. These could be attributed to his age, and not wanting to waste time and miss the opportunity to have a sexual relationship. Though successful aging requires adults to avoid disease and disability, the preference here is to risk an illness to ensure interpersonal engagement. Furthermore, Oren and Leah's relationship is contentious in the beginning of the trailer of *And So It Goes*. Oren is angry at his next-door neighbors, including Leah. Through a series of events, he becomes the temporary guardian of his granddaughter, therefore requiring Leah's motherly touch with the child. Bringing them closer together, eventually Oren is direct in his sexual proposition with Leah. Due to their history and the bluntness of his request, Leah is disgusted and walks away. Romance is not a part of Oren's suggestion. He is increasingly interested in the physical, continuously mentioning how she looks throughout the trailer, rather than any personality qualities. Of course, a transition occurs suggesting they end up together.

Because I Said So is slightly different since it doesn't introduce the romantic interest for Daphne until after her daughters recommend her to search for a romantic partner. Daphne first looks online for an "adult friend," only to discover the site is for porn. Instead of immediately clicking away, Daphne is intrigued, humping along with the moans. This brief moment of curiosity is broken by her dog's bark, resulting in her gasping and quickly closing her computer. Her embarrassment denotes shame for her inquisitiveness in porn. Similarly, in *Hope Springs*, Kay and Arnold have lost the intimacy in their marriage, so Kay decides to book an appointment with a couples therapist. In a session, Kay's therapist recommends a book on sex tips. In the subsequent shot, she is in the bathroom nervously holding a banana while reading the book until she decides to take a bite of the banana. Kay is apparently learning how to better perform

fellatio, to which Kay responses to her therapist that she couldn't go through with it. Though Kay

is nervous about being sexually adventurous, Arnold is even fearful of being touched and having

sex with Kay. Since older adults having sex has become socially desirable, Kay is responsible to

reignite her relationship's flame; therefore, Kay and Arnold will be judged by their ability to

conform to successful aging's sexual expectations. By the end of the trailer though, they are

laughing and dancing together on a beach, allowing the audience to assume they have found the

answer to their martial and sexual issues.

   Music and Lyrics follows an aging 1980s rockstar, Alex, who meets his new lyricist,

Sophie, through a series of unlikely events. Though their relationship begins purely professional,

it quickly becomes romantic. In the above exemplar right before Alex and Sophie have sex,

Sophie mentions sex much to Alex's pleasure. With this moment, she identifies herself as

sexually active and potentially interested in Alex. She also deconstructs the difference between

sex and relationships, even though an active sex life is an identifier of a healthy relationship. Not

only is the women the one who is addressing sex, she is years younger than Alex, which might

be why she is the one who announces her sexuality and experience since audiences may become

uncomfortable if the older, male character pursues Sophie.

   The last two exemplars also represent women interested in sex, unapologetically. Kate

and Richard (*I Don't Know How She Does It*) are approaching some difficult career choices, so

Kate suggests having sex as a solution to their anxiety about the future. Both career driven

individuals, they must decide how to balance children and their relationship. This depicts a quiet

moment between the characters deconstructing the use of sex to avoid uncomfortable

conversations, even though they are equal partners in their long-term relationship. Like *Hope*

Springs, Kate is using sex to provide intimacy and maintain interest in an otherwise difficult time

in their marriage. On the other hand, Madge (*The Second Best Exotic Marigold Hotel*) is introduced to Guy Timbers who she immediately is attracted to and openly expresses her interest, showing comfort with her sexuality. Without any shame or awkwardness, Madge directly pursues Guy. Though the tone from Guy and the other patrons is that she is a too bold, Madge is self-confidant in her sexualized approach. Even though to be successful having sex is important, the trailers tend to lean away from overt sexual messaging. In an age group that generally is not portrayed with any sexual desire, these trailers try to normalize the discussion. It should be noted, however, that none of the trailers depict sex on screen. And while marketers cannot be too explicit in a trailer, there are plenty of examples where younger characters are used to sell movies with sex, a recent example being *Fifty Shades of Grey* (2015). This is not to say that there are no blatant mentions of sex.

A subset of trailers has leading women who are powerful in their jobs, but unsuccessful in love. Happy in their careers, this power has not helped them in their romantic relationships. There are only 11 films in the sample of 41 that have women who are independently wealthy, not wealthy from a spouse or inheritance, and 7 of those films are directed by women (Table 1).

Table 1		
Something's Gotta Give	Nancy Meyers	2003
I Could Never Be Your Woman	Amy Heckerling	2007
The Proposal	Anne Fletcher	2009
It's Complicated	Nancy Meyers	2009
Serious Moonlight	Cheryl Hines	2009
Ride	Helen Hunt	2014

The Meddler	Lorene Scafaria	2014

The women in these films are the main character or co-main character of the films, which is not true for all the sample. Except for *The Meddler*, the women have successful, high-powered jobs not needing money from their husbands. Similarly, the first six trailers in Table 1 have the characters in more sexual situations, though they still don't show any sexual activity.

Andrew:	Oh, my god!
Margaret:	Why are you naked?!
Andrew:	Why are you wet?!

<div align="center">

The Proposal, 2009

</div>

Jake:	I thought it was smoking hot.
	[Jake sits next to the tub while Jane takes a bath]
Jane:	Oh, god.
	[in bed together after having sex]

<div align="center">

It's Complicated, 2009

</div>

Louise:	I threw heck to the wind and drove up to the country a day early. I want you to hold all calls. Looks like I'm about to have a lot of sex. Ian? Sexy.

<div align="center">

Serious Moonlight, 2009

</div>

Ian:	I just hope
Jackie:	Just use me for my body until I dump you, okay?
Ian:	Okay.

> [he kisses her]
>
> *Ride,* 2014

In *The Proposal*, Margaret is threatened with deportation, so on a whim she tells her supervisors that she is engaged to her assistant, Andrew. Of course, Margaret is an aggressive boss who Andrew has despised for years, but agrees to marry her to keep his job. In the latter part of the trailer, Margaret and Andrew accidently run into each other while naked. Each look at the other's body since it is the first time they see one another undressed. This scene sexualizes an otherwise standoffish portrayal of Margaret and introduces sex as a possibility for the two of them. The *It's Complicated* bed scene is a bit more visually explicit, since the shot shows Jake without a shirt and Jane's bra showing after having sex. Jake is pleased with himself and the situation, but Jane looks a little more concerned, though equally pleased. This is one of the most explicit moments in the trailers, however, some of the films themselves do show characters having sex.

Louise (*Serious Moonlight*) is also a high-powered career woman who decides to drive up to her country house to surprise her husband. When she walks into the house, she finds dozens of roses in vases and petals on the ground. Talking to her assistant, she is direct in her plans for the evening – sex. Unfortunately, the roses are for her husband's mistress. Her excitement quickly shifts to anger as he announces that he is going to leave her and move to Paris with his girlfriend. It turns out that they have lost the intimacy in their marriage and haven't had sex in a while. Likewise, Jackie (*Ride*) is an independent career woman who meets Ian, her surf instructor. Visiting from New York City, Jackie eventually embraces the relaxed energy of Santa Monica. Jackie has been focused on her career and son but ultimately evolves, becoming interested in her personal development and relationship with Ian. Though it is unclear how

serious or committed the relationship is, they are obviously having sex and not shamed by their physical connection.

Confidence in an Aging Body

The aging process produces physical characteristics such as weakening of the elasticity of the skin and wrinkles. Successful aging measures adults by the maintenance of a youthful appearance, and accordingly characters express longing for youth and beauty, while also objectifying youthful characters.

Mrs. Aaron:	That shirt makes you look fat.
	[talking to her son]
James:	That's because I am fat. If anything, I make the shirt look fat.
	I Want Someone To Eat Cheese With, 2007
Billy:	There are girls at every bar. I want all of you to get in trouble.
Girl:	Which one of you is Sam Harris?
	Last Vegas, 2013
Erica:	You ever been married, Harry?
Harry:	No.
Marin:	Harry was once engaged to Diane Sawyer.
Erica:	What? I'm impressed.
Harry:	Women your age love that about me.
	Something's Gotta Give, 2003
Louise:	She's very pretty. Not so bright though.
	[talking to Ian about his young mistress, Sara]
	Serious Moonlight, 2009

Jason:	You're jealous!
	[talking to Linda about kissing high schooler, Halle]
Linda:	Excuse me?
Jason:	You want me to bend you over your desk right now?
	The English Teacher, 2013

An overweight single man in *I Want Someone to Eat Cheese With*, James is self-conscious about his weight when his mother criticizes his choice of clothes. His weight is mentioned again when he is warned about a chubby chaser, a person who would only want to be with him because of his weight, and when he comments that he should lose weight and not eat more ice cream. This physical characteristic is negatively mentioned by all the women in the trailer, which is meant to further illustrate how much he is struggling in life and not adhering to the successful aging model.

