# Parents' and children's perceptions of food and beverage marketing to which children are exposed

**Kaye Mehta**

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Discipline of Public Health
Flinders Prevention, Promotion and Primary Health Care
Faculty of Health Sciences
Flinders University

# Contents

## Summary

Introduction

Children's exposure to marketing for energy-dense nutrient poor (EDNP) foods is considered to be a contributory factor to childhood obesity. A trend has been observed for marketing communications to move from traditional media (such as television advertising) to non-broadcast media (such as, the Internet). The influence of EDNP food marketing on children's food preferences and consumer behaviour (pestering) is also considered to undermine parental authority to regulate children's food choices, and add to the stress of parenting.

This doctoral research investigated the perceptions of parents and children, about food and beverage marketing to which children are exposed.

Review of literature

The following literature was reviewed in order to elicit the theoretical frames and empirical evidence that could inform the research: marketing within the context of consumer society; neo-liberalism; children and consumerism; food marketing to the child consumer; parenting the child consumer; and, ethics.

Methodology & methods

This research investigated the perceptions of parents and children, about food and beverage marketing to which children are exposed. The research conducted interviews with parent-child pairs (one parent and one child form each family; children aged between 8 -13 years), to discover their awareness of, responses to, and opinions about food and beverage marketing that children are exposed to.

The research objectives were to examine children's and parents':
general understandings and perceptions of marketing and its effects on children; awareness of marketing on non-broadcast media; opinions and concerns about marketing; consumer identity; and, perceptions of responsibility, regulation and governance in relation to marketing.

The research was based on the epistemology of constructionism, the theoretical perspective of interpretivism and, qualitative methodology. The research used semi-structured individual interviews and focus groups to explore parents' and children's perceptions of food marketing to which children are exposed.

Findings and discussion

The findings from my research emerged out of two rounds of interviews with the thirteen parent-child pairs.

The parents and children in this study exemplified neo-liberal citizenry who accepted food marketing as part of modern capitalist society, and who individualised the problem of unhealthy food marketing that children were exposed to. They considered that parents were primarily responsible for mitigating the adverse effects of unhealthy food marketing, and parents did this by regulating children's food choices and media use. The parents applied authoritative parenting principles to regulate their children's diets and media access, and their children in turn appeared to comply with parenting rules and practices.

The parents and children portrayed a complex mixture of idealistic and pragmatic views about the ethics of food marketing to children. They appeared to be caught within the paradox of problemetizing unhealthy food marketing to children, both as a social problem and as an individual problem.

The children's responses as consumers of marketing demonstrate the strong 'social' power of marketing vis a vis children's sense of belonging within society and their peer group. Parents also were enmeshed in a complex relationship with marketing, as primary purchasers of their children's food; they both resisted marketing for ethical reasons and engaged with it for pragmatic reasons.

Conclusion

This research revealed the perspectives of parents and children on some of the central elements in the policy debate on EDNP food marketing namely, ethics, responsibility and regulation. In this way, the research can make a positive contribution to the current policy debate in Australia on restricting children's exposure to EDNP food marketing.

## List of Tables



## Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

## Research output arising from this thesis

*Peer-reviewed publications*

1. Mehta K, Coveney J, Ward P, Handsley E, 'Parents' and children's perceptions of the ethics of marketing energy-dense nutrient-poor foods on the Internet: implications for policy to restrict children's exposure', *Currently under review by Public Health Ethics.*

*Conference presentations*

1. Mehta K, 2011, 'Media, marketing and how children think about food', Invited speaker, *Education for Health Conference,* Singapore.
2. Mehta K, 2011, 'Neo-liberal parenting and reservations about restricting unhealthy food marketing to children: Implications for public health nutrition advocacy', Oral presentation to *The Nurture and Nourish colloquium: emerging methodologies and theoretical aspects of public health nutrition,* The Australian Public Health Nutrition Academic Collaboration, Adelaide.
3. Mehta K, Coveney J, Ward P, Handsley E, 2009, 'Parents' and children's awareness of food and beverage marketing on non-broadcast media', *European Congress on Obesity,* Amsterdam, Netherlands.

*Commissioned reports*

1. Mehta K, Coveney J, Ward P, Handsley E, 2010, *'Children and Food Marketing Research Project'*, Final Report to SA Health.
2. Mehta K, 2009, *'Review of Literature on Marketing Food & Beverages to Children on Non-Broadcast Media'*, Report to SA Health.

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis reports on research into the perceptions of parents and children of food and beverage marketing[1], to which children are exposed. This chapter explains the background to the research, which includes: why children's current exposure to food marketing is problematic and what is being done about it (the policy response); the relevance of community perspectives to the policy process; and my own motivations for studying this subject. The chapter ends by outlining the structure of the remaining thesis.

To begin with, it is worth distinguishing between marketing and advertising. While most people think that marketing is advertising, in fact, advertising is only a subset of marketing. Marketing activity is described by the 4 Ps of: product, price, placement and promotion (Boone and Kurtz 2006). The promotional aspects of marketing include communications using a range of media and methods, such as: television advertising; marketing on the Internet; product placement in television programs, movies, DVDs, computer games and videogames; peer-to-peer or viral marketing[2]; supermarket sales promotions; cross promotions with movies and television programs; use of licensed characters and spokes-characters; celebrity endorsements; marketing in children's magazines; outdoor advertising; print marketing; sponsorship of school and sporting activities; marketing on mobile phones; and, branded toys and clothing (Hawkes 2007; Schor and Ford 2007). Promotional campaigns commonly integrate a range of marketing media simultaneously, in order to achieve wide brand recognition and appeal (Shade and Grimes 2005).

Television advertising (broadcast) is still the principal medium for promoting foods to children and comprises the largest share of corporate investment in product promotion to children (FTC 2008). Nevertheless, investment in marketing through television advertising has been observed to be decreasing, and marketing on new media observed to be growing (Calvert 2008; Harris, Pomeranz et al. 2008; Matthews 2008).

Reflecting the concentration of marketing on broadcast media, much of the early research focussed on television advertising of foods to children, and only latterly, has research

[1] 'Food and beverages' will from hereon, be referred to as 'foods', for reasons of simplicity.

[2] Viral marketing is the dissemination of branded information by consumers themselves. Viral marketing is also called 'buzz marketing' and the communication can occur in real or online communities Calvert, S 2008.

explored marketing on non-broadcast media. This thesis focuses on marketing of foods to children on non-broadcast media, but nevertheless draws on theories and evidence from research into food advertising on television.

## *1.1: The problem of children's exposure to food marketing*

### *1.1.1: Distinguishing exposure*

The targeted marketing of energy-dense nutrient-poor (EDNP) foods specifically to children has long been recognised as problematic because of the volume of branded communication, the powerful techniques used, and the persuasive effect on children's food preferences (Hastings, McDermott et al. 2006; McGinnis, Gootman et al. 2006; Hawkes 2007). Children are also affected by food marketing to which they are exposed, not simply food marketing targeted at them (Handsley, Nehmy et al. 2012). Considerations of the impact of food marketing have therefore shifted from a focus on marketing targeted at children, to marketing to which children are exposed (WHO 2010). This research was interested in parents' and children's perceptions of all food marketing to which children are exposed, however, many of the early authors in this field refer to marketing or advertising *targeted* at children, and references to these works will continue to use this term.

### *1.1.2: Detrimental effects on food choice and childhood obesity*

The problem with food marketing that children are exposed to, is that it mainly promotes EDNP foods, which are non-essential (non-core foods) and associated with poor nutrition and health outcomes (WHO 2003). Australian research over the last 30 years has shown that food advertisements on television programs between the hours of 6:00am and 21:00pm constitute approximately one-third of all advertisements during this time slot, and of those foods advertised, the majority (between 50-80%) comprise EDNP foods, with fast food, chocolate and confectionary consistently being the most highly advertised food groups (Morton 1985; Hill and Radimer 1997; Zuppa, Morton et al. 2003; Kelly, Smith et al. 2007). The Australian Government nutrition guidelines, *The Australian Guide to Healthy Eating*, (Kellett, Smith et al. 1998) was the principal tool used to assess nutritional value of the products in the above studies.

Children's exposure to marketing messages for non-core foods has been found to influence their food preferences, food choices, and consumption habits. This has been established through a number of international reviews of the empirical research into the effects of food marketing, conducted by Hastings et al. (2003; 2006) for the UK Food Standards Agency on two occasions, and by McGinnis et al. (2006) for the US Institute of Medicine. Research on the diet of Australian children lends weight to the association between exposure to marketing messages for EDNP foods and poor food choices. The Australian National Children's Nutrition and Physical Activity Survey found 39% of 4-8 year-olds and 99% of 14-16 year-olds did not meet the daily recommendation for fruit, and 78% of 4-8 year-olds and 95% of 14-16 year-olds did not meet the daily recommendation for vegetables (DHA 2008).

Childhood obesity is a serious public health problem in many countries across the world, and prevalence rates between 20-30% are common in developed countries such as the United States, United Kingdom and Australia (Wang and Lobstein 2006). The 2007 Australian National Children's Nutrition and Physical Activity Survey found prevalence rates for overweight and obesity among children aged 2-16 years to be at 23% (DHA 2008). The association between children's exposure to marketing communications for EDNP foods, the consequent influence on their food choices, and the rising rates of childhood obesity have been recognised by international groups such the World Health Organisation (WHO 2003), and Australian groups such as the National Obesity Taskforce (DHA 2003) and the National Preventative Health Taskforce (2009), as constituting serious public health problems. Over this time, the term 'obesogenic' has entered the childhood obesity discourse, to describe the role of EDNP food marketing as well as, children's sedentary leisure pursuits, in relation to this public health problem (Swinburn, Egger et al. 1999; Moodie, Swinburn et al. 2006).

Notwithstanding the dominant view about rising prevalence of obesity and the serious risks posed to population health, there are researchers who challenge this interpretation of the data and posit instead: that the epidemiology represents a modest trend in increasing weight across categories, from the top end of healthy weight into overweight and the top end of overweight into obesity; and, that the evidence for mortality risk is not only weak but also shows a U-shaped risk association with higher mortality at the extremes of obesity and thinness (Campos, Saguy et al. 2006). Nevertheless, the larger population size of overweight and obese people compared to those who are thin, may explain the greater public health attention towards overweight and obesity. Other researchers (Puhl and Latner 2007) caution on the

risks of the dominant obesity discourse itself contributing to stigmatization of children and adolescents who are overweight or obese, resulting in harm to their social, psychological and emotional wellbeing. They suggest that stigmatisation can take the form of bullying, teasing, prejudice and rejection, and this can come from peers, educators and even children's own parents.

The trend towards marketing on new platforms, such as screen-based media (including television, computer, videogame and DVD) and Australian children's high engagement with screen-based media, make this a significant source of exposure to marketing messages. The Australian Bureau of Statistics survey of children's (5-14 years of age) participation in leisure and cultural activities (ABS 2009), showed that 97% of children watched television, videos and DVDs, and 83% of children spent time on other screen-based activities during the two-week period of the survey; 79% of children accessed the Internet and 92% of these children did so at home, primarily for educational activities (85%), followed by online games. Children's screen-based activities (combining TV, video, DVD and computer) averaged two hours per day (ABS 2009). In the US, 96% of tweens (9-11 year olds) access social networking sites and 71% of online tweens do so at least weekly (Mays and Pope 2000). Many children exceed the National Australian Guidelines (DHA 2004) that recommend less than two hours of small screen recreation (SSR) per day (Hardy, Dobbins et al. 2006; Granich, Rosenberg et al. 2010). High engagement with SSR has been associated with increased weight for children in general (Sisson, Broyles et al. 2010) and boys in particular, who have a television in their bedroom (Delmas, Platat et al. 2007).

Many children engage in SSR in the privacy of their bedrooms, away from parental supervision and regulation; marketing messages in this context therefore reach children outside the protection of parental supervision (Austin and Reed 1999). The proportion of Australian and American children who have small screen media in their bedrooms equates roughly to: 30% for TV; 23% for computer; and 50% for video game consul (Salmon, Timperio et al. 2005; Roberts and Foehr 2008; Granich, Rosenberg et al. 2010). Marketing through screen-based media, in particular the Internet, uses innovative marketing methods such as: product placement in advergames[3]; viral marketing; and stealth or 'below-the-radar

[3] Advergames are advertiser-sponsored computer games, into which branded items are embedded (KFF 2004).

marketing'[4] (Hawkes 2007). 'Below-the-radar marketing' raises ethical concerns because it refers to marketers' intention to conceal the intention of marketing (this is discussed in more detail in section 2.6.6: Marketing to children as an ethical concern).

As well as SSR, children have access to child-specific magazines for which the global market is robust and predicted to expand (Wills 2012). In Australia alone there are more than 28 magazine titles targeting children. Magazines targeting children provide companies with a medium for marketing food products (Kelly and Chapman 2007), and also fall into the category of below-the-radar marketing, because reading magazines is a leisure activity that children are likely to do by themselves, and not with their parents.

Sponsorship of children's sport is another platform for food companies to market their products. The 2009 survey of children's leisure activities revealed that 63% of children play organized sport (ABS 2009). Sponsorship of children's sport allows for immersion in a branded environment through entitlement of naming rights and supply of banners, goalposts, prizes, uniforms, hats, water bottles and food vouchers by sponsoring companies (MacKay, Antonopoulos et al. 2011).

### *1.1.3: Detrimental effects on family relations and parenting*

The marketing of EDNP foods to children, and the concomitant influence on children's food preferences and consumer behaviour (pestering) undermines parental authority to regulate children's food choices, and adds to the stress of parenting (Nicholls and Cullen 2004; Nairn 2009). Pester power (in other words, nagging parents to purchase the desired products) is the principal means by which children exert their consumer potency, and this requires literally haranguing parents in order to break down their resistance to purchasing the product in question (Nicholls and Cullen 2004). The three product categories over which most pestering occurs are food, toys and clothes and the degree of conflict in the child-parent purchase relationship is thought to escalate from clothes to toys to food (Nicholls and Cullen 2004). Purchase refusal can lead to parent-child conflict and is experienced by many parents as stressful (Goldberg and Gorn 1978; McDermott, O'Sullivan et al. 2006; Turner, Kelly et al.

[4] Below-the-radar marketing, also called stealth marketing, is defined as '[the] use of surreptitious marketing practices that fail to disclose or reveal the true relationship with the company that produces or sponsors the marketing message' (Martin and Smith 2008).

2006; Ip, Mehta et al. 2007). Parents feel caught between wanting to please their children and making responsible food decisions (Pettigrew and Roberts 2006). Supermarkets are a particular site where children respond to point-of-sale marketing techniques such as product packaging, give-aways, and displays at check-outs, and consequently 'pester' their parent for the desired products; many parents experience co-shopping with children as stressful, and to be avoided where possible (Pettigrew and Roberts 2007).

While food marketing places stresses on parenting and family relations, most policy responses nevertheless focus on the nutritional problems associated with food marketing.

## *1.2: Policy responses to the problem*

Public health protagonists have consistently advocated for policy and legislative restrictions on the marketing of EDNP foods to children, as part of a comprehensive approach to combating childhood obesity and improving children's nutritional health outcomes (Caraher, Landon et al. 2006; Moodie, Swinburn et al. 2006; Harris, Pomeranz et al. 2008; Swinburn, Sacks et al. 2008). Citizens internationally and in Australia also have supported government restrictions on the marketing of EDNP foods to children; surveys of Australian adults have shown strong (averaging 90%) support for government-imposed restriction (Matthews 2008; Morley, Chapman et al. 2008; SA Health 2011).

From the publication of its first report on 'Diet, Nutrition and the Prevention of Chronic Disease', the World Health Organization (WHO) has acknowledged the role of marketing of EDNP foods in the aetiology of childhood obesity, and has urged member countries to restrict the impact of marketing on children (WHO 2003). In subsequent years the WHO (2006; 2009) has highlighted the global nature of marketing, the use of integrated marketing techniques that build brand loyalty and relationships with consumers, and the growing problem in the developing as well as developed world. In 2010, at the Sixty-Third World Health Assembly, the WHO released an Implementation Strategy that provided clear guidelines for member countries to institute policies that would restrict the reach and power of marketing to children; where 'reach' refers to exposure and 'power' refers to the sophisticated and integrated techniques used by marketers (WHO 2010). The WHO urged governments to demonstrate leadership in national policy development with relevant

stakeholders, including industry, and to cooperate internationally to address cross-border issues (2010).

In Australia the policy debate has been more equivocal. While government committees have recognised the obesogenic role of marketing EDNP foods to children (DHA 2003; NPHT 2009), federal governments of different persuasions (Liberal and Labor) have nevertheless been reluctant to take a leadership stance on policy development, and have consequently been criticised for bowing to industry opposition to restrictions on food marketing (ABC 2011). In 2003, the National Obesity Taskforce (DHA 2003, p.15) recommended:

> Better protection for young people against the promotion of high-energy, poor nutritional value foods and drinks and/or sedentary lifestyles through advertising and media that encourage unhealthy eating, inactivity and overweight.

And in 2009 the National Preventative Health Taskforce recommended:

> Reduc[ing] exposure of children and others to marketing, advertising, promotion and sponsorship of energy-dense nutrient-poor foods and beverages (NPHT 2009, p.121).

The conservative Liberal-National Coalition which was in government when the policy debate was perhaps at its most vigorous between 2002 and 2006, opposed government intervention in what they perceived to be a 'private family matter', namely parental regulation of children's food choices. The Prime Minister at the time The Honourable John Howard, warned that government intervention would amount to a 'nanny state, and usurp parents of their responsibility to regulate their children's diets and wellbeing (Jones 2004). The Health Minister at the time, The Honourable Tony Abbott went further and said:

> No one is in charge of what goes into kids' mouths except their parents; it is up to parents more than anyone else to take this matter in hand. If their parents are foolish enough to feed their kids on a diet of Coca Cola and lollies, well they should lift their game, and lift it urgently. In the end, if people are obese, they are eating too much and exercising too little and the answer is in the hands of those individuals (ABC 2005).

The Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) reviewed the Children's Television Standards during this time, and received considerable pressure from consumer and public health groups to strengthen the regulations governing food advertising to children. While ACMA acknowledged public concerns about the problem of advertising, they decided not to use the Children's Television Standards to bring about substantial reforms, and instead

only introduced one new regulation restricting the use of popular characters to advertise products to children (ACMA 2009). ACMA cited insufficient evidence on the causal link between advertising and children's food choices, the potential negative economic effects to industry groups and the lack of a nutrient profiling tool, as reasons against restricting advertising of energy-dense nutrient-poor foods and beverages to children (ACMA 2009).

Since the beginning of the policy debate in Australia, the Federal government has used a 'softly-softly' approach – encouraging industry to self-regulate restrictions on the marketing of EDNP foods to children, noting the motivational barriers to industry in limiting their profit-making activities, and 'warning' of government intervention should industry fail to adequately self-regulate (NPHT 2009). More recently the food industry has enacted several new codes - The Responsible Children's Marketing Initiative in Australia (AFGC 2008), and the Australian Quick Service Restaurant Industry Initiative for Responsible Advertising and Marketing to Children (QSRI) (AANA 2009). These undertake to avoid marketing EDNP foods to children under 12 years of age, and to increase marketing of healthy foods and lifestyles; in addition, to avoid the use of licensed characters and popular personalities, as well as product placement in program content and interactive games. While these self-regulatory codes have been reported by industry groups to have resulted in significant reduction of advertisements for EDNP foods in programs targeting children under 12 years of age (Dunn 2010), it must be noted that up to six times as many children watch programs rated for a general audience (G and PG rated programs[5]) during peak viewing times (18:00–21:00pm), than programs designed for children (C and P programs) (ACMA 2007). Therefore the industry self-regulatory codes start out by being inadequate in reducing children's exposure to EDNP food marketing because they operate in non-peak viewing times (King, Hebden et al. 2010). In addition, research by Hebden et al. (2002) found no change in the frequency of advertisements for fast foods during children's peak viewing times, following the introduction of the QSRI albeit that the proportion of core versus non-core fast foods had improved (AANA 2009). In her review of global regulations, Hawkes (2007) found food marketing to children on traditional (broadcast) and non-traditional media (Internet,

[5] Classification of Australian television programs: P=Pre-school children's; C=Children's; G=General; and, PG=Parental Guidance recommended. For more information see: http://www.freetv.com.au/media/Code_of_Practice/2010_Commercial_Television_Industry_Code_of_Practice.pdf, viewed 3 March 2013.

videogames, supermarkets, magazines, sports etc) to have increased between the period 2004-2006, contradicting industry claims about reductions in marketing to children.

While industry groups lobby governments for minimal intervention into their marketing practices, they nevertheless do recognise the problem of EDNP food marketing to children, albeit from the perspective of damage to brand image, customer loyalty and profits. Writing for an industry audience, Dawn (2005, p.42) says:

> We have reached a critical turning point where organisations can choose to defend what they do now and contribute around the seams or to inspire their customers by elevating the wellbeing of children to the core of their enterprise. … The opportunity is to create licensing agreements with food brands that are embraced by customers for what they contribute to their lives, and when that familiar little voice pipes up 'Daddy, Daddy I want!' Daddy will be more than happy to oblige.

Pettersson and Fjellstrom (2006, p.16) echo similar sentiments when they say:

> [A] cultural change is ongoing, where health aspects are becoming crucial and to satisfy consumer needs, producers and marketers have to be ethically responsible**.** By conducting responsible marketing emotional bonds are formed with the individual. Responsible marketing and relationship marketing can thus be seen as part of each other as establishing an ethically correct image among customers is a way of earning customer loyalty.

However, while we currently see robust debate about restrictions on EDNP food marketing to children, in many countries around the world there has in fact been very little action. Hawkes (2004; 2007) found that: more governments had supported industry self-regulatory codes than had implemented statutory restrictions; and most of the industry self-regulatory codes focussed on television advertising, and did not go far enough to reduce the amount of marketing that children were exposed to, nor the powerful methods used to entice children. She concluded that statutory regulation afforded more protection to children from the powerful influences that marketing exerted on their food choices (Hawkes 2007). Among the developed countries, the United Kingdom has stood out in its implementation of statutory restrictions on EDNP food advertisements during programs when children (up to 16 years) comprise 20% or more of the viewing audience (OfCom 2008). Nevertheless, while this strategy has resulted in reduced advertising in programs addressed by the regulations (OfCom 2008), it has failed to capture many other programs that children actually watch in large numbers, such as Beat the Star, Emmerdale, and Coronation Street (Which? 2008).

*1.2.1: Policy discourse*

A number of public health advocates and social scientists (Gilman 2008; Egger and Swinburn 2010) attribute unhealthy eating practices and the rising prevalence of obesity globally, to unsustainable economic development and the pressures of consumerism. Hastings et al. (2006) suggest that there are similarities between tobacco and food, to the extent that the world faces an international, market-driven threat to public health targeted at relatively disempowered consumers. Calls for statutory restrictions to the marketing of EDNP foods to children therefore represent a structuralist discourse on health whereby social and environmental conditions are recognised as playing an important part in shaping health decisions. Consequently, structural interventions that create supportive environments are seen as sustainable and effective policy decisions that tackling the socio-environmental causes of health problems 'upstream' rather than tackle the individual effects 'downstream' (WHO 1986; Baum 2008).

In contrast, the individualist discourse places responsibility for health behaviours squarely on the shoulders of the citizen (including the child citizen), emphasising agency in health decisions over social determinants and expecting individuals to exercise self-restraint and make the 'right' food choices, even in an environment that promotes consumption of EDNP foods (Rawlins 2008). Proponents of the individualist discourse nominate health education as the preferred intervention to address problems such as unhealthy diets (Lindsay 2010). The individualist discourse is consistent with neo-liberal ideologies that nurture the operations of markets and favour individual self-regulation over government interventions to create supportive environments for healthy choices (Hindess 2001). Proponents of the individualist ideology blame parents for children's poor diets and consider that statutory restrictions will erode parental responsibility and create a 'nanny state' (Udell and Mehta 2008). Popular individualist themes in the media include:

> [It is]absurd to suggest parents were unable to resist the pressure of children or advertising to feed the family junk food (Dow 2002).
>
> Parents simply have to say NO … It's up to parents, not the government, to turn off the television … (Armstrong 2004).

Perhaps nowhere is the transfer of responsibility from structures (for example, corporations marketing EDNP foods) to individuals, more strongly demonstrated than in the United States of America, where the 'Personal Responsibility in Food Consumption Act', and

‘Commonsense Consumption Act’ (otherwise known as the 'cheeseburger bills') were debated in the Congress in 2004-2005. These bills aimed to protect fast food companies from litigation suits by obese individuals, and instead to place responsibility for overconsumption of EDNP foods squarely onto the shoulders of individuals (Harris, Pomeranz et al. 2008). While the bills failed at the national level, by 2006 similar legislation was passed in 24 states of America, with considerable lobbying from industry groups (Harris, Pomeranz et al. 2008).

While most stakeholders in the ‘food marketing to children’ debate acknowledge both structure and agency as playing roles in children’s and family food choices, they nevertheless reveal their primary allegiance to one or the other paradigm. In Australia for example, the policy debate in relation to restricting children’s exposure to EDNP food marketing has got ‘stuck’ on the issue of responsibility, in other words, ‘who is responsible for the problem of children’s poor nutritional intake, lack of physical activity and consequent obesity?’. The food industry pays ‘lip-service’ to recognising their contribution to the problem of children’s poor food choices, but instead emphasises the responsibility of parents in regulating children’s exposure to marketing and concomitant food choices (Palmer and Carpenter 2006), and reverts to the ‘free-market paradigm’ of ‘choice’ and ‘buyer-beware’ (Yannis and Lang 1995 ).

Citizens (children and parents) navigate both discourses (structuralism and individualism) in making their food decisions; Rawlins (2008) refers to this as structured individualism, explaining that people make their food decisions within a complex geo-social space of personal, family, friends, school, work, social, economic and political influences, and, within this complex arena individuals have some agency to make choices among these influences, but they are also constrained by those influences they cannot control. Food decisions therefore are invariably complex and are not determined by cognitive inputs alone, thus underscoring the limits of educational approaches in tackling complex problems such as unhealthy food choices and childhood obesity (Rawlins 2008). Maziak et al (2008) suggest that targeting individual-level determinants of the unhealthy eating and obesity problem has delivered limited success and that the wider (social and structural determinants) need to be better understood and addressed; in other words they advocate upstream approaches to remove the barriers to healthy food choices, thereby making them the easier choices.

Palmer and Carpenter (2006, p.186) posit that:

> [M]oney fuels food and beverage marketing to children and youth. … Unless the cost-benefit fulcrum can be shifted dramatically with intense, well-coordinated effort by all stakeholders, the health and general welfare of our children and youth will not find a meaningful place at the table. Given the overwhelming momentum of financial pressures and the increased technological sophistication in targeting younger and younger children, it is difficult to see how anything short of legislative and regulatory measures can secure this place and affect this change.

In this doctoral research therefore, I was particularly interested to explore lay perceptions of responsibility in relation to mitigating the adverse effects of food and beverage marketing to children.

### *1.2.2: Community voices in the public policy debate*

A central principle underpinning primary health care and health promotion is the importance of community input into policies and decisions that affect their health outcomes. The Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion (WHO 1986) states that:

> Health promotion works through concrete and effective community action in setting priorities, making decisions, planning strategies and implementing them to achieve better health. At the heart of this process is the empowerment of communities, their ownership and control of their own endeavours and destinies.

The principle of community involvement in health policies is based on lofty social democratic values of citizen participation in governance, as well as more pragmatic ideas that individual health behaviour change is more likely if people 'own' the decision-making process. Consequently the rhetoric of community involvement in health decision-making is enshrined in government policy documents and in the enculturation of health workers (Baum 2008; Talbot and Verrinder 2010). Nevertheless there are many critics of community participation who question the tokenistic nature of it, to the extent that it masks the reality that powerful individuals and groups actually control decision-making processes, and in contrast, especially poor and marginalised communities have very little real influence on these processes (Baum 2008; Talbot and Verrinder 2010). Women and children are cited as being particularly excluded from policy decision-making processes as a result of their lower social status compared to men (Baum 2008).

I was therefore was interested to obtain the views of children and parents about their

perception of food marketing to which children are exposed.

*1.2.3: My own motivations for studying this subject*

As a community nutritionist for over 20 years, with the primary task of 'educating the public on healthy eating', it soon became obvious to me, particularly in relation to children's food choices, that nutrition education was a weak weapon against the influential forces of food marketing. I therefore shifted the focus of my work from individual change to structural change, and engaged in public health advocacy. In 2002 I established the national Coalition on Food Advertising to Children (www.cfac.net.au) that represented peak medical and health groups lobbying for statutory restrictions on children's exposure to EDNP food marketing. The primary health care principle of 'community involvement in health policy', has been a core value in my work ethic and consequently in my public health advocacy work on food marketing. I have involved community members in writing submissions to government and making presentations to government inquiries into obesity and food marketing (Mehta 2005). As well as lobbying for structural change, I have been particularly interested in how children and parents perceive food marketing and mitigate its detrimental effects, and have undertaken some research in this area (Ip, Mehta et al. 2007; Morley, Chapman et al. 2008; Mehta, Coveney et al. 2010a; Mehta, Coveney et al. 2010d.

In summary, children's exposure to marketing of EDNP foods is problematic because it influences their food preferences towards an unhealthy diet which is high in kilojoules, and this is considered to be a contributory factor to the prevalence of childhood obesity. This is a global problem and the World Health Organisation has issued recommendations to member countries to reduce the reach (exposure) and power of EDNP marketing to children. While the Australian government has been considering policy and regulations to restrict EDNP marketing, progress has been slow. It appears that policy-makers have been caught between opposing discourses of individualism and structuralism, in terms of attributing responsibility for the problem. This doctoral research is grounded in pubic health nutrition and the principles of primary health care, and is therefore interested in exploring how parents and children perceive the phenomenon of EDNP food marketing, and how they think about responsibility in the matter of restricting the reach and power of marketing.

## *1.3: The research*

*1.3.1: Research question*

The overarching research question was 'how to parents and children think about food marketing to which children are exposed?'

*1.3.2: Research aim*

To understand how parents and children perceive food marketing to which children are exposed.

*1.3.3: Research objectives*

(1) To critically analyse parents' and children's awareness of and opinions about food marketing to which children are exposed.

(2) To critically analyse how parents and children consider responsibility and regulation with respect to food marketing to which children are exposed.

(3) To critically analyse how parents and children relate to food marketing as consumers.

*1.3.4: Scope of research*

In this research study, 'perception' was interpreted as awareness of, understanding of, opinions about, and responses to food marketing. The research focussed on marketing on non-broadcast media (other than television advertising) because much is already known about marketing on television (Hastings, McDermott et al. 2006; The Institute of Medicine 2006), and investment by corporations is known to be shifting towards the non-broadcast media (FTC 2008). Non-broadcast media was defined as 'other than television advertisements' and included: the Internet, video games, school, sport, product placement on television programs, movies, DVDs, children's magazines, supermarket, outdoor environment and brochures delivered to homes.

The research took an individual perspective rather than a family perspective, in other words exploring parents' and children's perspectives separately, rather than exploring family dynamics around food marketing. There is a considerable body of literature which has already

examined family dynamics in relation to food marketing to children (Carlson and Grossbart 1988; Rose 1999; Rose, Valakas et al. 2003; Nicholls and Cullen 2004; Neeley 2005); therefore, my research focussed on the separate accounts of parents and children of their perceptions of food marketing to which children are exposed.

## *1.4: Structure of the thesis*

This thesis follows on from Chapter 1: Introduction, in the following manner.

Chapter 2: Review of the literature, looks at: marketing within the context of consumer society; neo-liberalism, governance and responsibility; children and consumerism; food marketing to the child consumer; parenting the child consumer; and, ethics and food marketing to children. The chapter ends by highlighting gaps in the literature addressed by this doctoral research.

Chapter 3: Methodology and methods justifies the choice of qualitative methodology for the research and describes the chosen method of semi-structured individual interviews and focus groups with parent-child pairs. It pays special attention to the ethical issues involved in working with child subjects.

Chapter 4: Findings, reports on two rounds of interviews with the parent-child pairs, and presents the findings separately under: interviews with parents and, interviews with children. The findings from interviews with parents are presented under the categories of: marketing; regulation; and responsibility. The findings from interviews with children are presented under the categories of: marketing, responsibility and consumerism. Socio-demographic data on the pairs is also provided.

Chapter 5: Discussion, interprets the findings using broad theoretical frames that explain: neo-liberalism and responsibility; ethics; and, marketing and consumers. These theoretical frames describe contemporary consumer society and the dominant discourses that shape how we think and act. They are helpful in making sense of the findings from the perspectives of: how parents and children conceptualise responsibility – at the individual and societal level; how parents regulate children's food choices and access to media; parents' and children's

concerns about marketing and how children and parents respond to marketing as consumers. This chapter ends with reflections on the quality of the research.

Chapter 6: Conclusion, summarises the research and draws conclusions on aspects that are relevant to the policy debate on EDNP food marketing within the context of childhood obesity. This chapter also makes recommendations for future research.

# Chapter 2: Review of the literature

This research on parents' and children's perceptions of food marketing to which children are exposed was located within the context of consumer society and was interested in how parents and children think about food marketing within this context. In particular the research was interested in understanding perceptions of regulation and responsibility within this context. The literature review therefore covered: marketing within the context of consumer society; neo-liberalism, governance and responsibility; children and consumerism; food marketing to the child consumer; parenting the child consumer; and ethics and food marketing to children. This scope of reading provided the theoretical frames and empirical evidence to inform the research.

The literature review began with a search of databases such as Expanded Academic ASAP, Proquest 5000 International, Web of Science, EconLit, Sociological Abstracts, PsychInfoLit and CINHL, with search terms related to the topics of interest, namely: marketing within the context of consumer society; neo-liberalism, governance and responsibility; children and consumerism; food marketing to the child consumer; parenting the child consumer; and ethics and food marketing to children. The Google database was used to search for relevant grey literature on the above topics. Literature that took a more purely business angle on marketing and a more purely theoretical angle on the sociological and political topics of interest (such as consumer society, parenting and neo-liberalism) were rejected in favour of literature that reflected a stronger public health perspective. Following the search of databases, literature was located more informally by a range of methods including citations, journal alerts and recommendations by colleagues.

## *2.1: Marketing within the context of consumer society*

### *2.1.1: Consumer society*

> [The] arrival of consumer society during the last one hundred years has transformed not only our material existence but also our ontology, our very being itself (Lee 2000, p. x).

Social and political writers acknowledge that the 20th century represented the unparalleled rise of capitalism and consumer society, whereby the logics of production and consumption underpinned 'a profound and fundamental change in the way that, as societies, we organize

our very means to existence' (Lee 2000, p. ix). As a leading thinker in this field, Dean (1999) states that in advanced capitalist countries, social organisation and governance is centred around the ideology of markets (also called neo-liberalism). Zukin and Maguire (2004) note that the choosing-self (consumer) is not dissimilar to the self-managing, responsible citizen in neo-liberal societies.

Lee (2000) explains that the idea of consumer society crystallised in 1913 with Henry Ford's mass production of the Model T automobile which revolutionized the production/consumption economy by delivering higher yields for lower production costs. Ford's automobile factory also created a class of consumers for mass produced goods by providing a living wage for fixed working hours (Lee 2000).

The rise of consumer society, we are told by Galbraith (2000), has been driven not only by production and employment technologies but also by the advertising and marketing industries, which have generated ideologies of 'desire, wants and needs' to support productive capital; in fact, production meets the needs it creates. Zukin and Maguire (2004) add that 'needs' created and serviced by marketing industries include the need to look good, be popular, be 'cool', be seen, and surround oneself with things of beauty - all of which require acts of consumption.

As Lee (2000, p. xx) explains, at the level of consumers, consumption symbolizes 'wealth and opportunity, social democracy, and individual freedom'. Social aspirations for success within consumerist society render 'goods as badges of both democratization and social status'(Zukin and Maguire 2004, p. 178). Yannis and Lang (1995) add that at the level of nation-states consumerism symbolizes successful capitalism, positive economic development and high standards of living.

For Lee (2000, p. xxiii) the 1980's saw a new ascendancy in consumer culture:

> [C]onsumption has moved center stage, not only in the battle to establish the economic high ground of the period, but also as a primary means through which individuals come to express their cultural identities.

Marketing theory labels the consumer as sovereign and describes a primary goal of meeting the needs of consumers by, for example, providing product information to assist consumers

choose one brand over the other (Yannis and Lang 1995). An alternative discourse posed by Lang and Heasman (2004) describes the hegemonic interests of corporations which manipulate consumers to 'think' they have control over their consumer decisions, when in fact they have very little real power in the consumption process. Lee (2000) argues that the real power lies with the industries representing marketing, advertising and motivational research, as evidenced by their achievement of a 'new world order' of consumerism. These industries drive consumer aspiration by attaching cultural value, meaning and status to products, and to the act of consumption itself. Lee says:

> [T]his system is as totalitarian as it is impenetrable to resistance: consumers merely assimilate the meanings transferred onto them via advertising's manipulation of the code of commodity sign-values (p. xiii).

*2.1.2: Consumption and identity*

In the consumption-oriented modern world, identity is formed through the consumptive act; 'we are what we consume'. Steinberg and Kincheloe (1997, p. 11) call this 'consumption theology', whereby redemption and happiness are promised via the consumption act.

As a leading theorist on consumer society, Bauman (2000; 2008) argues that the creation of personal identity is a necessary existential task to create solidness and security in the face of uncertainty and fluidity characteristic of modernity, and that consumerism is central to identity formation in modernity. He posits that people's lives symbolise 'works of art' and individuals strive for success in the 'the art of living' (Bauman 2008, p. 17). As he explains, modernity is 'fluid' to the extent that solid social structures have been replaced with loose, interchangeable networks, and the task of identity formation resembles an on-going process of personal transformation. Consequently, identity formation is always in flux and caught between the irreconcilable polarities of security and freedom; freedom brings with it insecurity, and security comes with constraints on freedom. He suggests that identity can only be held together by fantasy, which itself is weak and constantly changing, and goes on to describe 'fashion' which is built on fantasy, is temporary and changing**,** and involves shopping around, to be the perfect model for consumer-identity (Bauman 2000). He explains that paradoxically, the quest for a unique identity is attained through the consumption of mass-produced commodities, and the 'desired life' sought after by consumers is that 'as seen in the media' through advertisements and program content.

Bauman (2000) describes the role of shopping in consumer society thus: in the consumerist world, the quest for possibilities, happiness and satisfaction is addictive, never ending and never fulfilled; 'shopping' is the archetypal activity in consumer society; 'shopping' is that generic activity we do inside and outside shops, in our homes, work and leisure; we 'shop' for ways to improve our life skills, our competence and our work skills. The underpinning energy for shopping and indeed consumerism is 'desire' which Bauman (2000, p. 74) describes not only as 'volatile and ephemeral, evasive and capricious' but also insatiable. He portrays shopping as compensatory behaviour for 'exorcising the inner demons' (p.80) of uncertainty, anxiety and insecurity, characteristic of modernity, and not surprisingly, the relief obtained is only temporary and illusory in nature. Langer (2002) describes 'desire' as day-dreaming, hedonistic imagining and longing. She concurs with Bauman in emphasising that the act of desiring is what gives us pleasure, and in contrast the act of acquiring perpetuates disillusionment. In other words, consumerism involves longing and desire for consumption, fuelled by an unfocussed dissatisfaction (Langer 2002). Bauman (2000, p.84) puts it thus:

> Powerful, 'more real than reality' images on ubiquitous screens set the standards for reality and for its evaluation, as well as for the urge to make the 'lived' reality more palatable.

Bourdieu (1979) posits that an important social purpose of consumption is to establish 'differentiation and distinction', in other words to define one's place in the social space. He explains that clarification of the social spaces one is permitted to inhabit and those spaces one is excluded from is important for the consuming agent as well as for onlookers; it represents one of many means of maintaining social order. 'Taste' is the process by which individuals express distinction, and Bourdieu describes 'distinction' as embodied taxonomy which is activated with every act of consumption, and which forms the basis of identity. As he puts it, '[t]aste classifies and it classifies the classifier' – the expression of 'taste' and consumer choices reproduce social relations and class distinctions, which he calls 'habitus' (Bourdieu 1979, p. 6). While social classifications generally serve the dominant groups, Bourdieu (1979) nevertheless argues that less dominant groups also use classifications to their advantage – most likely, to keep the dominant groups out.

Bourdieu (1979) describes consumption beyond the narrow act of consuming material goods and services, to the broader activity of consuming social goods such as education and art, which he calls cultural consumption. He asserts that cultural consumption and the taste for cultural goods is socialised into individuals from their earliest upbringing. Consumption

therefore reproduces social stratification of classes (habitus) which Bourdieu (1979, p. 466) explains 'function[s] below the level of consciousness and language, beyond the reach of introspective scrutiny or control by the will'. Habitus can be seen in the way that richer people have more cultural capital by way of access to education, culture and art. Cultural capital also extends to communication and the capacity to decipher the code of cultural goods; access to cultural capital confers upon individuals the vocabulary for this communication.

Gartman (2010) critiques Bourdieu's theory of habitus saying that class distinctions apply more to non-material cultural commodities such as art and literature, while class distinctions are more blurred with material cultural commodities such as food and clothing. In the latter area, consumption patterns of lower and upper classes are determined by income and well paid blue-collar workers can consumer similar commodities to the wealthy classes (Hartman 2010). Zukin and Maguire (2004) attribute the blurring of class distinctions in relation to consumption, in part to modern production processes that allow objects of different value and quality to 'look' very similar, thereby facilitating a greater democratization of consumption. We are nevertheless reminded by Martens et al. (2004) that while consumption appears to afford all consumers the freedom to create their own lifestyle and even their identity, the reality is that choice is constrained by financial resources. Bourdieu (1979, p. 229) suggests that the 'democratization of culture is marked by a deep ambivalence' between popularization of cultural consumption on the one hand and maintaining social class and class distinctions on the other hand. Lee (2006 p. 239) is also critical of the ideology of democratization through consumption, saying that it creates:

> [R]enewed obsession with hierarchy and distinction….new exclusions are erected in the field of objects: a new morality of class, or caste, can now invest itself in the most material and most undeniable of things.

Yannis and Lang (1995) stress that while consumption represents wealth, social status, even happiness to the consuming subject, most of all it represents the idea of 'choice' - the notion of freely choosing products and services, and even choosing one's own lifestyle. The modern individual is constructed as the 'choosing self' (Zukin and Maguire 2004, p. 180). Martens et al. (2004, p. 168) add:

> [T]hrough consumption, individuals have greater capacity to decide 'who they want to be' and narrate their identity by appropriating styles of consumption.

Conspicuous consumption then is the pinnacle of successful consumerism and represents bountiful good fortune, wealth, happiness and social status (Yannis and Lang 1995 ).

### *2.1.3: Brands as signifiers*

Baudrillard (1996) proposes that consumer goods represent a language which confers cultural meaning and social status onto objects, and by association their consumers or owners; these meanings act as a cultural code and are communicated though the vehicle of brands. Brands and the marketing machinery that promulgates them individualise products, and offer personalization and distinction to consumers. Lee (2000, p. 236) describes the language of brands as:

> [U]ndoubtedly the most impoverished of languages: full of signification and empty meaning. It is a language of signals. And the "loyalty" to a brand name is nothing more than the conditioned reflex of a controlled affect.

Lee (2000) explains that brands provide a universally understood system of signs which distinguish products in a saturated marketplace, and assign social status to the act of consumption. Where social status once used to be conferred by power, authority and responsibility, it now hangs upon ownership of objects. He adds:

> [The] code is moral, and every infraction is more or less charged with guilt […] [the] code is totalitarian; no one escapes it: our individual flights do not negate the fact that each day we participate in its collective elaboration […] Even actions that resist the code are carried out in relation to a society that conforms to it (Lee 2000, p. 238).

### *2.1.4: Links between the literature and my research*

My research assumed the context of 'consumer society' and was interested to investigate the perceptions of parents and children as consumers participating in consumption, and as citizens reflecting on consumerism. The research sought to understand the meaning of brands to children, and how consumption is interwoven into the act of parenting.

