AGELESS

CIM 211.3: EXEGESIS

Figure 1: Ageless

GROUP ANIMATION MEMBERS

Molly Haste

Ethan Zwart

Huey Murray

Leevan Jiang

INTRODUCTION - AGELESS ANIMATIC

Figure 2: Character Concept

Our project is to create a media text that practically implements a critical theory in a small collaborative group (Simple Syllabus, 2024). Our group, The Gerontologists, created a short mobile video-form animatic that attempts to combat the harmful stereotypes associated with elderly groups and reaffirming the value of older adults. Through presenting the juxtaposition between the two main types of gerontology; social gerontology and biogerontology (National University, 2019), our group created a visually engaging animatic to draw in a young target audience to bring awareness of the current societal problems and age discrimination.

Critical gerontology is "an approach to ageing research, policy and practice which questions the assumptions underpinning the biomedical model of ageing and the notion that older people are a burden on society" (Ranzjin, 2015). Our group chose to address the critical perspective of gerontology by contrasting the impacts of a biomedical perspective within biogerontology that stereotypes ageing as a purely biological and psychological aspect of life. The biomedical model of ageing is discriminatory due to how it excludes the majority of elders, defining "successful ageing requires that the elder is disease free, disease-related disability free and engaged in activities with family and/or community" (Carver & Buchanan, 2016, p. 1624).

METHODS & TECHNIQUES

We created our animatic by following industry-standard processes: planning, pre-production, production, and post-production. We began the ideation process by brainstorming ideas (figure 3) and setting up a weekly schedule for specific milestones (figure 4).

Figure 3: Ideation Notes

Each member was assigned roles in the production pipeline (figure 5). Creative techniques include character design, storyboarding, colour-scripts, scene and background composition, and animating. After a storyline was established, Molly designed the characters, colour palette, and the storyboards (figures 6-7) that Ethan used to animate and add timings in Toonboom. Huey created background thumbnails for overall scene composition. During the entire process, updates of work-in-progress were

Part 1 - Project planning and meeting register

Team Member	Tasks	Due Date	Complete
Molly	Storyboard	Thursday Wk 10	☑
All	Discord Calls (generally Mondays)	every week til 13	☑
Ethan	Create Animatic	Week 12 Sunday	☑
Leevan	Start Report	Week 10 Friday	☑
Leevan/Huey	Complete Report	Week 13 Tuesday	☐
Ethan	Send Project 2 report	Week 10	☑
Huey	Complete Backgrounds	Week 9	☑
Molly	Design Characters	Week 9	☑
Ethan/Molly	Rough Animatic Completed	Week 11 Sun	☑
Leevan	Sound Design (?)	Week 12	☑
Huey	Complete Colour Pass	Week 12 Tuesday	☑

Figure 4: Weekly Schedule

posted in the Discord channel where feedback on timings, movement, and overall story were implemented. Leevan followed up on milestones and kept track of the weekly schedule and provided feedback throughout production. Huey coloured the animatic after Ethan completed the linework. Leevan added sound effects and title edits within Adobe Premiere Pro. The piece was also presented at Exhibition Night in week 13. Technical methods included knowledge of Toonboom, Adobe Premiere Pro, Trello, Discord and Instagram management, and scholarly research to inform creative and technical designs for the animatic.

Figure 6: Storyboards

Member	Roles
Molly	**Storyboard Artist:** create the main storyboard during pre-production. **Character Designer:** design characters for the project. **Major contributions towards aesthetics of project,** especially in stylistic choices in character design and awareness of social media-savvy audiences' taste. Contributed towards research concepts such as specific types of audience. **Colour Design/Art Direction:** made selective stylistic designs for the animatic's colours. Created a colourscript for the animatic and directed background colouration.
Ethan	**Animator:** Main animator of project. Added timing (with Molly) based on storyboards. **Contributed scholarly sources and existing knowledge of critical theory.** Shared relevant reports and helpful resources for the exegesis.
Huey	**Background Artist:** background designer of the animatic. **Colour Artist:** added colour to the final work. **Contributed to research during conception** and fleshing out storyline idea, major contribution idea towards showing the husband character and support network towards the old lady. Made major points around isolation of elderly being misleading, and their relationships are just as deep and even longlasting.
Leevan	**Project Manager:** oversee the entire pipeline and ensure milestones, deadlines and deliverables are met across this project. **Contributed towards conception of animatic story idea** **Sound Designer:** added sound effects **Main exegesis-writer** of the group, major role in analysis and articulation of final work in a scholarly format. **Main researcher:** find sources and information to inform the report.

Figure 7: Colour Script

Figure 5: Team Member Roles

CRITICAL THEORY & CULTURAL CONTEXT

Ranzijn's definition of critical gerontology also argues that many of the problems associated with ageing are not the result of "inherent individual declines and disabilities" but are instead caused by social structures that limit older people from expressing their strengths and continue to make contributions to society (Ranzijn, 2015). Our project supports this by questioning the assumptions underpinning the current biogerontology model through the anti-ageing advertisements (fig 8) the main character encounters on her phone, reflecting the underlying societal issues around the portrayal of older adults and fear of ageing.

