

# An emerging health problem today

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The essay to be reviewed by this paper discussed an emerging health problem today - that of child obesity. Specifically, the author emphasized the debate in regard to who is to blame for the dilemma and that his hypothesis is that parents are mainly responsible. He presented this against the argument that advertising is the main culprit for children gaining so unhealthy weight.

What makes the essay important for most people is that it touches on an unpopular standpoint by downplaying the role of the usual suspect in the obesity problem - the media - by stressing the complicity of the parents straight on. I believe that this is a very sensible argument and that it allowed the essay to develop a solution that is, though, not new is simple in its efficiency. By having the parents take the blame, the author was actually allowed an opportunity to present a sensible, simple and effective solution to the problem.

### Referencing

The very first impression that I got from reading the first paragraph is that the piece is not an argumentative essay but a report on Balko's position in the parents-versus-marketers debate about who to blame in the child obesity problem. The essay's thesis was not the author's and the problem that he chose to address was answered by quotes and paraphrases from Balko's work exclusively. Although paraphrasing and quotes lifted from Balko's books were correct, it is easy for the reader to assume that a good number of other arguments raised by the author (because it is not referenced) are also lifted from Balko. Consider the phrase: " Parents are angry at the unhealthy food manufacturers, who are marketing popular children's

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characters – such as SpongeBob SquarePants – for use during children’s television programs and endorsed on unhealthy food products.” In the introductory paragraph, Balko’s book was mentioned and it was entitled, Don't Blame SpongeBob for Child Obesity. It doesn’t take an overly active imagination to say that the unreferenced statement could still be attributed to Balko.

### Arguments

The arguments raised by the paper were credible (although most of it are attributed to Balko). There are specific cases mentioned to support a point being made. For example, there was the case of Sweden wherein statutes regulating advertisements marketed towards children are found to be ineffective in curbing obesity. There are statistics mentioned as well as studies that were conducted which provided a strong basis for the main purpose of the essay, which is to shift the responsibility from advertisements and the media and pin the blame on the parents. Specific statutes were also mentioned, an approach in the discourse that is highly effective especially in terms of persuasion.

Furthermore, the paper is not guilty of bias or unbalanced treatment of the subject. While it assumed a specific position, it did not fail to cite the arguments being raised by the other side as well. He was able to cite his points of view with demonizing the opposing perspective. He cited an opposing but valid point and presented a better alternative argument. However, all these were not able to compensate for the fact that the paper sounded like a report or even just a review of Balko’s perspectives on the issue and not about an independent inquiry and approach to persuade people based on original materials and thoughts on the subject.

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## Weakness

An important observation in the essay is that the introductory paragraph is weak and quite confusing. The opening statement, for example, talked about the fact that “ children are becoming obese and the finger-pointing continues.” What exactly is the finger pointing about when children become obese? The preceding statements were equally perplexing as the phrase, “ modern-day grudge” was introduced. The piece could have looked better when the author used straightforward words and phrases to demonstrate his thoughts.

The essay could have proved to be an effective argumentative piece if it was able to use a number of sources that could have provided different perspectives and diversity to the entire essay. The grammar was good and the points raised were sensible and that empirical shreds of evidence were amply utilized to strengthen the author’s opinions. A diverse roster of references could have given the essay credibility and persuaded its readers more effectively. In addition, the structure and the flow of points are smooth but, again, the substance is what always counts.

Finally, the author failed to comprehensively discuss what the parents could do to check the emergence of the obesity problem. After stating the facts, the essay no longer explored the steps and possible suggestions in regard to what the parents could do in order to stop child obesity.