## *2.2: Neo-liberalism, governance and responsibility*

*2.2.1: Neo-liberalism*

Modern governments in developed countries such as Australia are underpinned by the rationality of liberalism. Dean (1999) describes liberalism as an approach to government which places economics at the heart of the conduct of government; free markets are perceived to be essential to the success of the sovereign state and its population. Burchell (1996) adds that from its beginnings, liberalism represented a scepticism about the state's capacity to have the full complement of knowledge and technologies required to govern all aspects of life. Therefore, liberalism involved the separation of state, civil and market sectors of society for purposes of specialisation of knowledge and technologies of governance. Dean (1999) explains that there are variants of liberalism such as neo-liberalism, neo-conservatism and communitarianism, however all variants hold 'markets' integral to their function, and only differ in how markets are operationalized. Open and competitive markets are central to the neo-liberal ideology and are considered to provide the best means of securing fair and equitable products and services for citizens. In fact, Hiroko (2009) suggests that the market ideology is loyally supported even when market excesses compromise the health and wellbeing of the most vulnerable in society. Neo-liberalism, as Dean (1999) explains, maintains the governance role of the state at a level which is moderate, frugal and prudent, because excessive public administration is considered to be rigid, bureaucratic, costly, and potentially inhibiting of the efficient functioning of free market enterprise. He goes on to argue that the 'market' discourse of neo-liberalism uses economic rationalities to define the conduct of government as well as the conduct of citizens (Dean 1999).

Bauman (2008) describes liberalism as the transition from government aimed at securing nationhood and sovereignty ('solid modernity') to the contemporary government of permeable borders, global business and flow of multicultural populations ('liquid modernity'). He explains that solid structures of governance such as church and state, have been progressively dismantled under the aegis of neo-liberalism, and replaced by more fluid, less well defined, open, and changing processes. Power and the powerful, in this 'liquid modernity' are extraterritorial, in other words they transcend structures and space; the powerful are nomadic, remote, unknowable and inaccessible. The powerful in modernity are the 'captains of capitalism' and it is they who drive the economic discourse that shapes how people across the world live (Bauman 2000). Using the food system as an example, Hiroko

(2009) argues that neo-liberalism and the centrality of markets results in the food industry exerting considerable influence on matters of governance (such as food regulation), and upholding its profit-making interests even when this conflicts with public interest. The marketing of food and beverages to children is a case in point of this conflict of interests.

*2.2.2: De-traditionalising governance from state to individual and family*

A characteristic of liberal government, we are told by Dean (1999, p.50), is the engagement of the 'quasi-natural', non-political spheres such as family, markets and civil society, who sit alongside but outside of political governance, and whose natural and effective functioning are necessary for the entire social system of governance to work successfully. Excessive government administration is perceived to demotivate this non-political sphere and thereby reduce self-governance; this explains why neo-liberalism is characterised by the idea of 'small government' (Dean 1999).

The governing state therefore applies itself to the development of processes for self-governance by the non-political spheres, and minimises investment in development of structures of state authority and care. 'Family', Dean (1999) explains, is an important non-political sphere of governance and is positioned as autonomous and responsible for advancement of its own members, with the state intervening only when the family fails. Hiroko (2009) argues that 'family' is consequently a target of government policy aimed at improving health and wellbeing and it is women within families who are especially targeted for implementation of said policies, for example to provide healthy family meals and lunch-boxes for children. In this way women do the work of governance, in ensuring the health and wellbeing of their families.

Thus neo-liberal government, Dean (1999) explains, is less about ensuring the welfare of the population and more about facilitating individuals to achieve optimal functioning and productivity for the state. 'Individual choice' is a central tenet of the market paradigm and is consequently sacralised in consumer-centred neo-liberal society. Individuals and families are thereby transmuted into consumers of services delivered by the public as well as the private sectors, which in fact become quite indistinguishable from each other (Dean 1999). The individual's role, Hiroko (2009) explains, is to exercise consumer choice and the government's role is to manage risk and ensure 'correct' choices are made by citizens; this is

achieved through education, monitoring and surveillance. Bauman (2008) and Hiroko (2009) add that, as consumers citizens are considered to be autonomous individuals with rights, needs and interests, and within this context, they enjoy rights to self-definition and freedom to choose; however, these rights come with responsibilities for self-regulation to practice correct behaviour, and self-improvement to achieve optimum performance, wellness and happiness.

As well as being positioned as consumers of services, citizens are also labelled as entrepreneurs of their own lives. Burchell (1996, p.24) explains that free conduct in the context of neo-liberalism means 'entrepreneurial, and competitive conduct of economic-rational individuals'. Individualism then becomes a natural consequence of modern neo-liberal society, as traditional and more structured lives give way to more 'do-it-yourself' lives, wherein individuals can write their own biography and live according to goals that they consider to be important (James, Kjøholt et al. 2009). Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002, p.89) explain that the transition from communities of mutual obligation to independent and autonomous lives is the consequence of 'imperatives of performance-oriented society', so that 'what counted was now the individual person rather than the community'. They add that social changes associated with modernity such as provision of welfare payments and women's participation in the workforce, released individuals from economic dependence on the family unit and encouraged them to pursue their own personal goals. Baker (2009, p.277) argues that the political rationality of neo-liberalism extends beyond the economic sphere to permeate the very essence of individuality, 'so that individuals are conceptualized as rational, entrepreneurial actors whose moral authority is determined by their capacity for autonomy and self-care'. She stresses that the neo-liberal subject is consequently presented as the agent of their own lives, and wholly responsible for their own success or failure.

Burchell (1996, p.30) comments on the neo-liberal requirement of subjects to act responsibly by saying that it:

> [I]mpinges upon their very individuality, in their practical relationships to themselves in the conduct of their lives; it concerns them at the very heart of themselves by making its rationality the conduct of their active freedom.

The neo-liberal social contract therefore requires citizens to be virtuous, responsible and self-disciplined (Dean 1999). Using food as an example, Hiroko (2009, p. 165) suggests that food policy is a disciplinary discourse that is 'prescribed and endorsed by *institutional political*

*power* while being practiced by *individuals*'. The implementation of government policy by individuals in their daily lives (bio-politics) therefore requires that policy injunctions become integrated into the individual's cognitive processes.

The transformation of free subjects into self-disciplined citizens, we are told by Rose (1996) entails individuals practicing freedom through conforming to social rules; this process of subjection occurs by technologies of government that promote responsibilisation to citizens and encourage them to choose self-responsibility as part of their lifestyle and identity. Danaher's primer on Foucault's work (2000) explains that Foucault uses the term governmentality to describe the shift in state governance from welfare and protection to management of the population as a resource, and the concomitant transfer of regulation to citizens; the consequence being citizenry who understand and accept principles of self-discipline and self-regulation – in other words, responsibilisation. Foucault describes this evolution in governance as a shift from judicial power to disciplinary or bio-power, and he terms the practice of governing the conduct of citizenry as 'bio-politics' or 'life-politics'. He calls bio-power, 'micro-power' because, it operates at the level of subjects' bodies, through specifying normative ways of behaving; it also operates through subjects' minds because they come to believe and accept the rules of the institution or society. The rationality of micro- or bio-power developed in conjunction with a number of macro-social changes such as industrialization, urbanization, and colonization, from the 17$^{th}$ century onwards (Danaher, Schirato et al. 2000).

*2.2.3: Technologies of governmentality*

Foucault posits that knowledge and truth do not evolve naturally, but rather are constructed through struggles between competing 'schools of thought', and the emergent discourse (concepts that inform action and shape our understandings of ourselves and the world we live in) represents the views of the victor (Danaher, Schirato et al. 2000). Coveney (2006, p.5) adds historical context to this explanation of the construction of knowledge:

> [C]ertain knowledges become possible by recourse not to their growing perfection over time but to events which gave them the opportunity for expression within a certain historical moment.

Danaher (2000) explains that disciplinary or expert knowledge is constructed in much the same way, and is dependent on language, labels and the names given to phenomena. He

argues that it is important to consider the nexus between knowledge and power, particularly in the health sciences where knowledge and technologies are constructed for defining, regulating and controlling the human body (bio-power). The development of the health sciences was facilitated historically by orientations of liberal governments towards the creation of 'healthy and productive citizens', and this required expert knowledge and administrative institutions to regulate and control populations (Danaher, Schirato et al. 2000). Expert knowledge on health and social sciences took the form of statistics, surveys, demography, standards and criteria, all of which were framed in a normative fashion, thereby defining acceptable status and behaviour through classificatory systems such as: healthy/unhealthy; normal/deviant; and through provision of indices, criteria, policies and standards (Coveney 2006; Hiroko 2009). Hiroko (2009) argues that health discourses problematise biological and social phenomena through assessment of risk, and professionals who are schooled in their disciplinary discourse are positioned as experts who can assess and manage the risks, and regulate and normalise individuals. In this way, expert knowledge 'authorizes and legitimates the exercising of power' (Danaher, Schirato et al. 2000, p. 26). Wells (2011) holds a particular critique of health statistics, and suggests that they are used to problematise population groups instead of problematising government or broader social structures.

Disciplinary knowledge is used to create technologies of governmentality that enable citizens to be autonomous, self-governing, risk-literate, and to use the services of health professionals and institutions in order to achieve optimal health status (Hiroko 2009). Dean (1999) explains that technologies of governmentality include: the promotion of shared values around which citizens unite; contractual arrangements in exchange for services; and punitive measures such as withdrawal of services for breaches of compliance. He suggests that shared values are achieved through the use of technologies such as: public debate and discussion; empowerment programs; health promotion; and social marketing.

Surveillance is an important technology of governmentality and is epitomised by the notion of the panopticon, developed by Jeremy Bentham in the late 18$^{th}$ century as a central tower within prisons, from which the guards could monitor prisoners' every movements; the prisoners in turn believed they were under constant surveillance and therefore adjusted their behaviour accordingly (Danaher, Schirato et al. 2000). The panopticon concept is widely

applied to many aspects of society for example, schools, hospitals and prisons. Coveney (2006, p. 7) suggests that:

> [T]he panopticon structures human subjectivity. Precisely because they know they are always visible, individuals assume responsibility for the constraints of power and begin to discipline themselves…

Danaher (2000) explains that the logic of the authoritative gaze has been applied to many social institutions, most notably health, with citizens subjecting themselves to regular checks and examinations. The resultant cultural evolution is citizenry committed to self-monitoring their own bodies and behaviours, for example, monitoring their weight and dietary practices. Cost efficiencies constitute another rationale for self-monitoring because surveillance by citizens themselves is less costly than state instituted surveillance. Danaher explains Foucault's idea of 'descending individualism' in relation to the 'power of the gaze', whereby the least powerful in society (children, welfare recipients, offenders) are the most 'individuated' (individually known) by being subjected to the most surveillance and scrutiny – for example, welfare recipients being suspected of welfare fraud, and children being constantly tested in schools (Danaher, Schirato et al. 2000, p.58).

In critiquing technologies of governmentality, Dean (1999) argues that governments practice 'freedom' through consultation and negotiation, while at the same time they limit freedom through regulations, standards, benchmarks, monitoring and surveillance. These government programs can be perceived as coercive exercise of power to the extent that they represent government regulation of citizens to exercise their freedom, albeit, on the government's terms. He concludes that the 'position of 'freedom' in advanced liberal regimes of government is exceedingly ambivalent' because governments 'continually associate and disassociate subjection and subjectification' (Dean 1999, p. 165). Foucault however, does not believe that self-governance is entirely the result of domination and manipulation by state government; rather, that through their own reflexivity and agency, individuals problematise their situation and negotiate ethical behaviours with social institutions (Danaher, Schirato et al. 2000). The process of subjectification of individuals therefore involves complex intersections between technologies of state domination and technologies of self-governance (Burchell 1996).

Notwithstanding Foucault's proposition of the agentic nature of governmentality (Danaher, Schirato et al. 2000), we are reminded by Rawlins (2008) that agency is not only expressed through compliance with the dominant discourse but also through resistance. Her study of children showed that they understood the official nutrition guidelines but nevertheless demonstrated resistance by holding contrary attitudes and behaviours in relation to healthy eating, which led her to conclude that children's food choices occur in a complex social space in which multiple factors such as family, school, peers, community and broader society operate to influence food decisions (Rawlins 2008).

### *2.2.4: Governmentality and health*

In the area of health and wellbeing, governmentality and responsibilisation represent citizenry regulating their personal lives through the application of technologies developed by disciplinary experts, particularly those from the health and social sciences (Cruickshank 1996).

Coveney (2006) reminds us that the technologies of governmentality are oriented towards normalising behaviour and are imbued with moralistic tones because of their roots in Christianity which encourages followers to assess their life practices and commit to personal improvement. For Coveney (2006, p.12) governmentality is:

> [U]ndertaken through ethical self-formation whereby individuals seek to know and act on themselves.

Nutrition is a good exemplar of this. Coveney (2006) explains how nutrition as a modern science developed alongside the adoption of practices of Christian origin by liberal governments, so that nutrition became a moralistic discourse advocating moderation and frugality in order to temper the excesses of appetite and sensual pleasure. He adds that the Christian practices of reflection, confession and commitment to improvement of moral conduct have become seamlessly integrated into nutrition as an ethical practice, which is highly normative and for which there are clear specifications of good and bad food, and thus good and bad behaviour. He suggests that 'this approach is ideological in that it promotes individual rights and individual choices on the basis of scientific fact' (Coveney 2006, p. 17).

The individualised technologies of governmentality for health - in other words health education, surveillance and self-regulation - carry with them overtones of moralising and censure through normative conceptualisations of acceptable and unacceptable health status and health behaviours (Danaher, Schirato et al. 2000). Within health discourse, individuals who fail to achieve normative standards are labelled uncooperative or deviant. This can then lead to a situation of 'blaming the victim' for their personal health behaviours or circumstances, without fully understanding the complexity of individual negotiation of health behaviours within a socio-political space (Baum 2008; Rawlins 2008; Lindsay 2010). These 'deviant' citizens then become the focus of government or institutional intervention and are required to participate in self-improvement programs (for example, nutrition education programs), which Cruickshank (1996) describes as punishment or coercion.

While Foucault champions the agentic nature of governmentality, he nevertheless considers the technologies of governmentality as administered by disciplinary experts to be concerned with domination and the production of docile subjects through the use of techniques of regulation, surveillance and censure (Danaher, Schirato et al. 2000). Cruickshank (1996, p.231) adds that technologies of governmentality have created:

> [A] social revolution, not against capitalism, racism and inequality, but against the order of the self and the way we govern ourselves.

Children's health (including children's nutrition) is a powerful site of governmentality and moralising of parenthood**,** so that normative behaviour is equated with 'good parenting' (Baker 2009; Wells 2011). Wells (2011, p. 20) argues that child health technologies are widely communicated to the population so that 'an average child is made known and becomes the benchmark for the normal child'. In fact she goes so far as to say

> [C]hildhood is emblematic of the politics of life because of the centrality of development discourse to bio-politics' (Wells 2011, p. 18).

The neo-liberal disposition to individualise problematisations results in health education as the dominant policy solution, focussing on individual regulation of lifestyle choices (Rawlins 2008). The health education approach, however, has been found to be inadequate to address complex population health problems such as obesity, for which causes are multi-factorial and go beyond individual choices to include socio-economic, environmental and political determinants of food choice and physical activity that are outside the control of individuals

(Baum 2008; Maziak, Ward et al. 2008; Rawlins 2008). By placing responsibility for change onto individuals, health education fails to distribute responsibility equitably across the many socio-political spheres that influence individual health behaviours (Colls and Evans 2008; Popay, Whitehad et al. 2010). Tingstad (2009, p. 10) proposes that individualising responsibility for health, in other words the 'transfer of responsibility from the state to the individual' may itself contribute to the rise in childhood obesity.

### *2.2.5: Links between the literature and my research*

The literature on neo-liberalism informed inquiry into parents' and children's perceptions of responsibility and regulation – at the individual, corporate and state levels. I was interested in the extent to which parents accepted personal responsibility for mitigating the adverse effects of children's exposure to EDNP food marketing, and through this to unpack understandings of structure and agency in relation to issues of public health concern.

## *2.3: Children and consumerism*

> In sum, children love to spend money, their parents teach them how to do it, and given the opportunity, they will spend it in one of their favourite stores for one of their favourite brands of one of their favourite products (McNeal 1999, p. 48).

### *2.3.1: Commercialization of childhood*

> [C]hildren have never been as emancipated, articulate, and market-mature as they currently are (Valkenburg and Cantor 2001, p. 62).

Writing on the commodification of childhood, Langer (2002) describes the 1980's and 1990's as a time of rapid penetration of capitalism into childhood. The growth of capitalism is contingent on commodification of people's lives and childhood has not been spared from this enterprise. She asserts that with children perceived as a highly lucrative market, their culture industries have been appropriated to market products and services to them and, like adults, children's identities have been socialised into consumption. She argues that the commercialization of childhood carries ambivalent and paradoxical connotations. For example, the intrusion of commerce (once considered profane) into the sacred, romantic terrain of childhood. However in modern neo-liberal societies commerce is now also regarded as sacred because of its contribution to national and individual wealth (Langer 2002).

Pecora et al. (2007) argue that much of children's education, leisure and entertainment has been commodified. Imaginative play with common everyday objects is less common and has been replaced with specialized toys for every age and every leisure activity, which have built-in fashion and obsolescence, not dissimilar to the consumer world of adults. Toys supplied with food products (also called premiums or give-aways) are an example of this obsolescence whereby they are presented to children in association with current movies, only to be replaced by a new set of toys tied-in with the next movie release. They posit that whole new categories of child markets have come into being where they didn't exist before such as, the 'tween market' for 9-12 year olds (Pecora, Murray et al. 2007).

Langer (2002) adds that the realm of imagination has been appropriated by children's culture industries to market products, where it was once the province only of children's play. 'Kinderculture' is the name given to children's culture industries by Steinberg and Kincheloe (1997) who argue that they are hegemonic because they broadcast a cultural curriculum driven by the profit motives of corporations. The kinderculture curriculum is a source of power and authority in the lives of children and offers them pleasure, desires and intense emotional experience's that cannot be matched in other spaces of childhood. The role of marketing within kinderculture 'produce[s] an ethic of pleasure and a redefinition of authority' (Steinberg and Kincheloe 1997, p. 16). Marketing industries are positioned as the new 'colonisers' except this time of the mind and consciousness compared to old colonisers of geographical areas. Fiske (1991) describes this as discursive power whereby dominant groups create knowledge of 'reality' to suit their own (largely) economic ends. The concern here is about power and control and the abuse of it for commercial gain. Steinberg and Kincheloe (1997, p.16) suggest that:

> [P]arents are no longer in control of cultural experiences, they have lost the role that parents once played in shaping their children's values and worldviews.

In other words, the commercial world is educating and socialising children at least as much as and possibly more than parents and formal education systems.

The commercialization of childhood requires the seamless and almost indistinguishable integration of marketing with entertainment and play (Moore 2004; Moore and Rideout 2007; Nairn and Dew 2007). This merging of marketing and entertainment requires that creative content itself becomes a vehicle for marketing and is called 'advertainment' by the marketing

industry (Linn 2004; Schor 2004). The US Federal Trade Commission report (FTC 2008) on food marketing to children found that marketing is also simultaneously integrated on a range of media and platforms so as to maximise exposure and effect. For example, when a children's movie is released one can find food products featuring the movie characters, toys or give-aways in the food products associated with the movie, computer games featuring the movie characters and food products, and so on (FTC 2008). Other studies have found that the unbridled expansion of digital media has given children greater access to entertainment and communication technologies, and consequently more exposure to marketing messages; for example, social networking via the Internet is now an important method by which children and youth keep in touch with each other (Staunton 2008), and is also a vehicle for marketing to children (Harris, Pomeranz et al. 2008; Mehta, Phillips et al. 2010b).

A number of authors theorising about the commercialization of childhood have described the extent to which brands and consumption have become embedded into children's sense of themselves and their relations with peers and parents (Valkenburg and Cantor 2001; Staunton 2008; Pugh 2009). For example, Pugh (2009, p. 226) argues that 'children's lives are shaped by the distortions of interpreting belonging and care through commodities and commodified events.' Langer (2002) proposes that consumerism has become a social resource for children to gain peer membership and engage in a 'community of consumption' (Langer 2002). Demonstrating the association between brands and social status, Achenreiner and John (2003) found that by the age of 12 years, children rated products conceptually according to the popularity of brands and status conferred upon owners, in comparison to eight year-olds who rated products perceptually according to product characteristics. While much research points to the middle primary years (8-12 years) as the period when the need for peer acceptance is strongest, research by McAlister and Cornwall (2010) found that brand status among peers is evident in children as young as three years of age. Not only does consumerism create a culture of expectations for children but as Pugh (2009) points out, it also puts pressure on parents who feel obliged to demonstrate their moral worth by prioritising their children's social inclusion and dignity through provision of commodified goods and experiences. While consumption aspirations apply universally to all children and parents, it is not hard to envisage lower income families finding it more difficult to fulfil these desires compared to higher income families.

As well as leveraging identity and status, marketing to children also offers children the opportunity to engage in resistance against the adult world. Steinberg and Kincheloe (1997) argue that parents are framed by marketers as boring and out of touch with childhood, while children are presented as adventurous, curious and fun-loving. The marketing of EDNP foods in association with images of fun, fantasy, success and heroic acts, can be seen as setting up parents and children to be in conflict with each other in order to create a covert children's culture in opposition to adult culture, and in doing so to undermine parental authority over children (Pettigrew and Roberts 2007). Cook (2009, p. 121) describes this phenomenon as:

> Marketing positions itself on the side of children, addressing them in their visual, verbal and narrative 'languages' and encouraging their active participation and expressions of want.

As Colls and Evans (2008) suggest, the commercialization of childhood projects ambivalent messages about children's agency as consumers: on the one hand treating them as competent consumers capable of being marketed to directly, while on the other hand bypassing them when they market, for example, healthy (children's) foods to parents, implying that children are not competent or responsible enough to engage in dialogue about healthy eating.

### *2.3.2: The child consumer*

McNeal (1999) describes the child consumer as acting through three different consumption roles: as primary purchaser; through their influence on parental purchases; and as future adult purchaser. These three roles collectively give children many opportunities and considerable agency as consumers. It is no wonder they are courted by business for their spending dollars.

McNeal (1999) further states that children commence their roles as consumers in supermarkets, engaged in food purchases. In his study of American children's consumer behaviour he found that children accompanied their parents to supermarkets from infancy, and they became familiar with products while sitting captive in the supermarket trolley. Not surprisingly then, the positioning of products at children's eye-level while they are seated in the supermarket trolley is an important feature of marketing in this space. Children recognized brands from the food products used at home and also from advertising on television. They made their first purchase requests by two years of age, and food comprised 77% of these requests; breakfast cereals, confectionary and snacks were the foods most requested. By the age of three and a half years, children selected products off the shelves by

themselves and by this time their experience of different types of shops had increased to include discount stores (such as Kmart) and toy stores, as well as supermarkets. Food (59%) and toys (28%) dominated the consumerables of interest to children. Up to this point children were primarily acting as secondary consumers, influencing adult purchases. They commenced their role as primary consumers around five and a half years of age, when they started making their first assisted purchases. At this point they were learning the value of money and exchange, and they were acting like grown-ups. They were more likely to make their first purchase in a discount store (43%) buying a toy, or in a supermarket (19%) buying confectionary. He found that children made their first unassisted (solo) purchase around eight years of age, and this tended to be at a local shop (50%) near their home (McNeal 1999).

McNeal (1999, p. 24) proposes that children are 'consumers in training'. They begin their development as consumers from infancy, mimicking adult behaviour to start with and becoming fully functioning consumers by eight years of age – characterized by purchase requests, selection of products and independent purchases.

*2.3.3: Children's secondary consumption through influence on parents*

Children influence parental spending through their purchase requests. This is referred to as 'pester power' by a number of authors who describe it as repetitive pleading, haranguing, crying and other emotive appeals, so as to wear down parental resistance or refusal (Nicholls and Cullen 2004; Turner, Kelly et al. 2006). Not surprisingly, as McNeal (1999) suggests, the marketing industry considers pester power to be one of the most successful methods for influencing parental spending. Children's pester power is largely a negative experience for parents. In their survey of 143 parents of primary-school aged children on the subject of children and supermarket shopping, Turner et al. (2006) found that 55% of parents admitted to conflicts with their children over purchase decisions. In contrast, McGurk (1992) projects a positive view of conflict as being a natural part of children's socialisation. Such conflict within the context of children trusting that parents hold their best interests at heart, allows children to restructure their thinking. Lee and Collins (2000) suggest that a range of consensual and accommodative strategies are used by both parents and children to resolve conflicts over purchase decisions; these include problem solving, persuasion, bargaining and colluding. In their review of the literature on food marketing, McDermott et al. (2006) not

only found parent-child conflict in relation to children's pestering, but also found that pestering leads to parents acceding to children's requests and purchasing less healthy foods.

Within the children's market Nicholls and Cullen (2004) report that food is the most profitable product category, worth $US396 billion in 2000, and purchased routinely by adults in response to children's requests. As early as the 1970's and 1980's studies by Atkin (1978) and Isler et al. (1987) confirmed that food accounted for the majority of purchase requests made by children, and sweetened breakfast cereals and snacks featured prominently as highly desired food categories. More recent studies confirm children's purchase requests for food products as well as other consumerables (Dixon and Banwell 2004; McDermott, O'Sullivan et al. 2006).

McNeal (1999) reported in the 1990's, that children were successful in their purchase requests 40-80% of the time. This statistic still holds true more than 10 years later. In their study of supermarket purchase requests by Austrian children aged between three and 14 years, Ebster et al. (2009) found purchase requests to be successful about 50% of the time. Greater success was attributed to a number of factors, including: children's negotiation skills; positioning of products at children's eye level; and the degree of autonomy afforded to children to select products off the shelves (Ebster, Wagner et al. 2009).

It has been reported that pestering is more common among younger children under six years of age (McNeal 1999; Pettigrew and Roberts 2007). Ebster et al. (2009) suggest that older children appear to pester less than younger children because they use more sophisticated and effective communication strategies involving reasoned arguments and negotiation to request products, and are consequently more successful in their persuasion attempts.

*2.3.4: Development of the child consumer*

The theoretical literature on children's consumer socialization derives primarily from the discipline of child psychology and describes the psychological and social development of the child consumer.

- Psychological development

The psychological perspective on children's consumer socialisation draws on cognitive and social development theories to explain children's natural evolution as consumers in capitalist societies. Children's consumer understandings and behaviours are therefore framed as cognitive and social milestones within the framework of normal social and psychological development.

Valkenburg and Cantor (2001) explain that the child consumer develops through expressing a range of consumer behaviours that align well with the rest of natural child development. These consumer behaviours are: feeling wants and preferences; searching to fulfil them; making a choice and a purchase; and evaluating the product and its alternatives. Valkenburg and Cantor (2001) explain how children commence from infancy to recognize, desire and request products, however they are not goal-oriented at this stage, but rather reactive to what they see. 'They are still primarily children of consumers' (p.64). As pre-schoolers (aged two to five years) children seek to fulfil their desires through 'pester power'. They are not capable of delayed gratification or of resisting desirable stimuli, and consequently this is the age of tantrums in shops. Valkenburg and Cantor (2001) suggest that pre-schoolers have difficulty distinguishing fantasy from reality and do not understand persuasive intent. Consequently they are naïve consumers, believing what they hear and see in a literal way. Children also process information peripherally, focusing on single perceptual attributes which catch their attention. They do not analyse advertisements or products critically or in detail. In the early primary school years (five to 12 years), children emerge from being predominantly peripheral processors of information, and from mixing-up fantasy with reality. They start to process information more centrally, focusing on content and elaborating multiple features. By late primary school (eight to twelve years) children are consistent central processors, focusing more on detail and quality. By this stage they are critically evaluating products, brands and advertisements. Peer interactions and peer acceptance becomes important at this stage and may even override advertising as a primary source of marketing messages. Peer group norms about what is 'cool' and what is 'in' drive consumer decisions, as children navigate the complex psycho-social landscape of inclusion and exclusion from peer groups. Purchase requests decrease in this age group, while agency and influence over household purchases increase. At this stage, children become independent and fully functioning consumers (Valkenburg and Cantor 2001).

- Social development

The sociological perspective attributes the rise of the child consumer to the advance of capitalism and consumerism as a way of life, as well as to other macro-social changes that have impacted families and children. The rise of consumerism and the socialization of children into consumers have already been outlined in section 2.3.1: Commercialization of childhood. A number of authors, including McNeal (1999) and Schor (2007), describe a range of social changes in the 20th century largely associated with women's attainment of education, participation in the workforce, and use of contraception, that have contributed to the rise of the child consumer. These social changes are present to different degrees in developed as well as developing countries.

In summary, these social changes comprise:

- higher family incomes resulting in more disposable wealth
- postponement of child-bearing resulting in older parents with more money
- fewer children per family resulting in more money to go around
- more liberal and democratic parenting styles involving negotiation with children over their needs and wants
- working parents with busier lifestyles resulting in children being exposed more to eating out and convenience meals
- working parents feeling guilty about spending less time with children and consequently compensating by acquiescing to children's purchase requests
- marital breakdown and divorce resulting in compensatory consumption for children, as well as children owning more personal items as a consequence of living in more than one home
- single-parent families requiring children to take more responsibility for domestic tasks including tasks associated with family consumption
- grandparents involved in childcare, enculturated to 'spoil' grandchildren with treats, and often having the resources to do so.

Modern children engage with the outside world through childcare and preschool much earlier than their predecessors did, and this contributes to their socialisation through exposure to

peer-oriented popular culture from an early age (Linn 2004; Schor 2004). Staunton (2008) notes that modern children act older than their years, embracing adult products and services that make them look and feel older including cosmetics, clothes, technology and music. By the time they reach adolescence, children are expressing themselves more fully as consumers because they often have casual jobs which give them disposable income to purchase consumerables (Pecora, Murray et al. 2007).

Parent-child relationships have been considerably liberalized since the 1950s. Rose et al. (2003), writing about parenting and children's consumer socialization, posit that modern educated and middle-class parents are more authoritative rather than authoritarian, using parenting styles that involve communication, negotiation and education, over rigid rules and punishments for transgression. In an earlier study Carlson and Grossbart (1988) confirmed an association between higher education and authoritative parenting styles. Children participate in consumer decisions from a young age and in a number of ways as well as influencing parental food purchases. Dixon and Banwell (2004) inform us that children also influence many other family consumption decisions including those that would be considered outside the realm of childhood concerns. McNeal (1999), Lee and Collins (2000) and Nicholls and Cullen (2004) note that children participate in family consumer decisions about cars, insurance, houses and holidays. Staunton's (2008) study about the lives of children in the United Kingdom confirmed that they are often consulted on important household decisions.

Martens, Southerton et al. (2004) acknowledge the complex social space of children's consumption and recommend bringing together the sociologies of childhood and consumption to examine: how children learn to consume; identity formation through consumption; children's engagements with material culture; and parent-child relations in negotiating consumption. For example, while parents are an important influence on the child consumer and that they act as educators and gatekeepers to children's purchase decisions, parental influence however decreases as the child ages, and school, peers, media, and advertising assert themselves as important sources of influence on the consuming child. They conclude:

> In this respect, children's consumption relates to sets of complex interrelationships, only some of which can be associated with mechanisms of familial distinction (Martens, Southerton et al. 2004, p. 166).

In summary, the changing nature of society and family has resulted in children having more

autonomy and agency in their lives. The democratization of families also means that children enjoy more rights and consideration of their needs. With capitalism extending its reach into the world of children, we have arrived in late modernity with the 'child' very much established as a consumer in her/his own right, exerting her/his consumer agency through her/his choices of 'lifestyles' that include food, leisure, and other material goods and services. Vigorous advertising and marketing encourages children to exert their agency as consumers, and families are the site where consumerist negotiations take place because parents control the financial resources for consumption of goods and services until such time as children are financially independent.

*2.3.5: Problematising the child consumer*

Not all aspects of the consumer socialisation of children are problematic. In order to grow up in a capitalist and consumption-oriented world, children need to learn the cognitions and skills necessary to participate as consumers. Seen in this way, consumer socialisation is no different to the myriad of ways children are socialised to take their place in society, as children, and as 'becoming-adults'.

What is problematic about 'the child consumer, is the exponential rise of consumerism in the lives of modern children. Langer (2002) argues that the commercialization and commodification of childhood has propelled children into consumerism at ever younger ages and with greater intensity and pervasiveness. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNHCR 1989) provides a framework for ensuring that children's participation in society is moderated to their level of development and capacity to engage, with the ultimate goal of ensuring healthy growth and protection from harm. This social concern for children's wellbeing is demonstrated in laws restricting their access to adult behaviours such as participation in democratic elections, watching 'adult' movies, and imbibing alcohol. Egger and Swinburn (2010) argue that capitalist systems seem less concerned about ethical questions concerning children's developmental capacity to participate as consumers or indeed whether such a situation is harmful to children. That children are a lucrative market seems to be the overriding factor in pursuing child consumers. (The ethics of food marketing to children is discussed in more detail in section 2.6: Ethics and food marketing to children.)

As well as questions of ethics, consumerism is considered problematic because it engenders materialistic values in children. Nairn (2009) explains that materialism is the dependence on consumption to confer status, popularity and happiness, as well as to compensate for insecurities, disappointments and suffering. A number of studies have found that materialism in children is associated with low self esteem, dissatisfaction, disappointment, dependence on external gratification, over-reliance on peer acceptance, pester power, family conflict and antagonism towards parents (Kunkel 2001; Buijzen and Valkenburg 2003; Nairn 2009). In their survey of parents, Kasser and Linn (2004) found high levels of agreement that marketing to children engenders materialism. Children's materialism is a source of worry for parents. In their study of mothers, Pettigrew and Roberts (2006) found them to be concerned about materialistic values cultivated through regular exposure to toys bundled with food products, for example the free give-aways with fast food meals. For these parents, the commercialization of children's lives led to their children expecting to receive toys continuously for no particular reason, failing to appreciate their possessions, and, engaging in more conflict in the family home and in stores around purchase requests.

Researchers representing consumer psychology, cultural studies, public health and ethics are divided on the question of whether the child consumer on the one hand is savvy and discerning, or on the other is vulnerable to exploitation. Steinberg and Kincheloe (1997) explain that proponents of marketing to children consider that framing children as naïve innocents, vulnerable to manipulation by marketers, negates the normalcy of consumer socialization in the lives of children, and additionally insults their social intelligence. The disciplines of public health and ethics on the other hand, hold more to the Piagetian developmental view of children, in which children start life with limited social and cognitive skills and acquire these as they move through childhood to adolescence and adulthood (Piaget 1952), and therefore consider the child consumer vulnerable to manipulation (Swinburn, Egger et al. 1999; Hastings, McDermott et al. 2006; McGinnis, Gootman et al. 2006; Moodie, Swinburn et al. 2006). Public health proponents such as Egger and Swinburn (2010) argue that food marketing to children is largely driven by greed on the part of corporations, at the expense of children's health and wellbeing.

These opposing tensions are resolved to some extent by theoreticians from the sociology of childhood such as James and James (2004), who acknowledge children as active agents,

participating in the social lives of their time and place. Nevertheless, even for researchers from this discipline, the bottom line is that children are children, not little adults. Their staged cognitive and social development is accepted alongside their evolving roles in families and society. In other words, the individual psycho-social development of children is taken into account, as well as the social context of children's lives which is changing at a rapid pace. Within this conceptual framework children are not seen as passive victims of the capitalist machine but as active agents participating in decisions that concern them. Nevertheless, as minors children deserve special care, stewardship and protection from practices that exploit their credulity and harm them. Ingleby et al. (2008) state that while children's power and agency are duly recognized, so too is the power of the corporate sector which dwarfs the relative power of children, thus rendering children susceptible to exploitation and harm in the ensuing conflicts of interest.

#### *2.3.6: Links between the literature and my research*

The literature on the child consumer informed my research inquiry into how the child consumer thinks and acts within the context of food marketing on non-broadcast media; how children understand marketing to operate and how they interact with marketing as consumers. I was particularly interested to investigate children's agency and sentience in relation to marketing. The literature on children's consumer behaviour in families (via pester power) led me to enquire into parents' perceptions of marketing.

## *2.4: Food marketing to the child consumer*

#### *2.4.1: The problem of food marketing to the child consumer*

The field of food marketing to children (on broadcast media) has enjoyed more than 30 years of research which has consistently shown that children are exposed to high levels of marketing of EDNP foods (Hastings, McDermott et al. 2006; McGinnis, Gootman et al. 2006; WHO 2010). The reason for sustained levels of food and beverage marketing to children is very simply that they represent a lucrative market to be exploited for profits. Schor (2004) documents that children 2-14 years of age in the United States spent US$30 billion of their own money in 2002, with sweets, snacks and beverages topping their list of purchases, and influenced up to US$500 billion of household spending. The Federal Trade Commission (2008) in the United States reported that in 2006, 44 food, beverage and quick-service

restaurant companies spent US$1.6 billion promoting their products to children and adolescents; their marketing expenditure to all segments of the market, including parents, was US$9.6 billion. It is no wonder then that marketers coined the term 'pester power' to harness children's secondary purchasing capacity.

As already stated in section 1.1: The problem of children's exposure to food marketing, food marketing directed at children primarily promotes EDNP foods which are implicated in children's poor food choices and increasing levels of childhood obesity worldwide (WHO 2010). Marketing to children uses techniques that are known to appeal to children, for example, bright colours, fun graphics, jingles, cartoon and celebrity characters, novelty packaging, competitions, give-aways and collectibles, in the process creating a product range that is 'child-oriented' and that is easily distinguished from non-child-oriented products (McGinnis, Gootman et al. 2006). Numerous empirical studies, for example by Atkin (1978), Neeley and Schumann (2004) and Lewis (2006) to name a few, have shown that not only do these techniques appeal to children and result in product recognition, but they also result in purchase requests. We are reminded by James et al. (2009) that while child-oriented food products are a construction of economics, they are also a social construction with deep implications for how children and families negotiate their relations and their identities.

*2.4.2: Marketing to children on non-broadcast media*

While television advertising has been the principal medium for promoting food and beverages to children, there has been an observed trend towards marketing on non-broadcast media (Calvert 2008; Harris, Pomeranz et al. 2008; Matthews 2008). There are several explanations for the shift from television to new media. Kitchen et al. (2004) and Linn and Novosat (2008) suggest that the integrated nature of modern marketing, with products simultaneously promoted on television and the Internet, cross promotions with movies and toys, and product packaging, has created multiple new media for marketing. Calvert (2008) propose that production costs for marketing on non-broadcast media are considerably lower compared to advertising on television, therefore making the enterprise much more cost-effective. And finally, some authors (Swinburn, Sacks et al. 2008; MacKay, Antonopoulos et al. 2011) posit that strong public criticism about the role of EDNP food advertising in childhood obesity by advocacy groups such as the Coalition on Food Advertising to Children in Australia (CFAC 2007), has given 'bad publicity' to advertisers and food companies

resulting in a sideways shift into non-broadcast media, which is less researched and also 'below-the-radar' of parents and care-givers (compared to television advertising). Common non-broadcast media and methods of food marketing to children include: the Internet; supermarket sales promotions; outdoor advertising; product placement in movies, television programs and video-games; children's magazines; and promotions through schools and children's sports.

- Internet marketing

Some distinctive features of Internet marketing are: children's high engagement with the medium; the vast array of marketing channels; the integrated nature of marketing; immersion of children in branded environments; seamless blending of marketing and entertainment; and the marketing of EDNP foods (Mallinckrodt and Mizerski 2007; Neeley 2007; Calvert 2008).

Children use the Internet for a variety of purposes including entertainment, education and social networking (Neeley 2007). A Canadian study of children's Internet use found that it increased between 2001 to 2005, with 61% of nine to 16 year old children reporting accessing the Internet in 2001, and 94% reporting accessing the Internet in 2005; playing games was found to be the favourite activity among 89% of nine year olds (MAW 2005). Australian children show similar high engagement with the Internet (ABS 2009). With children engaging consistently and at high levels with the Internet, it provides a lucrative medium for marketing products. Neeley (2007) argues that marketing on the Internet is economically lucrative and constitutes the principal source of revenue for at least two-thirds of websites designed for children. It is important to note that children do not contain their activity to child-oriented websites alone, as shown by Fielder et al. (2007) who studied 40 popular websites frequented by UK children, and found that only one-third of the sites were specifically designed for children; ninety-five percent of the websites in the study had marketing messages, including advertising by third party agents and direct sales. A study of 196 websites popular with Australian children (2-16 years) by Kelly et al. (2008) also found that children accessed a wide range of websites covering television channels, movies, videos, search engines, news and games.

Thorson et al. (1999) and Neeley (2007) believe that the marketing potential of the Internet derives from the vast number and variety of channels available, the scope for creativity and

innovation, and opportunities for marketers to communicate directly and build relationships with children. Neeley (2007) describes the Internet as the most 'multimedia' of all media because it uses methods that are simultaneously visual, auditory and kinaesthetic. Marketing techniques that children are exposed to on the Internet have been well studied and reveal the use of techniques that are unique to computers for example banner ads, pop-up ads, advergames, free downloads, membership opportunities, email, e-cards, photos, television advertisements, movie and video clips, direct selling and viral marketing, as well as techniques common to other marketing media (such as television advertising) for example animation, visuals, special effects, sound, music, jingles, advertorials, competitions, premiums, discounts, and special offers (Hawkes 2004; Shade and Grimes 2005; Mallinckrodt and Mizerski 2007; Neeley 2007). Marketing messages may be directly related to the host site[6] or they may be found on a third party website unrelated to the sponsor[7].

Thorson et al. (1999) argue that while the Internet offers many channels for marketing, it nevertheless presents challenges to marketers as a result of the autonomous nature of children's engagement with this medium. This is expounded further by Moore and Rideout (2007) who explain that children actively seek out content on the Internet which gives them power as consumers, because unlike television which plays to a captive audience, children choose what they want to see on the Internet from a vast array of offerings. Brady et al. (2008) suggest that Internet marketing is used with other marketing techniques to create integrated campaigns that capture children's interest and attention, and maximise their exposure to branded messages through synergistic effects. Integrated marketing techniques include: strategic links with other content areas of interest; product placement in online games; movies and videos; advertisements on third party sites; advertorials to meet consumer interest in information; and profile pages on social network sites (Moore and Rideout 2007).

The genius of Internet marketing, we are told by Calvert (2008) and the Federal Trade Commission (2008), is that it immerses children in branded environments, exposes them by stealth to marketing messages that they are only peripherally aware of, and enrols them as

[6] For example, Trix cereals marketed on General Mills company website http://www.generalmills.com/corporate/brands/brand.aspx?catID=23550 accessed 1 July 2009.

[7] For example, Sillyrabbit Trix games on the Millsberry game site http://www.sillyrabbit.millsberry.com/ accessed 1 July 2009, or Hungry Jacks advertisement on NineMSN (http://ninemsn.com.au/ accessed 1 July 2009.

viral agents to extend the reach of marketing to yet more children. Writing in Brandweek (a business magazine), Chief Executive Officer of YaYa media, Ferrazzi (2001), projected that advergames in which advertisers inserted their brands into online games would enjoy profit growth of 25% annually. Shade and Grimes (2005) illustrate how the Internet advergame, Neopets is a classic example of this expansionary sector; Neopets trademarked the term 'immersive advertising' and described it as complete integration of the branded product into the game or activity, not unlike product placement in movies. Moore and Rideout (2007) stress that the Internet allows marketers to seamlessly blend content with advertising and actively engage children for extended periods of time, far surpassing the reach of the 30 second advertisement. This attribute of Internet marketing facilitates brand immersion. Children engaged in playing games or searching for information are likely to be only peripherally aware of marketing messages they encounter on their screen.

The many different ways that marketing messages can be embedded into Internet activities would also make it difficult for children to discern advertising from other content. In their study of websites frequented by UK children, and through observation of and interviews about children's (aged seven to 15 years) engagement with Internet marketing, Fielder, Gardner et al. (2007) found that children could discern more overt forms of Internet marketing such as banner and pop-up ads, but had difficulty recognising marketing on games or video clips. They also found that 73% of the marketing messages were not labelled in such a way as to make it clear to children that they were viewing advertisements (Fielder, Gardner et al. 2007). Nairn and Dew (2007) caution that while the blurring of boundaries between entertainment, information and marketing presents fantastic opportunities for marketers, it raises ethical concerns about the potential to deceive children.

