

2007

## Youth obesity : putting a price on life

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## Youth Obesity: Putting a Price on Life



*Source: [http://www.thefatproblem.com/images/obese\\_kids\\_4.jpg](http://www.thefatproblem.com/images/obese_kids_4.jpg)*

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Spring 2007

"Division of Humanities and Communication"

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Acknowledgements: Mary Catherine Langford

I'm very thankful that my family helped support me throughout my college career. I have had a blast and owe a great deal to them! Their advice and support has guided me to become the person that I am today. Dad, Cindy, Peyton, Clint, and Clare, you guys mean the world to me and without your support I don't know what I would have done. Thank you for everything you have sacrificed. Your little sis and baby girl is graduating college!!! I would also like to thank the HCOM faculty for making my experience at school unique and exciting. In particular, I would like to thank Juanita Darling for guiding me through the end of my college career. You have been a great help and a huge contribution to my success.

CSUMB is a very unique college with a promising future. I am so happy that I came to this school; I have had many memorable experiences here. I am looking forward to the path ahead. Serena Pedraza we did it, we got through it somehow! Great collaboration and teamwork throughout the past year!

Acknowledgements: Serena Pedraza

First and foremost my praise goes to God. Without Him in my life, none of my accomplishments would have been possible. Through the tough times, He is what got me through it all. To the only Father I've ever known, I love you! "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

My college experience has definitely been trying, and yet, I've learned so many life lessons in my time at CSU Monterey Bay. Through my studies I learned to become a creative writer, a journalist, and a field reporter, but more importantly, through my experiences I learned to become a better friend, sister, student, and leader. As an otter I worked hard on my own to succeed. The first of my family to attend and graduate college, I can hold my head high and know that I succeeded in my studies with little help from others.

However, my acknowledgments go out to the people who made my experiences so worthwhile. Thank you to my Nana who is my inspiration in life. She showed me that I should never sit down for the fear of not standing up again. For all of the countless hours she invested on her I feet, I am grateful. Many thanks go out to my sorority sisters of Sigma Theta Psi Inc., who taught me the value of honestly, loyalty, and respect. And to Linda, you are the one who taught me what it means to be a sister, and I love you for that. Guido, my dish fairy and the flow to my hustle, I don't know what I would ever do without you.

To my friends and fellow peers, thank you for the good times. To my partner MC, it's been a long process but we are finally there and can look back and laugh at our lunch at CPK.

## Introduction

“We’ve spent years making the healthy choice the most difficult choice. We need to make it the easy choice.” *Ross Brownson, epidemiologist at St. Louis University*

Youth obesity is increasing at an alarming rate and influenced by a number of factors. Ever shifting environments, including depleted access to fresh fruits and vegetables, a dependence on meals outside of the home to satiate appetites and deplete pocketbooks, and a lack of area to exercise affect the rich and poor alike. Cultural factors include differing perceptions of health and nutrition influenced by friends and family; perpetuated by large meals around the dinner table affecting our waistlines over time. The rising costs of obesity include related illness such as diabetes, eating disorders, depression, and eventual disability or worse, death, *can* be avoided. This is possible by working together as individuals, part of a greater system to change our lives.

Policies regarding nutrition are now drastically changing in schools. Vending machines are being removed and diet drinks are replacing common colas. Unfortunately, many children and adults alike are already overweight. Responsibility to implement change has so far been the responsibility of parents, educators, and individuals. Yet, the media must also take the initiative to aid this epidemic. Sadly, today’s youth is considered the most inactive of many past generations and obesity is a popular disease. Obesity has overtaken smoking as the number one cause of preventable death.

We would like to focus our research on children 6 to 11 years old and adolescents 12 to 17 years of age. We found statistics regarding the number of obesity cases and the severity in Monterey, California, schools and beyond. The people influenced by the

problem would be individuals, the schools, advertisers, big businesses, public and private health care providers and most importantly, the victims.

We found out why the media has only chosen to focus on the issue now, in 2007. We discovered the health risks, diagnosis and treatment. Even before conducting a lot of research, it is obvious that from a health perspective there is a problem. Youth obesity can lead to type II diabetes, hypertension, asthma, coronary heart disease, stroke, gallbladder disease, osteoarthritis, sleep apnea, respiratory problems, cancer and depression. This is why researching the prevention of this issue and how the problem can be solved is so important. In a media centered society prevention should be a key goal of marketers and advertisers alike. In a world so weight obsessed, why is youth obesity on the rise? It is important to analyze the current problem in order to find possible solutions.

The obesity epidemic is a problem for all ages, and we felt that it was most important to educate children on the negative effects that advertising can have on youth obesity in order to get them off of their couches and on the run, fixing one of the many causes of youth obesity, sedentary behavior.

Since the media is a powerful tool for or against children, the media has a responsibility of aiding in prevention rather than helping cause the epidemic. According to the article “Where Do We Stand,” in the last 30 years the prevalence of obesity in youth has increased more than three-fold. Research in this article also states that:

overweight in childhood is correlated to obesity in adulthood, and as a consequence, a higher incidence of chronic disease later in life. Moreover, intervention and prevention strategies targeting youth are more likely to be effective since healthful behaviors that influence overweight and obesity—such as nutrition, food choice, and levels of physical activity—when established during childhood, are more likely to persist into adulthood (ACTION, 1).

Teaching our youth to make healthy choices now, are going to aid in a healthy lifestyle in the future and decrease in the youth obesity epidemic.

Obesity is actually defined by a mathematical calculation referred to as (BMI) which stands for body mass index.

BMI is calculated by dividing an individual's body weight (kilograms) by their height squared (meters squared). Typically, the 85<sup>th</sup> and 95<sup>th</sup> percentiles have been used as the cutoff points for determining overweight and obesity in children and adolescents. BMI in children is determined in relation to these percentiles using national growth charts that are standardized to age and sex. (2)

A California Healthy Kids Survey on BMI for Monterey County Children Grades 7, 9 and 11 was conducted and a total of 53% of children are overweight and 57% of kids are at the risk of being overweight (California).

These numbers are overwhelming and this isn't even a statewide study. There is a solution to the growing obesity problem and the media can help aid in that prevention. Obesity is not a cheap problem, billions of dollars are spent annually reverse the effects of obesity. Instead of using this money to reverse the effects of obesity, we believe that giving money to the media to aid in prevention would be a healthy way to start attacking the problem and issues at hand.

### Literature Review

Among all population groups in the United States, the prevalence of obesity is growing and it starts with our children. We will argue that the media affects youth obesity and therefore can also aid in prevention. Rather than continuing as the cause of the issue we seek answers pertaining to whether/how media has covered youth obesity. The primary goal of our research is to find and advocate strategies to effectively aid in the decrease of youth obesity cases, through the use of positive media attention and finding a way to provide aid to people who need help. We argue that youth are highly influenced by the media, because it is hard for them to tell the difference between advertising and reality. When the media portrays a false reality, some children perceive it to be truth. We posit that when the media downplays or, ignores the damaging affects of youth obesity, those influenced by the media are caught off guard and shocked when they discover the harsh realities of what went uncovered.

Previous studies in this area pertain to one aspect of what we are comparing. They either research the obesity epidemic problem or the advertising problem to youth. So far, in our research we have found that our capstone differs a great deal from previous research because our study is a combined and direct correlation of how the media and advertising is related to youth; also it is an in-depth look at how advertising obtains little consumers. Another aspect of our research, which is far different from any previous studies, is that we are seeing how the media can affect youth in a positive matter, by helping them get healthy and teaching them prevention strategies, so that obesity starts to decrease rather than increase. We are solely concerned with the health of our nation as a whole, and through our research we feel we can fight obesity even if we start small.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Through the use of six secondary sources found in credible journals and world reports we discuss the role of the media and the effects on children as well as the direct effect on youth obesity. We found one world report, one brief and one journal using the research database EBSCO host. Using the keywords “advertising” and “children,” this search provided us with 2,892 results. We then added the keyword “consumers,” narrowing our research to 229 results. Combining the words “advertising” with “children,” we then narrowed our findings to 29 credible resources and read through the many papers until we found the ones most relevant.

### Effects of media on children

It is important to understand the effects of the media on youth populations in order to recognize that the media can influence what a young person buys. However, it is not only important to research purchasing power, but it would be interesting to find out the psychological effects of the media. In discovering this, we can then recognize how the media affects what our youth actually eat, or how the media influences how they choose to spend their time. Many reviews can be found to argue that children and the media are related, but for the sake of our research question, and in order to prevent youth obesity, we need to cover every aspect of media effects.

