

The Commercialization of Childhood

Presented by:
The Center for Earth Leadership
(www.earthleaders.org)

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Introduction

Agenda

- Introduction
- Marketing to Kids is Big Business
- Materialism and Family Stress
- Food Marketing and Childhood Obesity
- Marketing Body Image and Sex
- Marketing Violence
- Potential Solutions
- Group Discussion and Questions



Marketing to Kids is Big Business

Marketing to children is preparing them to embrace global capitalism.



http://blog.futurelab.net/a_media/media_consumption/



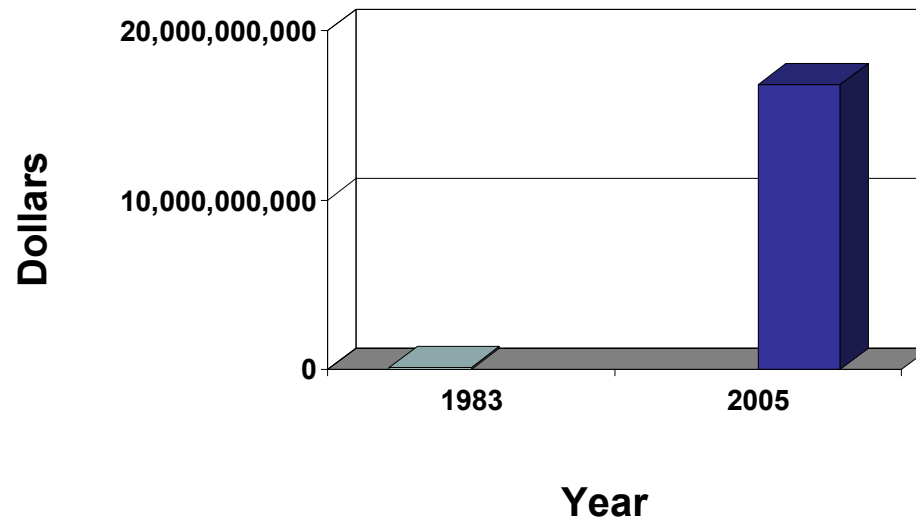
Marketing to Kids is Big Business

“I wondered why people were constantly consuming, and thus supporting the corporate dismantling of the planet’s ecosystems, when the accumulation of wealth doesn’t make them any happier [...]. The more people believe they need an endless array of material goods to be happy, the harder it is to live sustainably. The more time that is devoted to consuming [...] the less time is devoted to activities that satisfy non-material needs – family and friends, creative and artistic endeavors, spiritual practices, etc.”

- Allen Kanner

Marketing to Kids is Big Business

- In 1983, US companies spent \$100 million on advertising the kids. By 2005, they spent \$16.8 billion. In turn, children are influencing the spending of \$600 billion annually.



Marketing to Kids is Big Business



“They aren’t as much children as much as what we like to call ‘evolving consumers.’”

- Elliot Ettenberg
Marketing Executive

Marketing to Kids is Big Business

- Children see more than 40,000 advertisements on TV alone per year.



Marketing to Kids is Big Business

Marketing to Kids is Ubiquitous: Product Licensing

- The act of selling the use of images or logos to promote products other than the ones they were created for.
- Almost every major media program for children has a line of licensed merchandise.



