

Aging Film Review

The movie *Up* explores a variety of concepts related to adulthood and aging, including normative age-graded influences, non-normative life events, the bio-ecological model of development, changes in physical behavior and sensory organs, assistive solutions, and intelligence. These themes are woven into the narrative, particularly during the first 10 minutes, where the audience witnesses the fast-forwarded life of the main character, Carl. Through this sequence, we see numerous normative age-graded influences, such as entering the workforce, getting married, and experiencing the ups and downs of life. However, the main storyline truly begins after Carl attends his wife Ellie's funeral, marking a turning point in his life.

Carl's life is also shaped by non-normative life events, which are unexpected and not experienced by most people. For instance, when property developers attempt to buy his house, Carl refuses and becomes the sole holdout in the neighborhood, essentially a "nail house" owner. This situation is unusual and highlights his stubbornness and emotional attachment to his home. Another non-normative event occurs when Carl accidentally injures a young man trying to help him, leading to a court order that forces him to move to an elderly care facility. This event serves as a catalyst for his later adventure with Russell, a young boy who becomes his unexpected companion.

The bio-ecological model of development is also evident in the film. Despite losing his wife, Carl is influenced by his environment and the people around him. The

property developers represent the economic forces in the macro-system, while Russell and the young man who tries to assist Carl are part of his microsystem. These interactions shape Carl's decisions and ultimately lead him on a transformative journey.

The movie does a commendable job of depicting the physical changes associated with aging, even if some aspects of Carl's later physical abilities stretch believability. For example, Carl's morning routine includes cracking his joints, a common occurrence among older adults due to the wear and tear on their bones. He relies on a walking stick, a stairlift, and a hearing aid, all of which are realistic portrayals of assistive technologies used by seniors. His hearing aid occasionally squeaks in response to loud noises, adding a touch of authenticity. Additionally, the contrast between Carl's difficulty sleeping and Russell's ability to fall asleep easily highlights the physical challenges faced by older adults.

Carl's outward appearance also reflects typical signs of aging, such as white hair and wrinkles. The film incorporates assistive technologies effectively, from the stairlift and walking stick to the hearing aid. Later in the story, Dug, the talking dog, becomes an unintentional assistive companion for Carl. While Carl did not seek out an assistive animal, Dug's loyalty and assistance demonstrate how helpful such companions can be for older adults.

The movie also touches on the differences between Carl's and Russell's intelligence, aligning with concepts from developmental psychology. Carl exhibits crystallized intelligence, which involves accumulated knowledge and experience. For

example, he calculates how many balloons to release to control the house's descent and plans the journey with an understanding of how long the helium in the balloons will last. In contrast, Russell demonstrates fluid intelligence, which involves problem-solving and adaptability. His quick thinking, such as feeding Kevin (the snipe) chocolate, contributes to their adventure's success. Together, their complementary strengths highlight the value of different types of intelligence.

Personally, I found *Up* to be a deeply moving and exciting film. Without giving away spoilers, I was genuinely surprised when Carl lifted his house using balloons—a moment that was both visually stunning and emotionally impactful. The film's vibrant color palette and special effects add to its beauty. While some elements of the story are unrealistic, they should not detract from the film's core messages. The movie challenges stereotypes about aging, portraying Carl as a grumpy yet relatable character. His irritability, such as insulting the property developer, shutting the door on Russell, and accidentally hitting the young man, does not make him unlikable. Instead, it humanizes him, and his growth throughout the story is profoundly touching.

One of the most poignant moments occurs when Carl flips through his late wife Ellie's adventure book and reaches the final page, where she writes, "Thanks for the adventure. Now go have a new one." This message resonates deeply, emphasizing the importance of embracing life's next chapter while carrying forward the spirit of the past.

Overall, *Up* is a fantastic film that masterfully blends humor, emotion, and adventure. Although I had heard about it many times before, this assignment gave me the opportunity to finally watch it, and I am grateful for that. The movie's exploration of aging, relationships, and resilience left a lasting impression on me.