As reported in the U.S. News & World Report, Lisa Moore’s article “The Littlest Consumers” reports on the promising market of small children for advertisers. The article touches on the aspects involved with the marketing to this lower age group, by focusing on four main areas, food, clothing, electronics, and travel. Caroline Oates, Mark Blades and Barrie Gunter posit through the use of concise figures of how much money is actually being spent by children ages twelve and under. They report that “Recent figures

for the spending power of children aged up to twelve years in the United States...controlled spending of \$28 billion in 2000 from their own allowances and earnings, and in addition they influenced \$250 billion of family spending” (Oates, 401). This source clearly points out that the media has a direct effect on children. Considering the enormous amount of money available to such an uninformed group of individuals, we can see the direct correlation.

According to the book *Media and Culture*, The Federal Food and Drug Act passed in 1906 to monitor misleading patent-medicine claims in newspapers and magazine ads. The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) was established in 1914 to help the government further monitor advertising abuse (387). In 1971, the tobacco industry agrees to ban cigarette advertising from television. Following the tobacco ads being banned, R.J. Reynolds notices an increase in teens smoking Camel cigarettes due to Joe Camel cartoon ads (405).

Comparative advertising will continue to increase problems as well. Comparative advertising remains an extremely popular form of battle in the marketplace. In the last few years, lawsuits between competitors over allegations of false or deceptive claims have increased, as have challenges before the National Advertising Division. If advertisers are bringing up false or deceptive claims, children are most likely going to believe them.

There is simply no fine line between entertainment and advertising. Even though advertising of cigarettes was banned from television, there was still an increase in youth smoking because of the popular cartoon ads. Since there are popular cartoon characters advertising products such as cigarettes and sugary foods, children are most likely drawn

to the likeable character. If the youth is going to like the character, most likely they are going to want to purchase the product that is being advertised. If the obesity problem is rising right now due to cartoon entertainment advertising, imagine what it is going to do in the future if there is no fine line between the entertainment aspect and the advertising aspect.

#### Media and youth obesity

In regards to the direct effect of the media on youth obesity, the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, in their meta-analysis found a dramatic increase of childhood obesity in conjunction with a similar increase of children's media. This included television (broadcast and subscription), videos, and computers (games and internet). "Children today spend an average of five and a half hours a day using media, the equivalent of a full time job, and more time than they spend doing anything else besides sleeping" (1). According to this brief, William Dietz and Stephen Gortmaker published the first article about children's body weight and media in 1985. They conducted a national study with more than 13,000 children ages 12-17. Their findings included an increase of 2% body weight for every hour of television viewing (2). Other studies conducted during the 1980's and early 1990's showed that children, age 8 to 16, who watched television more than 2 hours a day were more likely to be overweight than children who watch less television. Some of these studies found the correlation between television watching and obesity to be true for girls, but not for boys.

Physical activities have decreased among youth according to the book *Core Concepts of Health*. "Activity levels among Americans are declining, beginning in childhood and continuing throughout the life cycle. Many schools have cut back on

physical education classes and recess. Most adults drive to work, sit all day, and then relax in front of the TV at night. During leisure time, both children and adults surf the Internet, play video games, or watch TV rather than bicycle, participate in sports, or just do yard work or chores around the house” (261).

These statistics are important when tracing the history of the media and its effects. It is obvious that youth obesity has remained a problem and is continuing to grow. Studies have been done in the past, but more studies need to be done now. In order to discontinue an ongoing problem, recent statistics need to be recorded. In our research we had trouble finding recent statistics. We need to research more, or retrieve our own statistics in order to make our paper more credible and trustworthy. However, acknowledging that the problem is ongoing is also important.

What we propose to do is answer these questions:

1. How has the problem of child obesity been ignored through the media? Then,
2. Why has child and adolescent obesity remained ignored until now, 2006?
3. What are the consequences of the media's decision to ignore youth obesity?
4. How can the media now help prevent the same consequences from occurring in the future?
5. What is the hidden agenda in the media's decision to ignore the problem?
6. What is being done today to stop youth obesity?
7. What other factors besides media are contributing to youth obesity?
8. What can be done to prevent youth obesity?

9. Are there certain chemicals that are added to foods that contribute to weight gain?
10. Is the lack of physical activity causing youth obesity?
11. Is technology contributing to kids being less active and gaining weight?

The media has a direct effect on the youth obesity epidemic. Also we are well aware through our findings that the media and advertising has a direct effect on youth and their decisions that they making on a daily basis. Luckily, the form of our research thus far has been credible literature. The problem that we might encounter is trying to compare the two different studies and combine them as a direct correlation. After finding a direct correlation, our next step is to find prevention strategies that the media could use to better the health of our youth. We feel that our research so far has been credible, as concluded earlier it is necessary that more research be done to find *more* current and *more* relevant resources. Research has already been done to conclude the effects of the media however, through our research we now need to focus more on how the media can prevent youth obesity. Acknowledgement that media has an effect is only half of what we will attempt to accomplish.

## METHODOLOGY

Our primary goal is that our readers understand the significant connection between advertising and obesity. As soon as this happens, we will be able to examine the correlation and discover prevention strategies to aid in society's efforts to lower the youth obesity epidemic rates. For our primary sources we looked into different organization's websites that were related to the obesity epidemic and that are already making efforts to change the media's perspective on obesity rates. We chose to study children because children are a good population to influence, because their eating and exercise habits are

still malleable, and if there is hope to make a difference, it lies within them. We both have personal experiences with children who suffer from obesity, and are tired of hearing about their day to day struggles.

Since children are not considered “[...] full-fledged economic actors like adults” (Young, 442), it can be understood that children and the effects of advertising on them, is a portion of research that often goes ignored. For this reason, the author of "Does food advertising influence children's food choices: A critical review of some of the recent literature," a piece in the International Journal of Advertising, looks at children as active decision-making consumers. He claims children are able to understand that advertising is different than a movie, story or sports program, between four and seven years old. However, it may take until age 12 for them to understand the economic and persuasive functions of advertising. A further aspect of this is that even after children are able to understand how advertising works, they do not use that understanding to evaluate and make reasoned decisions regarding their role as consumers.

Studies suggest that consideration regarding advertising to children must take into account “...the importance of cued information processing until 10-12 years of age is recognized. Children may understand but applying this understanding to a viewing situation may be limited in children until late childhood (447).

Through the use of six secondary sources found in credible journals and world reports we discuss the role of the media and the effects on children as well as the direct effect on youth obesity. We found one world report, one brief and one journal using the research database EBSCOhost. Using the keywords “advertising” and “children,” this search provided us with 2,892 results. We then added the keyword “consumers,”

narrowing our research to 229 results. Combining the words “advertising” with “children,” we then narrowed our findings to 29 credible resources and read through the many papers until we found the ones most relevant.

### Body/Findings

What effect does advertising have on youth obesity and how can the media bring this to the forefront in order to bring awareness to the epidemic? As we have discovered, it has often been reported that the media has a negative effect on youth obesity. Therefore it can also do the opposite and work to prevent and aid in the obesity epidemic. We plan to find ways to bring this evident problem to the forefront, ensuring change and recognizing prevention strategies the media can embark in.

It was important to recognize that advertising in all aspects is truly convincing towards children. Whether advertisers are marketing video games or clothing products or even sugary foods, we have to realize that they are targeting the children, our future consumers. Not only is the media teaching children what foods to buy, and promoting this in a negative way, but more time spent in front of the television is also going to cause a decrease in metabolism and an increase of obesity. Who wants to take the blame for the approximate “15.5 percent of adolescents (ages 12 to 19) and 15.3 percent of children (ages 6 to 11) [who] are obese” (Childhood)?

In regards to the direct effect of the media on youth obesity, the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, in their meta-analysis found a dramatic increase of childhood obesity in conjunction with a similar increase of children’s media. This included television (broadcast and subscription), videos, and computers (games and internet). “Children today spend an average of five and a half hours a day using media, the equivalent of a full time job, and more time than they spend doing anything else besides sleeping” (1). According to this brief, William Dietz and Stephen Gortmaker published the first article about children’s body weight and media in 1985. They conducted a national study with

more than 13,000 children ages 12-17. Their findings included an increase of 2% body weight for every hour of television viewing (2). Other studies conducted during the 1980's and early 1990's showed that children, age 8 to 16, who watched television more than 2 hours a day were more likely to be overweight than children who watch less television. Some of these studies found the correlation between television watching and obesity to be true for girls, but not for boys.

Advertising towards children has been an increasingly big part of business for the last thirty years. The number of advertisements that children see on television each year has doubled from approximately 20,000 in 1970 to over 40,000 in 2000. A part of this increase is due to the advent of cable television networks, dedicated to children's programming. In addition, there are over 160 magazines that target children in the United States (Dotson and Hyatt). They are full of stories, games and contests that are designed to keep children involved in the feature for several minutes. There are cross promotions between candy and sports leagues, toys and clothing. They are designed to engage a child without outright advertising a particular item.