Billy, in *Last Vegas*, is getting married to a younger woman so he decides to have his bachelor party with his best friends in Vegas. Once they arrive, he instructs them to let loose, and potentially have sex, with the younger women who are in scantily clad clothes or bikinis. The trailer goes so far to offer one girl in small shorts and a bra to Sam. Although the audience does not know exactly why she is looking for Sam, it is presumed that they will have sex even though he is married and their age difference is close to thirty years. Nevertheless, the other characters are jealous of him. Likewise, in *Something's Gotta Give*, Harry exclusively dates women half his age. It is not only his preference, but his rule. Erica is suspicious of him since he is dating her daughter, Marin. In the trailer, Harry often diminishes women his own age, such as Erica, with comments such as the above exemplar. Shocked and offended by his statement, she confronts her

daughter about their relationship. Nevertheless, in true romantic comedy fashion, Harry falls in love with Erica finding she is the only one who understands him.

In both *Serious Moonlight* and *The English Teacher*, the older women are jealous of the younger women their men choose over them. Louise and Ian had been married for many years before he decided to have an affair with his younger assistant. After finding out about their relationship, Louise meets the mistress, Sara, who stops by the house expecting only Ian. Jealous and angry at the two of them, Louise sends Sara away after she kidnaps Ian to make him fall back in love with her. Her only comment about Sara is that while she is beautiful, her intelligence does not compare to Louise's. Though she is upset from just learning about the affair, Louise's aggression is based in jealously of the young, blonde woman.

Linda (*The English Teacher*) in a spontaneous moment of passion has sex with an ex-student. After telling him they couldn't be together, she finds him kissing a current high school student. Her jealousy is apparent when she catches them. Jason confronts Linda and explicitly yells about their sexual history. This leads to chaos as other students hear his confession. Though she doesn't want to be with him, being replaced by someone so quickly and much younger hurts Linda causing her to get into a car accident. Once Linda and Louise discover the younger woman, they become emotional and aggressive which is intended to be humorous.

It appears that giving preference to youth and stereotyping younger characters as highly sexualized without much other depth is meant to show the older characters in a positive light. The older characters are more experienced and savvy, but still struggle with their identity and relationships. The younger characters are created for the purposes of forwarding the plot or further illustrating the age of the main characters. However, youthfulness is still presented as

more desirable, equally by the men and women. The preference towards youth solidifies

successful aging's place in the trailers.

The Traditional Gendering of Romance

Within the trailers, the way love is portrayed on screen determines what is believed to be

romantic. In life, how men and women act in relationships is based on the personality of the

individuals and the cultural scripts influenced by history and society (Wood, 1994). By

evaluating behaviors in romantic relationships, it can easily reveal the underlying tendencies and

expectations. The analysis of the data found an impressive amount of traditional gender roles,

especially in regards to the heteronormative standard of men pursuing women in relationships

and age gaps in the relationships. These were unexpected themes which were quite pervasive

across the trailers. Though the gender role themes do not directly connect to the successful aging

theoretical lens, their prevalence was so impactful that is was relevant to include in these results.

Wood (1994) explained that the cultural script specifies men and women's roles,

particularly that "men should initiate, plan, and direct activities and have greater power within

the relationship" (p. 191). The trailers integrate this script into the plot, with the men inviting the

women on dates, proposing a sexual relationship, or taking control as the relationship begins.

The other theme related to gender relations is May-December romances. May-December

relationships are when the younger person is in the spring of their life and the older is in the

wintering (Shary & McVittie, 2016). Although this term is never used in the trailers, there are

relationships where the characters have a large age gap of 15-30 years. Often these relationships

are older men and younger women. Historically rooted in centuries of older men using younger

women to impregnate, this concept has influenced the current social perception and comfort with

these relationships (Shary & McVittie, 2016). The May-December romances in the trailers did

reverse the roles with a younger man and an older woman, however, the norm was with older men-younger women. Furthermore, when the roles were reversed the older women questioned the relationship, not sure the romance could withstand their age gap.

The Male Pursuit

The men in the trailers range from charming partners to bumbling individuals nervous to talk to women. Nevertheless, it is expected that the men will take charge and initiate the relationship. Some of the romances are new, though others are rejuvenating an already existing relationship. In both cases, however, the women wait to be persuaded to continue the romance.

Narrator:	He's a little insensitive.
Leah:	I'm 65!
Oren:	I've sold houses older than you and in a lot worse condition.
Leah:	That makes me feel good.
Oren:	It's a compliment.

And So It Goes, 2014

Paul:	This may sound strange, but would you like to go on a date with me?
Meryl:	We had dinner last week.
Paul:	And I thought that went well until the murder. I'll pay.

Did You Hear About the Morgans?, 2009

Bill:	I wanna have lunch with you. What's your name?
Carol:	Yes.
Bill:	Your name is yes?
Carol:	Carol.

Bill: Bill.

I'll See You in My Dreams, 2015

Harvey: Let me make it up to both of us and I'll buy you lunch.

Kate: Thanks very much, but I don't know you and you don't know me.

Harvey: That's exactly why we should have lunch together.

Last Chance Harvey, 2008

Jake: You look good Janie.

Jane: Yeah.

Jake: No, you do. You always do. Your hair is shorter.

Jane: Longer.

Jake: I like it.

It's Complicated, 2009

Jacob: Hi, can I buy you a drink?

Woman 1:   Uh, huh.

Jacob: Wanna get outta here? Let's get out of here.

Woman 2:   Yeah.

Crazy, Stupid, Love, 2011

Some of the men in these exemplars, and in the trailers either try a direct approach or begin with

a compliment. Oren in *And So It Goes* is an unhappy man when he meets Leah. Beginning

contentiously, Oren uses a compliment to try and mend their relationship so it could develop into

something deeper. Unfortunately, for Oren he doesn't realize that by talking about Leah's age

and equating her body to a falling apart house, she is offended. Even after she shows her disgust,

he still believes he has said something positive. He also believes that a compliment about her appearance would be welcomed, possibly even more because she is older. His time out of the dating game has caused him to not understand what the proper protocol is for flirting. Paul (*Did You Hear About the Morgans?*) is also nervous about asking out Meryl. Interestingly, he is already married to Meryl, but this nervousness is due to their estranged relationship. Taking the whole trailer into consideration, the viewer can assume that Paul cheated on Meryl which caused their separation. During a dinner where Paul tries again to rectify his mistake, they witness a murder. This sends them from New York City into the witness protection program, where they must deal with their relationship issues in a small country town. After a series of romantic moments, Paul decides to invite Meryl out on a date. Even though he is hoping to be forgiven for his transgressions and it would make more sense for him to be pursuing her, he is following a traditional dating protocol which involves gifts and dinner dates.

The next two exemplars also demonstrate the common invitation to a meal. Bill and Carol (*I'll See You in My Dreams*) have only met briefly before Bill asks Carol to lunch. Wanting to get to know her better, he decides to directly ask her out. Carol's husband died many years ago, but when Bill invites her she expresses nervous certainty when she agrees. Though she wants to go with him, she is not experienced with dating and it has been awhile since she has been interested in someone. Bill is played with sexual confidence and masculinity, illustrated by him continuously chewing on a cigar. The audience doesn't learn much about Bill's relationship background; however, it is assumed he is not inexperienced. *Last Chance Harvey* doesn't display as much confidence as Bill. After being fired and excluded from his daughter's wedding ceremony, Harvey meets Kate in a London airport bar. He snaps at her when they meet which is why he offers to buy her lunch. Interestingly, she initially declines since he is a stranger. In the

above exemplars, only two show the women responding immediately and positively. Harvey

must convince Kate to go out with him. Both seem nervous about the prospect of a date, which

implies inexperience as well. While the age gap between Kate and Harvey wouldn't exactly be

considered a May-December romance, there is at least a 10-year difference. Kate is younger, but

their age difference is never mentioned in the trailer.

Inversely, *It's Complicated* follows a divorced couple of the same ages as they discover

they still have feelings for each other after many years. Meeting in a hotel bar, Jake compliments

Jane's hair, though he doesn't seem to remember her haircut before, implying inattention in their

relationship. Again, the compliment the man chooses to give is based on the physical. She

initially isn't interested in Jake's flirting, but later in the trailer the bar scene is shown again

revealing them sensually dancing. In another moment in the trailer, Jake waits outside of Jane's

house until her date leaves assuming he can enter her home and kiss her. Since they have been

together before, Jake and Jane are somewhat comfortable with each other, but the nervousness is

still present. Conversely in a unique moment in the study, *Crazy, Stupid, Love* shows how

aggressive male pursuit can become. After Calvin separates from his wife, he watches Jacob, a

young man, take home many young beautiful women. He is admired and Calvin is then taught

how to emulate his behavior. The women do not speak much, only agreeing to go home with

Jacob. He holds all the power and emotions do not seem to be involved. Calvin starts to take

women home using the same tactics halfway through the trailer. Eventually, near the end of the

trailer Jacob falls in love which is implied to be more successful than sleeping with multiple

women. Nevertheless, the woman he falls for is still someone he pursued very boldly in the bar,

the difference is they fall in love which allows for more meaning to their relationship.

