

**CHILDHOOD**

**AND**

**MARKETING:**

*A Briefing*

Simon Spadaro-Bliss  
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The University of New Hampshire  
Professor David Finkelhor, Ph.D.

## OVERVIEW

The present briefing overviews and samples a number of issues relating to childhood and business marketing. The briefing is divided into three parts.

### **Part 1: Marketing to Children**

- The viability of the children's market is confirmed from a business perspective.
- Child development is related to the comprehension of marketing. The literature indicates children under 8 cannot grasp the true meaning and intent behind advertisements.
- Marketing quantity and content are analyzed. It is established that most ads reach children via television. Unhealthy food products are disproportionately represented in these advertisements.
- Finally, some possible effects of marketing on childhood are considered. The perspective that TV ads are ruining childhood is contrasted with the perspective that children form their own kid cultures around marketed and branded products.

### **Part 2: Childhood, Marketing, and Related Social Problems**

- Two social problems related to marketing are examined: Childhood obesity and advertising in school.
- There appears to be a link between the unhealthy foods advertised to children and the rising rate of obesity among kids. But other factors must be considered as well.
- Advertising in school is more prevalent than ever. But the trend is part of a society-wide consumerist ideology, which has become the norm.

### **Part 3: Policy and Regulation**

- Governmental and Non-governmental efforts to regulate marketing to children are explored.
- Aside from the limited FTC and FCC, the government has intervened very little with marketing practices aimed at children.
- A number of advocacy groups exist in the interest of protecting children from deceptive and corruptive marketing practices.
- The marketing industry is quick to react to public discomfort with its own self-regulations.

**-- Part 1 --**  
**-- Marketing to Children --**

*Viability of Children's Market*

The intersection between childhood and business marketing is occupied by a multitude of issues and perspectives. These various ideas clash and converge to create a complex field for researchers. Among many possible angles, the most practical initial approach to the topic is from the avenue used by businesses and marketers. This particular viewpoint will, first and foremost, reveal the foundation for the modern children's market and, therefore, the basis for the numerous organizations and ideas that surround it.

Children are a viable market. And over the past half-century this market has exploded. James U. McNeal (1999), a leading authority on the subject, recalls being laughed at in 1962 for proposing the idea of targeting kids as a market. But it did not take long for the idea to catch on. From the mid-1980s up to the new millennium the proportion of retailers who marketed to children, whether they actually tried to sell them anything or not, doubled.

Today, there is an enormous selection of kid-specific products available for purchase and an equally impressive accompaniment of "kids-also" items (traditional adult products that are adapted or transformed to meet the needs and interests of children) (McNeal 1999). Likewise, the buying power along with the direct and influenced spending of

children has been on the rise (Calvert 2008). Children have been realized and engaged as a viable market. But beyond it's simple feasibility; the children's market can be lucrative.

McNeal (1999) asserts, "kids represent *more market potential* than any other segment" (17, italics added). The basis of his assertion lies in the nature of the children's market; they represent "three markets in one". First and foremost, many children are a **(1) Primary Market** who directly spend and make purchases themselves. Second, children are a powerful **(2) Influence Market** who can sway the purchases of those around them, particularly their parents. Finally, children are a **(3) Future Market**, who will one day assume the consumerist duties of earlier generations (McNeal 2008). For businesses, conceiving and targeting children as a market can prove a worthwhile endeavor.

With this foundation in place the appeal of marketing to children becomes evident. The next step is to explore its range.

*Ages and Advertising*

Many controversies surrounding marketing to children form over the core issue of the **appropriateness of advertising to certain age groups**. It is arguable that consumer development begins with a child's first exposure to a consumer environment, like a trip to the supermarket with his or her mother. The average age for an expedition of this sort

is 2 months old (McNeal 1999:39). But a child's presence in the consumer world is not enough to label him or her as "fair game" for marketing and advertisements. Since children's cognitive developments are relatively rapid, a couple extra years of wisdom may mean the difference between believing everything on television and actually interpreting the *meaning and intent* of advertisements. Regarding children's interpretations of advertisements on television, literature on the subject highlights two central and distinct components: the **(1) Distinction of content** and the **(2) Comprehension of its True Meaning/Intent**.

