The Representation and Portrayal of Female Characters in Children's Picture Books: A Case Study of Award-Winning Works from *the Hsin-Yi Picture Book Award*

Yifang Zhang

Graphical Design and Art Direction, Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester, M15 6BX, United Kingdom

Abstract. With the growing emphasis on early childhood education and gender equality, the development prospects of the children's picture book market have expanded significantly. However, the gender imagery conveyed through these children's picture books warrants critical exploration. This study examines gender stereotypes and their impact on children's gender identity development through the lens of gender construction and image narration. By employing a case study approach, we conducted a statistical analysis of award-winning works from the Hsin-Yi Picture Book Award, revealing a disproportionate male-to-female character ratio and the stereotypical portrayal of female roles (e.g., passive, domestic, or overly decorative). Therefore, in the practical part, the design of the picture book focuses on the life of children, shaping a breakthrough in the traditional role of women, so that children can obtain multiple gender cognition in the process of reading, and promote the education of gender equality.

Keywords: Children's Picture Books; Feminism; Gender Cognition.

1. Introduction

Picture books are an artistic genre that combines images and text to narrate stories, aligning with the early learning pathways and developmental characteristics of children, and serving as a significant medium for early childhood education. The information conveyed by picture books also shapes and alters children's cognitive perceptions to a certain extent. Psychologist Albert Bandura proposed the theory of imitation in children, which posits that during the process of engaging with media, children identify with the information conveyed, the characters depicted, and the behaviors of those roles, and subsequently imitate these behaviors in real-life situations when encountering similar scenarios [1]. However, numerous studies have pointed out that the character creation models in picture books, nurtured under patriarchal culture, contain a plethora of gender inequalities and biases. For instance, Lenore J. Weitzman and others, in their study *Sex Role Socialization in Picture Books for Preschool Children,* conducted a sample analysis of preschool picture books published in the United States from 1967 to 1971. Their findings revealed that the ratio of male to female protagonists was 7:2, and the ratio of male to female illustrations was 11:1. Moreover, male characters in the sample books often appeared in more active and dominant roles, while female characters were typically portrayed in subordinate and dependent positions. Therefore, how to portray female images and break away from the traditional, stereotypical representations of women in picture books has become the focal point of this study.

As articulated by Martin and Halverson's Gender Schema Theory: gender serves as a lens that reflects one's characteristics, and through this lens, various gender existences form gender schemas [2]. Children evaluate the appropriateness of their behaviors based on these gender schemas and adjust their actions accordingly, meaning that societal stereotypes about gender have a positively reinforcing effect on the development of children's gender characteristics [3]. Therefore, it is essential to foster correct gender concepts during the developmental stage of children's cognitive abilities.

Therefore, this study employs observational and case analysis methods to conduct research. First, data analysis is performed on the authoritative award-winning works and award circumstances in the book market to understand the gender distribution and gender portrayal in children's picture books. The study analyzes and summarizes the female characters in the award-winning picture books,

exploring the stereotypes and clichés present in the gender portrayals and their impacts. Then, in combination with children's cognition, picture books depicting more diversified female images are designed.

2. Basic Theory

2.1 Gender Schema Theory based on Feminist Research

Robert Stoller (1964) posited that humans possess biological sex and social gender . Biological sex refers to anatomical and physiological differences between males and females within the biological domain, whereas social gender denotes culturally constructed disparities in gender performativity—encompassing appearance, personality, identity, and behavioral patterns—shaped by political and cultural frameworks. Feminist theorist Simone de Beauvoir, in *The Second Sex*, formulated the concept of femininity, asserting that "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" [4]. This statement underscores that societal perceptions of femininity are not innate but are instead molded through structural oppression and sociocultural conditioning. This theoretical perspective is also reflected in children's picture books. Kohler-Flynn et al. investigated 17 *Caldecott Medal-winning* picture books, analyzing the gender and racial identities of central characters, as well as the genders of authors and illustrators. Their findings revealed a 30% increase in female character representation since Weitzman's seminal 1972 study on gender role socialization in children's literature. Although male and female characters now approach parity in numerical representation, female authors and illustrators constituted only 24% of the sample. Moreover, adult female characters remained disproportionately confined to roles as mothers and caregivers, perpetuating restrictive gender archetypes [5].

