

FOOD ADVERTISING AND CHILDREN: UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE TELEVISION  
ADVERTISING PLAYS IN CONFLICTS BETWEEN PARENTS AND CHILDREN  
REGARDING FOOD CHOICES

by

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(Under the Direction of Karen Whitehill King)

ABSTRACT

As many researchers and policy makers have considered children to be a special group that should be protected rather than the object for companies' marketing, discussions regarding undesired effects of advertising on children have gotten comprehensive interest. Among many kinds of ads, TV snack/fast-food advertising especially has been studied frequently in terms of possible negative influence on children due to the direct relationship with children's health issues, such as child obesity. Even though there have been many studies and media reports dealing with the negative effects of TV snack/fast-food ads on children, the invisible or secondary effects of the ads have not gotten enough attention. This study focuses on one of the important secondary effects of TV snack/fast-food ads, the conflict between children and parents. Some studies have reported that children's exposure to TV snack/fast-food ads cause them to keep pestering or nagging their parents to buy specific food products. Also, due to rejections from parents who are concerned about their children's health, a situation of repeated conflicts between parents and their children emerges. This study examines how TV snack/fast-food ads influence the conflict between mothers and their children. In addition to understanding the conflict situation itself, this study also explores the diverse relationships between the conflict and the many environmental factors surrounding children. These environmental factors include the mothers' general attitudes toward advertising, mothers' employment status, income level, and the presence of siblings. In-depth interviews and surveys with mothers who have at least one child between the ages of seven and twelve are conducted. As the theoretical frame for exploring the relationships between the conflict and diverse environmental factors, the Ecological Theory of Child Development (Bronfenbrenner 1979, 2001) is employed. This study will be one of the few studies testing if the Ecological Theory can be applied in advertising research context by examining the possible relationships among the impact of TV snack/fast-food ads on children, conflicts between mothers and children regarding food choices, and diverse environmental factors which potentially influence the conflicts.

INDEX WORDS: TV snack/fast-food advertising, advertising effect, advertising targeting children, conflict, advertising mediation, the Ecological Theory of Child Development

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## **DEDICATION**

For my father who has never heard “I love you” from his son,

Mr Sung-Choon Yu

I love you and I miss you so much.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b> .....	v
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b> .....	viii
<b>LIST OF FIGURES AND ILLUSTRATIONS</b> .....	ix
<b>CHAPTER</b>	
<b>1 INTRODUCTION</b> .....	1
Background.....	1
Objectives of the Current Study.....	3
Organization of the Report.....	6
<b>2 LITERATUREREVIEW</b> .....	8
Childhood Obesity.....	9
Children and Television in the U.S. ....	11
Advertising and Children.....	13
Advertising Effects on Children.....	16
Overview of Food Advertising and Children.....	17
Snack and Fast-food Advertising and Parent-Child Conflicts.....	22
Mediation by Parents to Resolve or Prevent Conflicts.....	25
Environmental Factors, Conflict and Mediation .....	28
Theoretical Frames.....	30
Ecological Theory of Child Development .....	30
Hypotheses and Research Questions.....	35
<b>3 IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS</b> .....	40
Objectives.....	40
A Purposive Convenience Sample.....	41
Analysis for the In-depth Interviews.....	45
Findings from In-depth Interviews.....	46
Flood of Snack and Fast-food Commercials.....	46
Toys and Movies in TV Snack and Fast-food Advertising.....	48
TV Advertising, a strong Agent of Conflict .....	52
For More Ethical Advertising: Creating a Balance .....	55

<b>4</b>	<b>SURVEY/ METHODS</b>	<b>58</b>
	Objectives	58
	Development of the Survey Instrument	59
	Pretest and Findings	60
	Statistical Methods for the Quantitative Study	63
<b>5</b>	<b>SURVEY/ RESULTS</b>	<b>65</b>
	Overview	65
	Sample Characteristics	67
	Results by Hypotheses and Research Questions	70
<b>6</b>	<b>DISCUSSION</b>	<b>92</b>
	Goals of this Study	92
	Findings from the Qualitative Research	93
	Results from the Quantitative Research	94
	Children’s Exposure to TV Snack/Fast-food Ads and conflict	95
	Conflict, Mediation, and the Characteristics of Family	98
	Gender of Children and Conflict; Advertising Mediation and Race	103
	The Words used in the Interviews and the Survey	105
	Differences in Mothers’ Perception about the Influence of TV Snack/Fast-food Ads: Possible Third-Person Effects	107
	Limitations and Future Recommendations	110
	<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>116</b>
	<b>APPENDICES</b>	<b>132</b>
	A Interviewer Guide for In-depth Interview	133
	B Survey Questionnaire	139



## LIST OF TABLES

<b>Table 1:</b> Demographic Characteristics of the Participants.....	42
<b>Table 2:</b> Protocol for In-depth Interviews.....	45
<b>Table 3:</b> Characteristics of Survey Respondents.....	68
<b>Table 4:</b> Mothers' Perceptions of the Influence of TV Snack/Fast-food Advertising on Children's Food choices .....	71
<b>Table 5:</b> Mothers' Perceptions of TV Snack/Fast-food Ads' Influence on the Conflict with Children Regarding their Food Choices.....	75
<b>Table 6:</b> Factor Analysis of the Items in the Ecology Model.....	77
<b>Table 7:</b> Regression on the Factors from the Ecology Model (Conflict) .....	78
<b>Table 8:</b> Regression on the Factors from the Ecology Model (Advertising Mediation).....	81
<b>Table 9:</b> The Relationships between the Participants' Characteristics and the Conflict (ANOVA).....	82
<b>Table 10:</b> The Relationships between the Participants' Characteristics and the Frequency of Mediation (ANOVA).....	84
<b>Table 11:</b> Interactions/reactions between Mothers and Children when They Experience Conflicts Regarding Food Choices.....	85
<b>Table 12:</b> Types of Mediation Mothers Use to Reduce the Conflict with Children Regarding Food Choices.....	89

## **LIST OF FIGURES & ILLUSTRATION**

<b>Figure 1:</b> Ecological Theory of Child Development.....	29
<b>Figure 2:</b> Application of the Ecology Model into the Conflict.....	31
<b>Figure 3:</b> Application of the Ecology Model into the Mediation.....	32
<b>Illustration 1:</b> The Drawing used in Thematic Apperception Test.....	43

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Background**

Unhealthy eating habits are a leading cause of children's obesity (Harrison and Marske 2005). Several factors are found to influence the eating habits of children: children's innate preferences (Young 2003), siblings and peers (Benton 2004), the behavior of adults (Harper and Sanders 1975), parental food preferences and beliefs (Campbell and Crawford 2001), and exposure to diverse media content (Caroli, Argentieri, Cardone, and Masi 2004). Even though some researchers have doubted a direct relationship (Ambler 2007; Livingstone 2005), many academic studies and media reports have pointed specifically to the growing exposure of children to TV food advertising as one of the most influential factors affecting children's eating habits and causing children to become obese (Boynton-Jarrett, Thomas, Peterson, Wiecha, Sobol, and Gortmaker 2003; Henderson and Kelly 2005; Kaiser Family foundation 2004). In addition to childhood obesity, another important consequence of unhealthy eating habits and exposure to TV food advertising is parent-child conflicts that may arise regarding food choices. These conflicts can have a negative impact not only on children but also on relationships within the family (Buijzen and Valkenburg 2003).

To date, there is a paucity of research discussing the impact of advertising on parent-child conflicts (Buijzen and Valkenburg 2005; McDermott, O'Sullivan, Stead, and Hastings 2006) even though several researchers (Buijzen and Valkenburg 2003; Isler, Popper, and Ward 1987)

have suggested that parent-child conflicts are one of the undesired consequences of advertising which should be explored further. Most of the studies dealing with advertising effects have focused on direct effects of advertising such as advertising recall (Mehta and Purvis 2006), message framing (Chang 2007), buying intentions (Yu and Cude 2007), and product purchase (Dahlen and Nordfalt 2004).

The major implications from the studies listed above were for marketers, rather than illuminating indirect effects for consumers (Gunther and Storey 2003; Erdem and Sun 2002). Therefore, the primary focus of this study is to obtain a macro view of the impact of TV snack and fast-food advertising on both children's food choices and parent-child relationships (conflict and mediation), as perceived by mothers. In addition, diverse environmental factors surrounding families (e.g., parents' employment status, parents' general attitudes toward advertising, presence of siblings, children's genders, parents' marital status, household income level, and parents' education) that may influence the conflicts (mediation) are explored.

Parents' opinions about and responses to TV advertising content have provided important rationale for supporting or loosening regulation and censorship of advertising (Hoffner and Buchanan 2002). When regulations about TV snack and fast-food advertising for children have been discussed in the literature, a wide range of topics have been addressed, such as self-regulation (Federal Trade Commission 2006), children's food requests (Galst and White 1976), increasing consumption of junk food (Hitchings and Moynihan 1998), childhood health risks (Benton 2004; Zuppa, Morton, and Mehta 2003), and social responsibility (Preston 2005). However, conflict (mediation), which is a psychological and secondary impact of advertising, has not received much attention (Buizjen and Valkenburg 2003).

Bridges and Briesch (2006) found that a pre-stage of the conflict between parents and children, “nagging,” happens frequently due to the influence of advertising. Morales (2000) also reported that one-third of food/beverage purchases are “nagging driven,” originating from children’s demands for advertised products. Conflict situations originating from exposure to advertising can be emotionally disturbing for both parents and children (Buijzen and Valkenberg 2003; Preston 2005).

### **Objectives of the Current Study**

The research was driven by two objectives. First, this study examines mothers’ perceptions about the influence of TV snack and fast-food ads on their children’s food choices, and on the conflict between the mothers and their children regarding food choices. As a possible negative influence of TV snack and fast-food advertising, the conflict between mothers and their children is investigated from several dimensions such as the frequency of occurrences and the reasons for the conflict (e.g., children’s requests for specific food products and requests for other products). The participants for this study were mothers since parent-child conflicts regarding food choices are more likely to happen between mothers and their children than between other members within a family unit (Campbell and Crawford 2001).

Second, this study also seeks to gain insight on the possible relationships between the food choice conflict and diverse environmental factors surrounding children. We can assume that there are diverse factors which may cause conflicts in food choices between mothers and their children. In addition to TV snack and fast-food advertising, several environmental factors may be related to the conflicts regarding children’s food choices (Buijzen and Valkenburg 2005). Possible environmental factors and the relationships among them that cause conflicts about food choices between mothers and their children are examined. This focus on environmental factors,

including TV snack and fast-food advertising, will provide a macro look at the conflicts regarding children's food choices between mothers and their children.

Two different methods are used to gather the data: in-depth interviews and a self-administered survey. Data are collected from mothers who have at least one child between the ages of seven and twelve. This study is one of only a few studies dealing with undesired advertising effects on children and the family unit from the perspective of mothers' real voices (Kelly 2005; Livingstone 2005). As a major theoretical frame, the Ecological Theory of Child Development (Bronfenbrenner 1979, 2001) is employed. The theory provides the basic framework for the environmental factors surrounding conflicts between children and mothers.

### **Importance of This Study**

This study will attempt to shed light on the literature discussing the effects of TV snack and fast-food advertising on children by providing a different perspective from that of previous studies which have dealt with the same issue. To date, advertising effects research has focused largely on providing insights that serve the best interest of marketers and agency practitioners (Gunther and Storey 2003; Erdem and Sun 2002). Therefore, discussion of the possible conflicts between mothers and their children caused by television snack and fast-food advertising, from the perspective of mothers, may provide a unique implication in the advertising literature.

Another contribution is that this study may provide important insight for the appropriate usage of advertising content by children. Children are generally considered as being unable to fully understand the selling intent of advertising (Mallalieu, Palan, and Laczniak 2005). For example, they may be easily persuaded by the toy prize itself in a TV snack and fast-food advertisement rather than either the quality of food products or the price of the food products (Neeley and Schumann 2004). Persuaded by advertising, children may continue pestering their

parents to buy particular products (McDermott, O'Sullivan, Stead, and Hastings 2006). If parents repeatedly decline their children's requests, conflicts may occur (Isler, Popper, and Ward 1987). Through a discussion of mediation skills mothers use to resolve or prevent this conflict situation, the strategies used by mothers and the perceived effect of these strategies on both children's understandings of the real intent of advertising and raising children to be smart consumers will be explored.

Providing insights for better relationships between parents and children may be another important contribution of this study. As mentioned above, the present study will explore the diverse environmental factors, including TV snack and fast-food advertising, influencing conflicts and advertising mediation. To the parents who might not have recognized the specific relationships between diverse factors and conflicts or advertising mediations, the results will shed light on how much each factor and the conflict or advertising mediation are interrelated.

From a theoretical standpoint, this study will be one of the few studies applying the Ecological Theory of Child Development (Bronfenbrenner 1979, 2001) in an advertising research context. Even though the theoretical frame has been used numerous times in studies examining the relationship between children and media overall, there have been few studies investigating the applicability of the theory in one specific media context, such as TV advertising. Through this exploration, a valuable insight about what environmental factors in addition to TV advertising are involved in the conflicts between mothers and their children regarding food choices will be provided.

In addition, the present research will provide implications for public policy regarding mothers' perceptions of the impact of television snack and fast-food advertising on their children's food choices. These findings will have relevance for policymakers, regulators,

consumer advocates, and educators, to plan more effective ways to create a more responsible advertising environment in today's society.

### **Organization of the Report**

Following this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature and details the conceptual foundations for this study. First, a discussion of the prevalence of childhood obesity is provided followed by a review of the literature on children's television usage and previous studies discussing advertising effects on children. Next, the research dealing with snack and fast-food advertising, children's food requests and parent-child conflicts particularly over food choices is examined

The major theoretical frame, the Ecological Theory of Child Development (Bronfenbrenner 1979, 2001), is introduced and explained as well. Finally, the conceptual model this study suggests, the hypotheses, and the research questions are posed based upon the theories.

In Chapter 3, the first data gathering stage in this study is introduced. An explanation of the in-depth interviews as a means to provide input for the development of the survey instrument is given along with a summary of the overall procedures, the sample, and the interview protocol. In the last part of Chapter 3, the findings from the in-depth interviews are reported and analyzed using analytic induction and a comparative analysis (Glaser and Strauss 1967).

An explanation of the method and all specific procedures for the surveys are provided in Chapter 4 (Survey/Methods). The major objectives of the quantitative study, sampling procedures, the pretest, and the final version of the survey instrument are also addressed. The plan for statistical analysis of the data from the survey is briefly summarized in the final part of Chapter 4.



In Chapter 5 (Survey/Results), the results from the survey of mothers are presented in the order of the hypotheses and research questions. A discussion of the results and the implications of the research are discussed in Chapter 6 (Discussion). Limitations and recommendations for the public policy arena and future research are also presented in the final chapter.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Structure of the Review**

Although the main focus of this research is the secondary effects of TV snack and fast-food advertising on children (i.e., the conflict between mothers and their children regarding food choices), this chapter tries to cover comprehensively the wide range of literature dealing with the myriad issues involving children and advertising. In doing so, it may be possible to understand the conflict between mothers and their children more clearly and in a more structured way with diverse knowledge about several related issues.

First, childhood obesity in the U.S. is reviewed. There has been a sharp and noticeable increase in the rate of childhood obesity in American children over the last two decades (CDC 2007), leading many researchers to attempt to figure out the major reasons that contribute to the prevalence. Second, a brief overview of the relationship between television and American children is conducted, television being one of the most popular pastimes and the greatest educator for people as well in human history (Byrd-Bredbenner 2002; Signorielli and Staples 1997). The amount of time average American children watch television in their daily lives, what channels they are generally watching, and what different perceptions there are regarding the effect of watching television on children are discussed.

Third, an overview of advertising and children is provided. The major agendas of early studies and the current literature are introduced. Next, among the diverse sub-topics found in the

literature, advertising effects on children are discussed in more depth. Then, the scope is narrowed down to the theme of children and food advertising. As the major category of advertising targeting children, both the amount of and the content of food advertising are analyzed. Next, issues that have previously been discussed by academic researchers about snack and fast-food advertising for children are discussed. Several important issues are introduced, such as children's level of understanding messages from advertising, the possible negative impact of advertising on children, and social responsibility.

The next four sub-topics in this chapter focus on the primary issue of this study, the conflict regarding food choices between mothers and their children. In addition to examining the literature dealing with the interactions when mothers and their children are in a conflict situation regarding food choices, the advertising mediations conducted by mothers to reduce or prevent conflict is discussed as well. Also, the possible roles of diverse environmental factors which might influence conflicts are discussed. Theoretical frames, hypotheses, and research questions of this study follow.

### **Childhood Obesity**

The rate of obesity among children between the ages of six and eleven in the U.S. has increased about five times compared to the rate in the 1970's (CDC 2007). At present, about nine million children in the U.S. over six years of age are considered to be obese (Institute of Medicine of the National Academies 2005). Even though the rate of obesity among adults in the U.S. has been increasing as well for the last decades, illuminating the causes of child obesity may prove to be of more importance because obesity at an early age is directly linked to chronic health problems that follow obese children into adulthood (Debby 2005; Pereira, Kartashov,

Ebbeling, Horn, Slattery, Jacobs, and Ludwig 2005). Obese children have a 70% chance of becoming obese adults (*USA Today* 2005).

Overweight children are more likely to contract certain diseases than their counterparts in a normal, healthy weight range (Prentice and Jebb 2003). According to a report from the Department of Health and Human Services (2007), risk factors for heart disease, such as high cholesterol and high blood pressure, occur more frequently in overweight children compared to children with a healthy weight. In addition, high cholesterol and high blood pressure are both considered precursors to type 2 diabetes. Childhood obesity also takes a toll on children's psychological health. The report also indicated that obese children feel social discrimination in their lives which can lead to poor self-esteem and depression (DHHS 2007) fostering shame and self-blame, both of which may impair academic and social functioning (Institute of Medicine of the National Academies 2005).

A sedentary life style and unhealthy eating habits are both frequently discussed as being among the main causes of childhood obesity in the U.S. today (Hills, King, and Armstrong 2007). According to American Academy of Pediatrics (2007), average child in the U.S. watch about four hours of television daily. If time in front of the television playing video games or watching DVD is added, the total time spent sitting in front of the TV screen increases (AAP 2007). Regarding children's unhealthy eating habits, the heavy consumption of fast-food has been indicated as the most critical reason for the epidemic of childhood obesity (Pereira et al. 2005). Fast-food consumption by children has increased more than five times since 1970, with nearly one-third of U.S. children ages four to nineteen eating fast-food daily (Bowman, Gortmaker, Ebbeling, Pereira and Ludwig 2004). Also, there are now over 280,000 fast-food restaurants across the country (Austin, Melly, Sanchez, Patel, Buka, and Gortmaker 2005).

According to a study by Bowman et al. (2004) examining the relationship between fast-food consumption and obesity in 6,212 children between the ages of four and nineteen, approximately one-third of the participants (30.3 %) consume fast-food on a typical day. Heavy consumption of fast-food was prevalent among both genders, all racial/ethnic groups, and all regions of the U.S. The study also revealed that fast-food consumption by children and adolescents has an adverse effect on dietary quality in ways that plausibly could increase the risk for obesity. The same study also found that fast-food consumption was related to malnutrition. Children who ate fast food consumed more fat, more carbohydrates, more added sugar, more sugar-sweetened beverages, and less fiber and fruit than children who did not have fast food (Bowman et al. 2004).

In addition to the reasons mentioned above, American children's frequent exposure to snack and fast-food advertising has also been considered to be an important factor causing children's obesity by many researchers and media reports (Institute of Medicine of the National Academies 2005; Harrison and Marske 2005; Henderson and Kelly 2005; Bernhard 2007; Brownell 2003).

### **Children and Television in the U.S.**

The only thing American children do more during a single day than watch television is sleep (Byrd-Bredbenner 2002). In one year, an average American child spends more time watching television (about 1,023 hours) than he or she does sitting in a classroom (about 900 hours) (Nemours Foundation 2007). Children quickly learn how to use television at a very early age and they easily become accustomed to watching television as their primary pastime. According to a report from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) (2007), children in the U.S. watch nearly four hours of television per day. Even though the guidelines from the AAP

indicate that younger children (those under the age of two) should not have “screen time” at all—screen time meaning any exposure to television, DVDs, videotapes, computers, or video games—due to the fact that it could be harmful for children’s brain development, watching television is a common activity among children of all ages in the U.S. (American Academy of Pediatrics 2007).

According to a recent report by Kaiser Family Foundation (2007), Nickelodeon and Fox were the most popular networks among children ages two-to-eleven and twelve-to-seventeen, respectively (Kaiser Family Foundation Report 2007). Even though many child oriented channels are available such as the Cartoon Network and the Disney Channel, the report also showed that children watch several network stations that have programming for people of all ages such as PBS, MTV, ABC, and CBS. However, most parents tend to think that their children are watching only children’s programming of networks and are watching television for what the parents consider to be an acceptable amount of time (Gallup 2006). The Gallup report showed that most parents (72% in the survey) are not worried about the quantity or quality of television programs that their children watch on a daily basis.

There are two dichotomous perspectives in the literature discussing the relationship between children and television watching; studies tend to focus on either the positive or negative influence television has on children. With a focus on a positive viewpoint, a report from the Nemours Foundation (2007) indicated that preschoolers can get a great deal of help with learning the alphabet by watching public television and grade school children also can learn about wildlife on nature shows. Parents also receive benefits from watching television as they can keep up with current events such as those reported on in news programs. However, research also shows that television viewing is related to negative characteristics of children such as child

obesity. A report from the AAP (2007) warned that children who consistently watch television for more than four hours a day are extremely at risk of being overweight, a condition which can lead to several serious diseases.

### **Advertising and Children**

The impact of advertising on children has been studied since the 1970's (Alexander, Benjamin, Hoerrner and Roe 1998). A variety of questions related to children and advertising have been asked by academic researchers, citizens' groups, and government agencies (Resnik, Stern, and Alberty 1979). According to Resnik, Stern, and Alberty (1979), most early studies related to children and advertising focused on one of seven major topics: 1) children's television advertising viewing behavior (Ward, Levinson, and Wackman 1972), 2) children's cognitive processing of commercial messages (Ward 1974), 3) children's exposure to TV advertising and social development (Atkin 1975), 4) children's responses to commercials (Breen and Powell 1973), 5) how children learn through TV commercials (Siegel 1974), 6) children's awareness, interest, desire and product preferences (Frideres 1973), and 7) children's purchase-related behavior (Ward and Wackman 1972).

In addition to the main topics listed above, some researchers have also addressed the relationship between children and television advertising by arguing that children's exposure to television advertising is a natural process of consumer socialization (Ward 1972; Resnik and Stern 1977), which helps children to be mature consumers. From this perspective, how television advertising can be used for children's consumer socialization has been studied (Goldberg and Gorn 1974). The role of the family as a unit and family members in children's socialization process through watching TV advertising also has been discussed (e.g., Ward, Wackman, and Wartella 1976). For example, Reid (1979) looked at the relationships between family group

interactions and children's understanding of television advertising. Using personal interviews and observations, he found that a family's group interactions about consuming behavior and purchasing practices played important roles in the level of children's understanding of TV advertising.

There also have been studies dealing with how children's attitudes toward television advertising are formed by the influences of family members. According to Denzin (1973), a child's style of watching television advertising is strongly influenced by the role of that child's major caretakers. The general opinions and attitudes toward television watching held by the major caretakers of children were found to have a critical role in what kind of consumers those children will be in the future (Ward 1976). Even the real effects of advertising targeting children were found to be influenced by the perspectives of family members. Many early researchers tried to figure out what family characteristics influence children's attitudes and perspectives toward TV advertising. Brown and Linne (1976) suggested the family unit as a crucial mediator in advertising influences on children. The specific rules in a family about watching television advertising that are set for children were also indicated as a significant factor in the responses of children to television commercials (Reid 1979).

A representative view concerning children's advertising from the negative standpoint asks for strict regulations by the government for advertising to children due to the possible negative impact of advertising on children. Prior to the early 1970's, regulating the content or amount/placement of advertising to children was largely under the control of advertisers and the media. The *Children's Advertising Guidelines* (1972) published by the Association of National Advertisers was the first attempt to impose guidelines of self-regulation among advertisers. In 1974, the National Advertising Review Council (NARC) set up the Children's Advertising



Review Unit (CARU) to supervise the implementation of guidelines and responsible advertising to children (Hawkes 2005). Even though there have been several efforts to promote self-regulation regarding children's advertising before the appearance of CARU, many researchers began to present the need for stricter and more organized regulating devices around the mid-1970's (Stern and Harmon 1984). Several researchers argued that because advertising to children may cause diverse, undesirable effects on children, there should be more regulations enacted by the government (Alder 1977; Bibby 1975). As this perspective that considers children as a vulnerable group in commercial marketing developed, discussions about regulations in advertising targeting children have become more popular (Resnik, Stern, and Albery 1979).