The Viability of the Relationship

Though women in May-December relationships question their relationships, they are not the only ones. The women worry far more than the men about whether the romance will last. Research has found that women will more often think reflectively and think of the others who could be affected by a situation (Wood, 1994). Though this may be trained behavior by society, women have become conscious of their fears and those closest to them which results in concern for the sustainability of their relationship.

Doris:	He's very different than me. Seems impossible.
Roz:	You need to find common interests.

Hello, My Name is Doris, 2015

Rosie:	I decided we shouldn't go out anymore.
Izzie:	Why? I like him.
Rosie:	I'm trying to be mature.
Izzie:	That's not really your style.

I Could Never Be Your Woman, 2009

Sarah:	How do people just know what they want? I have never known what I wanted. I can't believe I just did that.
	[Sarah kisses Beau]
	So, inappropriate. I didn't, I mean I really...

*Rumor Has It...,*2005

Linda:	Because of the play, we must be professional.
Jason:	Right.

The English Teacher, 2013

Elizabeth:	Look, you're complicated and confusing. Alex and I don't need that in our lives right now.
Arlen:	Yes, you do.

<div align="center">The Answer Man, 2009</div>

Jane:	What about the fact that I am now the other woman? I'm the one we hate.
Joanne:	He was yours first.
Jane:	True.

<div align="center">It's Complicated, 2009</div>

Brenda:	Is this some kind of game?
Harry:	That many men hurt you that you can't trust one?

<div align="center">Meet the Browns, 2008</div>

The women express the concerns that the audience may be feeling about their relationships. Voicing their fears, they illustrate anxiety about trusting their relationship. Doris (*Hello, My Name is Doris*) has fallen in love with John, a younger man in her office. In this exemplar, she worries that her crush will never result in a relationship because of their differences, mainly their age difference of about thirty years. Throughout the trailer, it is unknown whether John feels similarly about Doris, but he is never shown questioning if a relationship with her would work. Doris' best friend, Roz, is initially supportive of her attraction and offers solutions. This support lags later in the trailer when Roz argues that John is not old enough for a realistic relationship with Doris. *I Could Never Be Your Woman* uses Rosie's daughter, Izzie, to convince Rosie that being with Adam, her younger boyfriend, would not be an issue. Izzie judges her mother's

relationship based on how she feels about Adam as an individual, and age is not a consideration. Rosie believes that breaking up is the rational response to their age difference, which Izzie finds out of character for Rosie. Feeling societal pressure and fear of a good relationship, Rosie pulls back from Adam, though by the end of the trailer her questioning has lessened enough to stay with him.

Rumor Has It... follows Sarah as she discovers *The Graduate* story is based on her Pasadena family. Hoping to find a missing part of herself, Sarah searches for the man her mother slept with before her wedding. Sarah's mother's lover, Beau, is the older man who has found financial and career success, but has not found success in love. Though Sarah is engaged she finds herself attracted to Beau. She questions how people know what they want in life and a relationship, a confidence she has never had. Impulsively, she kisses Beau resulting in them having sex. Sarah spends the rest of the trailer questioning why she slept with Beau which disrupted her happy relationship with her fiancé. Beau on the other hand, is so confident he is borderline smug and never questioned their relationship. Similarly, Jacob in *The English Teacher* doesn't ask questions after he has sex with his former teacher. However, Linda was uneasy about her decision to sleep with Jacob and chose to break off the relationship before it began. Concerned about her job and the play the two of them were working on, she believes having sex with Jacob was a mistake. Unlike Jacob, Linda considers multiple individuals, the quality of their work and the ramifications their relationships could trigger.

Once Elizabeth in *The Answer Man,* realizes that she is falling for Arlen, who has struggled in life, she considers ending the relationship to protect herself and her young son from heartbreak. Arlen hasn't considered how his influence could disrupt Elizabeth and most importantly her son, Alex's life. Because she has a child, Elizabeth must consider how her

relationship will affect her son, protecting him from the difficulties of separation. Jane and Jake

(*It's Complicated*) have been divorced with children for years. Even though they are grown,

when Jane and Jake enter a sexual relationship their children are a consideration. Another

consideration is Jake's current wife, the woman he had an affair with when he was married to

Jane. Jake never questions that he wants to be back with Jane, but she questions the morality of

their rejuvenated relationship. Confessing to her friends about the affair, they support her

believing this to be karma and that Jane has possession over Jake not his current wife. Not only

does Jane worry about her situation, she also reveals their opinions on possession in

relationships. Even though Jane hasn't been Jake's wife for years her friends still believe she has

the option to claim him since she was his first wife. This rationalization does not stop Jane from

being concerned about her decisions, eventually pulling back from Jake who even at the end of

the trailer still pursues her.

Finally, *Meet the Browns*' Brenda has struggled in love throughout her life. Even the men

she has children with have not supported her or them. Because of this, Brenda has a deep seeded

distrust of men. When she overhears the theory that Harry might only be paying attention to her

because her son is a basketball gold mine, Brenda worries about his intentions. He never

expresses any concern as he pursues her. Of course, in true romantic comedy nature, Harry just

cares for her and her children with no ill motives and the trailer implies they stay together in the

end.

Love in May-December Romances

This section is not meant to disparage the love that can occur between people of different

ages, rather it identifies the normalized representation these trailers employ when depicting age

differences. Through quantitative analysis, men and women were found to be equally

represented. There were 214 female characters, 50.8%, and 206 male characters, 48.9%. After

further crosstab analysis, there was an interesting result. Within the 0-17 age range, gender was

fairly evenly split – 47.4% (female) and 52.6% (male). However, 18-30 year olds were far more

female than male – 69.6% (female) and 30.4% (male). The next three age ranges all favored

male: 31-44 – 48.5% (female) and 51.5% (male); 45-64 – 45.5% (female) and 54.5% (male); 65-

75 – 41.5% (female) and 58.5% (male). Interestingly though, female characters far outweigh

males in the final age group, 75+ – 71.4% (female) and 28.6% (male). These results show that

women are favored in youthful or elderly roles, possibly because younger women are acceptable

for older men, even viewed as a way to prove success if a man dates a younger woman. Old

women may be more conventional in an older role, comforting the audience in a matronly

manner. Nevertheless, in many cases the younger characters are utilized to forward the plot for

the older characters' development.

Ray:	Be honest. If this were a reality dating show, would I be kicked off already and you would be onto the next guy?
Mirabelle:	Uh... [she smiles]
	Shopgirl, 2005
Julien:	Your dad is going to be okay.
Marin:	He's not my dad.
Julien:	I'm sorry, your granddad is going to be okay.
	Something's Gotta Give, 2003
Alex:	Did you ever hear of the band Pop?

Sophie:	Yeah of course, everybody has. They had that ridiculous hair and those ridiculous outfits. Oh my god, you're one of them.

Music and Lyrics, 2007

Sarah:	You're Mrs. Robinson.
Katherine:	Huh.

Rumor Has It..., 2005

Kate:	Wakey wakey Professor Hayes.
Screen:	england's ultimate bachelor

Some Kind of Beautiful, 2014

Charlotte:	Lovely day, Mr. Wildhorn.
Monte:	It's shaping up to be a considerably lovely day. Spot, that lady has a way of making me sit taller in the saddle.

The Magic of Belle Isle, 2012

These exemplars are a small example of the relationships that portray age differences. An interesting theme within these romances is that they have a high likelihood that the couple does not stay together. Although the trailers offer some vague answers, they often do imply that the couples closer in age would be a better fit. *Shopgirl* is a great example of that concept. Ray and Mirabelle have a large age gap, further illustrated by Ray's financial success and Mirabelle's unsuccessful department store job. Mirabelle reveals a quiet maturity, nevertheless the introduction of Jeremey offers Mirabelle a younger alternative. Though it may seem that Ray is nervous on his date with Mirabelle, he clearly is confident enough to directly ask how she is feeling. Her lack of response makes the audience question her decision between the two men.

Comparably, Julien in *Something's Gotta Give* is Harry's doctor who cares for him after he has a heart attack. Worried about his condition, Harry's current girlfriend Marin is mistaken for his granddaughter. Their age difference is over forty years, so the assumption by the other characters is that they are not romantically involved, instead are likely to be family. As Harry explains, he finds comfort in the younger woman since they are less complicated and he has been dating them for over forty years. He eventually realizes that Marin's mother, Erica, is the better fit since she truly understands him and is an individual he could have a relationship with. In the exemplar scene, Julien is being used as society's voice to shame Marin for dating an older man. In this case, Marin is sexy and youthful increasing Harry's status however, Marin is questioned for her choice of boyfriend. Nevertheless, not all age differences are condemned.