We are told by Austin and Reed (1999) that the interactivity and communication aspects of the Internet distinguish it from advertising on traditional media by allowing corporations to build one-to-one relationships with child consumers. From a marketing theory perspective, Roehm and Haugtvedt (1999) explain that this phenomenon is likened to the conversations that take place between consumer and salesperson. Targeting, customizing and personalizing the communication to meet the needs, wants and interests of the child consumer are therefore key objectives of Internet marketers, and this has justified the use of tracking devices to better understand Internet behaviour. Calvert (2008) documents the use by Internet marketers of technologies such as bots, widgets and tracking devices to communicate with and track

children's behaviours, so as to better identify potential consumers, segment the market more accurately, and evaluate cost-effectiveness. A number of researchers have raised serious questions about the potential for these practices to violate children's online privacy (Fielder, Gardner et al. 2007; Moore and Rideout 2007).

Internet marketing has been found to be no different to television advertising in its promotion of EDNP foods. Moore and Rideout's (2007) study of corporate websites for 96 food brands that were commonly advertised to children found 90% of the brands promoted EDNP foods. Kelly et al.'s (2008) study of 196 popular children's websites found 61% of the food references to be for EDNP foods. And Lee et al.'s (2009) analysis of websites belonging to 47 of the top food companies targeting children found 84% of the foods promoted represented EDNP products.

While Internet marketing uses multiple methods to promote food products to children, three methods deserve further scrutiny. They are advergames, viral marketing and social networking.

Playing games has been documented by Neeley (2007) as the dominant computer activity of children and it therefore affords great opportunities for marketers to gain access to children. A multitude of gaming sites have been identified by Brady et al. (2008) to exist on the Internet specifically for children. These include arcade games, sports, racing, social simulation games and puzzles. Moore (2006) asserts that advergames (which constitute product placements embedded in computer games), result in children being exposed to branded entertainment in such a way that the boundaries between entertainment and marketing become blurred. Some examples of advergames found by Linn and Novosat (2008) include online games on sites belonging to McDonalds, Burger King, Taco Bell, Mountain Dew, Dr. Pepper, Coca-Cola, Skittles, Starburst, M&Ms, Cheetos, Doritos, and Pringles. In their study of food product websites Moore and Rideout (2007) counted a total of 546 advergames and found most of them to contain animation, music or sound effects, advertising elements known to be effective with children. While some authors such as Calvert (2008) describe marketing via advergames as product placement, others nevertheless distinguish between the passive placement of branded images and children's active engagement with branded items. Lee et al. (2009) outline a number of ways in which children can actively engage with branded items in computer games, for example, as tools or equipment within the game or to be collected or

consumed as part of the game strategy. In their study of 251 games found on websites belonging to the top food companies targeting children they found 88% of games to contain branded items, 67% used branded items as tools or equipment within the game and 47% required branded items to be collected (Lee, Choi et al. 2009). Company websites are not the exclusive domain of advergames and they can be found at other sites that are popular with children. Jones et al. (2008) investigated the websites of five popular Australian children's magazines and reported a number of marketing strategies including advergames. Advergames can also be found on third party host sites such as online game sites[8]. Neeley (2007) posits that advergames are 'sticky' in character because they encourage children to spend extended lengths of time at the site. According to Bertrim (2005) children spend on average 30 minutes on a gaming site, giving marketers more time to expose children to marketing messages than the 30 second time-slot of a television advertisement. Brady et al. (2008) suggest that strategies used to extend children's playing time include: invitations to 'play again'; score boards on which to post scores and compete with other players; multi-player opportunities; and recommendations to spread the game through social networks.

Viral marketing is the passing on of branded information by consumers themselves via click-of-mouse or word-of-mouth communication. Calvert (2008) explains that viral marketing is also called 'buzz marketing' and the communication of branded information can occur in real or online communities. She adds that the potency of viral marketing lies in the nature of peer-to-peer communication, so that the receptivity towards the branded information is likely to be stronger when received from a peer than from a commercial source (Calvert 2008). In their study of children aged 6-13 years, Brady et al. (2008) found that online viral marketing increased brand awareness for food, drink and confectionary products. Viral marketing has been found to be especially effective with so-called 'tweens' (aged between nine and 11 years) when it is associated with discounts and give-aways (Calvert 2008). An overt form of viral marketing is when so-called 'alpha kids' (who are popular among their peers and therefore enjoy leadership status) are selected for their capacity to influence other children and are paid to use products and endorse them to their peers. Schor and Ford (2007) and Calvert (2008) describe how 'alpha kids' are groomed to have a special relationship with the marketer and to feel important through titles like 'secret agent'. More subtle forms of viral

[8] For example Sillyrabbit Trix games on the Millsberry game site http://www.sillyrabbit.millsberry.com/ accessed 1 July 2009, and McDonald's videogame at the Heavygames site http://www.heavygames.com/themcdonaldsgame/showgame.asp, viewed on 1 July 2009.

marketing simply build brand awareness through association with brand names, logos and icons in online communications involving the sharing of jokes, games or images (Which? 2006). Moore and Rideout (2007) found that 64% of food product websites encouraged children to send greetings to friends via e-cards or to invite friends to visit the website. All of these communications carried brand names, logos, and characters; they also found viral marketing to be more prevalent on sites targeting children (74%) compared to sites targeting adults (32%) (Moore and Rideout 2007).

Social network sites are another platform for viral marketing. Linn and Novosat (2008) describe how Cherry Coke held a design contest on MySpace in 2007 and encouraged users to enrol their friends in the competition. Klaassen (2000), writing in *Ad Age Digital*, reported that 70% of children aged nine to 16 years who use the Internet connect to a social network site at least weekly. Harris et al. (2008) posit that marketers capitalize on children's increasing use of chat spaces on the Internet by engaging with them in conversations about products. A study by Mehta at al. (2010b) of food marketing to children on Facebook found regular postings of branded communication comprising news, advertisements, interaction, competitions and online shopping; viral marketing was used by all companies and brands. One particular use of social network sites is to hold 'branded chat' whereby companies discuss their products with children, obtaining their feedback, answering questions, featuring celebrities and directing children to the company website. This has been described by a marketing executive as, '[the] stuff you could never get from a two-dimensional banner ad' (McCashen 2005).

In summary, the literature shows that the Internet is a popular medium with children and is widely used by marketers. It offers unique and innovative ways for marketers to engage with children, build brand awareness and product appeal. It seamlessly blends marketing with content and entertainment, and can gather demographic information through tracking devices. Public health concerns associated with Internet marketing to children revolve around the promotion of EDNP foods, unfair persuasion and violation of privacy.

- Supermarket sales promotions

Supermarket sales promotions represent another significant marketing medium. In her report to the World Health Organisation, Hawkes (2004) wrote that in 2002 more money was spent

on supermarket sales promotions in the United States (US$234 billion) than was spent on television advertising (US$212 billion ). Marketing techniques aimed at children in this medium centre primarily on the product package with: attractive lettering and images; animated graphics; licensed characters; cross-promotions with television programs, movies and videos; endorsements by sporting and movie celebrities; and novelty packaging (Hawkes 2004; Chapman, Nicholas et al. 2006). Other marketing techniques include: premiums (giveaways and collectibles); competitions; games; puzzles; price discounts; point-of-sale promotion (shelf talkers, packaging, dump-bins, end-of-aisle displays); bundling; product sampling; and health and nutrition claims (Hawkes 2004). Research on marketing effects by the Kaiser Family Foundation (2004) reported that the use of cartoon characters are known to positively influence children's product recognition, while Story and French (2004) identified that premium offers increase positive attitudes towards, and preference for, supermarket products. An Australian study of supermarket sales promotions of food products targeting children by Chapman et al. (2006) found evidence of premium offers, competitions, cartoon character, sporting celebrities, and TV and movie celebrities or characters. Eighty-two percent of the sales promotions were for EDNP foods. Elliott (2008) investigated supermarket sales promotion of 367 child-oriented food products in Canadian supermarkets and found 90% of the products to be EDNP, 84% used cartoon characters on the packaging, and 63% made misleading claims about nutrition or health; for example, products claiming to be low fat were found to be high in sugar, or products claiming 'no trans-fats' were high in either total fat or sodium. A more recent study by Mehta et al. (2012) on marketing through child-oriented product packaging in a large supermarket chain in South Australia, found 157 child-oriented products with 75% representing EDNP foods. Similar marketing techniques were found (to earlier studies) and they also found a median of 6·43 marketing techniques per product suggesting considerable persuasion 'power' on child-oriented products. As with the Elliott (2008) study they found claims about health and nutrition on 56% of EDNP foods pointing to the potential for misleading advertising (Mehta, Phillips et al. 2012).

Food sales at supermarket checkouts constitute another marketing channel. It is known that 70% of confectionary purchases are impulse buys (Dixon, Scully et al. 2006). In their study of 27 supermarkets in Melbourne, Dixon et al. (2006) found that 77% of checkouts stocked confectionary and snack foods and 87% of food products at checkouts were within easy reach of children. They concluded that supermarkets were explicitly targeting children and parents, to make impulse buys of EDNP foods while waiting at the checkout.

In summary, supermarket sales promotions represent multiple channels through which marketing can occur. The potency of this medium may well be related to the fact that children's purchase requests for branded products have to be negotiated finally at the supermarket level. Furthermore for many parents, children are actually present and involved in supermarket shopping, thereby increasing their exposure to marketing in this medium.

- Outdoor advertising

Outdoor food advertising includes: billboards; posters on bus shelters, train stations, shop windows and shopping centres; restaurant signage; and branded functional promotional materials, such as umbrellas, dividers, fridges and street signs to retail businesses. Kelly et al. (2008) suggest that outdoor advertising is a cheaper medium in which to advertise, compared to television commercials, and has the benefit of achieving repeated exposures as people tend to pass through the same environment on a regular basis. Their study of outdoor advertising within a 500 metre radius of 40 primary schools in New south Wales found that food comprised 80% of the 1,834 advertisements. Soft drinks and alcoholic beverages were the most common food products advertised, comprising almost 50% of all food advertisements (Kelly et al. 2008).

- Product placement in movies, television programs and videogames

Product placement in movies, television programs and videogames follows the same principles as product placement in advergames, to the extent that brand images are embedded in the primary media or activity that children are engaged in. Story and French (2004) and McGinnis et al. (2006) suggest that branded products are used in movies and television programs for a number of reasons including: to create more realistic sets; to bring in revenue that offsets production costs; and to create brand awareness and product endorsement (in other words marketing). Product placement in movies is an effective marketing strategy, as shown by Story and French (2004) who reported on an increase in sales by 65% of Hershey Reece's peanut butter confectionary, following its insertion in the movie E.T. in 1982. Auty and Lewis (2004) demonstrated how product placement in movies influences food choice. Their study found that children selected the branded product after viewing a movie clip with product placement for that brand. They further suggested that the likely mechanism was

through implicit persuasion because the selective food choice was not related to children's recall of the product placement, in other words, cognitive memory processes. Their study also found a compounding effect of repetition on the influence of product placement on children's food choices. Those children who had seen the movie on a previous occasion were more influenced when reminded of the product placement by the present viewing (Auty and Lewis 2004). Repeated exposure to product placement is a likely phenomenon with computer games and videogames, which are leisure activities that children engage in on multiple occasions. McGinnis et al. (2006) argue that marketing to children via product placement raises dual concerns about the high levels of exposure to marketing messages, and even more alarmingly, the likelihood that children would not be aware that they were being marketed to (power of techniques).

- Children's magazines

Children's magazines have significant reach, with popular magazines targeting six to 13 year olds known to be consumed by up to 20% of the child population in Australia (Kelly and Chapman 2007). In their study of 16 popular Australian children's magazines over a six month period in 2006, Kelly and Chapman (2007) found 8,488 food references in 76 child magazine issues. These included: advertisements; advertorials; recipes; competitions; activities; links; and, icons. They found 64% of the references were for EDNP foods and of these 51% were for branded products. Cowburn and Boxer (2007) analysed five popular children's magazines targeting five to 19 year olds, for evidence of integrated marketing in magazines and on the Internet, that is, advertisements or advertorials in the magazines directing children to Internet sites. They found 50% of advertisements directed children to Internet sites featuring games, quizzes or tests. Jones et al. (2008) found similar integration of marketing in children's magazines and on the Internet. They examined websites of popular children's magazines and found eight food products promoted on the websites of three magazines, seven of which were for EDNP foods. Marketing strategies on the websites included competitions, advergames, free gifts, downloads, advertorials and links to the food company website (Jones et al. 2008).

- Schools

The marketing of food and beverages to children in schools is prevalent in the United States. Story and French (2004), McGinnis et al. (2006), Calvert (2008) and, Linn and Novosat (2008) report that such marketing takes a number of forms, such as: food sales through vending machines, fund raisers, canteens and fast food outlets; provision of corporate-sponsored telecommunications resources, such as Channel One, computers and video equipment, which carry advertisements and record student information; sponsorship of curriculum resources, uniforms, equipment, buses and buildings depicting branded logos; and market research with children. Story and French (2004) cite the US General Accounting Office who revealed that the sale of branded foods was the dominant marketing activity in schools, with soft drinks being the fastest growing category of food sales; schools received commissions and incentives from food sales, which could total US$1.5million per year from a beverage contract. There has been some progress in policies to restrict EDNP food marketing in American schools but Story et al. (2009) report that improvements are still needed in the areas of competitive foods and school-based meals. Schor and Ford (2007) and Linn and Novosat (2008) discuss the ethics of marketing through schools, explaining that it is invariably associated with funding of education and therefore places cash-strapped schools in a more vulnerable position. In addition, in this way children at school are captive audiences and have no choice in their exposure to marketing messages. To the extent that products are embedded in the environment in a way that is secondary to the main activity (education), sponsorship in schools acts in a similar way to product placement. Australian public schools can be assumed to contain considerably less food marketing due to healthy eating policies governing practice in all aspects of school functioning. At their best school-based strategies apply a ‘whole of school’ approach incorporating school canteens, vending machines, curriculum activities, fundraising and school events (NSWDET 2006; DECD 2008).

- Children’s sport

Like schools, children’s sport presents opportunities for food and beverage marketers through direct sale of products and sponsorship. A number of studies by Maher et al. (2006) and Mehta et al. (2010c) found food corporations’ sponsoring of children’s sport to represent a higher proportion of EDNP foods. Kelly et al. (2008) surveyed parents of children aged 5-17 years about foods sold at community sporting venues, and found that the majority of foods sold (53%) were EDNP.

- Stealth marketing

A distinctive feature of marketing on non-broadcast media is marketing by stealth. Stealth marketing by definition is marketing that is covert, resulting in children being unaware that they are being marketed to. Product placement is one example of stealth marketing whereby product images and licensed characters or brand logos are embedded in television programs, movies, video games or computer games (advergames), editorials (advertorials), recipes, activities, competitions and events activities (Hawkes 2004; Calvert 2008). As previously discussed, Auty and Lewis's (2004) study showed the effectiveness of product placement in influencing food choice. Calvert (2008) notes that marketing by stealth also occurs through social networking sites when children are invited to contribute to product development for example, by suggesting new characters or designs for products, and when they participate in virtual communities consuming branded products, for example Neopets. Viral marketing is a form of stealth marketing whereby children are encouraged to send messages embedded with marketing content on to their friends. Stealth marketing, we are told by Calvert (2008) and Nairn and Fine (2008), is powerful because of its surreptitious nature, bypassing cognitive processes so that children unconsciously absorb the messages and experience positive attitudes associated with the primary activity they are engaged in.

In summary, the literature shows considerable development in food marketing to children on non-broadcast media. Of public health concern is that the marketing primarily promotes EDNP foods and uses powerful techniques such as integrated marketing, product placement, viral marketing and stealth marketing.

### *2.4.3: The mechanisms by which children are persuaded*

A number of authors (Hart, Herriot et al. 2003; Moore 2004; Strachan and Pavie-Latour 2008) assert that children engage with food marketing communications to find out about products as well as to be entertained. International reviews (Hastings, McDermott et al. 2006; McGinnis, Gootman et al. 2006) have established that a consequence of children's exposure to marketing is desire for the products and consequent consumption behaviour (for example pestering). The plethora of marketing media and tactics used to engage children and build desire have already been described in the section above.

The processes by which children are persuaded by marketing communications has been well studied by developmental and consumer psychologists. Early research focusses on advertising literacy, that is, children's capacity to distinguish advertisements from program content and their understanding of the persuasive intent of advertisements. For example, John (1999) uses Piaget's (1960) work on children's cognitive development as a theoretical framework to explain how children under the age of seven years do not have well developed capacity to distinguish advertising from program content, nor to fully discern the persuasive intent of advertising. Roedder (1981) uses theories of information processing to explain children's developmental ability to focus on the central product message in an advertisement, and filter out peripheral elements such as sound, visuals and special effects. She proposes that children acquire the skills of central processing at about 13 years of age. The research on advertising literacy suggests a linear, chronological developmental process whereby children incrementally acquire capacity to distinguish advertising content and understand persuasive intent. This evidence has been used by groups such as the American Psychological Association (APA 2004) to argue that advertising to children under the age of eight years is inherently misleading, and that young children deserve to be protected from the harmful effects of advertising.

It was assumed that skills in literacy would give children scepticism and defence against advertising (Boush, Friestad et al. 1994; Bouchard 2002). However, empirical research by Brucks et al. (1988) showed that children as old as 11years of age, did not automatically invoke these cognitive defences unless explicitly reminded to do so. The myth that young children are more susceptible than older children to persuasion effects of advertising is further debunked by Livingstone and Helsper (2006) who show that children aged seven to 16 years show more persuasion effects than younger children aged two to six years. They propose a dual processing model of advertising effects, whereby children of different ages could be influenced to varying degrees by central or peripheral routes. They suggest that older children are more likely to be persuaded by a central processing route of the product message, and younger children to be persuaded by a peripheral processing route of the visuals, sounds, special effects and cartoon characters. Moore and Lutz (2000) also confirm age-related processing of marketing communications in their qualitative research with children aged between seven to 11 years.

Nairn and Fine (2008) take the arguments beyond cognition and skills and draw on findings from neuroscience and psychology to propose that marketing techniques which link positive experiences to product exposure result in consumers developing preferences for those products in unconscious and non-rational ways. They distinguish between 'implicit processes' which are automatic, impulsive, pre-conscious, difficult to control or self-regulate, and 'explicit processes' which are self-reported, controlled, deliberate and cognitive. They propose that attitudes formed by implicit processes are stronger predictors of behaviour than attitudes formed by explicit processes (Nairn and Fine 2008).

### *2.4.4: Links between the literature and my research*

The literature on food marketing to children led me to enquire into parents and children's perception of the nature and content of marketing. I was particularly interested to see whether their awareness of marketing on non-broadcast media matched what we know to be the trend away from broadcast to non-broadcast media. Given the significant amount of marketing on the Internet and through supermarket product packaging, these areas were investigated in some detail with parents and children, in particular, advertising techniques on these media (for example advergames), implicit persuasion effects, and ethical aspects (such as viral marketing).

## *2.5: Parenting the child consumer*

### *2.5.1: Modern families*

The notion of 'family', we are told by Turner (2005) and Giddens (2006), has undergone considerable transformation from its historical origins of ensuring inheritance of property, producing children who could deliver useful work, and socialising them to the rules of society. They inform us that some of the changes underpinning modern families are: that couples form relationships primarily out of a quest for intimacy and romance; there are greater expectations for personal satisfaction and fulfilment out of marital unions; there are higher rates of marital separation and divorce resulting in more step-families and lone-parent families; and more families are separated due to migration, as a consequence of globalization.

Notwithstanding the macro-social changes, Turner (2005) argues that having children is still highly valued by couples. He characterises modern families as,

> [S]mall rather than extended, separate from major economic activities and specialized around the provision of intimacy and affection (p. 146).

Baker (2009) posits that the neo-liberal thrust for responsibilisation and governmentality to be shifted from the state to individuals and families has conferred onto the social space of 'family' considerable personal responsibility, reflexivity and agency. Beck and Beck-Gersheim (2002) suggest that the underlying principles of 'family' have become increasingly individualised and democratised, so that relations are much more defined by negotiation rather than obligation, and individual goals are as important as the collective goals of the family group.

As a consequence of the business of families changing from a primary focus on survival to a new focus on success, autonomy, and individuality, James et al. (2009) propose that raising children emphasises the development of self-identity, personality and independence. Parent-child relations have been liberalized as part of this social evolution. Educated and middle-class parents are more authoritative rather than authoritarian, using parenting styles that involve communication, negotiation and education, instead of rigid rules and punishment for transgression (Carlson and Grossbart 1988). Staunton's (2008) study confirms these notions of parenting by showing that parents spend more time in leisure and play with their children, they are more involved in the lives of their children, and family decision-making is more democratic. This child-centred approach to parenting does not necessarily equate to permissiveness. Staunton's (2008) study found a perception that parents were actually applying more rules and discipline in certain areas, for example, children's diet.

Children's role in families has evolved alongside the changing nature of families. While the dominant discourse expounds on children's agency and independence, James et al. (2009) highlight the paradoxical trend of delayed development of children's autonomy in modern liberal societies, by children's increasing dependency on parents. They cite the following factors contributing to these trends: more intensive parenting practices; mandatory enrolment in education for longer periods; higher youth unemployment and higher costs of living forcing children to be more financially dependent on parents.

Ultimate decision-making power within families nevertheless resides with the parents and we are reminded by a number of authors (Roberts McNeal 1999; Nicholls and Cullen 2004;

2006; Turner, Kelly et al. 2006; Ebster, Wagner et al. 2009) that this situation results in children asserting their agency in a number of ways: by influencing and negotiating their needs with parents; by resisting parental injunctions; and by attempting to wrest power from parents.

In summary, modern families within consumerist societies are characterised by agency and individualism of all members including children, and this puts particular pressures on parents to negotiate and regulate the child consumer.

*2.5.2: Parental regulation of the child consumer*

Parenting is a constantly evolving social role shaped by macro-social phenomena, prevailing discourses, and the myriad of socio-economic forces that influence individual values and practices. Baker (2009) posits that in neo-liberal societies which emphasise individualism, parents are less constrained by 'old' structures and traditions, and are required to practice reflexive parenting and to write their own biography of parenting. This no doubt brings its share of freedoms as well as anxieties about what constitutes correct parenting. Writing about citizenship in neo-liberal society, Rose (1996) explains that the lack of external structures does not mean the absence of rules, which instead have become internalised by the process of individual self-regulation and responsibility.

The goal of reflexivity and self-regulation in parenting is about being the 'perfect or best parent possible'. This is not dissimilar to the neo-liberal injunction of 'good citizen, making the right lifestyle choices' (Giddens and Pierson 1998). Grieshaber (1997) asserts that this requires evaluation of self and others, defence of one's own practices, and critique and judgement of others deemed to be performing less well (also referred to as 'othering'). In her extensive writing on the experience of mothering, Lupton (2008; 2011) confirms that mothering is embedded within an array of discourses which are perpetuated by experts, government, media, family and friends; these include discourses of governmentality, responsibilisation, public health, intensive parenting and vulnerability of children. She explains that these discourses require mothers to take primary responsibility for their children's health and optimal development, and to be judged and blamed for any failures in children achieving these social goals. Motherhood is therefore a highly reflexive space wherein mothers are expected to assess the risks, dangers and opportunities associated with

children's care and well-being (Lupton 2008, 2011). Kokkonen's (2009) discourse analysis of parents' Internet postings about fatness in children confirmed the dominant discourse of 'good parenting' and blame directed towards parents for children's fatness, over and above other causative factors. While the neo-liberal injunction of 'good parent/good citizen' applies equally to fathers and mothers, there is no doubt that the job of parenting is highly gendered and mothers come under more scrutiny than fathers. Baker's (2009) research with young disadvantaged mothers highlighted the discourse of 'good mothering'; the mothers displayed continuous reflexivity and personal transformation, and they tended to individualise their problems. While recognising the gendered nature of parenting, I will not focus on mothers in this thesis but rather refer to parents in the plural.

One of the primary goals of parenting, we are reminded by Baumrind (1971), is the socialisation of children, essentially the education and training of children to develop the knowledge, skills and values necessary to function effectively in the society they live in. When applied to children becoming effective consumers, this is referred to as consumer socialisation (Gabel and Kamerman 2006).

The literature on 'parenting styles' provides a useful framework for discussing parents' educative and regulatory role in relation to 'parenting the child consumer'. A typology classifying parenting styles as authoritarian, authoritative, and, permissive was first developed by Baumrind (1971) and subsequently applied successfully by Carlson and Grossbart (1988) and Rose (1999) to explain parental socialisation of the child consumer. In this typology the authoritarian style of parenting is the most rigid and affords the child consumer limited opportunities for agency in family retail decisions. Parents exert tight control over consumption decisions and children have little chance to influence these decisions or negotiate their needs. Children resort to fairly crude communication strategies to influence parents such as pleading, nagging, bribing and threatening. The permissive style of parenting allows the child consumer considerable agency in their own as well as family purchases. Children enjoy consumer independence at an earlier stage compared to the authoritarian regime. This is particularly applicable to families where parents work long hours and are absent for much of the time, or in situations of high parental conflict and therefore fewer ground rules for children. The authoritative style of parenting is highly educative and regulatory, to the extent that parents negotiate consumer decisions within parameters set by the parent of what constitutes healthy and acceptable behaviour. Parents invest in educating

children to be sensible consumers through communicating with them about their consumer decisions and involving them in co-shopping. Parental rules are stricter for younger children and these are relaxed as children grow older and acquire more skills (Rose, Valakas et al. 2003). From the above elaboration, it can be seen that different parenting styles would result in different consumer socialisation outcomes for children. While theoretical frameworks are useful to explain differences in parenting style, it is quite likely that in practice parents range over the styles in response to individual situations and the child's developmental capacity. Nevertheless it is also likely that parents would have a natural tendency to practice one style preferentially over the others. Neeley (2005) found that the age of the child and socio-demographic characteristics of the family, influenced parents' consumer socialisation practices, to the extent that parents were more restrictive with younger children and more instructive and permissive with older children. Parents with a higher education engaged in more co-shopping, however busier parents provided less consumer education and co-shopping experiences and girls received more consumer communication and co-shopping than boys (Neeley 2005).

In summary, the authoritative parenting style is most closely aligned with the ideology of 'good parenting' in modern neo-liberal families, to the extent that it embodies love, nurturing, caring, communication, negotiation, reasoned explanations, and education as well as guidance, consequences instead of punishment, and interest and engagement in the child's life. It also requires high levels of reflexivity to adjust parenting behaviours to children's needs and situations (Grieshaber 1997).

### *2.5.3: Parental regulation of children's diets*

Parental regulation of children's diets provides a relevant parallel framework for thinking about responsibility and the discourse of 'good parenting' in relation to regulating the child consumer. We are told by Cook (2009) that food is universally recognised as a symbol of family love and care, primarily provided by mothers in the act of 'making family'. The considerable body of research on families and food (Charles and Kerr 1988; DeVault 1991; Coveney 2006; James, Curtis et al. 2009; James, Kjøholt et al. 2009; Ristovski-Slijepcevic, Chapman et al. 2010) agree that the family meal holds iconic status in western developed countries, and in fact symbolises 'proper family'. James et al. (2009) assert that the elements of a proper meal include: cooked by mum, prepared from basic ingredients, and eaten

together. The proper meal goes beyond provision of nutrition, to represent love and care. A drop in standards of the proper family meal by the absence of any one of the elements listed above (for example, commensality) is justified and almost apologized for by mothers talking about family food patterns. They argue that the family meal reproduces social roles between generations and genders, and in this way parents' and children's roles and responsibilities are clearly demarcated. Children's participation in family meals can have moral overtones of showing gratitude to the meal provider and demonstrating commitment to family membership through the sharing of a common meal; for these families the menu is not adapted or changed to accommodate children's preferences. These parental decisions may well be influenced by their own experiences as children, and in this way demonstrate the effects of intergenerational learning (James et al. 2009).

Provision of family meals and regulating children's food choices and eating behaviour are complex tasks for parents overlaid by many psycho-social as well as economic factors. The ascendancy of the agentic child in modern families is represented by Cook's (2009, p. 116) statement that, 'the sanctity of the choosing self, enshrined as the hallmark of contemporary consumer culture' can work to undermine parental attempts to regulate children's food choices and eating behaviour influence children. Roberts (2006) notes that parent-child interactions around food choice are a complex, negotiated process of parental values and authority on one side, and children's desires and agency on the other.

Much has been written about parental regulation of children's food choices and it is widely accepted that parents are a primary influence on children's food choice and promote healthy eating through restrictive and prescriptive practices, encouraging healthy choices as well as modelling healthy choices (Roberts 2006; Pettigrew and Roberts 2007; Cook 2009).

Authoritarian feeding practices and restricting children's access to particular (EDNP) foods have been found to be counter-productive, with children desiring products more and resisting parents' efforts to guide healthy food choices (Fisher and Birch 1999). In contrast, authoritative feeding practices have been associated with children making healthier food choices (Prasad, Rao et al. 1978; Kremers, Brug et al. 2003; Patrick and Nicklas 2005). Hays et al. (2001) however contradict this idea reporting that while authoritative parenting was associated with greater nutrition knowledge and awareness among children in their study,

authoritarian parenting was nevertheless associated with greater compliance with maternal healthy eating commands.

Children's food preferences and desires do not always concur with their parents', and Roberts (2006) found that this was a source of worry, concern and conflict in the parent-child relationship. In a study by Pettigrew and Roberts (2006) parents considered their children to be influential in family food choices, however they did not trust their children's choices from a health point of view. With their lesser power and authority (compared to parents) in family food purchases, one of the ways that children exercise their agency is through resistance (Roberts 2006; Rawlins 2008). For example, Roberts (2006) found that parents believed their children had awareness about healthy eating but did not exercise this knowledge consistently in making their food choices. From her empirical research with high school children, Rawlins (2008) found that the children understood the content of nutrition health messages but did not necessarily comply with them. She suggests that children's food choices are subjected to many influences and the children in her study exercised their agency in choosing which ones they followed. Children's gullibility to the persuasion effects of marketing as well as their personal food preferences, are among the range of factors influencing their food choices (McGinnis, Gootman et al. 2006).

Cook's (2009) study of parents of two to eight year old children revealed that in spite of nutrition being important to mothers, they nevertheless reported struggling with tensions between their nutritional priorities and their children's social and emotional priorities, in their decision-making about feeding their children. Their children preferred highly marketed, less healthy products and mothers had to employ a range of strategies to regulate their children's food consumption, which included the use of tricks and deceit such as: giving healthy foods commercial names (of EDNP foods); not disclosing healthy ingredients in dishes; and sneaking vegetables into dishes without the child's knowledge. Parenting within this consumerist context was perceived as a delicate balance between restriction and permission - respecting children's subjectivities in relation to commercial meanings of foods, allowing them some degree of agency in their food choices, and exercising responsibility and control over the nutritional adequacy of their diets (Cook 2009).

The work of Pettigrew and Roberts (2007) showed that the parents in the study (mothers) took their responsibility for regulating their children's food choices seriously, and they

carried this out in sophisticated ways that took into account the child's competence, individual preferences and social needs. Roberts (2006) found that parents respond in nuanced ways to children, exercising more control to compensate for children's immaturity and incompetence in food decisions, and rationalising children's resistance by labelling the child as a 'strong willed or fussy eater'.

A number of researchers (Charles and Kerr 1988; DeVault 1991; Coveney 2006) confirm that as with other aspects of parenting, regulating children's diets is highly gendered, with mothers carrying the major responsibility and work associated with feeding children and ensuring they have healthy diets. In their study of how families negotiate meals, James et al. (2009) found that responsibility for accommodating children's food preferences generally fell to the mother as primary food provider, and this was important to her social identity of 'doing' families. Other studies confirm the centrality of mothers in feeding children and accommodating their food preferences. Roberts (2006) found that mothers tended to give children what they liked to eat and Roberts (2005) found that some mothers packaged home meals for children so they could 'unwrap' them. As well as duty, responsibility carries with it being blamed when things go wrong. Kokkonen's (2009) study in Finland showed that mothers were held more responsible than fathers for children's weight problems notwithstanding enjoying high levels of gender equality.

Responsibility for children's diets and health can be experienced as a burden, as was found by Pocock, Trivedi et al. (2010) in their review of 21 qualitative studies from a range of countries on parents' perceptions of healthy behaviours for weight management in children. They found a preponderance of parental perceptions of barriers to healthy behaviours, including: children's own preferences for EDNP foods; constraints on parental time; being undermined by family members; lack of knowledge and therefore confidence to educate children about healthy behaviours; and marketing of EDNP foods. Parents appeared to accept responsibility for their children's health behaviours but were overwhelmed by the barriers to healthy behaviours and felt guilty for their children's unhealthy behaviours. This seems like the obvious and unhelpful endpoint of the dominant individualistic discourse of childhood obesity, when in actual fact the causes are largely environmental (Egger and Swinburn 2010).

Responsibility for children's diets is placed squarely on parents' shoulders, more specifically on the mother's shoulders because she is perceived to be the primary purchaser of family food

(Colls and Evans 2008). This is exemplified in television advertisements that promote children's products but direct their communication to mothers, explaining the nutritional benefits of the product. In their study of supermarkets Colls and Evans (2008) found that supermarkets reinforce the discourse of parental responsibility by targeting their nutrition product information to parents, and in doing so perpetuate the discourse that children are not responsible for their food choices.

*2.5.4: Regulating purchase requests and family conflict*

Turner et al. (2006) report that children's pestering for consumer products, and parents' concomitant refusal of these requests make family conflict a common part of the family consumer experience. As already mentioned, pester power is the principal means by which children exert their consumer potency, and this requires literally haranguing parents in order to break down their resistance to purchasing the product in question (Nicholls and Cullen 2004; Turner, Kelly et al. 2006). The three product categories over which most pestering occurs, we are told by Nicholls and Cullen (2004) are food, toys and clothes and the degree of conflict in the child-parent purchase relationship is thought to escalate from clothes to toys to food. Food marketing is known to cause 'pestering' by children and results in parents purchasing more EDNP foods for their children, which in turn contribute to childhood obesity. McDermott et al. (2006) argue that this undermines industry arguments that pester power is just a legitimate way for children to express their growing autonomy as consumers.

Conflict associated with children's pestering for consumerables has been reported by a number of researchers (Turner, Kelly et al. 2006; Nairn 2009). The mothers in the study by Pettigrew and Roberts (2006) spoke of their children's relentless pestering for toys bundled with fast food meals, and the ensuing distress associated with parental refusal; they felt caught between wanting to please their children and making responsible food decisions. The mothers felt that toy give-aways did not enhance family life. Dixon et al. (2006) report that supermarkets are one of the sites where children pester their parents and this is facilitated by point-of-sale marketing techniques such as product packaging, give-aways, and displays at check-outs. Not surprisingly then, authors like Pettigrew and Roberts (2007) found that many parents described co-shopping with children as stressful, and to be avoided where possible.

In summary, regulating children's food choices (including their *consumer* food choices) is a complex task in these modern times. It represents the confluence of a number of conflicting discourses - parenting, health and consumerism. These discourses emphasise individualism, personal responsibility and regulation on the one hand, while encouraging conspicuous and excessive consumption on the other hand. Resolving these competing discourses of restraint and extravagance poses a challenge for parents. Mothers in particular bear the burden of negotiating these conflicts.

### *2.5.5: Links between the literature and my research*

The above literature informed enquiry with parents into their perception of parenting the child consumer. Of particular interest were their perceptions of responsibility and regulation of their children's lives within the context of food marketing on non-broadcast media. I was looking to find out about reflexivity, the 'good parent' discourse and parenting style, in relation to how they responded to food marketing.

## *2.6: Ethics and food marketing to children*

### *2.6.1: Ethics in modernity*

Spence and Van Heekeren (2005) and Somerville (2004) explain that ethics constitutes the values, principles and rules that guide interpersonal and intra-personal conduct. Accepted principles which underpin ethics include: respect for life; rights to freedom for everyone; protection from harm; common good; inherent wrongness (something is wrong no matter how much good can come from it); precautionary principle; and burden of proof that something is safe (Rogers and Brock 2004; Somerville 2004). Spence and Van Heekeren (2005, p. 35) citing Kant argue that ethical conduct requires that we:

> [T]reat other people always as ends in themselves worthy of respect in their own right and never merely as a means in the pursuit of our own self- interested ends.

Zygmunt Bauman (2008) theorises that 'care for others' and 'care for self' are fundamentally conflicting drives for human beings. As abnormal and unreasonable the injunction to 'care for others' is – to love thy neighbour as thyself – this is a defining attribute of civilization. He argues that Kantian awareness of an inner moral code signals full subjective acknowledgement of the 'other' and responsibility to the 'other'. This is the crux of civilized

humanity - the 'self is born in the act of recognition of its being *for the other*' (p. 42). Social rules, regulations and constraints on freedom offer prescriptions for carrying out responsibility towards the 'other', and limit the angst caused by the infinite, imprecise social responsibility for multiple others.

In the globalised world people are all the more interdependent, as activities are connected across the globe and actions in one part of the world have consequences in other parts of the world, unknown sometimes even to those taking the actions. This state of globalised connectedness should engender objective responsibility for one another. However Bauman (2008, p. 26) posits that where ethics and interest in living a 'good life' were public and social concerns in the past (in 'solid' modernity), this isn't the case anymore; there are 'few if any signs that we who share the planet are willing to take up in earnest the subjective responsibility for that objective responsibility of ours'. He describes globalization as producing a 'network of interdependency' but little else - there is no global society, global polity, global law, or global social system. He argues that the social systems and coordinating forces such as economics, politics and culture, are now disparate. Market structures operate through their own codes of behaviour, relatively free of moral concerns and legal constraints.

> [The] unprecedented moral extraterritoriality of economic activities have produced spectacular wealth and prosperity, but also 'human misery and poverty, and mind-boggling polarization of living standards and opportunities (Bauman 2008, p. 74).

Responsibility for the 'other' that is clear and unambiguous in one-on-one relations, becomes confused when it confronts multiple 'others'. Somerville (2004) notes that in modernity, with human relations on a global scale, it is easy to understand how responsibility for the 'other' becomes almost 'impossible', as the individual retreats into their own self-interest as a survival response to the overwhelmingness of globalisation. However the real risk is 'de-learning the art of negotiating shared meanings, an agreeable modus convivendi' (Bauman 2008, p.68).

Sommerville (2004) adds that the high social value placed on reason, rationality, science and economics in modernity has resulted in the loss of moral and ethical imagination. Neo-liberal societies are predominantly secular, having dissipated the importance of religion in providing a 'moral compass' by which to live. She argues that, in typically pluralistic and multi-cultural societies there are less shared values and consensus about morality and ethics and more of

what can be called ‘situational ethics’ or ‘moral relativism’, whereby all options are kept open. There is also a tendency to underestimate the potential for harm in exchange for focusing on the benefits of social and economic reforms (Somerville 2004).

Bauman (2008) suggests that we have lost the vision for public ethics through the dismantling of state-governance structures in ‘liquid’ modernity, and devolving these functions increasingly to individual life-politics, requiring people to make their own assessment about ethical conduct. Solid and authoritative regulations have been replaced with persuasion and advice on appropriate behaviour through technologies of governmentality. The consequences of this are several. Bauman (2008) posits that the pleasures once derived from living well and being a good person (the ethical life) are now obtained through engaging with the market, for example, shopping, eating out, going to the movies and taking holidays. Martens et al. (2004) and Bauman (2000) argue that in liquid modernity, with consumption offered as the means to create one’s identity, but without the support of solid structures providing authoritative guides, the reflexive project of the ‘self’ is a private and individualised exercise, choosing between many possibilities which in themselves give rise to anxieties about what constitutes ‘best’ choices. He adds (Bauman 2008, p. 18) that ‘[u]ncertainty is the natural habitat of human life – although it is the hope of escaping uncertainty that is the engine of human pursuit’. And he proposes that living in consumerist society affects all aspects of our lives; we are urged to consume more and more, egged on by advertising, and ‘we become ourselves commodities in the consumer and labour markets’ (Bauman 2008, p. 58), The rewards of social and personal relationship are replaced with consumption – ‘materializing love’. Eckersley (2006, p. 10) echoes similar sentiments when he says that consumerism not only fosters dissatisfaction ‘with what we have, but also with who we are’. With desire and the search for pleasure as dominant human values in consumerist society, it is not hard to understand how the task of social responsibility and ethical conduct poses a strong cognitive and moral challenge for individuals.

*2.6.2: Ethics in neo-liberal societies*

In the spirit of minimal government intervention, neo-liberal societies essentially entrust the market to regulate its own ethical practice. Government only steps in to control the excesses of market practice and, it would appear, to ‘bail’ them out when the system fails, as we saw with the global financial crises of 2009 (Crotty 2009). The marketing of EDNP foods to

children exemplifies this situation, with governments (particularly in Australia) unwilling to restrict industry practices, particularly when this is resisted by said industries (Jones 2004; NPHT 2009). The mantra of 'consumer choice' that drives commerce assumes that consumers will select products appropriately, with due care to not harming themselves. This of course places an unfair burden of responsibility at the consumption-end rather than the production-end of the market.

The central principles of neo-liberalism seem to be antithetical to ethical conduct. Somerville (2004) posits that the intense focus on individualism, entrepreneurship, competitiveness, individual rights, self-responsibility and self-governance mitigates against an ethic of care for others, particularly the more vulnerable among us. Bauman (2008) suggests that in place of 'care for others' we have an ethic of blame and censure for those who fail to succeed, do not conform or resist their obligations in the social contract.

*2.6.3: Business, marketing and ethics*

As already explained, ethics constitutes the values, principles and rules that guide interpersonal and intra-personal conduct (Somerville 2004; Spence and Van Heekeren 2005). Central elements of most business codes of practice (for example, American Marketing Association) are honesty, fairness and transparency in dealings with consumers (Martin and Smith 2008; Handsley, Nehmy et al. 2012).

The rights of companies and those of consumers can sometimes be at odds. On the one hand, companies have rights to promote their products so as to encourage consumption, and thereby make profits. On the other hand, consumers have the right to accurate information to guide their decision-making. It is well recognized that marketing communicates selective information, namely positive qualities of the product, in order to persuade customers to purchase the product. In this way, marketing and advertising practices do not necessarily provide full and frank information to guide consumer decision-making. Spence and Van Heekeren (2005) suggest that the dual purpose of providing information to citizens to help them make informed consumption decisions, and communicating to consumers to persuade them to purchase products, can sometimes be at odds with each other and pose an ethical dilemma for business. Referring to modern marketing techniques such as viral marketing, product placement and advertainment which use 'stealth' techniques, Harris et al. (2008, p.

5.8) lament that it is ‘ironic that industry emphasizes personal responsibility while often undermining consumers' ability to be responsible’.

While theoretically business undertakes to act ethically towards consumers, in practice, particularly in relation to products with the potential to be harmful (for example, EDNP child-oriented foods), it would seem that business puts the onus of responsibility squarely on the shoulders of consumers, in particular parents, in relation to children’s products. In their study of supermarket practices and children’s nutrition, Colls and Evans (2008) found that supermarkets perceived their responsibility to encompass provision of information to parents (through labelling and signposting of healthy products), but not to limiting the supply of EDNP foods. They concluded that in this way, ‘supermarkets manoeuvre themselves out of a position of responsibility’ (p.620). Nicholls and Cullen (2004) argue that marketing discourse positions the child as ‘becoming socialised into a consumer’ and achieving self-determination through consumption, and in this discourse ‘pester power’ is a natural corollary of the consumer socialisation process and it is up to parents to ‘control’ their children’s behaviour. However, they suggest that children do not have the right to purchase harmful products even if the consumption behaviour contributes to self-realisation (for example, consumer socialisation). Consequently retailers and marketers have an ethical responsibility towards children and parents to curtail the marketing of harmful products to children (Nicholls and Cullen 2004).