In 1990, the U.S. Congress enacted the Children's Television Act. This was a big step toward protecting children from the possible negative effects of television content, including TV advertising, because according to the new law all commercial television stations in the U.S. must provide parents and children with more information about educational television programming. The main purpose of this act was to increase the amount of educational and informational programming for children available on television (Federal Communications Commission 2007). The FCC has since adopted specific rules to carry out the Children's Television Act. Under the FCC's rules, the commercial TV stations in the U.S. must a) provide parents and consumers with advance information about core programs being aired, b) define the type of programs that qualify as core programs, and c) air at least three hours per week of core educational programming (FCC Report 2007). In addition, there are specific regulations related to the issue of children and advertising. According to the FCC's rules about children's advertising, the amount of commercial matter which may be aired during certain children's television programming is limited to 10.5 minutes per hour on weekends and 12 minutes per hour on weekdays. Children's

programming includes programs originally produced and aired primarily for an audience of children 12-years-old and younger. Commercial material being regulated includes any type of commercial announcements, including advertisements (FCC Report 2007).

As another support for the regulatory perspective in the literature, Stutts and Hunnicut (1987) conducted a study examining the effects of advertising disclaimers among children, raising the question, “Can young children understand disclaimers in television commercials?” According to the results, a disclaimer that prevents misleading advertising content might not be understood by children. In other words, there was a need for a device, in addition to the present disclaimers, to prevent children from being misled or misunderstanding the content of any given advertisement. The efforts from government organizations such as the FTC to regulate children’s advertising have occurred from the 1970’s until today (*Advertising Age* 1974; Center for Health Improvement 2005; Harrison and Marske 2005; *The Wall Street Journal* 1974).

### **Advertising Effects on Children**

Research looking at the effects of advertising has received much attention in the advertising field (e.g., Hise and Strawser 1976; Sheffet 1983; Smit, Meurs, and Neijens 2006; Wang and Nelson 2006). Since a primary objective of advertising is to influence the perceptions of customers about a brand (Romaniuk and Nicholls 2006) which are linked to the final purchases (Nedungadi 1990; Keller 2003; Tipps, Berger, and Weinberg 2006), it is natural that many advertising studies have tried to come up with more effective ways to persuade consumers (Romaniuk and Nicholls 2006). Therefore, many studies in this field have been conducted from the perspective of advertisers or marketers in an attempt to improve the persuasive impact of advertising rather than focusing on protecting consumers (Berney-Reddish and Areni 2005). In

other words, the results of findings from previous studies were generally for the benefit of marketers or advertisers, not consumers.

Recently, discussions of advertising effects from the perspective of consumers have received more attention (Gould and Gupta 2006). The topics discussed range from advertising regulations (e.g., Sheehan 2005; Livingstone 2005) to ethical issues regarding advertising effects (e.g., Preston 2004). Research focusing on the possible negative impact of advertising on specific consumer groups, such as children, has increased (Livingstone and Helsper 2006). Different from the discussions about how advertising can persuade audiences more efficiently, the major purposes of the studies dealing with possible negative effects of advertising discuss stricter regulations on advertising content (Kelly 2005; Henderson and Kelly 2005), responsibility in conducting advertising (Kreth 2000; Preston 2005), or possible undesired effects of advertising (Buijzen and Valkenburg 2005; Isler, et al. 1987).

The possible negative effects and undesired effects of advertising to children have become very popular topics recently among researchers, lawmakers, and parental organizations (Warren 2005). Several suggestions from researchers argue that children should be considered not as the objects of marketing activity but instead as a group that needs to be protected (Preston 2004). Preventing any potential negative effects on this vulnerable group has been an important issue in the advertising field (Oates, Blades, Gunter, and Don 2003).

### **Overview of Food Advertising and Children**

To many companies, children are a significant consumer group to reach. According to recent reports (Kunkel 2001; Mercola 2004; Campaign For a Commercial-Free Childhood 2007), the average child in the U.S. is exposed to about 40,000 television commercials a year; the major products they are exposed to are candy, toys, cereal, soda, and fast-food. Children have not only

the power to consume for themselves, but they also highly influence food choices for the entire family (McDermott, O'Sullivan, Stead, and Hastings 2006). Children aged 14 and younger spend about \$14 billion on food products a year (McNeal 1998). Further, children are influencing 72% of the family food and beverage purchases (Brazil 1999).

Numerous commercials that include high-fat, high-sugar, and low-fiber foods are frequently advertised during children's television programming (Kotz and Story 1994; Taras and Gage 1995). Harrison and Marske (2005) found that 83% of advertised foods aimed at children's audiences are convenience/fast-foods and sweets. They found very limited presentations of fruits, vegetables, and dairy foods among the advertisements. Most advertised foods during the time when children typically watch television (7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.) exceed RDVs (Recommended Daily Values) of fat, saturated fat, and sodium, while failing to provide RDVs of other "healthy" attributes such as fiber and certain vitamins and minerals.

In regards to research regarding advertising, generally children between the ages of seven and twelve have been the group studied (Halford, Gillespie, Brown, Pontin, and Dovey 2004; Hitchings and Moynihan 1998). Children below the age of six have more limited cognitive abilities for understanding the content of advertising than do older children (Mallalieu et al. 2005, Oates, Blades, Gunter, and Don 2003), and adolescents (ages 13-18) are typically considered to be in a developmentally different stage than younger children (Khatibi, Haque, and Ismail 2004). Children between the ages of seven and twelve typically understand the content of advertising and research has shown that advertising can also influence their future actions (Oates et al. 2003). The food preferences of children in this age group are directly influenced by the advertising messages to which they were exposed (Zuppa et al. 2003).

Promotional events and related advertising campaigns have been major factors used to attract children as well. Especially, advertising using cartoon characters and action figures also creates strong incentives for children to go to fast-food restaurants (Mercola 2005). He also reported that children are amused by the many kinds of toys and playgrounds that fast-food restaurants provide. Many food marketing campaigns targeting children utilize children's favorite television or movie characters (Kendy 2003; Neeley and Schunmann 2004) such as SpongeBob, Scooby-Doo, and the Teletubbies.

The fast-food restaurant itself has become another form of major media for advertising. According to a recent study (Austin, Melly, Sanchez, Patel, Buka, and Gortmaker 2005), 78% of elementary and secondary schools had at least one fast-food restaurant within 800m (about half mile) of the campus. The average distance from an elementary or secondary school to a fast-food restaurant was 0.52 km in the Chicago area. Strategies at fast-food restaurants are arguably twofold. Without even entering a fast-food restaurant, children are exposed to outdoor advertisements and attractions, such as an outdoor play area (Austin et al. 2005). And once the children arrive at the restaurant, they find it is decorated with things such as advertisements using over-sized animation movie characters.

### **Issues in the Studies dealing with Snack and Fast-food Ads**

Various aspects of advertising targeting children have been addressed by researchers recently (e.g., Preston 2005; McDermott, O'Sullivan, Stead, and Hastings 2006; Pettersson and Fjellstrom 2004). Among them, discussions regarding snack and fast-food advertising have especially received strong attention (*The New York Times* 2005; Mercola 2004, 2005). First, there have been several articles reporting the large numbers of snack and fast-food advertisements targeting children (*CBS News* 2003; Halford et al. 2004; Pine and Veasey 2003).

Children's peak viewing times are targeted as appropriate for fast-food advertisements (Harrison and Marske, 2005). According to data from the prevention institute for the Center for Health Improvement (CHI 2004), more than half of Saturday morning children's programming advertisements are food advertisements. According to the same study, about 43.6% of advertisements fall into the foods category, advertising unhealthy products, such as candy, soft drinks, chips, and cookies. In addition, fast-food restaurant advertising was prevalent during children's programming, comprising approximately 11% of all advertisements.

There also have been many studies dealing with the influences of snack and fast-food advertising on children's food choices and future actions (Young 2003; Brody, Stoneman, Scott, and Sanders 1983; Zuppa et al. 2003; Oates et al. 2003). Research has shown that advertising using cartoon characters is a powerful means of persuading children to come to fast-food restaurants (Guber and Berry 1993). Based upon the fact that advertising using cartoon characters has a strong impact on children, several researchers have addressed the need for regulations of that specific advertising strategy (Neeley and Schumann 2004). Researchers note the ethical issue, pointing out young children's lack of ability to understand the real intent of advertising (Chan and McNeal 2004; Heubusch 1997).

According to Oates, Blades, and Gunter (2002), children below the age of six lack an understanding of commercials. They cannot differentiate advertising from general programming so that they will not understand that every advertisement has a selling intent which is different from general programming (John 1999). Therefore, children easily believe the content to which they are exposed in TV advertisements. By extending the social responsibility of advertising, Oates and her colleagues (2002) argue that in order to protect children there should be regulations on this type of advertising.

The topic about how advertisers view children and how some researchers feel they should view children has been an important issue. There have been two distinct perspectives regarding children (Preston 2005). From one perspective, advertisers view children as marketing subjects which need to be persuaded by a marketing message. There have been many studies indicating that children are important customers themselves and that they also play major roles in purchase decisions and consume specific products in the family (McDermott et al. 2006). From this perspective, children should be marketed to because of their value as a group of customers. However, the second perspective found in the literature is that children should be protected from advertising messages due to their lack of ability to understand advertising (Oates et al. 2003; Hawkes 2006).

### **Food Requests, Obesity, and Children's Exposure to Advertising**

How much children understand and the extent to which they remember advertising content influences their food preferences. Hitchings and Moynihan (1998) indicated that children often request that their parents buy specific foods which children remembered from television commercials. This result suggests strong relationships between advertisements to which the children are exposed and the foods that they consume. An earlier finding by Galst and White (1976) also indicated a positive relationship between the amount of time spent watching television and the number of food requests made by children. Even though some researchers have indicated the presence of several other factors influencing children's food choices (e.g., Bolton 1983; Young 2003), advertising has long been considered one of the strongest references for children's food preferences (Campbell and Crawford 2001; *Ascribe Newswire* 2004).

There have also been studies that focus on the relationship between food advertising and childhood obesity. Halford et al. (2004) found that exposure to advertisements increases food

intake among children. The results showed that obese children remember and recognize food advertisements more than other groups of children who have a BMI (Body Mass Index) in the healthy range. There have been several studies that bring up a possible direct relationship between exposure to advertising and obesity (e.g., Bolton 1983; Henderson and Kelly 2005).

In addition to the possible influence of advertising, results from research dealing with the relationship between overall television viewing (programs and commercials) and obesity of children have been similar. For the past 20 years, many studies and media reports have indicated positive relationships between television viewing and children's obesity (Dietz and Gortmaker 1985; Robinson 1999; Kaiser Family Foundation 2004; Story, Neumark-Sztainer, and French 2002; Bowman et al. 2004; *CBS News* 2003)

### **Snack and Fast-food Advertising and Parent-Child Conflicts**

Even though many studies about the negative effects of snack and fast-food advertising on children have discussed possible physical consequences such as obesity and health consciousness (FTC Report 2006; Harrison and Marske 2005), there also have been several studies dealing with other types of possible negative effects (McDermott et al. 2006). Among the many possible negative effects of advertising on children, the conflict between mothers and their children is an important concern in today's society (Isler, Popper and Ward 1987). Specifically, food choice conflicts are important because they may contribute to the deterioration of the family relationship in addition to negative influences on children's physical health (Buijzen and Valkenburg 2003).

Parents and children have conflicts for several different reasons including 1) conflicts with children who have a disease (Viikinsalo, Crawford, Kimbrel, Long, and Dashiff 2005), 2) conflicts originating from relationships with siblings (e.g., Sherman, Lansford, Volling 2006), 3)



conflicts that happens after parents divorce (e.g., Riggio 2004), and 4) conflicts originating from issues related to the media (e.g., Nathanson 2002). Among the conflicts caused by the media, conflicts between parents and children, which are fueled by children watching TV advertising, have been an important issue among researchers (Buijzen and Valkenburg 2005). Some early studies have indicated that advertising targeting children can cause children to pressure their parents into buying certain products, thereby causing conflicts between parents and children (Chaffee, Ward, Tipton 1970; Sheikh, Prasad, and Rao 1974). Sheikh and Moleski (1977) found through the story completion method that commercials have a strong effect not only by causing children to make more purchase requests to their parents, but also by causing children to be less prone to accept parental refusal and more likely to react aggressively when they are faced with a conflict situation.

The effects of exposure to advertising are influenced by the specific behaviors of children toward parents. Children who are exposed to advertising make purchase requests more frequently (Isler et al. 1987). This action, which originates from exposure to advertising, results in the conflicts between parents and children about healthy food choices (Buijzen and Valkenburg 2005).

According to Buijzen and Valkenburg (2003), there are three types of unintended effects of advertising exposure: children's materialism, feelings of unhappiness, and conflicts between parents and children. Conflict is defined as the children's negative reactions to a parental denial of a purchase request. The relationship between the children's advertising exposure and a purchase request has been indicated by several studies (e.g., Atkin 1975, Buijzen and Valkenburg 2000). A direct relationship between purchase requests and parent-child conflicts has also been found (e.g., Atkin 1975; Robertson, Ward, Gatignon, and Klees 1989).

## **Other Variables Influencing Conflicts between Parents and Children**

Several other factors influencing the relationship between children's advertising exposure and parent-child conflicts have been indicated by many studies. Children's age has been discussed very often as an important variable regarding the interactions between parents and children. Atkin (1975) indicated that comparatively older children (ages seven to eleven) were more influenced by advertising than younger children (ages four to six). In addition to Atkin's study, several other studies have also indicated that comparatively older children (ages seven to eleven) are more impacted by advertising, which easily results in parent-child conflict situations (Metcalf and Mischel 1999; Kuczynski, Kochanska, Raddel-Yarrow, and Ginius-Brown 1987).

Another major variable is the gender of children. Several studies (Atkin 1975; Buijzen and Valkenburg 2000; Ayla 1994) have addressed that boys mainly experience conflicts with their parents regarding the effects of advertising. Generally, boys are less compliant and more independent than girls to the requests and demands of their parents (Cowan and Avants 1988).

In addition to age and gender, characteristics of parents and the home environment may affect the frequency of conflicts. For example, Warren (2005) determined that children in low-income families experience more conflicts with their parents regarding purchase requests due to the limitation of financial resources of parents.

Conflicts that are caused by exposure to advertising have been an important sub-category of research regarding parent-child conflict issues (Buijzen and Valkenburg 2005). Three decades ago, some studies already indicated that advertising targeting children influence children to pressure their parents into buying certain products while also causing conflicts (e.g., Chaffee et al. 1970). Sheikh and Moleski (1977) also found that commercials tend to have a strong effect on children, not only causing children to make more purchase requests but also making children less

prone to accept parental refusal and more likely to react aggressively when they are faced with conflict. Research also supports a direct relationship between purchase requests and parent-child conflicts (Robertson et al. 1989). In addition to the factors discussed above, many other variables influencing the relationship between advertising exposure and conflicts have been addressed in the previous literature (Kuczynski et al. 1987; Metcalfe and Mischel 1999).

### **Mediation by Parents to Resolve or Prevent Conflicts**

Mediations conducted by parents to resolve conflicts originating from the effects of media exposure have been categorized in several ways. Even though the terminology used by various researchers sometimes differs, generally three distinctive types of parental mediations exist in the literature.

The first type of parental mediation is “active mediation” (e.g., Nathanson 2001, 2002) or “instructive mediation” (e.g., Desmond, Singer, Singer, Calam, and Colimore 1985; Warren 2002). Desmond and colleagues (1985) defined this concept as “some form of active effort by parents and others to translate the complexities of the physical and social environment, as well as the television medium, into terms capable of comprehension by children.” In other words, active or instructive mediation is the way by which parents actively talk about television programs with their children whenever an opportunity arises.

The second type of parental mediation is “restrictive mediation.” When parents employ restrictive mediation, they set rules about the amount of time that children are allowed to watch television, which is regarded as forbidden content, or use viewing as either a reward or a punishment for their children (Corder-Bolz and Fellows 1979; Rossiter and Robertson 1975). The effects of restrictive mediation vary. Some studies have indicated positive outcomes (e.g.,

Desmond et al. 1985), but others have found that restrictive mediation can be detrimental to children (e.g., Nathanson 1999).

The third type of parental mediation is “co-viewing,” which is defined as shared viewing with no discussion of television content (Dorr, Kovaric, and Doubleday 1989). Learning about educational content (Salomon 1977) and increased enjoyment of the co-viewed material (Wilson and Weiss 1993) are some of the positive effects of the co-viewing type of mediation. However, some studies have found that co-viewing may make children believe that television characters are “real-world” people (Messaris and Kerr 1984).

In regards to the influence of advertising specifically, there have been three representative mediation types in the literature (Buijzen and Valkenburg 2005). The first is “advertising mediation,” which is directly related to advertising to which children are exposed. Advertising mediation can be categorized into two sub categories: active mediation and restrictive mediation (Bijmolt, Classen, and Brus 1998). Active mediation is when parents deliberately comment on television advertisements and judge those advertisements based upon their own beliefs. Parents may also add an explanation about the real intent of the advertising to their children. The second type of mediation, “restrictive mediation”, is mainly about controlling the viewing of advertisements by children (Robinson, Saphir, and Kraemer 2001). This mediation is based upon (a) the notion that children lack the cognitive abilities to resist commercial messages from advertising and (b) the belief that it is highly possible for children to accept messages found in advertising without reasonable thought. Therefore, parents who utilize this particular type of mediation tend to believe that limiting children’s viewing time may be the only way to prevent the possible negative effects of advertising. Researchers do not agree about the real effects of these two types of mediation (Buijzen and Valkenburg 2005). Some

researchers have concluded that active mediation is the most effective tool (e.g., Bijmolt, Classen, and Brus 1998) while others consider restrictive mediation to be the only way to ensure beneficial effects for children (e.g., Wilman 1983).

The third type of advertising mediation, “consumer-related communication style”, is a somewhat broader perspective than the two mentioned above. This type of mediation addresses the effect of the general consumer-related family communication style on children’s responses to advertising (Moschis 1985; John 1999). Consumer-related communication style within the family unit is divided into two types: concept-orientation and socio-orientation. The concept-orientation approach is more liberal; family members conduct negotiations and share opinions and ideas freely. However, the socio-orientation approach puts more emphasis on obedience and harmony among family members (Carlson and Grossbart 1988; Moschis and Moore 1979). Adolescents from concept-orientation families have more knowledge about consumer-related matters and can easily understand the real intent of advertising (Churchill and Moschis 1979; Moschis 1985; Moschis and Moore 1982). In contrast, adolescents from socio-orientation families are more vulnerable to commercial messages; they are susceptible to the influence of television advertising and may be are persuaded more easily by advertising messages (Moore and Moschis 1978). In socio-orientation families, advertising-mediation by parents scarcely happens.

Biijzen and Valkenburg (2005) recently examined the effects of the two types of mediation using children between the age eight and twelve. According to their results, concept-oriented communication is more effective in preventing possible negative effects from advertising exposure to children in large part because parents more actively communicate with children using the concept-oriented communication style. These parents teach their children to

become more critical consumers, which will give their children a better ability to defend themselves from the possible negative impact of advertising (Buizjen and Valkenburg 2005).

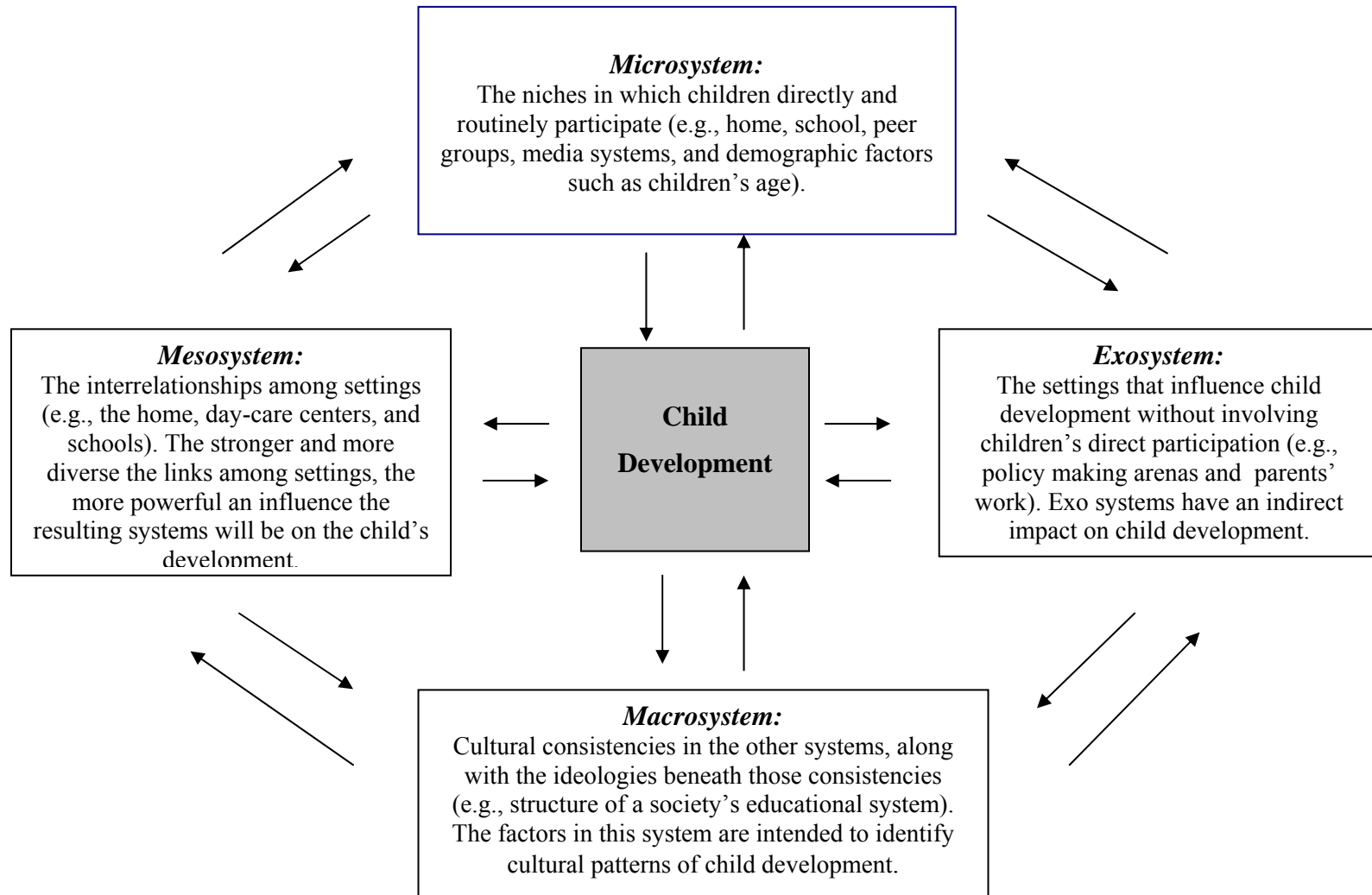
### **Environmental Factors, Conflict, and Mediation**

To explore diverse environmental factors which possibly influence conflicts originating from children's exposure to TV snack and fast-food advertising, the Ecological Theory of Child Development (Bronfenbrenner 1979, 2001) is used as a framework.

The basic concept of the theory is that children's development occurs through constant interactions between children and diverse environmental factors surrounding families, such as parents' general attitudes toward advertising, school teachers, peer groups, and media content. Bronfenbrenner grouped together environmental factors influencing children's development into four different systems: micro, meso, exo, and macrosystems (Figure 1). The current study adopts this theoretical structure to examine the possible relationships between parent-child conflicts and diverse environmental factors.

The term "child development" will be replaced by "conflicts between mothers and their children over food choice which originated from children's exposure to TV advertising" (Figure 2), and the possible relationships between the conflicts and diverse environmental factors will be investigated. Figures 2 and 3 on the following pages are the hypothesized models using the Ecological Theory of child Development (Bronfenbrenner 1979, 2001) framework.

**Figure 1. Ecological Theory of Child Development  
(Bronfenbrenner 1979, 2001)**



## **Theoretical Frames**

### **Ecological Theory of Child Development**

The Ecological Theory of Child Development (Bronfenbrenner 1979, 2001) is one of the major theoretical concepts which are capable of accounting for the macro and micro connections among the environmental factors surrounding children's development (Warren 2005).