2.2 Image Narrative Strategies Based on Children's Picture Books

Although picture books cater to diverse readers and encompass various genres, the integration of visual text and linguistic media remains their defining characteristic. Therefore, the study of image narrative in children's picture books is of particular importance. Canadian scholar Perry Nodelman, in his seminal work Words About Pictures: *The Narrative Art of Children's Picture Books (1988*), advocates for reading images through the lens of "semiotic theory." He promotes the idea of treating picture books as unique visual grammar systems and contexts, emphasizing the "signifier" and "signified" within images, and integrating semantic imagery into a unified narrative art [6]. Image narrative strategies encompass seven key elements: narrative style, character portrayal, text design, compositional layout, narrative perspective, color and lighting, and the use of montage.

Picture books offer children boundless joy and imagination. Barbara Bader, in *From Noah's Ark to the Beast Within: American Picture Books,* emphasizes that "the child's experience" is the core value of picture books, transforming them into artworks that align with children's aesthetic, psychological, and social characteristics [7]. Therefore, in the process of designing picture books, this study delves into the psychological traits and cognitive patterns of children, aiming to create works that resonate with their developmental and aesthetic sensibilities, ensuring strong readability.

3. Analysis of Gender Representation Characteristics in Children's Picture Books: A Case Study of the *Hsin-Yi Picture Book Award*

3.1 Introduction to the *Hsin-Yi Picture Book Award*

The Hsin-Yi Picture Book Award was established in 2009 by Taiwan's Hsin-Yi Foundation in China's Mainland to recognize unpublished original picture books, encouraging participation from children's literature creators and fostering the development of indigenous picture books. The award comprises two categories: the Picture Book Creation Award and the Text Creation Award for Picture Books. Given this study's emphasis on visual narrative analysis, the winning works of the Picture

Book Creation Award were selected as research subjects. Through systematic categorization of character representations, this study conducts a multidimensional analysis of the portrayal of female roles in these works.

3.2 Analysis of Gender Role Distribution and Characterization in Award-Winning Works

This chapter employs quantitative methods to examine the characteristics of female roles in award-winning picture books. First, the gender ratio of protagonists is analyzed to identify systemic biases. Secondly, it divides the award-winning works with female protagonists into times and studies the changes and trends of female characters' personalities, images, and social identities in the early and late periods. Third, the social identities and image-building of female supporting characters are investigated, with a focus on disparities compared to male counterparts.

3.2.1 Gender Ratio of Protagonists

The study initially compiled 89 award-winning and shortlisted works from the *Hsin-Yi Picture Book Award*. After applying exclusion criteria—removing 17 samples with incomplete data, 27 works featuring non-gendered protagonists (exclusively animals or plants), 1 work with human protagonists lacking gender attribution, and 4 works without a defined protagonist—the final analytical sample comprised 40 works. The statistical analysis reveals that among the sampled works, 24 feature male protagonists, accounting for 62.5% of the total sample, while 16 feature female protagonists, representing 37.5%. This data demonstrates that in the award-winning and shortlisted works of the *Hsin-Yi Picture Book Award*, male protagonists appear significantly more frequently than female protagonists. This phenomenon indicates that the narrative space for female roles remains somewhat confined to a fixed proportion, failing to expand over time or with societal advancements in gender equality. The data highlights a severe lack of female perspectives in contemporary children's literature. The absence of female roles signifies the further marginalization of women's voices in narratives, as well as a missed opportunity for children to engage with the complexity and diversity of female characters through these stories. The lack of gender equality not only reflects the imbalance in societal gender structures but also influences the formation of gender perceptions in the next generation. Therefore, it is imperative for creators to actively introduce and develop female roles, providing children with more robust and inclusive gender representations.

