

Culprits of obesity and businesses schools roles



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KaSandra K. Tuckerman

Deceived to Death

A Look at the Culprits of Obesity and Businesses/Schools Roles

Adelle Davis once said, “ to say that obesity is caused by merely consuming too many calories is like saying the only cause of the American Revolution was the Boston Tea Party”. We may all know many Acts were passed to increase the likeability of a revolution. The Boston Tea Party surely was one of the causes, but it is foolish to think that the Boston Tea Party was the only cause to the upheaval. Likewise, with obesity, many disregard alternative possibilities that may be playing a major role in this epidemic. People often have this pre-disposed idea that obesity is caused by simply “ eating too much”. However, they aren’t taking into consideration the other many possible culprits to this huge epidemic in the United States. For example, other than just eating too much, there are advertisements geared towards children, fast food chains, and sedentary lifestyles. Understanding obesity is difficult due to the many causes that are ignored and the complexity of this issue. However, to understand obesity as a whole and to start a revolution of prevention, recognizing all possibilities needs to occur. In order to value American health, we must bring to the table the possible culprits of obesity while questions the ethical values of schools and businesses.

First of all, in order to conquer this issue and recognize the possible culprits, it is important to know everything that is encompassed within obesity. There are many interesting facts that the Health and Wellness Resource Center wants to make clear to many Americans. Obesity is an unusual accumulation

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of adipose tissue (fat tissue) that happens overtime as someone consumes more energy than is depleted. When someone is clinically considered obese, their Body Mass Index (BMI), “ mass in kilograms divided by height in meters squared,” is above 30. As there are increased risks for those with obesity and the rates of obesity have sky-rocketed, bariatrics, the study and treatment of obesity, has become its own specialty. In contrast, it used to be a branch of nutrition. Those involved in bariatrics have created levels of obesity to inform their patients on their risks and what treatment means for them. The pillars, or categories, they have created are mild, moderate, and morbid. Mild obesity has been defined as 20-40% over ideal weight. Moderate obesity is where a patient is 40-100% over ideal weight whereas morbid obesity is where the patient is 100% over ideal weight. Depending on what percentage over ideal weight you are the treatment may differ, but the repercussions remain the same. You may experience severe issues like heart disease, unexplained heart attack, different cancers, and hyperlipidemia (over concentration of fat in blood); all the way to an aching body caused by joint problems. Rosalyn Carson-Dewitt, Tish Davidson, and William Atkins of the Health & Wellness Resource Center have found that those who are more “ apple-shaped”, store weight on their waist and abdomen, carry greater risks for cancer, heart disease, stroke, and diabetes than those that are “ pear-shaped”, carry the weight on their hips and thighs. Many have ideas that obesity is occurring in adults, but it has become more of an epidemic for children than anyone could ever imagine. It isn’t just hitting these specific age groups either; it is affecting people of both sexes, many races, and different socioeconomic status. Even though different groups are being affected the procedure of examination remain the same. To examine if a

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person has obesity, Physicians will calculate their BMI. Sometimes there can be issues in calculating the BMI, so a physician may gaze at their exterior to determine if there truly is an issue. Through treatment and prevention, the main goal is reducing the patients BMI to be within normal range. To achieve this goal the patient may undergo behavioral treatment, surgical removal of adipose tissue, dieting, drug intake, and alternative treatment through herbs. In order to truly understand different treatment and prevention options and carry out the correct action, we must get to the heart of the issue.

Continually, in order to value American health, we must examine food advertisement while questioning the ethics of the businesses and schools portraying these deceiving messages. We see everywhere pictures on billboards of greasy burgers and fries that look appetizing. Yes; this could be caused from our distorted view of what food truly is, but it is also caused from the appetizing depictions of food. “ The goal of marketing is to create customers” (Levine, Jane). The sole purpose behind these enticing depictions that create a desire to devour unhealthy foods is to create more business. When more business is created, there is greater profit to make more product for our inhumane consumption. According to Jane Levine, businesses, unethically, target elementary schools and young children for sale of product. I remember what it was like as a child watching television and seeing a commercial for the latest and greatest toy. The marketers of that product created a commercial that was geared toward my age group causing a craving for this toy. This purely manipulative approach creates a greater profit for the businesses product. The food industry has followed in these

exact footsteps by promoting their product in schools, especially in locations like the cafeteria.