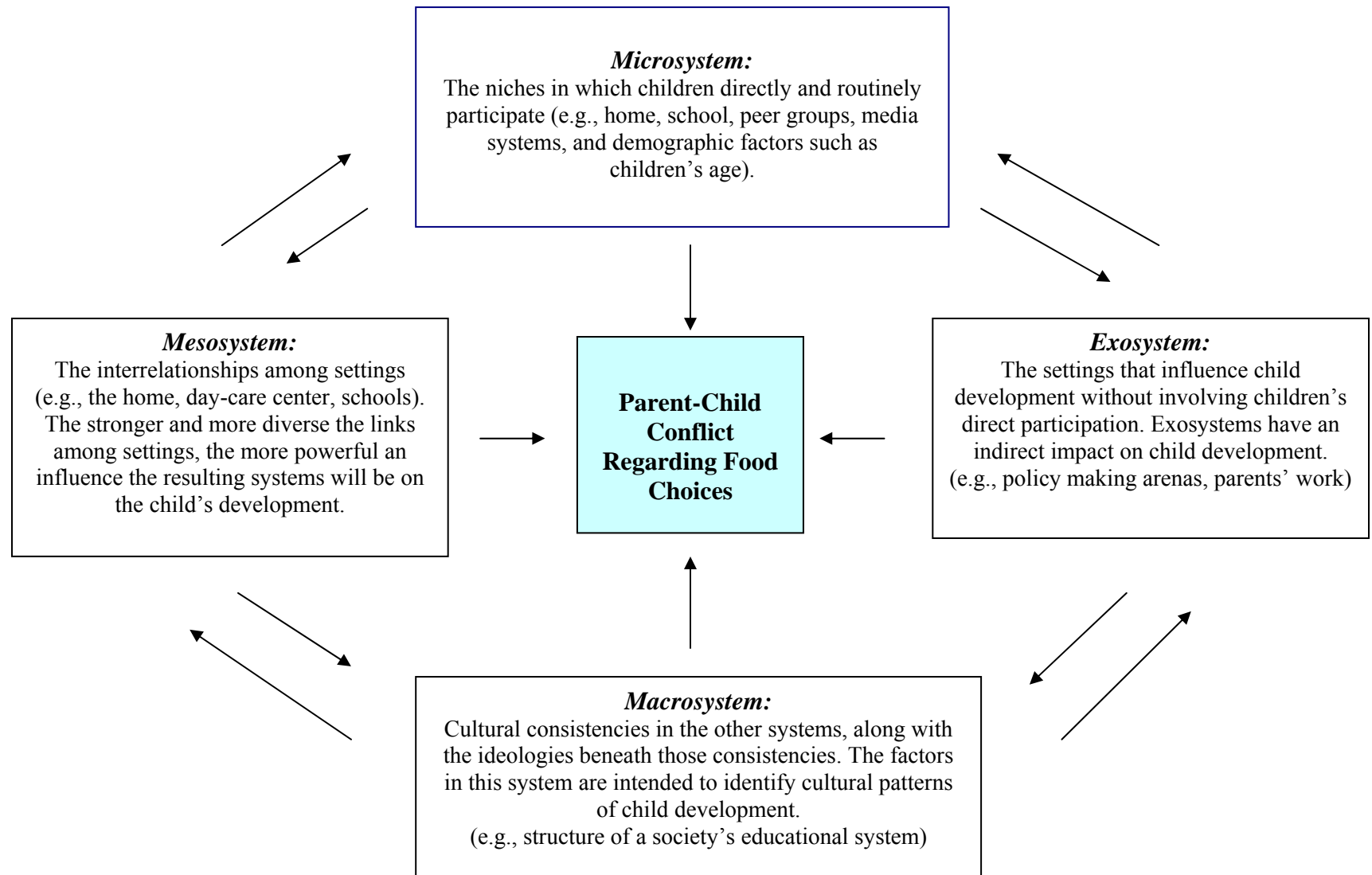
The basic premise of this theoretical framework is that shared social activities between children and knowledgeable others drive child development. For example, parents are a primary source of social interaction in the dominant social setting of most children, the home. The theory establishes four systems (macro, meso, exo, and micro systems) which contain diverse environmental factors surrounding children.

There is an assumption that each attribute in the four systems interacts with children. The development of children is the result of the interaction processes between each: the child and each system (Bronfenbrenner 1979, 2001). However, not only the people around a child, but also diverse non-human environmental factors (i.e., parental employment status, school, education system, siblings, exposure to media, household income, and relationships with friends) might influence a child's development.

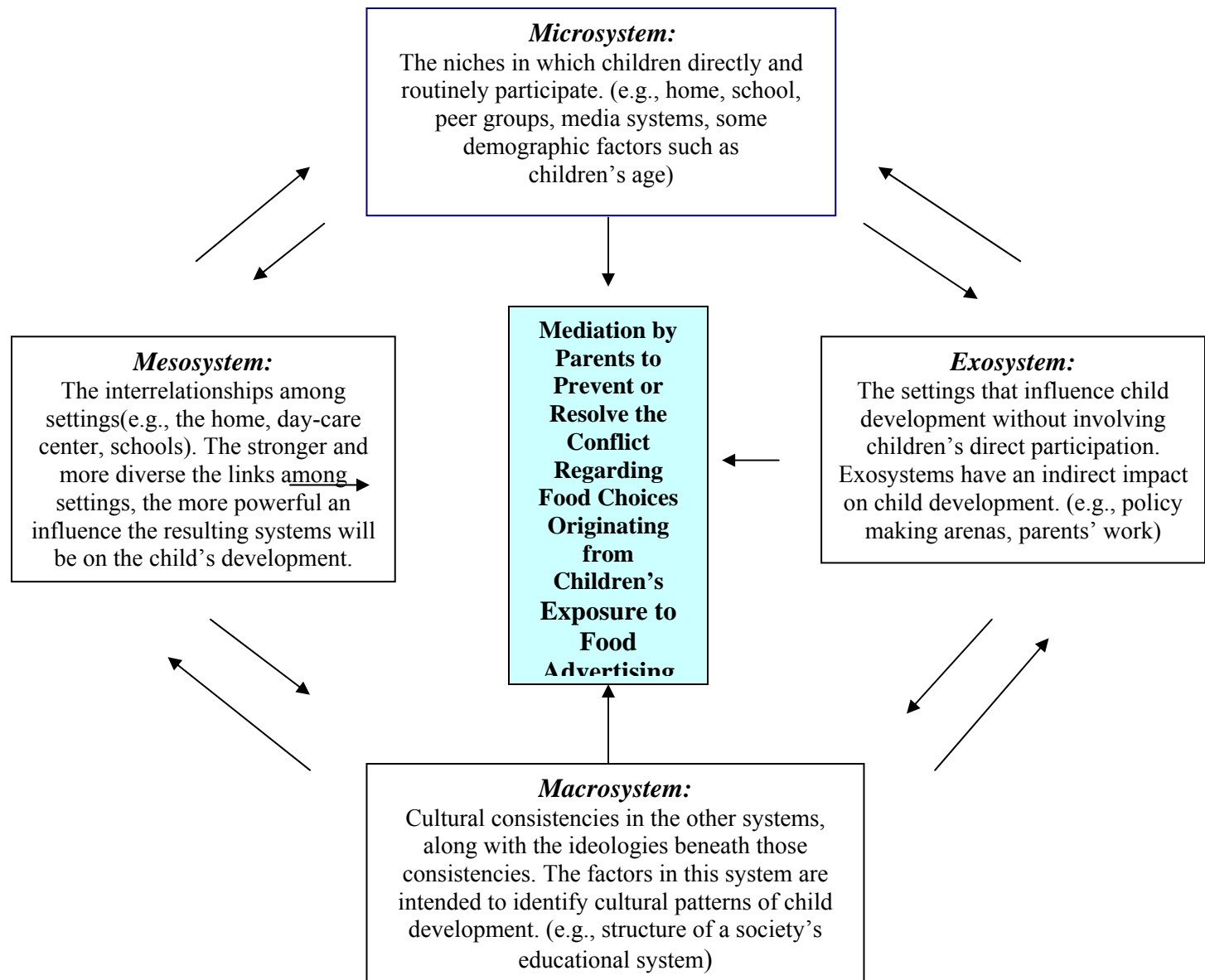
According to the ecological theory of child development, children's development is characterized by the levels of adult-child interaction within established settings of social activity, which are called ecological niches: micro, meso, exo, and macrosystems (Bronfenbrenner 1979, 2001).



**Figure 2. Application of the Ecology Model into the Conflict**



**Figure 3. Application of the Ecology Model into the Mediation**



The microsystem is a set of niches in which children directly and routinely participate such as home, school, peer groups, all kinds of media systems, and some demographic factors. The mesosystem consists of settings that influence child development without involving children's direct participations. These settings include parents' television viewing style/attitudes and parents' beliefs about television programs. The exosystem is the system which has an indirect impact on child development compared to other systems. Brofenbrenner (1979, 2001) identified parental employment status as an item in the exosystem with far-reaching implications for children. The macro system refers to cultural consistencies in the other niches, along with the ideologies beneath those consistencies. For example, the exosystem includes the structure of a society's educational system.

As indicated above, media and media exposure are one of the items in the micro system, which is defined as patterns of activities, roles, and relationships within a particular social setting. Brofenbrenner (1979, 2001) indicated that the nature of interaction between children and media is the primary focus in this theory. Both the frequency of interactions and the quality of interactions are key components of the developmental process of children. The most important feature of this model is that it describes many possible environmental factors surrounding children and parents. The theory is a very comprehensive framework which tries to explain diverse conditions that can influence interactions between parents and their children (Brofenbrenner 1979, 2001). All the attributes of the Ecological Theory of Child Development can be used as effective frameworks to gain insights into the specific conditions under which conflicts about food choices between mothers and their children occur.

As mentioned in the introduction, this study also examines advertising mediation, or the consecutive behaviors of parents who have experienced conflicts with their children as the result

of children's exposure to TV snack and fast-food advertising. Generally, parents are thought to have their own techniques of advertising mediation, which are used not only to prevent conflicts with children but also to resolve conflict situations. The Ecological Theory of Child Development framework is also used to explore the possible relationships between advertising mediations (frequency and types) by mothers and diverse environmental factors from the four systems. The term "child development" will be replaced by "advertising mediations parents use to prevent or resolve the conflicts regarding food choices with their children that originated from exposure to TV advertising" (Figure 3).

In addition to the Ecological Theory of Child Development (Bronfenbrenner 1979, 2001), this study also applies two other theoretical concepts as well. First, in order to explore other possible environmental factors not included in the Ecological Theory of Child Development which might influence parent/child conflicts, Isler, Popper, and Ward (1987)'s Model of Children's Purchase Requests and Parental Responses is utilized. This is a unique model which makes the exploration of children's typical behaviors and parents' responses in conflict situations surrounding food choices possible. This frame is used in the current study to explore more detailed descriptions of interactions when mothers and their children are in conflict situations.

Second, to get information about advertising mediation which is conducted by mothers to reduce or prevent the possible negative influence of TV snack and fast-food advertising on children, the scale of Advertising Mediation and Consumer Communication (Buijzen and Valkenburg 2005) is used. This frame will not only provide the diverse types of advertising mediations mothers use, but also provide an opportunity to better understand how the mothers and children communicate about consumer behaviors (Table 12).

## **Hypotheses and Research Questions**

There have been several types of studies indicating that children's exposure to TV snack and fast-food advertising influence their food choices/requests (Harrison and Marske 2005). Research on exploring this relationship have used survey (e.g., Atkin 1975; Del Toro and Greenberg 1989; Yavas and Abdul-Gader 1993) or experimental methods (e.g., Galst and White 1976; Stoneman and Brody 1982). Even though there have been some differences in the extent to which children are impacted by TV snack and fast-food advertising, the results of studies using these methods have found evidence for the influence of TV snack and fast-food ads on children's food choices.

In addition to the studies in which the data was gathered from children themselves, there have also been several studies conducted among mothers, who are the main participants in the present study, about the possible influence of TV snack and fast-food advertising on children's food choices (e.g., Donkin, Tilston, Neale, and Gregson 1992; Donkin, Neale, and Tilston 1993; Taras, Salis, Patterson, Nader, and Nelson 1989). As with the studies that use children as the sample, the mothers in those studies also indicated that watching TV snack and fast-food advertising is one of the crucial reasons for their children making the food choices that they do. Based upon the notions from many of the studies mentioned above, hypothesis 1 is formulated.

### ***H1:***

**Mothers think that their children's food choices are influenced by TV snack and fast-food advertising to which their children are exposed.**

As indicated in the literature review, several researchers have linked children's watching TV advertising to the conflict relationship between parents and children (Atkin 1980; Chaffee,

Ward, and Tipton 1970; Sheikh, Prasad, and Rao 1974; Robertson 1979). Among the related studies that have been conducted recently, Buijzen and Valkenburg (2003) have suggested the Model for the Unintended Effects of Advertising. This model was formulated using studies dating back to the 1970's that examined the relationships between the exposure to TV advertising and possible negative effects on children. The three major unintended effects of TV advertising on children are materialism, unhappiness, and parent-child conflicts; the latter effect is the major concern of the present study.

Findings from the previous research indicated above and the model formulated by Buijzen and Valkenburg (2003) become the rationale for hypothesis 2.

***H2:***

**Mothers think that exposure to TV snack and fast-food advertising causes conflicts between mothers and their children regarding children's food choices.**

According to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory of Child Development (1979, 2001), child development is conducted by the consistent interactions between the child and diverse environmental factors surrounding the child. In other words, all aspects of child development involve some kind of mutual relationship with diverse environmental factors around the child. As the structure of the environmental factors which influence child development, Bronfenbrenner indicated four systems: micro, meso, exo, and macrosystems (1979, 2001) in his Ecology theory.

Several researchers have argued that the conflict between children and parents is one of the crucial stages of child development (Viikinsalo et al. 2005; Sherman et al. 2006; Nathanson 2002). Even though conflicts may not be a stage in child development to which parents typically

look forward, nevertheless, the conflict has been a very common stage parents need to go through in child development (Buijzen and Valkenburg 2003).

Based on the Ecological Theory of Child Development (Bronfenbrenner 1979, 2001) and other conflict-related literature such as the Model of Unintended Advertising Effects (Buijzen and Valkenburg 2003), we can hypothesize that some of the environmental factors in the ecology model are expected to have some relationships with the conflict between mothers and children.

Hypothesis 3 is as follows:

***H3:***

**Environmental factors in the ecology model (Bronfenbrenner 1979, 2001) will have significant relationships with the level of the conflicts between mothers and children regarding children's food choices.**

The next hypothesis tests if any environmental factors in the ecology model (Bronfenbrenner 1979, 2001) have significant relationships with advertising mediation by which parents resolve and reduce the conflict with their children that originated from watching TV snack and fast-food advertising. Since advertising mediation is also one of the important stages mothers need to go through in the process of their child's development (Nathanson 2001, 2002; Desmond et al. 1985; Warren 2002), we can expect significant relationships between the level of advertising mediation by mothers and environmental factors in the Ecology model. Recently, Warren (2005) found that advertising mediation used by parents to resolve conflicts with their children is influenced by diverse environmental factors that surround the family, such as household income. Based on the Ecological Theory of Child Development (Bronfenbrenner 1979, 2001) and the findings from several studies indicated above, hypothesis 4 is suggested.

***H4:***

**Environmental factors in the Ecology model (Brofenbrenner 1979, 2001) will have significant relationships with the level of advertising mediation conducted by mothers to reduce or prevent the possible negative influences of TV snack and fast-food advertising.**

Through the next two research questions, this study also tries to determine what other environmental factors, apart from those in the ecology model, could influence conflicts between mothers and children or advertising mediation by mothers. The possible relationships between the frequency of conflicts regarding food choices and several demographic factors surrounding the family (e.g., gender of children, age of children, the presence of a father, race, and mothers' age) not included in the ecology model (Brofenbrenner 1979, 2001) are explored.

***RQ1:***

**What other factors, not included in the ecology model (Brofenbrenner 1979, 2001), cause or influence mother-child conflicts regarding food choices?**

Next, the possible relationships between diverse demographic factors not included in the ecology model and the level of advertising mediation reported by the mothers is examined.

***RQ2:***

**What other factors, not included in the ecology model (Brofenbrenner 1979, 2001), influence advertising mediation for reducing mother-child conflicts regarding food choices or for reducing negative advertising effects?**



The last two research questions are seeking information about how mothers approach their children and what they say to their children both when mothers and their children are in a conflict situation and also when mothers conduct advertising mediation for their children.

Isler, Popper, and Ward (1987)'s Model of Children's Purchase Requests and Parental Responses was used as the framework to answer research question 3.

***RQ3:***

**How do mothers and children behave when they experience the conflicts regarding food choices caused by children's exposure to TV snack and fast-food advertising?**

Research question 4 is seeking comprehensive information about the advertising mediation used by mothers for their children. Buijzen and Valkenburg (2005)'s scale of Advertising Mediation and Consumer Communication is used for this research question.

***RQ4:***

**What types of advertising mediation do mothers use?**

**What are the results of using different types of advertising mediation?**

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS**

#### **Objectives**

A two-stage research design was employed for this study. In the first stage, a qualitative approach using in-depth interviews with the mothers was conducted. McCracken (1988) indicates: “the purpose of the qualitative interview is not to discover how many, and what kinds of people share a certain characteristic. It is to gain access to the cultural categories and assumptions according to which one culture construes the world” (p. 17). Further, conducting in-depth interviews is an appropriate method for capturing and understanding informants’ lives, experiences, or situations in their own expressions and words (Taylor 1994; Taylor, Hoy and Haley 1996).

#### **Procedure**

The sample for the present study consisted of mothers with at least one child between the ages of seven and twelve. The sample was restricted to mothers for three reasons. One, mothers tend to be the primary caregivers for children in a family (Isler, Popper, and Ward 1987; Warren 2005). Two, parent-child conflicts regarding food choices are more likely to happen between mothers and their children (Campbell and Crawford 2001). Three, reducing test complexity makes the research manageable. In-depth interviews were conducted among 12 mothers in November and December 2006.

A Thematic Apperception Test (TAT), using an illustration to help participants to describe situations easily, was used in the interviews for eliciting rich responses (Illustration 1). A \$30 gift card from a local bookstore was offered as compensation for each participant.

### **A Purposive Convenience Sample**

The researcher contacted three Parent Teacher Organizations (PTOs) of elementary schools and two churches located in Athens-Clarke County, Georgia. PTO leaders and church administrators were asked if they were willing to ask their members to consider participating in this project as participants. The researcher sent a letter which provided the title of the research, objectives, and information about compensation for participation to leaders and administrators by e-mail (Appendix 3). A total of six potential participants were recruited from five groups (three PTOs and two churches), all of them with at least one child between the ages of seven and twelve.

For the diversity of the sample, the researcher recruited some of the participants from the most popular shopping mall in Athens-Clarke County. As a result of the recruiting process in front of the shopping mall, nine participants were lined up before the start of the interviews. Among the nine participants who originally wanted to participate, three of them contacted the researcher and asked to cancel. The final roster consisted of four mothers from the PTOs, two mothers from the churches, and six mothers who were recruited from the shopping mall. Detailed information about the participants and their children are listed in Table 1. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym. The names were used by the researcher during the interviews with the consent from the participants.

Table 1  
Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

	Mother's Age group	Mother's Ethnicity	Total number of children	Children's Ages, Genders	Mother's Education	Marital Status	Job Status
<b>Mother 1</b> (Sophie)	45-54	Black	1	9 (M)	College+	Married	Full time
<b>Mother 2</b> (Julie)	35-44	White	2	12 (M)	College graduate	Married	Part time
<b>Mother 3</b> (Linda)	35-44	White	2	7 (M)	College graduate	Married	Full Time
<b>Mother 4</b> (Donna)	35-44	White	2	9 (M)	College graduate	Married	Not Employed
<b>Mother 5</b> (Christine)	45-54	White	2	8 (M)	Some College	Married	Not Employed
<b>Mother 6</b> (Sarah)	35-44	White	3	8 (F)	College graduate	Married	Not Employed
<b>Mother 7</b> (Janice)	35-44	White	2	7 (F)	College graduate	Married	Not Employed
<b>Mother 8</b> (Shannon)	35-44	Asian	2	7 (F)	College graduate	Married	Not Employed
<b>Mother 9</b> (Lydia)	45-54	White	7	11 (F)	College graduate	Married	Not Employed
<b>Mother 10</b> (Ann)	35-44	White	1	7 (M)	College graduate	Married	Part time
<b>Mother 11</b> (Laura)	45-54	Black	1	8 (F)	High school grad	Divorced	Full Time
<b>Mother 12</b> (Kim)	25-34	White	2	7 (F)	College graduate	Married	Part time

**Illustration 1. The Drawing Used in Thematic Apperception Test**



The questions for the in-depth interviews covered diverse topics ranging from the mothers' general view of TV advertising to a particular behavior of their child when they are in a conflict situation. Due to the scarcity of studies dealing with mothers' opinions about the possible negative effects of TV snack and fast-food advertising on children, the researcher applied multiple sources as a reference for developing the interview protocol rather than a specific scale. Some studies provide particular items of questions (i.e., Pollay and Mittal 1993), other studies provide major issues which the researcher should ask the participants (i.e., Preston 2005; Austin and Reed 1999). Detailed information about the subcategories in the final version of interview protocol and the specific questions are shown in Table 2.

In addition to the principle questions, applying the emergent research design allowed the interviewer to probe the subject areas which came up during the interviews (Punyapiroje, Morrison, and Hoy 2002). A total of 12 in-depth interviews were conducted between November 20 and December 15, 2006. Locations of the in-depth interviews varied depending on the preference of the participants. Locations included a coffee shop, a conference room at an elementary school, and the personal office of the participant. Each interview took about 45 to 50 minutes and only the participant and the researcher were present. Before the start of each interview, the researcher introduced himself, briefly explained the purpose of the study, and asked the participant's permission to tape record the interview. Interviews were audio taped and transcribed to permit detailed analysis of the findings. In addition to verbal agreements, a paper consent form for participating in the research and allowing audio taping was filled out by each participant.

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Table 2  
Protocol for In-depth Interviews

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***Basic demographics of the family***

- Tell me about your family.
- How many children do you have between the ages of seven and twelve?  
How old are they? What are their genders?

***General attitudes toward advertising (Pollay and Mittal 1993; Nan 2006)***

- Tell me about your general opinion of advertising.
- What do you think about advertising?  
Do you have a positive opinion? Why or why not?

***Attitudes toward snack or fast-food advertising targeting children (Young, Bruin and Eagle 2003)***

- What opinions do you have regarding TV snack or fast-food advertising aired during the time your children generally watch television?

***Negative effect of advertising on children (Buijzen and Valkenburg 2005)***

- Are there any possible negative influences from exposure to TV snack or fast-food advertising to your child? What are they?

***Ethical perspective toward advertising targeting children (Preston 2005; Austin and Reed 1999)***

- From an ethical standpoint, do you think recent TV snack or fast-food advertising is appropriate for children to watch? Why or why not?

***Possible suggestions for policy makers this issue (Dresden, Barnard and Silkin 2003)***

- To deal with the ethical issue of advertising targeting children, what do you suggest in terms of policy or other ways to regulate this advertising?
- 

**Analysis for the In-depth Interviews**

As the method of analysis, this study used Analytic Induction and Comparative Analysis which tries to find common patterns in the data (Glaser and Strauss 1967). This method has been popular in qualitative studies which generally use in-depth interviews or focus group interviews (Punyapiroje, Morrison, and Hoy 2002; Oates et al. 2003; Drumwright and Murphy 2004). The researcher read through the transcripts of all 12 interviews and looked for themes or categories.

In the first stage of the analysis, the researcher wrote all the themes he found. Next, he chose four major common themes with which most participants were concerned. The researcher discussed some common themes that emerged from the first few interviews in later interviews, so that the significant issues were discussed and analyzed more thoroughly.

### **Findings from In-depth Interviews**

The researcher discovered four major themes from the interviews with the 12 mothers by analyzing the transcripts: (a) a perceived flood of snack and fast-food advertising during the time children watch TV; (b) overuse of toys and animated characters in TV snack and fast-food advertising targeting children; (c) unhappy relationships between mothers and their children resulting from TV advertising and mothers' suggestions for resolving this situation; and (d) mothers' hope for a balance in terms of the amount of products advertised on TV: healthy foods and non-healthy foods.

### **Flood of Snack and Fast-food Commercials**

Previous research has shown that the number of the advertisements aired during the time period when children generally watch TV is too high for mothers and children to avoid being exposed to advertising while watching general programming (Harrison and Marske 2005). According to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) (2006), the average American children saw nearly 5,000 nationally-aired snack and fast-food advertisements on TV in 2004. The findings of the in-depth interviews in the current study showed that the 12 mothers interviewed generally think that there are too many TV advertisements for snack and fast-foods that seemed unhealthy for their children. This finding was consistent with those of several previous studies.

Over three-fourths of the mothers indicated that their children watch TV for a limited time during the day and that they watch a limited number of channels which the mothers



assumed only carry appropriate content for children. However, despite the limited viewing time, the mothers felt their children had opportunities to watch many snack and fast-food commercials to such a degree that some of their children complained about the large amount of commercials. Some mothers even questioned the researcher about whether there are any federal regulations regarding the number of commercials the media can air at a specific time. The mothers did not seem to know if restrictions about where and when advertising can air were enforced.