3.2.2 Personality Traits, Image Building, and Social Identity of Female Protagonists

Promoting gender equality in narrative construction requires an increase in female roles and necessitates breaking existing gender stereotypes to provide children with more diverse gender expressions and story content. Although the proportion of female protagonists in the *Hsin-Yi Picture Book Award* does not show a significant upward trend, there has been a notable diversification and de-gendering in female protagonists' personality traits and characterization.

As shown in Table 1, the personality traits of female protagonists in the 1st to 14th editions of the award-winning works were analyzed. In the 1st to 6th editions, the personality impressions of female protagonists were relatively fixed, primarily characterized by traditional feminine traits such as elegance, cleanliness, patience, kindness, and romance. Additionally, a few female characters exhibited traits like ambition, courage, and playfulness. However, overall, female roles were often portrayed as passive or protected and were expected to embody "perfect" personas. Such portrayals often reflect societal disciplining of women, with female characters frequently depicted as gentle, flawless, and even impeccable. While these images may be visually pleasing, they represent a one-sided artistic construction, mirroring society's excessively high expectations and demands on women.

In *Granny Mian Can't Sleep* (Figure1), the story depicts typical Chinese traditional female images: hard-working, gentle. Although the Granny's life is plain and trivial, it is full of warmth. She takes care of her family, pets, plants and housework. This symbolizes the traditional expectation of women in Chinese culture that they should bear the main responsibility of the family.

Table 1. Statistics of heroine's personality characteristics

Time	Personality Traits and Percentage
1st-6th sessions	Elegant 12.5%, Pure and civilized 12.5%, Kind 25.0%, Loving 25.0% Dreamy 25.0%, Courageous 12.5%,Naughty 12.5%6, Romantic 12.5%, Weak 12.5%
7th-14th sessions	Curious 25.0%, Separation Anxiety 12.5%, Bad Temper 12.5%, Loving 12.5%, Childlike innocence 12.5%,Imagination 12.5%, Brave 25.0%, Naughty 12.5%



Figure 1. Granny Mian Can't Sleep
Source of the picture:https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S-teOhkbEgQ

From the 7th to the 14th, the character characteristics of the female protagonists gradually break through the traditional framework and show more abundant characteristics. The female characters are not only curious and good at expression, but also begin to show more complex human characteristics, such as separation anxiety and breaking loneliness, which makes the female image more complete. For example, in the *Balloon*, the grandmother is left alone in her hometown, and the balloon, a symbol of her relationship with her granddaughter, gradually deflates over time. The lonely and somewhat passive grandmother made a change: she decided to go to the busy market. In the market, through contact with all kinds of people and things, Grandma slowly opened up her heart and gradually got rid of loneliness. Eventually, she bought a new balloon, similar to the one her granddaughter had given her, as a symbol of her grandmother's renewed strength. Female characters are given more power and independence, changing the stereotype of waiting and caring. (Figure 2.)



Figure 2. Balloon
Source of the picture: https://weibo.com/2690260291/OiP5oDHH4

At the same time, in the *Grandma Mountain,* the role of the old woman has also undergone significant changes. The background of the story is still set in the mountain village and family affairs, but the image of grandma has changed from the "nagging" old woman in the imagination of her granddaughter to the "Peter Pan" full of childlike innocence and self-confidence, and even appears as a superhuman image in some episodes. (Figure 3).



Figure 3. Grandma Mountain
Source of the picture:
https://www.bilibili.com/video/BV1bc2pYeEK3/?spm_id_from=333.788.recommend_more_video.0

Female characters are stripping away the single gendered definition, no longer limited to the image of meek and elegant, but to express multiple facets. In this study, the appearance characteristics of female protagonists in picture books are classified into: appearance characteristics, physical characteristics. The proportions and data are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Image building of female protagonists