Around **(1) age five most children are able to distinguish advertising content from other content on television** (Calvert 2008; Jennings and Wartella 2007; John 2009). Based on this, Calvert (2008) identifies the age range just below that (two to five years old) as "extremely vulnerable to commercial advertisements" (215). She makes this claim for two primary reasons. First, as noted above, they cannot distinguish advertised content from other content. Kid's programming that alternates with commercial breaks is one continuous episode to the child under five. Second, unlike children younger than two years who merely state preference with no "goal-directed" choices, two to five year old children are able to "focus on the attractive qualities of products" and implement "effective negotiation" to obtain these products (Calvert 2008:215).

But even for five-year-old children, distinguishing marketing content only affords them half of the picture.

The distinction between distinguishing the placement of advertisements and distinguishing the meaning and intent of advertisements is significant (Jennings and Wartella 2007; John 1999); generally, **(2) children under eight-years-old do not comprehend the purposes of advertisements** (Calvert 2008; John 1999). "Although children can discriminate commercials from programs by the time they are five years old, as noted earlier, it takes a few more years before children expand their knowledge base to include an understanding of advertising's persuasive intent" (John 1999:7). The benchmark ages of five and eight are useful to keep in mind when assessing marketing practices which target young children.

Just Kid Inc. is a consumer research firm that was founded in 1994 by George Carey. The company conducts both qualitative and quantitative research that leads to the development of marketing strategies and new products for children. Just Kid Inc. boasts an extremely impressive client list of both consumer brands and not-for-profit organizations including Campbells, Crayola, Kellogg's, McDonald's, Nickelodeon, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, the Partnership for a Drug Free America, and Reading is Fundamental, among many others. On their website, Just Kid Inc. defines themselves as a "kids only"

research firm that focuses “on children 2-12 and their parents” (Just Kid Inc.).

A similar research firm, the Girls Intelligence Agency (abbreviated G.I.A.) based out of Los Angeles, California, conducts research on “tween” and teen girls. Their signature “Slumber Party in a Box” includes a variety of client company prototypes and prerelease products targeted at girls in the tween and teen age segments. Young “alpha” girls are recruited as “secret agents” for the company, who are issued the party kits and then host sleepovers. The firm then collects information on how well the different products were received by the girls, and reports back to their clients with the data (Girls Intelligence Agency; Schor 2004).

The research conducted by firms like Just Kid Inc. and the Girls Intelligence Agency is only part of the story of marketing and childhood. But these are good examples, demonstrating the range of ages (as young as two) and sub-categories (“tween” girls) businesses reach for within the broader children’s market. Furthermore, marketers have been increasingly targeting children at a rate growing faster than for adults (McNeal 1999).

### *How Much Advertising*

An exact figure describing the amount of advertising that actually targets and reaches children is difficult to ascertain (Jennings and Wartella 2007; McNeal 1999). Children’s advertising itself is a

difficult term to define since its boundaries are fluid. Does it include advertising targeting families? Should adult advertisements witnessed by children be included? To further complicate matters, high-technology outlets such as the Internet, mobile phones, and video games are extremely adaptable and can easily combine primary content experiences with advertising (Jennings and Wartella 2007).

However, even considering the lack of pinpoint accuracy regarding definitions, compiled research makes some generalizations about the amount of marketing that reaches children. It is agreed that television is currently, and has been historically, the primary medium for children’s marketing (Calvert 2008; Jennings and Wartella 2007; Thomas 2007). Since the early 1990’s, it has been estimated that, on average, a child views 40,000 television ads per year (Calvert 2008; Jennings and Wartella 2007; The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation 2006). American children frequently watch television and, as a result, are frequently exposed to televised marketing.

On the business side of things, however, it is not always clear which marketing dollars are specifically targeting children. Consider the variation among the following recent estimates:

*“Marketers probably spend no more than \$1.3 billion annually on all advertising to U.S. Kids” (McNeal 1999:139)*

*“Fast food outlets alone spend \$3 billion in television ads targeted to children” (The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation 2006:241)*

*“In 2004, total U.S. marketing expenditures were estimated at some \$15 billion to target products to children” (Calvert 2008:207)*

Again, defining what constitutes “children’s marketing” is a difficult task. And less virtuous companies won’t necessarily label their products and services aimed at children as marketing ploys. Instead, angelic guises, like labeling content “educational” or “productive”, are more often presented, and are more palatable, to the public (Thomas 2007).