"It's a family time and it's a family channel ... Disney channel or something.... Probably from 6:30-8:30.... but there are a lot of snack commercials. I think only food commercials come on ... I'm sick and tired of it. My child sees a McDonalds or a Burger King commercial and many times after that he'll say, 'Can we go to McDonalds to get dinner?' ... while I am preparing dinner..."  
(Linda, 7-year-old Boy)

"I think mainly TV commercials ... my child watches ... almost all snack and fast-food advertising ... he even complains sometimes ... too many commercials ... too many commercials ... because he wants to watch a movie ... but, commercials stop the movie every ... ten minutes ..." (Christine, 8-year-old Boy)

One of the questions in the interview protocol asked the mothers about what suggestions they might have to prevent the possible negative effects that TV snack and fast-food advertising might have on children. Several mothers answered that they were willing to suggest limiting the number of the snack and fast-food commercials during the time children watch TV, mainly between six to eight p.m. on weekdays and on Saturday mornings. Most mothers were worried about the significant impact of snack and fast-food commercials. They believe that the more their children are exposed to snack and fast-food commercials, the more effect those advertisements will have on their children's food choices in a negative and unhealthy way. Especially for children younger than 10-years-old, who are possibly not yet able to make a reasonable decision on their own, the mothers desired protection by regulators. Some mothers pointed out that this

issue is directly related to the question of whether we need to see children as the objects for marketing or as subjects to be protected. Even though many mothers understand that companies must advertise mainly during the time children watch TV most in order to see more profits, they also consider that their children are exposed to too many snack and fast-food commercials and this is not ethically right.

"Maybe this will never happen ... but I wish commercials, what you're saying like at a peak children's time for watching, I wish that they would reduce the amount of commercials ... it's too many. Sometimes I see food commercials way more than regular programs.... I hope the FTC or some organization can force them to reduce ... can we or not ... I don't know."  
(Janice, 7-year-old Girl)

"I know they have the right to advertise whenever they want ... it's a free country ... but, I think it's not ethical.... I think they know mothers cannot take care of children at that time ... children can watch whatever they want ... the only thing they can watch is snack-food commercials.... I was busy preparing dinner ... I cannot block the commercial ... and my child comes to the kitchen and says ...'Can we go to McDonald's to get dinner?' ... Then I become mad ..."  
(Shannon, 7-year-old Girl)

### **Toys and Movies in TV Snack and Fast-food Advertising**

Almost all the mothers agreed that the toys and animated characters the snack and fast-food companies use in their advertising are a big draw for their children (Neeley and Schunmann 2004). To date, this issue has been a serious topic addressed by several advertising researchers. When TV commercials using toys or cartoon characters come on, children are easily mesmerized, according to many mothers in the interviews. The children generally respond to those TV commercials very directly, such as calling their mothers and asking to go to the fast-food restaurants right away. Even though there are some differences in the levels of engagement

depending on the gender or ages of the children, most mothers tended to indicate that their children are very interested in the toys and animated characters in many fast-food commercials.

"Well ... my kids love junk food. They love McDonalds; they love Burger King and whatnot. Well, there's a good example. He has asked to go to Burger King before because of a commercial he saw. He saw a commercial for, they were the toy of the month or whatever, whatever it was and he wanted to go there to get the toy."  
(Sophie, 9-year-old Boy)

"We try to be egalitarian when we pick a restaurant to go to at night, for dinner. And I said, 'Okay, where do you want to go?' My daughter says, 'Barberito's.' Dad says, 'Ryan's.' Mom says, 'I want to go to Choo Choo Express.' And my son says, 'Burger King.' 'Well, why do you want to go to Burger King?' 'I don't know.' 'Well, no, you must have a reason; you must want to go there.' 'I just, I like the food.' 'Well, what food do you like there?' 'I don't know.' '... is the reason that you want to go there because you like the toy they're giving away?' 'Well, yeah.' 'How did you know what toy they were giving away?' 'I saw it on TV.' So there is an example where he has done that.  
(Donna, 8-year-old Boy)

Not only because of consistent nagging by children, but also from the perspective of advertising ethics, mothers generally had very negative opinions about the use of toys or cartoon characters in the marketing of snack and fast-food products targeting children. Some mothers said that they want the government to establish regulations limiting or prohibiting the usage of toys or cartoon characters in the TV advertisements for those products. They thought the use of toys and characters by snack and fast-food companies is somewhat unethical because the companies are taking advantage of children's naiveté.

Many mothers thought that the advertisers already know very well that children cannot make decisions about their food choices based upon logical reasons (e.g., price, quality, or health) but instead base their requests upon the desire to get the toys which come with the food. Therefore, even though the parents, generally mothers, try to persuade their children to make

different decisions by explaining about the low quality of the toys and unhealthy ingredients of the food products, many children will not hear their mothers' explanations. Some mothers answered that their children who are obsessed with certain toys will not listen to what they are saying but they do listen to what TV commercials are saying. If the children keep nagging, the mothers interviewed generally end up responding to the children's desire only because they did not want to disappoint their children by repeated rejections.

According to the mothers' opinions, their children are fooled by snack and food companies' sneaky and cunning strategies and they keep asking their mothers to go to fast-food restaurants only to get the toys. Although mothers feel that it is not easy to regulate the usage of the toys or cartoon characters by law, they consider the companies' frequent usage of those in TV advertising very unethical.

"No, yeah, not food. I usually go into the—you can go into a fast-food restaurant and buy just the toys that they have there without having to buy food. And so if I thought it was something that was cute. Because a lot of the stuff she just throws away she doesn't like it anyway. It's not for her and I think that being the youngest her thoughts are more up toward the older siblings. The younger ones are prone to be more a little more mature in their dress choices and their activities. That's because she's got older siblings." (Laura, 8-year-old Girl)

"Well that and that once they get them, and you can't tell them, but once they get them they realize that they don't do anything, it's just a little plastic figure from the movie but it doesn't do anything and then they're not as interested. But, boy, they beg to go get it. [Laughs] So." (Ann, 7-year-old Boy)

In addition to the TV advertisements, according to the participants, there is another stimulation that causes their children to desperately want toys they see advertised. When a mother and her child pass by an aisle at a grocery store, they find many snack and sugary products with Point-of-Purchases displays and packages on which the toys and cartoon

characters are used. Mothers have to then go through another conflict with their children on the spot. Again, mothers believe that the companies know very well that parents and children will have a conflict on the spot and, actually, the companies set up the situation deliberately for their profit. The mothers feel it is smart but sneaky.

" 'Look! It's Cars! ' If I get home and I say, 'Look, it's got the cars on it,' and put it on his banana, he's going to eat it. So there's something definitely something there with being at eye-level because if my kids go shopping with me what they see on the box—oh and the toy's in the box. Yeah. If they know that there's a toy in the box, they want that box if it's a toy they want, regardless of what's in the box. They'll take the toy out and throw the cereal away."  
(Sophie, 9-year-old Boy)

Since children's desire for toys is too strong for them to stop asking for the toy even when their mothers say no, some children even lie to their mothers to go to a certain fast-food restaurant or to go to the grocery store. For example, some mothers said that their children kept nagging to go a fast-food restaurant by repeatedly saying that they were really hungry. However, once the mothers took them to the restaurant and paid for the meal, the children only focused on the toys, not the food. Even though most mothers know their children's major interest is not in the food, but in the toys, mothers acquiesced to children's requests because they dislike making them depressed by frequent rejections. In these situations, mothers do not consider that their children are actually lying, but some mothers told the researcher that they will be uncomfortable if their children lie habitually.

"The toy is a big draw. She loves the toys. And they will order something—  
(Researcher: 'Like Sponge Bob or Dora...')... Yeah. Like the—oh, the Polly Pocket Fun Wheel. The toy is the draw. Absolutely. And if the toy is something she's interested in, they'll—my eight-year-old that is very mature, she has at times said, 'Mom, can we go by McDonalds today?

I'm very hungry.' And I'll say, 'Well...you just ate lunch.' And I'll kind of start smiling and I'll say, 'You're after the toy. What's the toy?' And she'll say, 'Oh, it's so-and-so.' And she knows..." (Laura, 8-year-old Girl)

### **TV Advertising, a Strong Agent of Conflict**

Most mothers in the sample answered that they had some kind of conflict with their children in the last four weeks regarding a food choice. Also, they considered TV snack and fast-food advertising a significant factor in creating conflict situations between their children and themselves. Some mothers even told the researcher that the conflict is so strong that they call it a “power struggle,” or a conflict about values in terms of food choice. Mothers wanted their children to eat healthy, consuming “boring” foods such as broccoli, carrots, fruits, or milk, but children only wanted snack foods, which are “unhealthy foods” from the mothers’ perspective. Most of the snack and fast-foods were considered “junk food” by the mothers, but children consider the foods to be very funny, cool, sweet, and delicious as the TV advertisements continually claim. Since these mothers felt that advertising causes a bad relationship between themselves and their children, some mothers feel that the advertisers are unethical because they also believe that the companies fully expect diverse negative effects and maybe take advantage of those for their business. To resolve or prevent a conflict with their children and to make their children try healthy foods, mothers use a variety of strategies.

"So, we're walking down the food aisle and he wants to buy a candy bar and I say, 'No. You're not buying a candy bar.' And he'll say, 'I want a candy bar.' And I'll say, 'Well, you're not buying a candy bar.' And then he'll say, 'Well, I was really good on this shopping trip so I should get a candy bar.' And I say, 'No. You're not getting a candy bar.' And that's usually the end of it because I'm pretty firm; I don't give in. So the more he badgers, it doesn't work. He's learned that so he usually tries about three times and then he stops." (Christine, 8-year-old Boy)

"Between tearing my hair out—what I tell him is, it's impossible for him to decide that he doesn't like something if he hasn't tried it. We do get him to try new things but we have to bribe him, we have to threaten him. I have paid him to try food. I had to give him three dollars to try watermelon. Who doesn't like watermelon? Three dollars. Because I thought he would like it and if I could get him more into fruit then it might introduce some other things. Nah, didn't like it. We have threatened him, we've punished him if he doesn't—'You need to try it. Just try one bite.' So, we've tried everything. He believes what the commercials are saying but, not me..."  
(Donna, 9-year-old Boy)

In conflict situations, mothers try to explain to their children the reasons why they want their children to eat other foods instead of snack or fast-foods. Among the participants, not one mother indicated that they just say "No!" without explaining to their children about why they do not want their children to eat a food product when they decline their children's request to buy a specific food. Mothers generally try to persuade their children, even using several technical words related to nutrition, such as "carbohydrate," "trans fat," or "sodium." The children's typical response is to resist first and then to obey their mothers eventually. Most children ask for reasons why their mothers do not want them to eat snack or fast-foods. When children argue with their mothers, they usually use two major references: advertising and peer groups, including siblings.

"I think like—the Manwich commercials, you buy the stuff in the can and you mix it with meat. She said, 'That looks good.' And I said, 'But it's not good. You wouldn't like it because it has peppers and onions,' and things she won't eat. And I'll say, 'But it's not very good for you because it's in a can and Mommy didn't make it.'"  
(Sarah, 8-year-old Girl)

"The latest thing that he has requested from a commercial is Cinnamon Toast Crunch cereal. I don't know what it is about the commercial, but he likes cinnamon toast and he likes cereal. And he said, 'I want to try that.' I said, 'Well, it won't taste exactly like cinnamon toast.' 'I want to try that. I want to try that.' 'Fine.' So, bought some and he loves it. So that is one new thing, sugary, bad-for-you cereal, but he has added that in. Now that is strictly from what he's seen on TV."  
(Sophie, 9-year-old Boy)

When the mothers bring up the diverse, unhealthy ingredients that are in the advertised food products, children do not accept this argument easily for two major reasons which were reported by some of the mothers in the interviews. First, the children do not usually see any disclaimers or other nutritional information in the advertisements that they see on TV. Even though most TV advertisements include at least some nutritional information or a disclaimer, children generally only focus on the visuals of the tasty products and very cool toys that are decorated with colorful animation (Kline 1993). Therefore, even though mothers frequently tell their children that to continue eating the specific food product is not good for his or her health and toys are just a low-quality attraction, it is not easy for children to understand and accept the fact because children are rarely exposed to that kind of information on TV advertising (Sophie, 9-year-old boy).

Second, children generally cannot understand what a disclaimer or a nutrition fact means even though they may actually watch a commercial that includes such information (Oates, Blades, Gunter, and Don 2003). Especially for younger children (generally less than eight-years-old), it is not possible for them to fully recognize and understand the meaning of such information (Edling 1999). Some studies have even indicated that many children consider that fast-food products are much healthier than homemade food served by their parents (Donahue, Meyer, and Henke 1978). Some mothers in the in-depth interviews suggested some stricter federal regulations regarding this issue, such as forcing all snack and fast-food companies to note major ingredients of a food product as a disclaimer somewhere in their TV advertisements, like all pharmaceutical products do in their TV commercials (Christine/eight-year-old boy; Julie/12 year-old boy). If possible, some mothers also wanted snack and fast-food commercials to list possible side effects of heavy consumption of some sugary products (Sophie/nine-year-old boy;



Christine/eight-year-old boy). Many mothers believed that those TV advertisements could be called more ethical if the advertisers made additional efforts regarding this issue.

As children's exposure to TV snack and fast-food advertising has been considered to be one of the critical reasons for the increasing rate of children's obesity (Kaiser Family Foundation 2004), more ethical advertisements for children have been requested by mothers who are constantly experiencing conflicts with their children regarding food choices.

### **For More Ethical Advertising: Creating a Balance**

"....Yeah, I [do]... because all I see is fast food on TV, fast-food restaurants: McDonalds, the steakhouse, IHOP, things like that...I want to see more healthy foods in commercials." (Julie, 12-year-old Boy)

Including the mother above, several participants asked if the companies could make more advertisements that show a comparatively healthy food product such as salad or fruit-related products. They admitted that TV snack and fast-food advertising has a large influence on their children's food choices. Even though there are diverse factors which may influence children's food choices—including mothers' food preferences, peer groups, siblings, and school teachers—the mothers could not deny that TV advertising is playing a big part in their children's food choices. Since the mothers in this study know the power of TV snack and fast-food advertising, they partly understood the position of the food companies. Some mothers even asked the researcher, "What else would be the ultimate purpose of companies besides money?" Most mothers accept the reality in which they find themselves. Therefore, if the desired decrease in the number of TV snack or fast-food advertising is not practical, mothers wanted to ask the companies to provide a balance in advertising in terms of the products they advertise. Some

mothers assumed that if the companies advertise healthy foods such as fruit yogurt or fruit salad with the toys, children's food choices would be easily improved in a healthier way. Some of the mothers also mentioned that they would consider buying products from a company if it tried to provide a balance in its advertising plan. The mothers thought that kind of effort should be an important responsibility for the companies that make profits through selling snack and fast-food products to children.

"Right... I want them to advertise more...healthy food. Celery, carrots, something like that. I know...the parents should be responsible because they control what they eat. If they see this on TV—'Mom, I want this!'—it's just like, no. I think they should say no. But...if there is a balance....that will be good."  
(Donna, 9-year-old Boy)

Most mothers in the interviews told the researcher that they could understand the position of the snack and fast-food companies, whose bottom line is to make a profit. That is an important principle and everybody's right in a capitalistic society, according to most mothers' answers. Some mothers even told the researcher, "That's their job...selling products using advertising, nothing wrong with that?" and "That's their business...isn't it?" However, despite understanding the ultimate marketing goals of the food companies, mothers showed interest in putting limits on what the companies can advertise. They also hoped for some kind of stronger and more comprehensive regulations by the FTC, or other federal organizations, in terms of the number of snack and fast-food commercials and the balance in the products advertised during the time children watch TV most.

"I don't like a lot of advertisements for food products because there are so many children who watch those commercials and figure that's what they should eat, even though it might not be helpful for them. And they're not very active. If they spend a lot of time in front of the television, they're not very active and exercising like they should. So that's why I think that type of advertising should be limited."  
(Lydia, 11-year-old Girl)

The findings from the qualitative stage of the study, 12 in-depth interviews, played two significant roles. First, the findings produced diverse and unique implications on their own for the present study. The real voices from mothers collected through open-ended questions are very important references that the researcher can use for discussing issues related to the possible negative effects of TV snack and fast-food advertising on children, as well as the impact on the relationships between mothers and children within a family. More importantly, the findings from the interviews not only provided many useful concepts for the survey questionnaire but also gave diverse ideas for the final survey instrument.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **SURVEY/ METHODS**

#### **Objectives**

Based partially on the findings from the qualitative study, the survey of mothers was conducted to gather perceptions of (a) the undesired effects of TV snack and fast-food advertising on children; (b) the conflict relationship between mothers and their children regarding food choices; and (c) the relationships between the conflict and diverse environmental factors surrounding the family unit. The survey was conducted to increase the external validity of the findings in this study.

#### **Survey Procedures**

A purposive convenience sample of mothers with children between the ages of seven and twelve was recruited from local PTOs, church groups, and Little League baseball teams. Attempts were made to include a diverse sample of participants in terms of ethnicity and socioeconomic status. A minimum of 300 completed surveys was desired to permit rigorous statistical analysis. The respondents or the groups to which the mothers belong (i.e., PTOs and church groups) were paid \$5 for each survey they returned completed.

In addition to descriptive statistics, Chi-Square Goodness-of-Fit Test, factor analysis, multiple regression, and ANOVA were used to determine not only if the mothers think TV snack and fast-food ads influences their children's food choices and the conflict with their children regarding food choices, but also which environmental factors influence the conflicts (or advertising mediation).

## **Sampling**

Similar procedures were conducted by the author as those in the in-depth interviews to recruit the participants for the survey. As a purposive convenience sample, several PTOs, churches, and the Little League Baseball teams in four counties located in northeastern Georgia (Athens-Clarke, Oconee, Jackson, and Barrow) were contacted by the author. Based on the information from the school board in the area, the author sent e-mails and called individual PTO leaders first. More than 80% of the groups which the author originally contacted agreed to participate. Among the nine churches the author initially contacted, four churches allowed the author to conduct the survey among their members. Among 10 team mothers from the Little League Baseball teams, 9 team mothers allowed the researcher to conduct the survey with other team parents.

The survey was conducted during a meeting or a gathering of each group at a place they usually meet. For example, the author visited the elementary schools on the day of a PTO meeting and conducted the survey. Also, the researcher visited the churches when they had a scheduled gathering for the survey. At the request of the mothers of children on Little League teams, the researcher visited the field at which the games were held to conduct the survey.

## **Development of the Survey Instrument**

The questionnaire for the survey was constructed based upon information from three sources. First, the research literature was reviewed in an attempt to identify valid scales which were previously used in empirical studies. Three were selected for the present study: Brofenbrenner's Ecological Theory of Child Development (1979, 2001), Isler, Popper, and Ward's Model of Children's Purchase Requests and Parental Responses (1987), and Buijzen and Valkenburg's Scale of Advertising Mediation and Consumer Communication typology (2005).

Second, the insights obtained from the 12 in-depth interviews were used to develop additional questions in the final survey questionnaire. For example, some questions were incorporated regarding the use of toys or animated characters in TV snack and fast-food advertising (Section 4 in the Questionnaire, Appendix B). Questions about possible deceptiveness of TV advertising were also added (Section 2 in the Questionnaire, Appendix B).

Third, the results of the pretest, which was conducted among 10 mothers using a draft version of the survey questionnaire, were used to fine tune the final questionnaire.

### **Pretest and Findings**

The researcher conducted a pretest before starting the actual survey. The participants for the pretest had exactly the same qualifications as those for the final survey: they were all mothers who had at least one child between the ages of seven and twelve. Using a convenience sample, the researcher recruited 10 participants from the journalism and mass communication college in which the researcher is enrolled. The participants were asked to fill out the survey during the second week of February 2007.

The researcher also provided each participant with a sheet of paper on which they could make any comments about the survey. In addition to the written feedback, the researcher conducted brief interviews with each participant for about 10 minutes to check if there was anything they forgot to mention in the survey or in the written feedback. The common issues the participants in pretest brought up in their written feedback and 10-minute interviews are as follows:

- (1) "I have three children between the ages of seven and twelve. Which one do I need to talk about?"**
- (2) "I think there are some redundant questions which asked very similar issues."**

- (3) “We have never had a television set in my house before.”**
- (4) “My son stopped nagging about his food choices after he was around 10. Now, he is 12. Do I need to answer the questions based upon my past experience or just the present situation?”**
- (5) “What is the difference between ‘Neither agree or disagree’ and ‘No opinion’ in the questionnaire?”**

Based on the participants’ comments and feedback from the pretest, the researcher revised the draft of the survey questionnaire. Regarding the first comment, for mothers who have more than one child in the target age range (seven- to twelve-years-old), a special direction was added on the first page of the survey. The researcher decided to make two versions of the survey. One version asks the mothers who have more than one child in the age range to mainly talk about the older child. The other version asks mothers to focus on the younger child if they have more than one child in the age range. This was done in an attempt to avoid any bias that might be caused by only using either the oldest or youngest child.

Regarding the second comment, about redundancy among the questions in the survey, the researcher decided to leave the possibly redundant questions in the survey because those questions were generally applied from the scales in the previous literature. Therefore, even though some small modifications were made to some of the questions, the researcher did not eliminate the questions from the survey even though some participants might feel there were some redundancies in the survey.

Regarding the third comment, about the presence of a television set in the home, the mothers were not included in the sample if they indicated that they do not have a TV in their homes. About the fourth comment, uncertainty of the time period that mothers need to consider when they answer questions about their children, the researcher asked them to mainly think

about the current situation (going back no further than a year) rather than their past experiences. Regarding the fifth comment, even though some mothers in the pilot test pointed out that they had a hard time making a distinction between “neither agree or disagree” and “no opinion”, the two choices were left in the survey because some other participants told the researcher that they got different nuances from the two items. Based on the comments and feedback from the pretest, the survey was revised and the final version of the survey was developed.

It is also important to mention that the researcher decided to ask the mothers participating in the survey to answer all the questions based upon all the TV programs and all advertising their children are exposed to, rather than limiting to the programs and advertising only targeting children. The current study is not focused on specific channels, programs, or advertising targeting children; this study is focused on the channels, programs, and advertising the children actually watch.

### **Final Version of the Survey**

The first part of the questionnaire consisted of questions asking mothers about their own views towards advertising and their opinions about the effects of TV snack and fast-food advertising exposure to their children (Pollay and Mittal 1993; Nan 2006). Also, questions were asked about any negative effects of TV snack and fast-food advertising on the relationship between themselves and their children (Young, Bruin, and Eagle 2003). In the second part of the questionnaire, the questions explored environmental factors including TV snack and fast-food advertising which may cause and influence the possible conflicts between mothers and children about food choices (Bronfenbrenner 1979, 2001; Warren 2005). Also, the specific types of reactions/interactions the mothers and their children show when they are in a conflict situation were asked (Isler, Popper, and Ward 1987).



The third part of the survey addressed the advertising mediation tactics that were used by mothers to either prevent or resolve conflict situations with their children (Buijzen and Valkenburg 2005). Also, several environmental factors which might be related to the parents' advertising mediation were examined as well. The entire survey can be seen in Appendix 2.

### **Statistical Methods for the Quantitative Study**

To test the four hypotheses and to answer the four research questions, this study used several multivariate statistical methods in addition to simple descriptive statistics. A factor analysis was used as the first step for testing hypotheses 3 (*“Environmental factors in the ecology model (Brofenbrenner 1979, 2001) will have significant relationships with the level of the conflicts between mothers and children regarding children’s food choices”*) and 4 (*“Environmental factors in the Ecology model (Brofenbrenner 1979, 2001) will have significant relationships with the level of advertising mediation conducted by mothers to reduce or prevent the possible negative influences of TV snack and fast-food advertising”*). The factor analysis produced a factor structure among the diverse environmental items in the Ecological Theory of Child Development model (Brofenbrenner 1979, 2001).

After the factor analysis, multiple regression analyses were conducted to check if there are significant relationships between the conflict/advertising mediation and the factors in the ecology model. In multiple regression analysis for testing hypothesis 3, the factor scores from each factor were used as multiple independent variables and the frequency of the conflict reported by the mothers was used as the dependent variable. To test hypothesis 4, another multiple regression analysis was conducted using the factor scores as independent variables and the index of level of advertising mediation reported by the mothers as the dependent variable.

ANOVA was applied to answer research questions 1 (*“What other factors, not included in the ecology model (Brofenbrenner 1979, 2001), cause or influence mother-child conflicts regarding food choices?”*) and 2 (*“What other factors, not included in the ecology model (Brofenbrenner 1979, 2001), influence advertising mediation for reducing mother-child conflicts regarding food choices or for reducing negative advertising effects?”*). Using the frequency of the conflict reported by the mothers as the dependent variable, the possible relationships with diverse demographic items about the participants’ families were investigated. The possible relationships between the level of mothers’ advertising mediation (dependent variable) and the demographic items (independent variables) were also checked by ANOVA.

Chi-Square Goodness-of-Fit Tests were also conducted to check for significant differences between the percentage of the people who agreed with the statements asking the negative influence of TV advertising and the percentage of the people who disagreed. The tests were used for testing hypotheses 1 (*“Mothers think that their children’s food choices are influenced by TV snack and fast-food advertising to which their children are exposed.”*) and 2 (*“Mothers think that exposure to TV snack and fast-food advertising causes conflicts between mothers and their children regarding children’s food choices.”*).