There is nevertheless a cultural evolution taking place whereby unethical practices are perceived as being bad for business, and companies are incorporating ethical accounting into their ‘bottom-lines’ (Sommerville 2004). Corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, Colls and Evans (2008) argue, confer social as well as fiscal benefits to companies by demonstrating business alignment with government policies for health or social improvement. Pettersson and Fjellstrom (2006), writing from a marketing perspective but acknowledging the cultural concerns about childhood obesity, advocate that business strike a balance between targeting children’s desire for fun and entertainment with their need for healthy foods. They take a pragmatic view of investment in ethics and suggest that responsible marketing is ‘good’ for business because it maintains a wholesome brand image, and builds a positive relationship with customers. True to the neo-liberal paradigm, they put caveats on industry responsibility for children’s food choices and posit that the ‘family unit’ is the central influence on children’s food habits, and they advocate for children to be taught consumer

skills. Preston (2005) echoes this neo-liberal perspective and proposes that the socialisation of children into consumers makes an important contribution to achieving the economic ends of society, and is therefore socially responsible. He suggests that '[w]ithin the context of a materialistic society advertising provides a useful function for children by providing information about brands and their symbolic and social meaning' (Preston 2005, p. 66).

However, Bauman (2008) cites Levinas who makes the distinction between 'pure morality' which is innate and spontaneous, not driven by any deliberation of need, gain or advantage, and those acts of kindness motivated by desire, need or ulterior motive which are not 'pure morality', and consequently suspect.

*2.6.4: Public health and ethics*

The disciplines of medicine and health pay particular attention to the following ethical principles: individual freedom and personal autonomy in health decisions; and do no harm (maleficence/beneficence) (Somerville 2004). Beauchamp and Childress (2009) distinguish public health ethics as being concerned with health inequalities, particularly for disadvantaged groups in society (justice), health interventions imposed without consent (individual freedom and autonomy) and access to coercive powers, for example, legislation and law.

While neo-liberal governments take a 'hands-off' approach to regulation, Rogers (2008) notes that ethicists argue that governments have a prima facie responsibility to protect and promote the health of the population. From the perspective of public health ethics, responsibility for health outcomes hinges on questions of attribution and efficacy. Rogers (2008) posits that matters located in the environment (such as advertising and marketing) are (a) not of the individual's making and (b) not under the individual's control to change**.** It is the state that has the power to alter the environment in physical, economic and political ways. Justifications for government intervention on ethical grounds include: reasonable means; proportionality; harm avoidance; and fairness. In the case of government intervention to restrict EDNP food marketing to children, she argues that this is justified because of the 'health risks' associated with obesity and that legislative measures are reasonable in the face of the inadequacy of health education and industry self-regulation (Rogers 2008).

Baum (2008) argues that it is necessary to distinguish between medical approaches which are focussed 'downstream' of health problems, employing treatment and education interventions, which are premised on assumptions about individual responsibility for health, and public health approaches which are focused 'upstream' towards the causes of health problems and enhancement of health, employing population interventions which are premised on broad socio-environmental determinants of health.

Paternalistic interventions that infringe individual rights for the sake of individual or community welfare are particularly relevant to the debate about restricting children's exposure to EDNP food marketing, and restricting marketing practices that carry strong persuasive powers. Bayer and Fairchild (2004) argue that paternalism and the subordination of individual rights for their own and the greater good is a foundational principle of public health ethics. This argument leads to the conclusion expounded by Rogers (2008) that infringing the autonomy of marketers is justified in order to reduce harm and preserve the greater good by creating an environment in which child consumers can make fully informed decisions, free of persuasion, pressure and misinformation. This argument is particularly pertinent to children who, as consumers in-the-making, are not yet fully equipped with consumer decision-making skills, and it is the central ethical principle cited by advocacy groups such as the American Psychological Association (APA 2004), the Coalition on Food Advertising to Children (CFAC 2007) and the International Association for the Study of Obesity (IASO 2007). Rogers (2008) argues that the autonomy of consumers is not infringed by restrictions on marketing because they can still get information about products in other ways. In any case, if parents are positioned as the regulators of children's food choices, then food marketing communications should be directed at parents.

Sommerville (2004) argues that the precautionary principle is important in public health ethics because it asserts that in policy-making, knowledge about risks and effectiveness of interventions may be incomplete but we are still required to act for the common good in the face of this uncertainty, otherwise known as the 'precautionary principle'. This perspective is also pertinent to the debate on food marketing to children because the food and marketing industries use the lack of causal evidence as a lever to lobby government into inaction (ABC 2011).

*2.6.5: Public health instruments*

Handsley et al. (2012) explain how the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (UNHCR 1989) provides important guidance for considerations of ethical conduct with respect to children. For a start the CRC references the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in asserting that children are entitled to special care and assistance. Article 3 (1) sums this up as follows:

> In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.

The section of the CRC that is most relevant to the debate on food marketing to children, is Article 17 (e) which calls for:

> [P]rotection of the child from information and material injurious to his or her well-being, bearing in mind the provisions of articles 13 [on children's freedom of expression] and 18 [on parents' responsibilities].

Article 13 describes children's right to freedom of expression, including to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, subject to considerations of, among other things, public health; this can be read as children's rights to participate in family food purchases. Article 18 refers to parents' responsibilities and indicates that children have rights of expression within constraints of parents having primary responsibility for children's upbringing. It also suggests that the state has a responsibility to support parents in this role. One way to interpret the CRC in relation to food marketing and children is that parents are the ultimate decision-makers about food purchases, and the state has a responsibility to support parents by restricting children's exposure to EDNP food marketing which would act to undermine parental authority in this regard. Article 36 is also relevant in its call for children to be protected from all forms of exploitation prejudicial to any aspect of their welfare (UNHCR 1989; Handsley, Nehmy et al. 2012)

Wells (2011, p. 18) argues that the modern neo-liberal interpretation of rights-based discourse, goes against state provision of care and protection, towards autonomy of individuals and participation as citizens (biopolitics), including children, and that this is counter to the original intent of the CRC which stands for 'protection and care of children in light of their specific vulnerabilities'.

Handsley et al. (2012) emphasise that the importance of a document such as the CRC, to which Australia is a signatory, is that it signifies an obligation on the part of the Australian

government to protect children's rights and to take action when there is any threat to these rights being fulfilled. Bennett (2008) notes that international agreements such as these are useful because they can constrain state governments from taking independent and contrary action, and they are particularly relevant to issues impacted by globalization and cross-border transmission of health problems.

*2.6.6: Marketing to children as an ethical concern*

Marketing to children is considered ethically problematic from a number of different viewpoints. As Rogers (2008) explains, informed choice in consumer decision-making is a central tenet of ethical practice, and this means that consumers (including children) should have full access to accurate information to guide their decision-making, and that they should not be misled or pressured to consume EDNP foods. She argues therefore, that individual responsibility for health behaviours cannot be attributed if they are constrained by ignorance, misinformation or force (Rogers 2008). Applied to marketing to children this means that (a) children need to know when they are being marketed to (separation of advertising from editorial content); and (b) they need to understand the persuasive intent of marketing, in other words, that markets have profit interests in mind and therefore will present the product in its best light in order to encourage purchase (Kunkel 2001). The early research on television advertising conducted by developmental psychologists established that children under the age of five years have difficulty distinguishing advertising from program content (John 1999). However, with marketing on new media such as product placement on the Internet and movies, sports promotions, and viral marketing, researchers such as Moore and Rideout (2007) and Nairn and Dew (2007) assert that even older children have difficulty discerning advertising from 'program' content. Brucks et al. (1988) showed that even though children understand the persuasive intent of advertisements by the age of eight years, they nevertheless do not spontaneously engage this cognitive defence and continue to be influenced by advertisements well into their teen years. And while younger children who don't fully understand that they are being marketed to or who don't understand the persuasive intent of marketing are particularly vulnerable to making consumer decisions without full information, and to being unfairly pressured (Kunkel 2001), the fact is that all children are susceptible to the persuasive effects of marketing, by conscious or unconscious means (Moore 2004; Livingstone and Helsper 2006).

Techniques used in marketing on non-broadcast media (in particular marketing on the Internet) such as product placement, advergames, viral marketing and the collection of personal information, are particularly problematic from an ethical perspective because they constitute stealth or below-the-radar marketing. Stealth marketing is considered to be innovative practice within the marketing industry, albeit with caveats to control for excess and abuse (Martin and Smith 2008). However from an ethical perspective, it fails the requirements for disclosure and transparency so that children are aware that they are being marketed to. In this way, it can subvert their cognitive defences and result in implicit persuasion (Moore 2004; Rogers 2008; Lee, Choi et al. 2009).

Stealth marketing is particularly evident on the Internet. In their study of 50 children's (aged nine to 13 years) websites, Nairn and Dew (2007) found that 50% of the advertisements were not labelled and 50% of the advertisements did not warn users that they were leaving the host site to visit the advertiser's site. In their study of advergames associated with food products marketed to children, Lee et al. (2009) found many types of brand identifiers embedded within games. These included, brand identifiers as active game components, as primary or secondary objects to be collected, as billboard style advertisements within the game or placed around the frame of the game. They suggested that product placement of this kind represented marketing by stealth and could increase positive attitudes towards products through implicit persuasion, thereby rendering it ethically suspect (Lee, Choi et al. 2009). Fielder et al. (2007) interviewed children aged seven to 15 years, about their perceptions of marketing via the Internet; the children distinguished advertisements by their position on the web-page and movement, for example, banner advertisements and pop-up advertisements were easily distinguishable, however the children found advergames and product placement more difficult to distinguish as forms of marketing. Other studies have also verified that children are less aware of marketing via product placement on non-broadcast media, compared to television advertisements (CSPI 2003; Lindstrom and Seybold 2004; Brady, Farrell et al. 2008).

While stealth marketing is prominent on the Internet, it also exists in other media, for example, advertorials or recipes featuring branded foods in children's magazines, and product placement in videogames, television programs and movies targeting children (Linn and Novosat 2008).

*2.6.7: Links between the literature and my research*

The literature on ethics informed inquiry with parents and children about their concerns in relation to food marketing to which children are exposed. Their ethical perspectives were situated within the context of neo-liberal society, so that I was interested in perceptions about the ethics of: business practice; marketing to children on non-broadcast media; personal responsibility; and regulation. The inquiry about ethics was also framed by the discourse of citizen rights - of children to be protected from harm, and parents to be supported in their regulatory role. The discussion of ethics led naturally into questions about change in relation to food marketing.

## *2.7: Gaps in the literature addressed by this research*

My review of the literature on consumer society, children and consumerism, neo-liberalism, food marketing to the child consumer, parenting the child consumer and ethics, reveals information and understandings about: how children are socialised to become consumers; how responsibility for wellbeing is individualised within a neo-liberal state; the extent, nature and effects of food marketing to children; how children behave as consumers in families; how parents regulate children's diets within the context of food marketing; and how ethics can be applied to food marketing to children. The literature represents a wide range of disciplines including psychology, cultural studies, sociology, marketing, public health, nutrition, political science and ethics. The literature on consumer society, neo-liberal society and ethics is largely theoretical, while the literature on food marketing to children and parenting the child consumer derives from considerable empirical research.

What is missing from the literature is empirical research on how children and parents perceive food marketing, to which children are exposed from a public health nutrition lens, in particular, focussing on perceptions of responsibility. In addition, much of the research on marketing has focused on television advertising and considerably less on marketing on non-broadcast media. The dominant methodology employed in research on food marketing to children is quantitative. My research therefore sought to address a gap in the literature on how children and parents perceive and think about food marketing within the context of prevailing discourses on nutrition, consumerism, parenting, neo-liberalism and ethics. Importantly, my research addresses a gap in relation to children's perspectives on the role of food marketing in their lives as young consumers. As the issue of 'responsibility for the problem' is highly

contested in the policy debate about restricting children's exposure to EDNP food marketing, my research addresses a gap in relation to parents' and children's perspectives on questions of responsibilities and rights. The research sought to bring rich understanding by using qualitative methods.

### *2.7.1: Research questions, aims and objectives*

As the literature review occurred alongside data collection and analysis in accordance with an iterative approach, the research questions that emerged were:

How do parents and children understand marketing and its effects?

How aware are they of food marketing on non-broadcast media?

What opinions and concerns do they have about food marketing?

How do they perceive who is responsible for mitigating the adverse effects of food marketing on children's food choices?

How do they (in particular, parents') perceive the regulation of children's eating habits?

To what extent do children display brand awareness and brand preference?

How do they (in particular, children) express their consumer identity?

This led to the formulation of the research aim:

To understand how parents and children perceive food marketing to which children are exposed.

And research objectives:

(1) To critically analyse parents' and children's awareness of and opinions about food marketing to which children are exposed.

(2) To critically analyse how parents and children consider responsibility and regulation with respect to food marketing to which children are exposed.

(3) To critically analyse how parents and children relate to food marketing as consumers.

# Chapter 3: Methodology and Methods

This research aimed to investigate parents' and children's perceptions of food marketing to which children are exposed. As explained in section 1.3.3: Scope of study, 'perception' was interpreted as awareness of, understanding of, opinions about, and responses to food marketing. The research focussed on (a) marketing on non-broadcast media (other than television advertising) because much is already known about marketing on television and (b) the separate accounts of parents and children because the family perspective has already been captured in previous research.

## *3.1: Epistemological ideas informing the research*

My review of the literature suggested a need for qualitative research enquiring into parents' and children's perceptions of food marketing within the context of prevailing discourses on nutrition, consumerism, parenting, neo-liberalism and ethics. In particular, the research sought to uncover perspectives on marketing from children as young consumers and perspectives on responsibility, which was a contested idea in the policy debate (see section 2.7: Gaps in the literature addressed by this research). The research was consequently based on the epistemology of constructionism, the theoretical perspective of interpretivism and qualitative methodology.

Epistemology refers to the nature of knowledge, in other words, what constitutes knowledge (Crotty 1998). My research was based on the epistemology of constructionism, which posits that truth and meaning are constructed by people in the process of living the reality of their lives, through engaging with the world and bringing their realities to consciousness (Crotty 1998). The epistemological stance of my research was constructionist to the extent that it tried to understand how parents and children perceive food marketing that children are exposed to - their perceptions of it and how they adapt to it. Constructionism holds that individuals do not create meaning, but rather construct it. In other words, individuals do not make meaning out of a void, but rather 'have something to work with. 'What we have to work with is the world and objects in the world' (Crotty 1998, p. 44). Knowledge is therefore always contextual to time, place and social situation because meanings about life are always made in reference to the world as experienced by that subject (Crotty 1998). A contrasting epistemology is

objectivism which posits that reality is perceived through our senses and does not require processing through consciousness (Crotty 1998).

The theoretical perspective represents the philosophy, assumptions, logic and criteria informing the chosen methodology (Crotty 1998). Another way of putting this it is to say that theoretical perspectives represent different ways of 'viewing the world', and these in turn shape the research process (Crotty 1998). The theoretical perspective represents a thinking framework that is well established and therefore makes the research conclusion more plausible and verifiable (Crotty 1998). Qualitative research is informed by many different theoretical perspectives, and this renders the methodology 'rich, pluralistic and diverse' (Sarantakos 1998, p. 47). There is some consensus about accepting fluidity and avoiding rigidity in relation to theoretical perspectives and methodologies (Crotty 1998). Selman (1980) explains that the specificities of time, place and social conditions constitute unique contexts for research and therefore require selection of appropriate theoretical perspectives and methodologies in order to examine the research question.

My research was based on the theoretical perspective of interpretivism which holds that reality is a subjective experience borne of interaction with the world and consciousness of life experiences (Sarantakos 1998). People construct individual and subjective meanings about their life and their world, and the goal of social research is to understand social life from the perspective of the subject (Sarantakos 1998). In spite of interpretivist research privileging subjectivity, it needs to be empirically grounded and methodologically rigorous so that the knowledge generated is verifiable (Crotty 1998). My research was interpretivist to the extent that it explored how children and their parents perceived food marketing, how they made sense of it and how they integrated it into their lives.

### *3.1.1: Qualitative methodology*

Methodology refers to the strategy or plan behind the choice of methods (Crotty 1998). Consistent with the chosen epistemology of constructivism and the theoretical perspective of interpretivism, I employed qualitative methodology in order to achieve a deep understanding about how parents and children perceived food marketing to which children are exposed.

For research that seeks to understand the complexities of the social world – beliefs, values, attitudes, interactions between people, and social processes – qualitative methodology is an appropriate research strategy (O'Leary 2004). Qualitative research can and should go beyond simple descriptions of phenomena or events to understand 'the meanings and intentions which underlie these activities' (Greig, Taylor et al. 2007, p. 56).

Assumptions underpinning qualitative research are: that the human world is created through interactions and therefore interpretive research seeks to understand these interactions (Sarantakos 1998); meanings and understandings attached to social interactions and phenomena are important to understand because these provide the rationales and justifications for human behaviour (Greig, Taylor et al. 2007); and truth is the lived experience of reality and hence it is always subjective (Greig, Taylor et al. 2007).

As an interpretive enquiry seeking to understand human interactions, qualitative research begins with an approach that does not have preconceived hypotheses (Sarantakos 1998). It tries to present the subject's world-view through detailed and accurate reporting of their own words.

Some important principles of qualitative methodology are:

- Research is a process of communication between researcher and respondent. The researcher is involved as an instrument of the research process. There is no intention to establish objectivity of the researcher or the data. Respondents are 'subjects' who define, explain, interpret and construct reality
- Reflexivity of object and analysis. Every symbol or meaning is considered to be a reflection of the context in which it is developed
- Flexibility with regards to choice of instruments and research procedures. Research design resembles guidelines rather than strict rules, and these can change during the research (Sarantakos 1998).

Qualitative research is inductive to the extent that all relevant questions are not known prior to commencing the research. Theory is referenced concurrently with the empirical research to refine research methods so as to collect more theoretically pertinent data and to build understanding about the relevance and accuracy of the findings (Liamputtong and Ezzy

2005). Section 3.2.3: Data analysis, describes the iterative and inductive process whereby data was simultaneously analysed and interview questions refined to enable deeper and more accurate enquiry.

### *3.1.2: Qualitative research with children*

There is a rich body of research that is interested in children's own meanings of childhood experiences (Alanen 1992; Backett-Milburn, Cunningham-Burley et al. 2003). Nevertheless, the field of research with children is contested by questions about children's reliability as research subjects (Gergen and Gergen 2003) because of their diminished ability to reflect 'intelligently' about their life experiences (Greig, Taylor et al. 2007). Questions are therefore raised about children's competence as research subjects (Gergen and Gergen 2003). Nevertheless even as early as the 1980's, there has been research with children on social perspective-taking which has enquired into their theory of human relations, their beliefs about people, motives, feelings and strategies for resolving conflict (Selman 1980). This research by Selman (1980) theorises that children's social cognition develops on a continuum from childhood to adolescence; their ability to reflect on their actions from the point of view of others, and to understand the motives, feelings and thoughts of others, evolves over the course of childhood. More recent researchers drawing on the 'sociology of childhood' position children as active agents in their lives and as sentient beings capable of insightful comments about their lives and the world they live in. They encourage research with children in order that 'children's voices' are brought into policy debates, and their participation as citizens is enabled (James and Prout 1997; Prout 2002). Nevertheless, there is a distinct paucity of research on children's perspective of food issues (Wills 2012), with most research on children and food being done from perspective of families and healthy eating, and with adults as informants (see section 2.5.3: Parental regulation of children's diets).

Research with children requires particular attention to the fact that children are developing physical, cognitive, social and emotional capacities (Greig, Taylor et al. 2007). Hence research should be informed by theories of child development in all the above domains, and pay particular attention to placing children's interests over the interests of the research (Gergen and Gergen 2003). Ethical concerns about research with children centre around the diminished power of children in society. This has consequence for their capacity to understand the intention and nature of research and therefore to fully consent to the research,

to assert their rights to withdraw from the research at any time or to refuse to answer questions, and even to 'speak their mind' rather than providing what information they think the adult-researcher wants to hear (Nelson and Quintana 2005). Graham and Fitzgerald (2003) nevertheless assert that rather than being overly concerned about protecting children from research due to their limited cognitive and social capabilities, participation in policy-relevant research allows children to make their concerns known to policy-makers, and this in itself affords them some social protection.

Methodological concerns about the validity or accuracy of children's accounts need to be addressed by applying research methods that are appropriate for the child's developmental stage. Greig et al (2007) suggest that:

> [E]very effort should be made by the researcher to choose the context (place of research) wisely, to understand the child's developmental and individual abilities in the design of questions and supporting materials, to explain to the child why he or she is there and what will happen (p. 91).

Greig et al. (2007) sound a further note of warning in relation to analysing and interpreting qualitative data derived from interviews with children. They suggest that the power relations played out between child and researcher can influence how the child 'constructs' meanings and events. This is even more of an issue for children than adults because of the larger power gradient between child informant and adult researcher. In conducting this research I have been mindful of methodological issues that are pertinent to doing research with children in particular power dynamics between adult researcher and child respondent. I have drawn on personal experience of doing research with children (Mehta, Coveney et al. 2010a; Mehta, Coveney et al. 2010d) and maintained a journal to assist reflexivity in my research practice.

For example, MacDougall, Schiller and Darbyshire (2004) in their investigation of children and physical activity, developed a child-centred research methodology allowing children to capture their own meanings of physical activity by assigning them cameras. A child-centred approach to research is also consistent with primary health care principles which recognise the importance of working with community members in respectful and empowering ways (Talbot and Verrinder 2010).

This research was particularly interested to hear the perspectives of children on food marketing because they are the focus of policy concerns about the obesogenic effects of marketing. While much is known about the child consumer and how food marketing influences children's food preferences and purchase behaviour, there are gaps in our knowledge about children's perceptions of marketing on non-broadcast media and how they think about food marketing as consumers (see section 2.7: Gaps in the literature addressed by this research). A particular interest of my doctoral research was to bring the voices of children into the policy debate specifically on the topic responsibility, which is a contested idea in the policy debate (refer to section 1.2.2: Community voices in the public policy debate).

#### *3.1.3: Summary*

The above exposition illustrates the way in which my research is based on: the epistemology of constructionism; the theoretical perspective of interpretivism; and qualitative methodology.

## *3.2: Methods*

### 3.2.1: Aim and objectives

#### *3.2.1.1: Aim*

To understand how parents and children perceive food marketing to which children are exposed.

#### *3.2.1.2: Objectives*

(1) To critically analyse parents' and children's awareness of and opinions about food marketing to which children are exposed.
(2) To critically analyse how parents and children consider responsibility and regulation with respect to food marketing to which children are exposed.
(3) To critically analyse how parents and children relate to food marketing as consumers.

## 3.2.2: Data collection

*3.2.2.1: Semi-structured interviews*

A semi-structured interview was chosen as the tool for investigating parents' and children's perceptions of food marketing. The interview is an ideal tool for studying social phenomena. It allows for a two-way conversation between researcher and respondent, and enables information to be negotiated and co-constructed (Liamputtong and Ezzy 2005). People talk about their lives from their own perspective rather than the pre-conceived perspectives of researchers (Liamputtong and Ezzy 2005). In this way, the interview is consistent with the epistemological position of finding out how people think about the subject matter under investigation. The semi-structured interview bears some resemblance to a structured questionnaire by following a schedule of questions, however it differs from the interview questionnaire by allowing the interviewer some spontaneity and initiative to explore themes of theoretical relevance to the broad research question (Sarantakos 1998). Questions can also be changed to suit the literacy or cultural needs of respondents (Sarantakos 1998). The semi-structured interview therefore allowed for questions emerging out of the literature review to be investigated while also allowing space for parents and children to raise issues and ideas that were unique to them, which could then be verified against the published literature in an inductive and cyclical manner (Liamputtong and Ezzy 2005).

*3.2.2.2: Sampling and recruitment*

The separate views of parents and children were sought because they have different roles and relationships to the question of 'children's exposure to EDNP food marketing'. Children relate to EDNP food marketing primarily as consumers and exert their consumer power in large part through their parents (McNeal 1999). Parents on the other hand relate to EDNP food marketing through their responsibility to regulate children's food choices and promote healthy eating (Roberts 2006). Consequently one parent and one child (aged between 8 -12 years) from the same family were sampled. The sampling of parents and children did not constitute dyadic research, which is concerned with examining the relationship between dyad partners (Quinn et al. 2010).

The children's age-range of eight to twelve years was theoretically selected because by this age children are known to understand the 'selling intent' of advertising, and therefore have

some cognitive defence against advertising, but are still susceptible to the effects of marketing (Brucks, Armstrong et al. 1988; Livingstone and Helsper 2006). They are also likely to do their own discretionary spending but remain dependent on parents for household food and beverage purchases (Schor and Ford 2007). This is discussed in section 2.3.4: Development of the child consumer.

A number of recruitment methods were used for the study. Initially participants were recruited by a social research company (Harrison Research[9]) which recruits volunteers who have demonstrated a willingness to take part in interviews or focus groups on a range of topics. Harrison Research was provided with a brief description of the study and was instructed to recruit parent-child pairs representing high and low socio-economic groups, and metropolitan and rural locations as defined by the Social Health Atlas of Australia (PHIDU 1999). There is evidence that suggests that people from different socio-economic backgrounds experience food marketing differently (Grier and Kumanyika 2010). The intention of the research was not to compare and contrast socio-economic groups but rather to sample widely in order to obtain a diversity of views. Harrison Research provided names and contact details of potential participants, and I sent out data packages containing information about the research and consent forms for parents and children to participate in the study (See Appendix 1. Information sheet for potential participants). Parents were followed up with phone calls to answer any questions they had about the research, and to arrange a time for an interview with themselves and one child (aged between eight – 12 years). An honorarium of Aus$35.00 was provided to each family in recognition of their contribution to the research.

A second recruitment method was employed after preliminary analysis of the first 10 parent interviews suggested a possible selection and response bias. A homogeneity appeared among the sample group, to the extent that parents appeared to be uniformly strong regulators of their children's food choices and media use with very little variance in their attitudes and practices concerning responsibility and regulation. This was in spite of socio-economic and geographic differences between the subjects.

[9] See company information on http://www.harrisonresearch.com.au/

The remaining three parent-child pairs were recruited through a community-based nutrition program, Community Foodies[10] (Foodies), which targets low-income communities across South Australia. Foodies are peer-educators who are trained in basic nutrition and community-work, and who then deliver nutrition education programs to their local communities. Notices about the research were sent out through the state-wide administering body of Community Foodies and two programs, one metropolitan and one rural, responded with Foodies interested to participate. Names and contact details of the potential participants were provided to me, and I followed the same process for recruitment as with participants recruited through Harrison Research. My assumption was that, as participants in a community nutrition program, these subjects would be seeking to develop their nutrition regulation role as parents, and would therefore be potentially 'less controlling' of their children's food choices. Unfortunately recruitment by this second method did not produce parents that were any different to the parents recruited first, with respect to 'responsibility and regulation'. See Table 3.1: Summary of data collection on page 90.

*3.2.2.3: Interview process*

Two rounds of interviews were conducted with the same parents and children over the course of the research – Round 1 and Round 2 – held approximately 12 months apart. Initially only one round of interviews was planned focussing on awareness and perceptions of food marketing to which children are exposed, however analysis of the data from Round 1 raised themes and questions that, through reflexive practice, beckoned further exploration in order to build a stronger theoretical understanding of the original research question. In particular, the second round of interviews enquired further into perceptions of food marketing within the context of prevailing discourses on nutrition, consumerism, parenting, neo-liberalism and ethics (See chapter 2: Review of the literature for a fuller discussion of these theoretical ideas). The further exploration of new issues reflects the iterative nature of qualitative research. Interview schedules for Round 1 and 2 can be found in Appendix 5. Parents and children had already agreed in Round 1 to be followed up for further elaboration and clarification of their interviews. Parents from Round 1 interviews were re-contacted by letter, provided with a summary of findings (from Round 1), invited with their children to participate in a second round of interviews, and followed up by phone to discuss their

[10] For description of Community Foodies program, see http://www.communityfoodies.com/aboutus.html

participation. Out of the original 14 parents, two parents declined to participate in Round 2 either due to poor health and/or work commitments, and one parent could not be contacted, leaving 11 parents who agreed to participate in Stage 2. Of these one was a husband and wife pair who participated in Round 1 together (as a pair), however only the wife participated in Round 2. That left nine parents who were interviewed in Round 2. Ten children participated in Round 2 because one of the one of the children came from a family where the parent was too busy too participate in Round 2.

Round 1 consisted of individual interviews with both parents and children, while in Round 2, I attempted to interview the parents using a focus group method. Focus group interviews were chosen as the preferred method for Round 2 interviews with parents because of a suspicion of social desirability response bias (Podsakoff, MacKenzie et al. 2003), in relation to responsibility for and regulation of, children's food choices and media use. From her interviews with mothers about their food practices, Roberts (2005) reflected that the interview method could lead to social desirability response bias, to the extent that mothers would be reluctant to discuss unhealthy food choices made by their children; this problem was alleviated for Roberts by using focus-group interviews. She reported that focus groups reduced socially desirable response bias by creating an atmosphere of camaraderie and empathy between parents, which allowed them to share negative or adverse experiences (Roberts 2005). The focus group method is recognised as particularly useful for encouraging discussion of issues that respondents may otherwise feel uncomfortable to talk about in an individual interview (Liamputtong and Ezzy 2005). It is the interaction between group members that is the strength of the focus group method. Respondents can compare and contrast their experiences, beliefs and opinions, and this can have the effect of putting people at ease (Liamputtong and Ezzy 2005). Of course, focus groups also have their risks. 'Group think' whereby respondents follow the lead of the dominant person(s) and withhold their own opinion is one of the hazards of focus groups, requiring an experienced moderator to overcome this (Mishna, Antle et al. 2004; Owen, Auty et al. 2007).

Having decided on the focus group method, organising them was not without its difficulties, particularly finding a time that was agreeable to all members, and a location that was relatively equidistant for members. The latter requirement proved the most difficult with almost 40% of respondents living in rural South Australia (SA). In the end I was only able to organise one focus group interview comprising four metropolitan parents; the remaining five

parents (four of which lived in rural SA) were interviewed individually.

Interviews with parents and children (for both rounds) were conducted separately, approximately one week apart. Interviews with metropolitan respondents were held in their homes, except for the focus group interview which was held in a public venue. For the interviews with metropolitan children, some parents sat with the child and interviewer, while other parents 'hovered' in the background doing household tasks. Interviews with rural respondents were conducted over the telephone, so it was not possible to know the extent to which parents were present. The individual interviews lasted about 60 minutes for parents and 30-45 minutes for children. Face-to-face interviews were longer than telephone interviews due most likely to the greater rapport that was possible between researcher and respondent.

In Round 1, at the end of the interviews with (metropolitan) children, I viewed a selection of computer and video games played by the child in order to get deeper insights into their perceptions of marketing on these media. Product placement is a common marketing technique used in these media and is known to bypass cognitive processes and instead to exert its effect through implicit persuasion processes (Fielder, Gardner et al. 2007; Nairn and Fine 2008). This is discussed in more detail in section 2.4.2: Marketing to children on non-broadcast media. Coming as it did at the end of the interview however, this observational research confronted a fatigue factor (in both child and researcher) which rendered the data less useful; consequently, this method was abandoned half-way through Round 1.

In his research on parents' (of pre-school children) food purchasing purchasing habits, Noble (2006, p. 252) used projective techniques to overcome social desirability response bias, explaining that respondents can 'project their feelings, attitudes or motivations into some form of unstructured stimulus bypassing their own defence mechanisms.' Round 2 interviews with children used a mix of verbal and visual/pictorial methods. This was done so as to overcome the problems of recall, relevance and abstract questioning that can be a risk with using verbal questioning alone with children (John 1999). Parents and children were shown the same images in Round 2. The images related to marketing on the Internet and supermarket product packaging.

- Images from Internet marketing addressed:

1. Advertising - a Sudoku game from the 'free' game-site Miniclip, showing advertisements for Chocolate Nesquik as banner and block advertisements, as well as comprising the background of the webpage.

2. Product placement in computer games - a game called 'Beach Waitress' from 'free' game-site Oyunlari, showing the waitress carrying a tray with a can of carbonated drink with red and white writing (resembling Coca Cola).

3. Advergame - Shapes (savoury biscuits) game with a chicken flying on a Shapes biscuit (relating to chicken flavoured Shapes).

4. Integrated marketing - Cadbury (chocolate) advergame depicting the adventures of Freddo Frog which was concurrently marketed on television and through product packaging.

- Images from supermarket packaging addressed:

1. Semiotics – cartoon characters, bright colours, childish script and other child-friendly images on children's product packages on Paradise Uglies biscuits, Nestle Nemo yoghurt and Steggles Batman chicken snacks.

2. Celebrity endorsements – Emily Seebohm (Olympic swimmer) on Uncle Toby's Plus Protein Lift cereal.

3. Give-aways and competitions – coupon to Adelaide Zoo in Kellogg's Coco Pops, LCM's, K Time Twists, and Cornflakes.

The data collection followed an iterative process whereby interviews were analysed immediately to enable a flexible interview format that allowed for on-going refinement of the questions so as to collect increasingly relevant information (Grbich 1999)

*3.2.2.4: Demographic data*

Demographic data and information about children's access to media were collected via a survey completed by parents in Round 1. This was not repeated in Round 2 (12 months later)

in order not to overburden respondents with data collection. (See Appendix 2: Demographic survey).

Demographic data covered:

| **Parent** | **Child** | **Family** |
|---|---|---|
| Gender | Gender | Family income |
| Age | Age | Children in the household |
| Marital status | Personal possession of screen-based equipment:<br>▪ Television sets<br>▪ Computers<br>▪ Videogame consuls | Screen-based equipment in the household:<br>▪ Television sets<br>▪ Computers<br>▪ Videogame consuls |
| Highest education level achieved | Access to children's magazines | Residence: rural or metropolitan |

*3.2.2.5: Summarising data collection*

The table below summarises the data collection.

Table 3.1: Summary of data collection.

| **Sample**<br>N=13 Parent-child pairs | **Demographic characteristics** | **Recruitment method** | **Round 1** | **Round 2** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Parents**<br>Individual (N=12)<br>Couple (N=1)<br><br>Total (N=14) | Spread of:<br><br>High-low socio-economic group<br><br>Metropolitan and rural residents | Social Research company<br>N=10<br><br>Community nutrition program (Community Foodies) | Individual interviews<br>N=14 | Individual interviews<br>N= 5<br>Focus group<br>N=4 |
| **Children**<br>Aged between 8 - 12 years<br>N =13 | | | Individual interviews<br>N=13 | Individual interviews<br>N=10 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | N=3 | | |

*3.2.2.6: Sensitivity to child participants*

Children received information about the research in the form of a child-friendly pamphlet which was different to the information sheet provided to parents (See Appendix 3:Child-friendly pamphlet). To assist them in preparing for the first interview on awareness of marketing on non-broadcast media, they received an Activity Sheet asking them to look out for advertising on the media under investigation (See Appendix4: Children's Activity Sheet). At the start of each interview I went through the information pamphlet and ascertained as best as possible that each child understood the purpose of the research, the methods for collecting information and their right to withdraw at any time or decline answering questions. Before commencing the interview, each child signed an Assent Form which affirmed their understanding of the project, their agreement to take part and their understanding of their right to withdraw at any time (See Appendix 5: Children's Assent Form).

*3.2.2.7: Pilot-testing*

The information package and interview schedule were pilot- tested on two parent-child pairs and modified only modestly on the basis of their feedback. For example, for the child interview the word 'marketing' was substituted with 'advertising' because parents suggested that 'advertising' was a more familiar term to children. The Activity Sheet was made more interesting with graphics and fun language, in response to feedback from children.

## 3.2.3: Data Analysis

All interviews were audio-taped and transcribed verbatim. Verbatim transcription facilitates an emic approach whereby the actual words and ideas of the respondents inform the data analysis (Hennink, Hutter et al. 2011). NVivo Version 8 was used to manage the data.

The data collection followed an iterative process whereby interviews were listened to, read and coded immediately. The interview process and preliminary findings were reflected upon straight away in order to enable refinement of the questions and collection of increasingly relevant information (Grbich 1999). All interview data were coded, in other words, every idea

expressed by respondents was assigned a code. Shared as well as opposing views were included in the codes. Consequently, numerous codes were created as indicated by Table 3.2 and Table 3.3 below. The data analysis applied inductive and deductive processes as described by Hennink et al. (2011). Codes were generated deductively from the interview questions as well and inductively from the data itself. For example, the code 'Awareness of marketing on computers/Internet arose deductively from questions enquiring into respondents' awareness of marketing on a range of media. Other codes, such as 'Peer pressure' arose inductively from close examination of the interview data (See Table 3.2). Verbatim quotes were recorded against each code to provide detailed descriptions of the codes and to ensure a rigorous record of the analysis process. Table 3.4 and Table 3.5 provide some examples of how interview data (shown as direct quotes) informed the creation of codes in the analysis of parent and child findings respectively. Not all quotes shown here were selected to illustrate themes in Chapter 4: Findings. Codes with similar characteristics were grouped into categories (these can be seen in Tables 3.2 and 3.3). The interview recordings were listened to and the transcripts read and re-read in order to achieve immersion in the findings and to check for internal consistency across codes and categories. The codes and categories were subjected to constant comparison to find patterns, associations and differences (Liamputtong and Ezzy 2005).

A personal journal was maintained which facilitated reflection on the interview process to detect interviewer bias, as well as to capture non-verbal communication between the researcher and respondent that could inform data analysis and further exploration of new ideas in subsequent interviews (Grbich 1999).

Themes and concepts emerged through an on-going process of discursive dialogue between the findings in the form of codes and categories, and the theoretical and empirical literature. See Tables 3.2 and 3.3 for derivation of themes from the categories and codes for parent and child findings respectively. The themes are presented in Chapter 4: Findings and are substantiated with quotes from respondents. The respondents' descriptions were read critically and compared with theoretical and empirical ideas in the published literature in order to establish links between concepts or ideas and to situate the findings within the broader research context (Grbich 1999). Emerging concepts were not only tested against the literature but also in subsequent interviews with respondents in order to achieve deeper and more precise enquiry (Minichiello, Aroni et al. 2008). My reflective notes provided an

additional source of data about emerging themes and issues. The theoretical concepts derived from the data analysis are elaborated on in Chapter 5: Discussion.

Table 3.2: Analysis of parent interviews into codes, categories and themes.

| **Codes** | **Categories** | **Themes** |
|---|---|---|
| Understanding of marketing | Awareness of marketing | Marketing |
| Awareness of marketing (general) | | |
| Awareness of marketing on computers/Internet | Awareness of marketing media | |
| Awareness of marketing in school | | |
| Awareness of marketing in children's sport | | |
| Awareness of marketing in supermarket | | |
| Awareness of marketing in the environment | | |
| Awareness of marketing in home catalogues/brochures | | |
| Awareness of marketing in children's magazines | | |
| Awareness of marketing in videogames | | |
| Awareness of marketing in television programs (product placement) | | |
| Awareness of marketing in movies and DVDs | | |
| Awareness of marketing on mobile phones | | |
| Changes since they were a child | Opinions about marketing | |
| Perception of amount of marketing | | |
| Impact of marketing on children | | |
| Premium offers and pester power | | |
| Pressure on parents to purchase products | | |
| Children and consumerism | | |
| Social marketing and health education | | |
| Nutrition and health | Concerns about marketing | |
| Gullibility of children | | |
| Projecting concern on 'other' | | |
| Marketing through schools | | |
| Peer pressure | | |
| Supermarkets and labeling | | |
| Ethics of marketing | | |
| Perspective on consumerist society | | |
| General attitudes to marketing | Marketing methods and effects | |
| Below-the-radar marketing (BRM) | | |
| Marketing tactics - general | | |
| Marketing tactics - Internet | | |
| Marketing tactics - Supermarket | | |
| Marketing effects | | |
| Peers | | |
| Regulating children's diets | Regulating diets and media use | Regulation |
| Children and food requests including pestering | | |
| Treats | | |
| Children's food choices and preferences | | |
| Regulating children's media use | | |
| Parenting styles | Parenting strategies | |
| Strong parental control of family diet | | |
| Food decisions | | |
| Rules | | |
| Conflict | | |
| Education | | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Attitudes to food | Family food practices | |
| Family food activities and decisions | | |
| Co-shopping | | |
| Agency and structure | Neo-liberalism and individualism | |
| Responsibility of parents | Responsibility | Responsibility |
| Responsibility of corporations | | |
| Responsibility of children | | |
| Rights of children | Rights | |
| Rights of parents | | |
| Rights of corporations | | |
| Attitudes - neo-liberal, structure, agency | Neo-liberal | |
| Power and powerlessness | | |

Table 3.3: Analysis of child interviews into codes, categories and themes

| **Code** | **Category** | **Theme** |
|---|---|---|
| Awareness of marketing platforms | General awareness of marketing | Marketing |
| Perception of amount of marketing | | |
| Enjoyment of marketing | | |
| Perceptions of healthy/unhealthy food marketing | | |
| Social marketing and health education | | |
| Awareness of marketing on computers/Internet | Awareness of marketing media | |
| Awareness of marketing in school | | |
| Awareness of marketing in children's sport | | |
| Awareness of marketing in supermarket | | |
| Awareness of marketing in the environment | | |
| Awareness of marketing in home catalogues/brochures | | |
| Awareness of marketing in children's magazines | | |
| Awareness of marketing in videogames | | |
| Awareness of marketing in television programs (product placement) | | |
| Awareness of marketing in movies and DVDs | | |
| Awareness of marketing on mobile phones | | |
| Specific marketing techniques | Marketing via Internet and supermarket | |
| Specific marketing effects | | |
| Health and nutrition claims | | |
| General marketing effects | Opinions about marketing | |
| Health and wellbeing | | |
| Pester power and family conflict | | |
| Ethics of marketing | | |
| Acceptance of marketing | | |
| Corporate responsibility | Responsibility | Responsibility |
| Parental responsibility | | |
| School responsibility | | |
| Children's responsibility | | |
| Restrictions on marketing | | |
| Changes to marketing | | |
| The meaning of brands | Brand symbolism and consumption behaviour | Consumerism |
| Brand consciousness and consumer choice | | |
| Purchase behaviour | | |
| Resistance and 'othering' | | |
| Nutrition knowledge | Food and nutrition | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Attitudes to food and nutrition | | |
| Food preferences and choices | | |

Table 3.4: How interview data informed coding for parents.

| **Interview data** | **Codes** | **Categories** |
|---|---|---|
| Like my daughter at the moment, my 12 year old, she loves Vitamin Water because she's convinced that it's really good for you. (P3, Mother, Metro, 1st round) | Impact of marketing on children | Opinions about marketing |
| I'm very concerned. Very, very concerned. I'm watching the kids especially in the city areas that have got access to all the foods. Very concerned. I believe it's just brain washing them into the kids thinking this is good food and that [it's] not going to hurt. And there's no advertising on what it does actually do to you. It's as bad as the adults smoking and drinking. Poor little bodies are trying to grow up. They're not getting that opportunity to do it. Well if you took off every bit of unhealthy food and advertising and just put in total healthy advertising, the generation of kids that are being brought up now would only get that. But this generation of children at the moment have just been inundated [with unhealthy food advertising] and it's been going for the last probably 15 years full on with this type of advertising. I mean the media do a great job in getting it out there and selling the product. (P8, Father, Rural, 1st round) | Nutrition and health | Concerns about marketing |
| [M]y kids take to school you know, today a sandwich um, a piece of fruit and usually I will chuck in a treat, treaty type of thing so if it is a little packet of biscuits then that's fine, I am happy to put that in. I figure they are going for six hours, at school so I am happy to put that in their lunch box as long as they don't eat it at school and then come home and want it again. And then want it again after tea, you know. Whatever goes in your lunch box that's it for the day. (P5, Mother, Metro, 2nd round) | Treats | Regulating diets and media use |
| [T]hose moments in the supermarket where its 'Oreos, everyone at school has got Oreos'. I don't feel resentful about it. It's just been, 'Just hold the line', I think. (P2, Mother, Metro, 2nd round) | Strong parental control of family diet | Parenting strategies |
| Ultimately the parents. I definitely think parents have the major responsibility. Not completely because there is the pester power and we know what kids are like. But in the end they are the ones that buy the food. As a parent it is our responsibility to make the right decisions and choose healthy choices for our children no matter what is out there. (P9, Mother, Rural, 2nd round) | Responsibility of parents | Responsibility |
| [T]hey shouldn't be bombarded with all this junk that is on the market. … at their age they don't have the understanding of just how dangerous it can be for them later on in life if they do start from this age to eat these unhealthy foods … so yeah, I agree that they shouldn't. It's not fair that they are bombarded in the way they are. (P5, Mother, Metro, 2nd round) | Rights of children | Rights |

Table 3.5: How interview data informed coding for children.

| Interview data | Code | Category |
|---|---|---|
| Um, maybe when like littler kids ask their mum if they can have them [and] the mums think, 'Oh well, if that's got the good things in them maybe they could have them [because those products] would be better for them'. (C9, 10 yo, Girl, Rural, 2nd round) | Health and nutrition claims | Marketing via Internet and supermarket |
| I just think I pity the people that do it because they make a lot of money just by the people buying it [the videogame], so why do they have to advertise it [unhealthy foods] in every single type of way. … I don't think they should. … all they care [about] is money and they don't care about the children and people's health. … I think they over-advertise. I think they should cut back a little bit. So, like basically everywhere you look in the city there will be an advertisement. (C12, 12yo, Boy, Rural, 1st round) | Ethics of marketing | Opinions about marketing |
| I would make it real. I would make it so they can't lie about it. And so if there really are, if they really are full of eight vitamins, calcium and iron then they can stay the same but if they are not then make sure they would be changed. Yeah, truth. Yes. Well then they would actually know. Then the parents would actually know that it's true and it's actually healthy if it was. … it wouldn't actually make a change in the kids they would still want the unhealthy ones I guess. (C11, 13 yo, Boy, Rural, 2nd round) | Changes to marketing | Responsibility |
| Well, most of the time when I am over at my friends and they just happen to have chips, it's corn chips or Smiths. It's usually Doritos because well the home brand chips don't usually taste as good as the marketing ones … they taste a bit different because the marketing ones would have um, a lot of salt on it, and kids like salt, and having them a lot of texture and flavour in it. … [friends]would probably have a brand because brands you can kind of rely on to have the same taste every single time you buy it but if you get like a different home brand they can make each a different one and they all look the same so you don't know all of them. (C1, 10 yo, Girl, Metro, 2nd round) | Brand consciousness and consumer choice | Brand symbolism and consumption behaviour |

### 3.2.4: Rigour

Qualitative research is often criticized for being 'soft' and 'fuzzy' and not getting at the objective truth. In reply, qualitative research argues that there isn't one objective truth, and qualitative research instead seeks to illuminate and explain the many subjective truths that constitute lived experiences in a complex world (Crotty 1998). Nevertheless, qualitative methodology holds itself to account for rigour and trustworthiness of the findings. Liamputtong and Ezzy (2005) suggest many ways that qualitative research can achieve high standards of rigour. These include: theoretical rigour – ensuring the study is underpinned by

theory and findings are interpreted against available theoretical and empirical research; sampling rigour – ensuring that the appropriate subjects are recruited to answer the research question; contextual rigour – acknowledging the social and political context of the research; procedural rigour – providing detailed accounts of the methods; interpretive rigour – representing the views of subjects accurately through the use of direct quotes; triangulation – using multiple methods to rise above biases inherent in a single method; and, reflexivity – ensuring the researcher addresses the inter-subjectivity of her/his role and its potential to influence the data.