Marketing to Kids is Big Business

Marketing to Kids is Ubiquitous: Product Placement

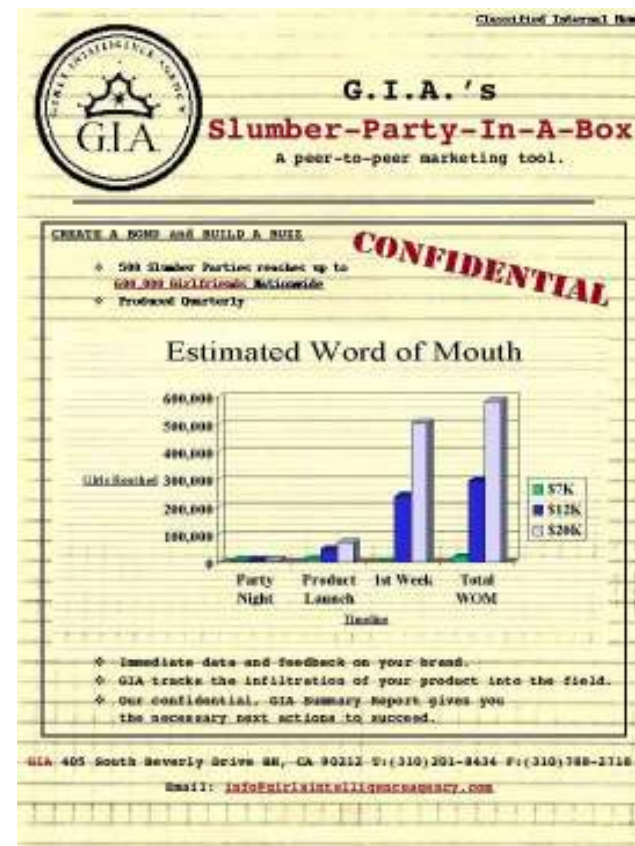
When products are incorporated into the fabric of a TV program, movie, computer game, book, etc.



Marketing to Kids is Big Business

Marketing to Kids is Ubiquitous: Stealth Marketing

- When the receiver of the advertisement remains unaware that they have been exposed to advertising at all.
- Girls Intelligence Agency's Slumber Party in a Box



Marketing to Kids is Big Business

Age and Child Marketing

- “All of these people understand something that is very basic and logical, that if you own this child at an early age, you can own this child for years to come... Companies are saying ‘Hey, I want to own the kid younger and younger.’” - Mike Searle, former President, Kids R Us.



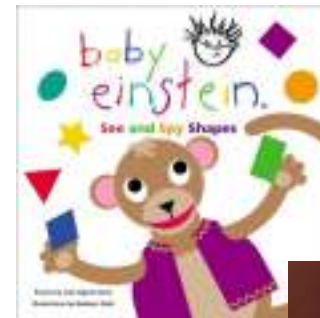
<http://conspiracyfactory.blogspot.com/2007/05/marketing-101-selling-crap-to-babies.html>

Marketing to Kids is Big Business

The Effects of Marketing to Kids

- “At six months of age, the same age they are imitating simple sounds like ‘ma-ma,’ babies are forming mental images of corporate logos and mascots.”

- James McNeal



Marketing to Kids is Big Business

Play

- Active play is the basis for cognitive development, imagination, humor, and the acquisition of social skills.
- Television and video games have encouraged play to become passive.
- The advent of toys based on TV characters has restricted children's ability to use their imagination to create diverse stories with their toys.



http://www.kidscornerflorida.com/about_us.htm



<http://www.xbox.com/en-US/hardware/compare101.htm>

Marketing to Kids is Big Business

What You Can Do

- **Media Literacy:**
 - Learn as much as you can about the effects fo media on your children and then teach them how to analyze and understand media.

Materialism and Family Stress

One of the central premises of marketing is that buying things will make us happy. There is a growing body of evidence, however, that the opposite is true: that the pressure to spend and consume actually makes people less happy.



www.autismtreatmentcenter.org/contents/images/news030.jpg

Materialism and Family Stress

Being Materialistic Affects Children's Well-Being

Children who are more materialistic:

- Are less happy, had lower self-esteem, and reported more symptoms of anxiety.
- Reported less generosity and allocated less money to charity when they imagined receiving a windfall.
- Reported engaging in fewer positive environmental behaviors (e.g., reusing paper, using less water while showering, etc).

Materialism and Family Stress

Exposure to Marketing Contributes to Children's Materialism

- Materialism is correlated to exposure to marketing for children as young as preschoolers.
- A survey of parents found that 63% of parents surveyed believed that their children define their self worth in terms of what they own.