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **SURVEY/ RESULTS**

#### **Overview**

A total of 655 surveys were distributed to the people who were qualified to be the participants (mothers with at least one child between the ages of seven and twelve), and 329 completed surveys were collected by the researcher. The researcher collected the surveys using two methods. One, the researcher visited a place where potential participants were attending a meeting (e.g., a PTO meeting) and the researcher distributed the surveys and waited until they were completed. Two, the researcher left the surveys with group leaders and came back later to pick up the completed surveys. The researcher visited again after about 24 hours to the location where the leader would leave the surveys. Even though a total of 329 surveys were collected, 11 surveys were incomplete. Some mothers skipped more than two sections in the questionnaire, and those surveys were eliminated from the data analysis. Therefore, the adjusted response rate was 48.5%.

#### **Data Screening**

A total of 318 completed surveys were collected and the data screening process was conducted during the entering process of data into the SPSS 15.0 program. Missing values in the surveys were eliminated from the statistical analysis by coding as the number 99, and the values did not influence the results.

In the survey, two kinds of scales were used to measure the perception of the mothers regarding several issues about the possible negative effects of TV snack and fast-food

advertising on their children. Depending on the characteristics of the statements which were asked to the mothers, the frequency (Never, Rarely, Once in a while, Often, and Very often) and the agreement (Strongly agree, Disagree, Neither agree or disagree, Agree, Strongly agree, No opinion) were used. It turned out that the number of the answers for “No opinion” in the agreement scale was extremely lower than the other four answers; the answer “No opinion” was combined with the answer “Neither agree or disagree.” Therefore, in calculating the mean of the individual answers, the number 3 was assigned to both answers of “No opinion” and “Neither agree or disagree.”

The index for the level of conflict between mothers and children regarding food choices was decided by the four questions asking about experience and the frequency of the conflicts reported by the mothers. Participants were able to answer “yes” or “no” to the questions about the experience of the conflict with their children (regarding any product and regarding a snack/fast-food product); the frequency of the conflict that the mothers experience with their children (regarding any product and regarding a snack/fast-food product) were answered as well. By assigning the higher numbers to the answers which indicate that the mothers experience conflicts with their children more frequently, the index for the conflict of all 318 mothers was decided.

Regarding the index for the level of advertising mediation, the mean scores of the mothers’ answers to 24 questions in the scale of Advertising Mediation and Consumer Communication (Buijzen and Valkenburg 2005, Table 12) were used. The mothers checked one of the five alternatives (Never=1, Rarely=2, Once in a while=3, Often=4, Very often=5) for each question and the means of individual mothers were calculated.

### **Sample Characteristics**

Participants in the survey were all mothers who have at least one child between the ages of seven and twelve. They lived in one of the four counties (Athens-Clarke, Oconee, Barrow, Jackson County) near the city of Athens, Georgia. The average age was 39.7-years-old. The youngest mother was 24-years-old and the oldest mother was 60-years-old.

As shown in Table 3, 72% of the participants were Caucasian/White (227), and 18% were African American/Black. Asian, Latino, and some other races (e.g., Bi-racial) comprised about 10% of the total sample. Most participants were currently married (74.4%) and about half of the participants had full-time jobs (49.7%). Over 63% (201) of participants had a B.A or higher degree.

About a quarter (27.6%) of the participants answered that their household income was less than \$40,000 a year before tax and there were 69 families (about 22%) that had a yearly income of more than \$100,000 before tax. More than half of the participants (55.6%) answered that they were strongly religiously observant and 44.4% of participants indicated that they were “weak” in their religious beliefs.

There were balanced rates of participants’ children of each age between seven and twelve. The largest group consisted of 10-year-olds (21%, 66 children) and the smallest group consisted of 8-year-olds (12.4%, 39 children). Mothers of boys were somewhat more prevalent (59.7%, 187 children) than mothers of girls (40.2%, 126 children) in the sample. Among the mothers, 83.2% had more than one child who was living with them.

Table 3 Characteristics of Survey Respondents			
<i>Total participants (N)</i>		318	
<i>Age (mean value)</i>		39.7	
		Percent (%)	Frequency
<i>Mothers' age</i>	24-30	11.1%	35
	31-40	47.6%	150
	41 or more	41.3%	130
	Total	99.0%	315
<i>Race</i>	Caucasian/White	71.8%	227
	African American/Black	18%	57
	Asian	3.8%	12
	Hispanic/Latino	3.5%	11
	Other/mixed race	2.8%	9
		Total	99.9%
<i>Marital status</i>	Currently married	74.4%	236
	Separated or divorced	13.9%	44
	Widowed	.6%	2
	Never married	7.3%	23
	Living with partner	3.8%	12
		Total	100%
<i>Education</i>	Some high school	4.7%	15
	Completed high school	11.7%	37
	Some college	19.9%	63
	College graduate	34.1%	108
	Attended graduate school	29.4%	93
		Total	99.8%
<i>Employment</i>	Fully employed	49.7%	158
	Partly employed	19.2%	61
	Self-employed	8.2%	26
	Not employed	23%	73
		Total	100%
<i>Household income</i>	Less than \$20,000	10.2%	31
	\$20,000-40,000	17.4%	53
	\$40,001-60,000	20%	61
	\$60,001-80,000	18%	55
	\$80,001-100,000	11.8%	36
	\$10,001-120,000	4.6%	14
	\$120,001 or higher	18%	55
		Total	100%
<i>Child's age</i>	7	17.1%	54
	8	12.4%	39
	9	15.6%	49
	10	21%	66
	11	14.6%	46
	12	19.4%	61
		Total	100%
<i>Child's gender</i>	Boy	59.7%	187

Girl		40.2%	126
	Total	99.9%	313

\* Not all bases equal to N (318), due to non-responses.

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## **Representativeness of the Sample**

Among the total sample of 318 mothers, 72% were Caucasian and 18% were African American. These proportions were similar to the real makeup of the city of Athens ([www.city-data.com](http://www.city-data.com) 2007) with African Americans being somewhat under represented. According to the Census 2000 ([www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov) 2007), about 65% of residents in Athens were Caucasian/White and 27% were African American/Black. The Asian population was also well reflected in the sample (3.2% in the Census 2000, 3.8% in the sample). However, the Hispanic participants were under represented in the sample compared to the numbers of real residents in Athens (6.4% in the Census 2000, 3.5% in the sample).

In the Census 2000, the rate of the mothers who were currently married was about double that of female heads of household without a husband (32.3% and 13.3%), but the difference between the two groups was higher in the sample (74% and 26%). Education levels of the residents in Athens were a little lower than that of the sample (Bachelor's degree or higher 40% in the Census 2000, 63% in the sample). Children's gender was slightly different between the two data. According to the Census 2000, for every 100 females there were 95.4 males in the city. However, boys were represented slightly more (59%) than girls in the sample. This may be due in part to the fact that there were more mothers with boys at the Little League fields.

## **Results by Hypotheses and Research Questions**

**H1: Mothers think that their children's food choices are influenced by TV snack and fast-food advertising to which their children are exposed.**

Hypothesis 1 assumed that the mothers perceive that TV snack and fast-food advertising has an impact on their children's food choices. The mothers' opinions were asked by 10 related statements (Table 4) which were answered by checking one of five options: strongly agree (5), agree (4), neither disagree or agree (3), disagree (2), and strongly disagree (1). The 10 statements asked the influences of TV snack and fast-food advertising on their children in diverse ways. The fact that those 10 statements were asking the same topic was supported by getting acceptable reliability (Cronbach alpha = .738).

To test hypothesis 1, "*Mothers think that their children's food choices are influenced by TV snack and fast-food advertising to which their children are exposed.*" a Chi-Square Goodness-of-Fit Test was performed in addition to conducting the simple frequency. Among the answers from the mothers, "strongly agree" and "agree" were collapsed into a single category "agree"; "disagree" and "strongly disagree" were combined to "disagree." The 10 statements were ranked by the percent of agreement of the participants.

Half of the statements received agreement from about half of the participants (Table 4) and the other four statements received agreement from 32-44% of the participants. Only one statement received agreement by less than 30% of the mothers. The statement receiving the highest level of agreement was "*I have set rules for my child regarding the amount of time he/she can watch TV because I am concerned about the effect of TV snack and fast-food advertising*"; 83.6% of mothers answered "yes" to this statement. The other statements which got more than 50% of agreement from the mothers were mainly about the direct impact of TV snack and fast-food advertising on their children. For example, about 70% of mothers (251)



believed that the more TV snack and fast-food advertising their children watch, the more they will ask to buy the food products advertised on television. Also, about half of the mothers felt that the toys found in the TV snack and fast-food ads were an important factor influencing why their children ask to go to certain fast-food restaurants (47.3%).

As a result of influential TV snack and fast-food advertising, mothers expressed concern for their children's health. They agreed very strongly with the statement "*There should be a ban on TV snack and fast-food advertising heavily-sugared products aimed at children*" (54%).

Thirty-five percent of mothers agreed that TV snack and fast-food advertising sometimes is more harmful than the regular TV programs aimed at their children.

**Table 4**  
**Mothers' Perceptions of the Influence of**  
**TV Snack and Fast-food Advertising on Children's Food Choices**

Rank by % of agreement	Statements	Agree	Neither Agree or disagree	Disagree	Base (n)
1	<i>I have set rules for my child regarding the amount of time he/she can watch TV because I am concerned about the effect of TV snack and fast-food ads.</i>	83.6 % (265)	7.6 % (24)	8.8 % (28)	(317)
2	<i>There is too much sugar and fat in food products advertised in TV programs directed at children.</i>	79.2 % (251)	15.2 % (48)	5.7 % (18)	(317)
3	<i>The more TV snack or fast-food ads my child watches the more he/she will want the products advertised.</i>	68 % (213)	17 % (53)	15 % (47)	(313)
4	<i>There should be a ban on TV snack and fast-food advertising heavily-sugared products aimed at children.</i>	54 % (172)	28 % (88)	18.2 % (58)	(318)
5	<i>My child asks to go to fast-food restaurants because he/she has seen a TV ad giving information that the fast-food comes with a toy.</i>	47.3 % (150)	13.9 % (44)	39 % (123)	(317)
6	<i>TV ads for snack and fast-foods influence my child's food choices.</i>	44.2 % (140)	21 % (66)	35 % (111)	(317)
7	<i>Toys in TV snack and fast-food ads are very influential in my child's food choices.</i>	41 % (129)	19.4 % (61)	39.5 % (124)	(314)
8	<i>Sometimes, TV snack and fast-food ads might be more harmful than regular TV programs to my child.</i>	35 % (110)	32.6 % (103)	32.6 % (103)	(316)

9	<i>The cooperate advertising of snack or fast-food companies with movies negatively influence my child's food choices.</i>	32.3 % (101)	30.7 % (96)	116 % (37)	(313)
10	<i>If my child watches TV snack and fast-food ads more, it will be more likely for him/her to be obese in the future.</i>	25 % (79)	35.1 % (111)	39.9 % (126)	(316)

\* Not all bases equal to N (318), due to non-responses.

However, despite these general agreements by the mothers regarding the influences of TV snack and fast-food advertising on their children's food choices, there were some statements which got lower rates of agreement as well. For example, the statement asking the relationship between watching TV snack and fast-food advertising and their children's obesity got a lower rate of agreement than other statements (Table 4). To the statement "*If my child watches TV snack and fast-food ads more, it will be more likely for him/her to be obese in the future,*" about 40% of mothers disagreed, compared to 25% of mothers who agreed with the statement. Regarding the opinions of the entertainment tied-in style advertising campaigns (e.g., the movie *Spiderman* and Burger King, the movie *Shrek* and McDonald's), only 25% of mothers agreed that the advertising campaign negatively influenced their children's food choices.

As the second step for testing this hypothesis, the Chi-Square Goodness-of-Fit Tests were conducted to check if the differences between the percentage of agreement and disagreement are statistically significant. Among the eight statements which got more agreements than disagreements by the mothers, only one statement ("*Sometimes, TV snack and fast-food ads might be more harmful than regular TV programs to my child*") did not show a significant difference. The other seven statements got significant differences from the Chi-Square Goodness-of-Fit Tests ( $p < .05$ ).

Since the percent of the agreement in most of the statements exceeded the percent of disagreement, and 70% of the statements got a significantly higher percentage of agreement than

disagreement by the participants, the results in Table 4 indicated that hypothesis 1 (*“Mothers think that their children’s food choices are influenced by TV snack and fast-food advertising to which their children are exposed.”*) was generally supported.

**H2: Mothers think that exposure to TV snack and fast-food advertising causes conflicts between mothers and their children regarding children’s food choices.**

The issues related to the impact of TV snack and fast-food advertising on the conflict regarding food choices between mothers and children were asked to the participants through another 10 statements (Table 5). The statements comprised a reliable scale with a Cronbach’s alpha of .818. The same procedures (frequency and Chi- Square Goodness-of-Fit Tests) as those done for hypothesis 1 were performed again to test hypothesis 2 (*“Mothers think that exposure to TV snack and fast-food advertising causes conflicts between mothers and their children regarding children’s food choices”*).

As seen in Table 5, six out of ten statements received agreement from 40% of mothers. The statement with the highest agreement percentage was about the presence of conflict caused by children’s requests to buy fast-food by giving reasons such as, “I saw this on a TV ad.” About 90% (87.6%), or 276 mothers, agreed that they have experienced conflicts and said “no” to those requests from their children. About eight out of ten mothers agreed that TV snack and fast-food advertising makes their children ask to buy fast-food they do not need (78.2%). Also, approximately 60% of mothers believed that TV snack and fast-food advertising causes pestering behaviors from their children.

To the children who ask for a particular food product by saying they saw it in a TV advertisement, mothers said that TV snack and fast-food advertising is generally deceptive (45.4%) and even unethical (44.6%). About 45% of the participants agreed that they have said

those statements to their children before. About four out of ten mothers (42.3%) also agreed that their children mainly care about toys and other animation characters utilized in snack and fast-food advertising campaigns instead of the food products themselves. Finally, many mothers believed that stricter regulations should be enforced in terms of TV snack and fast-food advertising to protect their own children (39.2%).

There were two statements in which more mothers disagreed rather than agreed. To the statement *“I am very worried about the negative effect of TV snack and fast-food advertising on my child,”* slightly more mothers disagreed than agreed (36.8% and 33.3%). Also, about 44% of mothers (137) disagreed with the statement asking if their children trust more what the TV snack and fast-food advertising says than the mothers’ recommendations about food choices (Agreement: 28%).

Chi-Square Goodness-of-Fit Tests showed that seven out of eight statements which got a higher percentage of agreement than disagreement by the mothers perceived significantly higher differences ( $p < .05$ ). Since eight out of ten statements had a higher agreement among the mothers than disagreement and seven statements among the eight got significantly higher percentages, hypothesis 2 (*“Mothers think that exposure to TV snack and fast-food advertising causes conflicts between mothers and their children regarding children’s food choices”*) was also generally supported.

**Table 5**  
**Mothers’ Perceptions of TV Snack and Fast-food Ads’**  
**Influence on the Conflict with Children Regarding their Food Choices**

Rank by % of agreement	Statements	Agree	Neither Agree or disagree	Disagree	Base (n)
1	<i>I often explain my reasons for saying “no” to</i>	87.6 %	7 %	5.4 %	(315)

	<i>my child's request to buy a snack or fast-food he/she saw on TV ads.</i>	(276)	(22)	(17)	
2	<i>TV snack and fast-food ads encourage my child to want the products he/she doesn't need.</i>	78.2 % (247)	10.1 % (32)	11.7 % (37)	(316)
3	<i>TV snack and fast-food advertising is an important cause of my child pestering me for advertised products.</i>	57 % (181)	16.4 % (52)	26.5 % (84)	(317)
4	<i>I have told my child that TV snack and fast-food ads are generally deceptive.</i>	45.4 % (144)	28 % (89)	26.5 % (84)	(317)
5	<i>I have told my child that TV snack and fast-food advertising is unethical.</i>	44.6 % (141)	24 % (76)	31.3 % (99)	(316)
6	<i>My child mainly cares about the toys in TV snack and fast-food ads rather than the food itself.</i>	42.3 % (134)	17.4 % (55)	40.4 % (128)	(317)
7	<i>Stricter regulation by the government is needed, regarding TV snack and fast-food ads, to protect my child.</i>	39.2 % (124)	32.3 % (102)	28.5 % (90)	(316)
8	<i>The use of toys in TV snack and fast-food ads should be more regulated to protect my child.</i>	35.6 % (112)	38.7 % (122)	25.7 % (81)	(315)
9	<i>I am very worried about the negative effect of TV snack and fast-food advertising on my child.</i>	33.3 % (105)	29.8 % (94)	36.8 % (116)	(315)
10	<i>Sometimes, my child trusts what TV snack and fast-food advertising says more than my recommendations about his/her food choices.</i>	28.3 % (89)	28.3 % (89)	43.5 % (137)	(315)

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\* Not all bases equal to N (318), due to non-responses.

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### **H3: Environmental factors in the ecology model (Brofenbrenner 1979, 2001) will have significant relationships with the level of the conflicts between mothers and children regarding children's food choices.**

To test hypothesis 3 (*“Environmental factors in the ecology model (Brofenbrenner 1979, 2001) will have significant relationships with the level of the conflicts between mothers and children regarding children's food choices”*), two statistical methods were employed: factor analysis and multiple regression analysis.

First, a factor analysis was used in an effort to try to identify a possible factor structure among diverse items in the ecology model (Figure 1, P. 29). All possible items from the ecology

model were translated into 27 specific statements for the participants. Mothers were asked their opinions of each separate statement using a 5-point agree-disagree scale (1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neither Agree or Disagree, 4= Agree, 5= Strongly Agree).

Since it can be assumed that there are some correlations among the items from the ecology model, a Promax Rotation Factor analysis (orthogonal) was conducted. The factor analysis produced a total of nine individual factors with an Eigenvalue greater than one, as seen in Table 6.

After the first factor analysis, two items were dropped from further analysis because they did not load in any of the nine factors produced in the first factor analysis. Using the rest of the 25 items, another Promax rotation factor analysis was performed. This analysis produced the nine factors which explained that about 70% of variance (69.3%).

Each statement had more than .6 loading in one of the nine factors. Each factor was labeled based upon the characteristics of the specific items: (1) commitment to my child, (2) child's school life, (3) satisfaction in the quality of life, (4) the meaning of TV in my family, (5) mothers' personality, (6) interest in the nation's issues, (7) interaction among family members, (8) helping my child with schoolwork, and (9) communication with my child.

Table 6										
Factor Analysis of the Items in The Ecology Model										
<i>Name of factors</i>	<i>Statements</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
<i>Commitment to my child</i>	* Talking to my child a lot when I am with him/her	.971								
	* Participating in most events at my child's school	.967								
	* Worrying about my family's security in this society	.956								
	* Talking with my child about report cards	.754								

[illegible]

(Brofenbrenner 1979, 2001) will have significant relationships with the level of the conflicts between mothers and children regarding children's food choices") involved examining the applicability of the ecology model into the issue of conflict between mothers and children

regarding children's food choices. In other words, the possible relationships between the frequency of the conflict and diverse items in the ecology model were checked through multiple regression analysis.

The frequency of the conflict regarding food choices between the mothers and their children reported by the participants became the single dependent variable, and the nine factors in the Ecological Theory of Child Development (Bronfenbrenner 1979, 2001) were used as multiple independent variables for the regression analysis. More specifically, the factor scores of the nine factors were used as the independent variables.

In the results, as seen in Table 7, there was one factor which had a significant relationship with the frequency of the conflict regarding food choices between mothers and children. Factor 7, which was labeled "Interactions among family members", showed a significant p-value from the multiple regression analysis.

Judging by the results, hypothesis 3 was partly supported. The mothers who perceived that there are many interactions among their family members answered that they have had less conflicts regarding food choices with their children.

Table 7  
Regression on the Factors from The Ecology Model (Conflict)

<i>Dependent Variable</i>	<i>Predictors</i>	<i>B</i>
<i>Conflict between mothers and children regarding children's food choices</i>	<b>Factor 1</b>	.040
	<i>Commitment to my child</i>	
	<b>Factor 2</b>	-.053
	<i>Child's school life</i>	
	<b>Factor 3</b>	-.050
	<i>Satisfaction in the quality of life</i>	
	<b>Factor 4</b>	.044
	<i>The meaning of television in my family</i>	
	<b>Factor 5</b>	-.116
	<i>Mothers' personality</i>	
	<b>Factor 6</b>	-.047
	<i>Interest in nation's issue</i>	
	<b>Factor 7</b>	-.155**
	<i>Interaction among family members</i>	



<b>Factor 8</b>	-0.097
<i>My child's time at home</i>	
<b>Factor 9</b>	-0.100
<i>Intimacy with my child</i>	
R <sup>2</sup> = .054	
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> = .012	
df=9, MS= 1.312, F=1.277, p=.251	
<b>** p &lt; .05</b>	

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### Correlations among the Nine Factors

As indicated above, the Promax Factor analyses (orthogonal) were conducted to investigate the possible factor structure among the environmental items in the Ecological Theory of Child Development (Brofenbrenner 1979, 2001). The reason for using the Promax Factor analysis was that the researcher assumed that there are some correlations among the items. To check if the initial assumption was correct, the correlations among the nine factors were examined.

Regarding the positive correlations, the highest correlation was found between Factor 2 (Child's school life) and Factor 7 (Interaction among family members) (.314). In addition to the highest correlation, the significant correlations were also found in the pair of Factor 9 (Intimacy with my child)/Factor 7 (Interaction among family members) (.279), Factor 3 (Satisfaction in the quality of life)/Factor 2 (Child's school life) (.222), and Factor 9 (Intimacy with my child)/Factor 2 (Child's school life) (.205).

In negative correlations, the highest score was found in the pair of Factor 5 (Mothers' personality) and Factor 7 (Interaction among family members) (-.314). Also, there were three more pairs which had significant correlations (Factor 2 (Child's school life)/Factor 5 (Mothers' personality) (-.204), Factor 5/Factor 9 (-.188), and Factor 1/Factor 2 (-.116)).

Based upon the results in positive and negative correlations among the nine factors, it can be said that the initial assumption by which the Promax Factor analysis (orthogonal) was conducted among the items in the ecology model was reasonable.

**H4: Environmental factors in the Ecology model (Brofenbrenner 1979, 2001) will have significant relationships with the level of advertising mediation conducted by mothers to reduce or prevent the possible negative influences of TV snack and fast-food advertising.**

Using the nine factors from the previous factor analysis, another multiple regression analysis was conducted to test hypothesis 4 (*“Environmental factors in the Ecology model (Brofenbrenner 1979, 2001) will have significant relationships with the level of advertising mediation conducted by mothers to reduce or prevent the possible negative influences of TV snack and fast-food advertising”*).

The factor scores from the nine factors were used as the independent variables and the levels of advertising mediation of the mothers which were determined using the scale of Advertising Mediation and Consumer Communication (Buijzen and Valkenburg 2005) were used as dependent variables. The existence of possible relationships between diverse items in the ecology model and the level of advertising mediation was checked by multiple regression analysis.

Table 8		
Regression on the Factors from The Ecology Model (Advertising Mediation)		
<i>Dependent Variable</i>	<i>Predictors</i>	<i>B</i>
<i>Mediation that the mothers use to reduce the conflict with their children regarding</i>	<b>Factor 1</b> <i>Commitment to my child</i>	.097
	<b>Factor 2</b> <i>Child's school life</i>	-.170**

<i>children's food choices</i>	<b>Factor 3</b>	
	<i>Satisfaction in the quality of life</i>	.003
	<b>Factor 4</b>	
	<i>The meaning of television in my family</i>	.152**
	<b>Factor 5</b>	
	<i>Mothers' personality</i>	-.046
	<b>Factor 6</b>	
	<i>Interest in nation's issue</i>	-.051
	<b>Factor 7</b>	
	<i>Interaction among family members</i>	.048
	<b>Factor 8</b>	
	<i>My child's time at home</i>	.015
	<b>Factor 9</b>	
	<i>Intimacy with my child</i>	.064
	R <sup>2</sup> = .071	
	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> = .044	
	df=9, MS= 88.791, F=2.620, p=.006**	
	** $p < .01$	

The results showed that the two factors from the ecology model had significant relationships with the mothers' advertising mediation level (Table 8). The first one was factor 2, labeled "Child's school life" ("*My child is safe in his/her school,*" "*My child enjoys hanging out with his/her school friends,*" "*My child loves to go to his/her school,*" "*Knowing well the teachers in my child's school*") and the other factor was factor 4, which was labeled "The meaning of television in my family" ("*To me, watching television is significant in my life,*" "*My child is enjoying watching television with me*").

According to the results, the mothers who considered their child's school life to be positive generally had a lower level of advertising mediation with their children. Also, the fact that the mothers with positive perceptions about watching TV had a higher level of advertising mediation with their children was found. Since there were two factors from the ecology model that were significantly related to the mothers' level of advertising mediation, hypothesis 4 was partly supported.

**RQ1: What other factors, not included in the ecology model (Bronfenbrenner 1979, 2001), cause or influence mother-child conflicts regarding food choices?**

In addition to the items in the ecology model, other possible factors which might influence conflicts between mothers and children regarding food choices were examined. A series of one-way ANOVAs were performed using several characteristics of the mothers and their children as the independent variables: (a) mothers' demographic characteristics (age, ethnicity, marital status, education level, and employment status), (b) children's characteristics (age, gender, and presence of sibling), and (c) family's characteristics (household income and strength of religious beliefs).