The issue of reflexivity in qualitative research is an important one. Waldrop (2004, p. 247) suggests that the researcher is integral to qualitative research and she/he uses methods such as 'chatting, reaching out, making people feel comfortable, being non-judgemental, and building on shared humanity as a basis for greater understanding', to work with the subject. This way of working with the subject to arrive at shared understandings, nevertheless carries the potential for the researcher to influence the subject. Waldrop (2004) therefore recommends that a high level of self-awareness and insight on the part of the researcher into her/his effect on the interaction with the subject adds to the rigour as well as ethical quality of the research outcomes. Awareness not only extends to understanding the meaning of the communication with the subject, but also the personal reactions of the researcher listening and responding to the communication. As well as ensuring the accuracy of the data collected, this also upholds the principle of 'doing no harm' in the research process. She suggests that self-reflection can take the form of writing notes after each interview to analyse the research process, and in particular, noting the researcher's personal responses and the effect the researcher is having on the subject and the interview. Finally, she also advises researchers to 'use ethical uncertainties and ambiguities as signposts along the journey of discovery' (Waldrop 2004, p. 252). In this research project I kept reflective notes in conjunction with the interviews with respondents, and used these to modify questions so as to achieve deeper and more accurate exploration of issues under consideration.

Rigour and trustworthiness of the findings was achieved in a number of ways. PhD supervisors approved all stages of the research. Methodological issues and analysis and interpretation of findings were discussed in detail with supervisors, and changes to methods were justified prior to being approved by supervisors.

Data triangulation was achieved through the recruitment of informants representing different genders, socio-economic status and different places of residence. Analytic triangulation was achieved by open discussion of the analytic methods with the supervisors to argue contested themes and to reach consensus on interpretation of the findings, as well as by testing emergent themes against the literature (Noble 2006).

I kept a reflective journal of each interview which played an important part in the on-going refinement of methods, in particular research questions. Reflections were discussed with PhD supervisors to justify changes to methodology.

Detailed reflection on rigour in the research can be found in section: 5.2.1: Quality in qualitative research.

### 3.2.5: Ethical matters

Ethics approval was obtained from the Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee of Flinders University of South Australia. Prior to participating in interviews, parents completed consent forms for themselves and their children. Children completed an assent form prior to their interview. This was only done once at the start of the first round of interviews.

*3.2.5.1: Communication of findings to families*

A brief report containing a summary of the research findings was provided to all families prior to commencing the second round of interviews. At the end of the second round of interviews a user-friendly pamphlet, summarising both rounds of findings, was sent to each family.

## *3.3: Summary*

The research used qualitative methodology of semi-structured individual interviews and focus groups to explore parents' and children's perceptions of food marketing that children are exposed to. The subjects were parent-child pairs (with the child aged between eight – 12 years). Special attention was paid to the ethics of conducting research with child subjects. Two rounds of interviews were held over a 12-month period. All interview results were

coded, and then subsequently assigned to categories, from which emerged themes. All findings were continuously compared to the literature and discussed with the PhD supervisors, to enable deeper exploration of the issues and theoretical understanding of the interview material.

# Chapter 4: Findings

## *4.1: Framework for presentation of findings*

This research enquired into parents' and children's perceptions of marketing – their awareness of, responses to, and opinions about food marketing to which children are exposed.

The findings emerged from two rounds of interviews with the 13 parent-child pairs. In Round 1 the interviews focussed on parents' and children's awareness and responses to food marketing on non-broadcast media. Following an iterative process of analysis, Round 2 interviews explored new and different domains which emerged from Round 1 interviews, in particular, issues relating to responsibility and regulation for mitigating the effects of food marketing, and children's views about consumerism. The findings are presented with extensive quotes in order to achieve interpretive rigour through accurate representation of respondents' views (Liamputtong and Ezzy 2005).

The findings have been organised in the following manner:

- Socio-demographic profile of families
- Interviews with parents
- Interviews with children.

## *4.2: Socio-demographic profile of families*

Socio-demographic information was only collected in the first round of interviews in order not to overburden parents with two rounds of similar data collection. While there was a possibility that their socio-economic situation may have changed in the intervening 12 months between Rounds 1 and 2, nevertheless it was considered that socio-demographic data was not a central focus of this research, and therefore was not collected in the second round of interviews.

The socio-demographic profile of the families is summarised below.

*4.2.1: Parents*

Fourteen parents participated in Round 1 because in one family both mother and father chose to participate in the interview. In this family only the mother's demographic profile is used because she participated in both interviews. Some of the father's quotes are nevertheless used to demonstrate particular themes. One parent (father, rural) did not return his demographic details, therefore out of the 13 parent-child pairs recruited there are only demographic descriptions for 12 families.

Socio-demographic profile of parents (N=12):
N=10 were mothers
N=9 were metropolitan residents
N=6 were aged over 40 years
N=9 were married
N=9 had tertiary qualifications (diploma or degree, of which N=3 had degrees).

*4.2.2: Children*

Total number (N=12)
N=7 were girls
Mean age was 10.5 years (Range 8-13 years).

*4.2.3: Families*

Total number (N=12)
N=3 earned under Aus$60,000 per annum
N=11 had 2 or more children
Households averaged 3 television sets, 3 computers and 3 videogame consuls
N=5 children had a television set in their bedroom
N=2 children had a computer in their bedroom
N=5 children had a video consul in their bedroom
N=2 children had their own mobile phone
N=7 children accessed magazines regularly.

## *4.3: Interviews with parents*

As explained in section 3.2.2.3: Interview process, the second round of interviews succeeded in recruiting nine parents and 10 children out of the original 13 parent-child pairs. Three parents declined to participate in the second round of interviews due to illness (1), and busy schedule (2). One parent could not be contacted, and the family for which both mother and father participated in Round 1 only yielded one parent (mother) in Round 2. Table 4.1 describes the socio-demographic make-up of parents in the two rounds of interviews.

Table 4.1: Socio-demographic make-up of parents in the two rounds of interviews.

| **Interviews** | **Number** | **Gender (N)** | | **Residence (N)** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **(N)** | **Female** | **Male** | **Metro** | **Rural** |
| **Round 1 (2009)** | 14 | 10 | 4 | 9 | 5 |
| **Round 2 (2010)** | 9 | 8 | 1 | 5 | 4 |

The first round of interviews focussed on: parents' perceptions of marketing; their awareness of marketing on non-broadcast media; their opinions about the effects of marketing on their own and their children's food choices; their approach to parenting within the context of marketing; and their concerns about marketing.

The second round of interviews explored more deeply: the perceptions of parenting within the context of children's exposure to food marketing, in particular, their attitudes to regulation of children's diets and responsibility for mitigating the effects of marketing; and their perceptions of 'new' marketing techniques (such as product placement in computer games) and marketing they were not aware of (below-the-radar marketing).

The findings presented here represent the themes that emerged from primary content analysis of all the data from the interviews with parents (see Table 3.2: Analysis of parent interviews into codes, categories and theses, for explanation of the analysis process). The data is discussed under thematic headings of: marketing; regulation; and, responsibility.

Quotes have been selected to illustrate the thematic ideas. The quotes have been labelled: Respondent number P1-P13, mother or father, rural or metropolitan (rural/Metro), 1st or 2nd round of interviews[11] – thereby ensuring anonymity.

## 4.3.1: Marketing

*4.3.1.1: Understanding of marketing in general*

Parents were asked to discuss their ideas their thoughts about food marketing, for example, how they thought marketing operated, how pervasive it was, types of foods marketed and changes in marketing since she/he was a child.

All parents in this study demonstrated a reasonably sophisticated understanding of marketing to children, in particular: market segmentation whereby consumers are distinguished according to age, gender and other socio-demographic characteristics; and the use of a wide variety of marketing strategies, such as visuals, premiums, celebrity figures, licensed characters and cross-promotions. The quote below exemplifies an understanding of targeted marketing techniques to appeal to particular population demographics. It is interesting to note that P6 was one of the least educated parents in the study with 'Year 10 or less' education, yet he nevertheless understood the rudiments of targeted marketing.

> They try to get down to the child's level, they try to present it as if another child is perhaps recommending it … Yes, they try to be immature about it, at the same level as the child might be immature, (P6, Father, Metro, 1st round)

Most parents considered that there was a significant amount of marketing and that marketing had changed considerably since they were children. They described the changes as: increasing sophistication and aggressiveness of marketing practices; and children's increased access to screen-based leisure and fast food.

[11] Note that in the second round, Parents P1, P2, P6 and P13 were interviewed as a focus group

> [I]t seems much more aggressive, like the actual identification of children as a group that can be marketed to. So targeted products that are only meant really for children, like when the girls go to the shops they'll say, this kind of yoghurt, its not just yoghurt. (P1, Mother, Metro, 1st round)

In the quote above, P1 demonstrates an understanding of how marketing children's products creates brand awareness and loyalty.

Many parents contextualised marketing within a highly commercialised world that provides consumers with enormous choices for EDNP foods thereby encouraging over-consumption.

> [I]n one generation I guess treats … like the marketing has changed and the availability has changed …like, there is too much choice now for people to make those unhealthy choices that weren't around in the fifties, sixties, seventies, eighties you know. Kind of bombarding us now. (P11, Mother, Rural, 2nd round)

At a broader level, one parent recognised marketing as the building of brand loyalty through philanthropic activities of corporations. The quote below suggests that brand loyalty does not only apply to consumer choices but extends to a kind of emotional loyalty to the company. P1 was one of the few parents (N=3) who had a tertiary degree and she demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of marketing.

> It's also about, 'what is an advert and what's marketing?', because I know my kids when they see Ronald McDonald house[12] … they get this confusing message … they don't think that is marketing, yeah, but when they think that's for children who are ill, there is just nothing you could say that's bad about that, from their point of view (P1, Mother, Metro, 2nd round)

[12] The Ronald McDonald House Charities is part of McDonald's social responsibility charter, to "improve the health and wellbeing of seriously ill children". See http://www.rmhc.org.au/; viewed on June 2010.

*4.3.1.2: Awareness of marketing on a range of non-broadcast media*

Parents were asked whether they were aware of food marketing on a range of non-broadcast media such as computers/Internet, videogames, children's magazines, movies and DVD's, children's sport, supermarkets, outdoor environment, and catalogues and promotional brochures distributed to homes.

Parents were most aware of television (broadcast) as a medium for marketing foods to children. With respect to non-broadcast media, they were more aware of marketing in supermarkets and signage in outdoor environments, compared to marketing on the Internet, in videogames, movies and DVDs, children's magazines and children's sport. They were not aware of branded marketing in the general school environment, with the exception of school sports where some branded products were noticed, such as *Milo in2 Cricket*. In contrast, most parents were aware of the promotion of healthy eating in schools. While parents were aware of marketing through retail catalogues delivered to homes, they reported that their children showed very little interest in this form of marketing. Marketing through mobile phones was not relevant because most parents in this study reported that their children did not own one. For the two children who owned mobile phones, their parents considered that their use was minimal and that they were unlikely to be exposed to marketing. Some parents put their lack of awareness of marketing on non-broadcast media down to the ubiquitous nature of marketing, and their own lack of engagement in children's leisure activities.

> Because again I zone out of it [supermarket sales promotions], I just have this ability to not see stuff like that. (P12, Mother, Rural, 1st round)

> (Referring to Internet) No, I am not aware of anything that she has been exposed to in that way. … because I don't play with her on the computer. (P6, Father, Metro, 1st round)

Of the parents (N=5) who admitted to their lack of engagement in their child's leisure activities, most of them referred to the Internet, computer games and television programs (N= 4). Two parents referred to children's magazines. Three of them were fathers and three of them lived in rural settings. Only one child had a computer in their bedroom while two children had video-consuls in their bedroom. Children having access to small screen recreation (SSR) in the privacy of their bedrooms is emerging as a factor in childhood obesity

and raising concerns about marketing below parental 'radar' or supervision (Austin and Reed 1999; Sisson, Broyles et al. 2010).

#### *4.3.1.3: Marketing effects*

In spite of not being asked any specific questions about 'marketing effects', most parents nevertheless spoke about this aspect of marketing in the course of discussing marketing their children were exposed to and their role in regulating children's diets.

- Marketing effects on children

Uppermost in parents' minds was that marketing influenced children's preferences for EDNP foods.

> [B]ut without McDonalds in your face with advertising, he probably would never have wanted McDonalds in the first place. (P12, Mother, Rural, 2nd round)

The following quote demonstrates a parent's perception that the persuasion effects of marketing override her child's cognition about the nutritional value of the foods being promoted.

> [T]hey do make jokes like, KFC they go, 'do you know what KFC stands for mum? - Kids Fattening Centre', you know, so they have all these things, 'do you know mum, that they put pig fat in the McDonalds milk shakes?', but then at the same time they really want to go there. (P1, Mother, Metro, 2nd round)

Some parents were able to analyse marketing effects further, and identify issues of status and popularity. The quotes below illustrate how parents perceived that their children's cognition about the nutritional value of branded products is subservient to deeper psychological drives for identity through consumption of branded products (Bourdieu 1979; Baudrillard 1996). This is discussed in more detail in section 2.1: Marketing within the context of consumer society.

> [T]he thing about seeing the underlying theme 'I am going to be really popular and if I eat this'… (P1, Mother, Metro, 2nd round)

> [They feel] 'cool' if they eat it because they know darn well that the food is rubbish, it's just a matter of 'its cool', it might taste half alright, salty or whatever, they know it's not that good, they just want to be 'cool'. (P6, Father, Metro, 2nd round)

Parents also discussed how marketing exerts its effects through peer influence, particularly in the context of school lunches; children with branded food products in their lunchboxes acted as 'advertisers' of those products. Valkenburg and Cantor (2001) stress the importance of peer acceptance in the development of the child consumer, particularly around 8-12 years of age, which was the age range of child respondents in this study.

> The other way is through other kids, like lunch boxes, 'Lets compare lunch boxes, Oh! What have you got today?', so, that's another way that they can market their products through the school. Yeah, peer pressure. (P13, Mother, Metro, 1st round)

Peer influence was considered to operate through establishment of social norms and rules of acceptance.

> And no matter when you are trying to say 'no' they kind of, they are seen as some kind of pariah if they go to school without what other kids think is ... like neglecting your kids you know, 'they have nothing to eat' (parodies). So they come back [and] when I do the washing and I open their pockets and I'm pulling out, you know, chocolate wrappers and crisp packets, but it's like the right to say 'no' seems loaded … (P1, Mother, Metro, 2nd round)

The above quote also suggests that although the parent may not give the child treat foods (which are EDNP), the child can still get them in other ways, most likely from peers or self-purchasing from the school canteen or shops.

Only one parent lamented the lack of peer influence on his children's food choices. This father had two daughters who were fussy eaters, and their small range of food preferences concerned him.

> I'm almost the opposite to that, like I wish they would try something. I wish they would say 'Oh, Julie or Lucy had that and I want to try it'. (P6, Father, Metro, 2nd round)

Parents also reported the effects of marketing through children's preference for branded over home brand products. The quotes below demonstrate the degree to which children's identity and behaviour are shaped by consumerist values.

> It is, 'I have to have that brand. I can't have the home brand version, I can't have a cheaper version, I have to have that brand'. Because that is the brand that everybody has. (P9, Mother, Rural, Ist round)

> [I]f I had bought Dora [yoghurt] and the kids had loved Dora, they would have eaten it, yeah, and if I had just bought the Woolworths brand with the cow on it, that might come back, even though it is probably the same stuff, they always ate it more, and I had to buy boy and girl yoghurt. Because the boys wouldn't take Dora. (P10, Mother, Rural, 2nd round)

The quote from P10 also illustrates how market segmentation applies to gender as well as age, and the potential for this kind of marketing to perpetuate gender stereotypes.

The parents identified particular marketing techniques that were effective in stimulating product desire. These included: attractive packaging; premiums; competitions; and integrated marketing that tied advertising to supermarket sales promotions. Supermarket sales promotions were writ large in parents' minds when they discussed marketing effects. This was consistent with the finding that parents were indeed most aware of marketing in the supermarket compared to other non-broadcast platforms.

> The only other thing I find like, they grab all the time, is the Powerade. … I think a lot of it's when I guess if you're watching the cricket or something like

> that or any sort of sports, they've always got these amazing ads, Powerade ads, that I think really suck the kids in. … And they might have a … 'You'll win something' and they get all excited and they just want the food because they can see that they might win something out of it. My son, yeah, it does. If he sees something that you can win, he would want to buy it. (P8, Father, Rural, 1st round)

While competitions are a common technique used to market products and have been used for decades, the above quote demonstrates the potential for early 'grooming' of gambling tendencies, whereby children get hooked into the 'chance' to win something.

The translation of children's desire into purchase requests (and pestering) that parents had to contend with made marketing problematic for parents. Pester power and the effects on parent-child relationships have been discussed in section 2.5.4 Regulating purchase requests and family conflict.

> You know, you are at the actual checkout and your kids are going, 'Can I have this? Can I have this? Can I have this?' You know, I hate that. (P10, Mother, Rural, 2nd round)

> Oh, you know, I don't think I do it very well, so I do feel like it is this barrage of pressure especially from the one daughter who really loves that kind of food. It's just this constant lobbying, I'm sure she will grow up to be a lobbyist or something, but she just needles all the time … yeah, so I felt that I am not terribly good at standing up against all of that. (P1, Mother, Metro, 2nd round)

While both of the quotes above speak about the stresses associated with children's pestering for products, P1 also describes an approach to parenting that is highly reflexive, redolent of the 'good parent' discourse (Grieshaber 1997; Baker 2009), and resembling the authoritative style of parenting whereby children's agency is well regarded (Carlson and Grossbart 1988).

A number of parents described age as a factor in children's purchase requests, with younger children showing less understanding and being more demanding. Ebster et al. (2009) also

found older children to display greater sophistication in their purchase requests, and therefore to be more successful.

> [W]ith the younger ones, we regularly get the temper tantrums because mummy won't put it in the trolley, whereas my eldest, because she makes the healthy options, usually gets what she wants. (P9, Mother, Rural, 2nd round)

Parents' concerns were underpinned by an understanding of children's staged cognitive development, which rendered younger children more credulous and therefore vulnerable to marketing influence. This is consistent with prevailing psychological perspectives on children's cognitive development and consequent understanding of advertising intent (APA 2004).

> (referring to misleading advertising) [K]ids don't understand, they read that as gospel. (P5, Mother and Father, Metro, 1st round)

Not all parents felt that marketing exerted problematic effects. Three parents described immunity from the effects of marketing as a result of their own strong approach to parenting, and their children's innate personalities. There were no obvious socio-demographic characteristics of these parents; two were mothers, one of whom was tertiary educated with a degree and lived in the city; the other mother left school with Year 10 qualifications or less and lived in the country. The remaining parent was a metropolitan father with a high school qualification (Year 12).

> He never really has pestered me for anything that I can think of … I mean the odd thing, the other day they brought [out] all those new flavors of chips and he said, 'Oh, can we get a packet of those chips and try the new flavors', and I bought them, because we don't buy chips, it was just that he was curious. So, um, he has never really pestered me for anything, no. (P12, Mother, Rural, 2nd round)

There was one striking difference in parents' perceptions of marketing that related to where they lived. Rural parents pointed out the protective effects of their relative isolation from

marketing in the physical environment, namely via billboards, signage and the establishment of fast food outlets.

> [T]hey [corporations] just don't look at us … I am so grateful … we are lucky. (P12, Mother, Rural, I$^{st}$ round)

- Marketing effects on parents

Parents also discussed the effects of marketing on themselves. They described complex purchase decision-making for child-oriented products, which took into account a number of criteria such as healthy, appealing to children and likely to be eaten. Roberts (2006) describes food decisions as complex negotiations between parental values for healthy eating and children's desires for EDNP foods; see section 2.5.3: Parental regulation of children's diets, for a fuller discussion.

> [W]ith things like baked beans or things like that, spaghetti you know, I used to try to entice my daughter, you know, 'Let's eat these, look, it's Wiggles', things like that … so if I thought it would help, yeah, I would be happy, you know, if there was two side by side and they were the same, one was the Wiggles shape and one was plain, I would buy the Wiggles one you know, because it's a bit fun for them. (P5, Mother, Metro, 2$^{nd}$ round)

Other parents purchased branded children's products as a 'treat'.

> Using that terrible word, 'as a treat', yes, yoghurts and the custards. Um, I guess it just, I notice a price difference, because I will usually buy like a bulk yoghurt, rather than the littler containers. And so my kids get, 'Here is a cute little container that is all yours', and you know, um. (P9, Mother, Rural, 2$^{nd}$ round)

Both quotes above illustrate the degree to which parental love and care is intertwined with provision of commodified goods (Pugh 2009).

One parent bought children's products because the sizing was appropriate for small people.

> [I] am all for children's sizes if it's all about portion management, but if its not portion management, well, I just think it's just making it prettier and happier so the kids want it more … on a pure marketing, no I'm not [in favour of purchasing products] (P12, Mother, Rural, 2nd round)

Parents also discussed their resistance to marketing. Some of this took the form of compromises in their purchase of products with 'less' marketing.

> Yes, I have, yes. I have bought Milo yoghurt tubs, like chocolate custardy stuff, just about a week, 2 weeks ago. Well, Milo was the only [one] that didn't have a, um, like a film or cartoon endorsement, so that is why I chose the Milo one… I try not to get the ones with the characters if I can, because …I don't endorse that food and um, movie marketing as being combined. I don't think, I don't agree with that, it is an ethical decision I suppose. (P11, Mother, Rural, 2nd round)

*4.3.1.4: Opinions and concerns about marketing*

In the first round of interviews, parents were asked whether they had any concerns about food marketing to which their children were exposed. Throughout both rounds of interviews however, they expressed a range of opinions about marketing in the course of discussing the effects of marketing on their children and their role in regulating children's diets.

- Impacts on children's health and wellbeing

All parents considered that food corporations primarily marketed EDNP foods to children. This is consistent with evidence on food marketing to children, discussed in section 1.1.2: Detrimental effects on food choice and childhood obesity.

> Definitely unhealthy foods. Coco Pops, Nutella, McDonalds, um, Milo, er, all sorts of Kelloggs products, bars NutriGrain Bars, yeah, sugar and fat content. (P11, Mother, Rural, Ist round)

In the previous quote, P11 describes purchasing Milo chocolate custard because it had less marketing than other custards, and in the quote above she categorises Milo as unhealthy. These two quotes give some insights into the complex decision-making in parental food purchases, whereby a number of factors are taken into consideration, to arrive at the final purchase decision, which may in the end be a compromise between favourable and unfavourable attributes of the product (Roberts 2006).

The majority of parents were concerned about the impact of marketing on children's health and wellbeing.

> I'm very concerned, very, very concerned…this generation of children at the moment have just been inundated [with unhealthy food advertising] … Poor little bodies are trying to grow up. They're not getting that opportunity to do it. (P8, Father, Rural, I$^{st}$ round)

While P8's sentiment may appear somewhat extreme, he is nevertheless voicing broadly held concerns that EDNP food marketing is compromising children's opportunity to develop positive nutritional habits that result in improved health outcomes (WHO 2003; WHO 2010).

Some parents considered marketing to exploit children's credulity.

> [T]o them, to go to you know, um, McDonalds or the supermarket to buy these things, all they are interested in is, 'You beauty! I am going to get a meal and I'm going to get a free toy', you know, so they are not understanding the consequences of, you know, you can't live on this, this is not a healthy option. (P5, Mother, Metro, 2$^{nd}$ round)

The quote from P5 highlights the differences between children's desire for fun through food, and parents' desire for health. These tensions in the parent-child relationship over food choices, are described by Roberts (2006) and Cook (2009) in section 2.5.3 Parental regulation of children's diets.

Some parents were concerned about marketing in particular settings, such as children's sport, which they believed to be at odds with the core objectives of those settings.

> [I]n the athletics they're very full on with bloody [sic] McDonald's Encouragement Awards … it's absolutely crazy because they're out doing a sport and they're getting these vouchers and encourage kids to go and eat crap food. (P8, Father, Rural, 1st round)

One parent reflected the dilemma of corporate sponsorship which helped children access sport but promoted EDNP foods at the same time.

> [I]t's good to see the kids get excited that they are getting the award … it's still got the McDonalds logos and everything all over it so, yeah. (P13, Mother, Metro, 1st round)

At least one parent spoke about the broader effects of marketing in fostering consumerist values in children, so that children were brand conscious about products that were not specifically child-oriented. Dixon and Banwell (2004) and Nicholls and Cullen (2004) describe how children influence a broad range of family purchases, including cars, houses and holidays (see section 2.3.4 Development of the child consumer).

> Yeah, they have opinions now about everything, not even just specific foods that you think like crisps or lollies but even breads. …They do have very strong opinions if you take them shopping, about everything. (P1, Mother, Metro, 1st round)

Many parents considered marketing to be unethical because it promoted EDNP foods, exploited children's vulnerabilities and undermined parental regulation of children's wellbeing. These parental opinions resonate with concerns expressed by authors writing about ethical implications of food marketing to children (Nicholls and Cullen 2004; Nairn 2009).

> My concern is that the companies will make a cheap buck and a fast buck, and they are not really worried about the kids' health at all … they don't really have a right to influence people … But kids are so vulnerable, they really need to be under their parents' wing at that age. And to think that the parents don't fully know what is influencing their kid … [it] doesn't seem right. It's

> nowhere near as bad as being a drug pusher or anything like that, but it's down that same alley. (P6, Father, Metro, 1st round)

> Well yeah, I don't think it's fair that at such a young age that they are bombarded with all these things that they have no real understanding of … So I don't think it's fair. (P5, Mother, Metro, 2nd round)

One parent was particularly critical of the ways in which marketing put pressure on parents through inciting children's desire and purchase requests, and exploiting parental insecurities.

> …of all of the things that are marketed, food would have to be one of the most clever in terms of having that, 'slash' the-parent-from-the-child's-perspective because they go straight to the (gestures to heart) – 'Ohhh, we have failed as parents'. Parents are an easy target as far as food is concerned. (P2, Mother, Metro, 2nd round)

The quote above illustrates the embodiment and felt effect of the 'good parent' discourse, and the high levels of reflexivity associated with modern parenting (Grieshaber 1997; Baker 2009). P2 was one of the few parents with a tertiary degree and her nuanced reflection on the association between marketing and parental identity may be linked to her education status.

- Below-the-radar marketing (BRM)

As indicated earlier, most parents had low levels of awareness of marketing on non-broadcast media. The second round of interviews probed parents for their awareness of marketing on 'new' media and explored their thoughts and feelings about 'below-the-radar marketing', in other words, marketing that concealed it's intention to persuade. Most parents used the idea of BRM loosely to describe marketing that bypassed conscious awareness due to its ubiquity, as well as marketing that employed stealth techniques to conceal it's intent to persuade.

In Round 2 of interviews most parents re-confirmed their low awareness of marketing on non-broadcast media.

> Probably a zero. Even just the other day, [child] was on the [computer], and I did notice one, and I went, 'I've never! I just didn't look before'. Yes, like I just didn't even, it might have been there, I just didn't take any notice. (P10, Mother, Rural, 2nd round)

Parents considered food marketing to be ubiquitous, and saw it exerting its effect on their children in subliminal ways. Consequently, they were mistrustful of communications that were bypassing their children's cognitive awareness.

> Um, I think it [marketing] is happening everywhere. …yeah. I guess it is like, it's a sense that someone is like subliminally brain-washing my children. … I guess I think, hopefully they won't see it, they won't notice it. You feel like something underhanded is happening. (P11, Mother, Rural, 2nd round)

They were concerned that their own lack of awareness rendered parents at a disadvantage with respect to regulating children's food choices.

> Yeah, I imagine it becomes very tough because they are going to get to an age where, 'You're just mum, what do you know?', whereas 'Such and such on TV they're drinking Coke and they're eating hamburgers and they say its OK', you know, so, you know, I imagine that that sort of influence is going to be pretty tough to try to get around. Because if all the cool people are doing it on TV, 'What do you know mum?' … If you have got no idea, if you have got no knowledge of what they are wanting or needing or seeing, well I imagine that's pretty tough. (P5, Mother, Metro, 2nd round)

Marketing to children on the Internet has been identified as ethically problematic because many children engage in this activity in the privacy of their bedroom, away from parental supervision (Austin and Reed 1999).

A few parents (N=3) were not concerned because they had confidence in their strong parenting and their children's resilience against the effects of marketing. There were no common features between these parents; two of them were metropolitan dwellers and one was

a rural dweller, one of the metropolitan parents was a father, and educational levels varied between all three.

> For me personally I am not overly concerned because [child] is a smart kid and makes mostly good choices, so for me personally it's not a big issue … (P12, Mother, Rural, 2nd round)

- Internet marketing

In Round 2 of interviews parents were shown computer screen shots of marketing via (a) advertising in a free downloadable game (Nesquik); (b) product placement in a computer game (a can of carbonated drink in a café game); and (c) two advergames (Shapes biscuit and Cadbury Freddo Frog).

The interactivity and enjoyment associated with computer games was judged as increasing the risk of children forming implicit positive attitudes towards the products. The quote below describes a parent's concerns about implicit persuasion (Nairn and Fine 2008).

> [T]he whole game-playing thing, not a fan of that at all because like I said, even though they are playing a game, it's planted a seed and I don't agree with getting them to interact with them. Whereas this way [advertisement] they are seeing it, but they are not interacting with it, but when they are playing Freddo Frog games or biscuit games whatever it was, they are actually interacting with it, and I don't agree with that at all. (P5, Mother, Metro, 2nd round)

One parent articulated her anxieties about the mining of personal data by Internet sites. Concerns about the violation of children's online privacy have been highlighted by some researchers in this field (Fielder, Gardner et al. 2007; Moore and Rideout 2007).

> [M]y girls focus on MSN, and now they are both on Facebook, even though they are quite young … I know they have the demographic stuff…I know that they use that information to push little adverts, … they are targeting you all the time, and it's no mistake. So you sort of think, 'What the hell are they doing? What are they are going to do with all of that information they have got about

> my children? They think they are 14 to start with' … I get concerned by the Facebook stuff because of the profiling …. (P1, Mother, Metro, 2nd round)

Many parents were disapproving of viral marketing because their children were unintended agents of marketing. Viral marketing has been highlighted as an ethical problem associated with marketing to children via the Internet (Calvert 2008; FTC 2008); see section 2.4.2: Marketing to children on non-broadcast media/Internet marketing for a fuller discussion.

> [I] guess the biggest concern I would probably have there, would be the viral marketing because I think that can get spread …when kids see the opportunity to challenge or to win something that's a real temptation, yeah, so that would probably be the one that would concern me the most. (P12, Mother, Rural, 2nd interview)

For some parents their unease about Internet marketing was tempered by their belief that their child's attention was centrally focussed on the game and not on the marketing. The quote below illustrates the subtlety and complexity of implicit persuasion, so that even adults can fail to understand what it is. This parent (P2) was one of the most highly educated of the group (having a university degree).

> But in actual fact I think what would happen in our house is the fun of the game would be the attraction and not the actual, you know, a chicken flying on a Shape would be great fun, not because it's a Shape [biscuit]... (P2, Mother, Metro, 2nd round)

- Supermarket marketing

In Round 2 of interviews parents were shown images of child-oriented product packages depicting: cartoon characters and sporting celebrities; bright colours, fun lettering and other child-friendly images; and give-aways and competitions.

Most parents held ambivalent attitudes towards child-oriented products. On the one hand, they considered them problematic, and on the other hand they accepted them as part of

children's 'consumer culture' and sometimes even found them useful as 'treats' or to encourage consumption.

> [T]hat's right, it is getting quite extensive. Um, it has its place, but it's that tricky, that very fine line of, you know, 'You can advertise healthy stuff like this, but you can't advertise junk like that'. So there is that very fine line, and some stuff is reasonably healthy that they are advertising like, … like your yoghurts and milks and stuff like that. (P9, Mother, Rural, 2nd round)

One parent took particular issue with the very notion of 'child-oriented products', and considered that it encouraged values of selfishness and individualism that went against principles of family and collectivism.

> I think it can segregate the family, 'Don't eat that - that's daddy's, don't eat that - that's the little ones', like I think it adds to segregation within the family rather than, 'We are all a family and we all share our food together and it's family time, and what's mine is yours'. It's almost like instead of, 'What's mine is yours', it's sort of like, 'What's mine is mine and what's yours is yours', so I think it sends the wrong message within a family of sharing and giving and taking and all belongs to all. (P12, Mother, Rural, 2nd round)

Particular marketing techniques on child-oriented products which raised the ire of parents were the use of cartoon characters and celebrities, premiums and movie tie-ins.

> Yes, I really hate that they use cartoon characters to sell junk food. The Nemo, Dora the Explorer, things like that, I have a real problem with those joinings [movie-food tie-ins], because the kid is going to see the cartoon character, they are not going to know or care what's in the food. They just want, they don't want the yoghurt, they want the Nemo. They don't want the yoghurt, they want the Dora, so um, I think, I think that's really bad, because its tricking kids, they, all they are getting is their cartoon character…[the product appears] more pretty and happier, and it just adds to the pester power. (P12, Mother, Rural, 2nd round)

The use of health or nutrition claims in marketing products was also seen as problematic. Some parents were cynical about marketing techniques that emphasised the healthy aspects of products and failed to expose the unhealthy aspects of products (for example that Coco Pops is comprised of approximately 40% sugar, (http://www.calorieking.com.au/, viewed on 11 Feb 2012).

> [C]oco Pops has got like, fibre and iron and all that stuff in it, …I think the seventies ad, 'just like a chocolate milkshake only crunchy' was pretty onerous on the fact that it is having chocolate for breakfast but now, it's like you are having iron and niacin and fibre with it as well, so they have just got better at finding out what parents want to hear. (P11, Mother, Rural, I$^{st}$ round)

Marketing techniques that promoted the potential to increase children's educational or health capacity were seen as manipulating parents in their carer role. Commodified goods provide parents with an opportunity to express their love and care to children (Pugh 2009), but they also represent a source of tension for parents because of the perceived 'lack of choice' to resist, if the products are promoted as 'positive' for children.

> Yes, it seems like another way of screwing you over as a parent, 'Your kids could be smarter at school if they had their fatty acids'. My daughter actually convinced me to buy her some Fruity Bursletts which are omega oils in the Fruity Burslett which is shaped like a fish. (P1, Mother, Metro, 2$^{nd}$ round)

Other aspects of supermarket marketing that parents were unhappy about did not relate to child-oriented products, but rather positioning, checkouts, and labels. Marketing through checkouts has been described by Dixon et al. (Dixon, Scully et al. 2006) (see section 2.4.2 Marketing to children on non-broadcast media/Supermarket sales promotions) and marketing through positioning of products at children's eye-level has been described by McNeal (1999) (see section 2.3.2 The child consumer).

> It's all at kids' height, all the junk food and lollies and … (P13 Mother, Metro, 2$^{nd}$ round)

*4.3.1.5: Summary of findings on marketing*

Parents had a good understanding of how food marketing works through a range of media and methods. Their awareness of marketing on non-broadcast media however presented some interesting patterns. They were least aware of marketing on children's 'new' leisure activities and they were also least engaged with these media. They understood how marketing influences children through creating psychological needs for status and peer acceptance, building brand awareness, and using sophisticated techniques that hook children. Marketing exerts its effects through purchase requests which most parents found problematic. Parents themselves responded to child-oriented marketing as consumers, either specifically purchasing child-oriented products or resisting them. Their concerns about marketing mirrored those of public health experts to the extent that they centred around threats to children's health, and exploitation of children's credulity. Parents were particularly concerned about the stealth nature of marketing on the Internet and the power effects of techniques used on product packaging.

## 4.3.2: Regulation

*4.3.2.1: Parental regulation of children's food choices*

The dominant strategy used by parents to mitigate the effects of EDNP food marketing was through regulating their children's food choices.

Parents showed a basic understanding of nutrition through their correct classification of foods into healthy and unhealthy categories. They had an intuitive understanding of the impact of EDNP foods on the body, and most parents were committed to healthy food choices for their children. Parental commitment to providing healthy diets for their children is well supported in the literature (Cook 2009; Pocock, Trivedi et al. 2010); this has been described in more detail in section 2.5.3 Parental regulation of children's diets.

> Because healthy foods should be 'everyday' foods. I suppose, we try and you know, teach our children to eat a good meal everyday and have a healthy lunch and I don't know, and the unhealthy food is sometimes food and a treat so, healthy food should be an everyday thing I suppose. (P11, Mother, Rural, 2nd round)

> It's just like I'm going to promote healthy habits and encourage, make sure there is good food. We regularly eat healthy meals, we all sit down together at the table to eat. (P2, Mother, Metro, 2nd round)

Nevertheless, the need for children 'to eat something' was a stronger priority (than healthy food consumption), and parents consequently described ways in which they compromised on nutrition in order to accommodate children's food preferences, showing the extent to which parental food decisions are complex, negotiated processes (Roberts 2006).

> But a lot of the time you feed them stuff that you know they are going to eat. So we just sort of add a few extra veggies on this, or mash a few more healthy things in there and things like that. (P9, Mother, Rural, 2nd round)

Regulating treats was an important consideration for most parents in this study. Their constructs about treats contributed an interesting dimension to their regulation of children's diets. As would be expected, they expressed disapproval towards EDNP foods and considered that these foods were unhealthy and should only be consumed occasionally; paradoxically however, these same 'unhealthy foods' were transformed into 'essential' and 'regular' foods when they were called 'treats'. It may be that what we see here is the intersection of two discourses relating to food: health and pleasure.

> Well I figure if you deprive them, they will only go mad on it when they get the chance, so if they, if they're having it, you know a little treat in their lunch box each day, then they are less inclined when they get to a kids party to gorge themselves because they have never been exposed to this fabulous food … (P5, Mother, Metro, 2nd round)

> [S]ome unhealthy foodstuffs are really nice to have from time to time like that treat idea or whatever, and if they are eaten in that kind of capacity there is probably no harm done …. (P2, Mother, Metro, 2nd round)

While most parents seemed comfortable with the incorporation of treats into their children's diets, more than one parent described internal conflict associated with this process.

> I guess, just my choices, like when we go to Port Pirie, and [child] wants McDonalds, I want to say 'no' because I don't believe in anything McDonalds do, and yet he is a child and he should be able to have a junky treat now and then and I just, I sort of fight with myself. Do I stick to my guns or do I think 'Oh, for heaven's sake, its one day, just let him have his junk food'. (P12, Mother, Rural, 2nd round)

Treats were acknowledged as a 'parenting resource', either to get children to behave in particular ways, or to compensate for parenting inadequacies.

> [B]ehaviour and reward systems I think, I can say that I do that, 'If you do this, this and this, I will get you an ice-cream after school; if you do this, this and this, perhaps we can have chocolate tonight or something' …you know, I could talk again about my sister, I think there is some sort of guilt there, that she lacks in other areas, so she makes up for it by giving them certain foods as treats …to kind of make up for other areas that aren't feeding their development, or whatever social or emotional needs. Yeah, horrible, but that is what we do. (P11, Mother, Rural, 2nd round)

While recognizing the pragmatics of treats, some parents were also cognizant about the potential risk of associating emotions with foods.

> It's terrible, it's terrible, they, I mean, children will learn probably emotions link[ed] with food, 'When I want to feel good, or when I want to reward myself', or even like if a child is hurt sometimes it's like, 'Comfort, comfort, how about an Icy Pole? Or would some chocolate make you feel better? What about a Freddo?', you know, like that kind of direct link with emotions and food. … it will set them up for adult life patterns of using food as a comfort I think, or a reward (P11, Mother, Rural, 2nd round)

The quotes above on regulation of treats demonstrate reflexive parenting that has been referred to earlier (Grieshaber 1997; Baker 2009). The parenting style demonstrated aligns with authoritative parenting whereby the needs of the child are considered and, while there are rules, there is also room for negotiation (Carlson and Grossbart 1988; Rose 1999); these aspects are discussed in section 2.5.2: Parental regulation of the

child consumer. There were no obvious demographic associations between parents and their perceptions of treats.

*4.3.2.2: Educating children about nutrition*

Educating children about nutrition was an important approach to regulation described by most parents. This is consistent with the authoritative style of parenting that is highly educative and regulatory (Carlson and Grossbart 1988; Rose 1999).

> For me it's to make sure that they understand that they can have treats, it's all balance, balance. To make sure that they know that having chocolates and lollies is okay but it's 'sometimes' food, not an 'all-the-time' food …to create a balance to help them to understand that there aren't ever foods that you need to absolutely stay away from at all times, but there are just foods that you can have sometimes, and there are foods that you can have all the time. (P5, Mother, Metro, 2nd round)

*4.3.2.3: Involvement of children in family food activities*

Parents involved children in family food activities in a number of ways. They consulted children on school lunches, family meals and family food purchases. This is consistent with modern parenting whereby children are involved in family decisions (Staunton 2008); see section 2.5.1 Modern families.