One magazine cited in the study included 32 pages of promotional material out of a total of 84 pages (Dotson and Hyatt). All of this advertising is intended to connect a child's emotional well-being with the acquisition of a particular game, brand of sneaker, or most importantly, food. While not all studies show that advertising has a direct affect on the consumer choices children make (Lvovich), there is little question that advertising works. Why else would it be a \$250 billion industry (Pediatrics)?

The television is not the only cause of youth obesity. However, along with the many proven factors, such as a lack of physical activity, socioeconomics, poor eating

habits, and genetics, the American Obesity Association's website also lists two other causes. These include sedentary behavior involving a "high frequency of television viewing," as well as "over-exposure to advertising of foods that promote high-calorie foods and lack of recreational facilities" (Childhood). These two factors appear the easiest to alter, such as turning off the television which seems to be an easy solution to a major problem. However, if the media is associated as being a part of the problem, there seems to be a future profit loss, so keeping youth obesity away from the forefront may be what is best for the business in the long run. "Advertising has over 900,000 brands to sell and children and adolescents are attractive consumers" (Pediatrics). With the television off, and the youth spending their time off the couch, the media sources are looking to lose big bucks.

Although advertising may be a \$250 billion industry, the obesity epidemic has costs of its own. "In 2000, the total cost of obesity was estimated to be \$117 billion (\$61 billion direct and \$56 billion indirect). Most of the cost associated with obesity is due to type 2 diabetes, coronary heart disease, and hypertension" (Wolf). The media may have made a greater profit, but how do you put a measure on life?

According to Rebecca Randall, director of outreach for the nonprofit Common Sense Media based in San Francisco, youth are hit by "the equivalent of one commercial every five minutes on a Saturday morning television lineup" (Bernhard). This surplus of junk food advertisements is leaving negative effects on the youth population. Marketers advertise lies to children. By linking junk food products with athletes, fit bodies, and by placing a bowl of sugar-coated cereal in between apples and oranges, advertisers find ways to falsely promote their products (Eisenberg). "Advertisers spend more than \$2.5

billion/year to promote restaurants and another \$2 billion to promote food products” (Horgen). If these facts are looked at further and are included in mainstream advertisements bringing the issue to the forefront, maybe marketers would realize that their money could be better spent elsewhere.

Physical activities have decreased among youth according to the book *Core Concepts of Health*. “Activity levels among Americans are declining, beginning in childhood and continuing throughout the life cycle. Many schools have cut back on physical education classes and recess. Most adults drive to work, sit all day, and then relax in front of the TV at night. During leisure time, both children and adults surf the Internet, play video games, or watch TV rather than bicycle, participate in sports, or just do yard work or chores around the house” (261). These statistics are important when tracing the history of the media and its effects. It is obvious that youth obesity has remained a problem and is continuing to grow.

Money can be better spent elsewhere, as in providing the youth more recreational facilities or promoting healthy activities for families. “During the past 20 years, the combination of decreased physical activity and unhealthy eating has resulted in a doubling of the percentage of overweight children and adolescents” (Ogden). According to the article titled “To Use ‘Dance Dance Revolution’ To Slim Kids,” the state of West Virginia is planning to put the video game in every one of its public schools. “Preliminary results from a 24-week study of 50 overweight or obese children, aged 7 to 12, showed that those who played the game at home for at least 30 minutes five days per week maintained their weight and saw a reduction in some risk factors for heart disease and diabetes.” Even though food intake wasn’t part of this study there was still an

increase in physical activity, which then promoted the kids to want to do other kinds of physical activity.

This was a creative physical activity that kept the children's attention span and made working out fun. This video game is very strenuous and promoted children to jump around and dance which in turn would increase their heart rates and promote a healthy lifestyle. According to the article "The study's control group included a dozen children who did not play the game for the first 12 weeks, then did so for remainder of the study period. Those children piled on an average of 6 pounds during the first portion of the study but saw their weight stabilize in the second half." This video game is a fun and creative way to engage a child in physical activity and can also be implemented in schools around the United States. West Virginia currently has the worst childhood obesity problem in the United States and they are taking action. Money should be spent to advertise games like this, creating a win-win situation for everyone.

According to the book *Media and Culture*, The Federal Food and Drug Act passed in 1906 to monitor misleading patent-medicine claims in newspapers and magazine ads. The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) was established in 1914 to help the government further monitor advertising abuse (387).

Today, in the United States, obesity is regarded as a physical health problem that limits the quality and lifespan of the individuals affected. In her book, *Obesity*, Evelyn Kelly explores a variety of topics, from the origin of obesity to the modern world's public health pandemic. According to the author, obesity, also called *polysarcia* (Greek for "much flesh"), became a public health concern in the twentieth century when, "insurance companies, armed with statistics of health patterns, drove the change of linking of being

overweight with poor health and financial burdens” (Evelyn, 2006, p25). Prior to that time, the medical world had stifled their curiosity with the overweight and obese through studies and experiments. Now, there are financial incentives to stay thin and so the public has a reason to take notice of the weight issues, the skinny ones. Weight loss currently is a multi-billion dollar industry. Economic issues that arise from the problem of youth obesity include consumer alert issues. There are many products and services that are put on the market to supposedly cure obesity. Unfortunately, these products do not work and are dangerous for the user. Weight loss fraud is becoming a heavy issue and has been recognized by many organizations, such as the American Obesity Association.

According to the California Department of Health Services, in 2001 a report titled, “Prevalence of Obesity and Healthy Weight in California Counties,” in Monterey County roughly 25 percent of the *adult* population was obese. Our next generation is bleak, “...even more alarming is the trend in children, with the percentage of overweight children and adolescents more than doubling since the early 1970’s” (Lund, L., et. al, 2001).

In 2003, an article was written informing the reader that Kraft Foods, the famous Oreo cookie’s marketer, began to show an interest in the youth obesity issue. They responded to the public’s worry by, “corporate introspection about its mix of products and how those products [were] presented through its advertising and marketing” (Kraft). A popular commercial presenting the audience with children hanging around a living room and stuffing their faces with Double Stuff Oreos was later removed. It was recognized as having a negative way to portray their product. Kraft recognized the public scrutiny their commercials were bringing and decided to “get ahead of the debate, setting

the agenda for change among food manufacturers” (Kraft) through new marketing strategies, education campaigns, and providing healthier versions of their loved foods.

Kraft is one company doing its part to change mainstream advertising techniques. However, it was difficult to find other positive changes in the media’s role in youth advertising. Critics repeatedly contend that advertising has a negative impact on young people.

Educational workshops like the *Institute of Medicine of The National Academics* holds are good prevention strategies. An example of their list of agendas is as follows; Marketing and Media Influences: Identifying Challenges and Effective Strategies for the Prevention of Childhood Obesity, Family Dynamics and the Challenges and Opportunities for Preventing Childhood Obesity and Promoting Healthful Lifestyles. These are very interesting topics that could help to educate the public on some very controversial issues. The media could also film one of these educational workshops and air clips on workshops possibly promoting attendance.

In regards to advertising in schools “More than 200 school districts nationwide have signed exclusive contracts with soft drink companies” (Hays). Advertisements can be found almost anywhere today. Advertisements are on the internet, sides of school busses, on bathroom stalls, and on book covers. However, measures have been taken to decrease the problem. “In May, 2006, the nation's largest beverage distributors agreed to halt nearly all sales of sodas to public schools and sell only water, unsweetened juice, and low-fat milk in elementary and middle schools. Diet sodas would be sold only in high schools” (Clinton). These positive reinforcements need to be given more attention.

We agree with the critics who believe “that the government should control the quantity and content of ads, since young people are especially vulnerable to marketing messages” (Youth). Michael Jacobson, executive director of the Center for Science in the Public Interest, a Washington, D.C.-based consumer group states that "it's very difficult to eat a healthy diet because there is so much encouragement and opportunity to eat a diet that's loaded with calories, fat and sugar."

Obesity-related conditions are costing California businesses a lot of money. 10.2 billion dollars are being spent on medical treatments, 338 million on workman's compensation related issues, and indirectly 11.2 billion in lost productivity (August, Brooks, 2005). If the amounts of obesity cases continue to rise in California's future, so will the many costs associated with them. Obesity is an economic crisis as well as a health related one.

## Conclusion

Society needs to stop the obesity epidemic by teaching our children to become smart consumers. Focusing advertisements on nutritious foods and physical activities will lower rates of obesity and educating parents is essential. It's easier for the media to focus its attention on their positive influences on society that they make because taking the blame costs money. In comparing gains and losses, the lives of human beings outweigh any dollar amount.