Sophie and Alex (*Music and Lyrics*) do not have too large of an age gap, only about 10 years. The age difference was illustrated by explaining that Sophie was not the targeted age group for Alex's band, rather her older sister remembers them with extreme excitement. Upon one of their first few meetings, Sophie mocks the band's fashion style clearly without nostalgia or fondness, which identifies the age difference. Interestingly though, the only concern about their relationship is whether they can maintain their professional relationship while being romantic and having sex. There are little to no mentions, apart from this exemplar, that identify the age gap. Their equal partnership still requires Alex to prove to Sophie, while pursuing her, that he is ready for a relationship after so many years alone. Sophie falls into a professional relationship with Alex after he discovers her lyrical talent during her job of watering his plants. Able to quickly change careers, she follows him into a successful career. These traditional dynamics are underlying, but do not dominate the trailer. Instead, the trailer focuses on the

humorous transition Alex experiences allowing him to truly fall in love with Sophie rather than sleeping with women without much emotional meaning.

Rumor Has It... is somewhat different than other trailers in that it has two May-December relationships. Sarah's grandmother, Katherine, slept with the young Beau, the age of her daughter. This is the May-December relationship which results in Katherine becoming the character of Mrs. Robinson. Surprisingly, in I Could Never Be Your Woman, another older woman-younger man relationship, Rosie (the older woman) is also called Mrs. Robinson. The second May-December relationship in Rumor Has It... is between Sarah and Beau, a romance that disrupts Sarah's life and prior engagement. Katherine as Mrs. Robinson is not viewed in a positive light, instead Katherine is still seen as a manipulator taking advantage of a young man. She is punished for her relationship with a younger person by becoming more self-conscious about aging. Richard (Some Kind of Beautiful) is punished for his relationship with a younger woman, but in a more concrete way than Katherine. Where Katherine became concerned about aging, Richard's wife, Kate, falls in love with a man her own age. When Kate meets Richard as a student, she admires him and his status as a well-regarded professor. During this time, Richard holds the power in the relationship and is comfortable in his environment. Once he moves to California to be with Kate and their child, he begins to lose that power ultimately losing his wife. He then must discover who he is wants to be with, ultimately a woman closer to his age but still younger.

Monte has also been struggling and even though Charlotte is going through a divorce, her children and positive outlook allows him to find himself again. These two have both been married before, and now are looking for something to make them happy later in life. And while Charlotte would not be considered young, their age gap is approximately 30 years. Monte and

Charlotte never kiss or get physically close in the trailer. Their date is quiet as they sit outside

talking about life and drinking wine. This choice could be due to their age gap or Monte's

physical disability; however, the trailer does focus more on the emotional development

Charlotte's influence has on Monte rather than their romantic relationship.

Most of the trailers do not address the age differences between couples, rather cues such

as these exemplars illustrate the way May-December romances are portrayed. The romances are

normalized, though as explained before older women-younger men are likely to be questioned.

For the most part, the older character realizes their emotional connection is better with the

character their age, leaving the younger to find a better fit. The presence of these romances was

unforeseen since the main characters are older; nevertheless, youth is desired even if ultimately it

is not chosen.

Relating Class, Race and Wealth in Successful Aging

When the conceptualization of successful aging was first created by Havighurst (1961),

he meant for it to become the theory for the "greatest good for the greatest number" (p. 8). Then

when Rowe and Kahn (1997) emphasized successes and failures, they placed the responsibility

in the hands of the individual (Katz & Calasanti, 2014). They believed successful aging could be

obtained through good choices, behaviors and enough effort (Katz & Calasanti, 2014). Although

this may seem beneficial, all individuals do not have access to the same lifestyle and care due to

their economic level. Sociologists have long since criticized the concept of status-bound

lifestyles which are difficult to maintain without a high level of accessibility (Katz & Calasanti,

2014). Chapman (2005) argues that by theorizing about a model to determine if an individual has

aged well ignores the opportunity to understand how those aging find meaning and value in their

lives. Since physical or cognitive disabilities result in a negative categorization, unsuccessful

aging adults may be stigmatized or marginalized (Minkler & Fadem, 2002). For many, structural

inequalities including race, gender, and class affect opportunities and choices shaping how one is

categorized (Chapman, 2005). Furthermore, by placing the responsibility on the individual it

suggests that ageism towards that individual is justified since they did not age in a "successful"

manner (Calasanti, 2015). Without access to high quality healthcare and the income level to

engage in social activities, it would be difficult to be labeled as having successfully aged.

Though few of the trailers directly talked about money, they did express a sense of wealth

through conceptual and concrete cues. Wealth was illustrated in the clothes, cars, houses and the

comfort the characters had when spending money. There is no one answer for why wealth was so

prominent in the trailer, rather it is likely a combination of factors. When an individual is

financially stable, they have the chance to concentrate on other aspects of their lives including

relationships. By following wealthy characters, the trailers harken back to the devices of

historical screwball comedies where wealth almost became a character itself (Gehring, 2002).

Another influence is the race of the characters which aligned with previous studies of

Hollywood overall (BUNCHE, 2016; Smith, Choueiti & Pieper, 2016). Through the quantitative

analysis, it was found that the characters were predominantly White; 421 characters were coded

and 333 (79.1%) were White. The next largest group was Black at 50 characters (11.9%). Asian,

Latino, Multi-racial were all less than 3.3% of the coded characters. There were no Native

Americans present on screen. As discussed in the Literature Review, Hollywood has historically

and continuously given preference to White stories without representing other racial groups (J.T.,

2016). During 2013-2014, people of color were underrepresented 3 to 1 against White film leads

(BUNCHE, 2016). USC Annenberg's study on diversity in Hollywood found there were only

26.5% underrepresented speaking characters in 2014 (Smith et al., 2016). "The hashtag

#OscarsSoWhite should be changed to #HollywoodSoWhite, as our findings show that an epidemic of invisibility runs throughout popular storytelling" (Smith et al., 2016, p. 9).

In the current sample, there were only five films with leading Black actors or actresses. Charlene in *Bringing Down the House* and Brenda in *Meet the Browns* outwardly struggle with poverty. Charlene escapes from prison hoping the lawyer she befriends will help her clear her name from the armed robbery she didn't commit. Brenda is dealing with extreme poverty after losing her job, unable to pay for childcare and food. Finally, though Archie (*Last Vegas*) and Monte (*The Magic of Belle Isle*) are not identified as low income, they also are not wealthy. Alex (*5 Flights Up*) does live in a nice Brooklyn apartment with his wife, Ruth, but the trailer opens with Alex explaining that they could afford the place because they bought it before the area was cool. Interestingly, Archie, Monte, and Alex are all played by Morgan Freeman who is an A-list established actor. It is important to note the distinction that though Charlene and Brenda are Black characters, Archie, Monte, and Alex are characters that happen to be Black and could have been possibly cast as another race. However, the fact that all five of the Black leads are not given the opportunity to be wealthy implies a bias towards the assumption that Black characters would likely be financially disadvantaged. Overall, by portraying significantly more White characters the filmmakers are limiting the diversity of stories represented.

Brenda:	Baby, this is for you.
Tosha:	All we gotta eat is oatmeal?
Michael:	We've been here before and don't we always make it? We're gonna be alright Ma.
	Meet the Browns, 2008
Cox:	We have come to a parting of ways.

Larry:	This sounds like your firing me.

Larry Crowne, 2011

Deidre:	I'm from the studio. Deidre Hearn.
Charlie:	Are you sleeping with anyone?

The Deal, 2008

Lonnie:	You know who is supposed to be staying here this weekend? Fifty.

Last Vegas, 2013

Adam:	You can buy and name a star Meryl. It's $75 and you get a celestial map and a certificate.
Paul:	I was really looking for something a little bit more impressive. Can I buy a constellation?

Did You Hear About the Morgans?, 2009

Marnie:	I know I'm over stepping my boundaries, but what if I gave you the money?
	[talking to Jillian about her wedding dress]

The Meddler, 2014

Douglas:	It's a luxury development where all the residents are in their golden years.
Golfer:	Like the coast of Florida?
Douglas:	Well, yeah, but more elephants.