> [I]f they know I am going shopping for the day I will say to them, 'I am going shopping, any requests for what you might like for meals this week or lunches?', things like that, so they will input that way. (P5, Mother, Metro, 2nd round)

Some (N=3) parents suggested that their reasons for consulting children about family meals was to avoid conflict. All three were mothers and two lived in the country; the value assigned by mothers to meeting the food preferences of family members, has been well documented (Charles and Kerr 1988; Roberts 2006; Cook 2009); see section 2.5.3 Parental regulation of children's diets, for a fuller discussion.

> [I] don't just want to cook for myself and they go 'Yuk'. So I always ask them everyday, 'What do you want for tea?' (P10, Mother, Rural, 2nd round)

A number of children assisted with supermarket shopping as well as family meals.

> Yes, and they are really good now, like I can just go, 'Can you just run down that aisle and get me you know, whatever', and they always come back and they go, 'Yeah, this one was on special, mum', you know, like they are really good. (P10, Mother, Rural, 2nd round)

*4.3.2.4: Strong parental regulation*

Most of the parents (N=8) presented themselves as strong regulators of their children's food choice and consumer behaviour. One mother of seven children epitomised strong regulation and control of children when she described taking all her children supermarket shopping.

> You know, like I'll be in the supermarket, I'll take all [7] of my kids shopping and every two seconds, 'I want this, I want this'. 'Nup, nup', I just walk around the whole shop going 'Nup, nup'. They know, every now and again they'll get a treat, which they did yesterday, but it depends on whether I can afford it. And they can pester me till the cows come home, and if I've got the money and I feel nice, I'll buy it for them. (P3, Mother, Metro, Ist round)

Other parents echoed similar strong regulation, albeit not in the context of co-shopping.

> [M]y husband and I direct them a lot, and if we say 'No', then it's no… And I believe that that's how it needs to be, that they need boundaries and they can't see that they can manipulate my husband and myself. (P4, Mother, Metro, Ist round)

> [L]ike ,say I buy some ice-cream and three days later it's gone and he says, 'We need more ice-cream'. I just laugh and say 'In your dreams, when the week's up you will get more ice-cream'. So its kind of not negotiable, just limits and he tries it on and he doesn't argue then, you know? … Yes, yes, I am one of those mums that the boundaries haven't moved, so he knows there

> is no point in arguing because they're not going to move … (P12, Mother, Rural, 2nd round)

The above quotes, taken by themselves, reflect a more authoritarian style of parenting, which is rigid and non-negotiable, and allows the child scant opportunity to express their agency and influence family decisions; nevertheless, placed within the context of everything else that parents said in the interviews, the 'rules' established by parents are more consistent with the highly regulatory, reflexive and educative, authoritative style of parenting (Carlson and Grossbart 1988; Rose 1999).

Parents identified the values and principles they use to regulate children's food choices. These go some way to explaining the impression of parents as strong regulators and 'in control' of their children's dietary care.

> [L]ike, I look at my sister, and, um I guess it is about parenting boundaries, like, we are really different in the way we parent our children…her kids will have like free range [sic] of the fridge and um day and night, [they] can eat whatever they want. When my kids go there, they love it because I am a bit stricter at home about, 'Ask me before you take something from the pantry', or 'Ask me before you reach into the fridge, you know, if you can have it'. (P11, Mother, Rural, 2nd round)

The application of rules gave children clear guidelines about appropriate behaviour. These parental values are consistent with the authoritative style of parenting (Carlson and Grossbart 1988; Rose 1999) associated with middle-class and educated parents (Rose, Valakas et al. 2003). While the parents in this study represented a range of class as signified by their income (from low $30-$59,000 pa to high >$90,000pa), nevertheless most parents N=10, had tertiary qualifications (diploma or degree),

> Yes there are [rules], yes, fruits and vegetables, they know that they can pretty much help themselves [to] unless its like I said, after tea or getting close to tea, then they tend to ask. But during the day we have things like um Shapes, Dixie Drumstick or Pizza Shapes or BBQ Shapes things like that, they have to ask if they can have those. Um, they have to ask for drinks other than water. Water,

> they help themselves to, but if they want cordial, juice, milk, they have to ask … I really don't know how long I will enforce those [rules], I guess maybe if I feel that they have, understand, you know, or if they have got the balance right, then things like that, then maybe it might become a little bit more lenient later on, but for now I can't foresee when I will. (P5, Mother, Metro, 2nd round)

Parents expressed pride in their strong regulation and even considered themselves to be 'outside or above the norm'. They equated strong regulation with 'good parenting', doing the best for their children even if that rendered them unpopular (in the short term).

> [S]o, I am one of the unusual parents for I don't care how much the argument prolongs, I will say that, 'I am sorry, but that's just the way it is here. When you leave home and buy your own food, you can buy whatever you want, but while you are living here you will eat properly', and I am one of the ones that stand my ground but I, there is very few of us. (P12, Mother, Rural, Ist round)

While P12 (above) considered herself unusual in fact the 'good parent' discourse is integrated into the neo-liberal 'reflexive project of the self', and she as well as other parents in this study exemplified this perspective (Baker 2009; Kokkonen 2009).

A number of parents implied that their children were able to resist marketing persuasion, due to their strong regulation. This is similar to the findings reported in section 4.3.1.3 Marketing effects.

> [S]he hasn't been driven by any advertising. (P7, Father, Metro, Ist round)

The discourse of 'good parenting' extended to casting judgement towards other parents. Parents who were not firm were labelled 'weak and inadequate', and not as committed to their children's welfare. The notion of individual self-responsibility is central to neo-liberal governance (Rose 1996) and with it come critique and blame of those who are not achieving the social standards expected of responsible citizens (Bauman 2008). Parents' discussion of responsibility within the content of 'good parenting' is further presented in section 4.3.3.1 Parental responsibility for mitigating the effects of marketing.

> It is a shame because parents like to take the easy way out, and it is a shame in that respect, you know, but at the end of the day, I think the buck is with the parents. Convenience, you know, you work 8, 9 hours a day, or 10, 11, and on your way home, [you go for] junk food. …you have got working parents that are pushed for time, and really they have just got to manage their time better and partly because I think people are essentially lazy, … (P7, Father, Metro, I$^{st}$ round)

*4.3.2.5: Challenges and obstacles to parental regulation*

In spite of the dominant impression of strong regulation, parents did acknowledge barriers and obstacles to parental regulation of children's diets.

They discussed the relentlessness of 'pester power'.

> I have been worn down – you get really worn down. … I didn't realise that there would be such intense pressure from other quarters …if you don't get it for them, then they think it is special. (P11, Mother, Rural, I$^{st}$ round)

Conflict associated with children's pestering and resistance to parental authority was also a source of stress.

> I'll see a mum with a toddler and a baby and a school age kid and doing the shopping and it is sometimes just easier to avoid the tantrums, to say 'Yes', … sometimes it's just easier to say 'Yes' than it is to say 'No'… (P11, Mother, Rural, 2$^{nd}$ round)

Juggling employment with family responsibilities was seen as a significant barrier to parental regulation. The quotes below illustrate nutritional compromises that busy parents make, in the regulation of their children's diet.

> Time, work-life balance, yes, yes, … because we are both busy and working and whereas I might used to make healthy biscuits or a slice or some quiche or something, now we are buying muesli bars and drinks with sugar in them and um, what else, like yoghurt tubs that aren't necessarily the best brand and

> things like that, because it is just convenience when two parents are working to have something to grab, to fill up the lunch box. (P11, Mother, Rural, 2nd round)

> [I]n this day and age, you really need both parents working, struggling to pay for the mortgage and everything else, and sometimes you tend to find that it is easier to have a take-away as opposed to preparing an evening meal. (P7, Father, Metro, I st round)

One parent, herself on a low income, emphasised the double burden of modern day stresses plus social disadvantage.

> [T]hey [parents] would rather give in to the kid rather than, 'No, you can't have it', its just a quick fix sort of thing. And you see it happen in the supermarket all the time. So it's tied to the stresses of living in that … people who are disadvantaged are coping with more stresses, so, um, it might be one thing you give in on. (P13, Mother, Metro, I st round)

Another parent discussed the higher cost of healthier foods as a barrier to feeding her children a healthy diet.

> And also the cost I think too, is a big thing, to buy, and I have done it many a times sat down and tried to work it out, you know to have all the yummy healthy stuff in their lunch box versus buying the pre-packaged cheap junk that you know [you] can get in the home brand versions, it's a lot cheaper; [it's] frightening. (P9, Mother, Rural, 2nd round)

In some instances family and friends undermined parental regulation.

> [M]y mother-in-law is the terrible one, because, we call her house the lolly factory, because she has cupboards and cupboards and cupboards just full of lollies and chocolates. Yeah, and my mother-in-law, she is the worst … they [children] constantly would love to go there, you know, 'Can we go see nanna?', and you know that they are going there because they know they are

> going to get a tummy full of sweets and lollies and ice-creams and things like that. (P5, Mother, Metro, 2nd round)

Broader social influences in a child's environment, as well as a child's autonomy in the matter of food choice, were other factors potentially limiting the efficacy of parental regulation.

> Up until they turn about 13, I had control of that, and then they started getting jobs at McDonalds and Hungry Jacks …and then I just lost control of the older three. (P13 Mother, Metro, 2nd round)

The above quotes illustrate the many factors that compete with parents' desires to feed their children nutritious, minimally processed foods; these include family relationships, time, work pressures, money and children's developing autonomy.

Compromise was a strategy used by some parents to manage the stresses of regulation.

> [I]f they said, like, 'Oh can we have that?', we are in that aisle like, in that check-out thing, I always went 'Nup nup nup nup'; then we would go out for lunch, or something, because I sort of think, I'm not going to give in here, otherwise I will have to give in all the time. But you know what, 'Let's go here' [fast food restaurant], and then we are all happy … Because it is really hard to keep saying 'No, no, no, no'. You know, all the time. (P10, Mother, Rural, 2nd round)

P10 also demonstrates the stress of refusing purchase requests, which is described by Turner et al. (2006) and discussed in more detail in section 2.5.4 Regulating purchase requests and family conflict.

Not all parents were confident about their approach to regulation, and at least one parent discussed the difficulties associated with regulation. For her, food choices were not simply a matter of nutrition, but also about respecting children's desires.

> I just think, I just say 'Yes', too much actually now, I think I need coaching. I need to go to a coach, to learn to say 'No' more, but you know the sort of, its hard when I think, there is sort of this thing about what they value even if its wrong … I sort of think that's what they like, I can't always be saying 'No, you know, you have got to have an apple', it just seems really hypocritical. (P1, Mother, Metro, 2nd round)

This same parent also spoke about the value of food within the context of social norms and acceptance.

> [T]hey are saying their friends won't come over because there is nothing for them to eat, and that they just can't possibly eat fruit or crackers, you know, there is just nothing for them to eat'. And that whole social thing, this thing of you, feeling really different, that really pushes my buttons, you know … 'Well, that's just mum and dad being weird'. (P1, Mother, Metro, 2nd round)

As previously mentioned, P1 was one of the higher educated parents in the study (tertiary degree) and consistently presented nuanced views that showed a capacity for deep thinking and reflection.

*4.3.2.6: Parental regulation of children's media*

Regulating children's media use was another strategy that most parents employed to mitigate the effects of marketing. Restricting access to particular types of media, and limiting the range of applications a child could use, were some of the methods employed.

> [H]e is not allowed [to browse the Internet] … I will open the page for him that he is allowed to go on … but he's not to go surfing the net. (P11, Mother, Rural, 1st round)

> [T]he younger ones actually aren't allowed to access the Internet at home, I don't allow it, because there is nothing but rubbish on the net, and they are limited with what time they have with the TV. Um, your social interaction is to go outside and play with your mates not to sit at home and watch TV and be

> pumped full of everything. They are not allowed to read those teen magazines or anything like that, I don't allow that to happen. Um, basically you could say that I shelter them to a certain extent, but yeah, it's the marketing and the stuff that gets pushed at kids. (P13, Mother, Metro, 2nd round)

*4.3.2.7: Education about marketing*

Most parents also reported educating their children on critical appraisal of marketing. Education is recognised as an important aspect of parental consumer socialisation of children (Ward 1980).

> [I] am fortunate, because from very young with my son when we would be watching TV, so, I would constantly say to him, 'Look at that, can you see how they are trying to trick you?' so I actually anti-brainwashed him from Day 1, so he can really see through advertising because I have taught him to. (P12, Mother, Rural, Ist round)

*4.3.2.8: Co-shopping*

While co-shopping is recognised as an integral part of children's consumer socialisation (McNeal 1999), nevertheless parents are known to avoid co-shopping because of the stresses involved in children's pester power (Pettigrew and Roberts 2007). Most of the parents in this study admitted to avoiding co-shopping; in doing so, they did not incorporate co-shopping intentionally into their suite of strategies to regulate children's responses to food marketing.

> Um, you probably have heard this before, 'It's a nightmare'. Yes, they do want to buy the things with the free cricket cards like I said. Or you know they always have the end-aisles 'specials' and its usually soft drink or chips or something like that. And so when we were waiting in the queue they start asking for all those things, that they can see immediately like in the side of the checkout and at the end of the aisles, and they nag and it's horrible, so I would rather go without them. … it is pretty gross [children pestering at the supermarket]. Yes, I guess the way around that is just not take them to the supermarket, which is what I do. (P11, Mother, Rural, 2nd round)

Parents who needed to take their children shopping employed strategies that ensured they were in control of their children. Notwithstanding this, the parent below reflected a flexible approach to co-shopping.

> Um, it could be all [four], it could be two, I always take the two younger ones … It depends on the, you know, the day too, like sometimes I'll go, 'I've got my list and we are in and out, I'm not mucking around'. But there is other times and I'm probably hungry or something, or I've just got nothing else [to do], and we will just cruise around and you know, but it just depends on… (P10, Mother, Rural, 2nd round)

Only one parent was enthusiastic about co-shopping.

> As much as it is a challenge in itself, I love taking my children shopping, and we do go through, 'Why we don't buy that, what this has got in it, and um, where it is made'. … Um, so it's good for them, because if you don't do it now, then when they move out and start to do their own shopping they don't understand what it all means and how to shop properly. (P9, Mother, Rural, 2nd round)

*4.3.2.9: Parenting paradox*

While parents perceived themselves to be strong regulators of their children's consumer-related behaviour (food choice, nutrition awareness, media use, marketing awareness and co-shopping), they nevertheless exhibited a contradiction in relation to their perception of media regulation and their actual engagement in children's media activities. As a result of their general lack of interest in children's 'new' media[13], and the impracticality of closely supervising children's media use, parents were unaware of marketing that their children were exposed to on these platforms.

> I don't know. I don't even look at it [children's magazines]. I don't want to sit down and read it. (P5, Mother, Metro, 1st round)

[13] Parents' general lack of interest in children's 'new' media is described in section 4.3.1.2: Awareness of marketing on a range of non-broadcast media

*4.3.2.10: Summary of findings on regulation*

Parents presented themselves as strong regulators of their children's diets and consumer behaviour. They had a reasonable understanding of nutrition, and they were committed to their children having healthy diets. Their approach to 'treats' presented an interesting paradox in this regard. The parents demonstrated a combination of firm and pragmatic parenting through well articulated values, principles and rules. In spite of presenting themselves as strong regulators they were also aware of challenges and barriers to parental regulation. They took pride in their strong regulation, were reflexive of their approaches, and judgemental of parents who they perceived to be 'weak'. Regulating food choices and media use, educating children about nutrition and critical media literacy, and involving them in family food activities were strategies that parents used to mitigate the effects of marketing. Children's exposure to marketing via 'new' media revealed a contradiction between parents' perception of strong regulation and the reality of their low engagement with children's 'new' media.

## 4.3.3: Responsibility

Parents were asked a number of questions that explored their perceptions of responsibility for mitigating the detrimental effects of food marketing on children's food preferences. Questions referenced the policy debate around attribution of responsibility to parents, food industry and government. Much of the discussion described how parents actually mitigate marketing effects by regulating children's diets and media use - this has been reported in section 4.3.2: Regulation. Parents were also asked to discuss their views about rights in relation to food marketing.

*4.3.3.1: Parental responsibility for mitigating the effects of marketing*

All parents claimed primary responsibility for mitigating the effects of marketing, principally through regulation of children's food choices and screen use. They accepted that responsibility for children's wellbeing 'came with the job' of being a parent, and this involved doing difficult things like saying 'no'.

> [I]t's up to the parents to say 'Well no, you're not having it' …Yeah. Well that's your role as a parent. (P3, Mother, Metro, I$^{st}$ round)

> Oh yeah, it should be us. It should be us. Yeah, I don't know, I suppose because in the end, when they ask, we do have to say 'No'. We have to make a choice … (P10, Mother, Rural, 2nd round)

> Ultimately the parents. I definitely think parents have the major responsibility, not completely because there is the pester power, and we know what kids are like, but in the end they are the ones that buy the food. As a parent it is our responsibility to make the right decisions and choose healthy choices for our children. No matter what is out there. (P9, Mother, Rural, 2nd round)

The quotes above resonate with the neo-liberal discourse of individual responsibility for wellbeing through self-regulation (or governmentality) (Dean 1999). This has been described in section 2.2.2: De-traditionalising governance from state to individual and family. While P10 shows a glimmer of equivocation and P9 acknowledges the influence of external forces, all parents nevertheless accepted primary responsibility for mitigating the effects of marketing.

At least one parent expressed frustration at the impossibility of fully carrying out this responsibility.

> [I]f there is something that I am not aware of, that's my own fault for not making myself aware of what's going on in my son's life ... I mean, you can't be everywhere at the same time. But the thing is, if he's watching telly, I can't sit there and watch telly with him all the time … if I haven't taken the time to see what's on his play-station game then that's my responsibility, but if it's a pop-up on an online game, but then well, I can't help that. (P12, Mother, Rural, 2nd round)

A few parents (N=2) expressed enthusiasm about their responsibility.

> I do want those responsibilities, I feel very passionate about my child's health and his longevity and I really believe that the way he cares for his body now

> will totally impact on what his body is going to treat him like later in life. So, I take the challenge on happily… (P12, Mother, Rural, 2nd round)

P12 reflects the entrepreneurial aspect of neo-liberalism whereby through discipline and self-governance, citizens can write their own successful life script (Dean 1999).

But for other parents (N=5), there was detectable resignation and acknowledgement of the 'less than desirable' circumstances of parenting within capitalist society that expose children to the forces of marketing.

> [I] also realise that we live in this particular society where money gets made by pumping products, and that's what we have got so I am not going to be that worried about it, or overwhelmed by it, I just do it. I don't feel resentment over it, no. only slight, a slight annoyance, on a scale of one to 10, about three. (P6, Father, Metro, 2nd round)

> I feel that it's part of being a parent. That's just, what you take on when you become a parent, its challenging but all parts of parenting are challenging. (P9, Mother, Rural, 2nd round)

Consistent with their agentic approach to regulation (described in section 4.3.2.4: Strong parental regulation), some parents moralised parental responsibility and consequently cast judgement on other parents, who they considered to be lax in the exercise of their duties.

> I think the majority of parents these days don't try hard enough, to teach their children. They don't just take the effort to educate their children. They don't understand the long term effects that this is going to have on their children's health and I think it's poor parenting to not make sure your kid knows what they are eating. … there are so many parents that just like, 'Poor me', well 'You had em, you do it right'. (P12, Mother, Rural, 2nd round)

One parent reflected the experience of being a victim of moralising and blame.

> [M]y daughter … the 12 year old, she is overweight, and people look at the parents at that, like, 'You should be controlling that'. You know. So you do, that's why I think we feel like it is all our responsibility, because even um, like, professionals all blame the parents as well. (P10, Mother, Rural, 2nd round)

*4.3.3.2: Children's responsibility*

Most parents had difficulty conceptualising children's responsibilities in relation to food and beverage marketing. They tended to excuse children from taking responsibility for their food choices.

> I don't think kids have any responsibilities, they don't think, you know, they don't, um. …they just don't seem to worry about you know [what they eat]. (P10, Mother, Rural, 2nd round)

Most parents took a developmental perspective and associated responsibility with maturity.

> I don't see it as being their responsibility like, they're kids, that's the thing like and you don't want to push them too early because they are kids, they need to grow up and learn that as they get older but not just now … (P13 Mother, Metro, 2nd round)

> I think as they get older … my 8 year old is a little bit border-line, but I think she's, she's starting now to take responsibility for what she eats and drinks. … around the age of 10 then they need to be thinking about what they should or shouldn't be putting in their body. (P5, Mother, Metro, 2nd round)

Some parents acknowledged that their children were acting responsibly. In the quote below P10 describes her daughter taking responsibility for exercising self-discipline in relation to her eating.

> Like I was saying, I have got one overweight daughter, but my other one is skinny, really skinny, and she will eat two triple cheeseburgers. But, um, like [overweight daughter] couldn't do that, and she wouldn't do that, she wouldn't eat two triple cheeseburgers…(P10, Mother, Rural, 2nd round)

*4.3.3.3: Corporate responsibility*

Most parents had no difficulty apportioning some responsibility to corporations for the negative impact of EDNP food marketing on children's food choices, and the concomitant stress on parents to refuse purchase requests.

> [I]t should be also the advertising and manufacturers … they should take some responsibility, because it is really hard to keep saying 'No, no, no, no', you know, all the time. (P10, Mother, Rural, 2nd round)

They made practical suggestions on what corporations could do to act more responsibly. These included: restricting the marketing of EDNP foods to children; increasing their marketing of healthier products; and engaging in more honest disclosure about the nutritional content of products.

> I don't think junk food should be advertised at all. You know, like advertise your fruit and your veg and, I don't [think] junk food should be allowed to be advertised because of the cost to society later on. (P12, Mother, Rural, 2nd round)

> I think the companies themselves, I mean clearly they are trying to sell their product, I get that, but… they should be just more clear about what the product does. They advertise the product as though it is pretty flash, but they don't let on, well, it is actually rubbish. So I think both the government and the company need to be more realistic about what the advert … (P12, Mother, Rural, 2nd round)

For some parents (N=3) though, there was equivocation about requiring corporations to act responsibly, because they did not want to undermine the profit-making capacity of companies. These parents echoed the neo-liberal discourse that gives primacy to markets (Dean 1999). There were no real distinguishing features of these parents: two of them were metropolitan dwellers and two of them had a family income of more than $60, 000 per annum.

> I don't think they should be completely excluded from marketing the unhealthy products but maybe a certain percentage or times can be the unhealthy stuff, and then the majority of the time should be only healthy advertising. (P9, Mother, Rural, 2nd round)

A number of parents (N=4) expressed cynicism about the capacity of corporations to act responsibly. All of these parents were mothers; three out of the four were rural dwellers and all were tertiary educated (diploma or degree).

> [I] just don't think that they will ever behave in a responsible way I'm not in favour of self-regulation, I just don't think they will … (P1, Mother, Metro, 2nd round)

The parents' dilemmas and uncertainty about corporate responsibility reflect an individualised discourse of responsibility consistent with neo-liberal society (Dean 1999) and the 'ethically adrift' citizen in globalized world (Somerville 2004; Bauman 2008).

*4.3.3.4: Government responsibility*

A number of parents (N=5) felt that the government should take an overarching regulatory role in restricting the marketing of EDNP foods to children; this was linked to their lack of confidence in industry self-regulation. This concurs with broader Australian community views about regulation (Morley, Chapman et al. 2008; SA Health 2011). Four of the parents were women and lived in the country, and one parent was male and lived in the city.

> [I] really think it is some sort of intervention, like I said, from the government, that would have to step in to make them [companies] responsible … to stop that, but I don't think they would, voluntarily. (P11, Mother, Rural, 2nd round)

Only one parent expressed a clear opinion against government regulation. She was a city dweller with tertiary (degree) qualifications and consistently presented a perspective of confidence in her own strong parental regulation.

> It's kind of tricky though because a lot of responsibility has to come back to the consumer … Well I just don't know how you go about saying to a marketing company, 'You can't do that because people aren't eating it in the right amounts'. Well, who, where does that line get drawn? … it comes back to the concept of the 'nanny state'. (P2, Mother, Metro, 2nd round)

*4.3.3.5: Children's rights*

Some parents (N=5) believed that children deserved to be protected from EDNP food marketing, principally because of their greater susceptibility to persuasion compared to adults. These parents represented a diverse socio-economic spectrum with one father, three metropolitan dwellers, and two parents with the lowest education level (Year 10 or less).

> [T]hey shouldn't be bombarded with all this, junk that is on the market … because at their age, they don't have the understanding of just how dangerous it can be for them later on in life, if they do start from this age to eat these unhealthy foods … (P5, Mother, Metro, 2nd round)

Other parents framed rights as a positive entitlement to healthy foods.

> Their rights are to have healthy, nutritional foods … (P9, Mother, Rural, 2nd round)

A number of parents (N=3) had difficulty conceptualising children's rights, and confused rights with responsibilities. All three parents were rural dwellers and one of them had the lowest education level.

> [I]ts up to us also to tell them what's best for their bodies until they are adults, so no I don't think children have the right to choose junk food. (P12, Mother, Rural, 2nd round)

*4.3.3.6: Parents' rights*

Parents' articulation of their own rights was more confusing. There were a number of different understandings of what this meant. A few parents (N=2) had difficulty expressing their rights and instead merged their articulation of rights into more on responsibility and authority.

> Are you talking about rights to protect you from your own kids? Rights. (laughter) Just tell them to shut up, you know. Just tell them to stop. It's easy. … just tell them, you know, 'Stop pestering me, and that's it. Stop it'. And if they keep going well whatever discipline you need to use on them, you will. (P6, Father, Metro, 2nd round)

Others (N=2) focussed on the right to choose and brought the conversation back to parental regulation of children's diets.

> Um, my rights. It's the right to choose, pretty much, what I would like to put in my trolley … The parent's right is the right to choice, like I said with the trolleys; but also a right to choose, not the KFC meal with the toy, or the KFC meal without the toy, you know, like, you can kind of make that choice as well. (P11, Mother, Rural, 2nd round)

A few parents (N=2) believed they had the right not to be targeted with pestering.

> [N]obody should be encouraging kids to go and pester their parents. We need rights to stop people from trying to control, slow it down at least, people doing that … We should have a right that whoever is trying to encourage that pestering, as in the marketers, they should be stopped by some other force, as in you know, 'department of pestering'… Perhaps a right should be a wing of government that is controlling it. (P6, Father, Metro, 2nd round)

One parent believed she had no rights. This parent consistently displayed the strongest individualistic views amongst all the parents. For example, in section 4.3.3.3 Corporate responsibility she is one of the parents who is equivocal about corporate responsibility, and in

section 4.3.3.7 Rights of corporations, she is a staunch defender of the rights of companies to market their products to children, in the interest of making profits.

> Um, not really [no rights]. (P5, Mother, Metro, 2nd round)

*4.3.3.7: Rights of corporations*

Most parents agreed that corporations had a right to market their products, and themselves, the responsibility to mitigate the unwanted effects of corporate activity. This included parents who appeared to occupy opposite poles of the structure-agency spectrum. For example, P1, who consistently identified marketing as a social phenomenon shaping identity and behaviour for children and parents, and P5 who spoke about parents and children making individual choices based on family values and regulation.

> [W]e're in a consumer society and you can't escape it. (P1, Mother, Metro, I st round)

> So, fair or not, its their right to be able to promote their businesses in the best marketable way, I mean, hey, you know if I could make a gazillion dollars by bombarding adverts on TV, then look lets face it, we would probably all do it. Yeah, so I guess it is their right to do that, maybe not fair, but it is their right to do. (P5, Mother, Metro, 2nd round)

Some parents did articulate the need for corporations to take a more balanced approach to the question of rights and responsibilities.

> I see them as, a lot of the time, businesses that are out to make a profit, however that might be. Um, I think they have the right to make a profit from children as consumers, but not in an unhealthy way. I think that goes, like opposite with their responsibility to act in a right and proper, you know, a correct way. (P9, Mother, Rural, 2nd round)

*4.3.3.8: Responsibility, regulation and power*

In contrast to their confidence in relation to regulating their children's consumer behaviour, parents were much more ambivalent about their capacity to 'take a stand against' corporations and demand restrictions to marketing.

> It's [marketing] downright evil, shouldn't be allowed, but you know I feel pretty helpless about it. (P6, Father, Metro, 2nd interview)

> I am quite taken with the concept of the rights to protect children from direct marketing on all levels. But I kind of feel like the machine is so powerful that it's very unlikely to have that right fulfilled. (P2, Mother, Metro, 2nd interview)

The sense of powerlessness reflected by these parents is consistent with living in a globalized world in which personal capacity for ethical choices is challenged and people retreat into self-preservation and blame of others (Somerville 2004; Bauman 2008).

*4.3.3.9: Summary of findings on responsibility*

Parents demonstrated wide acceptance and commitment to mitigating the effects of marketing. They tended to accept this responsibility with pride, although some parents reflected the burden of such responsibility. In contrast they had more diverse and sometimes confused notions about parental rights in relation to food marketing. The reverse was true for children in relation to rights and responsibilities. Parents felt that children had rights to be protected from marketing of EDNP foods, and to be exposed to marketing of healthier foods, and few responsibilities due to their age and cognitive development. While corporations were considered to have some responsibility to market more healthily to children, parents nevertheless tended to be somewhat permissive of corporations' rights to market their products in order to make money. On the whole they were not confident in the capacity of corporations to self-regulate their marketing practices, and favoured government as the overarching regulator.

## *4.4: Interviews with children*

As with the parents, one child from each family was interviewed on two occasions, approximately 12 months apart. There were 10 children (and nine parents) in the second round of interviews, because one family volunteered a child to be interviewed, but the parent (father) declined to be interviewed because he was too busy. Table 4.2 describes the socio-demographic make-up of children in the two rounds of interviews.

Table 4.2: Socio-demographic make-up of children in the two rounds of interviews.

| **Interviews** | **Number** | **Age (years)** | | **Gender (N)** | | **Residence (N)** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **(N)** | **Mean** | **Range** | **Girls** | **Boys** | **Metro** | **Rural** |
| **Round 1 (2009)** | 13 | 10.5 | 8-12 | 7 | 6 | 8 | 5 |
| **Round 2 (2010)** | 10 | 11.2 | 9-13 | 6 | 4 | 6 | 4 |

The first round of interviews focussed on children's: understanding of food marketing; awareness of marketing on non-broadcast media; perception of the persuasion effects of marketing; and, opinions and concerns about marketing.

The second round of interviews explored children's: insights into consumerism; views about marketing on particular non-broadcast media (the Internet and through supermarket sales promotions); and opinions about responsibility and regulation.

In the interviews with children I used the term 'advertising' and not 'marketing', on the advice of parents from the pilot interviews, who suggested that 'advertising' was a familiar term in children's lexicon, whereas 'marketing' was not so well known. In the presentation of the interview findings I have used the term 'marketing' to correctly describe the broad range of activities captured by this term, whereas the children's quotes almost exclusively use the term 'advertising'.

As with the parent data, the findings presented here represent the themes that emerged from primary content analysis of all the data from the interviews with children (see Table 3.3: Analysis of child interviews into codes, categories and themes, for explanation of the analysis process). The data is discussed under thematic headings of: marketing; responsibility; and consumerism. Quotes have been selected to illustrate thematic ideas, and have been labelled: Respondent number C1-C13, age 8-13yo, girl or boy, rural or metropolitan (Rural/Metro), 1st or 2nd round of interviews. The age of the child is taken as the age at the first round of interviews.

## 4.4.1: Marketing

*4.4.1.1: Understanding what marketing is*

In the first round of interviews, children were asked about their understanding of how advertising (marketing) works. Every child was able to describe the use of multiple media for delivery of marketing messages to children. As expected, the majority of children identified television advertisements as the principal medium. Other media cited included: Internet, supermarket, radio, catalogues, brochures, competitions, food packets, videogames, sports sponsorship, shops, newspaper, billboards and buses.

The children discussed the attractiveness of advertisements, which is an important aspect of its appeal to children, namely that marketing directed at children relies on the use of attractive and engaging semiotics among other techniques (Hawkes 2007).

> The adverts on TV, they make their adverts very colourful and unique, different all the time. … Sometimes they make, they make it like stand out, make it special and stuff. (C6, 12yo, Girl, Metro, 1st round)

The majority of children (N=7) considered marketing to focus primarily on EDNP foods. No child considered that marketing promoted healthy foods. The quote below reveals some cynicism about the motivation of food corporations to market EDNP foods to children; this is a consistent theme that is identified more clearly in section 4.4.1.4: Opinions about marketing.

> Because they [corporations] think well, if it is unhealthy we can get more attention to get them, if it's like fruit, they [children] can go, 'hmm don't want, yeah'. (C5, 9 yo, Girl, Metro, I$^{st}$ round)

Some children (N=5) considered that there was moderate to high levels of marketing directed at them.

> To children, there is heaps. McDonalds is usually aimed towards kids; KFC, Hungry Jacks, stuff like that, that comes with toys. (C11, 12 yo, Boy, Rural, I$^{st}$ round)

*4.4.1.2: Awareness of marketing on a range of non-broadcast media*

Children were asked about their awareness of marketing on a range of non-broadcast media, including: computers; videogames; magazines; television programs; movies and DVDs; school; children's sport; supermarket; outdoor environment; home; and mobile phones.

The children reported strong awareness of marketing in supermarkets and outdoor environments, with less consistent awareness of marketing on the Internet and computer games, videogames, magazines and home catalogues. They were least aware of marketing in schools and sporting clubs, and product placement in television programs, movies and DVDs. McNeal (1999) reports that children become socialised as consumers by accompanying their parents to the supermarket from the time they are babies. In the supermarket they not only recognise products that are marketed through television advertisements, but they also get to handle the products. The lack of awareness of marketing on the Internet, computer games, videogames, magazines, television programs, movies and DVDs, may be due to children's central awareness being on the entertainment pursuit and the marketing message thereby coming in below their cognitive radar (Nairn and Fine 2008).

- Supermarket

All of the children noticed a range of marketing strategies in the supermarket including: attractive packaging; premiums; competitions; cartoon characters; celebrity figures; licensed characters; movie tie-ins; novelty packaging; and store lay-out.

> [T]here is those GoGurt tubes, those yoghurt things, and they have got little faces on them and stuff so … It's one that you suck out and it comes in a packet and there is six of them … I find them more fun. (C2, 9 yo, Boy, Metro, I$^{st}$ round)

> [L]ike the Simpsons in the packet that you can eat…like a biscuit, they put icing on it, and they do a picture of Homer or Marj, Maggie. (C13, 8 yo, Girl, Metro, I$^{st}$ round)

- Outdoor advertising

Most children reported awareness of outdoor advertising. They described marketing on billboards, bus shelters and buses, as well as other forms of signage.

> [T]he one that I have really noticed is sometimes they have those Snickers billboards, yeah, and that's the one I have really, sort of noticed. I think one of them had Mr T on it. (C3, 11 yo, Girl, Metro, I$^{st}$ round)

Country children reflected the disparities in outdoor advertising between rural and metropolitan regions. They were less aware of outdoor advertising in their local environment, however they recalled a lot of outdoor advertising when they came into a bigger town or city.

> Adelaide, Port Pirie, because there always would be signs on buildings. When you go into a shop there would be like posters everywhere, posters on the um, light poles. There would just be everything, everywhere. (C12, 12 yo, Boy, Rural, I$^{st}$ round)

- Internet and computer games

Most of the children (N=12) used their computer primarily to play games. They named a wide cross-section of free games that are downloadable off the Internet, as well as CD Rom games. Miniclip was the most popular site for on-line games, and Runescape was the game most often mentioned.

The children recalled some, although by no means extensive exposure to food marketing on the Internet and via computer games, for example, marketing via product placement in computer games (advergames).

> [T]he McDonalds game. Its actually like, you are actually the um, manager of McDonalds and you have got to like, buy a paddock, put some cows there, put some other stuff, chicken maybe. And then once they get bigger you have got to send them to the factory to get cut up, and then you gotta sell the burgers, employ people. (C11, 12 yo, Boy, Rural, I$^{st}$ round)

A majority of children (N=7) socialised on the Internet through games and messaging. In this way some marketing was distributed virally between children. There was very low (N=1) reported participation on social network sites, such as Facebook, and there was limited awareness of marketing through social networking. It is worth noting that the age requirement for joining Facebook is 14 years and all children in this study were under this age; the child who accessed Facebook was 12 years old at the start of the research. Most of the children reported not accessing food company websites consciously (although it is possible that they accessed them unconsciously).

*4.4.1.3: Marketing effects*

The children were asked about what they thought and felt when they came across marketing.

All the children in this study clearly understood the persuasive intent of marketing. This is consistent with development theory of the child consumer which states that children understand marketing intent around eight years of age (John 1999).

Some children (N=5) admitted to being persuaded by marketing, to the extent that they desired advertised products and made purchase requests of their parents. Marketing literacy is known to be insufficient defence against marketing persuasion (Livingstone and Helsper 2006).

> [L]ike the billboards … Its like well, I don't like a product but it makes me want to eat it. … Sometimes like I am not a real big fan of Fanta, but it will

> think to me, ‘If there was only like, some shops that only sold Fanta I would probably get it because of that’. (C11, 12 yo, Boy, Rural, I$^{st}$ round)

> Plus on the back of a bus, when I ride my bus home from school, [buses] that we pass, I always see the Cornetto ad. That’s a little annoying because then I have to go home and eat an ice-cream, not Cornetto, but a different ice-cream. Yes, they influence me a little, not too much. I don’t go out and buy Cornetto, but I do feel the need, ‘Oh God, that ice-cream looks so good’. (C6, 12yo, Girl, Metro, 2$^{nd}$ round)

A number of children (N=4) positioned themselves as resistant to marketing. They attributed marketing effects to ‘other’ children, in particular younger children, whom they described as being more vulnerable to marketing. When they did admit to being influenced by marketing, they often referred to themselves in the past, when they were younger. Two of the children were males, their ages ranged from nine to 12 years, and three of them were rural dwellers. The children’s perception of themselves as resistant to marketing may be linked to their parents’ perception of themselves as strong regulators of their children’s diets – see section 4.3.2.4: Strong parental regulation.

> Kids around my age don’t, like we don’t care, but people that are younger, like under the age of seven, would probably think, ‘That is my favourite character, I am going to get that’. (C1, 9 yo, Girl, Metro, 2$^{nd}$ round)

> Like, 7 year olds and sort of that age group, because younger kids don’t really think about the unhealthy food and healthy, what’s really good for you and stuff. (C7, 11 yo, Girl, Metro, 2$^{nd}$ round

> [W]hen I was younger, I used to eat a lot of yoghurt that had like, characters like the Wiggles on it or Dorothy the Dinosaur or Barney. It made me feel like they were more kiddish, meant for kids and stuff. And it just made it a little, you know, better, not really tasted better, but it made it a little more exciting to eat it. (C6, 12yo, Girl, Metro, 2$^{nd}$ round)

In the second round of interviews, children were shown screen shots of marketing via the Internet (product placement in computer games and advergames), as well as pictures of marketing via packaging of child-oriented products in the supermarket (cartoon characters, sporting celebrities, entertainment celebrities, and, claims about nutrition and health). They were asked their views about marketing in these two media, in particular about how they thought marketing works.

In response to the Internet images, the majority of children postulated that exposure to marketing images would stimulate desire and purchase behaviour in the form of purchase requests to parents, and that they would actively seek out the marketed products at the supermarket.

> 'I want it' … yes a taste might come into their mouth and go, 'Oh, I want one of them'... Well with the Freddo [advergame] I think that they'd like, want a Freddo Frog chocolate or any sort of chocolate, and that and its just a way for kids to go up to their parents and go, 'Can I please go and buy some Freddo Frogs because I feel like one', and stuff like that. (C5, 9 yo, Girl, Metro, 2nd round)

Some children (N=4) suggested that exposure to marketing may be experienced unconsciously or implicitly, to the extent that children would be engaged in the computer game and unaware of being marketed to (Nairn and Fine 2008). Two of the children represented the youngest age group (eight years old at the start of the study) and the other two represented the oldest group (12 years old at the start of the study); the two older ones were males and from the country.

> [T]hey might be just so into the game they mightn't even realise that there is stuff around it or there is Coke in it. (C11, 12 yo, Boy, Rural, 2nd round)

> I think that the actual children would be concentrating more on the game than on the ad. … I don't think it will have much effect on children considering that it's just a game and they will be concentrating more on the game. (C12, 12 yo, Boy, Rural, 2nd round)

> Well I think that um, if its just a game with product placement in it, it um, its kind of different because you just want to play the game. Then you see the product in it, as in these ones [advergames] are all about that product so its trying to get you to buy it more I think. (C2, 9 yo, Boy, Metro, 2nd round)

Other children referred to brand symbolism, that is, the perception that marketed products are 'cool' and linked to peer acceptance through shared experience of commodified products. Consuming branded products is known to be an important aspect of peer acceptance in the lives of children (Langer 2002; Pugh 2009); this is described in more detail in section 2.3.1: Commercialization of childhood.

> They are like, when they like go onto the game and play, they just see it and they just want it … Like, um, [if] they haven't tasted it before and their friends and everything, everyone around them has em, but they haven't had them before, and they just like get annoyed or something. They might save their pocket money to get one to see what it tastes like. (C10, 10 yo, Boy, Rural, 2nd round)

In comparison to Internet marketing, children had more to say and more nuanced understandings about marketing via supermarket product packaging. Children's engagement with supermarkets (and marketing through supermarkets) in their everyday lives was captured succinctly by one child.

> Because many kids might not go on the Internet as much as they would go to the shops and stuff, and see stuff. (C7, 11 yo, Girl, Metro, 2nd round)

All the children felt that supermarket product packaging was an effective form of marketing. At a basic level, they considered child-oriented packaging to be more attractive than adult-oriented packaging, and therefore more appealing to children. One respondent even tried to explain how child-oriented products made children feel 'special'.

> I think the colour, the more creative and more colourful a product is, it's more likely to catch the child's eye. If it has a character they recognise they might

> get excited by that, and want to buy it and try it. … And it's kind of weird but I think it is just that they put a little more effort into designing the box, it makes them [children] think that they put a little more effort into the cereal too. (C6, 12yo, Girl, Metro, 2nd round)

In the quote above C6 goes some way to describing integrated marketing (FTC 2008) (to the extent that a child may recognise a character from the movies or television on the product packaging) and she also alludes to the complex psychology of marketing to create desire by making people feel emotions in relation to the product (in her case feeling 'special').

The children were able to specifically analyse marketing techniques used on child-oriented products.

Almost all the children (N=9) identified cartoon characters and celebrity figures to exert the most powerful effect, particularly with young children, aged between three to seven years. This effect derived from children's recognition of cartoon characters and celebrity figures which featured in their favourite television programs and celebrity concerts. The degree of enthusiasm that children invested in this section of the interview revealed their familiarity with this form of marketing. Interestingly they implied a gendered association with cartoon characters on child-oriented products, for example, that girls would be attracted to Dora the Explorer and boys would be attracted to Batman. Cartoon characters are known to be used extensively to market child-oriented products (Elliott 2008) and to be effective in persuading children to desire products (Kaiser Family Foundation 2004).

> And um, with the cartoons, it's just like obviously they are going to like it if it's got their favourite cartoon on it and they are really going to want it. … and stuff and with the Wiggles, I am pretty sure most kids like the Wiggles. (C11, 12 yo, Boy, Rural, 2nd round)

> And with the little cartoon characters for example, a girl loves Dora she is more inclined to buy the Dora chocolate … (C12, 12 yo, Boy, Rural, 2nd round)

Sporting celebrities were believed to influence children through suggestion that a child could achieve similar sporting prowess by consuming the marketed product. This form of marketing was considered effective with older children, adolescents and even adults.

> [W]ith like um athletes on them, means some people would think, 'Well if they eat it, maybe I will become an athlete one day', or something like that … The sporting one maybe would trigger a bit more in adults or teenagers. (C5, 9 yo, Girl, Metro, 2nd round)

Claims about nutrition and health were judged to influence both children and adult (parent) shoppers by persuading them about the healthiness of the product, and its superiority over similar products that did not carry such a claim.