.1.1 Although progress has been made, there is still more to be done. Public policy can be used to conduct a multi-front effort to change this rapidly overwhelming increase of health related problems linked to poor nutrition and exercise. It is no wonder that government has relied on the efforts of community based organizations and schools to help in the fight against childhood obesity and malnutrition since advertisers will not take the blame and bring the issue to the forefront. Children are a good population to influence, because their eating and exercise habits are still malleable, and if there is hope to make a difference, it lies within them.

Youth obesity, as we stated takes a huge community effort to overcome. If we start at the root of the problem, starting with educating the children, we can aid in future generations. Learning now, that child obesity is a leading factor in youth obesity, should teach parents a lesson about what they feed their children. Although it will take time to educate and implement new policies to end youth obesity, it is not out of our reach. Families and educators are doing their part, now it is the media's turn.

Being obese is causing many financial burdens for families, but most importantly the reason ending obesity is so important is due to the fact that these health issues can be prevented.

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## Annotated Bibliography

### INTRODUCTION

Youth obesity is a problem that is continuing to grow on a daily basis. Because of certain advertising and the negative effects that they have on the youth's minds, it is important to analyze them and discover the root of the problem. Advertising is convincing for adults, making it easy to imagine how it affects the youth population. By understanding how advertising is related to child obesity, it may be possible to discover a solution to the growing epidemic and create changes in our media controlled society.

Advertising towards children has been an increasingly big part of business for the last thirty years. The number of advertisements that children see on television each year has doubled from approximately 20,000 in 1970 to over 40,000 in 2000. A part of this increase is due to the advent of cable television networks, dedicated to children's programming. In addition, there are over 160 magazines that target children in the United States (Dotson and Hyatt). They are full of stories, games and contests that are designed to keep children involved in the feature for several minutes. There are cross promotions between candy and sports leagues, toys and clothing. They are designed to engage a child without outright advertising a particular item.

One magazine cited in the study, included 32 pages of promotional material out of a total of 84 pages (Dotson and Hyatt). All of this advertising is intended to connect a child's emotional well-being with the acquisition of a particular game, brand of sneaker, or most importantly, food. While not all studies show that advertising has a direct affect on the consumer choices children make (Lvovich), there is little question that advertising works. Why else would it be a \$54 billion industry in 2001 (Citizens for Independent Public Broadcasting)?

This annotated bibliography is organized into 4 sections. The first is an overview of advertising affects on children, which is then followed by advertisements of food, including fast food outlets. A surprising recent study found that 69% of all advertisements targeting children were for food, showing the direct affect of the media and nutrition. A correlation can be found here, and a deeper examination will follow.

#### SOURCES

Young, Brian. "Does food advertising influence children's food choices: A critical review of some of the recent literature." International Journal of Advertising 22.4 (2003): 441-459. (Primary source)

At the University of Exeter, Brian Young is an economic psychologist. He has published and lectured extensively about the influences of advertising on children. A recent book, The faces of Televisual Media: Teaching, Violence, Selling to Children, was published in 2003. He looks at advertising as an influence on the diets of children. One of the questions that arise is, "are children able to understand the difference between television programming and commercials that advertise products that will appeal to them."

According to Young, this is an area of research that has been neglected because children are not considered "[...] full-fledged economic actors like adults, but constitute a significant part of the family market and thus much of their economic and consumer activity functions within the family, where children have a role to play." (442). For this paper, he chooses to look at children as active decision-making consumers. Children are making decisions, based in part on the advertising they are exposed to, thus, the author looks at the understanding the children have of the advertising process.

The author looks at what is involved in understanding advertising and at what ages children are able to make distinctions that are critical to that understanding. He claims children are able to understand that advertising is different than the movie, story or sports program between four and seven years old but it may take until age 12 for them to understand the economic and persuasive functions of advertising. A further aspect is that even after children are able to understand how advertising works, they do not use that understanding to evaluate and make reasoned decisions regarding their role as consumers.

Studies suggest that consideration regarding advertising to children must take into account "...the importance of cued information processing until 10-12 years of age is recognized. Children may understand but applying this understanding to a viewing situation may be limited in children until late childhood (447). A further consideration is ...participants' show that the range of abilities in children can vary and that although understanding is obviously age-related, there is still a wide variation within the same age band (447).

All of this suggests that advertising to children is very important. A study conducted in 1996 showed that 63% of the Saturday morning programming advertising was for food. Of that 63%, 56% was for breads, cereals, rice and pasta, and 28% were for fast food restaurants (448). Young further looks at a study in 1998 that found that 20% of food advertising targeting children were for convenience foods, 6% was for fast food, and cereal and sweets made up the remaining ads (449).

A study conducted in Finland found that children play an active role in family decision-making regarding food purchases (450). Another study found that dialogue between family members and friends influence food purchases (451).

After reporting on a study that found young children who have been exposed to commercials embedded in a program are more likely to choose those foods, the researcher goes on to suggest that there is no connection between choosing a particular food product and seeing it previously. He says “There is no way of knowing if a simple choice paradigm just reflects for the younger children a general function in choice that is equivalent to “I’ve seen that before so it’s the right answer” (454). This conclusion by the author seems to run counter to the use of advertising as a way to make products familiar to children. If advertising to children didn’t work, it wouldn’t be a billion dollar industry.

The author referenced 34 studies in this article.

Wolf, Aline D. “Advertising and Children: Corporate America is now in the business of dictating values to our children. How best can parents respond?” America 179.3 Aug. 1998. (Primary source)

Aline Wolf is articulate in her argument against intensive advertising to children.

A mother of nine, Mrs. Wolf speaks easily from a mother’s perspective:

What parent has not been pestered to buy toys representing Barney or the Power Rangers, to buy Nike sneakers even when other brands are more affordable, to go to McDonald’s when there is better food at home and to take a child to yet another questionable Disney movie advertised incessantly on television as family entertainment?

She effectively grabs parents’ attention and eliciting wise, “I’ve been there before” nods with her concise language. But Mrs. Wolf is not simply a mother on a rant against today’s materialistic society; she is a co-founder of the first Montessori school in Pennsylvania, and also provides first-hand cases of the encroachment of advertising in schools. One example is the all-too-familiar soda brand advertising visible upon entering a school. It is not surprising to hear that commercial corporations pay schools for the

ability to advertise on the premises. How many times have you seen an ad for McDonald's on a school campus?

By this point in the article, you begin to wonder just how major corporations are so successful at sneaking their ads into schools. Wolf appears to have all the answers, and directly addresses the question. According to her, first, they promote the message that happiness will only be achieved through buying this product, or consuming a certain unhealthy food. Then, they advertise their product in such a way as to make those who don't buy it feel inferior. Finally, they flood the communication lines to promote the popularity of their product and the collecting of their product. An excellent example of the collecting portion of advertising ploys, states Wolf, is "the infinite variety of Beanie Babies and Barbies," which is "designed to make children want as many as possible." We can also remember when we were little how cool it was to get a happy meal and collect the surprises that came with the unhealthy meal. We remember begging our parents for happy meals solely for the toys, but we still continue to consume too fatty hydrogenated filled food. We also remember buying sugary cereals that had little or no nutritious content to get the toys. The cereal also tasted good and had cartoon characters on the front of the boxes which were very intriguing to the young eye and mind. This in mind, we know from personal experience that children are highly impressionable, and the author makes a valid point when she calls for parents and caretakers to be aware of these commercial strategies. As adults, it is our responsibility to care for the young, and that means carefully protecting them from the more harmful beasts in advertising.

Wolf also addresses other characteristics inherent within actual industry products available to minors. The first is a major one—violence in media (video games in

particular). Shockingly, there are “16 acts of violence per hour of children’s television programming, with very few peaceful situations to conflicts,” and in video games, often times “to win, the child must commit violent acts.” Naturally, children do possess the ability to tell the difference between reality and fantasy, however, I sincerely doubt such an extreme and casual exposure to violence as is found in video games is beneficial to proper child development! Also children were much more likely to spend time inside rather than outside playing and getting exercise. These violent video games kept their attention for hours and instead of exercising and getting their heart rate up during the day, the most exercise they were receiving were in their hands.

Other characteristics found in products are misinformation and stereotyping. Among these, according to Wolf, are negative racial and female perceptions. As one who grew up with Disney movies, I was rather surprised to see just how cleverly such negative portrayals were disguised. None of my peers (at the time) thought Ariel, from “The Little Mermaid,” would have been promoting an anorexic figure as beautiful, nor that she would send the message that in order to be someone, you have to catch a handsome man. And yet, now that I reconsider everything I was shown, it hits the nail on the head. Although we are talking about the youth obesity crisis, it is also important to realize that advertising is also affecting anorexic individuals as well. Even though we are talking about youth obesity, we are not encouraging children to want to become waif thing like Ariel, from “The Little Mermaid.”