Materialism and Family Stress

The Nag Factor

- Studies show a correlation between children's exposure to marketing and their purchase requests.
- Studies have also demonstrated a relationship between exposure to marketing and family conflict.



- A pole of young people ages 12 to 17 showed that on average they ask their parents nine times before getting what they want.
- Fifty-five percent said they were usually successful in getting their parents to give in.

Marketing to Kids is Big Business

The Nag Factor

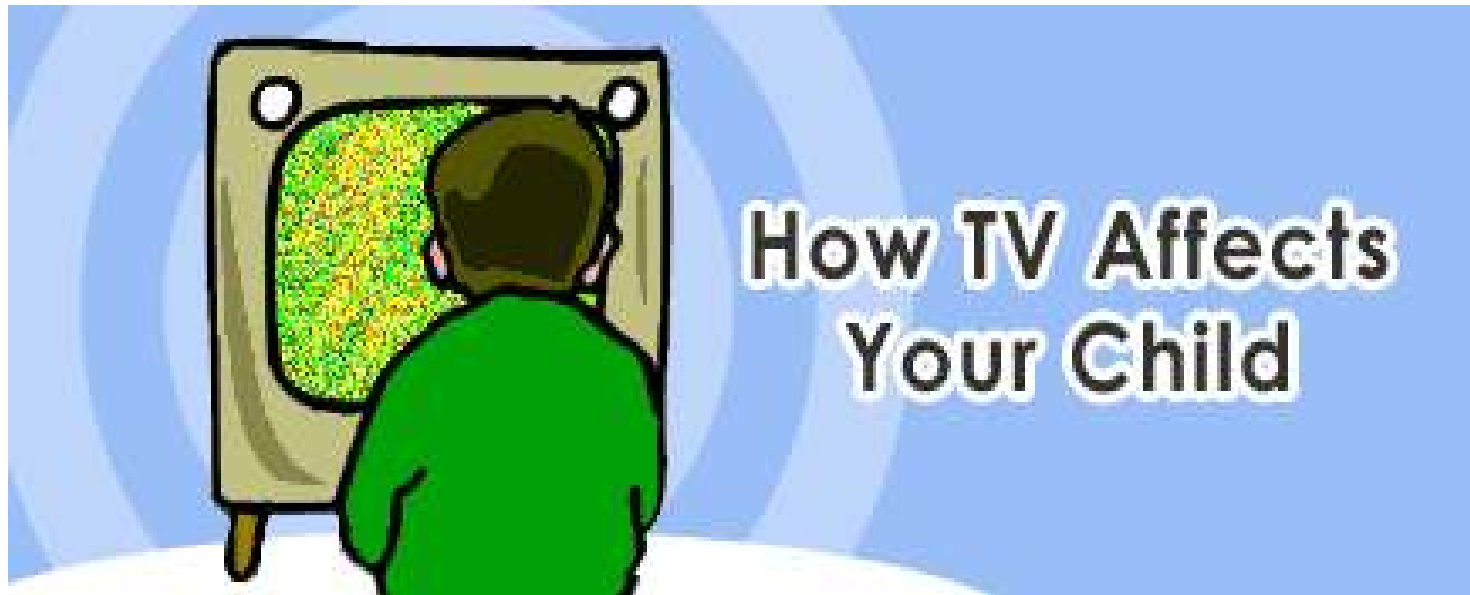
Marketers also deliberately try to get children to nag their parents for products.

“All of our advertising is targeted to kids. You want that nag factor so that 7-year-old Sarah is nagging Mom in the grocery store to buy Funky Purple. We’re not sure Mom would reach out for it on her own.”