Figure 8: Anti-Ageing Advertisement

Tena, a Swedish brand that creates products for bladder weakness (TENA, 2024), released a creative advertisement "#Ageless" that broached the taboo subject of age and incontinence. However, the advertisement focused on how older adults perceived and managed incontinence instead of a product that will 'fix' incontinence. Similarly, our project focuses on the perception of how the elderly couple perceive themselves as still young at heart, instead of focusing and stereotyping how society perceives them. Tena finalises the advertisement with the dialogue, "Too much? Well, it's not about you. It's about me" empowering the voice of older adults by challenging the societal norm and normalising ageing.

The MacArthur Model of successful ageing encompasses three principle components: low risk of disease & disease-related disability, maintenance of high mental and physical function, and continued engagement with life (Rowe & Kahn, 2015). However, there have been over 100 variation proposals to this model, the amount of critiques so varied that it was split into four main categories (Martinson & Berrdige, 2014). 45% of the proposals advocated for adding older adults' subjective meanings of successful ageing to established objective measures, 25% advocated for a multidimensional expansion of the criteria, 20% advocated for more just and inclusive frameworks and avoidance of stigma and discrimination of those not ageing well, and 10% advocated for correcting or replacing the perceived

western cultural bias within the MacArthur model (Rowe % Khan, 2015). These findings suggest that the current model used to define successful ageing is discriminatory due to underlying biases such as western influences, or objective criteria that favours a minority of the aged population. Furthermore, the World Health Organisation released a YouTube video to bring awareness of the human race beginning to age, where "the world will soon have more older people than children" (World Health Organisation, 2012). The video pointedly explains that "the world is changing. Stereotypes hold us back" and we should be moving forward in society by having early healthy habits, keeping older people at the centre of families and communities, planning for older people, and valuing their contributions to society (World Health Organisation, 2012). This relates to the main message of our project; to break down the stereotypes surrounding older adults, especially for younger audiences who have been subjected to marketing strategies and overall societal norms that discriminate against older people unfairly. Additionally, our cartoon 2D style, pastel colours, and vertical format serve an appealing aesthetic that will visually engage younger audiences while advocating perspectives on ageing. Thus our animatic attempts to highlight the underpinning biases that are associated with biogerontology, and present a critical perspective that suggests the need to reaffirm the value of the elderly whose emotional relationships are equally enduring despite physicality of ageing.

AUDIENCE & AESTHETICS

Our main target audience is a young audience, specifically those who consume social media content. Our project was designed to spread awareness and foster discourse around the societal issues of ageing, and bringing the conversation to the younger audience through appealing aesthetics allow young viewers to digest the complex topic of gerontology and begin to understand the perspectives of older age groups.

Our animatic is in a vertical video format that allows accessible shareability on social media platforms such as TikTok. As of 2024, "TikTok is the destination for short-form mobile videos" (SMPerth, 2024) where the platform ads have the potential to reach 46.6% of the Australian population over the age of 18. This demonstrates the influential power of the platform, and how our content, designed for mobile-viewing, bolsters our ability to improve discourse and discussion around gerontology by reaching a wider audience. In the US, over 50% of content creators are young people aged 18-24 (Woodward, 2021), and globally, has over 1.5 billion monthly active users (West, 2024).

Our group chose animation as the medium to express our message where we had more control over the stylistic choices and overall aesthetic we presented. The aesthetic style of our animatic was decided through these stylistic choices:

- 2D cartoon style animation
- Soft and rounded character designs
- Pastel colour palette
- Overall cute aesthetic that appeals to a younger target audience
- Vertical format for social media sharing

Our use of a soft and rounded 2D cartoon style and cute aesthetic was intended to appeal to a young demographic who regularly consume visually engaging content. The pastel colours were designed to be aesthetically harmonious and align with current trends on social media platforms. Although animation works are inherently creative, it falls into heavy stereotyping tropes. Animation commonly stereotypes negative archetypes with older age groups (Brigham Young University, 2006) which can affect how younger audiences perceive older generations and have lasting effects. In the BYU study, associate professor of communications and lead author of the article, Tom Robinson notes that, "we don't want to raise a generation fearful of growing old, or have these children rise or positions of influence and power only to dismiss the older age group because of these stereotypes" (Brigham Young University, 2006). This supports our decision to raise awareness in younger audiences, normalising the process of ageing, and fostering understanding towards the elderly.

Figure 9: Ending Scene

We crafted the ending to feel wholesome, where the older couple view each other as young at heart to evoke a sense of warmth and comfort in younger audiences. The simple and upbeat sound effects add to this effect, especially the ascending chime when the couple lock eyes.

MESSAGE & CONCLUSION

In summary, our group has created an animatic that considers the binary opposition between biogerontology and critical gerontology, juxtaposing them through symbolic references of anti-ageing advertisements and the enduring emotional bonds between older groups.

We chose to present this juxtaposition with a 2D cartoon animation with pastel colours and an overall cute aesthetic to engage younger audiences who regularly consume visually engaging content and foster understanding of older generations. By creating content that discusses the global ageing population similar to what the World Health Organisation are beginning to do, we can begin to break down the societal problems and negative stereotypes underpinning the disrespect or misunderstanding about getting older in life.

Figure 10: Old Couple

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