It turned out that, as seen in Table 9, there was only one characteristic which made the frequency of the conflict regarding food choices between mothers and children significantly change: sex of the children. Mothers of boys had significantly more conflicts regarding food choices than mothers of girls ( $p < .05$ ).

**Table 9**  
**The Relationships between the Participants' Characteristics and The Conflict (ANOVA)**

		%	Mean/ Conflict	f	df	p- value	Base (N)
<i>Mothers' age</i>	24-30	11.1	1.28	2.52	3	n.s	(315)
	31-40	47.6	1.64				
	41 or more	41.3	1.61				
<i>Race</i>	Caucasian/White	71.6	1.62	1.706	3	n.s	(317)
	African American/Black	17.9	1.42				
	Others (Asian, Latino, Native American, Bi/Multi-racial)	10.4	1.52				
<i>Marital status</i>	Currently married	74.4	1.60	.423	2	n.s	(317)
	Not currently married	25.6	1.51				
<i>Education</i>	Completed high school or less	16.4	1.47	.776	3	n.s	(316)
	College graduate or less	54.1	1.61				
	Attended graduate school or more	29.4	1.59				
<i>Employment</i>	Fully employed	49.6	1.53	.788	2	n.s	(318)

	Partly employed/Self-employed	27.3	1.60				
	Not employed	22.9	1.65				
<i>Child's age</i>	7-8	29.5	1.47	.959	6	n.s	(315)
	9-10	36.5	1.54				
	11-12	33.9	1.50				
<i>Child's sex</i>	Boy	59.7	1.64	4.031	2	.05**	(313)
	Girl	40.2	1.47				
<i>Sibling</i>	Yes	83.2	1.58	.694	2	n.s	(316)
	No	16.7	1.57				
<i>Income</i>	40,000 or less	27.5	1.52	.414	3	n.s	(305)
	40,001-80,000	38	1.57				
	80,001 or higher	34.4	1.61				
<i>Religious belief</i>	Weak	138	1.56	.797	2	n.s	(311)
	Strong	173	1.58				

\* Not all bases equal to N (318), due to non-responses.

**RQ2: What other factors, not included in the ecology model (Brofenbrenner 1979, 2001), influence advertising mediation for reducing mother-child conflicts regarding food choices or for reducing negative advertising effects?**

One way ANOVAs were conducted again to check if there were some other factors influencing the level of advertising mediation mothers use to reduce the conflict regarding food choices with their own children. Diverse demographic factors which were used in the previous ANOVAs for answering research question 1 were applied again as independent variables. As seen in the table below (Table 10), the ethnicity of mothers had a significant relationship with the level of advertising mediation conducted by mothers for their children. The results showed that the Caucasian/White mothers had a significantly higher level of advertising mediation with their own children than Non-Caucasian mothers (African American/Black, Asian, Latino, Bi-racial and multi-racial mothers). A post-hoc test using the three groups (Caucasian/White, African American/Black, Others) also indicated that there is a significant difference in the level of advertising mediation between Caucasian/White mothers and African American mothers.

**Table 10**  
**The Relationships between The Participants' Characteristics**  
**and The Frequency of Mediation**  
**(ANOVA)**

		%	Mean/ Mediation	f	df	p- value	Base (N)
<i>Mothers' age</i>	24-30	11.1	2.31	.332	3	n.s	(315)
	31-40	47.6	3.03				
	41 or more	41.3	2.37				
<i>Race</i>	Caucasian/White	71.6	4.92	2.672	3	<b>.05**</b>	(317)
	African American/Black	17.9	2.08				
	Others (Asian, Latino, Native American, Bi/Multi-racial)	10.4	2.85				
<i>Marital status</i>	Currently married	74.4	2.66	.012	2	n.s	(317)
	Not currently married	25.6	2.70				
<i>Education</i>	Completed high school or less	16.4	2.89	.750	3	n.s	(316)
	College graduate or less	54.1	2.24				
	Attended graduate school or more	29.4	3.34				
<i>Employment</i>	Fully employed	49.6	3.11	1.019	2	n.s	(318)
	Partly employed/Self-employed	27.3	1.96				
	Not employed	22.9	2.55				
<i>Child's age</i>	7-8	29.5	3.02	.197	6	n.s	(315)
	9-10	36.5	2.56				
	11-12	33.9	2.50				
<i>Child's gender</i>	Boy	59.7	2.24	1.277	2	n.s	(313)
	Girl	40.2	3.23				
<i>Sibling</i>	Yes	83.2	2.29	1.631	2	n.s	(316)
	No	16.7	2.75				
<i>Income</i>	40,000 or less	27.5	2.63	.685	3	n.s	(305)
	40,001-80,000	38	2.19				
	80,001 or higher	34.4	3.27				
<i>Religious belief</i>	Weak	138	2.12	1.084	2	n.s	(311)
	Strong	173	3.13				

\* Not all bases equal to N (318), due to non-responses.

**RQ3: How do mothers and children behave when they experience the conflicts regarding food choices caused by children's exposure to TV snack and fast-food advertising?**

The Model of Children's Requests and Parental Responses by Isler, Popper, and Ward (1987) was used to get comprehensive knowledge about the interactions and reactions by mothers and children when they are in conflict situations regarding food choices. Divided into six sub-categories, a total of 33 statements were given to the mothers asking the level of frequency of the situation described in each statement. For example, the first seven statements asked the specific types of children's requests to buy a fast-food product. Each statement began with the same phrase: *"My child's style of requesting a specific snack or fast-food product is—."* The statements ended with phrases such as: *"Just asking, not nagging,"* and *"Saying that he/she has seen it on TV advertising."* Mothers were asked to answer on a five-point scale: where *Never=1, Rarely=2, Once in a while= 3, Often=4, and Very often=5.*

Cronbach's alpha tests were conducted for the six sub-categories to examine the internal consistency of the items in each category. All six sub-categories got more than .7 Cronbach alpha.

Table 11 Interactions/Reactions between Mothers and Children When they Experience Conflicts Regarding Food Choices								
Category	Question	Never (%)	Rarely (%)	Once in a while (%)	Often (%)	Very often (%)	Mean	$\alpha$
<i><b>My child's style of requesting a specific snack or fast-food product is—</b></i>	Just asking, not nagging.	2.20	7.20	34.0	43.1	12.9	<b>4.17</b>	.828
	Pleading over and over.	14.8	35.5	31.1	15.1	2.50	<b>3.45</b>	
	Saying that he/she has seen it on TV.	17.6	32.1	33.6	11.6	4.40	<b>3.13</b>	
	Saying that a sibling/friend has or likes it.	10.7	19.5	38.7	25.8	5.0	<b>3.25</b>	
	Bargaining (offers to do chores, pay for part of the product).	30.5	29.2	23.6	12.9	2.50	<b>3.48</b>	
	Listing different ways that the item can be used.	38.1	31.8	20.8	7.20	1.30	<b>2.92</b>	
	Just putting it in the shopping basket at the store.	39.3	31.1	21.4	6.30	1.30	<b>2.59</b>	

<b><i>My style of response to the request for buying a specific snack or fast-food product is—</i></b>	Saying “yes” right away.	24.2	45.9	24.8	4.10	.60	<b>2.41</b>	.802
	Buying it, but discussing it with my child before saying yes.	14.2	33.0	36.8	14.2	.60	<b>3.74</b>	
	Saying yes but not to the brand the child wanted.	17.6	36.5	37.7	6.3	.60	<b>3.56</b>	
		5.70	23.6	33.3	32.4	4.40	<b>3.66</b>	
	Saying no and that is that.							
	Saying no and explaining why.	4.10	6.90	24.5	53.1	8.80	<b>4.97</b>	
	Stalling or substituting.	25.8	30.5	31.8	10.4	.60	<b>3.20</b>	
	Saying no, but agreeing to buy something else instead.	11.0	20.8	40.9	23.9	2.80	<b>3.47</b>	
	Saying maybe sometimes but not now.	8.50	17.6	42.1	27.4	3.80	<b>3.60</b>	
<b><i>My perception of the main reasons for my child’s request of snack or fast-food product is—</i></b>	He/she saw the product in the store.	4.40	14.8	33.6	38.7	7.50	<b>4.20</b>	.696
	He/she saw an ad on TV.	5.30	22.0	37.4	26.4	8.50	<b>3.40</b>	
	He/she has a sibling/friend who has it.	6.60	15.1	29.6	36.5	11.0	<b>4.50</b>	
	He/she saw another ad (not on TV).	12.9	38.1	36.2	10.7	1.30	<b>3.40</b>	
<b><i>Category</i></b>	<b><i>Question</i></b>	<b>Never (%)</b>	<b>Rarely (%)</b>	<b>Once in a while (%)</b>	<b>Often (%)</b>	<b>Very often (%)</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b><i>α</i></b>
<b><i>My child’s general reaction to my refusal to buy a certain snack or fast-food product is—</i></b>	He/she seems to take it okay.	2.20	8.20	25.5	49.7	13.5	<b>4.54</b>	.841
	He/she is disappointed, but he/she doesn’t say anything further.	5.30	14.8	39.9	33.3	6.0	<b>3.80</b>	
	He/she argues a little and then lets it drop.	10.1	23.6	43.1	19.8	1.90	<b>4.30</b>	
	He/she argues a lot and continues nagging.	33.3	38.1	17.3	8.80	1.60	<b>2.97</b>	
	He/she gets really angry.	60.1	23.9	9.70	2.80	1.30	<b>3.72</b>	
<b><i>My reaction to my child’s negative response when I refuse to buy a certain snack or fast-food product is—</i></b>	To ignore his/her response.	15.4	21.7	31.8	24.5	6.0	<b>3.44</b>	.777
	To repeat what I said before.	4.70	8.50	28.9	51.6	5.70	<b>4.05</b>	
	To get angry with my child.	28.0	41.5	25.5	3.50	.60	<b>2.97</b>	
	To compromise.	18.9	32.4	33.6	13.2	1.30	<b>3.05</b>	
	To decide to buy what my child has asked for.	35.5	39.3	20.4	3.10	.60	<b>2.84</b>	
<b><i>Disagreement with my child about snack or</i></b>	In the kitchen.	17.9	33.6	26.7	18.6	2.20	<b>3.44</b>	.972



<i>fast-food choices take place—</i>							
In front of the television.	36.8	33.0	21.7	6.0	1.30	<b>3.22</b>	
On the way to the store.	24.8	34.6	26.7	10.1	2.50	<b>3.51</b>	
At the store.	6.0	12.6	30.8	39.3	10.4	<b>4.26</b>	
* Not all bases equal to N (318), due to non-responses.							

In the category of the child's particular styles of requesting a specific snack or fast-food product, "*just asking, not nagging*" was used most often by children (mean: 4.17). The next popular type was "*bargaining*", such as promising to do chores for their mothers (mean: 3.48). The mean of the children's style, "*mentioning they have seen the product in a TV advertisement*" was more than three as well (mean: 3.25). The least popular style of children's request for a snack or fast-food product was "*putting the product in the shopping cart without asking at the store*" (mean: 2.59).

To the questions asking the mothers' styles of response to the request by their children to buy a specific snack or fast-food product, many mothers chose the answer "*buying the product but discussing with child before saying yes*" (mean: 3.74). With a similar mean score, the style of "*saying maybe sometime not now*" was also used very frequently by mothers (mean: 3.60). Only a few mothers "*say yes right away*" (mean: 2.41).

Regarding the mothers' perceptions of the main reasons for their children's requests to buy a snack or fast-food product, "*the influences from a sibling or a friend who has the same product*" was considered to be the most popular reason (mean: 4.5). The influences from TV advertising were comparatively lower than the other factors according to the mothers' perceptions (mean: 3.4), except advertising in other media (mean: 3.4). When mothers refuse their children's requests to buy a specific food product, the most popular reaction from the children was "*seems to take it okay*" according to mothers' perceptions (mean: 4.5). On the other hand, there were not many cases of "*arguing a lot and continues nagging*" (mean: 2.97).

As the place where the conflict regarding food choices between mothers and children happens, the store was ranked to be the first. In the car on the way to the store was the next popular place (mean: 3.51). However, in front of the TV had comparatively lower agreement by the mothers (mean: 3.22).

**RQ4: What types of advertising mediation do mothers use?  
What are the results of using different types of advertising mediation?**

As the last research question, the diverse types of advertising mediation for mothers to use to reduce or prevent the conflicts with their children regarding food choices were asked. To examine the types and the frequency of the advertising mediation mothers might use, Buijzen and Valkenburg (2005)'s scale was applied. A total of 24 questions which have the same beginning phrase, "*How often do you tell your child—*", were categorized into four sub-topics. Each question was answered by mothers in one of the five (*1= Never, 2= Rarely, 3= Once in a while, 4= Often, 5= Very often*).

The first five questions were about mothers' specific instructions for their children to understand the real intent of TV advertising, such as "*How often do you tell your child that advertising depicts products as better than they really are?*", and "*How often do you tell your child that advertising does not always tell the truth?*" According to the results, mothers frequently tell their children that advertised products are not of as good a quality as what is advertised (mean: 4.6). Also, saying that advertising does not always tell the truth was a very popular comment made by mothers (mean: 4.6).

The questions in the second sub-category were dealing with the specific rules mothers have about their children's exposure to TV advertising, such as "*How often do you tell your*

*child that to switch to a channel that broadcasts fewer commercials?”*, and *“How often do you tell your child that to turn off the TV when he/she is watching television commercials?”*

The most popular style of the mothers’ specific rules was *“encouraging the children to watch networks broadcasting relatively fewer commercials”* (mean: 4.3). Mothers also tell their children very often to switch to a channel with fewer commercials when their children are watching TV (mean: 4.2).

Table 12 Types of Mediation Mothers Use To Reduce the Conflict with Children Regarding Food Choices								
Category	Question	Never (%)	Rarely (%)	Once in a while (%)	Often (%)	Very often (%)	Mean	$\alpha$
<i>How often do you tell your child—</i>	That advertising depicts products as better than they really are?	7.20	11.4	36.8	28.4	10.2	3.43	.743
	That advertising does not always tell the truth?	4.50	10.2	33.8	34.7	10.8	3.54	
	That the purpose of advertising is to sell products?	2.40	4.80	21.6	46.1	20.1	2.92	
	That not all advertised products are of good quality?	3.60	5.10	28.7	42.5	13.8	4.02	
	That some advertised products are not good for children?	1.80	3.90	31.7	41.3	16.2	2.84	
<i>How often do you tell your child—</i>	To turn off the TV when he/she is watching TV commercials?	26.6	31.7	23.1	11.1	1.80	2.43	.865
	That he/she should not watch commercial networks because they broadcast too many commercials?	35.9	30.8	15.6	6.60	4.80	2.94	
	To switch to a channel that broadcasts fewer commercials?	36.8	29.9	13.8	9.0	3.60	3.56	
	That he/she should not watch television advertising at all?	48.5	26.6	12.6	4.50	2.10	2.19	
	To watch specific networks that broadcast relatively few commercials?	38.0	22.5	14.1	11.4	7.20	3.69	
<i>How often do you tell your child—</i>	That every member of your family should have some say in family purchase decisions?	18.0	25.1	32.6	16.5	2.70	2.05	.871
	To give his/her opinion when discussing family purchases?	6.30	20.1	39.2	24.00	4.50	3.24	
	To give his/her opinion about products and brands?	9.0	23.1	39.2	20.7	2.70	2.51	
	That you respect his/her expertise on certain products and brands?	12.9	23.1	33.5	22.8	2.10	2.79	

That you consider his/her preferences when making a purchase?	4.20	12.6	36.2	35.9	5.70	2.87
To consider the advantages/disadvantages of products and brands?	7.50	15.3	30.8	34.4	6.60	2.80
That he/she can co-decide when you make purchases for him/her?	6.0	19.8	35.0	29.3	4.80	2.39

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Continued

Category	Question	Never (%)	Rarely (%)	Once in a while (%)	Often (%)	Very often (%)	Mean	$\alpha$
<b><i>How often do you tell your child—</i></b>	That you know which products are best for him/her?	2.10	9.90	34.4	41.0	7.20	2.99	.890
	Not to argue with you when you say no to his/her product requests?	4.20	15.3	28.7	37.1	9.30	2.89	
	That you expect him/her to accept your decisions about products purchases?	3.90	14.1	27.2	27.2	41.0	2.94	
	Which products are or are not purchased for the family?	7.20	16.8	32.3	32.0	6.0	3.06	
	Which products he/she should or should not buy?	6.60	13.5	34.7	35.6	4.50	2.51	
	That you have strict/clear rules when it comes to product purchases?	7.20	20.4	27.8	31.4	8.10	2.43	
	That he/she is not allowed to ask for products?	36.8	31.7	19.5	6.0	.60	1.95	

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\* Not all bases equal to N (318), due to non-responses.

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The next two sections were mainly related to the types of consumer communications within the participants' families. There were questions like "*How often do you tell your child that to consider the advantages or disadvantages of products and brands?*" ,or "*How often do you tell your child that to give his/her opinion when discussing family purchases?*" in the third category. Many mothers answered that they ask their children's opinion on buying products for the family (mean: 4.2). Also, the item of "*considering my child's preference when making family purchase*" was highly agreeable (mean: 3.9). Mothers were trying to listen to the children's opinions about family purchases according to the results.

The last category was dealing with the specific behaviors of mothers when they were coaching their children about buying products, such as “*How often do you tell your child which products he/she should or should not buy?*” According to the results, mothers frequently tell their children that they as mothers have more knowledge regarding which product will be the best for him or her than any other person (mean: 4.03). Also, mothers tell their children often that they expect them to accept their mothers’ decisions about purchasing a specific product (mean: 4).

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **DISCUSSION**

#### **Goals of This Study**

There were two major goals in the present study. First, this study was purposed to examine mother's perceptions about the possible impact of TV snack and fast-food advertising on both children's food choices and parent-child conflicts regarding food choices. Second, this study also tried to gain insight on the possible relationships between the food choice conflict and diverse environmental factors, including TV snack and fast-food advertising, surrounding families.

As a major theoretical frame, the Ecological Theory of Child Development (Bronfenbrenner 1979, 2001) was employed. The theory provided the basic framework for the environmental factors surrounding families which might influence the relationships (conflict and mediation) between mothers and children. As one of the few trials to apply the Ecological Theory of Child Development in advertising context, this study tested if this theoretical frame can be applicable to the food choice conflicts between mothers and children that originate from children's watching TV snack and fast-food advertising. Also, the possible relationships between the level of mothers' advertising mediation and diverse environmental factors in the Ecological Theory of Child Development were tested.

In addition, the actual behaviors of mothers and children when they are in conflict situations regarding food choices were examined using the Model of Children's Purchase Requests (Isler, Popper, and Ward 1987). The types and styles of advertising mediation mothers

use for their children were examined using Buijzen and Valkenburg's scale of Advertising Mediation and Consumer Communication (2005). As the methods for data gathering, the in-depth interviews with 12 mothers and a self-administered survey among 318 mothers with children ages 7-12 were conducted.

### **Findings from Qualitative Research**

The findings from the 12 in-depth interviews provided two significant roles in this study. First, the findings produced diverse and unique implications on their own for this study. The perspectives of the mothers that were elicited through open-ended questions provided the researcher with an important reference for discussing issues related to the possible negative effects of TV snack and fast-food advertising on children, as well as the impact on relationships between children and mothers within the family unit. Second, the findings not only provided the basic concepts for the survey questionnaire, but also gave critical ideas for the final survey instrument.

Four major common themes were identified from the interviews. First, mothers perceived that there was a serious amount of TV snack and fast-food advertising targeting children especially during the time children watch TV most. Most mothers, worried about the possible negative impact on their children, felt there should be stricter regulations limiting the time and place the TV commercials are aired. Second, in regards to the content of TV commercials, almost all mothers were concerned about the overuse of toys and animated characters in TV snack and fast-food advertising targeting children. Mothers indicated that their children frequently asked to go to a fast-food restaurant not because of the food itself, but because of the toys which come with the food product. To children, who are not mature enough to make a purchase decision based on the quality of a food product they want, the toys were a huge draw.

Third, mothers felt that children's exposure to TV snack and fast-food advertising was an important reason for the conflict with their children regarding food choices. Even though many mothers have told their children that not all advertising is truthful, their children sometimes put more trust in what the advertising is saying than what their mothers say. Fourth, many mothers in the interviews wanted to see more balance between "non-healthy foods" and "healthy foods" in terms of the specific products advertised in TV advertising. The mothers felt that most foods advertised during the time when children watch TV most often were unhealthy.

### **Results from the Quantitative Research**

The results of the survey among 318 mothers provided empirical evidence not only for supporting the findings from the in-depth interviews, but also for investigating possible relationships between diverse environmental factors surrounding children and the possible negative influences of TV snack and fast-food advertising.

Hypothesis 1, "*Mothers think that their children's food choices are influenced by TV snack and fast-food advertising to which their children are exposed.*" was generally supported since eight out of the ten statements which were asked received a higher percentage of agreement than disagreement from mothers. The Chi-Square Goodness-of-Fit Test indicated that there were significant differences between the percentages of agreement and those of disagreement in many statements. Hypothesis 2, "*Mothers think that exposure to TV snack and fast-food advertising causes conflicts between mothers and their children regarding children's food choices*" was also generally supported. Again, eight out of ten statements related to hypothesis 2 got a higher percentage of agreement than disagreement.

Hypothesis 3, "*Environmental factors in the ecology model (Bronfenbrenner 1979, 2001) will have significant relationships with the level of the conflicts between mothers and children*



*regarding children's food choices*" was partly supported. Among the nine factors obtained from the factor analysis using all the items in the ecology model, the factor dealing with the interactions among family members had a significant relationship with the frequency of conflicts regarding food choices between mothers and children.

The next hypothesis, hypothesis 4, *"Environmental factors in the Ecology model (Brofenbrenner 1979, 2001) will have significant relationships with the level of advertising mediation conducted by mothers to reduce or prevent the possible negative influences of TV snack and fast-food advertising"* was also partly supported. The level of advertising mediation conducted by mothers for their children had significant relationships with both mothers' perceptions of their children's school life and the mothers' general attitudes toward TV. According to the results, mothers who had a positive opinion regarding watching TV provided more advertising mediation for their children. Also, the more positive that the attitude the mothers have toward watching TV, the more advertising mediations they have had with their children.

In addition to the results from testing the hypotheses above, the specific types of reactions/interactions of mothers and children when they are in a conflict situation regarding food choice and mothers' particular strategies for advertising mediations with their children were explored through the four research questions.

### **Children's Exposure to TV Snack/Fast-food Ads and Conflict**

As hypothesized in hypotheses 1 (*"Mothers think that their children's food choices are influenced by TV snack and fast-food advertising to which their children are exposed"*) and 2 (*"Mothers think that exposure to TV snack and fast-food advertising causes conflicts between mothers and their children regarding children's food choices"*), most mothers in the survey and

the interviews indicated there was a strong influence from TV snack and fast-food advertising on their children's food choices (Tables 4 and 5). One mother in the interviews even mentioned that not only are her own children influenced by advertising, but that she herself may be strongly influenced by advertising (Julie, 12-year-old son).

The mothers provided several examples of situations when they noticed the strong influence of the TV advertising on their children. First, their children have mentioned that they saw a fast-food product on a TV advertisement when they request that their mothers buy the food product. As many mothers pointed out, children sometimes put more trust in what advertising says rather than what their mothers say (28.3% of agreement) about a food product. Donna, who has a 9-year-old son, believed that her son thinks her suggestions are always “boring” and “not funny at all” compared to the messages from TV fast-food commercials.

Therefore, when mothers decline their children's requests to buy a particular food product, the children may easily confront their mothers because they remembered the messages from the TV advertising and sometimes trusted those more than what their mothers said about the product. Whenever mothers encountered this conflict situation, they recognized the powerful influence of TV advertising over their own abilities to persuade their children.

The second example of a situation when the mothers notice the strong influence of TV advertising is when their children either “mimicked” the jingles they saw on TV advertising or memorized slogans or lines from commercials (e.g., Donna, 9-year-old son). Many TV advertisements during the time children watch TV most use ear-catching jingles and endorsements by animated characters (Harrison and Marske 2005). Children can be easily mesmerized by those commercials and they often imitate what the animated characters endorse, such as jingles or lines (Neeley and Schumann 2004).

Third, and maybe most importantly, mothers said that their children call them over to the TV set when some advertisements come on (Christine, 8-year-old son). In these instances, the children wanted their mothers to watch the TV commercials for products they would really like to buy. The children use tactics to try to get their mothers to buy the products sooner or later by saying things like, “See, this is what I told you before!” (Donna, 9-year-old son).

In this case, the TV advertising is playing a double role: persuading children to request parents to buy a certain product and also encouraging children to use advertising as a reference for persuading their parents to buy a particular product. As addressed in the results section, most mothers in this study agreed that TV snack and fast-food advertising has been very influential to their children in many ways including their everyday food choices.