The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel, 2011

> Bill: People that retire with all their money, they don't know what to do with themselves. I didn't want to end up like that. I don't like being alone.
>
> *I'll See You in My Dreams*, 2015

As discussed above, *Meet the Browns* follows a single mother struggling to put food on the table for her three children. After it is revealed that Brenda has lost her job, this scene shows the seriousness of their money problems. In a turn of events, Brenda's father dies leaving her a house in Georgia. Her romantic interest then fixes the house into a beautiful home. The Georgian family feeds and helps take care of Brenda and the kids. From the Chicago projects to a southern town, Brenda is one of the few characters that shows the impact of poverty. Brenda is a strong character, but she almost perfectly fits the stereotype of a young Black mother struggling in an urban area. It isn't until her father dies that she is given a chance to become middle-class. And while it is extremely difficult to pull a family out of poverty, Harry plays Prince Charming offering her a life in Georgia and paying for the remodel of her inherited home. This instills traditional gender roles and stereotypical plots about how to escape poverty.

Larry Crowne spent years working at a department store gaining employee of the month eight times, until management decided to fire him due to his lack of higher education. Once Larry was fired, he then must become a diner cook to compensate during his time in community college. He continues to work throughout the trailer unashamed and optimistic about his future prospects. Larry's neighbors who help push him to go back to school are a Black couple that run a large full time garage sale. Though there are other major characters of color, none hold a position of power or could be identified as particularly wealthy in the trailer. These hard-working

characters end in a better situation than they began, showing kindness and persistence are the paths to success. Plus, once their immediate financial concerns are addressed they can be open for love and a relationship – a theme throughout the trailers with struggling characters.

The Deal tells the love story of a producer and studio executive on set. Though Deidre, the studio executive, is the one with money not Charlie, the out of luck producer, they are both comfortable working on a multi-million production. Charlie is not dressed in business or professional clothes, but asserts his power through sexual advances meant to entice Deidre. This high-style life is focused on wealth and status. The only two characters of color in the trailer are presented for the purposes of humor. A woman of Middle Eastern descent is overly sexualized as she pours chocolate on a man. The other is Bobby who is ridiculed for his acting and conversion to Judaism. Though the film is meant to satirize the film industry, the power, talent, and intelligence is given to the White characters. By using the characters of color as props instead of developing them, they become the stereotype the trailer may be trying to mock. Not only is the entertainment industry meant to be glamourous, but Deidre wears expensive looking suits with a fashionable haircut. These aspects identify her power and wealth. The trailer also shows the two of them on the red carpet, a symbol of wealth, status, and power. Through this glittering image of the industry, the audience is brought into a different world that is unattainable for most.

Last Vegas also portrays high status during Billy's bachelor party in Vegas. Staying in a hotel suite originally meant for rapper Fifty Cent, the group never discusses money though they are wearing expensive suits, buying drinks, and in one shot they are laying out hundreds of dollars presumably to spend. Although Las Vegas is a possible vacation for many, being able to spend large amounts of money and stay in a luxury suite is not likely since the "overall average household income was $65,751 in 2014" (Frankel, 2016, para. 2). Billy seems to be the

wealthiest, who interestingly also has the easiest time with the younger women. One younger

woman even comments on his engagement to his young fiancée stating that he must be rich to

have the affections of a younger woman.

Before Paul and Meryl enter the witness protection program in *Did You Hear About The*

Morgans? they are a wealthy New York couple at the height of their careers. Their apartment

shown in an early scene has a wide NYC skyline view. In this exemplar, Paul and his assistant

discuss gifts for Meryl to win her back as they walk through a high end corporate office. Paul is

willing to pay high costs to show his affection, also taking her to a nice restaurant for dinner.

Their clothes, jewelry/watches, and multiple phones illustrate their wealth in NYC. Throughout

the rest of the trailer when they are taken to Wyoming, Paul and Meryl disparage the country

town and the lifestyle of its residents showing their arrogance through humor, though the trailer

makes a point to show the kindness of the country. On the other hand, Marnie (*The Meddler*) is

lonely after the death of her husband and decides to visit her daughter's friends. Marnie then

offers to pay for Jillian's wedding dress, and though the audience doesn't know how much the

dress cost it is reasonable to assume a dress in a bridal boutique would cost over $1,000. Marnie

gives the money away freely, convincing Jillian to allow her to pay for the dress. To manage her

loneliness, she uses her large insurance inheritance to help buy the affections and interest of

those around her. Marnie also is shown throughout the trailer at Apple purchasing new products.

Though Marnie isn't arrogant and gives away her money, she has a high level of disposable

income uncommon to most individuals.

Both Douglas (*The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel*) and Bill (*I'll See You in My Dreams*)

discuss their future after retirement. Douglas is more abstract in mention of money, pointing out

that the hotel is a luxury development and therefore potentially expensive, especially since his

fellow golfer equates it to the coast of Florida. They are also shown at a nice golf course in England, wearing proper golfing attire thereby displaying their wealth. Throughout this trailer and in the sequel, *The Second Best Exotic Hotel*, the somewhat wealthy English and American hotel residents are served and then become friends with the local Indians. Particularly apparent in the first film, the characters are not used to seeing Indian people and an environment so different from their western homes. Muriel and Jean are specifically unhappy in India. Muriel continuously is concerned about the different food and the fact that there are Indians around the hotel. By the second film she has become more comfortable in India, even becoming the hotel manager. Jean on the other hand never connects to the Indian people or culture. In the second film's trailer, she is only visiting which implies that she has left her husband and India. Though both of their behavior is looked down upon, it does illustrate a part of the population that shares these fearful tendencies of differences in culture and race.

On the contrary, Bill directly discusses money and spending it. Afraid of not using his money while he can, Bill purchased a yacht. Though he doesn't spend his money ostentatiously, he does not share any concerns for not having money. In fact, he would be categorized as having successfully aged with enough money to be active later in life. Retirement is thought to be a time to spend the money that has accrued over a lifetime of working. However, this is not possible for everyone. Though it is interesting to watch, most individuals will not have the finances to purchase a yacht or live without worrying about money. After the analysis of just the wealth and class aspects, *Larry Crowne* is one of the more progressive, in that it shows Larry being fired (a common occurrence after the financial crisis in 2008), deciding to make a career change and return to school, and needing a job to sustain him through his education. Rarely do romantic comedies show the struggles and the realistic steps to gaining success. In most cases, the trailers

portray the wealthy, ignoring a portion of the population within median income levels. In the end, fairytale endings or solutions garner unrealistic expectations, and only showing wealth could build resentments and guilt about the audience's lives.

Trailers utilize persuasive content that has been created for a specific audience. This study's sample of trailers uniquely alternates between content focused on lifting the age stigma and instilling successful aging and stereotypes of aging. To combat depression and struggling, romance and active sexual lives are the solution. Characters are also portrayed within the confines of traditional gender roles where men initiate relationships, women question the relationship and overwhelmingly youth is desired by both women and men. Nevertheless, the trailers promote representation and open sexuality for older adults, even as they prescribe relationships, wealth, and physically fit living.

Chapter Five: Discussion & Conclusion

In 2003, the presence of a love story about older adults was somewhat new. The next twelve years presented love between aging couples with relative comfort. The study was meant to determine how pervasive the successful aging model, and therefore ageist content, was in romantic comedy film trailers with baby boomers. The overarching premise across all the themes was that while aging characters were meant to find love and discover their sexual desires later in life, the trailers ultimately prescribed the successful aging model to varying degrees. The trailers have shown that older bodies are desirable and attractive, but continuously highlighted and compared older characters to their younger counterparts. Instances surrounding aging are discussed and depicted by both the younger and older characters.

Although older characters reflect on the stigma of age, they are encouraged to keep up their physical appearance and social engagement levels – direct expectations from the successful aging model. The widespread nature of the study's theoretical lens was unexpected. Since the films are from the same genre, the trailers took similar approaches. Weaving humor, romance, characters and situations relatable to an aging population the trailers' formula is entertaining but the underlying messages focus on the ideal rather than an individualistic approach. The following sections conclude this study: Study Summary, Implications, Limitations, Future Research and Conclusion.

Study Summary

Using successful aging as a guiding theoretical lens allowed for exploration into the messages present in the trailers. These results found that a surprising amount of the content followed the successful aging model in regards to physical ability, active engagement and sexual lives, and high wealth. This indicts both societal and genre expectations for this age group as

they search for love. By using this content, the marketers believe this material will be interesting and persuasive to potential viewers.

Directly Addressing Successful Aging

Three out of the four themes found in this study centered on how the trailers tackled age, and as a result overwhelmingly recommended successful aging attributes. First, it was clear the words "age" or "aging" and "old" or "older" started the conversation about age. This study found these two root words were used a combined forty-one times, therefore answering quantitative RQ1. Anxious about the opportunities available in old age and the physical changes further separating them from youth, older characters express a more negative association with aging. However, there were a few instances meant to positively lift the stigma. Often the characters' romantic partner explained their attraction and admiration encouraging the character to view themselves through their eyes and see their beauty. Others were reinvigorated to pursue new career goals and intellectual pursuits. The term "age" also was connected to family as older characters' behavior was questioned and futures contemplated. Largely, these two words were used within a romantic or familial context, meant to illustrate what the trailers view as valuable.

