

# Qualitative Impact of TV and Social Media Advertising of Unhealthy Foods in Children

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## Introduction

A recent systematic review of food advertising influences on children's attitudes, preferences and intake of unhealthy foods found a lack of: 1) qualitative research, 2) understanding of newer media food ads (e.g., social media ads), 3) understanding of long-term health effects of food marketing (1).

There currently exists no federal prohibition on advertising embedded within children's television programming, although some voluntary, industry-led programs exist (2, 3).

## Research Goals:

Qualitative case study of 30 children (9-11 years) to: 1) understand extent to which children realize they are targets for unhealthy, processed foods, 2) if there are racial/ethnic differences in perception of being targeted, 3) explore if BMI partially mediates (4) perception of being targeted for food ads.

## Methods

Data was collected from 21 child-parent dyads residing in New England from Mar-Sept. 2022.

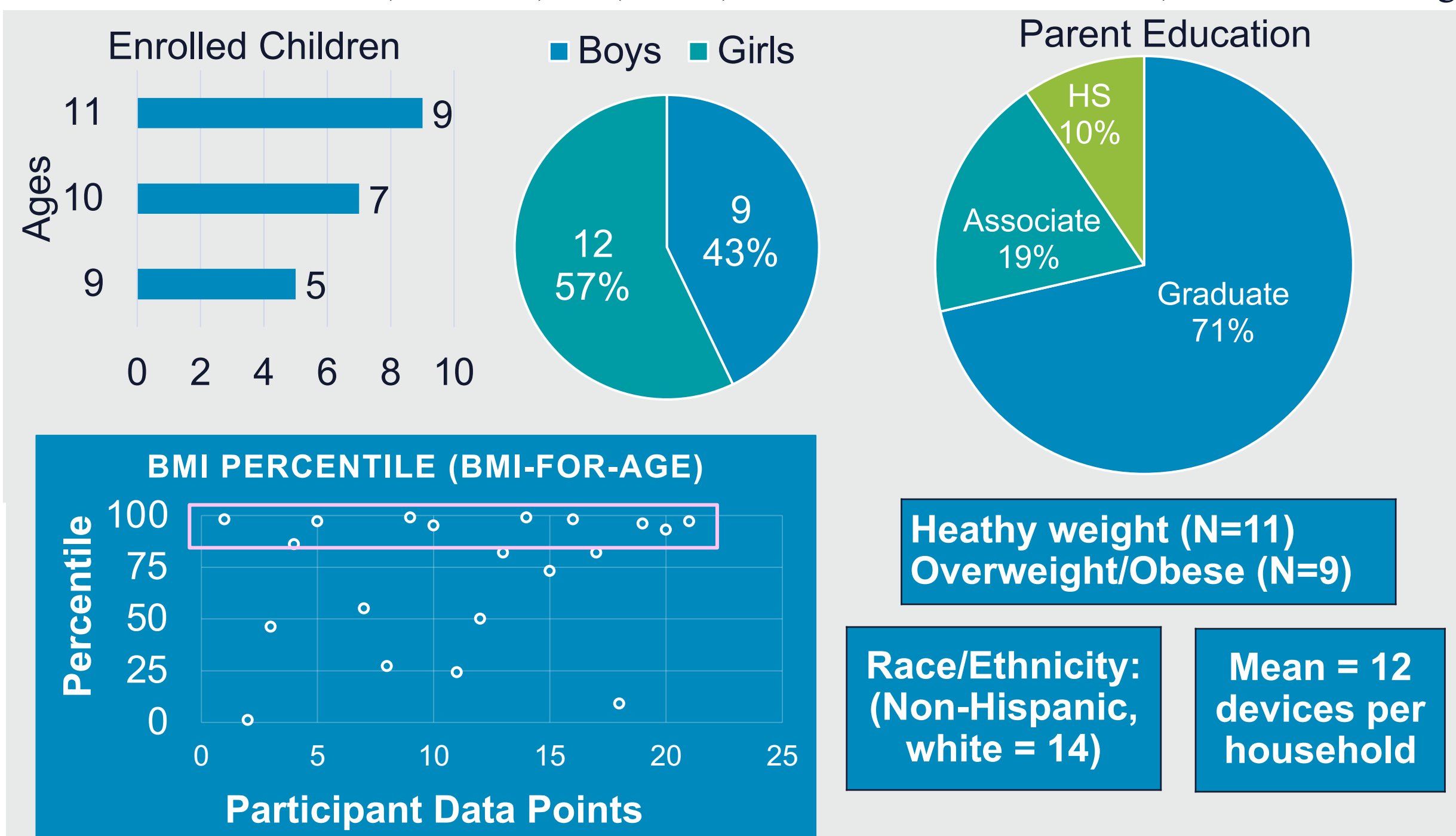
Children were interviewed via Zoom & asked:

- About media use, food ads they see across media devices, how they interact with 'skip ad' buttons (e.g., YouTube), what they like to watch, etc.

- To share a screenshot of a food ad they saw.

Parents completed a survey for # of household media devices, child weekly media use across devices, and background demographics.