### *Content of Children’s Marketing*

There is about a half-century of research available that analyzes the content of children’s marketing and advertisements (Pecora, Murray, and Wartella 2007). But the present briefing will primarily focus on research compiled since the 1990’s. In a comprehensive review of the literature on children and advertising between 1950 and 1998, Jennings and Wartella (2007) identified only 10% of efforts as focused on content analysis. Also, it is important to note that children frequently view adult programming, and therefore adult marketing, but research on kids and marketing focuses primarily on television and marketing efforts designed for, and aimed at, children (Gunter, Oates, and

Blades 2005). Gunter, Oates, and Blades (2005) note, “children are not so interested in products for adults, [and] are less likely to pay attention to them... Commercials designed specifically for the children’s audience... are most likely to attract children’s interests and affect their behavior” (14). That said, the content of advertisements aimed at children has been consistent over the past two decades.

Research is also consistent in noting **four primary product categories** that target children through television marketing. These are **(1) Toys and Games, (2) Cereals, (3) Candies, and (4) Fast-Food Restaurants** (Calvert 2008; Gunter, Oates, and Blades 2005; Jennings and Wartella 2007; The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation 2006). Similar consensus surrounds the unhealthy nature of the three food categories; foods promoted to children on television tend to be high in sugars and calories and of poor nutritional value overall (Calvert 2008; The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation 2006; Reese, Rifon, and Rodriguez 1999). A section later on will discuss the link between marketing and childhood obesity. Also, despite less research being available on the subject, content analyses of Internet advertisements report similar findings (Calvert 2008). However, not all marketing campaigns look to profit off children through sales of potentially harmful goods and services.

Alongside commercials promoting the newest toys, snacks of questionable nutritional value, and the latest music and movies, are **Social Marketing Campaigns**. For those concerned with the content of corporate-conceived ad campaigns, social marketing represents a “fight fire with fire” approach to instilling positive values in the nation’s youth (Donahue, Haskins, and Nightingale 2008). And despite their relatively diminutive financial supports (Evans 2008), McNeal (1999) acknowledges them as increasingly serious competition to traditional marketers for pricy ad slots.

What’s unique about social marketing campaigns is not their message, but rather their delivery, which is a step away from the traditional information-based campaigns of earlier decades. Social marketing is about selling socially desirable behavior with business strategies, such as branding and imagery. Nationally prominent social marketing examples include the *truth* anti-tobacco campaign, the VERB: It’s What You Do physical activity promotion campaign, and the KNOW HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention campaign (Evans 2008). Social marketing campaigns will be returned to later during a discussion on their effectiveness. With an overview in mind of why and how children are targeted as a market, the next section examines the research revealing effects of marketing on children and childhood.

### *Effects of Marketing on Childhood*

A review of the literature has shown children are a viable market that is *actively engaged* by the business world. And the marketing effort, for businesses, is worth it. In 1968, primary spending for children was estimated at \$2.2 billion. In 1991, the figure almost quadrupled to \$8.6 billion. By the year 2000, primary spending for children was estimated at \$35.6 billion (Unadjusted figures, McNeal 1999:17). Influenced spending rose from \$50 billion in 1985, to \$190 billion in 1997. The 2000 estimate for influenced spending was \$290 billion (McNeal 1999:18). The standalone figures are not what impress; but the rate of expansion certainly explains businesses’ committed interests in kids. And knowing the business world has established a fruitful relationship for itself it is time to turn the focus to children.

The effects of marketing on the social idea of “childhood” can be interpreted in any number of ways, both positive and negative. Niel Postman (1994) argues that “childhood” itself is threatened to the point of extinction; and a contributing factor is television and advertisements. For Postman, the age of technology, and particularly the advent of television, is eroding the divide between childhood and adulthood that was once maintained by standards of literacy and education. Television commercials play a part in this equation.

Postman (1994) adopts a religious comparison in demonstrating how commercials have “hopelessly muddled” the once clear distinction “between the commercial arena and the spiritual one” (107); this distinction being important because religious enlightenment once was “one of the clear markers of adult sensibility” (Postman 1994:107), and therefore a distinguishing characteristic between childhood and adulthood. Commercials on television conform to the formula of three-part “parables” common in religious theology; and “like all religious parables they put forward a concept of sin, intimations of the way to redemption, and a vision of Heaven” (Postman 1994:109). Television commercials offer all these virtues and life lessons in easy to digest thirty-second bites, which, Postman (1994) argues, were once instructions that had to be learned through literature and formal institutions of education; this was the defining line between the worlds of children and adults.

