

# Critique of "too much of a good thing" essay



Critique of " Too Much of a Good Thing" " Eating too much food is a bad thing (Steam, n. d. ). " says Greg Crister in his op-ed essay " Too much of A Good Thing" featured in the Los Angeles Times (July 22, 2001). Crister raises the issue of child obesity as a growing epidemic plaguing America and the world and proposes that in order to fight this crisis the American public needs to stigmatize the idea of overeating. By stigmatizing overeating children will be less likely to overeat, thus having positive effects and reducing the percentage of children affected by child obesity.

Crister proposes a valid solution to the problem; however he does not take into consideration the negative externalities that may occur from such a stigmatization and the complexity of the situation. Crister begins his essay by stating the United Nations, which is set to meet in New York City in the coming month, has declared that Obesity is a growing health problem of which western countries are especially being plagued. Current data has shown that child obesity had double in many countries throughout the world and in the United States 25 percent of all children less than 19 years are either overweight or obese.

Health problems as a result of obesity is costing the health care system so much that HIV/AIDS will appear inexpensive. Families, more specifically Parent, which Crister regards as important variables in tackling this problem, have been influenced by the media and outdated nutritional information which has prevented them from setting strict eating guidelines preventing overeating. He cites that such information propagated by bestselling books as " Fit for Life" by Harvey and Marilyn Diamond that " Where food is concerned, tension is always to be avoided. Crister says that such advice has

made parents weary of tackling their children's eating habits. Crister explains that no one should be stigmatized for being overweight but stigmatizing unhealthy eating habits could be effective similar to efforts made to stigmatized smoking and safe sex, which have had positive effects, despite short term problems. He then presents the readers with a recent study by Barbara Rolls, a Pennsylvania State University scholar, in which a group of children are given three different portions of food.

The results yielded those children less than 5 years, ate the same portion regardless of the serving they were given, while those over 5 years often ate more as the portions increased, which the researchers indicated provides an opportunity to influence children's eating habits. Crister then continues to along this round stating that another study has was shown that children 6 to 12 years, who were offered health guidance, were less overweight 10 years later than those children that received none. Despite such data, opposing research into the area of child diets has stated that children should not be placed on diets.

He then counter claims this by stating that in fact there is evidence, published in " Pediatrics" health journal, that a healthy supervised diet has no negative effects on a child's growth. Many parents believe that restricting children's eating habits is an antiquated notion of days gone by. They believe that children should be allowed to make mistakes, however Crister makes note that in a world where such companies as McDonald's spend billions of dollars in targeting children it is easy to make bad mistakes.

He finally ends with stating that it might be futile to attempt such efforts against overeating especially in a society where bad eating choices is cheaper, more accessible and convenient as opposed to healthy food choices. However the French faced a similar problem with child obesity in the early 20th century and took a hard line stance promoting strict dietary guidelines, which may explain why the French today are so lean. In his essay Greg Crister presents a tangible and plausible solution to tackling the problem of child obesity.

He logically brings across his point that child obesity is growing problem in America which needs desperate attention. He does this by using information from valid sources such as the United Nations and research studies by nutritional experts to give his claim validity. He also presents a balance argument in several instances where he interjects counterarguments against his own claims, which he uses to advantage, by exposing flaws and weakness in the argument. This in turn adds to the credibility in his stance that child obesity needs to be addressed as a serious matter.

Although Crister undoubtedly brings about his point of child obesity as a problem, he fails in providing supporting evidence that stigmatizing overeating will solve the problem of child obesity. Apart from equating success against smoking and unsafe sex and an example of how the French dealt with a similar situation, there is no credible evidence, such as research studies or data, which indicates that the stigmatization of overeating will be successful in solving this problem.

This false analogy that he presents compares two situations which may seem similar but have various differences that set it apart from the current situation, therefore it is somewhat misleading. His proposition that by stigmatizing overeating will solve the current situation of child obesity oversimplifies a complex situation that involves many other variables. Research has indicated " that childhood obesity rates are due to a combination of factors. These factors include community designs, less access to nutritious factors, more television and video game times, computer time, and busier family schedules (K.

Costley, 2010). " In addition to this Crister fails to acknowledge economic disparities between different families in America. Many families in the lower income brackets are unable to afford healthier foods because they are expensive. In a 2006 study, it was discovered that obesity increased more in children of low-income families (Anderson and Butcher, 2006). It then makes sense that by only tackling one cause of this problem, eating habits, the problem of child obesity will not be solved by stigmatizing bad eating habits alone. It may help but it will not be the end all solution to this problem.

The problem of child obesity is a serious matter that should be addressed not only by families but also institutions such as the government. Crister's suggestion to stigmatize overeating seems logical, however he does not account for the negative consequences that such an approach may cause. In a society where " fat" is deemed unacceptable adding additional negative stigmas to eating causing increases in health problems such as anorexia and bulimia. Those who are afflicted by additional circumstances, such as

genetics and biology, may need further help to fight obesity, something that stigmatization will not be able to solve.

Although Crister mentions that he does not condone stigmatizing overweight individuals, only unhealthy eating habits, it will be difficult to not associate overweight individuals with the negative connotations that this stigmatization of overeating will bring. Children, as we all know can be cruel and say cruel things, therefore many overweight children may fall prey to cruel behavior by other children. Such exposure can very well contribute to higher depression rates and negative self image in overweight children, which can lead to increase eating. Stigmas are usually associated with negative connotations and social disapproval, herefore taking such an approach might in the end create more societal problems. In order words we may be exchanging one problem for another. A better approach would be to educate children, parents and families on the positive aspects of healthy eating as well as the negative consequences of overeating. Instead of punishing unhealthy eating habits, rewards healthy habits creating positive reinforcement. Increase programs to help children who may suffer from psychological problems, leading to overeating, so that they have increase avenues to deal with these issues.

If the problem of child obesity is to be solved an in-depth study has to be done to uncover all causes and all solutions must be evaluated careful to decipher if any will have negative spillovers. Crister does a great job on bring the issue of child obesity to the forefront; however his solution does not help to deal with many aspects that are also contributing to the problem.

Stigmatizing overeating is solution that may be successful in combating child

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obesity; however it is only a start and needs to be fine tuned and combined with additional solutions to solve a problem like child obesity.