Interviews were transcribed (Otter AI); themes were identified using NVivo (V20.6.1). Analysis is preliminary and on-going.



### Selected Quotes:

Q: "Do you have a favorite TV show or video that you like to watch?"  
 A: "Yes. Probably. For videos, it's probably like sneakers, like *Jordan's* and stuff..."  
 Q: "Do you see any food advertisements on your favorite shows or video?"  
 A: "Sometimes, just like shoes, they'll promote a new food brand's shoe."  
 Q: "Can you give an example of that?"  
 A: "*Twix* made a shoe. So did *Ruffles*."

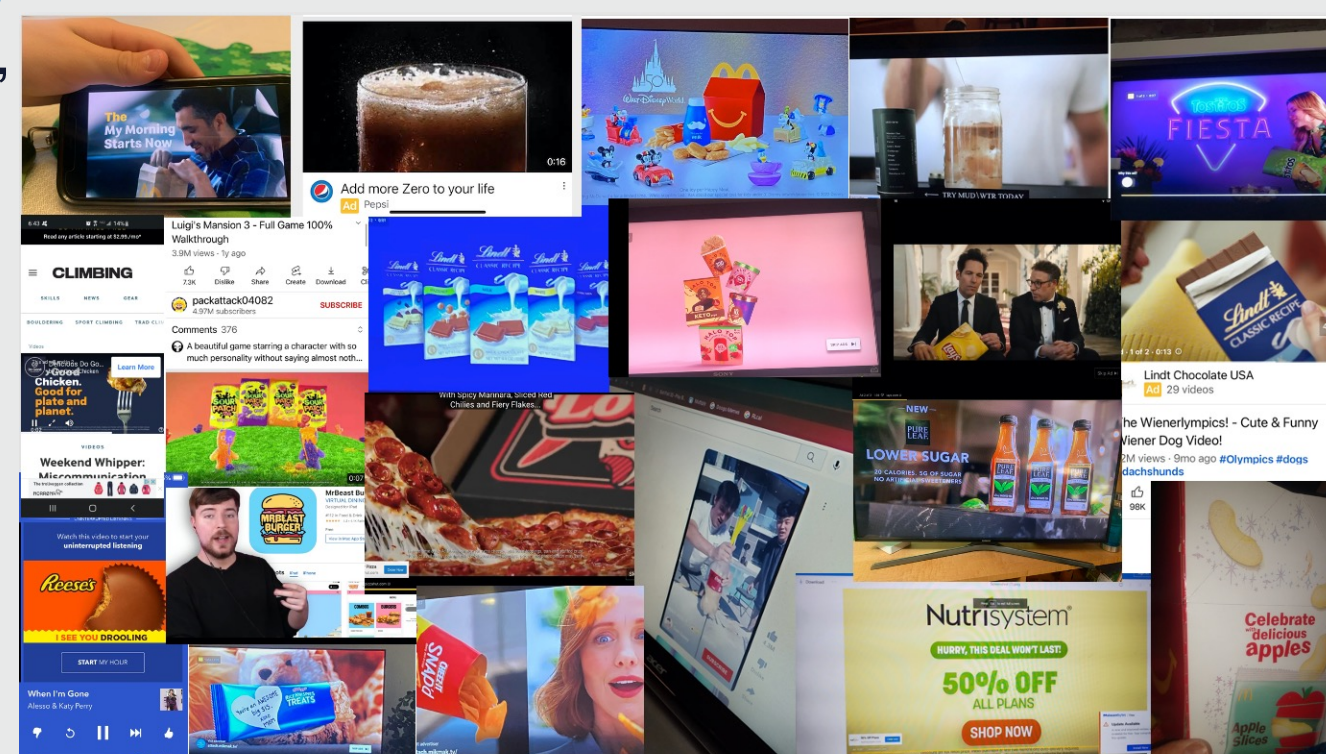


Image from: <https://footwearnews.com/2019/focus/athletic-outdoor/anthony-davis-signature-shoes-release-nike-ruffles-1202793697/>

### Selected Quotes:

Q: "[On YouTube] Do you usually hit 'skip ad' or do you usually watch the commercial?"  
 A: "Sometimes, if I just get a little interested... I sit there for like 25 minutes watching the commercial. But usually, if it's something boring, I'll just skip."

### Ad Screenshots from Children



### Selected Quotes:

Q: "How do you feel when you're advertised to? When you see a commercial, do you feel annoyed, do you like it, do you think they're funny or something else? Or all the above?"

A: "All of the above. Because sometimes they can be funny. Sometimes they can be annoying when they're interrupting my show."

## Implications

This study helps us to learn about:

- Current media use among 9-11 year olds & ads they see on newer media platforms
- Perceptions of targeted ads & how ubiquitous ads are
- May help inform future interventions to potentially improve children's health & protect them from potential negative advertising effects

### Lessons Learned:

- Recruiting is challenging, but recruiting a diverse sample is even more challenging; allow for a lot of time and effort (especially if you're doing it by yourself)
- Siblings can get upset if their sibling is the only one being interviewed; consider asking a few questions of the sibling (if the situation seems appropriate).

## Acknowledgements

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## References

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