Deceptively harmless, yet dark messages lie therein.

Wolf, using that as a diving board, leaps into the other detriments of too much television. A primary argument is that the “ready-made images of the television world

blunt children's imagination," and while this is a highly subjective statement at first, she proceeds to back up her reasoning with information from expert on human intelligence and creativity, Joseph Chilton Pearce. According to Pearce, exposure to TV weakens a child's ability to produce images from within their own brain due to the flooding of pre-made imagery. It's possible. Yes, children who watch TV do tend to mimic scenes they have seen, but I know several who still retained their innate creativity. Children are also watching multiple hours of television and aren't spending the time they need exercising.

Wolf concludes with dire warnings about how constant exposure to advertising produces failure within our lives. While this is an opinionated statement, she does make some good points: while we cannot simply "throw out the television," we do have to be selective about what we watch and avoid letting the TV be the babysitter.

"Advertising and Children," while it can appear at times like a mother's rant against corporate America, it does contain useful facts and personal anecdotes of the effects of advertising. All arguments are backed up, and Wolf's method of delivery is nearly airtight. In addition, she takes it one step farther and even addresses questions centering on enforcement of values so downplayed with the materialism of ads. Positive solutions for parents and educators wishing to enforce good values in children are presented with logic, and with a message of hope. If we can instill in the next generation the essential skills and values necessary for analytical thinking (to prevent getting sucked in by advertising), we'll be giving them something greater in the long run: individual uniqueness. We will also be practically handing them the ability to judge advertisements so that they can make better food choices as well.

Campbell, R., Martin, C.R., and Fabos, B. (2004). *Media & Culture*. 380-403. (Secondary source)

Advertising has been around for about three hundred years, dating back to the early 1700's when the first newspaper ad appeared in the *Boston News-Letter* in 1704 (381). Since then, there has been a steady increase in advertising, advertising agencies, and the effect advertising has on people. To better understand where advertising is today, we need to look at the significant events that took place in advertising, starting with 1704.

In 1880, the first ad agency was established. Volney Palmer, representing newspaper publishers, opened the first agency in Boston (382). In 1875 another agency follows in Philadelphia. The Federal Food and Drug Act passed in 1906 to monitor misleading patent-medicine claims in newspapers and magazine ads. The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) was established in 1914 to help the government further monitor advertising abuse (387). In 1971, the tobacco industry agrees to ban cigarette advertising from television. Following the tobacco ads being banned, R.J. Reynolds notices an increase in teens smoking Camel cigarettes due to Joe Camel cartoon ads (405). Channel One News is introduced in schools, offering free use of equipment in exchange for ten minutes of news and two minutes of advertising. In 1998, the tobacco industry agrees to a settlement with several states to ban tobacco ads on billboards. By 2001, an hour of prime-time network television contains an average of 16 minutes and 8 seconds of ads-3 minutes more than in 1991 (379). America Online (AOL) internet ad sales drop by 40 percent in 2002, and also in 2002, four international mega-agencies including WPP, Omnicom, Interpublic, and Publicis, control more than one-half of the world's ad revenue (388). Finally, in 2003, the Super Bowl remains the most expensive program for

purchasing television ads. During the Super Bowl one-thirty second ad costs more than two million dollars (393).

In order to understand the enormous effects advertising has on our lives, and more importantly on our children, we need to understand the root of the problem. By looking at the history of advertising and the political issues concerning advertising, we are better equipped to do this.

Wood, Doug. "10 Advertising Legal Issues." Advertising Age. 20 December 2004. Vol. 75 Issue 51, p12. (Secondary source)

This article released in Advertising Age discusses the top ten advertising legal issues congress will most likely face in 2005. Children's advertising is ranked number one among issues that will arise. Following advertising to children are privacy, audience measurement, gift cards, return on marketing investment, branded entertainment, comparative advertising, NAAG, ethnic marketing and DTC drug advertising. The issues most pertinent to children are branded entertainment, comparative advertising, the NAAG and ethnic marketing.

The National Association of Attorneys General has been relatively quiet this past year; however they are not expected to follow this trend in the upcoming year. The author here suggests for us to look for NAAG to form multi-state task forces to attack a variety of marketing practices more in the mainstream than those they've attacked in the past. Expect them to look at children's advertising, alcoholic beverages, promotions, credit and lots of other practices important to advertisers.

Comparative advertising will continue to increase problems as well. Comparative advertising remains an extremely popular form of battle in the marketplace. In the last few years, lawsuits between competitors over allegations of false or deceptive claims have increased, as have challenges before the National Advertising Division. If advertisers are bringing up false or deceptive claims, children are most likely going to believe them.

One important notion also brought up in this article was subliminal messaging to children and consumers who object to the advertising and erosion of the line between entertainment and advertising.

This article raises many important legal issues surrounding advertising to children in the year of 2005. Unfortunately we can only anticipate what the future of advertising will hold and what restrictions will be brought forth, but we hope to protect our children in the process. If the obesity problem is rising right now due to advertising, imagine what it is going to do in the future if there is no fine line between the entertainment aspect and the advertising aspect.

Teinowitz, Ira. "Marketing to Stay Under Microscope." Advertising Age, 3 January 2005,

Vol. 76 Issue 1, p23. (Secondary source)

After a worry free year, Congress will now have some major decisions to make concerning advertising in 2005. Some of the main concerns this article pointed out for congress are the marketers' ability to deduct ad costs, attacks on food advertising aimed at kids, rising postal costs and the potential threat to e-mail marketing are all expected to be on the Washington agenda this year-in addition to efforts to limit DTC advertising.

According to Dick O'Brien, executive Vice President of the American Association of Advertising Agencies growing concerns about childhood obesity could make the issue "the flash point for advertising" with the question being whether "food and beverages should be advertised to children."<sup>(1)</sup> This article touches on many hot topics that are anticipated for Washington. The rise in obesity is a new concern to our country because it has not been until recently that we are noticing these unhealthy weight trends in children, which most likely can be linked to the immense amount of advertising and lifestyles children are exposed to. This change in culture due to advertising is becoming a downward spiral for children.

Moore, Lisa J. "The littlest consumers." U.S. News & World Report November 1990: 73-75. (Secondary source)

In an article entitled, "The Littlest Consumers", which appeared in U.S. News & World Report, author L.J. Moore discusses the promising market of small children for advertisers. Lisa J. Moore is a graduate from the college of arts and science and University of Virginia. The article touches on the aspects involved with the marketing to this lower age group by focusing on four main areas, which include food, clothing, electronics, and travel.

The beginning of the article begins with three quotes from different companies, which address the children-marketing group. Here they are: "By building brand loyalty in children today, they'll be the adult passengers of tomorrow," says Delta Air Lines spokesperson Jackie Pate. "We believe children make brand decisions very early that they will carry into their adult lives," says Ann Moore, publisher of Sports Illustrated for

Kids. “Our new adult campaign, ‘It’s Time to Play,’ has obvious appeal to children. We hope it will strengthen the branding of Reebok in the 6-to-12 group,” says Gordie Nye, marketing director for Reebok (73).

The article also addresses the issue that nowadays, the marketing of “sophisticated merchandise is being pitched at much younger children, with far more advertising. This year’s advance sales of ad time for kids’ television hit a record of nearly \$450 million, up about 15 percent from last year’s, according to the Network of Independence Broadcasters” (73). This can help speculate that marketers are finding that due to being uninformed about marketing; children have become prime targets to direct sales approaches toward.

Further into the article, James McNeal, marketing professor at Texas A&M University and author of *Children as Consumers* is quoted about the current situation of marketing and the effects it has on children. In reference to a study he conducted, “according to surveys by Texas A&M’s McNeal, some 37 million children from age 4 to 12 have nearly \$9 billion of their own money and growing influence over Mom and Dad’s cash” (74). This just shows how much money is actually being targeted by this advertisers and the importance of having their goals of persuading the youth reached.

Although, the articles then move forward with information on toiletry, food, electronic, and travel sales directed towards children, I have focused this portion on the clothing industries influences on youth. “With enormously successful Oshkosh as a precedent, clothing manufactures are whipping out children’s lines meant to attract both kids and their brand-and-quality-conscious folks” (74). The article continues to explain

this ordeal by bringing to view the different means businesses are trying to reach out to children and their parents. Many of the companies have even started selling business suits and dresses for children just to bring in higher priced sales, “like the \$98 black-velveteen dress in size 4 to 6 by Albert Nipon Girls and sold through Talbots Kids, and the new \$300 Ralph Lauren down-filled expedition jacket.