> Um, maybe when like littler kids ask their mum if they can have them, [and] the mums think, 'Oh well, if that's got the good things in them maybe they could have them', [because those products] would be better for them. (C9, 9 yo, Girl, Rural, 2nd round)

A number of children (N=3) expressed cynicism towards claims about nutrition or health, doubting their veracity and suggesting that they exaggerated the truth in order to increase sales. This scepticism is consistent with their stage of cognitive development (John 1999). Nevertheless some children (N=3) discussed the usefulness of labelling claims to children's persuasion attempts with their parents. These children were in the older cohort (ten to 12 years of age at the start of the study) and two were from the country.

> With the goodness and health I mean, some kids, like their mum might say, 'no', and then they will go, 'Oh, but its got goodness and health and I really want it, because it's got goodness and health', and try and 'egg' their mum on to get it maybe. That's how that one might work, maybe fooling the parents a bit. (C11, 12 yo, Boy, Rural, 2nd round)

In spite of the salience of product packaging, most children denied being directly influenced by this form of marketing. They tended to attribute persuasion to a time when they were younger and were more easily influenced.

> But this kind of stuff usually doesn't, it won't appeal to me very much, because, well I am usually not looking for what it is shaped like or who is on it, I just look for nice healthy foods. And yes, sometimes a bit of junk food, but yes, hardly I don't think that I usually buy stuff with this on it, not even occasionally. (C1, 9yo, Girl, Metro, 2nd round)

*4.4.1.4: Opinions about marketing*

In both rounds of interviews, children were encouraged to express their opinions about positive and negative aspects of food marketing that they were exposed to. Most children believed that the primary focus of marketing was to promote the tastiness of foods, with health being a lesser focus.

> To an extent, I mean if a child dropped dead from their products they would probably be worried about it. They probably want to make it as tasty as possible, but not so much concerned that as the health, health food. Like, the amount of product, how healthy it is, is just like a bonus to them. It's like tasty first, and that gets people to buy it. Healthy is just like an incentive, like extra. Depending on what they want to sell it as, if they are selling Weetbix, because it tastes like cardboard, they have to make sure that it's healthy. (C6, 12yo, Girl, Metro, 2nd round)

The children's prioritization of taste over health reflected their own values. Four children cited taste as a more important driver of food choice than health, and seven children named EDNP foods as their favourites. There were no distinguishing features of these children, compared to the others except for the four children who cited taste as an important driver of food choice were all metropolitan children.

> We don't think straight away, 'This is junk food, I am not going to get this', it really depends on how it tastes; yes, it depends on how it tastes. Like if you don't like carrots but it's a healthy thing, you shouldn't have to eat it, if you don't like carrots. (C1, 9yo, Girl, Metro, 2nd round)

> [M]ore people like junk food than healthy…because of the taste… they will go for the nicest food, unhealthiest. (C7, 11 yo, Girl, Metro)

The majority of children (N=7) expressed disapproval of marketing. Their concerns encompassed: health; family conflict; and ethics.

Potential harm to children's health was the dominant concern. A number of children perceived marketing to be a force for manipulating children to consume EDNP foods.

> Um, er, no. I don't really like it. I don't really know, it's just trying to get people to buy their thing because they say it's good for you or it looks good because it has got a cartoon character on it, when it's actually not that good … like Coco Pops or something, and they have like a character on the front, and they say it is all healthy for you and everything when its actually really quite bad for you then, its really kind of bad. (C2, 9 yo, Boy, Metro, 2nd round)

The potential cause of family conflict was another problematic feature of marketing.

> Um, they'll just crave it [unhealthy foods] … practically all the time, and they will start with their parents to get it, and it will pull parents, families apart … Because it will provoke arguments in the family. (C12, 12 yo, Boy, Rural, I st round)

Some children expressed the view that marketing was unethical because it made profits at the expense of children's health and wellbeing.

> [A]ll they care is money and they don't care about the children and people's health. … I think they over-advertise, I think they should cut back a little bit. (C12, 12 yo, Boy, Rural, round)

A number of children (N=5) expressed views to the effect that they found marketing unproblematic and accepted it as part of life in consumer society.

> I think it's pretty fine, like, it's all right. Um, the fact that like, companies are going out of their way to actually put on things like that so that they are getting people sucked into it. (C9, 9 yo, Girl, Rural, 2nd round)

Three of these children also expressed views about the problematic nature of marketing. There were no particular distinguishing features of these children – they ranged in age from the youngest to the oldest, two were male, and two were city children. The two children who did not contradict themselves were both girls, both in the youngest cohort of children and one was a country child. The children's views reflect the complexity of negotiating opposing discourses of consumerism and ethics. In her research with children on food and eating, Wills (2012, p. 1) reflects that children speaking about their food experiences are likely to reveal 'complexity, contradiction and ambiguity'.

#### *4.4.1.5: Summary of findings on marketing*

Overall the children in this study displayed a reasonable understanding about the nature of marketing, in particular the integrated nature of marketing over a number of media. Their awareness of marketing via non-broadcast media matched engagement with these media. H ence they were most aware of marketing in supermarkets and the outdoor environment, and to a lesser extent via the Internet and computer games. The children had a reasonably sophisticated understanding about how marketing works to persuade children, implicitly and explicitly. They had strong opinions about how marketing via product packaging works. While they noticed and were attracted to marketing messages, they nevertheless preferred to attribute personal resistance to marketing and attributed persuasion to younger children. Most children disapproved of marketing although some accepted it as a normal part of life.

### 4.4.2: Responsibility

#### *4.4.2.1: Corporate responsibility*

Notions of responsibility for the effects of marketing were explicitly explored in the second round of interviews. Children were asked to reflect on whether food companies had any responsibility for influencing children's food choices.

Half the children in the second round of interviews (N=5) were of the opinion that food companies had some responsibility for children's health and wellbeing. They considered that companies had a responsibility not to market EDNP foods to children, and others believed that companies should produce healthier foods. Their rationale for company responsibility rested on concerns about health, in particular, prevention of overweight and obesity.

> Definitely, they should [be concerned about children's health] cos younger kids, not my age, they would think, 'Oh well, if this person is on it, they obviously think that this is a good food. So, I am going to act like this person and I am going to get this'. Well if it's on an unhealthy thing then definitely it's not a good thing to do because I know a lot about little kids right now, and they will go for the thing that has this celebrity on it. (C1, 9 yo, Girl, Metro, 2nd round)

Three children were ambivalent about company responsibility, and only one child held definite views that companies did not have responsibilities for children's health and wellbeing.

> Um, not really, because they can't really control what children eat and things like that. Then, yes, they really just want to sell their stuff for money and things like that. (C5, 9 yo, Girl, Metro, 2nd round)

C5 touched on the neo-liberal discourse of personal responsibility and self-control (Dean 1999). Her views mirrored her mother's (P5), presented in section 4.3.3.7: Rights of corporations.

The most common suggestion proposed by children (N=6) was the use of labels to inform consumers about the nutritional value, in particular, fat and sugar content, of products. One child acknowledged that this information already existed on labels but suggested that it needed to be on the front of the package and more prominent – in other words to be used as a marketing strategy. Another child suggested that the Heart Foundation Tick[14] was a useful and well recognized symbol to aid product selection.

[14] See http://www.heartfoundation.org.au for more details on the Heart Foundation Tick program.

> Well they should like, have how much is in it, and like have a warning on it saying, 'This is an only 'sometimes' food, don't go for this like every single day. This is a food that should be special'. … They do have it, but what I always find it's not on the front, it's always on the side of it. So people aren't going to go 'Oh look, it looks ok to me'. … They should have how much sugar and how much fat is in it. They should have that on the front. (C1, 9 yo, Girl, Metro, 2nd round)

The question of whether food companies actually practiced responsibility in relation to marketing, was a difficult one for most children to answer. Two children felt that companies were acting responsibly and two children felt they weren't. While the children had difficulty answering this question directly, their responses throughout the interviews indicated a perception that the motivation to sell products could override responsible marketing practices. This was consistent with their concerns about the ethics of marketing (see section 4.4.1.4: Opinions about marketing).

The children who felt that companies were acting responsibly did not provide much explanation.

> Yer, I think they are doing a pretty good job. (C9, 9 yo, Girl, Rural, 2nd round)

In contrast, children who felt that companies did not act responsibly elaborated their answers.

> Um, well, um, quite a few are I think, but lots aren't like. Like, lots of, if you say cereal companies, or lolly companies or soft drink companies they say or, like fast food companies, are saying they are really healthy when they're actually really bad for you. I would probably say that there is probably more that lie about their food than um, um, ones that don't lie about their food. (C2, 9 yo, Boy, Metro, 2nd round)

*4.4.2.2: Other responsibility*

The children were also asked to reflect on who else in their lives had a role in influencing their food choices.

Children were unanimous in identifying their parents as having primary responsibility for influencing their food choices. They considered that parents exercised this responsibility through regulation of EDNP foods and educating children about healthy eating. They extended this responsibility to the parents of friends, whom they felt should choose healthy options when children were visiting at each other's homes. Two children applied the adage, 'parents provide children decide', in describing the shared responsibility for children's food choices. One child acknowledged the limits of parental responsibility outside the home.

> Parents, well they have the strongest role, they boss their children, and they are the boss of what they buy etc., what they put in the cupboards. (C12, 12 yo, Boy, Rural, 2nd round)

> They [parents] can't really do that at school, because if you give them [children] money and they can sometimes say, 'I buy healthy food', but technically they are not; it's like, something that's bad. Well again, they can't really control that [when the child is at a friend's house], because it's the parent at that person's house or the people that are around you that can sort of control that. (C5, 9 yo, Girl, Metro, 2nd round)

Six children included teachers and schools as having responsibility for guiding children's food choices through education, role-modelling and development of healthy eating policies.

> Yes, they shouldn't just walk in the class room with an energy drink or something. (C10, 10 yo, Boy, Rural, 2nd round)

> Um, at school they could make healthy eating policies, like children at school can't take bad food. (C9, 9 yo, Girl, Rural, 2nd round)

One child went so far as to consider teachers to be more influential than parents.

> Probably teachers have the number one responsibility, no I say number two. Advertising companies probably have the most, but teachers probably second because they are a role model. Children actually probably would listen to them more than they would listen to their parents, because parents are the support-

> giver, teachers are like the information-guide. (C6, 12yo, Girl, Metro, 2nd round)

On the subject of children being responsible for their own food choices, they were quite ambivalent. They acknowledged some responsibility but were not confident that health could overcome taste, as a dominant driver of children's food choices.

> Well, yeah, I guess so. Well I guess, they might go for the more healthier thing than the unhealthy, like, the biscuits or maybe fruit and nuts in the cupboard. Probably not, they will go for the nicest food, unhealthiest. (C7, 11 yo, Girl, Metro, 2nd round)

Most children found the questions about responsibility to be quite difficult to answer, and had to be probed for responses. On reflection this is not unexpected, since responsibility and ethics are complex concepts even for adults to grasp in a globalised market-driven world (Somerville 2004; Bauman 2008). In keeping with the dominant neo-liberal discourse the children were much more ambivalent about corporate responsibility and much clearer about individual responsibility (Dean 1999).

*4.4.2.3: Changes to marketing*

Finally, in the category of 'responsibility' children were asked what they would change about 'advertising food and drinks to children' if they had the power to so (for example, if they were Prime Minister for the day).

On the question of changes to marketing, the children were split into two camps. One group, (N=5) suggested stronger marketing of healthier products.

> Well yeah, I guess I would probably want like more healthier advertising up. Yes, because you don't see much fruit advertising as well as chocolate and Cadbury and sort of that stuff. Cos I would rather the place be healthier than unhealthy. (C7, 11 yo, Girl, Metro, 2nd round)

Ensuring that healthy products were tasty was an important consideration in line with their views about taste being a strong driver of food choice (see 4.4.1.4 Opinions about marketing).

> Yeah, like taking a lot of the bad foods out of the advertising and put like lots of like vegetables and things in. I think it would a bit [make a difference to children's food choices]. Yeah, like find a way to make things taste a little better and stuff. (C9, 9 yo, Girl, Rural, 2nd round)

The other group (N=4) suggested the need to address deceptive marketing practices.

> I would make it real. I would make it so they can't lie about it. And so if there really are, if they really are full of eight vitamins, calcium and iron then they can stay the same but if they are not, then make sure they would be changed. Yeah, truth, yes. Well then they would actually know, then the parents would actually know that it's true and it's actually healthy … It wouldn't actually make a change in the kids they would still want the unhealthy ones I guess. (C11, 12 yo, Boy, Rural, 2nd round)

In the quote above, taste and the tastiness of EDNP foods nevertheless continue to be an important factor in C11's concept of children's food preferences.

There were no socio-demographic differences between the two groups; they were equally represented with children of different ages, gender and place of residence.

A number of children (N=2) understood the complexity of change, to the extent that improvements to the nutritional content of products could compromise taste, and in so doing potentially undermine the profitability of companies; one child went further to consider adverse social impact such as unemployment caused by downturn in sales and profits. These children not only demonstrated a nuanced understanding of the marketing imperative to provide products that consumers want (Yannis and Lang 1995 ), but they also articulated neo-liberal concerns to protect the interests of markets (Dean 1999).

> Like for example if food wasn't, if there was less bad stuff in soft drinks for example, they might, the children might not like em different, because less bad

> ingredients would make less flavour and make a taste difference and lots of the children wouldn't like it, so the product, income will go down…. Because I think in the products-selling land there is never two thumbs up, there is always, if you try to change something, there is always one thumb up and one thumb down. (C12, 12 yo, Boy, Rural, 2nd round)

> Um, well I would probably, would think that, that [healthier foods] would be pretty hard to bring in, because lots of people would um, lose their jobs and um, things like that. Like um, well, um, people that work for that company or um, or that sells the food or whatever they, they would just lose their food because they would just not um be able to get money or anything anymore. And they might get like, like um, not be able to pay for basic things like food or things like that. Yes, [as prime minister] I'm not really sure, I would probably make sure that everyone could get into a new job before I did that. (C2, 9 yo, Boy, Metro, 2nd round)

One child was adamant that no change was required of companies because responsibility for food choice ultimately lay with consumers. Her firm view against corporate responsibility is reported under section 4.4.2.1 Corporate responsibility.

> No. I wouldn't, because, er, well, some kids do get sucked in with these things. But we can't really control them if their minds, they just get sucked in and buy those products when they are really bad, things like that. (C5, 9 yo, Girl, Metro, 2nd round)

*4.4.2.4: Summary of findings on responsibility*

Children assigned primary responsibility for ameliorating the detrimental effects of marketing, to their parents. While they understood the necessity for corporate responsibility in theory, they were equivocal about assigning responsibility in practice. Their ambivalence about corporate responsibility centred on the taste qualities of foods. They considered EDNP foods to be tasty and were concerned that healthier foods would be less tasty and consequently less profitable. Suggestions for corporate responsibility included marketing healthier foods, being more honest and having better nutritional information on labels.

Teachers and schools were also assigned responsibility for guiding children's food choices. The notion of children's self-responsibility was less understood and subscribed to.

### 4.4.3: Consumerism

Children's perceptions of consumerism were explored in the second round of interviews.

*4.4.3.1: The meaning of brands to children*

Children were asked to compare branded food products with unbranded (home-brand) products.

Most of the children (N=8) perceived branded products to be superior to home-brand products – in flavour, taste and quality. Branded products were perceived to be more reliable and trustworthy, in other words, you knew what to expect when you opened the packet. They were also more familiar and recognisable to children as a result of advertising and direct consumer experience. The packaging on branded products was perceived to be more attractive and appealing to children. A few children (N=2) associated the plainer packaging of home-brand products with inferior quality.

> Well, most of the time, when I am over at my friends and they just happen to have chips, it's corn chips or Smiths, it's usually Doritos, because well the home-brand chips don't usually taste as good as the marketing ones … … they taste a bit different because the marketing ones would have um, a lot of salt on it, and kids like salt, and having them a lot of texture and flavour in it. … [friends]would probably have a brand because brands you can kind of rely on, to have the same taste every single time you buy it, but if you get like a different home-brand they can make each a different one, and they all look the same so you don't know all of them. (C1, 9 yo, Girl, Metro, 2nd round)

Unbranded products were less familiar and trustworthy and consequently 'more risky' in social situations when food is consumed with peers. In fact one child claimed that the home-brand products were 'imitations' of the original.

> Because the brand is original and the home-brand is just a copy, it wouldn't taste exactly the same because it's not Coca Cola, it's an attemption [sic] of Coca Cola. (C12, 12 yo, Boy, Rural, 2nd round)

Product recognition was an important factor in the superiority of branded products. A number of children (N=6) were of the opinion that branded products were better known to children because they were subject to stronger marketing, and consequently children had more confidence in, and attached greater value to, branded products. All of these children were girls aged between 9 -12 years, and three of them were city children.

> Maybe, some people may be a little fussier than others, [and prefer] branded [drinks]…because they might be a bit more well known than home brand. (C5, 9 yo, Girl, Metro, 2nd round)

> I think it would matter [to friends]. Probably the Coca Cola because it is more advertised. (C9, 9 yo, Girl, Rural, 2nd round)

One child (C6) articulated the symbolic meaning of child-oriented products in conveying values pertaining to special, power and autonomy. She was reported making a similar statement in section 4.4.1.3 Marketing effects.

> [I]t would just like, the yoghurt would, its going to sound weird, but the yoghurt would look more friendly and it would just look like more for kids because they are a special thing. [the home-brand yoghurt] would just be a little more plain and dull; [its about] recognising characters from the TV on your food, yeah, it's just like that thrill when you recognise someone on the package or the box. … I think if they brought the home-brand yoghurt, they [friends] would think 'Oh the mum picked it out, or the dad picked it out', but if they brought the advertising one, just say that, um, they would think that the kid had gone along and bought it. The kid's one. (C6, 12yo, Girl, Metro, 2nd round)

Non-branded (home-brand) products were generally perceived to have less ingredients and therefore to be less tasty than the original. In particular home-brand products were considered to have less salt and sugar, which were important flavours that appealed to children.

> But a home-brand chip would probably not have as much, because home-brand ones usually don't have um salt on it, and stuff like that, and that's one of the things that people actually really like. (C1, 9 yo, Girl, Metro, 2nd round)

Paradoxically, for one child (C6) the notion of home-brand products having less ingredients also made them 'healthier' and 'more responsible', albeit less tasty and appealing.

> [H]ome-brand products which are often more healthier I think, … The home-brand ones seem like a bit more responsible, like the basics so they don't have all the sweets and sugar in them, but I'm not really sure … (C6, 12yo, Girl, Metro, 2nd round)

A few children (N=3) were more objective about differences between branded and home-brand products.

> It would probably be a bit different because, yes, different companies so, means sort of different ways of cooking stuff. Well it depends on the taste-buds thing, and the person. They might think the home-brand is better than Cadbury, but someone else might think different. (C7, 11 yo, Girl, Metro, 2nd round)

*4.4.3.2: Brand consciousness and consumer choice*

The children were presented with two hypothetical situations: (1) in which a child (third person perspective) was asked to bring a food or drink to a party; the hypothetical food or drink chosen (X) was one that the child respondent had previously identified as a favourite food; and (2) in which a child brought a food product to school, in their lunch box; once again a previously identified favourite food was selected for this hypothetical scenario. They were asked about whether or not it would matter to the child and their friends, if they brought a branded food product or home-brand product to the social situation.

Children responded to the question of brand consciousness and consumer choice in different ways. In spite of regarding branded products as superior in the hypothetical situation of a child choosing foods to eat in the company of peers, when it came to reflecting on themselves as consumers in the real world, the majority of children (N=8) placed themselves and their own friends in the category of 'not caring' about brands. This applied to their own personal consumption as well as sharing food with peers. They reported that the food was the object of interest not the brand, and taste was the most important factor that drove food choice.

> No, I think they would just be worried about what goes in their mouth, like the ice-cream. (C11, 12 yo, Boy, Rural, 2nd round)

Two children suggested that there was no difference in taste between branded and unbranded products. Both of these children were from the country and one was female.

> [no preference] I reckon they all taste the same. (C9, 9 yo, Girl, Rural, 2nd round)

Children who cared about brands were labelled 'privileged, wealthy and spoilt' by two children; both these children were male, from the country, aged ten and 12 years respectively.

> Well really it depends on the, what type of children they are. Like, the really up-stuck and, they've 'got to have the best stuff' would care … (C12, 12 yo, Boy, Rural, 2nd round)

Other constructs used by children were to associate brand preference with increasing age and maturity (N=2), and to associate choice of unbranded products with financial constraint and frugality (N=2).

> Depends what age really. If they were like, older they might joke about it, like 'Oh you cant' afford the good brands' or something like that. But, um, yeah I don't think it would matter either way. Yeah, I don't think if, like my little brother took some just Black and Gold ice-cream over next door, I don't think

> they would be worried about what brand it is. I am pretty sure they would just be worried about what is in the container. (C11, 12 yo, Boy, Rural, 2nd round)

While the majority of children claimed to be indifferent to brands in practice, on deeper probing at least six children (four of whom had previously claimed indifference) admitted that if given the choice between branded and unbranded products, they would choose the branded versions, particularly in social situations sharing food and drinks with peers. Five of the children were female, four were city children, and they were aged between eight and twelve \ years.

> [I]f you were having a party you would want your friends to enjoy the food and stuff that they had there. So if you really wanted your friends to have a good time and have some good food, you wouldn't take a risk [with home-brand products], they just wouldn't I don't think anyone would do that. (C1, 10 yo, Girl, Metro, 2nd round)

The importance of brands for peer acceptance and popularity was raised by a number of children (N=3).

> [referring to crisps in lunchbox) Well if they want to make new friends or something like that, they might think if I bring something more sort of expensive it might make them look better or something like that. (C7, 11 yo, Girl, Metro, 2nd round)

> [I]f she was um holding a different version to what all of her friends like, she would feel a bit upset that she didn't get the one that they would like. (C9, 9 yo, Girl, Rural, 2nd round)

*4.4.3.3: Purchase behaviour*

Children were asked about their purchase behaviour for foods that they had seen advertised and that they desired.

The children described two pathways for taking action on their food desires: (a) asking a parent to purchase it for them (N=8); and (b) purchasing it themselves (N=5). As would be expected, there was a greater proportion of younger children (eight to nine year-olds) in the former group (4/8) compared to the latter group (2/5). Most of the desired products mentioned by children were EDNP foods for example, chocolate bars, crisps and ice-cream.

> I would see how much money is in my wallet, and then if I didn't have enough I would ask mum. (C11, 12 yo, Boy, Rural, 2nd round)

> I would ask and if we are not allowed to, I would check in my bag for any change or anything. (C10, 10 yo, Boy, Rural, 2n d round)

Autonomous purchases were usually done at shops or supermarkets close to home. Not surprisingly, affordability was an important factor. Parental permission did not appear to be necessary for children's autonomous food purchases.

> Oh, I would just walk down the street and buy it … [with] pocket money … like if I am walking with friends and I feel like something I will just go over to the IGA. [parental permission not required], if I get it [money], if I earn it, I can do whatever I want with it basically. … chocolate or Coke, … Yes Cadbury or just like a chocolate bar, like Kit Kat or Boost or Violet Crumble etc. (C12, 12 yo, Boy, Rural, 2nd round)

> [I]f we had a shop nearby I would see if they were a bit in my price range … (C9, 9 yo, Girl, Rural, 2nd round)

The children were asked about parental responses to their purchase request.

Five children mentioned making purchase requests to their mothers and only one child (C6) mentioned making her purchase requests to her father. Her father (P6) was the parent in their family who volunteered to participate in the study and he described his domestic situation as 'married'. Parental refusal was a common experience cited by five children. Reasons for refusal included: nutrition and health; parental mood; child's fulfilment of domestic tasks; cost of the desired product; and the request falling outside the normal shopping routine.

> Sometimes I ask for chocolate, if she goes, 'What would you like from the shops?' 'Chocolate' and she still goes 'No'. Because it's all sugary, and I will have too much of it or something, eaarghh! (C5, 9 yo, Girl, Metro, 2nd round)

> When your parents are grumpy it's harder, and when they are not so grumpy it's easier. Yeah, it's like, if their day has been, gone really good and if their day has gone really bad it will be harder. (C10, 10 yo, Boy, Rural, 2nd round)

The children were asked about their own responses to parental refusal of their purchase requests.

Eight children described a range of reactions to parental refusal, from acceptance (N=3) to resignation (N=3) and disappointment (N=2). Interestingly there were more younger children (eight to nine year-olds) expressing acceptance and resignation (N=4) and the two children expressing disappointment were in the oldest age range (12 years). Older children are known to make less purchase requests and to aim them more strategically compared to younger children (Ebster, Wagner et al. 2009). This may explain their greater disappointment compared to younger children, who make more indiscriminate purchase requests and quite likely expect to receive regular parental refusal of their requests. Two children (N=2) described persistent nagging if they really wanted the product badly; both these children were male, one was 10 years old and the other 12 years old.

> I am sort of used to it now, because she is always saying 'No', unless something is planned, like a party or something. Um, well I know what the answer is, all the time I ask, but I already know that it is going to be a 'no'. Yes, I just accept it. It's no big deal. (C5, 9 yo, Girl, Metro, 2nd round)

> I don't know, I just go and watch TV; that calms me down. (C13, 8 yo, Girl, Metro, 2nd round)

> Sometimes I would be like, 'Oh, why? Why?' Or other times I would be like, 'Oh yeah. OK, fine then'. (C11, 12 yo, Boy, Rural, 2nd round)

Following on forom earlier research by (Mehta, Coveney et al. 2010d) which found that children engaged younger siblings to make purchase requests of parents, the children in this study were asked about their engagement of siblings.

Two children had used younger siblings to make purchase requests on their behalf, but this strategy did not improve their success rate. One child did not use her younger sibling because he would not cooperate. One child was used by older siblings and while he accepted the situation, he did not enjoy the experience.

> I think I have done it once or twice, but yeah, I don't do it that often I think I have done it. [I: Successful?] No. (C11, 12 yo, Boy, Rural, 2nd round).

*4.4.3.4: Summary of findings on consumerism*

Branded products were considered superior to unbranded products in flavour, quality, reliability and trustworthiness; they were less risky in social situations with peers. Home-brand products were considered to have less ingredients and therefore to be less tasty. For this reason, paradoxically, they were assessed to be healthier by some children. When it came to consumer choice, children claimed personal resistance against the influence of brands. Brand preference was associated with social privilege and snobbery. However, in spite of their claimed resistance, the children identified a preference for branded products in social situations with peers. Children made purchase requests of parents or independently purchased foods that they desired. Requests to parents were perceived to be routinely met with refusal.

## *4.5: Overall summary of findings*

Parents' and children's perceptions of marketing, responsibility, regulation and consumerism are summarised below.

Both parents and children understood how food marketing works through a range of techniques and multiple media. Their awareness of marketing on non-broadcast media matched their engagement with these media. Both groups were most aware of marketing in

supermarkets and parents were least aware of marketing through children's leisure activities such as the Internet. While both groups understood the intent of marketing to persuade consumers, parents emphasized the psycho-social dimensions of persuasion effects on children, namely status and peer acceptance, while children spoke about explicit and implicit persuasion effects. For parents, the consequences of marketing were purchase requests which they found problematic. The children on the other hand tended to position themselves as resistant to marketing effects, and attributed marketing influence to younger children. Parents also responded to child-oriented marketing as consumers either purchasing the products for the marketing attributes or resisting them because of the marketing. Both parents and children expressed concerns about the harmful effects of food marketing on children's health. Parents were also concerned about the ethical aspects of exploiting children's credulity, marketing by stealth and the use of powerful techniques to influence children. Some children accepted that marketing was an intrinsic part of living in a consumer society.

Both groups assigned primary responsibility for mitigating the harmful effects of food marketing to parents. Most parents accepted this responsibility with pride. While they acknowledged the responsibility of corporations to limit children's exposure to EDNP foods, both groups were also protective of the rights of corporations to make profits. Parents expressed lack of confidence in industry capacity to self-regulate and nominated government as having responsibility for overarching regulation. Children also assigned responsibility to teachers and schools to promote healthy food choices. Both groups were ambivalent about children's responsibilities. Parents were clearer about children's rights to be protected from EDNP food marketing than they were about their own rights to be supported in their parenting duties of regulating children's food choices.

Parents perceived themselves to be strong regulators of their children's diets and media use. They reflected authoritative parenting with clear rules and a strong education focus. They were cognizant of the barriers and challenges to parental regulation and therefore applied compromise and pragmatism to their approach. In keeping with the neo-liberal individualist discourse, they were judgemental of other parents who they perceived to be more permissive in their regulation. Parents seemed to apply two conflicting constructs to EDNP foods, one construct described these foods as unhealthy and needing to be restricted, while the other construct described these foods as 'treats' and needing to be incorporated regularly into a

child's diet. The other area of contradiction was parents' perception of themselves as strong regulators of children's leisure activities on 'new' media such as the Internet, while in reality they had low engagement in their children's leisure activities and consequently low awareness of marketing in these media.

The children perceived branded products to be superior to home-brand products in taste and quality. Paradoxically home-brand products were considered healthier by some children because they contained less of the 'tasty' ingredients such as salt and sugar. While the children tended to position themselves as indifferent to brands they nevertheless admitted to brands being important in social situations with peers. The children translated their desire for products into purchase requests of parents or autonomous purchase of the products.

# Chapter 5: Discussion

## *5.1: Overview of discussion*

The marketing of food and beverages to children was the central concern of this doctoral research, the purpose of which was to understand how parents and children perceive food marketing – their awareness of, responses to, and opinions about food marketing to which children are exposed.

The focus of the research was food marketing on non-broadcast media because much is already known about marketing on television (Hastings, McDermott et al. 2006; McGinnis, Gootman et al. 2006), and investment by corporations is shifting towards non-broadcast media (FTC 2008). Non-broadcast media was defined as 'other than television advertisements' and included: the Internet; video games; school; children's sport; product placement on television programs, movies and DVDs; children's magazines; supermarket; outdoor environment; and food marketing brochures and catalogues delivered to homes.

The findings on parents' and children's perceptions of marketing can best be understood by discussing them within broad theoretical frames that explain: neo-liberalism and responsibility; ethics; and marketing and consumers. These theoretical frames describe contemporary consumer society and the dominant discourses that shape how we think and act. They are helpful in making sense of the findings from the perspectives of:

- How parents and children conceptualise responsibility – at the individual and societal level
- How parents regulate children's food choices and access to media
- Parents' and children's concerns about marketing
- How children and parents respond to marketing as consumers.

Before proceeding to discuss the findings, it is worth reflecting in the quality of the research process.

## *5.2: Reflecting on the research*

In this research, I set out to explore parents' and children's perceptions of food marketing to which children are exposed. Specific objectives for enquiry into children's perceptions were: general understandings and perceptions of marketing and its effects on children; awareness of marketing on non-broadcast media; specific understandings and perceptions about marketing on a range of non-broadcast media; opinions and concerns about marketing; consumer identity; and perceptions of responsibility and governance in relation to marketing. Specific objectives for enquiry into parents' perceptions were: general understandings and perceptions of marketing and its effects; awareness of marketing on non-broadcast media; specific understandings and perceptions about marketing on a range of non-broadcast media; opinions and concerns about marketing; perceptions of responsibility in relation to marketing; and perceptions of regulation in relation to marketing. The research conducted semi-structured interviews with parent-child pairs to uncover these perceptions.

To the extent that all objectives were achieved, in other words, parents and children provided rich information to all interview questions, it can be concluded that the research methods were effective. Nevertheless, as with all research, there are areas for improvement. The strengths and weaknesses of the research are discussed against the quality criteria for qualitative research as outlined in section 3.1.1 Qualitative Methodology, namely: theoretical rigour; sampling rigour; contextual rigour; procedural rigour; triangulation; and reflexivity (Liamputtong and Ezzy 2005).

### 5.2.1: Quality in qualitative research

An important overarching 'quality' mechanism in this research was the monitoring and guidance of research methods by the doctoral supervisors; regular reporting to them on research progress and their feedback on drafts of all chapters provided quality assurance.

- Theoretical rigour

Theoretical rigour was achieved by engaging in a broad review of literature on marketing within the context of consumer society, neo-liberalism, children and consumerism, food marketing to the child consumer, parenting the child consumer, and ethics. This ensured that

the research was informed by the multiple disciplinary knowledges that define this field of study. The literature encompassed disciplines of psychology, cultural studies, sociology, marketing, public health, nutrition, political science, and ethics, and reported on theoretical as well as empirical research. The analysis of findings against theoretical and empirical literature occurred continuously, and not only enabled iterative refinement of interview questions, but more importantly led to a second round of interviews which built on the findings of the first round.

While the breadth of the literature review was a strength of the method, it was also constrained by the inability to delve deeply into any one area of disciplinary knowledge. Hence it represents more of an overview of theoretical knowledge of the field. It was also constrained by the limits of the researcher's disciplinary knowledge and expertise, representing nutrition, and therefore lacking the expertise to critically assess other disciplinary knowledge.

- Sampling rigour

Sampling rigour was achieved through the various attention to theoretical justification, independent recruitment, striving for saturation and flexibility, in acordance with inductive iterative analysis (Hennink, Hutter et al. 2011). Child respondents were theoretically sampled on the basis of their understanding of advertising intent by the age of eight years (child respondents were aged eight to 13 years) (Brucks, Armstrong et al. 1988; Livingstone and Helsper 2006). Parent-child pairs were purposively sampled to represent high and low socio-economic groups, and metropolitan and rural residents, to yield diverse perspectives on the subject of food marketing and children. The decision to interview parents and children from the same family yielded rich information from both parties, and allowed for some patterns to be seen vis-a-vis the socialisation that occurs in families so that children express similar views to their parents, as well as the different perceptions of parents and children with respect to purchase requests and questions of responsibility. While interviewing children in the presence of adults can inhibit children from speaking freely, it nevertheless allows for their responses to be mapped on each other (Wills 2012). Participant recruitment began through an independent social research company inviting volunteer subjects, and this changed during the course of the study in response to iterative analysis of preliminary findings (Grbich 1999). As described in section 3.2.2.2: Sampling and Recruitment, a suspicion of possible response bias

(preponderance of parents showing strict regulation of their children's diet and media use) led to a change in recruitment method to convenience sampling from a community nutrition program targeting low-income communities, in the hope of finding greater variance in parental regulation. As it turned out, the second method did not yield the difference that was sought after.

The sample size, 13 parent-child pairs, was relatively small, but interviewing the same cohort twice over a two-year period provided a depth of information that enhanced the quality of the research findings. Saturation of research data was seen to be reached with this number of respondents, because no new information was obtained from later pairs that was different to the earlier pairs (Hennink, Hutter et al. 2011). The range of parent-child pairs representing different socio-econimic groups and areas of residence was an important strategy to enable diverse views and contexts to be obtained, however analysis of interviews showed a surprising commonality of views apart from rural parents commenting on the lack of marketing in the external environment, for example, billboards.

- Contextual rigour

The social context of this research on food marketing and children was consumer society (Lee 2000) and neo-liberal society (Dean 1999). The research therefore was interested to understand how children and parents thought about food marketing within the specified context. Personal responsibility for regulation is an important principle in neo-liberal discourse (Dean 1999) and public health ethics is concerned with questions of correct attribution of responsibility for health outcomes to individuals or structures (Rogers 2008). Consequently, the research was interested to find out how parents and children perceived the question of responsibility in relation to EDNP food marketing. Interviewing metropolitan parents and children in the natural setting of their homes seemed to work well; both parents and children seemed to be comfortable with the interviews, speaking freely and providing rich data. For the interviews with children, parents could 'hover' in the background ostensibly doing domestic tasks such as folding clothes or preparing the evening meal (most interviews occurred in the evenings), thereby providing them with supervisory access to the interview with their children in an unobtrusive way. Interviews with rural respondents occurred over the phone and parents would have only been able to hear one side of the interview (their children's responses); it was not apparent that phones had been switched to speaker mode in

the interviews with rural children. Wills (2012) cautions that having parents present while interviewing children can inhibit what they say, due to the power dynamics between parents and children. In the case of the metropolitan children in this study, some parents indicated privately that they were fascinated and amused to hear their children's views and one parent indicated that she thought that her child simply made up her responses on the spot, in other words, they were not necessarily grounded in 'truth'. The question of veracity in qualitative research is regularly asked and can be answered in terms of the chosen epistemology and methodology. The epistemology of constructionism proposes that truth and meaning are constructed by people in the process of living the reality of their lives (Crotty 1998), and the methodology of qualitative research seeks to understand those constructions, meanings and perspectives (Sarantakos 1998). Hence the perspective presented by the respondent is taken as their 'truth' (Wills 2012). It is accepted that respondents will have differing perspectives even on the same phenomenon under investigation, and the quality of perspectives will vary between respondents. The ultimate quality of the research report depends on the researcher applying rigorous criteria in interpreting the findings (Porter 2007).

Interviewing parents and children twice over a two-year period also seemed to work well. There was reasonably high interest to take part in a second interview, and many respondents either commented at the second interview that they had enjoyed the first one, or made reference to some issue that was raised in the first interview that they had reflected on in the intervening 12months. This speaks of the ability of the researcher to gain the trust of the respondents, and the interview process being relevant, interesting and non-threatening to respondents (Hennink, Hutter et al. 2011).

- Procedural rigour

Detailed accounts of the methods used in the research (see Chapter 3: Methodology and Methods) address the requirement for procedural rigour.

The research used a systematic and structured approach to data analysis as well as flexibility in interpreting the meanings of respondents' information and developing theoretical concepts (Hennink, Hutter et al. 2011). The iterative and flexible nature of the research is reflected by the fact that the initial objective of the study was: (1) to critically analyse parents' and children's awareness of and perceptions about food marketing to which children are exposed.

As the interviews progressed themes relating to responsibility, regulation and consumerism emerged and resulted in extended research objectives: (2) to critically analyse how parents and children consider responsibility and regulation with respect to food marketing to which children are exposed; and, (3) to critically analyse how parents and children relate to food marketing as consumers.

- Interpretive rigour

Interpretive rigour requires accurate representation of the views of subjects through the use of direct quotes. The provision of extensive quotes to illustrate the findings in Chapter 4: Findings, achieves interpretive rigour.

- Triangulation

This study used triangulation in a number of ways. Firstly, interview questions were based on theoretical and empirical findings from the literature. The interviews followed an iterative process whereby findings were constantly compared with the literature and the interviews modified to explore emerging concepts (Grbich 1999; Minichiello, Aroni et al. 2008). The themes that emerged from analysis of the interview data were interpreted against social theories and empirical evidence in the published literature. The second round of interviews was another way of triangulating the findings. While they ostensibly built on and extended the first round of interviews, they also provided a means of checking the reliability of parents' and children's views about marketing. To the extent that neither parents nor children changed their fundamental opinions about marketing from one year to the next, this confirmed the rigour of the interview method. Finally, interviewing parents and children from the same family was a kind of triangulation. It was possible to compare the perspectives of parents and children on similar questions relating to awareness of marketing on non-broadcast media and responsibility for mitigating the effects of marketing (Wills 2012).

- Reflexivity

Reflexivity on the inter-subjective nature of the researcher's role was achieved through journaling after each interview (as mentioned in section 3.1.1: Qualitative methodology) (Grbich 1999; Waldrop 2004).

Grieg et al. (2007) caution on the effects of power relations between the adult researcher and child respondent, and the degree to which this can bias the information offered by child respondents. My on-going interest in undertaking research with children (Mehta, Coveney et al. 2010d; Papadopoulos 2012[15]) is informed by the ethics of power relations between the adult researcher and child respondent. In this doctoral research I was mindful of these tensions, and used strategies (described below) to minimise their effects.

Waldrop (2004) suggests that good qualitative research adopts a curious, enquiring, respectful and non-judgemental approach. To the best of my ability, I strove to apply those values and principles to my interviews with parents and children. Meeting parents and children in their home and at a time that suited them (mostly in the evenings), would have contributed to their comfort and sense of control over the interview process (Hennink, Hutter et al. 2011). The rich data obtained from the interviews suggests that both parents and children found the questions and interview style sufficiently interesting and non-threatening, for them to discuss freely and in some depth. I did not at any time feel that respondents were bored or uncomfortable with questions. Nevertheless, not all interviews flowed well and not all questions worked well.

For the interviews with children, child-friendly techniques were used such as an information pamphlet written for children, a worksheet for them to record awareness of marketing on non-broadcast media prior to the interview, and interview questions that were pilot-tested and modified to ensure appropriate terminology. This attention to speaking to the child-respondent seemed to deliver interviews in which children appeared to be comfortable and to speak freely. Nevertheless there was room for improvement - the first round of interviews enquired into awareness of marketing on a range of non-broadcast media and this part of the interview proceeded in a linear fashion, enquiring into one media after another, for example, computers and the Internet, supermarkets etc. This method of enquiry seemed to tire the children (perhaps because of its tedious linearity) and consequently one aspect of the interviews, namely to observe them accessing computer games or the Internet where they had noticed instances of food marketing, was abandoned, out of concerns that their concentration and interest in the interview was diminished by the end of the list of questions.

[15] I was co-supervisor for this MPH dissertation thesis.

Notwithstanding the perceived tedium of the first round interview, all children appeared to 'give it their best shot', answering questions as fully as they could and participating enthusiastically. It would seem that children are rarely asked their opinions in deep and meaningful ways (Fox and Smith 2011) – for example, as well as asking about their awareness of marketing on non-broadcast media, children were also asked their opinions about marketing, and like all human beings they enjoyed speaking about a phenomenon in their lives about which they had thoughts, feelings and opinions. Reflections on the first round interviews with children concluded that the questions were quite abstract, relied on recall and required personal disclosure, all of which are recognised as posing difficulties for research respondents (Liamputtong and Ezzy 2005). The activity sheet given to children prior to the interview worked well in providing a stimulus and framework for the conversation (Darbyshire, MacDougall et al. 2005). The activity sheet listed the non-broadcast media under investigation, and while most children did not fill it out prior to the interview, it nevertheless sat on the table for the first interview and provided a visual guide to the interview questions. The second round of interviews used more projective techniques to enable children to speak through third person perspectives (Noble 2006), thereby facilitating easier discussion about topics such as marketing on the Internet and how children respond to brands. While the interview methods with children achieved rich data, they could have been improved by being more interactive and less abstract; for example, using a range of techniques to support individual interviews such as observing informal conversations between children (Nelson and Quintana 2005), sentence completion and audio diaries (Wills 2012), and mapping and photo-voice (Darbyshire, MacDougall et al. 2005). Wills (2012) nevertheless maintains that the narrative method is particularly useful for allowing the researcher access to the respondent's 'mind' – how they think and feel about things. She adds that speaking about their experiences offer child participants 'the opportunity to delve into their own world of practice to co-produce a narrative with the researcher' (Wills 2012, p.1). Overall, I consider the interviews with children to have been successful in engaging the children's interest, and achieving sufficient trust for them to talk freely about their opinions, thoughts and feelings about food marketing. In this way this research affirmed children's citizenship, agency and sentience, by bringing their opinions about a public matter to the fore and affording them the possibility to be heard in the policy debate on children's exposure to EDNP food marketing (Prout 2002; Gergen and Gergen 2003; Darbyshire, Schiller et al. 2005).

For the interviews with parents, the questions on parental regulation were personal and could have aroused sensitivities, but the ease with which parents spoke about their regulatory practices suggested that they were comfortable with this topic of discussion. Nevertheless, even as early as the first round of interviews, parental responses quickly implied the occurrence of social desirability response bias (Podsakoff, MacKenzie et al. 2003). All parents seemed to portray themselves as strong regulators of their children's diets, with little variance in spite of socio-demographic differences between parents. In the second round of interviews therefore, a different interview method was implemented, the focus group, which aimed to enhance group discussion, sharing of experiences and a sense of camaraderie, thereby reducing the individualised exposure of parents and their assumed reluctance to display their difficulties and challenges with regard to parental regulation (social desirability response bias) (Liamputtong and Ezzy 2005; Roberts 2005). As already indicated, this change in method did not produce findings that were any different, in other words, parents continued to display high levels of regulation even with the focus group method of interview.

### 5.2.2: Summary

In reflecting on this doctoral research, the methods used produced rich and deep data from the parents and children. Quality in qualitative research was achieved through intentional application of techniques of rigour. Insights and learning from the research point the way to improvements that can be made to future qualitative research.