As discussed in the first theme, (Successful) Aging and the Mid-Life Reevaluation: What's Left in Life?, situations revolve around aging and characters are continuously concerned about how old they are, especially in comparison to younger characters. As asked in qualitative RQ1 and RQ1a, the trailers do incorporate successful aging theory's recommendations for high physical, cognitive abilities and active engagement. Though older women are particularly at risk to express unease about their aging bodies, often comparing themselves to younger bodies, they also reflexively think about the expected behaviors for their age. Though this anxiety about aging and becoming older is expressed by male characters, it is overwhelmingly the women who

outwardly worry. In many cases, the women verbally express the fear of aging, whereas the men more often show their fear through their actions such as having affairs and/or sleeping with much younger women.

The characters also compare their bodies to their younger selves or other younger characters. This is done when the older characters wish for youth or the younger characters diminish the qualities of aging they deem inappropriate or unattractive, such as the stereotypical granny panties or when an older character demands to not be called a grandparent in public. Though some instances are aggressive or humorous, it stems from an anxiety about the future and loss of youth. During this period of life, two different discussions are common: death and the next stage of life. Since the characters are older it is not abnormal to be thinking about the death of themselves and their friends, however the situation is typically addressed humorously with only a few trailers contemplating death with a somber tone. Death as a topic is likely to have been included to add realism due to the ages of the characters, although grief is avoided except in *The Meddler* and *I'll See You in My Dreams*. These two exceptions follow widowers as they find new love and themselves in the process. Both women express their loneliness in the beginning of the trailers, but the new romance provides a distraction from their sadness that has lasted years. This topic is a window into the experiences of older adults, but the trailers' characters have avoided death and now must determine what they want to do.

Since these are romantic comedy films, the next stage of life is focused on relationships and using romance to alleviate the stress of age while giving direction to the characters' lives. Whether the characters were depressed or undergoing a life altering transformation, romance brought clarity and excitement thereby linking romance with success. Unexpectedly, in the trailers many characters were struggling in life, though a change was implied by the end of the

trailer. Facing difficulties such as divorce, affairs, death of a spouse, and empty nests the characters must determine what their next step is and for most love helped them personally develop and realize what was important. As discussed in Using Romance to Combat Struggling, the characters are faced with difficulties and to appease the romantic comedy viewer the solution is love. Interestingly, the relationships are meant to increase the engagement level of the characters which is a component of successful aging theory. After the romantic introduction, the characters transform into their best and/or true selves. The trailers continuously use the romance to trigger confidence and happiness. The future is unknown until the transformation occurs and then the relationship provides guidance (qualitative RQ2a). Before the transformation, the relationship could not be fully realized and while some of the trailers used love to change, others used younger characters to aid the older characters which gives the power to youth indicating they understand what is attractive and desirable. This not only does not allow for individualized aging but also privileges younger opinions over the older characters' preferences which is another example of the result for RQ1a.

Although the characters may be struggling emotionally or in their relationships, most are not worried about money. Detailed in the Relating Class, Race and Wealth in Successful Aging section, the successful aging model requires a certain level of income to maintain the physical and engagement levels. Without access to the proper services, individuals can have a difficult time sustaining status-bound lifestyles (Katz & Calasanti, 2014). Additionally, race, gender, and class inequalities affect opportunities and health services, therefore limiting who can be labeled as successfully aged (Chapman, 2005). The current study found that a majority of the trailers depict high status and wealth. Though the trailers do not directly announce wealth or high-class characters, it is highly apparent in cues including their homes, clothes, or high powered jobs.

These features illustrate a level of income that allows the characters to consider a romantic relationship since they aren't focused on surviving. When the characters are stressed about money or their financial situation, such as *Bringing Down the House*, *Meet the Browns*, or *I Want Someone to Have Cheese With* they must seemingly address or rectify these issues before the romance can occur or flourish. When the characters were not struggling, it is assumed that they were financial able and therefore money was not mentioned. It was only discussed if they were worried about money.

This level of wealth may be connected to the race of the characters who were predominantly White; of the 421 characters that were coded, 333 (79.1%) were White. Quantitative RQ2 speculated about the racial diversity visible in the trailers. Since the characters were overwhelmingly White, it illustrates a lack of representation among people of color. In the five trailers where the main characters were Black (the next highest group evaluated at 11.9% of the coded characters), they were not depicted as wealthy. In fact, two of the characters were struggling immensely. Brenda (*Meet the Browns*) is dealing with extreme poverty and Charlene (*Bringing Down the House*) is trying to clear her name of an armed robbery charge. These two instances are far different from the storylines in the other trailers. Brenda's poverty status is not used for humor and instead a plot device to push her to move from Chicago to Georgia. Charlene on the other hand is continuously used for laughs, from her punching Peter after he tries to wake her in the morning to her vernacular intended to portray a gangster lifestyle. Though other White characters must deal with a failing career like *I Want Someone to Eat Cheese With* and *Larry Crowne*, they still live in nice homes with few visible impacts. When money is not an issue, it is spent freely and without question. These characters would be categorized as successfully aged in this aspect. By having money, they can figure out what they want to do with the rest of their lives

without fear of being broke in retirement, plus they can also pursue a romantic relationship

another aspect of successful aging.

Prescribing Relationships

As discussed in It's About Passionate Sex, society has become more comfortable with

older adults' sexuality (Marshall, 2014; Marshall & Swinnen, 2014) and films have begun to

focus on revealing that shift (Shary & McVitte, 2014; Weitz, 2010). The current study's trailers

reflect the characters' desire to have sex, and committed relationships are given priority

(qualitative RQ2). Older adults were instructed to have sex, aligning the trailers' concepts with

successful aging which has incorporated sex as an identifier (Marshall, 2014). Although

character reactions ranged from comfort to fear of the topic, either way the characters were

searching for sex (RQ2). The explicitness of the message also varies among the trailers. The men

tended to be bolder in their announcements of sex, whereas the women were subtle in their

advancements or uncomfortable when the situation arose. Though when the women take a more

direct stand they are met with awkwardness as in *The Second Best Exotic Marigold Hotel*. When

Madge is introduced to Guy, the new man at the hotel, she candidly mentions her interest in

having at least a sexual relationship with him. Nevertheless, the other patrons' response is tense.

However, in the seven films directed by women (see Table 1), six of them depict the female

leads in sexual situations. These seven women are also financially stable and most are high-

powered career women. The women control the situation and yearn for sex, but sexual activity is

still not shown. Moreover, all the trailers shy away from any overt sexual messaging or

portrayals, though they try to normalize the discussion.

Although sex is a common topic and focus, the characters often long for youth

associating true beauty with youthfulness. The younger characters' bodies are viewed as the ideal

and comparisons favor them over older bodies, even though they are often one-dimensional sex

symbols. Successful aging instructs older adults to maintain youthful attributes, absent of disease

and disability (Rowe & Kahn, 1997). Both men and women desired the younger body, and older

women were envious of the younger characters and the attention received. However, by the end

of the trailers, frequently the older women were identified as the serious romantic partner. The

younger characters' purpose was to forward the plot and emphasize the older age of the main

characters.

These heterosexual situations and couples also followed traditional gender roles with men

primarily initiating the relationship and dating younger women with the common occurrence of

May-December relationships as revealed in The Traditional Gendering of Romance. Men have

historically been placed with the pressure to be the initiator and planner of romance (Wood,

1994). Almost exclusively the men were responsible for introducing themselves or the possibility

of a relationship. By inviting the women on a date or using compliments to flirt, the men either

were looking for a purely sexual relationship or a more serious connection. In most cases, the

women push back and reject their advances until the men win them over with genuine charm.

Overall, the women who are active in the initial reaction ultimately receive the lasting interest of

the men.

This push back also resulted in questioning the relationship. To introduce conflict into the

trailer, the women exclusively mistrusted their romance or attraction. Even though this could be

just a plot device, the men do not worry about the viability or long-term possibilities of the

relationship. Some of the female characters are concerned their differences with their romantic

interests is too great to overcome, whereas others do not trust their feelings or the intentions of

the men. Conversely, the men continue to pursue the women without stopping. This suggests that

women's questioning has become normalized in film and audiences would accept these situations enough to be intrigued.