Overall, the article closes with the author’s own opinions on the issue, which display with a condescending humor that “given the current economy, Merrill Lynch should retire its legendary bull and hire the old ‘toon favorite, Bullwinkle.” (75) Although, the article holds many conclusive points, the generality holds little depth into the grander issues involved with the current dilemma involving marketing and children. Nonetheless, with current information and a vast audience appeal, the article is extremely beneficial when seeking new insight on an issue afflicting our modern-day youth.

Oates, Caroline, Mark Blates, and Barrie Gunter. "Marketing to Children." Journal of Marketing Management 19.3/4 (2003): 401-409. (Secondary source)

The editorial from the Journal of Marketing Management, entitled Marketing to Children, discuss the problems associated with advertisements and their affect on children. The three authors of this editorial are Caroline Oates, Mark Blades and Barrie Gunter. Oates is a Lecturer in Marketing in the Management School at the University of Sheffield where she holds a first degree in social policy from the University of Sheffield, and M.Sc. in marketing from Sheffield Hallam University and a Ph.D. from the University of Sheffield. Blades is a Senior Lecturer in Developmental Psychology in the

Department of Psychology at the University of Sheffield; he also has a degree in archaeology and anthropology from the University of Cambridge and a degree in psychology from the University of Sheffield where he also completed a Ph.D. in child development. The third author, Gunter, is a Professor of Journalism Studies in the Department of Journalism Studies at University of Sheffield. He also has degrees in psychology from the University of Wales (a bachelor's in science), University of London (master's in science), and the University of East London (a doctorate degree), and he has written 45 books and over 200 other publications on a variety of media and marketing topics.

In the introduction of this article, the authors discuss the issues involved with children and advertisements. During which they bring in concise figures on how much money is actually being spend by children ages twelve and under. "Recent figures for the spending power of children aged up to twelve years in the United States...controlled spending of \$28 billion in 2000 from their own allowances and earnings, and in addition they influenced \$250 billion of family spending" (401). This illustrates just how important the marketing towards children really is, considering the enormous amount of money available to such an uninformed group of individuals.

The article moves forward, by bringing in the notion that television has become the major tool for marketers influencing youth. The article quotes from an article entitled, "Children and television advertising", that "suggested that contemporary children in the U.S. may view more than 40,000 advertisements every year, and found that more than 10 minutes of every hour of network U.S. television programs were given to advertising

material” (401). The article also discusses the strategies many countries are using in order to help stop the influencing of advertisements on children. “Countries like Sweden [does] not allow advertising to under-twelve on its terrestrial television stations” (401). On the other hand, some countries find this tactic unnecessary in support for the advertisers. Britain has made a system entitled Media Smart. “The launch of Media Smart, a recent advertising industry initiative, aims to address critics of advertising to children by providing an advertising literacy program to be taught in schools. Launched with the backing of several key advertisers, Media Smart is designed to teach children about advertising and if the scheme is successful it will be extended across Europe” (402). The main emphasis of this tactic is to prevent “legislation aimed at restricting advertising to children” (402).

The two areas of advertisements the article addresses are the food and clothing industries. These two hold the most prominent influencing powers over children under the age of twelve. Food being the number one afflicter which helps to cause youth obesity, while clothing follow close behind in the number two position. The main emphasis taken out of this article in reference to the topic matter at hand for this annotative paper is the information about clothing. “Such advertising places an emphasis on possessions, and on aspiring to a certain life-style. This is especially the case for branded products with a particular label” (402). A reference to an article entitled, “When is a brand not a brand?” cited in this article found, “children can recognize brands and logos before they can read. Children’s desire to possess products they have seen on television is said to lead to ‘pester power’, which means that children pester their parents or other adults to buy things for them” (402). This explains the figures that address the

money children have available to their expedencies; including their parent's own funds.

The ideal that brands create a life-style shows that also the problem dealing with brand named clothing and children who are targeted by advertisements to buy them to enrich their own lives. Also the McDonald's arch is becoming more recognizable to children than the symbol of a cross. In opinion, many children who watch commercials of children with perfect families wearing Gap clothing might get the impression that if they buy the clothes the family life-style is included. Also if a child sees an advertisement about an unhealthy food such as French fries on a McDonald's commercial and sees a completely fit child that might give them the impression that if you eat French fries you will be fit and healthy.

The article continues further with the idea that countries are trying hard to find ways to prevent the manipulation of children's minds caused by advertising. In the end of this informational article, the authors also bring in other resources that may be beneficial to the reader if wanting more information on the topic addressed. Overall, the article does bring about information that can lead to a more educated comprehension on the issues caused by marketing to children. However, with more reference to the clothing industry and conclusive facts the article would have better bearing on the thesis of the topic our group has decided to explore.

Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation. "The Role of Media in Childhood Obesity." Issue

Brief 7030 (2004). 14 Feb 2005 <[www.kff.org](http://www.kff.org)>. (Secondary source)

This article is a meta-analysis by the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation. The foundation is a “non-profit private foundation dedicated to providing information and analysis on health care issues to policymakers, the media, the health care community, and the general public” (1). The researchers for this issue brief looked at the dramatic increase of childhood obesity in conjunction with a similar increase of children’s media. This included television (broadcast and subscription), videos, and computers (games and internet). “Children today spend an average of five and a half hours a day using media, the equivalent of a full time job, and more time than they spend doing anything else besides sleeping (1).

Many experts interested in this area of research, both medical and media related believe that the following contribute to childhood obesity:

The time children spend using media displaces time they could spend in physical activities; the food advertisements children are exposed to on TV influence them to make unhealthy food choices; the cross-promotions between food products and popular TV and movie characters are encouraging children to buy and eat more high-calorie foods; children snack excessively while using media and they eat less healthy meals when eating in front of the TV; Watching TV and videos lowers children’s metabolic rates below what they would be even if they were sleeping; depictions of nutrition and body weight in entertainment media encourage children to develop less healthy diets (2).

According to this brief, William Dietz and Stephen Gortmaker published the first article about children’s body weight and media in 1985. They conducted a national study with more than 13,000 children ages 12-17. Their findings included an increase of 2% body weight for every hour of television viewing (2). Other studies conducted during the 1980’s and early 1990’s showed that children, age 8 to 16, who watched television more than 2 hours a day were more likely to be overweight than children who less television.

Some of these studies found the correlation between television watching and obesity to be true for girls, but not for boys.

Cross-sectional studies tended to not find a correlation between television watching and obesity. This could be a problem with the methodology of such studies. They did not control for other factors such as socio-economic status, parental body weight, or a possible causal relationship between low physical activity and television watching. Longitudinal studies, such as the Framingham Children's Study, did show a causal relationship. The authors believe this relationship shows long-term effects that may not be readily apparent in a short study (3).

The authors of this brief also looked at interventions as a way to determine the effects of television viewing and childhood obesity. They looked at a study conducted by Stanford University that found "students who received the intervention achieved statistically significant reductions in their television viewing and meals eaten in front of the TV set, as well as decreases in BMI, triceps skinfold thickness, waist circumference, and waist-to-hip ratio" (3). The studies are mixed with regard to hours of media watching and the amount of time spent in physical activities.

Recent estimates show that children today see an average of more the 40,000 television advertisements directed at them each year. This is an increase from 20,000 in the 1970's and 30,000 by the late 1980's (4). "The majority of ads targeted to children are for food: primarily candy (32% of all children's ads), cereal (31%), and fast food (9%). One study documented approximately 11 food commercials per hour during children's Saturday morning television programming, estimating that the average child viewer may be exposed to one food commercial every 5 minutes" (5).

This brief shows there is strong evidence that advertising directed at children has a strong influence on their eating habits. There are many studies that increased television-viewing correlates to an increased consumption of soft drinks (5); children who view food advertisements tend to show a preference for the one advertised (5); and that many children believe fast food is more nutritious than home-cooked foods (6).

Cross promotion marketing is also used for children. A toy or game is advertised in conjunction with a fast food, breakfast cereal, or snack food product. This creates an emotional appeal for the child that means eating the advertised food and playing with the toy will bring good feelings. The food is then equated with feeling good, not just with satisfying a need for nutrition.

Content analysis of television programming shows the majority of food consumed on prime time and children's television is sweet or salty snacks and soft drinks as opposed to nutritional meals or fruits (6). A study of the 1997 season found more than 500 food references during the week for children's programming with 1/3 showing foods high in fats, sugar, or salt.

Consumer socialization (understanding advertising) of children is not the same as for adults. Most researchers agree that children under 6 are unable to differentiate between programming and advertising and children under 10 have difficulty understanding the persuasive intent of the advertising. They do not realize that the way the ads are designed cause them to want to purchase the item. "Pediatrics reviewed the publicly available research about children and advertising and concluded that advertising

directed toward children is inherently deceptive and exploits children under 8 years of age” (8).