Likewise, while recognizing the possible culprit of manipulative advertising in obesity, we must bring to question not only the ethics of businesses, but also that of schools. This sort of advertising contributing to the obesity epidemic is at the fault of the administration of the school in which advertising is taking place. In order to have a “ Got Milk?” poster in the lunchroom, the administration of the school must approve and promote the material. It is one thing to reveal the message that the businesses desire, but it is another to promote that product through the selling for personal profit. If you travel to an elementary school or even a high school for that matter, you will find foods high in fat, sodium, and sugar. These snacks are served through many different outlets. Whether it be through the lunch line or through the vending machine closest to the classroom being traveled to, preserved and fattening products are being ingested into the body, thereby playing a role in the childhood obesity epidemic. Marketing to these children has become “ an acceptable ‘ trade off” for needed funds and materials” over their own personal health (Levine, Jane). The fact that it has become a trade-off shows just how far away from good health and values America has fallen. The ethics of schools should be in question when it comes to this issue. The administration is feeding children disgusting lies through promoting disgusting product in order to fund their cutting-edge ideas. They are willing to sacrifice the health of children, a need, for their own personal desires. Philippians 2: 3 says “ do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves”. In

the situation of the school's promoting this product for the sake of funds, they are putting their desires above what the children need, good health. Purely selfish ambition encapsulates their minds as they think of no one but themselves. If the actions they are taking to fund their desires is not unethical and selfish, I don't know what is.

In addition, the targeting of children in advertisements makes it difficult to value American health and questions the values of businesses. Food advertisements have almost become second nature to witness through television, the internet, and the radio. According to Naturopathy Digest “companies reported spending \$745 million” on advertisements through the outlet of television. With this amount of money spent on food advertisement, our minds must be imbibed with the companies' menus, slogans, and jingles. Naturopathy Digest noticed that through these outlets of advertisement, children are being targeted through different “promoters” of their product. Businesses have found a way to incorporate children's favorite cartoon characters or MARVEL superheroes into their product that will increase demand of the product. Through this sort of enticement, superheroes and cartoon characters have easily become advocates for sugar packed snacks. Children begin to receive the message that eating badly is “good” because these characters, in their eyes, are good. Senator Tom Harkins of Iowa once said “more and more we see advertising for kids to get them hooked on high-fat, high-sugar, high-salt diets”. The ways that they get them hooked on their products is through their favorite characters in the companies' image. It isn't just our elementary student's whom are becoming sugar addicts through faulty advertisement, but children even younger. A study done by

Child Health Alert took “ 63 preschoolers from low-income families”, placed food without a brand name linked to it, and placed the exact same food with a McDonald’s logo on the packaging in front of the children. They found that more often than not the children reached for the food with the McDonalds packaging. This allowed Child Health Alert to infer that children by 2 years of age can recognize brand names and preschoolers can link logos and characters to specific brand names. With these results, we can see that at a young age things are recollected and linked to specific products. This is why “ branding” of is extremely dangerous to the health of the new generation.

Next, we must bring to the table advertisements that are affecting the rates of acceptance of obesity. According to Bruce Horovitz of USA Today, “ obese people are showing up in the very place that’s mostly excluded them for decades: ads.” The obese of these ads are conquering past stigma, but also bringing to the table another issue. Horovitz says that all of sudden, in this “ new age”, it has become acceptable to show obesity. “ More of us are overweight, so it’s a shared problem” (Horovitz, Bruce). I understand that the acceptance of these people all of sudden could be a factor of their breaking out from past body shaming, but something that must be considered is that the rates at which obesity has appeared in commercials correlates directly with the increase in obesity rates. Just like the child blinded by enticing advertisement, the adult is transitioned into a life of acceptance to the obesity epidemic. The prevalence of these commercials has led to a revolution of acceptance that has swept across our nation.