Postman (1994) offers a decidedly grim outlook for childhood. But, as mentioned earlier, this is only one perspective offered on the effects of marketing. In his assessment of children’s cultures, Corsaro (1997) describes the role of marketing in establishing a defined kids community. In describing “children’s material culture”, he considers a historical context where objects, such as toys, have always facilitated community among children who play together with

and around them. Corsaro (1997) indicates that, in the same way adults rally around the branded images of sports teams, children form consumer culture communities around their own valued brands. “After all, is a sweatshirt with a Chicago Bulls or Indiana Hoosiers logo any more educational (or less expensive) than one with Mickey Mouse or Tweety Bird?” (Corsaro 1997:113). But where Postman (1994) would view this as a mirror of adult behaviors (and therefore evidence of the erosion of childhood), Corsaro (1997) notes that certain symbols, like Mickey Mouse, are particular to childhood and help support a children’s material sub-culture and community.

As mentioned earlier, not all marketing is used to sell goods and services to kids. Social marketing campaigns utilize business marketing techniques to send positive messages and “sell” pro-social behaviors. Calvert (2008) notes that, while social marketing campaigns are worthwhile, evaluation programs are not always optimal and oftentimes lack control groups for properly gauging effectiveness. Nonetheless, she indicates, “social marketing campaigns have been notably successful in three areas: preventing tobacco use, promoting diet and physical activity, and preventing HIV/AIDS” (Calvert 2008:191).

In studies aimed at teasing out the proportional effects of social marketing, Calvert (2009) indicates that successful

social marketing campaigns usually only account for less than ten percent of a population's behavior variations. However, this is about twice the effect of typical information-only campaigns. One of the most successful examples of social marketing is the American Legacy Foundation's anti-tobacco *truth* campaign, which accounted for 22 percent of the decline in youth smoking between 1999 and 2002 (Calvert 2008). But while social marketing campaigns look to combat many of the issues facing childhood, a number of social problems are still linked with certain business marketing practices.

#### -- Part 2 --

#### -- Childhood, Marketing, and Related -- -- Social Problems --

Concerned parents, advocates, and policy makers oftentimes tie marketing to children with a host of other issues. This section will sample two of those related issues. First, discussion surrounding childhood obesity will be explored, followed by an analysis of marketing in schools.

#### *Childhood Obesity*

The link between commercial television content and childhood obesity was hinted at earlier, noting that the types of foods frequently marketed to children are of poor nutritional value (Calvert 2008; The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation 2006; Reese, Rifon, and

Rodriguez 1999). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2008), reporting on National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) data, indicates that the prevalence of obesity among children in the United States has more than doubled for kids between the ages of 2 and 11, and more than tripled for kids between the ages of 12 and 19 since 1976.

Many people assign marketers partial responsibility for this trend. And, aside from the food in these ads being unwholesome, "there are additional concerns that advertising for food products aimed at children may make misleading claims about the nutritional value and health benefits of the foods being promoted" (Gunter, Oates, and Blades 2005:120). It is difficult, however, to place full weight of the issue on marketers and advertisements. In a report on the role of media in childhood obesity, the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation (2006) identified the replacement of physical activity with television viewing, excessive and unhealthy snacking while watching television, and the exceedingly low metabolic rates of children while viewing television as other media related factors contributing to the issue.

#### *Schools and Marketing*

Among the expansion of marketing that targets children, one area where the development is particularly disconcerting is in schools. Commercials on television

are expected and anticipated, but when advertisers enter schools the implications are different. In their extensive annual report on commercialism trends in schools, Molnar et al. (2008) preface the topic with discussion on the “total environment” approach of modern marketing. The idea of marketing in schools is not an idiosyncratic issue; instead, it is merely a manifestation of “underlying cultural trends”. “Most fundamental among [these trends] is that the language and values of commerce are slowly becoming accepted as the standard filter through which people, including children, read, interpret, understand and behave in the world” (Molnar et al. 2008:3). The result: people are desensitized to marketing, as it becomes their everyday (Rowe and Ruskin 2003).

To remedy this, marketers implement new strategies when old ones stop “getting through”. Molnar et al. (2008) indicate two major marketing techniques that have grown from this environment. First, “stealth strategies” make advertisements appear to be part of everyday life and are easily mistaken for original content. Second, marketers implement interactive strategies that “actively engage consumers in ads” (Molnar et al. 2008:5). This preface is important, as Molnar et al. (2008) note, since it facilitates the entrance of marketers into school.