There are a number of regulations already in place that restrict the way advertising is used to entice children. These include the use of program characters in ads, “bumpers” that separate programming from advertising and time restrictions. There have been calls to restrict further the use of advertising aimed at children. These include:

- A ban on any advertising to preschoolers.
- A ban on advertising on “junk” food to very young children.
- An FTC investigation into marketing of “junk” food to children.
- A prohibition on food product placement in children’s programming.
- The provision of “equal time” for messages on nutrition or fitness, to counteract food ads in children’s shows.
- Parental “warnings” about the nutritional value of advertised foods.
- A repeal of the tax deduction for company expenses associated with advertising “junk” food products to children.
- A prohibition on food advertising in school-based TV programs such as Channel One.
- Explicit announcement of food-related product placement deals in popular TV shows or movies seen by large numbers of children.
- Eliminating or limiting cross-promotions between popular children’s media characters and unhealthy food products.
- Increasing the use of popular media characters and celebrities to promote healthy food alternatives.

Many countries in the world have strong restrictions regarding advertising to children. One of the most restrictive is Sweden, which prohibits all advertising to children under age 12. In England, the BBC prohibits the use of cartoon characters in

fast food advertising, and Norway and Finland do not allow “commercial sponsorship of children’s programs” (8). This brief referenced 110 studies.

## CONCLUSION

Today, in the United States, obesity is regarded as a physical health problem that limits the quality and lifespan of the individuals affected. In her book, *Obesity*, Evelyn Kelly explores a variety of topics, from the origin of obesity to the modern world’s public health pandemic. According to the author, obesity, also called *polysarcia* (Greek for “much flesh”), became a public health concern in the twentieth century when, “insurance companies, armed with statistics of health patterns, drove the change of linking of being overweight with poor health and financial burdens” (Evelyn, 2006, p25). Prior to that time, the medical world had stifled their curiosity with the overweight and obese through studies and experiments. Now, there are financial incentives to stay thin and so the public has a reason to take notice of the weight issues.

According to the California Department of Health Services, in 2001 a report titled, “Prevalence of Obesity and Healthy Weight in California Counties,” in Monterey County roughly 25 percent of the *adult* population was obese. Our next generation is bleak, “...even more alarming is the trend in children, with the percentage of overweight children and adolescents more than doubling since the early 1970’s” (Lund, L., et. al, 2001).

We truly feel and have direct sources stating that youth obesity is a problem that is on the rise. It was important for us to show the reader that advertising in all aspects is truly convincing towards children. Whether advertisers are marketing video games or clothing products or even sugary foods, we have to realize that they are targeting the

children, our future consumers. Not only is the media teaching children what foods to buy, and promoting them in a negative way, but more time spent in front of the television is also going to cause a decrease in metabolism and an increase of obesity.

Society needs to stop the obesity epidemic by teaching our children to become smart consumers. Focusing advertisements on nutritious foods and physical activities will lower rates of obesity and educating parents is essential.

Interdisciplinary Reflection: Mary Catherine Langford

My career at CSUMB has been one that I will truly never forget, simple enough, I LOVE THIS COLLEGE! Even though I love this college, I am truly looking forward to venturing on to a new level in my life. My development has grown, not only as a student but also as an individual. There were many classes at this institution, which clearly changed my outlook on life, and I am blessed to say that I really do love my major and that I learned a lot. I didn't just learn only about scholastics at this college, I learned about life as well. I think that education should shed some light on the real world, versus only teaching out of books. CSUMB really is different from any school that I have ever attended, and I love the way that my instructors taught their classes.

HCOM is such an amazing major, and it was the right one for me. The MLO's that are covered in our major were a great way to gain an understanding on an array of subjects; in particular I really enjoyed my service learning experience. Honestly, when I first started service learning it was somewhat of a hassle. I did my service learning in Salinas at Juvenile Hall, and it was something that truly changed my outlook on life. Seeing another way of life was a huge reality to me. I grew very fond of the children that I instructed about Media Literacy and would never take back that experience for anything. This class was simply a lesson on life, with incorporating our major.

In the beginning of my term at CSUMB I knew a little bit about what I was going to study in my major, only because I had taken a couple of classes at another four year institution in HCOM. Lewis Clark State College in Idaho was completely different from CSUMB if you can imagine. I am glad that I attended that college because I have lived in multiple places during my college career. I have to say how happy I am that I attended

CSUMB, and if I could start all over again, I would have started my college career at this institute. As time progressed, I began to understand a little bit more about what my major was going to teach me. When I first started my HCOM classes, I thought that the majority of my classes would be media based. I had no clue that there was going to be so much writing involved. I used to despise writing and now in my last semester of college I am writing for the Otter Realm, which is CSUMB'S school newspaper. I love writing for the paper, and going into this major that was something that I never thought that I was going to enjoy or even do.

This school is very different when it comes to student success after college. I really feel that teachers and advisors are very involved when it comes to student success in the work force after college. Teachers at this school seem to be very involved with implementing internships into classes and getting to know students on a personal level. I actually had an internship prior to coming to CSUMB for my first year. I interned at a Marketing Firm in San Diego, when I gained much knowledge about the work place outside of a learning institute. The CEO of the company actually steered me into choosing my major at CSUMB. She told me that communication classes would best get me geared up for the marketing field, because of all the public speaking. Even though we do a lot of public speaking in HCOM, my understanding is that most majors at this school do a lot of presentations. In my experience in my internship, that confidence of being able to get up in public and speak really helps in the corporate world. My journalism and mass media concentration has prepared me in many areas for life after college. I have cranked out so many papers; writing has almost become a habit. I also feel that this college is really engaged with technology. I learned at my internship that e-mail was the

most popular form of communication with clients. This school is VERY e-mail bases. I have to check my e-mail multiple times a day to keep up with my mail from teachers.

Different pedagogies in the classroom are very good in my opinion. Different styles in class tend to get you prepared for the real world. Even at my internship I was dealing with different kinds of people and different ways of doing business depending on who the client was. Obviously I am better at dealing with certain types of teaching styles than others, but having different instructors widened my education. Working on projects tends to be very hard, especially when you have a large group of people working together. Schedules vary, and so do the approaches towards the task at hand. My development as a student in this aspect changed with every class that I took. I had different experiences in all of my classes and with all of my groups that I dealt with over the past two years. Even my capstone project was completed with a partner, and that was the most tedious project I have ever dealt with. Through our collaboration process we learned a great deal from each other and I think working with another person keeps me on task and helped our project in many areas. Overall, my experiences were great and the exposure to different people taught me a lot about communicating, scheduling and understanding.

All of my classes that I took at CSUMB had connections across disciplinary divides. HCOM terms that were used in one class were used in a majority of HCOM classes. I felt that the more classes I took the more knowledgeable I was entering another HCOM class. I felt that in HCOM classes really emphasized personal understanding of others. Communication skills are held on a pedestal, in dealing with the real world. I also noticed how most of my teachers emphasized the fact to question everything that you

hear, in their classroom, in the mass media, from your parents etc. They really taught me to think for my self. Teachers in the HCOM department really respected what the students had to say and virtually there was no wrong answer. I think that I have learned that you can learn something new from every single person you come into contact with. Whether that person is an instructor or a fellow student or a child in juvenile hall, there is always something you can learn from individuals.

I really don't feel like I have had any gaps or missed opportunities in this institution. I think that I was very fortunate to have the instructors that I have had, and I can't emphasize how my outlook on life has changed over the past two years. I think I have honestly grown a great deal through my college career and have really started to find out who I am and what I stand for. I also feel I have a strong grasp on what I want to do in the future, and I am so excited about the next chapter in my life.

HCOM really changed the way that I view the world, speaking about the media in general. I really am very skeptical when I read anything in a newspaper, or anything that I see on television etc. Really taking a far in depth look of how the media directly affects the general public and children really makes me irate. I really think that advertisers are the reason for many problems in the United States. Even though the media has a lot to do with it, I think it is the individual responsibility of people educated in this department to share their wisdom. That is why I found my Service Learning course so meaningful. The media really paints an ugly and fake picture, and without an education on media, how would the normal consumer be able to pinpoint these problems? Advertisers are very tricky and even the most educated consumer can be caught by their brilliance.

I really think that my education generally did change my relationships. I really learned to communicate in a more understanding matter. Looking at things from multiple perspectives helped me communicate more responsibly. I am also going to need my education for my future commitments. My future commitment in the work force are working for Roni Hicks and Associates which is a very well-known intergraded marketing firm in San Diego, Ca. For this job, I really am going to be using my outcome-based education to give that company my best work.

Capstone was the final stair in my staircase to graduation. I truly do feel that I have climbed many flights of stairs to get to this point in my life. I really had a pretty good idea of what I wanted to do on my Capstone when entering pre-cap. I wanted to focus on the way that advertising affected children. As time progressed I ended up teaming up with Serena Pedraza and our Capstone turned into how advertisers could help bring the obesity epidemic to the forefront. I was pretty frightened of Capstone, considered how much work I had heard it was.