Age was not a factor as women of all ages were anxious about their relationships, and women and men were equally represented with 214 female characters (50.8%) and 206 male characters (48.9%). On the other hand, two age groups were dominated by women: 75+ (71.4%) and 18-30 (69.6%). In the case of the 75+ group, women were possibly more represented due to the matronly and comforting qualities. The purpose of the content analysis (quantitative RQ2) was to determine the variation in representation of race, gender, and age. Though gender diversity is equal, the trailers still favored youth, particularly among younger women. Since it was common to find May-December relationships with younger women-older men, it follows that there would be a disproportional number of younger women to younger men. Though there were younger men-older women relationships, they were not as common and were more likely to be distrusted than the reverse. Not all the May-December romances addressed the age gap, but the difference was less noticeable if the characters had less than a 25-30-year gap. Unlike some of the other relationships, May-December romances had a high likelihood of breakup, and though some vague explanations were offered, the trailers implied that the couples closer in age were meant to be together. Though this preference for older women is seemingly progressive, the younger women are sexually interesting, where the older women are intellectually stimulating.

Even as the trailers hope to be diverse and portray realistic characters, past values of gender roles and successful aging can be found. It is not enough to simply place older characters on the screen. Generally, the messages in the trailers overwhelmingly adhered to successful aging and centered stories around older, white, middle to high-class adults. The final research question (qualitative RQ3) examined the general impressions of aging and relationships.

Separate from the successful aging framework, the trailers expressed fear of growing older as characters looked for solace in love. By depicting older adults in love and desiring sex shows older and younger adults that relationships are possible and wanted throughout life. Subjects of the emotional effects of divorce and relationships later in life are important to represent since these situations are shared by many, though topics of death and growing older are universal and should be discussed. The trailers have started to normalize aging and growing older no longer needs to be hidden and feared.

Implications

The purpose of this study was to determine the pervasiveness of successful aging content that film marketers believed would be persuasive in romantic comedies with leading actors/actresses of the baby boomer generation. By using a successful aging theoretical lens, this study has tried to determine the level of ageist content through successful aging theory recommendations that do not emphasize individual growth and development.

As mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, social identity theory and age identity theory have found that media images can affect how individuals view themselves (Tajfel, 1974). After group identification becomes salient, the group mentality is normalized therefore guiding behavior and attitude (McKinley, Mastro & Warber, 2014). Consequently, if an individual identified with a character or storyline, then the material seen in a trailer could influence how they view aging and what is possible during the later period of life. Through analysis of these trailers, this study provides data on the representation of older characters. Without an understanding of how the film industry portrays aging, changes to make films more diverse are difficult. From this study, it is clear further individualized representation is required. Since the characters conform to a successful aging stance, the films limit what the viewers think is normal.

The film industry can incorporate a few changes to begin providing audiences with a better image of aging. First, older characters from a range of ages need to be present in films. Individuals do not disappear after a certain age; therefore, characters of all ages should be portrayed on screen. Not including older adults in film could encourage the public to ignore or minimize older adults and avoid aging as a topic all together. Second, older characters cannot be used solely for plot devices or humor. Older adults have stories to tell and when characters are reduced to stereotypes it encourages a restricted view of aging, ignoring the opportunity to view older adults as full human beings. Third, romance, sex, and high activity levels are important for some, but films should not pity or guilt those that do not have or want this lifestyle. Though aspirational content is common in the romantic comedy genre, this discourse should not always provide simplistic answers allowing audiences to question their relationship or successful aging status. Overall, normalizing aging and promoting individualism is critical. By becoming aware of subtle ageist content, filmmakers and the public may be able to lift the stigma on growing older allowing more inclusion into society. Everyone should be permitted to figure out how to navigate aging and be judged based on who they are, not a standard formula.

Limitations

The limitations of this study largely center around the sample. Though the study focuses on romantic comedies, there is no set criteria or full list of this genre, especially as it pertains to romantic comedies with older leading actors and actresses. Influenced by genre experts (Grindon, 2011; Gehring, 2008; McDonald, 2007; Graves & Engle, 2006), the researcher created a way to determine whether a film was a romantic comedy and therefore applicable for the study (see Appendix B). Through this analysis, a 41-film sample was determined. However, another researcher may have identified other films more relevant or disqualified some in the current

sample. Each film was coded differently by IMDb and Movie Insider, thereby adding a complexity to the sampling process. Furthermore, not all the trailers were representative of the films. In fact, some emphasized sadness rather than the humor and romance.

Similarly, during sampling it was found that there are very few films with aging actors and actresses of color. Most of the characters, particularly the leading characters, were White. It is unknown why people of color were left out of the films and these stories were chosen to focus on rather than diversifying. It could be potentially due to the expectations of the age group. Baby boomers grew up during a period where mainstream film often portrayed White stories. There are romantic comedies with people of color, but the characters are typically from the Generation X and Millennial generations.

As discussed in the methodology section, the researcher is colored by the experience of being a Millennial. This perspective allowed for the researcher to approach the data and analysis from a unique outsider position leaning heavily on the successful aging lens. Nevertheless, the researcher could not personally and directly relate to the situations represented which may have limited some of the nuances grasped in the material.

Future Research

There are a variety of different avenues of research that could be pursued based on this thesis. Since there is little research on media representations of aging adults, the study's purpose was to identify if and how the trailers worked within a framework of successful aging theory. This theory should also be applied to other genres of film to analyze how aging is presented and discussed – if at all. Specifically, drama and romance films with aging characters are two that may focus on different aspects of growing old than romantic comedies. These may also have a

different target audience than romantic comedies and therefore could potentially depict age in a

more open manner.

Films targeted to a younger audience, but portraying older characters such as *Dirty*

Grandpa (2016) should also be examined within the confines of a successful aging framework.

Similarly, how romance and relationships are portrayed in younger versus older romantic

comedies is warranted since love at an older age is presented with different struggles and

complications than films with characters in their 20s-30s. Since the international film industry

has also become more prevalent and popular in recent years, this study's methodology should be

used to analyze other countries' films. The way age is represented is based on cultural

expectations, therefore it may alter the amount of ageist content.

However, future research should not be purely based in textual analysis. In-depth

interviews and/or focus groups need to be conducted to identify films' impact on how potential

viewers understand aging. As in previous research on successful aging, these types of films may

impact whether an older individual would categorize themselves as having successfully aged and

their impressions of the aging process. In the introduction of this thesis, social identity theory

was discussed to argue the significance of studying this kind of material, but to truly know if

these films influence both younger and older people's thoughts on aging human analysis needs to

occur.

This exploration into an underrepresented aspect of research is just the beginning of what

could and should be investigated. As Gen Xers and Millennials age, romantic comedies and other

genres need to be continuously studied to understand the discourse that affects perceptions of the

aging process. Since films' portrayal of getting older has changed drastically even in the last fifty

years (Shary & McVitte, 2016), it would make sense that in the next fifty years aging will be

represented much differently than today. Furthermore, having academic research on these topics may even help push the film industry into more progressive and individualized depictions benefiting all of society.

Conclusion

Films have spent much of history stereotyping older characters, and so it seems this new era could result in more inclusiveness. These 41 trailers provide a sample of how age depiction in Hollywood and independent films is being used to try to persuade viewers. The increase in older actors/actresses on screen allows for more diverse stories as the audience becomes more comfortable with topics including sex and death. However, the cinematic formula based in successful aging is limiting, even as the current scrutiny of equal racial, gender, sexual orientation, and age representation remains in the foreground. Filmmakers must navigate this cultural shift to ensure they are promoting individualized and reflective content. Academic research must continue to investigate these portrayals and use the data to encourage the film industry to separate from the successful aging standard and provide a wider-range of stories.

Appendix A – Sample with Director and Production Company List

Film	Year	Director	Prod. Company
Bringing Down the House	2003	Adam Shankman	Touchstone Pictures
Something's Gotta Give	2003	Nancy Meyers	Columbia Pictures
Meet the Fockers	2004	Jay Roach	Universal Pictures
The Perfect Man	2005	Mark Rosman	Universal Pictures
Shopgirl	2005	Anand Tucker	Touchstone Pictures
Rumor Has It...	2005	Rob Reiner	Warner Bros.
The Upside of Anger	2005	Mike Binder	New Line Cinema
I Could Never Be Your Woman	2007	Amy Heckerling	Bauer Martinez Studios
Because I Said So	2007	Michael Lehmann	Universal Pictures
Music and Lyrics	2007	Marc Lawrence	Warner Bros.
I Want Someone to Eat Cheese With	2007	Jeff Garlin	3 Arts Entertainment
Meet the Browns	2008	Tyler Perry	Tyler Perry Company
The Deal	2008	Steven Schacter	Peace Arch Entertainment Group
Last Chance Harvey	2008	Joel Hopkins	Overture Films
The Proposal	2009	Anne Fletcher	Touchstone Pictures
It's Complicated	2009	Nancy Meyers	Universal Pictures
Did You Hear About the Morgans?	2009	Marc Lawrence	Columbia Pictures