However, despite this general agreement about the influences of TV snack and fast-food advertising on their children, “conflict” regarding food choices between themselves and their children was less likely attributed to TV advertising according to the perception of the mothers (Table 5). First, mothers pointed out that there could be some other factors in addition to TV advertising that may cause conflicts regarding food choices, such as influences of siblings or friends. Actually, the presence of several other factors in the conflict has been indicated in previous studies (Livingstone 2005; Young 2003).

When mothers confront their children regarding food choices, the children frequently bring up the fact that he or she saw one of his or her siblings or friends had the same product (mean of agreement = 4.5). Therefore, “why can’t I?” is a popular reaction by children in conflict situations between mothers and children. Second, a place where conflict happens frequently was “at the store”, more specifically in the store aisles (mean of agreement = 4.26). In grocery stores, there is not only an array of diverse food products which are attractively packaged with colorful

wrappers, but also many Point-of-Purchase displays such as a big toy *Spiderman* or large displays aimed at attracting the attention of young consumers. Mothers in this study indicated that in-store advertisements are not only a huge draw for children but also can lead to conflicts between them in the store. Mothers reported that they have had many conflicts and arguments when they were pushing a shopping cart. In addition, it can be argued that exposure to TV snack and fast-food advertising makes the advertisements in the stores more powerful because some children grab a food product while saying, “I saw this! I saw this in the ad!” Several mothers in this study agreed that they have experienced this situation (mean of agreement = 3.4).

In summary, even though mothers feel that watching TV snack and fast-food advertising is an important factor influencing children’s food choices, the findings of this study suggest researchers may also need to look at additional factors in order to fully discuss the conflict issue. There may be many other factors not yet fully discussed that are causing conflicts regarding food choices, such as the personalities of fathers or other people who are influential in the children’s lives.

### **Conflict, Mediation, and the Characteristics of Family**

There was one factor in the ecology model (Factor 7) which had a significant relationship with the frequency of the conflict between mothers and children regarding food choices. The factor “*Interactions among family members*” was negatively related to the frequency of the conflict (Table 7). Therefore, the more interactions a family unit has among family members, the fewer conflicts mothers have regarding food choices between mothers and children. This relationship between the amount of communication among family members and a consequence of children’s watching TV advertising, the conflict, has been reported in several previous studies

(Warren 2005, Buijzen and Valkenburg 2005). An identical finding was actually found again in the present study.

Reid (1979) found that the interactions among family members are one of the critical factors influencing the child/ TV advertising relationship by his participant observation study. From the perspective of consumer socialization, he indicated that the various social interaction characteristics the children encounter within the family unit are the key issues to be discussed in the issues of child/TV advertising relationship. For example, he demonstrated that the impact of varying parental consumer teaching orientations for children can be more important information than children's chronological age to discuss children's level of understanding about the content in TV advertising.

More specifically about the conflict originated by children's watching TV snack/food commercials, Isler, Popper and Ward (1987) indicated that there is an important relationship between the conflict and the parents' communication style with their children. In their research through a four-week-long diary method in which the mothers reported diverse information about the conflict and communication styles with their children, the results provided empirical evidence of the applicability of this relationship in terms of the issue of the conflict between mothers and children regarding food choices and the influences of TV snack and fast-food advertising. The researchers also found that the roles of the other members within a family, although not as important as the role of mothers, were also important in reducing the conflict regarding food choices between mothers and children.

Regarding the relationships between advertising mediation mothers use to help their children better understand advertising (e.g., explaining the real intent of advertising, or explaining the difference between the ideal image of the product in TV advertising and the real

product) and the factor structure in the ecology model, the two factors (Factor 2 and 4, Table 8) showed significant relationships. First, the mothers' level of advertising mediation was significantly and negatively related to the factor "*Child's school life*", which consists of these specific statements:

- 1. My child is safe in his/her school.**
- 2. My child enjoys hanging out with his/her school friends.**
- 3. My child loves to go to his/her school.**
- 4. I know the teachers in my child's school very well.**

Therefore, the high agreement with these statements suggests that mothers believe that their children have a positive experience in their school lives. The mothers have optimistic views of their children's schools and also feel that they know well the people their children associate with in school, such as their children's friends and their teachers. Interestingly enough, the mothers with this optimistic view had a low level of advertising mediation according to the results of this study.

This negative relationship between the mothers' view about their children's school life and the level of advertising mediation conducted by mothers could be interpreted this way. The mothers with a positive view about their children's school life generally could have similar optimistic feelings about the children's school in several aspects. Therefore, it could be said that the mothers believe their children's schools are doing their jobs well one of which is providing the children with the knowledge not in children's text books such as how to understand the real intent of TV advertising. Due to this comparatively strong trust in the school's educating role, the mothers may not recognize the need for additional efforts by themselves about the specific

instruction for their child, such as the possible negative influence of TV advertising their children watch.

We cannot negate the important role of the school as a place where children spend the majority of their time during the week. However, it would not be a good idea for mothers to expect that all the education their children need to get is to be conducted solely by teachers and school systems (Valentine 2004; Young 2003). A mother from the qualitative section of the current study is a teacher at an elementary school. She indicated, based on her personal experience, that school teachers rarely provide knowledge for children specifically about advertising mediation.

Shannon, the mother of a 7-year-old daughter, also thought that the teachers in school were busy trying to help students prepare for standardized tests, which is a curriculum that does not have room for education about advertising or economics. Even though she has heard that there was a “TV-free week” event at her daughter’s school encouraging the children not to turn on the TV for a particular week, she perceived that the role of school teachers regarding advertising mediation for her children was extremely minimal.

Therefore, from the findings of the present study, it can be suggested that the mothers with optimistic views about their children’s school life also need to make more of an effort to provide education for their children especially in terms of the knowledge the children rarely get from their teachers, such as advertising mediation.

Another factor which had a significant relationship with the mothers’ level of advertising mediation was factor 4 (Table 8): “The meaning of television in my family.” The factor includes the two statements:

- 1. To me, watching television is significant in my life.**
- 2. My child enjoys watching television with me.**

Therefore, mothers who were more likely to strongly agree with these items are in a family that considers watching TV as important to their lives and something they enjoy with their children. To some extent, this could be linked to the fact that mothers have comparatively positive opinions about TV in general. Based upon the results, we could argue that the more positive opinion toward watching TV that mothers have, the more frequent discussions the mothers have regarding TV advertising with their children.

Even though the mediations this study examined were only about one limited subject, advertising mediation, and also the present study did not measure the amount of watching TV by family members, it could be said that our results were not identical to previous related studies dealing with the relationship between a family's communication level and the degree of TV watching. As several researchers have indicated (e.g., Alexander 1994, Rosenblatt and Cunningham 1976), the amount of TV watching was negatively related to the level of communication among family members. The time period for watching TV generally blocks verbal communication among family members according to the studies above.

However, this study found that the situations could be different depending on the subject about which the family members might be discussing in front of the TV. In the case of communication regarding TV advertising (advertising mediation), the family who enjoys watching TV has more chances for diverse advertising mediations than other families. Even though we cannot conclude that the amount of time watching TV is positively related to the amount of advertising mediations since we did not measure the exact amount of time for TV



watching, the attitudes of mothers about TV watching in general is positively related to the amount of advertising mediation they provide for their children.

### **Gender of Children and Conflict, Advertising Mediation and Race**

This study also examined demographic characteristics of the participants themselves, of their children, and of families. Using that information, an effort to identify the potential relationships with the frequency of conflicts regarding food choices between mothers and children was made. In addition to the 25 items in the Ecological Theory of child Development (Bronfenbrenner 1979, 2001), many other demographic characteristics such as mother's age, marital status, income level, and religious belief were tested. The relationships between those characteristics and the frequency of conflict was brought to light in the in-depth interviews and supported from the findings in the survey.

Mothers in the interviews reported that they had more conflicts with their sons regarding food choices than with their daughters. As seen in the results section, the same results were found in the survey as well. The results from both the interviews and the survey indicated that boys have more conflicts with their mothers regarding food choices than girls.

In the literature discussing the conflict between parents and children gender has been identified as an important issue (Gardner, Sonuga-Barke, and Sayal 1999). As several studies have addressed, male children have more arguments and conflicts with their parents in general (e.g., Kevin and Bridget 2007). However, some studies reported that there were more serious conflicts between parents and female children if the issues are related to personal weight or beauty, suggest that gender may influence the type of conflicts that parents and children typically have (Furnham and Husain 1999; Wells 2003). Diet or maintaining body shape has been a major issue which causes harsh conflicts with female children and their parents (Renk, Liljequist,

Simpson, and Phares 2005; Allison and Schultz 2004). Therefore, it may be better, as researchers, to deal with the conflict and gender issues differently depending on the characteristics of the specific issues (Kevin and Bridget 2007).

There was only one demographic feature which had a significant relationship with the level of mothers' advertising mediation: ethnicity of mothers (Caucasian/White, African American/Black, and Others). The White group had a significantly higher level of mothers' advertising mediations compared to the other groups. This notion was initially found through the in-depth interviews as well.

Among the participants in the in-depth interviews, several Caucasian mothers told the researcher that they have tried to have enough time to talk specifically about TV snack and fast-food advertising with their children (e.g., Lydia, 11-year-old girl). Some of them even had specific educational sessions for their children about advertising-related topics such as exaggerations found in advertising and the quality of the toys in fast-food advertising (Shannon, 7-year-old girl).

Also, one White mother mentioned the purpose of these educational sessions was to raise her children to be wise consumers so that the children would not be deceived by marketers (Julie, 12 year-old-son). However, two African-American mothers (Sophie, 9 year-old-boy and Laura, 8 year-old girl) in the interviews answered that they rarely have talked about the possible negative impact of TV snack and fast-food advertising for their children.

The results of the survey also showed that there was a statistical difference in the level of advertising mediation by mothers between the groups of Caucasian/White and African American/Black. Perhaps this issue needs to be explored by taking into account several other

demographic characteristics together with race, such as the number of siblings, household income, mothers' education level, and the role of the husbands or fathers.

African American mothers who participated in this study generally were raising more children than mothers from other ethnic groups, earned less income, and had lower education levels. Also, many African American mothers were more likely to be living in a single-income household (Table 3). Therefore, even though these mothers recognize the need of advertising mediation for their children, it may not have been easy for them to conduct advertising mediation for their children due to other demands on their time (Warren 2005).

### **The Words Used in the Interviews and The Survey**

Since one of the focal issues of the present study was the conflict regarding food choices between mothers and children, the researcher initially used the word “conflict” in the protocol for the in-depth interviews. However, the researcher recognized that using the word “conflict” might not be appropriate for communications with the participants after completing the first interview.

The first participant (Julie, 12-year-old son) pointed out that she did not want to label the interactions with her child as “conflicts.” Instead, she suggested the words “disagreement” or “discussion.” The researcher examined whether the other participants had similar opinions about the word “conflict” and found that most mothers in the in-depth interviews felt uncomfortable with the use of the word “conflict”. According to dictionary.com, the definition of the word “conflict” is:

**Conflict:**

\* Verb: to come into collision or disagreement;  
be contradictory, at variance, or in opposition

\* Noun: discord of action, feeling, or effect ([www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com), accessed on June 1, 2007)

The researcher actually conducted a short experiment in which the exact definitions of the word “conflict” were used during the next few interviews instead of the word “conflict” itself. The participants did not show any negative reactions to the use of the definitions from the dictionary above. However, when the researcher asked for their opinion of using the word “conflict” to the same participants instead of the definitions from dictionary.com, they answered that it might not be a good idea to use the word “conflict”.

Similar negative responses were observed from the use of the words “nagging,” “pestering,” and “arguing a lot” when the researcher asked the mothers about the reactions/interactions with their children when the mothers are in conflict situations with their children regarding food choices. Even though the results of this study indicated that these mothers have frequent disagreements or arguments with their children regarding food choices at the store or in front of the TV set, the mothers did not want to use those words when they directly mention about their own children. They felt that the characteristics of those words could have a somewhat negative connotation about their children.

Also, the word “obesity” garnered a similar reaction by the mothers as the words above. To the question asking the opinion about their children’s body shape, no mother used the word “obese”. When the researcher used the word “obese” or “obesity”, some mothers replaced the word with other words and phrases such as “chubby”, “plump” “a little fat”, or “full-figured.”

Based upon the results and findings from this study, it is suggested that future research should use comparatively friendly and favorable words with mothers if the survey or interview protocol asks about people who are extremely important to them, such as close family members. By using different words that may have a better connotation for the mothers, it might be possible for researchers to get more opportunities to obtain valuable information from the participants.

### **Differences in Mothers' Perception about the Influence of TV Snack/Fast-food Ads: Possible Third-Person Effects**

There were four particular statements which attempted to measure the possible third-person effects in mothers' perceptions of the influences of TV snack and fast-food advertising. The first two statements asked about the possible differences in mothers' perceptions of the influences of TV snack and fast-food advertising on three different types of children: "your own children", "your friend's children", and "other people's children". It was found that many mothers believed their own children are less influenced by TV snack and fast-food advertising than other people's children in terms of food choices. Regarding the comparison between their own children and their friends' children, there was no significant difference in the answers.

The other two statements asked the mothers about the influences of TV snack and fast-food advertising on the conflict regarding food choices between mothers and children. Again, the possible differences in the mothers' perception about three types of children were examined: "your own children", "your friend's children", and "other people's children". Different from the results of the previous two statements asking about the influences of advertising, the mothers answered that they and their own children have fewer conflicts regarding food choices originating from watching TV snack and fast-food advertising than both other people's children and also their friends' children.

The four statements tried to measure possible third-person effects on mothers' perceptions of the influence of TV snack and fast-food ads. However, the researcher found that the way in which some statements were structured made it difficult to discern the third-person effect. Some of the questions had a double-barreled structure which might have confused the participants while they were responding to the statements. For example, in response to statement 2 ("Due to the effect of TV snack and fast-food advertising, more regulations on those ads are

needed to help protect my friend's children than to protect my children"), the mothers had to agree with the two concepts (1. the need for more regulations on TV snack and fast-food advertising, 2. the reason for more regulations on advertising is the negative effect of the ads on their children) at the same time to agree with the statement 2. Therefore, examining the presence of the third-person effect in the perceptions of mothers through those four questions was not possible.

However, despite the limitation, the researcher recognized that the findings from the four statements revealed that there appears to be a social distance in the opinions of the mothers regarding the influences of TV snack and fast-food advertising on children's food choices and the conflict between children and mothers.

Many mothers in this study showed a difference in their perceptions of the possible negative influence of TV advertising on their own children and their friends' children. However, the difference was smaller than the one that was found between the perception about their children and other people's children. Therefore, the strength of the effect in the perceptions of mothers regarding the possible negative impact of TV snack and fast-food advertising is as follows: other people's children > my friends' children > my own child.

As the social distance with the mothers increased, the mothers perceived that the possible negative effects of TV snack and fast-food advertising on children was more serious. Perloff (1993) interpreted this phenomena using psychological distance (1993). Depending on how much people feel intimacy toward the subjects (friends or other people), the width of the social distance can be decided.

In addition to the findings from the four statements which were specifically designed to examine the mother's different perceptions of the influence of the TV ads regarding different

types of children, the mothers' comparatively friendly perceptions about their own children were also found in responses to some of the other survey questionnaires. For example, to the questions asking the general reactions of their own children when their requests to buy a food product is declined by mothers, many participants answered that their children's reactions were very docile and obedient such as "seems to take it okay", or "stop nagging." Therefore, despite the general agreement of the frequent happening of conflict with their own children regarding food choices, the mothers expressed that their own children do not show any resistance and take their responses to their requests very easily. In other words, the mothers in this study agreed to most statements asking about the possible negative effects of TV snack and fast-food advertising on children and the mother-child relationship, but they also claimed that their own children and the relationship between themselves and their children are far less influenced by this advertising than those in other families.

People's differences in the perceived negative media effects on self and others have long been considered to be one of the significant phenomena in the mass communication field (David, Morrison, Johnson, and Ross 2002). Many researchers have called this phenomenon the third-person effect (Davison 1983; Gunther 1991; Brosius 1996; McLeod 1997; Salwen 1998). Including the discussion about the first-person effect (Gunther and Thorson 1992; Perloff 1993), which is the opposite concept to the third-person effect, the argument dealing with the typical situations where people claim they are less or more influenced by a specific media message than other people has been an important issue (Gunther and Thorson 1992).

## **Limitations and Future Recommendations**

### **Research Perspectives**

As with all research, there are limitations to this study. The first limitation of this study is that this research relied only on the perception of mothers. The data gathered from their perspective was not only just about the mothers themselves, but also all about their children and other family members from the mothers' point of view. Therefore, the knowledge from this study might be a little bit biased by the mothers' particular viewpoints toward the issues in this study. Even though the mothers' perspectives were considered the most important for this study, it is possible that there may be gaps in information that can be filled in by asking questions from the perspectives of other family members, including the children themselves. For example, questions that ask about the typical reactions of children when the mothers decline their requests to buy a particular fast-food product may elicit different responses if the children were questioned instead of the mothers. Even though most mothers' first choice was "*It seems that he/she took it okay!*", the answers by the children might be different.

Therefore, one possible future study would include the children, fathers, or other family members as participants. The possible differences of these perspectives about the issues related to the possible negative influence of TV snack and fast-food advertising could be explored. As an example, it might be possible that children feel conflict more frequently than their mothers do. Despite the mothers' preferences for the words "disagreement" or "conversation" over the word "conflict", children might want to use the word "conflict" to label the situations they have had with their mothers in front of the TV or at the grocery store.

The second limitation of this study is the similarity of some demographic characteristics among the participants. Since the participants were recruited from organizations such as PTOs



and Little League baseball teams, it is possible that mothers in the sample were more active mothers than other mothers who are not likely to participate in those gatherings. Generally, most mothers in the sample were very dedicated to their children and very aggressively participated in all kinds of events in which their children are involved. Therefore, it is possible that many of the participants have personality traits in common, such as being sociable, active, confident, and very committed to their children. Therefore, this possible homogeneity among the participants might have caused the lack of diversity in responses in some parts in this study.

While recognizing this possible limitation, one future study could extend the sample to comparatively less-active mothers who might have different perceptions about the possible negative influence of TV snack and fast-food advertising.

Third, this study assumed that mothers are major caregivers of their children in all families and that mothers could provide the most valuable information regarding the issues of the conflict regarding food choices and TV snack/fast-food advertising. Even though the assumption was supported by several studies (e.g., Campbell and Crawford 2001), the researcher found that there were some special cases. In a PTO meeting of an elementary school, there were several fathers who claimed that they have been the major caregivers at least in terms of the issues related to TV watching and advertising.

The researcher also found that there may be several other people who are taking the major responsibility for children's TV watching besides their mothers. These other people, such as an older sister or a babysitter, were the individuals who were providing the advertising mediations for the children. Also, there were several children who spend more than half of their day at school or at after-school programs with their teachers or instructors. Therefore, it is recommended that future studies include the other family members in addition to the mothers.

Considering diverse situations will make the advertising effect studies be of better quality and help the researchers to produce more valuable insight.

As the fourth recommendation for future research, a study for developing a model regarding the conflict and advertising mediation issues is recommended. One of the major purposes of this study was to determine the roles of diverse environmental factors that may influence the conflict between mothers and children regarding food choices. In addition to watching TV snack and fast-food advertising, many possible factors were tested by the hypotheses and examined by the research questions. As seen in the previous sections, it was found that several environmental factors surrounding children, such as the amount of interactions within the family, were significantly related to conflicts regarding food choices between mothers and children. One of the significant insights from this study is that multiple factors should be considered to investigate the conflict issue and the other negative influences of TV snack and fast-food advertising.

Therefore, a future study would involve developing a model of the conflict regarding food choices between mothers and children so that unidentified factors could be found. For the model-building study, additional multivariate statistical analyses should be considered such as path analysis and structural equation modeling to figure out the possible causal relationships among the variables surrounding children. As Bolton (1983) expressed in her model-building study about the impact of TV food advertising on children's diets, model development is a great way to examine the roles of multiple factors on a single phenomenon in the communication field.

Lastly, a study dealing with the possible third-person effect on the perceptions of mothers regarding the influence of TV snack and fast-food advertising could be conducted. Specific information (e.g., frequency of the conflict between mothers and children regarding food

choices) and overall opinions (e.g., seriousness of the conflict between mothers and children regarding food choices) in terms of the possible differences between their own families and other families could be examined. Through this investigation, it could be possible to better understand the perspectives of the mothers toward the positive or negative influence of TV snack and fast-food advertising both on their children and on the relationships within the family.

### **Suggestion for the Public Policy Arena**

As indicated in the introduction section, one of the goals of this study was to provide useful insights for the public policy arena by providing empirical results from the real voices of American mothers. Even though the major party by which the suggestions to be planned and leaded will be federal organizations, other parties such as schools, churches, consumer interest groups, and advertising industries are needed to take the partial responsibility for reducing or preventing the possible negative effect of advertising on our children.

There are three things the researcher wants to suggest to that end. First, more efforts should be made by related parties to produce public service announcements (PSAs) supporting an increase in family communication and children's healthy food choices. The results in the present study showed that the more interactions a family has among its members, the fewer conflicts the family has regarding food choices between mothers and children. To help families have more frequent interactions among its members, public policymakers can encourage related organizations to create diverse types of PSAs conveying messages about the issues. Many PSAs have played important roles in other public issues such as smoking (Choi, Stephenson, Cameron, and Leshner 2005) and drug use (Cappella, Fishbein, Barrett, and Zhao 2005). Since the results of the present study showed that many mothers have had advertising mediations with their children frequently in front of the TV, watching PSAs together with their children will increase

the effect of advertising mediations conducted by mothers. Advertising campaigns providing education about healthy food choices or the real intent of advertising will be a helpful tool that mothers and other family members can use to talk about those issues more easily with their children.

Second, additional attention to non-Caucasian populations needs to be considered in terms of advertising mediations for children. The results suggest that African American mothers especially provided far less advertising mediations for their children (Table 10). They rarely talked to their children about the negative influence of TV snack and fast-food advertising, such as the possible deceptions, bad impact on children's health, and the differences between real products and the ideal images from the advertising. As researchers have pointed out (Kelly 2005; Livingstone 2005), the mother is the most important person who can act as a mediator in preventing or reducing the possible negative impacts of advertising targeting children. Therefore, if mothers are not providing these mediations then the children do not have enough opportunities to get the advertising mediations which are necessary to prevent the possible negative influence of TV advertising.

Even though some studies (e.g., John 1999) have reported that many children not only recognize the difference between advertising and programming, but also remember the content of advertising without their parents' assistance, it has also been addressed that many children do not fully understand advertising content correctly (Oates et al., 2003). Khatibi et al. (2004) also found that the majority of children (five- to eight-years-old) have just "some" understanding of TV advertising. Specifically, they do not understand the verbal messages the advertising conveys. Based upon the findings from several studies, including the current study, it is doubtful that most children understand the results of heavy consumption of food products by interpreting correctly

the diverse messages in the advertising. Therefore, unless mothers themselves recognize the importance of advertising mediations for their own children, the possibility for the children to be more vulnerable to the negative effects of TV snack and fast-food advertising will increase.

Increasing the opportunities to be educated about advertising mediation by the parents will be one of the initial steps to deal with this issue. The educating sessions and the specific topics could be planned and organized by school councils in each local society. Education for parents can be led by the teachers in local schools or PTO leaders, utilizing a regular gathering time such as a PTO meeting, which is very common in most schools.

Third, the roles of teachers and schools in the negative influence of TV snack/fast-food advertising and the conflict regarding food choices between mothers and children need to be discussed as well. As long as children spend the majority of their time in school, the roles of schools cannot be free from these issues. Even though several mothers in the interviews indicated that they understood that teachers cannot play but a minor role in the issues because they are busy teaching classes and grading exams (e.g., Shannon, 7-year-old girl), many mothers also hoped the teachers will take more responsibilities to prevent or reduce the possible negative influences of TV snack and fast-food advertising (e.g., Lydia, 11-old-girl). Therefore, in addition to education about advertising mediation for the parents suggested above, special efforts to make our children wiser in accepting the contents from TV advertising need to be considered as well. Conducting at least occasional sessions using a well-designed health curriculum for children could lead them to be not only a healthier generation but also be wiser consumers in their future.

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## **APPENDICES**

## **APPENDIX A**

### **(Interviewer Guide for In-depth interview)**

#### **Participants:**

Mothers who have child (ren) between the ages of 7 and 12.

Residents of Athens-Clarke, Oconee, Jackson, Barrow County, Georgia

#### **Briefing**

I appreciate your cooperation in this interview process. As I explained in the previous e-mail/phone call, my dissertation is about food advertising and children.

You are highly encouraged to share any of your thoughts. I, the researcher and the interviewer, will ask about your perceptions and opinions regarding a) your child's snack food consumption, b) television viewing, c) the effects of food advertising, if any, on your children, d) conflicts with your children regarding food choices and, e) other related issues.

Please read and sign the consent form where indicated if you agree to be interviewed. Upon completion of the form, the interview will start and will take approximately 30 minutes. The interview will be taped so I can go back and examine the responses in more detail. However, you will be assigned a pseudonym in order to keep your responses confidential.