Designing an interdisciplinary project was VERY time consuming. Serena and I had very different schedules and really had to make time for our project. Even if we weren't in person, we were over the phone working on our project together. We really kept on top of our project and turned everything in on time, and felt that at times we went overboard comparing our projects to other individuals. In the end our hard work has paid off and it looks like we are almost done with our project. It is such a wonderful feeling to know that our hard work has paid off, not only in our Capstone class but also in our college careers.

Doing different research across the board really proved to be challenging. I really hadn't completed any research as in depth as we did for this project. It seemed really hard to find primary sources for our project in the beginning, but we finally got the hang of researching across the board. I have to say that probably our most useful research tool was CSUMB'S Library website. It really helped us to find our primary and secondary sources. Some of our information came from classes we had previously taken in our college careers, but most of our research was additional education that we obtained through our pre-cap class.

Through our research and collaboration, I really learned a lot of statistics about the childhood obesity epidemic. I also learned about many ways that the media could bring this issue to the forefront and help aid in the epidemic. I also learned ways to search scholarly material. I also learned time management through this project, and furthered my education on collaborating on projects, especially on projects that are extremely in depth. I finally learned what a great feeling being on top of our Capstone feels like; having scholarly work almost completed is an amazing accomplishment. Graduating college is going to be the most amazing accomplishment I have had in my life, and this class is the final step to that process. I feel like through this class I have really put my entire college education into this project, which is a good feeling. I am truly proud of our paper.

I think that everyone can make a difference in our world, and hopefully our project will impact children that are part of the obesity epidemic. Also hopefully advertisers will become aware that they can make a difference and implement changes in the media. Hopefully parents will also take a stand to educate their children about

becoming smart consumers. Overall, hopefully the obesity epidemic will start to decrease rather than rise any further.

In the future, I hope to become very successful. I do truly believe that through education, diligence and hard work, success will follow. The diligence and hard work put into this project has shown others including myself what I am capable of doing. This project has not only shown me time management but it has also been a building block to my future. Capstone is a very stressful class that teaches students to deal with stress in a healthy manner, and provide a stepping stone to the next flight of stairs I have to be ready to climb.

### Interdisciplinary Reflection: Serena Pedraza

I didn't know what I wanted to do with my life after high school. I knew I was a good writer because my parents told me so. I was told I was creative by my sister, and my brother complained that I talked too much. The communications field seemed perfectly suited for me according to them, my teachers, and my guidance councilors. CSU Monterey Bay, due to its close proximity to the beach, filled my desire to move out of my parent's house, so I decided Human Communications was my ticket out. I became an otter in the fall of 2002 and since then, the road to achieving my degree has been a rather curvy one.

I thought I was coming here to become a television broadcaster. Looking in the mirror each day my freshman year, I practiced my smile. "This is Serena Pedraza reporting live on location," I'd repeat in different tones while whipping my hair around and posing for the stuffed animals on my bed. I thought the profession was perfect for a talkative, creative, writer like me. I became confident in what my friends and family wanted for me. Nonetheless, a lot has changed since then.

Now having learned what the media is made up of I've decided I don't want my face in front of that controversial lens. Having attempted to find a media source that is reliable, honest and unbiased, I learned that one does not truly exist. Soon after, I began to question my own views on the world in which I thought I lived such a calm and simple life. Life overwhelmed me for the first time and I fell into a slumber of grief. Seeing my brother sent to war at eight-teen, my sister suffering from a weight-obsessed society, and dealing with the stressors the foster care system brought me and my siblings, I began to

yearn for something to ease those pains, and to make a difference. I took a step back and began once again at square one.

I took some classes I felt were pointless. I fell asleep through the movies I was required to watch in music classes and sat through Spanish courses to learn a language I thought I already knew. I was taught the proper ways to find information in the library at least 4 times and learned the history of beautiful Monterey and Cannery Row through John Steinbeck's eyes. I had teachers that made me laugh, stressed me out and made me doze off then wake up to lectures of jellyfish and tidal waves. None of these things prepared me for my future career goals, but all of them taught me my strengths and weaknesses, my likes and dislikes. I learned that being an accountant or working with marine biology was not for me. I'm skilled at statistics but can not remember my Roman numerals. In a nutshell, I was excited when my general education classes were over.

Human Communications taught me a lot about myself more than anything else. Yes, I learned the proper ways to cite MLA and the great techniques used to create annotated bibliographies. But most importantly I created myself. Professor Benmayor taught me to take pride in my Puerto Rican heritage and to never forget to look to my roots for answers. Professor Reichard taught me to stand up for my beliefs and take full advantage of my rights as a human being. Professor Motoike showed me the power of service. I've fed the hungry. I've served the homeless. I've tutored students whose parents work all day and night to pay the rent. The pain I've seen has shown me how menial my problems are at home and how blessed I really am. These Human Communication field experiences prepared me to create and fulfill my career goals.

I discovered my passion was helping people. Through all the talking my brother complained I did too much of I realized how many people turned to me to help solve their problems. Through the creativity I was blessed with, I spent hours setting up community service events for my sorority. My news anchor smile brought warmth to the people with no homes and no food and my writing skills came in handy with everything I did. I used my communication skills to end arguments, raise awareness and negotiate. Human Communications taught me to be compassionate, assertive yet cooperative, social, resourceful and innovative.

Knowing that my passion was being in the helping field I decided to look for a minor that would allow me to integrate my communication skills with service skills. Talking with Professor Kim Judson I realized that I have a strong desire to help children. Being raised in foster care, I saw a lot of horrible things that children are faced with day to day. I knew I didn't want to be a social worker because I already knew first-hand what they do and I feared the attachments I would gain with the children. My heart broke each and every day that my foster mother would tell me another story about another abandoned, hurt, abused child. And so after taking some time to think about other areas of interest I remembered my youngest sister who is an obese child. After that first meeting I did plenty of research on the topic, and I found the issues of youth obesity and malnourishment were becoming more and more important to me. In fact, these issues began to anger me.

My brother hardly eats anything, and my sister eats whatever is left: cereal, chips, cookies; typically junk. They sit in front of the television all day playing video games and rarely go outside because the neighborhood isn't the safest. My mother won't put them in

sports because of the fees and because of the need for transportation. They get little or no physical activity and no healthy food. My mother who dropped out of high school at seventeen has no idea which foods are healthy or not. She knows nothing about vitamins, healthcare, or youth obesity. This is really unfortunate and something needs to be done. I was raised the same way.

Youth obesity is the main focus for my Capstone this semester. I'm tired of hearing my sister tell me someone referred to her as a "pig" in her 3<sup>rd</sup> grade class. She has no control over the environment in which she lives. But, now is the best time to reach her, to stop the epidemic before it gets into the further stages, resulting in diabetes, heart disease and future orthopedic problems. Now is the time to educate, by starting with the youth, going back to the beginning as to not repeat the same mistakes.

I didn't grow to understand health until my third year in college. Now, looking back I can understand why my little sister is over-weight. I have so many ideas to aid in the epidemic. I want to find ways to provide transportation for low-income families to get their children to sports and after-school activities. I believe that nutrition education should be provided for all parents as a mandatory class to learn how to properly nourish their families and how to cook affordable, healthy meals. Just like prenatal care, our youth must be taking care of for survival purposes. I think a lot can be done to halt the youth obesity epidemic. I don't want to see the same mistakes repeated.

Growing up with nothing, I've learned that education is the only thing that can never be taken from you. That is why I believe an education is the main cure for the youth obesity epidemic. To solve the problem before it starts.

I've enjoyed my Capstone experience so far. There have been ups and downs within the partnership process between Mary Catherine Langford and me, but overall I think our paper is really coming together. Having the opportunity to write about something that I am so devoted to has made the semester go by very quickly and I look forward to seeing the final product. I feel that I was prepared to begin the Capstone experience, but that I was not prepared for how fast paced everything would be.

I had some trouble working with scholarly sources and citing certain references. The feedback was tremendously helpful, and I felt that a majority of our problems would stem from having too much information and not knowing how to condense it or make it make sense. I feel that our topic on youth obesity and how the media affects it is an important one because the statistics have risen to staggering amounts.

Working in the health field is where I see myself today and in the future. I love the field because I can serve and be served all at the same time. Within the field of communications and health, I will be able to see the progress that I will help make and the jobs are very humbling. I am excited to finish Capstone and graduate because Mary Catherine and I can use our project to apply for jobs which may one day become our careers. At this point I really feel that the options are endless and I am excited to begin a new chapter in my life. This chapter will be more secure and confident than the ones of the past years.