Time	Long Hair	Short Hair	Slim	Balanced	plump	Cute	Kind	Beautiful
1^{st}-6^{th} sessions	83.3%	16.7%	66.7%	16.7%	16.7%	33.3%	33.3%	16.7%
7^{th}-14^{th} sessions	57.14%	42.86%	28.57%	71.43%	14.29%	14.29%	28.57%	42.68%

In the winning works from the 1st to the 6th, the female characters were mostly presented as a single image, mostly princesses with long hair (Figure 4). The setting of the princess role still follows

the requirements of society for women to be "elegant". This type of princess is also reflected in other works, such as in *Long Haired Girls* (Figure 5), where the little girl enters a Rapunzel competition to avoid having her hair cut and wins the princess award. Through the setting of the competition, the story implies that girls must aspire to certain beauty standards to be recognized as a "princess" or a symbol of "beauty."



Figure 4. How a Princess Picks Her Nose
Source of the picture: https://m.limaogushi.com/huiben/520.html



Figure 5. Long Haired Girls
source of the picture:
https://wenku.baidu.com/view/e5e88b76905f804d2b160b4e767f5acfa1c783d8.html?_wkts_=1729529015214&bdQuery



Figure 6. Don't want to Say Goodbye
Source of the picture: https://m.weibo.cn/status/4906719983438653#&gid=1&pid=2

In the award-winning works in recent years, more and more female images have begun to break through this traditional framework, showing secondary sexual characteristics and natural and ordinary characteristics, and the characteristics of gender appearance are no longer the core elements of role shaping. For example, in *Don't want to Say Goodbye* (Figure 6), the image design of the little girl is neutral, she wears suspenders, has a watermelon head, and does not have too much feminine decoration, showing the original appearance of children, removing the deliberate carving about gender. This design restores the true state of children, weakens the subtle discipline of the girl's appearance, and highlights the emotion and personality of the characters.

The *Not Boring Handbook* shows an image of an ordinary female youth (Figure 7). She is a relaxed and healthy figure, and this design conveys that women can naturally exist in the story, without relying on appearance to conform to aesthetic standards. The characters depicted are not only closer to real women in real life, but also provide readers with broader choices about identity.

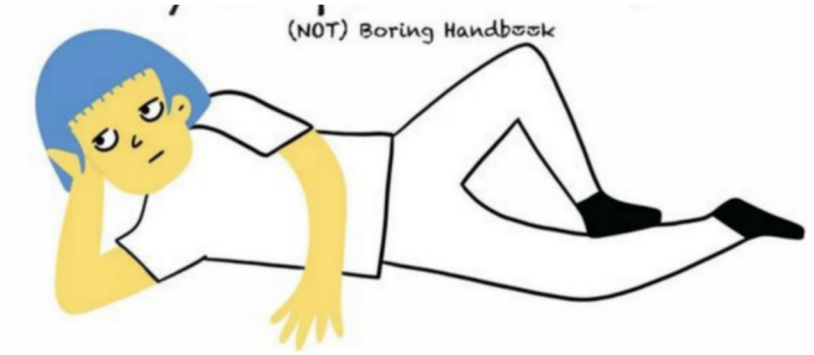


Figure 7. The Not Boring Handbook
Source of the picture:
https://m.thepaper.cn/kuaibao_detail.jsp?contid=23259993&from=kuaibao

3.2.3 Social Identity and Image Building of Female Supporting Characters

The female supporting characters in children's picture books also have great limitations. As shown in Table 3, by comparing male identity distribution with female identity distribution in supporting roles, it can be seen that male supporting roles are usually assigned more professional identities and social roles, covering a wide range of occupations and social status, from experts, priests, generals to salespeople, directors, drivers, firefighters, etc. Female supporting characters tend to focus on domestic or traditional female roles, such as mother, granny, elegant lady, little girl, ballet teacher.