Additionally, to truly value American health, we must take into consideration misleading nutrition claims and be able to debunk them. A study done by J.

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Craig Andrews, Scot Burton and Richard G. Netemeyer of the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), recruited “ primary food shoppers” and interviewed them based upon the procedures accepted for copy tests. The leaders would start with ad claim type (2), to nutrition knowledge (2), and to disclosure type (4). This led them to the creation of the mathematical equation for impeccable results, $2 \times 2 \times 4$. When it comes to nutrition knowledge, they are simply speaking of the cumulative knowledge that a primary food shopper has when it comes to aspects of nutrition. For example, this study took into consideration the knowledge one may have when it comes to phrases like: “ without all the fat”, “ a lot less sodium”, and “ loaded with fiber”. If one doesn’t understand what these mean, because they have a lack of nutritional knowledge, they may have a greater chance of buying that product. Businesses feed off of lack of nutritional knowledge. Because many lack the understanding of misleading nutritional claims, the businesses have begun to exploit this and have turned their lack of knowledge into a colossal issue. The study revealed the three biases a consumer may have while looking at misleading nutritional claims. First, there is the positivity bias, “ which consumers provide better product ratings merely based on the presence of the claim” (Andrews, Burton, & Netemeyer). This means that if a box of reduced fat Cheez-its was placed in front of a consumer, the consumer would likely give the product a better rating than Goldfish simply due to the ad claim of reduced fat. Secondly, there is the halo effect, “ which consumer’s rate the product higher on other attributes not mentioned in the claim” (Andrews, Burton, & Netemeyer). For example, if a box of reduced fat Cheez-its was placed in front of a consumer again, the consumer is likely to give a better product rating to Cheez-its because of the sodium level instead of the

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claim of reduced fat. Thirdly, there is the “magic bullet” effect, “which consumers attribute inappropriate health benefits to the product” (Andrews, Burton, & Netemeyer). Once again, if a box of reduced fat Cheez-its is placed in front of a consumer, the consumer will most likely think that because it is reduced fat it is healthy. In reality, the product is still high in fat, just lower than the original product. In addition the study also took into consideration to importance of advertising disclosures. According to Andrews, Burton, and Netemeyer, advertising disclosures include extra information for consumers to lead to lower rates of being misled. They came to the conclusion that there are three different types of disclosure: absolute, relative, and evaluative disclosure. Absolute disclosure only gives information to consumers that involve the absolute quantitative level of nutrients within the product. For example, the product may reveal that it “contains 500 milligrams per serving” (Andrews, Burton, & Netemeyer). The next disclosure type noticed the fault in absolute disclosure by adding to the absolute information the recommended daily value and the daily value percentage. Lastly, there is evaluative disclosure. This disclosure type adds that if the per serving level of the nutrient shown on the packaging is high according to the FDA standards. As you could assume, the study found that evaluative disclosure had a greater effect on consumer purchasing rates of the product. If a product with evaluative disclosure on the packaging was placed in front of me, I would regard all the facts resounding as truth. It is more likely to buy the product with lower disclosure level (absolute disclosure) than that of high disclosure level (evaluative disclosure). Because evaluative disclosure is so convincing, many businesses that create fattening snacks will use the lowest disclosure to still create an influx of profit. The last element that Andrews,

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Burton, and Netemeyer took into consideration is that of ad claims. They found that the “ use of general or specific ad claims also may affect generalizations from nutritional information ads”. Overall, nutritional knowledge, advertisement disclosures, and ad claims effect greatly the generalizations of consumers and then the profits of businesses. Because businesses’ profits can be changed drastically, they use low disclosure and manipulative ad claims to mislead consumers to purchase their product. This, in my opinion, is very unethical. Yes; their business is profiting and may be helping America economically, but they certainly are not helping America in health. The only thing that they are doing is leading them down the aisle of sugary snacks in deceitful ways that may in turn lead them in a downward spiral of unhealthy habits and obesity. Being able to debunk the health claims of businesses can be problematic, but you must have a controlled mindset and be able to ask yourself what the statements actually mean. In order to know what these statements mean nutritional knowledge is key.