- Kelly Still, Heinz



Food Marketing and Childhood Obesity



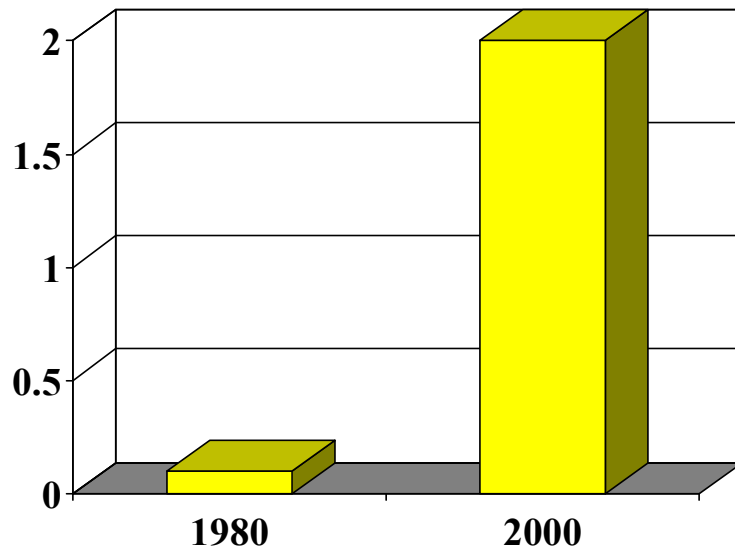
Food Marketing and Childhood Obesity

Marketing Is a Factor in Childhood Obesity

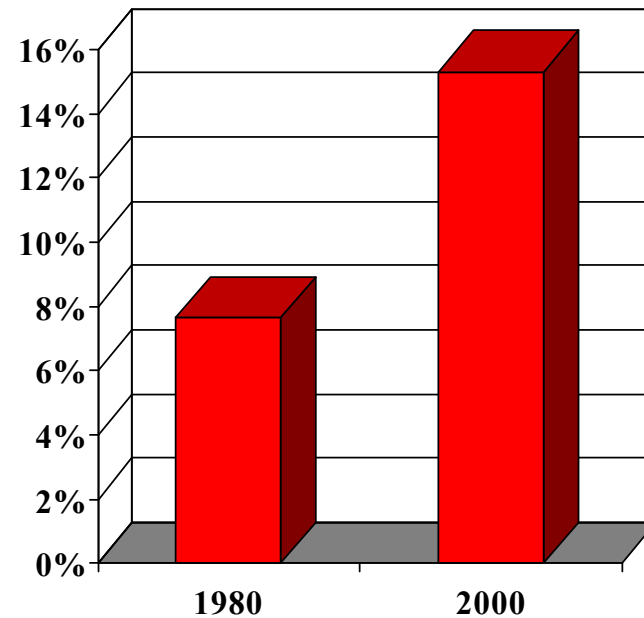
- TV ads affect what kids know about food and what they choose to consume!
- The Kaiser Family Foundation concluded that exposure to food advertising and product licensing (where a child's favorite media characters are used to sell junk food) contributes to childhood obesity.

Food Marketing and Childhood Obesity

Advertising Toward Children & Childhood Obesity



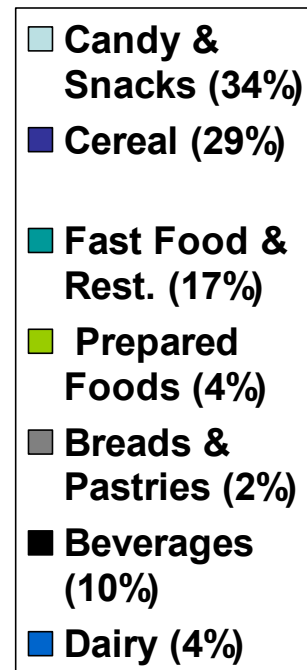
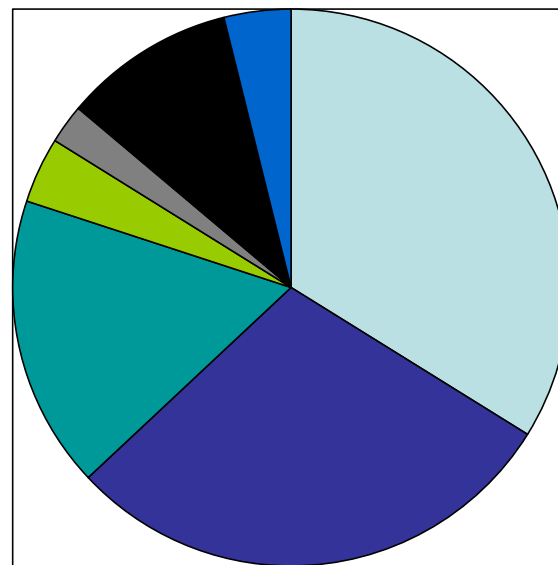
■ Industry Spending on Advertising to Children (in Billions)