Table 3. Social identity statistics of male and female supporting characters

Male supporting characters	Expert, Father, Clergyman, Mythological Figure (e.g., Sun Wukong), Martial Hero (e.g., Wu Song), Historical Figure (e.g., Jiang Taigong), Elderly Man, Salesman, Boss, Boy, General, Little Boy, Driver, Director, Office Worker, Delivery Man, Firefighter, Host, Road Worker.
Female supporting characters	Mother, Ballet Teacher, Ballet Student, Literary Figure (e.g., Lin Daiyu), Storytelling Grandmother, Knitting Lady, Sister Mung Bean, General's Wife,Granny , Office Worker, Little Girl.

In the *Mr. Sneezing Dinosaur* (Figure 8), there are a total of 5 male supporting characters and 1 female supporting character. Among them, important positions such as director, firefighter, driver, etc. are all held by men, while the female supporting characters have no obvious professional attributes. This can create a gender bias in the profession, where people think that boys should not study classical dance, but firefighters, soldiers, and pilots should be predominantly male. At the same

time, girls should be engaged in teachers, nurses and other professions, and the personality bias in this profession may mislead children's professional cognition. In addition, due to the small number of supporting characters in picture books, creators need to make readers quickly identify and understand the positioning of characters through concise drawings. Therefore, female supporting characters usually retain obvious female characteristics, such as red lips, long hair and tutus, so that their social roles produce symbolic effects. This stereotyped gender assignment not only limits the diversity of female images, but also further deepens the stereotype of gender division of labor.



Figure 8. Mr. Sneezing Dinosaur
Source of the picture: https://vocus.cc/article/63736676fd89780001af6412

3.3 Summary

Statistical analysis reveals the gender bias and the portrayal of female characters in award-winning children's picture books. Firstly, the proportion of male protagonists is significantly higher than that of female protagonists. Secondly, with the development of feminism, female protagonists show a trend towards diversification in personality traits and image building, but their social roles are still limited to traditionally perceived female occupations. Finally, there is also an imbalance in the gender ratio and occupational distribution among supporting characters. Furthermore, children's picture books often depict overly idealized female images, neglecting the multiple roles and complexities of real women in society, and obscuring the strength and wisdom women possess when facing challenges and conflicts. This may negatively impact children's early gender perceptions and parent-child relationships. Children may conclude these stories that a woman's value lies in her gentleness and perfection, rather than her unique personality and diverse life experiences.

Therefore, the traditional female images in picture books are not just an issue in artistic creation; they also reflect a certain singular and idealized expectations of women. Breaking this stereotypical status quo requires endowing female characters with more diversity and complexity, showcasing their strength, decision-making abilities, and independence, to help children develop richer gender perceptions from an early age.

For example, female characters can appear in a wider variety of occupations and social roles, rather than being confined to the family. Another approach is to expand the scope of social identities of female supporting characters. Through the creation of diverse characters, children's picture books can provide young readers with richer gender narratives and role models, thus breaking the constraints imposed by traditional gender frameworks.

4. Design Practice of Children's Picture Books

4.1 Meaning and Goal of Children's Picture Book Design

This study will explain the design of children's picture books based on women's perspective. Combining with children's cognition, this study discusses the expression forms of female perspective in children's picture books. From the elements of the story plot, role modeling, color selection, composition form and other elements of the picture book, the shackles brought by the traditional gender framework are broken, and female characters are endowed with more diversity and depth.

4.2 Narrative Structure Design of Children's Picture Book Stories

4.2.1 Theme Conception

Story narration is one of the key elements of a picture book, which is used to identify core ideas, emotional expression, and educational functions. In the *Scar Perception in School-aged Children After Major Surgery in Infancy*, it is mentioned that girls are more likely to have a negative perception of scars (OR: 1.54, 95%-CI: 1.06-2.24) and embarrassment associated with scarring (OR: 4.29, 95%-CI: 1.77-10.44). [8] Therefore, this study chooses the girl's scar as the content of the picture book.

4.2.2 Script Design

The study took into account that children have limited attention, and their cognitive and logical reasoning abilities are not fully developed. Therefore, the picture book adopts the linear narrative structure of the first person. At the same time, children's imagination is often very jump, they like to personify and emotionalize inanimate things, so in character design, story details will be close to children's life, using anthropomorphic expression, make children feel intimate, reduce the sense of distance between the characters in the story and children.