The Answer Man	2009	John Hindman	120dB Films
Solitary Man	2009	Brian Koppelman, David Levien	Millennium Films
All About Steve	2009	Phil Traill	Fox 2000 Pictures
Serious Moonlight	2009	Cheryl Hines	Night and Day Pictures
Crazy, Stupid, Love	2011	Glenn Ficarra, John Requa	Carousel Productions
Larry Crowne	2011	Tom Hanks	Universal Pictures
The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel	2011	John Madden	Blueprint Pictures
I Don't Know How She Does It	2011	Douglas McGrath	Weinstein Company
The Magic of Belle Isle	2012	Rob Reiner	Magnolia Pictures
Hope Springs	2012	David Frankel	Columbia Pictures
Darling Companion	2012	Lawrence Kasdan	Werc Werk Works
The English Teacher	2013	Craig Zisk	Artina Films
Last Vegas	2013	Jon Turteltaub	CBS Films
5 Flights Up	2014	Richard Loncraine	Lascaux Films
Ride	2014	Helen Hunt	Sandbar Pictures
Some Kind of Beautiful	2014	Tom Vaughan	PalmStar Media
The Meddler	2014	Lorene Scafaria	Anonymous Content
Words and Pictures	2014	Fred Schepisi	Latitude Productions
And So it Goes	2014	Rob Reiner	ASIG Productions
My Old Lady	2014	Israel Horovitz	BBC Films

The Rewrite	2015	Marc Lawrence	Castle Rock Entertainment
Hello, My Name is Doris	2015	Michael Showalter	Red Crown Productions
I'll See You in My Dreams	2015	Brett Haley	Two Flints
The Second Best Exotic Marigold Hotel	2015	John Madden	Babieka

Appendix B – Romantic Comedy Criteria

Since there is not full list of modern romantic comedies released in the last decade, the

researcher had to use scholarly material to create a criteria to determine an appropriate sample.

As typical with film and genre studies, this list is based on the researcher's strategic

interpretation. These determinations are a result of influences from the romantic comedy books

Grindon, 2011; Gehring, 2008; McDonald, 2007; Graves & Engle, 2006.

A film was considered a romantic comedy and therefore included in the sample through an

assessment of the below characteristics:

- Two characters engaged in physical interactions (holding hands, having sex, kissing,

  touching each other's arms or face, or hugging) or emotional interactions (loving glances,

  light hitting, laughing, smiling).

- The romance was the focus for a significant portion of the trailer.

  o The characters discussed the romance with other characters or thru narration.

  o The romantic characters were shown on screen together for longer than 5 seconds.

  o The romance drove conversations and actions.

- The characters generally discussed love and relationships.

- Typically, there was a friend archetype for the main character(s) to gain advice and

  discuss the relationship with.

- Some sort of conflict was introduced whether this is mistaken identity, personality or

  physical differences, or the timing of the relationship (Graves & Engle, 2006).

- Sentimentality influences such as self-reflectivity, doubt (Gehring, 2008), or romance

  genre influences.

- Seductive or romantic musical undertones employed (jazz including bass or violins). Music may also stay upbeat and whimsical.

- IMDb's and Movie Insider's coding of the film under Comedy and Romance.

    o Judgement must be used, as films were also coded under Drama and Romance or Drama and Comedy.

- Whether the romantic characters were featured on the film's poster.

- An assumption that the two characters may end up together.

Appendix C – Codebook

Race

- Black was identified/coded by the appearance of a person with dark brown to light brown skin and having tight textured hair.

- Latino was identified/coded by the appearance of a person with brown skin and wavy hair.

- Asian was coded by the appearance of a person with straight, dark hair, fair skin and mono-lids eyes.

- Native American was coded by the appearance of a person with copper skin and dark hair.

- White was coded by the appearance of a person with fair skin, lighter hair, oval eyes.

- Multi-racial (racial ambiguity) was coded as the appearance of a person with features typically associated with two or more races.

- Other was coded for individuals who do not singularly match the above categorizations or cannot be properly identified.

Gender

- Male was identified/coded by the appearance of multiple characteristics which were combined from a list of below factors:
    - Facial hair
    - Shorter hair as determined by traditional standards (shaven, cropped, or styled in a more masculine fashion)
    - Larger build
    - Lack of breasts

- Lower pitch in voice

- Female was identified/coded by the appearance of multiple characteristics which were combined from a list of below factors:

  - Breasts

  - Smaller features (hands, face, torso)

  - Shorter in height

  - Higher pitch in voice

Age

- Group 0-17 was identified/coded by the estimated appearance of the below characteristics:

  - Smaller build and features (height, breast development, less defined curves)

  - No wrinkles or age spots

  - No head balding

  - Minimal facial hair

  - Fuller face

  - Skin imperfections such as pimples

  - Vocal changes and spikes

- 18-30 was identified/coded by the estimated appearance of the below characteristics:

  - More defined facial features

  - Presence of the beginnings of wrinkles especially in the face

  - Greater line definition around the eyes and mouth

  - Wider shoulder development for men

- 31-44 was identified/coded by the estimated appearance of the below characteristics:

- Lessing of elasticity of the skin

- Drying of skin began

- Changes in vision (presence of glasses, especially separate reading glasses)

- Wrinkles developing especially around the eyes and mouth

- Graying hair began and lessening hair follicles

- 45-64 was identified/coded by the estimated appearance of the below characteristics:

  - Graying hair increased

  - Menopause symptoms began (examples: hot flashes, lessening/end of
    reproductive capabilities, or mood swings)

  - Hearing decreased (presence of hearing aids)

  - Wrinkles and age spots increased and skin elasticity decreased

  - Veins became pronounced on legs and hands especially

- 65-75 was identified/coded by the estimated appearance of the below characteristics:

  - Gray to white hair

  - Balding

  - Joints and bones pronounced

  - Wrinkles and age spots particularly on the face (mouth, eyes, and forehead),
    hands, and arms

  - Skin was even looser

  - Veins visible on legs, arms, and hands

  - Darkening of the white part of the eyes

- 75+ was identified/coded by the estimated appearance of the below characteristics:

  - Shorter in height

- o   Curved posture

- o   White hair or roots

- o   Lessening of hair

- o   Delicate features and bones

- o   Shifts in walking or assistance with cane or wheelchair

- o   Pronounced wrinkles

- o   Lessening of eye lashes and eyebrows

- o   Yellowing or pink coloration of the white part of the eye

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Education:

S.I. NEWHOUSE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS, Syracuse University
Master of Arts: Media Studies, GPA 3.96 (May 2017)
Graduate School Master's Prize Awardee

JUNIATA COLLEGE
Bachelor of Arts: Media, Conflict and Communication (May 2013)
Dean's List: Fall 2012, Spring 2013
Study Abroad: The Gambia, West Africa

SACRAMENTO CITY COLLEGE
Associate of Arts: Social Sciences (May 2011)
Phi Theta Kappa

Professional Experience:

INSTRUCTIONAL ASSISTANT (Spring 2016 – Spring 2017)
Communications Law for Television, Radio & Film – Syracuse University
- Assisted students with course content and management
- Maintained class grades and assignments, administrative records, and online information

MARKETING INTERN (Summer 2016)
Sacramento Film & Music Festival – Sacramento, CA
- Assembled background information on accepted films
- Created marketing campaigns for screened films
- Distributed targeted marketing content to relevant interested organizations and businesses

RESEARCH ASSISTANT (Fall 2015)
Research Projects: Mugshots on Facebook and Newscasters' Online Personas – Syracuse University
- Compiled background information and literature
- Developed content analysis and survey materials
- Assisted in theoretical framework and project development

PROGRAMS & GREEN STUDIO PRODUCER (December 2013 – July 2015)
Nonprofit Resource Center (The Impact Foundry) – Sacramento, CA
  Organized, scheduled, and managed all training programs
  Communicated with the public and clients on nonprofit topics including fundraising and marketing
  Created and managed social media including Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube
  Developed and maintained website content and the bi-weekly electronic newsletter
  Produced and edited all video content for in-house and outside clients
  Managed the Green Studio and coordinated with all project partners to train and complete projects

Research:

Masterson, A. (2017) *The romantic baby boomer: A successful aging analysis of romantic comedy film trailers.* Master's thesis publication in preparation, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY.
  Content and textual analysis of 41 romantic comedy film trailers focused on Hollywood's portrayal of aging and relationships later in life

Meyer, M., Masterson, A. & Kuang, J. (2016) *Broadcast yourselves: Exploring racial and gender diversity on Streamy-nominated YouTube vlogs.* Presented at BEA (Broadcast Education Association), Las Vegas, NV
  Content analysis of 150 YouTube videos concentrating on on-screen racial and gender representation, engagement statistics, and language surrounding progressive and stereotypical race and gender content

Technology Skills:	Microsoft Office, Outlook, Blackboard, Adobe Photoshop, HTML, CSS, SPSS, NVivo, Mac and PC platforms, Social Media – Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Hootsuite
Languages:	Conversationally fluent in American Sign Language (ASL)