Molnar et al. (2008) describe a host of both stealth and interactive marketing in schools. Blended stealth content “take[s]

the form of corporate-sponsored educational materials such as classroom posters, fundraising efforts such as math-a-thons, and appropriation of space such as scoreboard logos” (Molnar et al. 2008:6). Interactive marketing examples “include sponsored programs such as art contests, fundraising efforts such as McTeacher nights, and exclusive agreements, such as with soft drink companies, that lead to purchase and consumption of branded drinks” (Molnar et al. 2008:7). But among the more commercialized outside worlds of television, radio, and Internet, schools remain a relatively “safe” haven. Unfortunately, argue Molnar et al. (2008), it is the untapped nature of this captive audience that makes schools such an appealing place for marketers. And Molnar et al. (2008) predict the future of schoolhouses as inevitable mirrors to the extremely potent commercial ideology that already pervades the rest of society.

The situation may not be as hopeless as Molnar et al. paint it. And as pervasive as consumerism is in the United States, it still has its share of critics. Parents, children, and policy makers are not entirely blind to the issues. The next section discusses both governmental and non-governmental policy implications.

**-- Part 3 --**  
**-- Policy and Regulation --**

*Official Policies Overview*

In regard to government regulations, businesses and marketers feel most direct pressure from two regulatory agencies: the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). Among other things, the FCC resides over media and, with the passage of the Children's Television Act (CTA) in 1990, affects children's television the most by restricting the length of advertisements and commercials. The FTC is responsible for protecting consumers and therefore regulates the content of advertising and marketing aimed at children (Jordan 2008). Specific regulatory policies will now be considered.

The issue of whether or not advertising to young children is a "fair" practice gained momentum in the 1970's. Controversy ensued with debate questioning young children's ability to fully comprehend the true meaning of advertisements. Recall from an earlier section that children under eight may be able to distinguish commercial content on television from programming content, but do not grasp its potentially deceptive purpose of selling goods and services (Calvert 2008; John 1999). By 1978, debate over the issue saw the development and proposal of an FTC regulation to prohibit advertising to children under eight-years-old. Congress,

however, did not pass this extreme measure (John 1999; Jordan 2008; Rowe and Ruskin 2003). Since the defeat of the proposal, no new measures have sought to eliminate advertising to children altogether (John 1999).

As mentioned above, the FCC saw the Children's Television Act (CTA) into effect in 1990 (Calvert 2008; Jordan 2008).

**Three primary functions of the CTA** were to **(1) Limit the Amount of Time Allotted to Commercials** during children's programming, **(2) mandate a Minimum Amount of Educational Children's Programming** to be aired, and **(3) Prohibit "Host Selling"** where a primary character from the program promotes items either during the show or during commercial breaks (Jordan 2008).

This ban on "host selling" also forms one part of a three-part "separation principle" put in place by the FCC. The separation principle also requires clear transition markers between program content and advertising content on television. Finally, product placement is not permitted during children's programming (Calvert 2008).

Currently, 19 have states have statutes or regulations "pertaining to specific school-based commercial activity" (Molnar et al. 2008:33). And most regulation of marketing in school relates to the nutritional value of consumable goods for sale, which may or may not be targeting advertisements in school directly (Molnar et al. 2008). Overall, the amount of official regulation imposed on

business marketing practices is minimal. And, as Jordan (2008) notes, “[even] though the Federal Trade Commission examines complaints of deceptive or harmful advertising, most restraints on advertising to children come from within the industry” (243). The following section will first examine advocacy groups, followed by an analysis self-regulation.

### *Advocacy Groups and Self-Regulation*

To help counteract the lack of official government regulations, advocacy groups have formed with the express interest of protecting children consumers and “childhood” more generally. On the other side of the fence, business-sided efforts at self-regulation exist for (theoretically) the same purpose. These are the primary protections afforded child consumers and, therefore, represent the future direction of children’s marketing policy.

### *Advocacy Groups*

Advocacy groups that fight (one way or another) to “preserve” childhood include Commercial Alert, Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood, and Obligation, Inc. (Molnar 2008). Advocacy groups obviously look to draw attention to their issue, but they go about it in different ways. According to their web sites, Both Commercial Alert and Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood run fairly similar operations. Both organizations raise the awareness of politicians and the community to issues of

unfair and exploitive children’s marketing practices.