The picture book is named *Lines*, which tells the story of a scarred girl who visits the botanical garden with her friends under the guidance of her kindergarten teacher. The little girl saw a lot of plants with "scars" but happy growth during the tour, and she found that the "scars" of leaf marks, double-headed flowers, and mushrooms have become unique lines. Therefore, she no longer felt inferior because of scars, bravely took off her coat and hat, and showed her scars to her friends, and also received encouragement from the children. After the girl went home and told her mother about the botanical garden experience, the mother also felt this, she took the initiative to lift up her clothes to show the stretch marks, the little girl touched the mother's stomach. The story ends with a mother in a midriff dress and a little girl in short sleeves playing in the sun. In real life, people can be troubled by scars. Therefore, this study chooses the story of the girl and her mother reconciling with the scar, conveying the connotation that the scar is just a line, and even the girl with the scar can still grow up happily.

4.2.3 Role Design

(1) Protagonist design



Figure 9. The little girl character in the picture book

The main character of the picture book *Lines* is a little girl. The girl has a strong and brave personality, curiosity and exploration spirit, and likes roller skating with speed and strength, but she is sensitive to her scars. Such an image setting has changed the marginalized stereotype of girls in extreme sports.

The girl's modeling design refers to the common ordinary girls in life, healthy skin tone, robust body type, and some small freckles on the face. The girl's clothing design is short for sports, wearing a tiger-head hat, and leaning toward a neutral image creation (Figure 9), which makes the girl's image close to life and highlights her bright, lovely and strong personality characteristics. This image design and personality characteristics are different from the traditional Chinese description of women with long hair and beautiful body. Avoid shaping female stereotypes in children's cognition at an early stage, and give children more space to explore gender.

(2) supporting characters design

Beyond simply enriching the plot, the design of supporting characters in picture books serves to establish diverse social role models (fictional role models) for children of all genders. Studies on women's learning experiences have shown that role models are crucial in shaping girls 'aspirations, self-perception, and attitudes, particularly when they aim to challenge traditional gender norms [14]. Consequently, this work integrates more diverse professional representations into the creation of secondary characters. This approach not only helps dismantle gender biases but also offers children a wider range of career awareness, enabling them to understand at an earlier age that gender should not restrict one's career choices and social roles, thus cultivating a more inclusive gender perspective in their lives.

Within the picture book, the little girl's mother is no longer confined to the role of housewife or traditional caregiver; instead, she is depicted as a career woman wearing a suit. This image highlights women's independence and capabilities in the professional sphere. Furthermore, the picture book incorporates the image of a father caring for children, a portrayal that underscores the significant role of fathers in parenting and reflects the modern family trend of shared childcare responsibilities between mothers and fathers. The picture book also features characters such as female botanical gardeners (Figure 10).



Figure 10. Mother, gardener, father in the picture book

4.2.4 Illustration Style

The illustration style of a picture book is a crucial element in storytelling, directly influencing children's perception of the story and their emotional engagement. The picture book is painted in watercolor style. This style not only offers a soft and warm visual effect but also creates a rich and delicate sense of layering in the illustrations. Through meticulous brushstrokes and smooth transitions, the watercolor technique presents a vibrant and emotionally resonant picture book world.

Additionally, the illustration style draws inspiration from botanical science illustrations. In terms of color and composition, abundant plant elements are incorporated, allowing children to immerse themselves in the story while simultaneously learning about plants. This combination of watercolor

style and botanical illustration not only enhances the artistic quality of the picture book but also integrates scientific knowledge, helping children perceive the world through imagery and gain valuable learning experiences.