■ Childhood Obesity

Food Marketing and Childhood Obesity

TV bombards kids with Junk Food

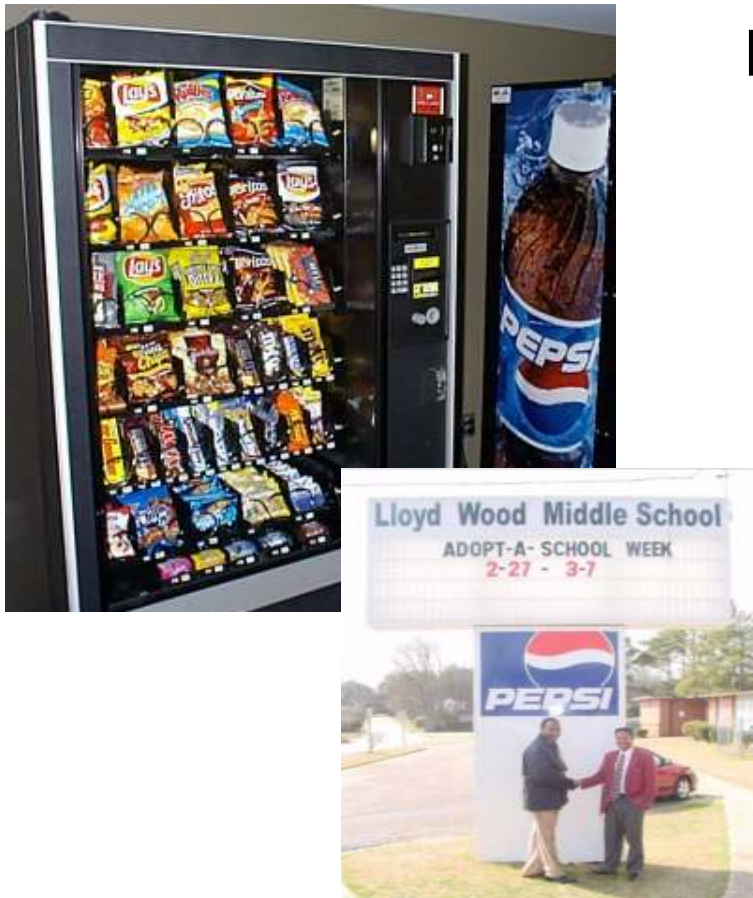


Food Marketing and Childhood Obesity

Food Marketing Aimed at Kids is Everywhere



Food Marketing and Childhood Obesity



Food Advertising in Schools

- Marketers take advantage of budget shortfalls to offer cash or products in return for advertising access
- 94% of high schools, 84% of middle schools, and 58% of elementary schools allow sales of sugar-laden drinks on their premises
- Channel One regularly shows ads for soda, candy, fast food & chips