#### **Qualify Respondents**

Have you experienced conflict with your child over a request to buy a particular product?

Yes (     )    No (     )    Unsure (     )

Has there ever been conflict over a food product request?

Yes (     )    No (     )    Unsure (     )

How many times in the last four weeks would you say you experienced conflict with your child over a request to buy a particular product?

Yes (     )    No (     )    Unsure (     )

Over the 4 weeks period, did any of the conflict involve a food product request?

Yes (     )    No (     )    Unsure (     )

### **Grand Tour questions**

How many children do you have between the ages of 7-12?

(BASED ON RESPONSE, THE INTERVIEWER WILL ASK PARTICIPANT TO FOCUS THEIR RESPONSES ON INTERACTIONS WITH ONE SPECIFIC CHILD IN THEIR FAMILY)

Does your child pay attention to TV commercials when watching TV?

What does he/she typically do when a commercial comes on?

What is your opinion about TV advertising to children?

What is your opinion about televised food commercials directed at children?

Do you think your child is influenced by TV food commercials?

If so, how is he/she influenced?

Do you think your child reacts differently to TV food commercials than commercials for other types of products?

Do you believe your child's food choices are influenced by televised food commercials? If so, how is he/she influenced?

Have you ever experienced conflict with your child over food choices?

If so, where does such conflict tend to occur?



Are particular types of foods the subject of conflict?

Are all televised food commercials alike?

Why does conflict arise between you and your child over food choices?

Are there specific causes of conflict that you can identify?

How do you resolve conflict over food choices?

What are the usual outcomes of conflict over food choices?

What are your general thoughts on the amount of television your child watches?

What does your child generally do when the advertising comes on?

What is your opinion about television food advertising to children?

Is your child influenced by food advertisements? If yes, please give some examples.

Do you think that your child's food choices are influenced by television food advertising?

Have you had any conflict with your child in terms of food choices?

If so, what is usually the reason for the conflict?

### **Thematic Apperception Test**

Now, I want to show you a drawing.

Pretend that the drawing depicts you and your child.

Here is a picture of you and your child watching TV. Imagine that a commercial comes on for a favorite snack food of your child?

What is the commercial advertising?

What would you say your child is thinking while watching the commercial?

Would your child react in anyway to the commercial in your presence?

What would you be thinking?

Would you react in anyway to your child in the co-viewing situation?

How would you and your child interact while viewing the commercial?

If so, what would the nature of the interactions?

Talking? Asking?

Do you think your child could imitate the jingle and copy of the XXX commercial without much trouble?

Please pretend that the people in this picture are you and your child.

What, if anything, do you think is happening?

What would the child say while watching the commercial?

What would you say to your child about the commercial?

Do you think the child could imitate the jingle or copy of the food advertisement?

Does your child request that you buy snack foods while watching the commercial?

How do you react to the child's requests for snack foods?

What happens next?

Has your child requested to go to a fast-food restaurant because of action figures or toys that they saw advertised in a commercial for the fast food restaurant?

Besides food advertisements, what other factors influence this child's food choices?

Do you think that your child is influenced by food advertising more, less, or about the same as other children?

Great.

Now, I would like to ask some questions about television food advertising.

How would you feel about television advertising for snack foods?

Give me five or so words that capture your feelings about the form of TV advertising.

Does your child request that you buy snack foods after seeing TV commercials for the foods?

Do the requests happen in front of the TV or in other locations?

How do you react to your child's purchase requests for snack foods?

How does your child react to your decision regarding his/her purchase request?

Has your child ever requested that you go to a fast-food restaurant because of an action figure he/she saw in a TV commercial for the fast-food restaurant?

How did you handle the request?

What is the most influential agent on your child's food choices?

Why do you say that?

Do you think television advertising influences your child's food choices?

Are there other factors that influence his/her food choices?

Do you think your child is influenced more, less, or about the same as other children by TV advertising for snack foods?

How often do you experience disagreements with your child regarding food choice?

Generally, what does your child say to you, when he/she disagrees with you about food choices?

Do you think television food advertisements played any role in this conflict?

What did you say to your child to try to persuade him/her to make a healthy food choice?

Did it work? Why or why not?

How did your child react to your persuasion?

Do you think other parties, such as school, government or community, should do something to solve this conflict?

What would be the roles of those parties?

Lastly,

I would like to ask you some other related questions.

What is your general opinion about television food advertising to children?

Are advertisers sincere, or deceptive, ethical, or unethical?

Do you think food advertising aired during children's primetime and on cable stations, such as

Nick or Noggin, needs to be regulated more than it is currently?

If so, what should additional regulations be?

Do you let your child watch television (programs/advertising) whenever he/she wants?

How many television sets do you have in your house?

Does your child have his or her own television set?

How much television do you watch with your child? A lot, a little?

Have you talked about (food) advertising (e.g., story, model, intention) with your child?

If so, what have you talked about?

### **Conclusion and Debriefing**

I really appreciate your help. I think I have asked everything I planned.

Is there any thing you want to bring up about television advertising and children's food choices?

If yes, please feel free to add your opinions or comments.

Thank you for your time.

Your answers will be extremely helpful for my research.

I will send the research results to anyone who so requests when I have completed the research.

**The end of the interview.**

**APPENDIX B**

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**A SURVEY OF MOTHERS' OPINIONS ABOUT  
SNACK/FAST-FOOD ADVERTISING AND CHILDREN**

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**Please turn the page and begin.  
Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.**

## **DIRECTIONS**

- \* **This survey will take about 20 minutes and the information you provide will be used only for academic purposes. All content will be kept confidential.**
- \* **Each question will ask you to indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with a statement regarding the situations related to advertising effects and parent-child relationships.**
- \* **The terms “food commercial” and “television food advertising” in this survey refer to advertisements for all kinds of snack foods (i.e., candy, sweets, soda, sugar cereal, desserts, cookies, pies, etc.) and fast-food restaurants (i.e., McDonalds, Wendy’s, Burger King, etc).**
- \* **This research deals with children between the ages of 7-12. Please focus only on your child within this age range.**
- \* **If you have more than one child within this age range, please focus on the older child.**
- \* **Please answer the questions based upon the current situations surrounding your child and yourself.**

Thank you for your participation.

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## SECTION 1.

I am going to ask you some questions about **your attitude towards advertising in general**. Please indicate **THE DEGREE OF AGREEMENT FOR EACH ITEM** by **circling one of the numbers** in each statement.

**1= “STRONGLY DISAGREE,”** and **5= “STRONGLY AGREE”** with the statement.

Also, **3 equals “NEITHER AGREE OR DISAGREE.”** If you have **“NO OPINION”** about the issue addressed in a specific statement, please circle **9**.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	No Opinion
My general opinion about advertising is unfavorable.	1	2	3	4	5	9
For me, advertisements are oftentimes unwelcome interruptions.	1	2	3	4	5	9
Through advertising, I learn which brands have the features I am looking for.	1	2	3	4	5	9
Advertising keeps me up-to-date about products/services available in the market.	1	2	3	4	5	9
Through advertising, I learn about fashions for me or my family.	1	2	3	4	5	9
Overall, I like advertising.	1	2	3	4	5	9
For me, advertising is oftentimes entertaining and amusing.	1	2	3	4	5	9
In general, advertising promotes competition which benefits me as a consumer.	1	2	3	4	5	9
Advertising results in my purchasing better products.	1	2	3	4	5	9
Oftentimes, I am misled by advertising.	1	2	3	4	5	9
Advertising makes me buy products I cannot afford just to show off to my peers.	1	2	3	4	5	9
Advertising tends to pose a threat to my desirable values.	1	2	3	4	5	9
I will maintain better values if I am not exposed to excessive advertising.	1	2	3	4	5	9
Oftentimes, I am deceived by advertising.	1	2	3	4	5	9
For me, advertising is oftentimes annoying.	1	2	3	4	5	9
Through advertising, I learn what other people with lifestyles similar to mine are buying and using.	1	2	3	4	5	9
Advertisements provide information to me regarding available products.	1	2	3	4	5	9
Through advertising, I learn about what to buy to impress others.	1	2	3	4	5	9
Advertising makes me materialistic and/or overly interested in buying and owning things.	1	2	3	4	5	9

## SECTION 2.

Now, I am going to ask some questions about your opinions regarding TV advertising targeting children. Please indicate the degree of agreement for each item by circling one of the numbers in each statement.

1= “STRONGLY DISAGREE,” and 5= “STRONGLY AGREE” with the statement.

Also, 3 equals “NEITHER AGREE OR DISAGREE.” If you have “NO OPINION” about the issue addressed in a specific statement, please circle 9.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	No Opinion
There are too many ads in TV programs directed at children.	1	2	3	4	5	9
Television advertising to children uses tricks and gimmicks.	1	2	3	4	5	9
Ads aimed at children under the age of 12 should be banned.	1	2	3	4	5	9
Most advertisements deceive children.	1	2	3	4	5	9
There is too much sugar and fat in food products advertised in television programs directed at children.	1	2	3	4	5	9
There should be a ban on advertising heavily-sugared products aimed at children.	1	2	3	4	5	9
TV advertising is an important cause of my child pestering me for advertised products.	1	2	3	4	5	9
TV ads encourage my child to want products he/she doesn't need.	1	2	3	4	5	9
TV advertising to children leads to family conflicts in my house.	1	2	3	4	5	9
My child is able to distinguish between programs and advertising.	1	2	3	4	5	9
Advertisements encourage discussion of products within my family.	1	2	3	4	5	9
My child understands the real purpose of advertising.	1	2	3	4	5	9
The more ads my child watches, the more he/she will want products advertised.	1	2	3	4	5	9
My child is deceived by advertisements more easily than me.	1	2	3	4	5	9
The more advertisements my child watches, the better he/she will understand them.	1	2	3	4	5	9
Ads help my child become more aware of the world around him/her.	1	2	3	4	5	9
I have the overall responsibility for deciding what advertisements my child should watch.	1	2	3	4	5	9
When my child decides what to buy, he/she is influenced more by his/her friends than by advertising.	1	2	3	4	5	9



Snack and fast-food advertised on television is an important cause of my child's unhealthy eating habits.	1	2	3	4	5	9
Snack and fast-food advertising is the main influence on my child's diet.	1	2	3	4	5	9
If snack and fast-foods were not advertised, my child's eating habits would improve.	1	2	3	4	5	9
My child usually demands food he/she has seen in TV advertisements.	1	2	3	4	5	9

### SECTION 3.

Please circle the answer which best describes your situation.

Have you ever experienced any type of disagreement with your child over his/her request to buy a particular product?

- a) Yes – If Yes, continue to answer the next three questions.
- b) No – If No, please skip to the Section 4.

Then, approximately how many times in the last year would you say you have experienced a disagreement with your child over a request to buy a particular product?

- a) 1-3 times    b) 4-6 times    c) 7-9 times    d) 10 or more times

Has there ever been any type of disagreement with your child over a snack or fast-food product request?

- a) Yes    b) No    c) Unsure

If yes, approximately how many times in the last year would you say you have experienced a disagreement with your child over a request to buy a snack or fast-food product?

- a) 1-3 times    b) 4-6 times    c) 7-9 times    d) 10 or more times

## SECTION 4.

The questions below are about the effects of TV snack or fast-food advertisements on children and the relationship between you and your child.

Please indicate the degree of agreement for each item by circling a number out of six choices (Based upon the current situations surrounding you and your child).

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	No Opinion
TV ads for snack or fast-foods influence my child's food choices.	1	2	3	4	5	9
Stricter regulation by the government is needed, regarding TV snack or fast-food advertisements, to protect my child.	1	2	3	4	5	9
Generally, I trust the messages found in TV snack or fast-food advertising.	1	2	3	4	5	9
I am worried about the negative effects of TV snack or fast-food advertising on my family.	1	2	3	4	5	9
The use of toys in TV snack or fast-food ads should be more regulated to protect my child.	1	2	3	4	5	9
My child is always happy spending time with the family.	1	2	3	4	5	9
My child is always happy about hanging out with his/her friends at his/her school.	1	2	3	4	5	9
I should take major responsibility for the possible negative effects of TV snack or fast-food ads on my child.	1	2	3	4	5	9
My child mainly cares about the toys the fast-food companies provide, rather than the food itself.	1	2	3	4	5	9
My child asks to go to fast-food restaurants because he/she has seen an ad giving information that the food comes with a toy.	1	2	3	4	5	9
I have set rules for my child regarding the amount of time he/she can watch TV or specific programs he/she can watch on TV.	1	2	3	4	5	9
Billboards are very influential to my child's food choice.	1	2	3	4	5	9
Public Service Announcements directed at children would be a good way to encourage healthy food choices for my child.	1	2	3	4	5	9
Mimicking jingles/lines from TV ads is harmful to my child.	1	2	3	4	5	9
Toys provided by fast-food restaurants are very influential in my child's food choice.	1	2	3	4	5	9
I have told my child that TV snack or fast-food ads are generally unethical.	1	2	3	4	5	9
I explain the intent/purpose of TV snack or fast-food ads to my child.	1	2	3	4	5	9

Sometimes, TV snack or fast-food ads might be more harmful than regular TV programs to my child.

1	2	3	4	5	9
---	---	---	---	---	---

I often explain my reasons for saying “no” to my child’s request to buy a snack or fast-food.

1	2	3	4	5	9
---	---	---	---	---	---

If my child watches TV snack or fast-food ads more, it will be more likely for him/her to be obese in the future.

1	2	3	4	5	9
---	---	---	---	---	---

I explain the intent/purpose of TV snack or fast-food ads to my child.

1	2	3	4	5	9
---	---	---	---	---	---

If our household income were lower than now, there would be a greater likelihood for my child to be obese.

1	2	3	4	5	9
---	---	---	---	---	---

I have told my child that TV snack or fast-food ads are generally deceptive.

1	2	3	4	5	9
---	---	---	---	---	---

My child’s food choices are not often influenced by TV snack or fast-food advertising.

1	2	3	4	5	9
---	---	---	---	---	---

I tell my child that watching TV advertising will be a good way to understand how society works (a process of socialization).

1	2	3	4	5	9
---	---	---	---	---	---

The cooperate marketing of snack or fast-food companies with movies (e.g., tied-in marketing of Pirates of Caribbean and McDonald’s) negatively influence my child’s food choices.

1	2	3	4	5	9
---	---	---	---	---	---

My child is already very health conscious in terms of what he/she eats.

1	2	3	4	5	9
---	---	---	---	---	---

Sometimes, my child trusts what TV snack or fast-food advertising says more than my recommendation about his/her food choices.

1	2	3	4	5	9
---	---	---	---	---	---

I have told my child that TV snack or fast-food ads are generally deceptive.

1	2	3	4	5	9
---	---	---	---	---	---

I believe that children in low-income families will have more possibility to be influenced by TV snack or fast-food ads to their food choices.

1	2	3	4	5	9
---	---	---	---	---	---

I am not willing to call a disagreement between my child and myself an actual “conflict”.

1	2	3	4	5	9
---	---	---	---	---	---

I use words such as “carb”, “protein”, and/or “trans fat” to persuade my child to eat healthy foods.

1	2	3	4	5	9
---	---	---	---	---	---

**SECTION 5.** Next, please indicate how often you have experienced each situation by circling one of the numbers. The questions are about interactions you have had with your child regarding food choices **(within the past year).**

Never    Rarely    Once in a while    Often    Very often

**My child's style of requesting a specific snack or fast-food product is-**

Just asking, not nagging.	1	2	3	4	5
Pleading over and over.	1	2	3	4	5
Saying that he or she has seen it on TV.	1	2	3	4	5
Saying that a sibling/friend has or likes it.	1	2	3	4	5
Bargaining (offers to do chores, pay for part of the product).	1	2	3	4	5
Listing different ways that the item can be used.	1	2	3	4	5
Just putting it in the shopping basket at the store.	1	2	3	4	5

**My style of response to the request for buying a specific snack or fast-food product is-**

Saying "yes," right away.	1	2	3	4	5
Buying it, but discussing it with my child before saying yes.	1	2	3	4	5
Saying yes, but not to the brand the child wanted.	1	2	3	4	5
Saying no, and that is that.	1	2	3	4	5
Saying no, and explaining why.	1	2	3	4	5
Stalling or substituting.	1	2	3	4	5
Saying no, but agreeing to buy something else instead.	1	2	3	4	5
Saying maybe sometime but not now.	1	2	3	4	5

**My perception of the main reasons for my child's request of snack or fast-food product is -**

He/she saw the product in the store.	1	2	3	4	5
He/she saw an ad on TV.	1	2	3	4	5
He/she has a sibling/friend who has it.	1	2	3	4	5
He/she saw another ad (not on TV).	1	2	3	4	5

**My child's general reaction to my refusal to buy a certain snack or fast-food product is-**

He/she seems to take it okay.	1	2	3	4	5
He/she is disappointed, but he/she doesn't say anything further.	1	2	3	4	5
He/she argues a little and then lets it drop.	1	2	3	4	5
He/she argues a lot and continues nagging.	1	2	3	4	5
He/she gets really angry.	1	2	3	4	5

**My reaction to my child's negative response when I refuse to buy a certain snack or fast-food product is-**

To ignore his or her response.	1	2	3	4	5
To repeat what I said before.	1	2	3	4	5
To get angry with my child.	1	2	3	4	5
To compromise.	1	2	3	4	5
To decide to buy what my child has asked for.	1	2	3	4	5

**Disagreement with my child about snack or fast-food choices take place-**

In the kitchen.	1	2	3	4	5
In front of the television.	1	2	3	4	5
On the way to the store.	1	2	3	4	5
At the store.	1	2	3	4	5

## SECTION 6.

The following questions ask about your opinions about the influence of TV snack or fast-food advertising on **YOUR FRIENDS' CHILDREN.**

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	No Opinion
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I think there are more conflicts regarding food choices between my friends and their children than there are in my family.	1	2	3	4	5	9
--	---	---	---	---	---	---

More regulations on snack or fast-food advertising in TV are needed to help protect my friend's children than to protect my child(ren).	1	2	3	4	5	9
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## SECTION 7.

Now, I am going to ask you some **QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR FAMILY.**

Please indicate the degree of agreement for each item by circling a number out of six choices.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	No Opinion
----------------------	----------	------------------------------	-------	-------------------	---------------

There are many interactions within my family.	1	2	3	4	5	9
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

My child spends a lot of time with his or her peers during the day.	1	2	3	4	5	9
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

My child spends more time watching TV than other children.	1	2	3	4	5	9
--	---	---	---	---	---	---

Generally, my child watches television with me.	1	2	3	4	5	9
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

To me, watching television is a significant part of my daily life.	1	2	3	4	5	9
--	---	---	---	---	---	---

I am satisfied with my current work conditions.	1	2	3	4	5	9
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

My family's income is enough for our standard of living.	1	2	3	4	5	9
--	---	---	---	---	---	---

I feel comfortable handling technological devices such as a computers, game consoles, or TiVo.	1	2	3	4	5	9
--	---	---	---	---	---	---

I am very involved in the PTA of my child's school.	1	2	3	4	5	9
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

I think my child and I communicate very much.	1	2	3	4	5	9
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

I think our country is currently in an economic recession.	1	2	3	4	5	9
--	---	---	---	---	---	---

I think my child loves to go to his or her School.	1	2	3	4	5	9
--	---	---	---	---	---	---

My child enjoys hanging out with his/her peers.	1	2	3	4	5	9
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Generally, my child enjoys watching TV advertising.	1	2	3	4	5	9
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

I know the teachers in my child's school very well.	1	2	3	4	5	9
I think my child is safe in his/her school.	1	2	3	4	5	9
I spend a lot of time to help my child to study (or homework).	1	2	3	4	5	9
I participate in most events at my child's school.	1	2	3	4	5	9
I know well who my child's friends are.	1	2	3	4	5	9
I talk with my child about advertising, such as the purpose of the ad or the trick used in a commercial.	1	2	3	4	5	9
I think government organizations (e.g., FDA, FTC) are doing a good job regulating the content of TV ads.	1	2	3	4	5	9
My family experiences diverse cultures very often.	1	2	3	4	5	9
The school my child goes to has a wide range of diversity in terms of ethnicity.	1	2	3	4	5	9
Generally, I am worried about my family's security living in this society.	1	2	3	4	5	9
I understand how the educational system in this society works very well.	1	2	3	4	5	9
I talk to my child a lot when I am with him or her.	1	2	3	4	5	9
I talk with my child about the report cards from his/her school.	1	2	3	4	5	9

## SECTION 8.

The following questions ask about your opinions about the influence of TV snack and fast-food advertising

ON **OTHER PEOPLE'S CHILDREN**

(NOT "YOUR CHILDREN OR YOUR FRIENDS' CHILDREN").

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	No Opinion
I think there are more conflicts regarding food choices between mothers and children in other families than there are in my family.	1	2	3	4	5	9
More regulations on snack or fast-food advertising on TV are needed to help protect other people's children than to protect my child(ren).	1	2	3	4	5	9

**SECTION 9.**

**Lastly, I will ask you some questions about THE TYPES OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN YOU AND YOUR CHILD.**

**PLEASE INDICATE HOW OFTEN YOU HAVE EXPERIENCED THE SITUATION DESCRIBED IN EACH STATEMENT by circling one of the following six options.**

**1= "NEVER", 5= "VERY OFTEN", 9= "NO OPINION."**

	Never	Rarely	Once in a while	Often	Very often
<b>How often do you tell your child-</b>					
That advertising depicts products as better than they really are?	1	2	3	4	5
That advertising does not always tell the truth?	1	2	3	4	5
That the purpose of advertising is to sell products?	1	2	3	4	5
That not all advertised products are of good quality?	1	2	3	4	5
That some advertised products are not good for children?	1	2	3	4	5
<b>How often do you tell your child-</b>					
To turn off the TV when (s)he is watching commercials?	1	2	3	4	5
That (s)he should not watch commercial networks because they broadcast too many commercials?	1	2	3	4	5
To switch to a channel that broadcasts fewer commercials?	1	2	3	4	5
That (s)he should not watch television advertising at all?	1	2	3	4	5
To watch specific networks that broadcast relatively few commercials?	1	2	3	4	5
<b>How often do you tell your child-</b>					
That every member of your family should have some say in family purchase decisions?	1	2	3	4	5
To give his/her opinion when discussing family purchases?	1	2	3	4	5
To give his/her opinion about products and brands?	1	2	3	4	5
That you respect his/her expertise on certain products and brands?	1	2	3	4	5
That you consider his/her preferences when making a purchase?	1	2	3	4	5
To consider the advantages/disadvantages of products and brands?	1	2	3	4	5
That she or he can co-decide when you make purchases for him/her?	1	2	3	4	5

**How often do you tell your child-**

That you know which products are best for him or her?	1	2	3	4	5
Not to argue with you when you say no to his/her product requests?	1	2	3	4	5
That you expect him/her to accept your decisions about product purchases?	1	2	3	4	5
Which products are or are not purchased for the family?	1	2	3	4	5
Which products she/he should or should not buy?	1	2	3	4	5
That you have strict/clear rules when it comes to product purchases?	1	2	3	4	5
That she/he is not allowed to ask for products?	1	2	3	4	5



**For the final part of this survey, please answer the questions about you and your family.  
These will be used for classification purposes only.**

**What is your age?** \_\_\_\_\_

**How do you describe yourself in terms of ethnicity?**

- 1) Caucasian/ White
- 2) African-American/ Black
- 3) Asian
- 4) Native American (or American Indian)
- 5) Bi-racial or multi-racial
- 6) Other

**What is your current marital status?**

- 1) Currently married
- 2) Separated or divorced
- 3) Widowed
- 4) Never married
- 5) Living with partner

**What is the highest level of schooling you completed?**

- 1) Some high school
- 2) Completed high school
- 3) Some college
- 4) College graduate
- 5) Attended graduate school

**Are you employed?**

- 1) Fully employed
- 2) Partly employed
- 3) Self-employed
- 4) Not employed

**Please provide the information about your family.**

**1) Children**

**(If you have more than five children, please tell us about your five children from the youngest).**

	<b>Child 1 (Youngest)</b>	<b>Child 2</b>	<b>Child 3</b>	<b>Child 4</b>	<b>Child 5 (Oldest)</b>
<b>Gender</b>					
<b>Age</b>					

**2) Adults**

	<b>Adult 1 (Youngest)</b>	<b>Adult 2</b>	<b>Adult 3</b>	<b>Adult 4</b>	<b>Adult 5 (Oldest)</b>
<b>Gender</b>					
<b>Age</b>					

**Which county do you live in?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Which of the following groups does your household income fall into before taxes?**

- 1) Less than \$ 20,000    2) \$ 20,001- 40,000    3) \$ 40,001- 60,000    4) \$ 60,001- 800,000
- 5) \$ 80,001- 100,000    6) \$ 100,001- 120,000    7) \$ 120,001- 140,000    8) \$ 140,001 or higher

**How religiously observant are you (any religion)? (1 = Very weak, 5 = Very strong).**

<u>Very weak</u>	<u>Weak</u>		<u>Strong</u>	<u>Very strong</u>
1	2	3	4	5

**\*\*\*\*\* Thank you very much for your participation! \*\*\*\*\***