4.3 Visual Presentation of the Children's Picture Book Story

4.3.1 Presentation of the Storyboard

Based on the integrated storyline and textual information, this picture book features thirteen illustrated storyboard frames (Figure 11). The composition of the images employs a mix of double-page spreads, single-page layouts, and single-page segmented designs to prevent visual fatigue in young readers. While creating the illustrations, careful consideration was given to alternating between richly detailed pages and simplified ones, with particular emphasis on using visually rich scenes to highlight key plot points, such as in the 8th and 9th frames. The illustrations depict the protagonist's emotional nuances in detail. For instance, as the little girl explores the patterns of plants like the double-headed flower, leaf miners, and leaf scars, her expressions and emotions undergo a positive transformation (frames 1 to 7).

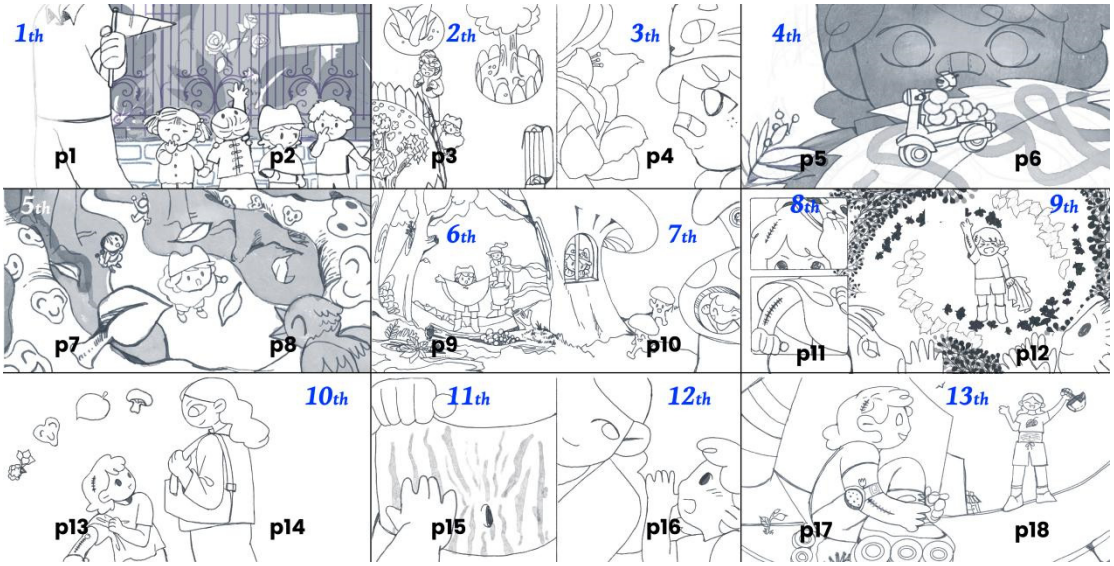


Figure 11. Picture book storyboard

4.3.2 Color Presentation

Colors in children's picture books can directly render the atmosphere of the story, as well as serve as visual guidance, and also hint at the inner emotions of the characters. Based on the analysis of children's visual aesthetic preference presented in *Hsin-Yi Picture Book Award*, this paper finds that bright colors and light tones are quite popular among children. In Lines, the author uses a large number of colors with high brightness and purity. At the same time, this study uses contrasting colors, complementary colors, adjacent colors and low-saturation colors to combine and match, and embellishes each other in different scenes to highlight the highlight information in the picture, to attract the attention of children readers, so that children will not feel bored while immersed in the story. To provide readers with a good and harmonious reading experience. In the botanical garden scene in Figure 12, the author processes the main information such as the double-headed flower and the protagonist as high-saturation colors, and the secondary information as bright gray with low contrast, so that the information level of the picture is clearly defined. The color of the next page then becomes a large area of high light and high saturation color to adjust the reader's interest. As the story progresses, the color of the picture also gradually warms up, in order to render a warm and warm parent-child atmosphere. (Figure13)



Figure 12. Double-headed flower picture presented



Figure 13. Stretch marks and a parent-child interaction picture presented

4.3.3 Scene Presentation



Figure 14. Realistic and imagined picture presentation

Firstly, regarding creative expression. The author combines real-world scenes with the child's imagination. For example, when the protagonist observes small mushrooms growing from a tree's

scar, she imagines living in a mushroom kingdom. The image transitions between the tree and the mushroom house, creating a fantastical representation that transcends reality (Figure 14).