Food Marketing and Childhood Obesity

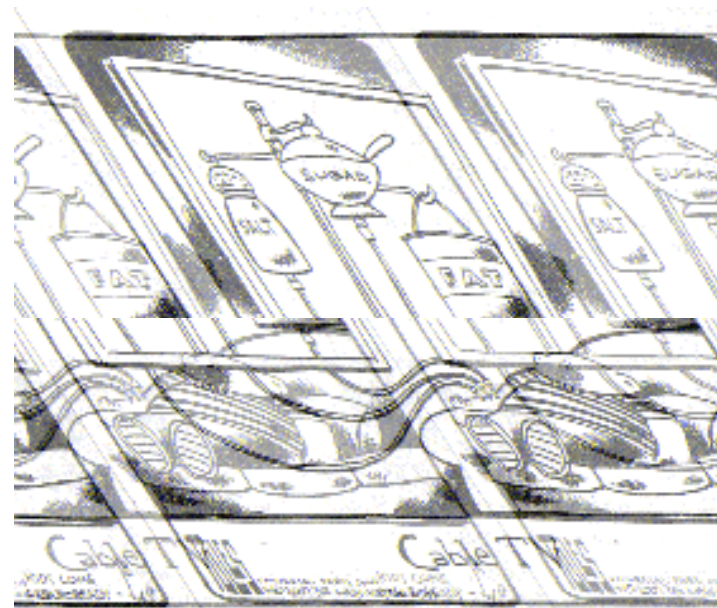
Serious Health Consequences of Obesity

- 1 of 3 overweight kids is susceptible to diabetes (higher for some minority groups).
- 80% of overweight adolescents continue to be overweight in adulthood.
- 300,000 deaths in the US each year are related to obesity.

Food Marketing and Childhood Obesity

Health Consequences, cont'd

- For every hour of TV viewed per day, obesity risk increases by 6% (31% if in bedroom).
- An article in *The Oregonian* on Jan. 6, 2008 was titled "Food isn't the be-all – you can be killed by your couch"
- "The growing epidemic of physical inactivity and its related diseases are such a significant problem that US doctors have coined a new term: Sedentary Death Syndrome."



The Oregonian, 1/6/08

Food Marketing and Childhood Obesity

Researchers and Professional Organizations are Concerned

- Young children are not able to distinguish between commercials & TV programs. They do not recognize commercials are trying to sell something.
- The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends NO screen time for kids under 2 years old and 2 hours or less per day of *quality* programming for children over 2 years.

Food Marketing and Childhood Obesity

Is There ANY Good News?



- Yes - In Portland, there is the Campaign for Commercial Free Schools, an organization seeking passage of a comprehensive policy to reduce commercial influence in Portland Public Schools.
- Also, kids learn from examples: Be a good role model!

Marketing Body Image

- The number one desire for girls ages 11 to 17 is to be thinner.
- Forty percent of 9- and 10-year-old girls are on diets.



- As many as 10 million females are struggling with an eating disorder. Most are between the ages of 11 and 25. And more than 50% of the boys 11-17 chose a physical ideal only possible through the use of steroids.
- In real life, Barbie would be 8 feet tall and have a 16 inch waist.

Marketing Body Image

- Research has shown that discontent about body image is directly correlated to how often teenage girls read fashion magazines.
- Increased viewing of TV commercials and reading of fashion magazines leads to increased body dissatisfaction for both male and female adolescents.



YM Magazine



Teen People

Marketing Sex

Children are bombarded with sexual content and messages.

- Most of the top TV shows for teens contain sexual content. A 2003 Kaiser Foundation study showed that 83% of the top 20 shows viewed by teens had some sexual content and 20% contained implicit references to sexual intercourse.
- Teens who watch more sexual content on TV are more likely to initiate intercourse and progress to more advanced non-coital sexual activities during the subsequent year.

Marketing Sex

Sexual messages are being marketed to younger and younger children

- Bratz dolls for 2-year-olds have catch phrases like “Babyz already know how to flaunt it” and “They’re keeping it real in the crib.”
- Underwear are now being made to fit 7-year-old girls.
- Abercrombie sells t-shirts that read “the rumors are true” for girls and “something about you attracts me, I wish I could put my finger on it” for boys.