Furthermore, in order to value American health, we must consider the foods that we are ingesting into our bodies. The International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity says “ one trend that has attracted particular attention in both the scientific and lay press is the dramatic increase in eating away from home, and particularly at ‘ fast food’ outlets.” Fast food restaurants have become so prevalent in the society that we live in today. We can see a McDonald’s, Arby’s, or Burger King on every corner. Because of the frequent sight of these restaurants, fast food has become a part of our monthly, weekly, or even daily intake. Scientifically, many correlations have been found between your favorite burger joint and obesity. The International

Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity has found that “time trends in eating away from home roughly parallel the national time trends in obesity prevalence”. It could be from the prevalence of fast food or the food on the menu, but we can see the direct relationship between fast food chains and obesity. The International Journal also noticed some very interesting facts about the prevalence of obesity and fast food chains. For example, “although there is no clearly agreed upon definition of the concept, ‘fast food’ outlets have been by far the most rapidly expanding sector of the U. S. food distribution system”. Many heads are coming together to ultimately form a definition for this outlet of distribution of food, whether that be based upon the calories and other nutritional facts about the product or the time span it takes to make the product. Until they find this definition, they all agree that it is growing faster than any other outlet. They also agree upon the fact that the food distributed at these chains is “positively associated with body weight” (Jeffery, Baxter, McGuire, & Linde). The amount of fat and sodium packed into company’s product has been proven to increase body weight significantly. In a documentary known as Super-Size Me, a man decides to experience for himself this exact issue. In the documentary, Morgan Spurlock decides to go to McDonald’s for a whole month, 30 days, for breakfast, lunch, and dinner to view the effects that fast food has on the human machine. He had found, at the end of his study, that his breathing was much heavier, mood swings were experienced, fat was accumulated in his liver, and he gained twenty-four pounds. Spurlock faced these side effects during the experiment, but he also experienced repercussions long after the production of this documentary. For example, the weight that he had gained stayed with him for a long time. It took Spurlock a whole fourteen

months to get back to his original size and shape. Super-Size Me is an impeccable example of what fast food can do to your body and the long term effects that can be spurned upon you from fat packed, high in sodium food products. Aside from Robert W. Jeffery's, Judy Baxter's, Maureen McGuire's, and Jennifer Linde's agreement that these foods are "positively associated with body weight", as seen with the case of Spurlock, they also agree upon the fact that the foods are generally high in energy density. The International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity found, through an analysis of the foods served in these sort of venues, that energy packed foods makes the body more susceptible for an excess of energy intake. Because the human body cannot digest this much energy within their foods, weight is gained therefore linking these foods to obesity if eaten in excess amounts. To value American health, the importance of recognizing these factors of fast food linked to obesity is beyond prevalent. It's hard to not walk down the street and see someone who is overweight or experiencing symptoms of weight gain. With the increase of eating out at fast food venues, we have found an undeniably sound culprit to the epidemic.

Altogether, we must bring to the table all of the possible perpetrators of obesity while questioning the ethical values of schools and businesses. Through all culprits of obesity, the deceitful hand of schools and businesses are in action. From the advertisements targeting with their favorite MARVEL character all the way to schools trading off young health for the sake of funding their desires, we have been swayed as a nation toward the acceptance of obesity through businesses and schools. Although there are many culprits to this major epidemic, maybe the heart of the issue isn't

biological factors or the foods we are ingesting, but rather the issue is within the ethical values of the schools and businesses promoting unhealthy lifestyles that lead to being deceived to death.

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