Secondly, concerning the expression of visual tension within the scenes, the author utilizes contrasts in size and weight to enhance the expressiveness of the images. For instance, in Figure 15, the trees and the character form a contrast in size under a bird's-eye view, expressing visual tension in the image. In Figure 16, the double-page spread features a color block design on the left side and densely decorated leaves on the right, using a contrast between sparse and dense elements to create visual tension, breaking the visual monotony and making it more visually appealing.



Figure 15. Leaf scar of the picture presented



Figure 16. The scars of the picture presented

5. Conclusion

Picture books serve as a primary source for children's gender cognition, with the traits of female characters subtly shaping their understanding of societal gender structures. Thus, children's literature bears the responsibility to portray diverse female roles that convey gender equality and broaden children's perspectives on self-development. Through case studies of female character representation in *Hsin-Yi Picture Book Award*-winning works, this research reveals persistent imbalances: male protagonists significantly outnumber females (62.5% vs. 37.5%), and female roles remain stereotyped.

While post-2017 works show progress in diversifying female appearances and personalities, gendered divisions in social identities (e.g., occupational roles) persist.

To address these issues, this study created a picture book titled *Lines*, which adopts a child-centered narrative while integrating themes of female bodily autonomy and self-growth. The work introduces multifaceted female characters across diverse roles, yet challenges emerged during creation. For instance, detailed depictions of scars raised concerns about potential aversion among young readers, prompting artistic modifications to soften their visual impact. Additionally, the scarcity of existing picture books centered on female children's perspectives limited comparative analysis, underscoring the need for more narratives that reject stereotypes and prioritize children's authentic experiences.

References

[1] Lenore J. Weitzman, Deborah Eifler, et al. Sex-Role Socialization in Picture Books for Preschool Children. American Journal of Sociology ,1972, p. 1125 - 1150.

[2] Zhang Han: Research on Children's Gender Concept and Gender Preference (Master's Degree, Shandong Normal University, China, 2007).

[3] Simone de Beauvoir. The Second Nature. Translated by Tao Tiezhu. Beijing China Books Publishing House, 1998.

[4] Judith Butler. Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity. Translated by Song Sufeng. Shanghai Sanlian Bookstore,2009.

[5] Chizuko Ueno. Misogyny: Female aversion in Japan. Translated by Wang LAN. Shanghai Sanlian Bookstore,2019.

[6] Kohler-Flynn, et al. Gender and race portrayal in children's picture books: An analysis 118 of recent Caldecott Medal winners. Australian Journal of Psychology,2003.

[7] Xue Fangyuan. Children draw the diversity of visual images in narrative research (master degree, jiangnan university, 2020). The DOI: 10.27169 /, dc nki. Gwqgu. 2020.000480.

[8] Leonard S. Marcus. Why are picture books important. Jiangsu Phoenix Fine Arts Publishing House,2017.

[9] Nao Matsuie. My Picture Book. Trans. Ji Ying. Changsha Hunan Children's Publishing House, 2009.

[10] Maria Nikolajeva, Carole Scott,et al. How Picturebooks Work. Carole Scott Copyright ,2001.

[11] Bader Barbara. American Picturebooks from Noah'Ark to The Beast within. New York: Macmillan, 1976.

[12] Nodelman, Pertry. Words about Pictures: The Narrative Art of Children's Picture Books [M]. Athens: U of Georgia,1988.

[13] C. Imren, H. IJsselstijn, et al. Scar Perception in School-aged Children After Major Surgery in Infancy. Journal of Pediatric Surgery, Volume 59, Issue 11,2024.

[14] Reznik G, Massarani L, et al. Informal science learning experiences for gender equity, inclusion and belonging in STEM through a feminist intersectional lens[J/OL]. Cultural Studies of Science Education, 2023.