Marketing Violence

Research shows a connection between media and youth violence as strong as that between tobacco and cancer.



Marketing Violence

- There have been 1000+ studies over the past 40 years with the conclusion that TV and film violence leads to real world violence in childhood and later in adult life.
- Research on violent video games suggest they have a similar, perhaps stronger effect.
- Professional organizations, the Surgeon General, the Senate Judiciary committee, and others uniformly endorse the conclusions about media and violence and have issued suggestions for parents



*Toys for 7-year-olds
from R-Rated movies*

Marketing Violence

Violent Video Games

- The majority of video games include violence (half of which would cause serious injury or death in the real world)
- Effects include physiological arousal, aggressive thoughts, emotions and actions, hostile attributions and decreases in pro-social actions
- Boys average 13 hours/week playing video games; girls 5 hours



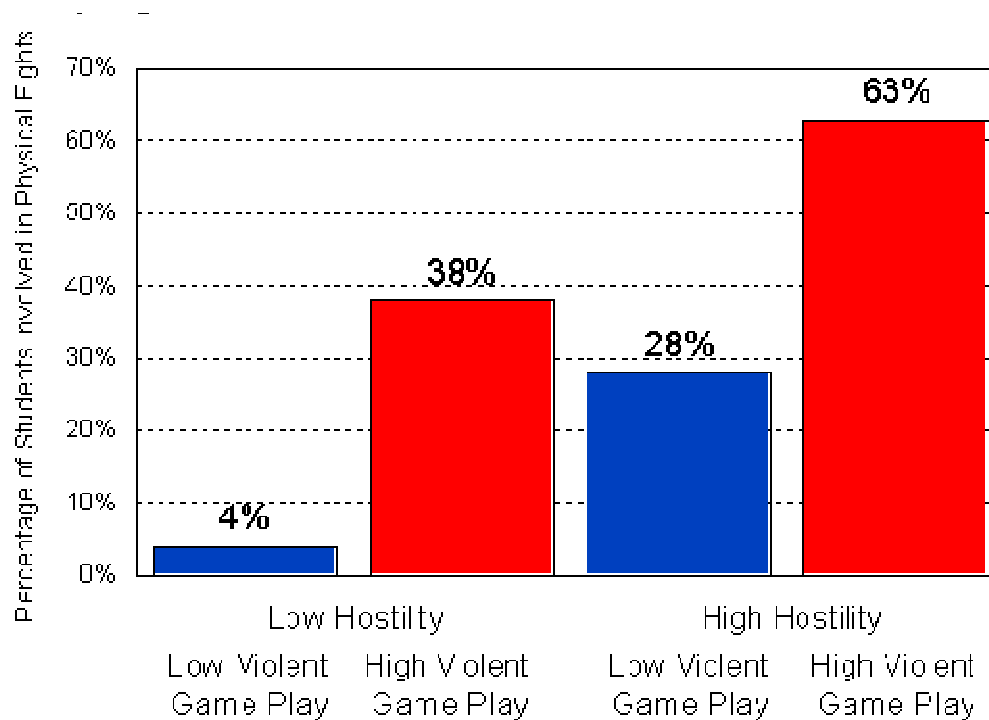
Grand Theft Auto 3



resident evil®

Marketing Violence

7th & 8th graders who play violent video games get into more fights



Marketing Violence



Marketing Violence

The negative effects can be long lasting, but The Good News is that effects are reversible

- 6-10 year olds from 5 countries were followed up at age 20-25; those with more exposure to TV violence were more aggressive as young adults
- 3rd and 4th grade students whose media time was restricted experienced a 50% decrease in verbal aggression and a 40% decrease in physical aggression.

From The Christian Science Monitor



What You Can Do

- **Contributing to the Household**
- **Bed-time Routines**
- **Family Dinners**
- **Rainy Day Play**
- **Outdoor Play**
- **Establish Limits to Screen Time**
- **Media Literacy**

Presentation by the Center for Earth Leadership