For example, in 2001 Commercial Alert sponsored the “Ad Slam Contest” where they awarded \$5,000 to the school that made “the best and most creative effort to expel advertising and commercialism from school premises” (Commercial Alert). Commercial Alert has also assembled a “Parents Bill of Rights”, which it is pressing on congress. The proposed “Bill” contains a number of measures aimed at reducing children’s exposure to marketing and righting “the balance of power between parents and corporations” (Commercial Alert, Parent’s Bill of Rights). The Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood has been hosting summits since 2001 to bring “together distinguished scholars, activists, parents, and educators to talk about how marketing undermines children’s health and well-being and what we can do about it” (Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood).

On the other hand, advocacy group Obligation, Inc. utilizes a less tactful approach. Their website presents harsh opinions on the marketing industry’s “attack” on kids. Much of Obligation, Inc.’s focus is devoted to bashing Channel One and it’s parent company Alloy. Channel One creates short, sponsored “news” briefs for children to watch in school. And while neither Commercial Alert nor the Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood support the marketing-oriented cause of Channel One,

Obligation, Inc. is particularly unsophisticated in their efforts to counter-market the company.

Obligation, Inc. often focuses less on the issue and more on the moral character of individual Channel One and Alloy employees, all while releasing tastelessly forward comments such as, “Channel One News is nothing less than a 21st Century form of indentured servitude. If a school district has a contract with Channel One, they are not serious about education” (Obligation, Inc.). So while advocacy groups like Commercial Alert and the Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood are promising ventures, groups that adopt strategies similar to Obligation, Inc.’s may only serve to slow the cause.

#### *Responsible Businesses and Self-Regulation*

Aside from advocacy groups who work to counter the negative effects of marketing on children, businesses that take part in self-regulation can minimize possible harms in the first place. And while self-regulation is a “voluntary” practice, both businesses and the larger community can benefit in the end.

In the summer of 2007, the Hershey Company pledged not to produce any television advertisements aimed at children under the age of twelve. Coca-Cola of North America made a similar pledge, and further limited the beverages it sold in schools to water, 100 percent juice, and milk. The Cadbury Adams Company pledged to stop using

advertisements and product placement of its Bubblicious gum to target children under twelve (Jordan 2008). The timing of these and other pledges was no coincidence, as Jordon (2008) reveals. “In 2007, Congress and the FCC formed a joint task force on marketing and childhood obesity. With new regulatory action looming, more than a dozen of the nation’s largest food manufacturers pledged to limit junk food marketing and promote healthy lifestyles” (244). In July of 2008, the FTC reported that they were “pleased to recognize” that “since 2006, many food and beverage companies, media and entertainment companies, and other entities, have taken steps to implement the recommendations from the 2006 Report” (Federal Trade Commission 2008:81). Businesses have become wise in avoiding potentially restrictive legal regulations.

Industries look to anticipate “threats” of regulation from the FTC and FCC. By self-remedying any complaints against themselves early businesses avoid the potential of facing much more restrictive regulations, which they would have even less control over (Jordan 2008). The Children’s Advertising Review Unit (CARU) was established just for this purpose. In 1974 the Council of Better Business Bureaus created CARU “as a self-regulatory program to promote responsible children’s advertising. CARU is... funded by members of the children’s advertising industry” (Children’s Advertising Review Unit 2006:1).

The guidelines laid out by CARU for responsible advertising are straightforward, if somewhat idealistic. For example, the section regarding proper use of endorsements states, "All personal endorsements should reflect the actual experiences and beliefs of the endorser" (Children's Advertising Review Unit 2006:6). Another guideline states, "Sound and visual presentations should not mislead children about product performance characteristics. Such characteristics may include... speed, method of operation, color, sound, durability, nutritional benefits and similar characteristics" (Children's Advertising Review Unit 2006:4). While these are certainly noble theories for business practices, they don't seem practical. Imagine a marketer who does nothing to enhance the television image of his products and tries only to convey their relatively dull reality. This employee would surely be fired before his advertisement ever had time to sail and sink among a sea of inevitably more flashy and glamorized products.

### **-- Conclusion --**

Over the past half-century, childhood and marketing have established a strong bond. This briefing has reviewed how marketers' realization for profit potential in children opened them up as a viable market. From there, controversy stemmed naturally and was further fueled by parents' and politicians' concern for

the children. But the perspectives vary. Where Postman saw television advertising melt away the boundary between childhood and adulthood, Corsaro saw the potential for children's cultures to be further defined, centered on these modern material artifacts.

The purpose of this briefing was to provide a forum for some of these varying perspectives to meet. All framed within certain empirical and historical points to help shape the issue of childhood and marketing. And if the research presented in this briefing is any indication of future directions, the bond between childhood and marketing will continue to grow stronger.

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