## *5.3: Neo-liberalism and responsibility*

### 5.3.1: Neo-liberalism and individual responsibility

Parents and children in this study reflected neo-liberal ideology to the extent that they seemed to accept that marketing was a necessary part of modern capitalist society, and should be allowed to operate without too many restrictions (Dean 1999). Even though they disapproved of the consequences of marketing EDNP foods to children (primarily because it compromised children's health), they still fundamentally accepted the right of corporations to market their products to consumers (including EDNP foods to children), in order to make profits (this is discussed further in section 5.3.3 Responsibilities and rights). To this extent, both parents and children reflected a kind of acceptance of the 'dominant discourse' of the neo-liberal state (Danaher, Schirato et al. 2000). And, while some parents articulated a structuralist discourse

whereby they acknowledged that marketing of EDNP foods is a force outside of the personal and family sphere that influences children's food choices and health (Baum 2008), their principle response was to individualise the problem of EDNP food marketing and to look to their own agency to find solutions. In their predominantly individualistic problematisation of marketing, all the parents in the study accepted responsibility for mitigating the harmful effects of marketing. While most parents expressed a kind of resignation that responsibility to mitigate the detrimental effects of marketing 'came with the job' of being a parent in a capitalist world, a few parents went further to express enthusiasm for this individualised responsibilisation. For these parents, it seemed to be a matter of 'pride' to be invested with such a serious responsibility. Children also reflected the same discourses as their parents. They predominantly accepted marketing as a normal activity, and for some children even an unproblematic part of life, and they saw mitigation of the harmful effects of marketing to be primarily the responsibility of their parents.

In their conceptualization of how marketing and individuals intersect, the parents and children in this study reflected neo-liberal discourses of governmentality and responsibilisation**,** to the extent that social problems are individualised and citizens are expected to exercise self-responsibility and self-governance, towards the goal of writing their own biographies of what it means to be a 'good and successful' citizen (Rose 1996; Dean 1999). Margaret Thatcher's famous statement in 1987, '[t]here is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women and their families. … no government can do anything except through their people and people must look to themselves first' (quoted in Dean 1999, p.151), is central to neo-liberal philosophy. That statement by Thatcher released government from the responsibility for care of the population, and placed individuals and families as free agents responsible for the consequences of their life choices (Bauman 2000). The individualisation of social problems, and the framing of identity as a reflexive project, have been key mechanisms through which neo-liberalism has promulgated individual governmentality and responsibilisation (Hiroko 2009). A Foucauldian analysis of this state of affairs reminds us not to position individuals as victims of domination, but rather as agents employing reflexivity to negotiate the structures in their lives (Danaher, Schirato et al. 2000).

### 5.3.2: Regulation and responsibilisation

The parents in this study executed their individualised responsibility by regulating their children's food choices and to a lesser extent their media use**.** In this role most of the parents perceived themselves to be tough, strong and firm in setting rules and boundaries for their children, and monitoring their children's diets and media activities. Some of them even took pains to separate themselves from the majority of other parents and to express higher standards for themselves in relation to parental regulation; these parents epitomised the degree to which individualism and competitiveness are embedded within the neo-liberal discourse (Dean 1999). Only a few parents admitted to inadequacies in their parental regulation; for the majority it appeared that the 'good parent' badge was an important part of their identity. There is of course the possibility of social desirability response bias operating here, whereby parents would be reluctant to admit their failings to an outsider or stranger (the researcher) (Podsakoff, MacKenzie et al. 2003).

Principles of individualism, reflexivity, regulation and surveillance were evident in the way parents in this study articulated aspirations for their children's health and wellbeing, as well as for themselves to be 'good' parents (Grieshaber 1997; Baker 2009; Kokkonen 2009). Contemporary parenting is underpinned by the neo-liberal discourses of responsibilisation and governmentality to the extent that parents' identities are shaped by how well they discharge their duties of family care and child upbringing (Coveney 2006; Treloar and Funk 2008; Green, Owen et al. 2009; Fox and Smith 2011). The 'good parent' discourse (which mostly applies to women) requires self-discipline and self-sacrifice towards achieving optimal physical, psychological, social and intellectual development of the child (Stanworth 1992), which is entirely consistent with neo-liberal values of responsibility for self-improvement and self-perfection (Dean 1999; Baker 2009).

The parents in this study moralized the issues of parental responsibility and regulation of children, and were critical of parents whom they perceived to be lax and to give in too easily to their children's demands for EDNP foods; they considered those parents to be less committed to their children's welfare. Individual regulation to conform to socially prescribed norms and moral censure for deviance are embedded within the neo-liberal governmentality discourse (Bauman 2008; Fox and Smith 2011), and nutrition as a health science draws

heavily on moral discourses of temperance, reflexivity and ethical behaviours, to encourage citizens to conform to normative standards of 'healthy eating' (Coveney 2006).

Regulation constituted the primary way that parents in this study engaged with marketing, by managing the downstream effects of marketing; that is, mitigating against real or perceived ill effects. None of the parents acted upstream to advocate for prevention of the harmful effects of marketing (Baum 2008). With regulation as the primary manner in which parents engaged with food marketing that their children were exposed to, they showed a strong understanding of and commitment to healthy eating for their children, and they executed their commitment through daily regulatory practices of their children's diets; for example, exercising rules about what could or couldn't be eaten at different times of the day. Parents, in particular mothers, are known to be committed to providing healthy diets for their children (Lupton 2008; Cook 2009; Pocock, Trivedi et al. 2010). In this way the parents in this study showed themselves to be powerful agents in the lives of their families, contrary to prevailing public criticisms of parents failing to control their children's poor dietary choices, in relation to the rising prevalence of childhood obesity in Australia (Armstrong 2004). The reflexive project of mothering, which requires mothers to acquire knowledge and practice surveillance of self and others, can be empowering as well as burdensome for mothers (Lupton 2008).

While 'good parenting' stood out as the dominant discourse for the parents in this study, nevertheless some of them recognised the many barriers to effective parental regulation of children's diets, in particular: the relentlessness of children's pester power; juggling work and family life; managing tight family budgets and the perceived higher cost of healthy food; children's increasing autonomy with age and maturity; and managing the opposing influences of family and friends. Some parents admitted that it was not always easy to say 'no' to children's pestering**,** for themselves, let alone for parents experiencing multiple burdens of social disadvantage, for example living on a low income and juggling other stresses; in this way, they showed some empathy towards parents who gave in to 'pester power'. While children unanimously shared the view that parents were responsible for mitigating marketing, at least one child acknowledged the limits to parents' abilities to regulate children's food choices outside the home. The parents' and children's perspective on responsibilisation conforms to the dominant discourse whereby individuals and families are the bio-political units, and the administrative language of 'empowerment' frames them as active agents in

regulating their behaviour, while at the same time downplaying social disadvantage and structural barriers to health (Hiroko 2009).

The gendered nature of family food responsibility deserves attention here. While this study did not set out to explore gender divisions in parental regulation of children's food choices, more women (N=10) than men (N=4) agreed to participate in the study, suggesting a greater engagement with the topic of food, marketing and families for women compared to men. Most of the children who discussed making purchase requests to parents identified mothers as the target of their appeals, and only mothers in this study articulated the importance to them of managing food preferences of their children in order to avoid conflict. The gendered nature of family care and mothers' greater shouldering of responsibility for family food choices, health and nutrition has been well documented by many social researchers. Mothers are known to take the job of family food provision seriously, to be concerned about providing nutritious foods to children, to consider and even placate the food preferences of family members when planning meals, and to take responsibility for mitigating the effects of marketing (Charles and Kerr 1988; DeVault 1991; Coveney 2006; Roberts 2006; Cook 2009; James, Curtis et al. 2009; James, Kjøholt et al. 2009; Ristovski-Slijepcevic, Chapman et al. 2010; Fox and Smith 2011).

### 5.3.3: Governmentality and modern parenting

The parents and children in this study embodied the discourse of bio-politics**,** to the extent that they used prevailing nutrition knowledge and wisdom as their technologies of governmentality (Dean 1999). They had an understanding of nutrition, at a basic level at least, and correctly classified foods into healthy and unhealthy categories. They understood the relationship between nutrition and health, and they knew that food marketing primarily promoted EDNP foods. The parents articulated clear parenting values and principles, and they applied rules and boundaries so that their children knew who was in control and what was expected of them. Family rules essentially covered the nature, amount and timing of children's eating; for example, foods they could eat freely and those that needed to be restricted. The use of treats was a good example of the way in which parents taught children moderation through regulated access. As well as rules, parents imposed limits and boundaries on what they would negotiate on, and what they would stand firm on. They also devoted considerable effort to educating their children on nutrition and health, and how to think

critically about marketing. Education is integral to children's consumer socialisation (Ward 1980). Other researchers have also found that mothers in particular take expert (government) nutrition directives seriously and incorporate these into their role as primary custodian of family health and nutrition (Ristovski-Slijepcevic, Chapman et al. 2010; Fox and Smith 2011).

The parents in this study demonstrated an approach to family regulation that is consistent with contemporary parenting ideology, which prioritises relationship-building, communication, education and negotiation (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002; James, Curtis et al. 2009). Apart from regulating their children's diets and media use, and educating children about nutrition and marketing effects, they also consulted their children on school lunches, family meals and family food purchases; this is consistent with modern parenting whereby children are involved in family decisions (Staunton 2008).

The parents' regulatory practices fit with the authoritative parenting style, which is both educative and regulatory, but also negotiable and respectful of children as individuals (Carlson and Grossbart 1988; Rose 1999). Regulating children's food requests was not simply a matter of saying 'no'. The parents demonstrated high levels of reflexivity in their responses to children's purchase requests, and had clear reasons for refusing or acquiescing. The parents involved their children in decision-making around family food decisions and in food-related domestic tasks. Most parents however, avoided co-shopping with their children if they could help it, and employed strategies to ensure control over purchase decisions while co-shopping. Other studies (Pettigrew and Roberts 2007) have also found parents to dislike co-shopping with children.

Authoritative parenting is adaptive to children's increasing competency, applying stricter rules for younger children and relaxing these as children grow older and show more maturity (Rose, Valakas et al. 2003). Parents have been found to be more accommodating of the food preferences of older children and to offer them more choices compared to younger children (Warren 2008). The parents in this study also considered age, stage of development and maturity in their parenting practices. They appeared to be less inclined to consider the purchase requests of younger children because they were ill-informed with respect to nutrition. The perception by parents and children in this study of the effectiveness of parental regulation of children's diets, as manifest by children's general compliance with parental

instruction, is indicative of the success of authoritative feeding practices in fostering children's preferences for healthier food choices (Prasad, Rao et al. 1978; Kremers, Brug et al. 2003; Patrick and Nicklas 2005). Authoritative parenting has been associated with higher education and class (Rose, Valakas et al. 2003) and while the parents in this study represented diverse socio-economic status, they nevertheless also represented a well-educated group with 10 out of 14 parents holding a tertiary qualification.

Not all regulation was straightforward for parents in this study and some of them pondered the dilemmas of regulation, particularly in relation to the balance between being strict and giving some ground on 'unhealthy foods' or treats. Overly rigid authoritarian feeding practices are known to increase conflict and child resistance to parental injunctions (Brophy 1977), and to have limited effect in encouraging children to prefer healthier food choices (Fisher and Birch 1999). While the parents in this study were committed to good nutrition, they were willing to compromise on their nutrition goals in order to ensure that the children actually consumed food (and did not go hungry), to avoid wastage, to avoid conflict, and to enable their children to participate in consumer culture, thereby demonstrating the complex negotiated process of family food decision-making (Roberts 2006).

In these reflexive spaces parents considered the importance of children being part of the dominant culture and what a 'balanced' diet meant. The management of 'treats' by parents was a particular example of their reflexivity. While some parents were confident about their management of treats, applying clear principles about food for health and food for pleasure, others struggled with finding a balance between their values for children's health, pleasure, participation in consumer culture and peer acceptance. The parents also reflected on how they were using treats as a parenting resource and the longer-term socialisation of children's relationship with food, for example children learning to use food for comfort or reward. Parenting within the neo-liberal context is epitomized by reflexivity about being a 'good' parent (Grieshaber 1997; Giddens and Pierson 1998; Baker 2009). The children in this study seemed generally compliant with their parents' regulation. While they made purchase requests for foods they liked, the children did not seem unduly perturbed by their parents' refusal. Only a few children described persistent nagging in response to parental refusal. This is consistent with a study by Marshall et al. (2007) of New Zealand children's (8-11 years old) experience of snack food consumption. They found that while children were influenced by advertisements for EDNP foods, nevertheless their consumption nevertheless included

healthy foods and reflected parental regulation. The authoritative style of parenting is associated with greater child compliance (Brophy 1977).

Monitoring and surveillance were a strong part of the parents' regulation of their children's diets, and consequently most parents portrayed strong knowledge and control of what their children were eating. In contrast, parents' regulation of children's media use was not as straightforward. There appeared to be a discrepancy between parents' perception of their media regulation and their actual practice of regulation. Taking the Internet as a case in point, parents described restrictions they put on children's access to the Internet, but then went on to admit that they were not engaged with this aspect of their children's leisure, and consequently were not aware of the marketing communications that their children were exposed to. Their perception of strong regulation and the reality of 'weak' regulation of children's media use, constitute a 'blind spot' in the 'panopticon' of parental surveillance and regulation of children's exposure to food marketing (Danaher, Schirato et al. 2000). This particularly holds true for marketing via the Internet, children's magazines and videogames, which can then be said to be coming at children below the parental radar of surveillance and protection, thereby raising ethical issues (Nairn and Fine 2008).

### 5.3.4: Summary

In summary, the parents and children in this study exemplified neo-liberal citizenry who accept food marketing as part of modern capitalist society, and who individualise the problem of EDNP food marketing that children are exposed to. They considered that parents were primarily responsible for mitigating the adverse effects of EDNP food marketing, and parents did this by regulating children's food choices and media use. Parents were highly reflexive of their parenting practices, and embodied the 'good parent' discourse, demonstrating pride in their firmness and being judgemental of other parents who gave in too easily to their children's demands. The parents applied authoritative parenting principles effectively to regulate their children's diets and media access, and their children in turn appeared to comply with parenting rules and practices. The lack of regulation of children's utilization of new media however showed up weaknesses in parental mitigation of marketing exposure and effects.

## *5.4: Ethics*

### 5.4.1: Parents' views on ethics

*5.4.1.1: The marketing of EDNP foods*

Parents in this study considered many aspects of food marketing to be problematic and unethical. They were primarily troubled by the promotion of EDNP foods which they judged to put their children's health at risk. Public polling by the South Australian Health Department between 2004 and 2011 has consistently revealed high levels (90%) of adults aged between 18-74 years to be concerned about EDNP food marketing to children (SA Health 2011). In this study, the parents' anxieties about food marketing and children's health generally mirror the public health discourse on this subject, namely, that the promotion of EDNP foods gives children biased information about food choice, and puts them at risk of unhealthy diets and obesity (Swinburn, Egger et al. 1999; WHO 2003; Hastings, McDermott et al. 2006; WHO 2006; WHO 2010). The Conventions on the Rights of the Child (UNHCR 1989) Article 17 states that children have a right to be protected from material injurious to their health, and this has been invoked to argue the case for protection of children from exposure to EDNP food marketing (Handsley, Mehta et al. 2009). That the problem has not been fully resolved, and children continue to be exposed to marketing messages for EDNP foods, is the result of oppositional interests among industries that benefit from marketing to children, and neo-liberal governments reluctant to regulate (Moodie, Swinburn et al. 2006; Egger and Swinburn 2010). Children's progressive development of cognitive skills and consequent ability to understand the persuasive intent of advertising, add to the difficulty of arriving at a policy response. The early work by psychologists which found cognitive understanding of marketing by age 8- 12 years (John 1999) has been used by protagonists of marketing to argue that children are savvy and discerning consumers who do not need to be protected. On the contrary, they argue that exposure to marketing is essential for children's consumer socialisation and effective functioning in consumer society (Pettersson and Fjellstrom 2006). Notwithstanding the psychological development of cognitive defence against marketing, there is evidence to show that this does not protect children from the persuasive influence of marketing (Livingstone and Helsper 2006). A number of parents in this study reflected the discourse on cognitive development by assigning different levels of concern for older and younger children, in other words, they were more uneasy about the effects of marketing on younger children.

*5.4.1.2: Materialism and pester power*

Parents in this study were also concerned that food marketing led to their children developing consumerist values and brand consciousness about many food items, including basic food items such as bread. This is related to broader concerns about marketing and materialistic values being problematic for children's health and family wellbeing (Kunkel 2001; Pettigrew and Roberts 2006; Nairn 2009). Specifically, Gosliner et al (2007) suggest that the commercialization commercialization of food complicates individual food choice decisions by emphasising the socio-economic value of foods at the expense of the nutritional value. At the social health level, marketing is also considered to exploit vulnerabilities relating to social identity, and peer acceptance and status, for adult and child consumers alike; in this way it is potentially harmful, particularly to children who are still developing their defences to these social pressures (Spence and Van Heekeren 2005).

In this study parents felt that marketing encouraged 'pester power' for EDNP foods, which in turn undermined their authority to regulate and guide their children's food choices; pester power also contributed to parental stress and family conflict**.** Marketing promotes children's commercial culture as 'cool for kids', and sets parents up for conflict when they refuse to purchase products for children. This is perceived as a negative experience by parents (Turner, Kelly et al. 2006; Nairn 2009), and is also considered to undermine parental authority (Steinberg and Kincheloe 1997). South Australian adults have consistently revealed strong disquiet (80-90% of survey respondents) about the relationship between food advertising and children pestering parents for products (SA Health 2011).

Nicholls and Cullen (2004) acknowledge the rights of children to participate in family consumer decisions which are enshrined by the Conventions on the Rights of the Child (UNHCR 1989). However, they see ethics as a balance between the rights and responsibilities of children and parents; in this case, parents' rights not to be undermined in their role of guiding children's food choices, and children's rights to participate in decisions that concern them. Parents have a responsibility to involve children in decision-making and children have a responsibility to obey their parents. They see parent-child conflict playing out primarily on the retail shop-floor, and they suggest that retailers are reneging on their responsibilities to achieve a balance of rights for children and parents (Nicholls and Cullen 2004).

It is important to note that not all parents in this study were concerned about the capacity of marketing to influence their children. Those who were less concerned attributed their children's ability to resist marketing to their own 'strong parenting', which led to their children's consequent resistance to the effects of marketing. In this way they not only subscribed to the moralistic discourse of 'good' parenting but also to individualising the problem of marketing, and attributing protection to individual resilience, knowledge and skills (Baker 2009).

*5.4.1.3: Marketing on the Internet*

Parents in this study were particularly concerned about marketing on the Internet, for example, advergames, viral marketing and the mining of personal information, importantly, because it was happening in children's 'private space' and therefore below parental supervision or radar. Ethical concerns about marketing to children on the Internet have been identified by a number of researchers, and these include: blurring of entertainment and advertising; subverting children's cognitive defence; marketing to children outside the supervision and permission of parents (below-the-radar); direct selling to children online; inadequate provision of disclosures and warnings, for example, alerting children to advertising; collection of personal demographic information; use of tracking devices for marketing purposes; and, links to inappropriate websites, such as gambling websites (Austin and Reed 1999; Moore and Lutz 2000; Moore 2004; Moore and Rideout 2007; Schor and Ford 2007; Nairn 2008).

The children in this study had variable awareness of product placement, in other words, some children were aware of it and some were not (this is discussed in more detail in section 5.4 Marketing and consumers). However, the parents on the other hand, had very little awareness of product placement because of their disengagement from children's leisure activities. Nonetheless, they had grave concerns about product placement in advergames on the Internet subverting children's cognitive awareness that they were being marketed to. Product placement is one particular marketing strategy that breaches the ethical requirement of separation of advertising from editorial content, so that children know that they are being advertised to, and in that way can make informed choices as consumers (Schmitt, Wagner et al. 2007; Rogers 2008). In failing to separate marketing from entertainment or editorial

content, product placement has the potential to subvert children's scepticism, and thereby increase their vulnerability to marketing persuasion (Moore 2004; Lee, Choi et al. 2009). Children are known to have difficulty separating commercial and entertainment content on the Internet (Lindstrom and Seybold 2004; Fielder, Gardner et al. 2007; Brady, Farrell et al. 2008), and product placement has been shown to positively influence children's food choices, with persuasion effects being augmented by prior and repeated exposure (albeit in a study involving product placement in a movie) (Auty and Lewis 2004, p. 712). The high degree of repetitious playing of computer games would put children at particular risk of implicit persuasion by marketing embedded in advergames.

Many of the marketing techniques found on the Internet fall into the category of so-called 'stealth marketing', which has been labelled unethical because withholding the identity of the sponsor or not disclosing to a child that they are being marketed to, is fundamentally deceitful and fails the ethical tests of (a) consent to be engaged in a commercial interaction; and (b) making an informed consumer decision (Rogers 2008). By withholding persuasion knowledge and agent knowledge, stealth marketing comes in 'below children's cognitive radar'. It can also be intrusive into their personal space, for example intruding into their game playing or surfing the net for leisure, and exploitative of personal relationships by suggesting to or encouraging children to send-on marketing messages or promote products to their friends or family (Martin and Smith 2008). Stealth marketing violates industry's own codes of practice of transparency and honesty in marketing (Martin and Smith 2008).

Marketing via the Internet is especially concerning because of children's high engagement with computers and the Internet with upwards of 90% of children aged 5-14 years using computers regularly and accessing the Internet at least weekly (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006; Linn and Novosat 2008). Many children exceed the National Australian Guidelines of no more than two hours of small screen recreation per day (Hardy, Dobbins et al. 2006; Granich, Rosenberg et al. 2010). The other aspect of children's 'new' leisure commodities is that they are designed specifically for children to use 'privately', for example, in their bedroom. The proportion of children with electronic media in their bedroom is not inconsequential and equates roughly to: 30% for TV; 23%for computer; and 50% for video game consul (Salmon, Timperio et al. 2005; Roberts and Foehr 2008; Granich, Rosenberg et al. 2010). Below-the-radar marketing (BRM) is particularly relevant to children's 'new' leisure commodities such as computer games, videogames and magazines.

While parents in this study considered much of marketing on non-broadcast media to be BRM because the sheer ubiquitousness of marketing resulted in it slipping below conscious awareness, and being 'subliminal' [their phrase], they nevertheless held strong ethical concerns about stealth marketing on the Internet. As well as subverting children's scepticism, they held concerns that BRM undermined their regulatory role. They felt that in order to be strong regulators of their children's diets, they needed to be aware of food messages that their children were exposed to – akin to the Foucault's panopticon for effective surveillance (Danaher, Schirato et al. 2000) – and BRM put them in the unenviable position of failing their end of the neo-liberal social contract, vis-a-vis being responsible for their children's food choices (Rose 1996; Dean 1999). In this way BRM made it difficult for them to live up to the social expectations of being 'good parents' and good citizens (Grieshaber 1997; Giddens and Pierson 1998; Baker 2009). The parents' reaction to BRM typifies one of the ethical dilemmas of children's exposure to EDNP food marketing, whereby in a neo-liberal world, individuals (in this case parents) are required to take responsibility for social problems, not of their making and outside their power to control (Rogers 2008).

*5.4.1.4: Marketing through supermarkets*

Apart from marketing on the Internet, supermarkets received special attention by parents in this study. They were concerned about the marketing of EDNP foods to children via child-oriented product packaging, misleading claims about nutrition and health, positioning of products within children's reach, and checkouts. They worried about the marketing methods used to 'hook' children through product packaging, for example, premiums, competitions, celebrities, movie tie-ins, and claims about health and nutrition. The majority of child-oriented food products have been found to be energy-dense nutrient-poor (Elliott 2008; Mehta, Phillips et al. 2012), and the multiple marketing methods used on child-oriented packaging have been found to influence children's desire for the products (Atkin 1978; McNeal 1999; CSPI 2003; KFF 2004; Story and French 2004; Shee 2008).

Claims about health and nutrition on child-oriented products were problematic for both children and parents, albeit with some differences. Parents were critical about the misleading effect of such claims (on their children's food choices) when they occurred on EDNP foods, for example, Kellogg's Coco Pops promoting positive nutrients when it also contains almost

40% of added sugars (http://www.calorieking.com.au/, accessed 11 Feb 2012). A study by Mehta et al. (2012) on marketing through supermarket product packaging found claims about nutrition and health on more than half of the non-core products. While parents in this study were cynical about health and nutrition claims on food packages, some of them also paid heed to claims, preferring products with claims over those without. Adult consumers in general, and parents in particular, are known to rely on health claims when making family foods purchases (Grunert and Wills 2007; Kelly, Hughes et al. 2009; Maubach and Hoek 2010; Pocock, Trivedi et al. 2010), and nutrition or health claims on EDNP foods signal an intent on the part of manufacturers to confuse and deceive consumers. Concerns have previously been raised about the ethics of such claims on EDNP child-oriented products (Which? 2006; Elliott 2008).

Children on the other hand were more pragmatic than parents about nutrition and health claims. While they recognised the ethical problem of misleading information, they nevertheless used the very same claims for positive health to persuade their parents to purchase the products. Children's use of health and nutrition claims to persuade parents has been found by other authors (Which? 2006) and is indicative of the sophisticated communication skills of children in the eight to 13 year age range (Ebster, Wagner et al. 2009).

As with many of the issues discussed by parents, their views about child-oriented products were nuanced, and included both positive and negative opinions. For example, child-oriented products could be useful as 'treats' to reward or entice good behaviour, but they could also create divisions in family eating between children and adults. (This is discussed further in section 5.4: Marketing and consumers.) As well as providing lucrative profits to food companies (FTC 2008), child-oriented products also play a role in the power dynamics of parent-child relations (James, Kjøholt et al. 2009). While children overtly have less consumer power than adults, there is increasing recognition of their 'power' to shape family food choices and consumer decisions (Dixon and Banwell 2004; Coveney 2006; Green, Owen et al. 2009). While children's participation in family purchase decisions has become normalised in modernity (Staunton 2008), the marketing of child-oriented products gives children explicit licence to engage in 'pester power', which in turn contributes to conflict and stress in the parent-child relationship (Nicholls and Cullen 2004; Turner, Kelly et al. 2006; Nairn 2009).

### 5.4.2: Children's views on ethics

The children in this study shared some of their parents' concerns about the ethics of marketing, principally regarding the promotion of EDNP foods. While they succumbed to the persuasive effects of marketing, in other words, desire for branded products which were marketed to them (directly or indirectly), the children also displayed capacity to reflect more broadly on marketing as a social and cultural phenomenon, and to problematise marketing (James and Prout 1997). They seemed more attuned than their parents to the potential for marketing to contribute to family conflict.

Some children identified the ethical problem of implicit persuasion through marketing on the Internet and 'misleading' claims about nutrition and health on product packaging. While the children in this study showed a high reflexivity about marketing, which could be interpreted as cognitive defence (Boush, Friestad et al. 1994), it is nevertheless important to distinguish between cognitive awareness and susceptibility to persuasion. Livingstone and Helsper's (2006) study reminds us that children who are aware about marketing are still persuaded by it. Indeed the parents' anxieties about the capacity of marketing to adversely influence children's food preferences are a salutary warning that cognition does not necessarily protect against persuasion effects.

### 5.4.3: Responsibilities and rights

Notwithstanding their awareness of the unethical aspects of marketing to children, both parents and children also 'accepted' marketing as an integral part of consumer society and essential for business-success. Both parents and children saw the primary responsibility for mitigating the adverse effects of marketing to lie with parents. They were ambivalent about assigning responsibility to corporations and restricting corporate food marketing to children. They supported some restrictions on the marketing of EDNP foods and beverages to children, however they did not want this to happen at the expense of business success; in this way, they appeared somewhat 'protective' of business rights to make profits even at the expense of children's health. As discussed in section 5.2.1: Neo-liberalism and individual responsibility, these views held by parents and children are consistent with neo-liberal discourse that individualises social problems (Rose 1996; Dean 1999). Research in the United Kingdom also found parents to be critical of corporations marketing EDNP foods to children, while at the same time accepting it as part of modern society, and taking responsibility for mitigating the

effects of marketing on children's food preferences (Spungin 2004). Notwithstanding their acceptance of marketing as a reality of modern life, most of the parents in this study supported restrictions on EDNP food marketing to children. A number of them were cynical about the capacity of corporations to act ethically in their children's interests, and therefore favoured government regulation to restrict the marketing of EDNP foods to children. These views concur with the broader Australian public (Morley, Chapman et al. 2008; SA Health 2011).

On the matter of advocating for business ethics, the parents expressed a sense of powerlessness to 'take on' business on behalf of their children. This is consistent with Sommerville's (2004) and Bauman's (2008) arguments about the decline of citizen and consumer ethics in a globalised world, whereby individuals retreat into their own self-interest**,** as a survival response to the overwhelmingness of globalisation

While most parents in this study unambiguously supported children's rights to be protected from EDNP food marketing, they were much less certain about their own rights not to be undermined in their role of guiding children to make healthy food choices, even though the Convention on the Rights of the Child states that parents deserve to be supported in carrying out their responsibilities towards the wellbeing of children (UNHCR 1989). It appeared that notions of parental rights were overshadowed by dominant discourses of individualism, responsibilisation and reflexive parenting (Rose 1996; Grieshaber 1997; Dean 1999; Baker 2009).

### 5.4.4: Summary

In summary, the parents and children portrayed a complex mix of idealistic and pragmatic views about the ethics of EDNP food marketing to which their children were exposed. They appeared to be caught within the paradox of problematising EDNP food marketing to children, both as a social problem and as an individual problem. The dilemma expressed by parents is not dissimilar to the broader policy debate in Australia on the matter of food marketing and children's health; it appears that policy-makers are also constrained by conflicting analyses of EDNP food marketing as a social and as an individual problem. Parents were particularly concerned about marketing techniques on non-broadcast media such as the Internet and product packaging.

## *5.5: Marketing and consumers*

### 5.5.1: Children as consumers

The children in this study were highly cognizant of how food marketing works, both on multiple media (for example, television, computers, magazines, billboards etc.) and multiple methods (for example, attractive visuals, cartoon characters, celebrity characters, give-aways, competitions etc.). They nevertheless reported different levels of awareness of marketing on non-broadcast media. They were more aware of marketing in supermarkets and outdoor environments, and less aware of marketing in children's magazines and children's sport. Awareness of marketing on the Internet varied from reasonable to low. These assessments are based on the degree to which children could identify and describe marketing on these media. The differential awareness of marketing seemed to reflect varying levels of exposure and active engagement with media and marketing, as well as mental processing of the marketing communication. For example, children's strong awareness of marketing via product packaging can be explained by the fact that going to the supermarket with parents (co-shopping) is a common experience for most children, which starts at a young age and affords children opportunities to not only see, but also to handle products and make purchase requests for products they want (McNeal 1999). In other words, in the supermarket children are directly engaged with the products being marketed to them. As well as children's practical engagement with marketing via the supermarket, child-oriented food products carry significant marketing via the packaging. A study by Mehta et al. (2012) found up to 12 marketing techniques per child-oriented product, thereby showing that children are exposed to multiple marketing stimuli through this medium. A possible explanation for a lower awareness of marketing via other non-broadcast media, is that children's primary reason for engaging with computer games, the Internet, videogames, children's magazines and children's sport**,** is for entertainment, leisure and fitness (Neeley 2007); consequently, awareness of marketing on these media is largely subconscious (Nairn and Fine 2008). Finally, it is possible that ubiquity plays a role here as well, so that the pervasiveness, regularity and ordinariness of marketing renders it 'invisible' to some extent (Henke 1999; Lewis 2006; Brady, Farrell et al. 2008). Parents in particular spoke about the ubiquity of marketing to explain their own lack of awareness of marketing on non-broadcast media.

Some children noticed more subtle forms of marketing such as product placement in computer games and videogames, and some even went further to show an understanding of how marketing exerts implicit persuasion. Nairn and Fine (2008) propose that marketing techniques which link positive experiences to product exposure result in consumers developing preferences for those products in subconscious and non-rational ways; they suggest that implicit positive attitudes are stronger predictors of behaviour than explicitly-held attitudes.

All the children understood the persuasive intent of marketing, as befits the cognitive development of this age group (8-13 years) (APA 2004); consequently, they considered that marketing would result in desire for products. Their opinions were not simply generalised but quite specific as to how particular marketing techniques would work. For example: that children would identify their favourite entertainment characters on product packaging; that they would associate physical prowess with products featuring sporting celebrities; and that playing advergames would engender implicit positive attitudes to products. Through these accounts children verified the art and science of persuasion that informs marketing methods and the investment in integrated strategies that build brand awareness, desire and loyalty (Schultz 2000). The importance of product packaging to attract the attention and interest of children was highlighted by Shee (2008) who reported on a study by Tyson Foods Inc showing 75% of children made food choices based on branding and packaging.

The children's accounts of persuasion effects were largely through third person postulations; in other words that marketing would affect 'other', in particular younger children. When it came to speaking about themselves, most children positioned themselves as able to resist marketing effects. The study by Dixey et al. (2001) of UK children aged 9-11 years also found opinions of resilience against the effects of marketing, in spite of children desiring the marketed foods. The attempts of children in this study to distance themselves from persuasion effects reflects a number of popular discourses on food marketing to children: firstly, that food marketing is a negative influence on children's food choices and health, and secondly, that younger children are more susceptible to the effects of marketing. Food marketing to children has been the subject of extensive public debate in Australia dating back to 2002, with much of the media discussion focussed on the extent to which marketing exerts a detrimental effect on children's food choices and health (Udell and Mehta 2008). To this extent, it can be said that an anti-marketing discourse is prevalent and it is not surprising that children

perceive their agency and power to come from resisting food marketing, as resistance is one of the ways in which children express their agency in relation to food (Roberts 2006; Rawlins 2008). Children's attempts to distinguish resilience as a factor of age and maturity are consistent with the discourse on age-related cognitive defence and the special vulnerabilities of younger children (APA 2004). While the children in this study positioned themselves as 'resistant' to the effects of marketing, their parents were less sanguine about this in their accounts of marketing effects, thus verifying Livingstone and Helsper's (2006) conclusion that cognitive defence does not protect children from persuasion effects.

Of interest also in this study were the children's accounts of claims about nutrition and health. They expressed cynicism about the veracity of the claims, but nevertheless used the claims to their advantage when persuading their parents to purchase the products. While children's pestering of their parents to purchase products begins from a young age, their persuasion skills are known to get more sophisticated and effective with maturity and the development of social and cognitive skills (Ebster, Wagner et al. 2009). It is important not to assume that the cynicism expressed by children is equivalent to cognition or understanding, because children are known to be confused by health claims on labels (Lewis 2006). Children's understanding of health and nutrition claims, and how this influences their consumption behaviour, are areas for further investigation.

In their accounts of how marketing influenced their food choices and purchase behaviour, the children in this study exemplified common understandings of the 'child consumer' (Langer 2002; Staunton 2008). They displayed brand consciousness to the extent that they preferred branded products over unbranded (home-brand) products. The fact that branded products are marketed more than unbranded products made them more known to the children and gave them greater status vis-a-vis reliability and quality. Peer acceptance played an important role in their brand awareness and consumer behaviour; in situations with peers and in particular peers whom they wanted to impress, the children preferred branded products over unbranded products. Engagement with brands and commodities is known to play an important part in children's need for inclusion with and respect from their peer groups (Pugh 2009). Some children in this study 'correctly' interpreted that child-oriented products were specifically made for them, and reported that this made them feel 'special' and conferred a sense of power and autonomy to them as consumers. In this way, not only did children consume the product, but they also 'consumed the marketing' as a symbol of status and power (Baudrillard 2006).

In the same way that they positioned themselves as resistant to marketing tactics, the children also positioned themselves as resistant to the influence of branding**,** suggesting a kind of compliance with popular 'anti-marketing' and anti-consumerism' discourses (Eckersley 2006).

Children's misconceptions about the nutritional quality of branded and unbranded products was an interesting finding in relation to brand awareness. Some children regarded unbranded products to be inferior to branded products because they contained less of the 'tasty' ingredients, such as sugar, salt and fat; this construct was then extended to infer that unbranded foods were 'healthier' than branded foods. While this perception of branded and unbranded foods is fundamentally flawed, because most home brand products are nutritionally similar to branded products and there is no consistent taste difference between branded and home-brand products (Gatto 2010), the children's perceptions indicated some expected and unexpected conceptualisations. Firstly, they demonstrated a basic comprehension of food science and the role of ingredients – to the extent that sugar, salt and fat are the principle ingredients that confer 'tastiness' to foods; secondly that taste is a driver of food choice (Hart, Bishop et al. 2002; Sobal, Bisogni et al. 2006); and thirdly, that salt, fat and sugar are nutrients of concern from a health point of view (Kellett, Smith et al. 1998). The misconception about branded and unbranded foods deserves further research to fully understand the extent to which children understand the information communicated via food product labels. Children's understanding of the nutritional quality of food products should be of interest to health policy-makers and nutrition practitioners, in the current policy context of nutrition education directed at children to prevent obesity and chronic disease (DHA 2003; NPHT 2009). Studies have shown that children as young as four years of age have a rudimentary understanding of nutrition, to the extent that fat, salt and sugar are unhealthy and should be eaten more sparingly, and that fruits and vegetables are healthy and should be eaten regularly (Lytle, Eldridge et al. 1997; Dixey, Sahota et al. 2001). Nevertheless, younger children (pre-schoolers) are known to have difficulty understanding more abstract concepts such as, the need to eat a variety of foods, diet-health link, and eating in moderation, whereas older children are more able to grasp these concepts (Lytle, Eldridge et al. 1997; Dixey, Sahota et al. 2001; Hart, Bishop et al. 2002).

Children's nutrition knowledge has been associated with parental style in relation to food rules. Children have been shown to have better nutrition knowledge with prescriptive

(focussing on foods to have) rules, rather than restrictive (focussing on foods to avoid) rules (Hart, Bishop et al. 2002). The parents in this study were strong regulators of their children's diets, which would explain the reasonable understanding of nutrition and health displayed by the children, notwithstanding their confusion over the nutritional attributes of branded and unbranded foods. Despite the children's basic understanding of nutrition, both parents and children confirmed the children's preference for EDNP foods, with the parents attributing this in part to the persuasive effects of marketing. There is considerable empirical research that asserts children's preference for EDNP foods for many reasons, including that they taste better than healthy foods (Dixey, Sahota et al. 2001; Roberts 2006; Pettigrew and Roberts 2007; Pocock, Trivedi et al. 2010). Children's desire and preference for EDNP foods, in spite of their cognizance of healthy foods and the importance of healthy eating, can be explained in terms of personal taste preference, and also their expression of agency through resisting health discourses (Dixey, Sahota et al. 2001; Rawlins 2008).

The children's reports on consumption behaviour for foods they desired followed the same trajectory as an earlier study by Mehta et al. (2010d) of children's perceptions of advertising. That is, they made purchase requests to parents (principally mothers), and they made autonomous purchases of foods at shops near their homes or schools. Most children in this study perceived their parents to refuse purchase requests. Children understood the reasons behind parental refusal of or acquiescence to purchase requests to be related to a number of factors including the nutritional quality of foods, parental mood, children's fulfilment of domestic duties and cost or money available. The children generally accepted their parents' refusal of purchase requests with what seemed like resignation and sometimes made further attempts at 'pester power' if they really wanted the product. Children's acceptance of parental refusal and general compliance with parental food rules have been found in other studies (Marshall, O'Donohoe et al. 2007; Mehta, Coveney et al. 2010d), and have been associated with authoritative parenting style (Brophy 1977). While the children perceived their parents to mostly refuse their purchase requests, parents had a different perception of this situation. They reported giving considerable thought to their children's food desires - they reflected deeply on their decisions and sometimes felt conflicted between refusal and acquiescence. This depiction of negotiations between the 'asking' child and the 'governing' parent reflect the power relations within families which are central to the food experience and which shape the identities of both parents and children (James, Kjøholt et al. 2009).

### 5.5.2: Parents as consumers

As the purchasers of their children's foods, the parents in this study embodied neo-liberal principles of reflexivity and self-responsibility, to the extent that their purchase decisions were 'conscious, intentional and accountable' and they reflected deeply on the long-term effects of their present decisions. They responded to marketing that their children were attracted to in one of two ways - they resisted it or they were persuaded by it. Consistent with their diligent regulation of children's food choices, some parents resisted buying child-oriented food products mainly on nutritional grounds, but also as an ethical stand against marketing. When they decided to purchase child-oriented products, they did so because: firstly, they knew their child would prefer the product (over one that was not marketed to children) and therefore they were more confident that the food would be consumed (thereby avoiding wastage); secondly, these products were used as 'special treats' to symbolise parental love and care; thirdly, they recognised the importance of children fitting in with peers; fourthly, they wanted to avoid conflict; and fifthly, in recognition of children's rights to participate in consumer culture through acts of consumption. Other empirical research has also shown high levels of parental reflexivity over the conflicting goals of children's physical health (nutrition) and psychological health (peer inclusion, autonomy and pleasure), in relation to food consumption (Pettigrew and Roberts 2006; Roberts 2006; Turner, Kelly et al. 2006; Cook 2009; Pugh 2009). Parents, particularly those on low incomes are known to manage their limited budgets wisely by selecting foods they are confident will be eaten by children and therefore not wasted (Charles and Kerr 1988; Hitchman, Christie et al. 2002; Fox and Smith 2011). Highly processed foods are 'good value for money' for people on low incomes because they provide cheap and tasty calories (compared to unprocessed foods), and they are desirable because they are marketed and therefore most likely to be consumed by children and not wasted (Drewnowski and Specter 2004). This illustrates the complexity of parental food purchase decisions that take into account a multitude of factors, including nutrition, finance, wastage, social inclusion and personal preference.

One justification used by parents in this study to purchase child-oriented products, or acquiesce to children's purchase requests (which were mainly for marketed and EDNP foods), was to call them 'treats', conferring on these foods the status of 'special', 'sometimes' and 'fun' foods. In fact the idea of treats was a paradoxical one for these parents who were simultaneously strong advocates of healthy eating, and strong advocates of treats as an

essential and regular (sometimes daily) part of a normal child's diet. Their relationship with treats was far from straightforward, and some parents expressed inner conflict with their practice of using food as treats, and thereby teaching children to associate emotions with foods. Pugh's (2009) research highlights the power of consumption as a metaphor for parental love and care of children, and food treats for children are known to represent complex rationalisations on the part of parents, encompassing love, guilt and pragmatics (Noble 2006; Turner, Kelly et al. 2006). The subject of parenting and food treats requires further research to understand how parents account for the practice of food treats within their responsibilities for ensuring that their children eat a healthy diet.

### 5.5.3: Summary

In summary, in this study the children's responses as consumers of marketing demonstrate the strong 'social' power of marketing vis-a-vis children's sense of belonging within society and their peer group. Their sophisticated use of claims in their persuasion attempts with parents, their perception of themselves as resilient, and their confusion about the nutritional benefits of branded and unbranded foods, suggest a complex and paradoxical mix of naïve as well as savvy consumer. Parents also were enmeshed in a complex relationship with marketing as primary purchasers of their children's food; they both resisted marketing for ethical reasons and engaged with it for pragmatic reasons. Their relationship with food as treats was emblematic of the complex rationalities involved in parenting and regulating children's diets.

# Chapter 6: Conclusion

This doctoral research set out to explore parents' and children's perceptions of food marketing – their awareness of, responses to, and opinions about food marketing – to which children are exposed.

Overall, parents and children in this study showed themselves to be highly aware about the business of food marketing, namely the promotion of primarily EDNP foods. They were however less aware about the extent of food marketing on non-broadcast media, and particularly on media associated with children's new leisure (for example, the Internet). Both parents and children were concerned about the effects of EDNP food marketing on children's food preferences and ultimately on their nutrition and health status. Some of them were also concerned about the unethical nature of EDNP food marketing.

Parents' and children's perceptions of food marketing were contextualised within modern neo-liberal society, which meant that for them marketing was a normal part of life, and responsibility for regulating the adverse effects of EDNP food marketing fell to individuals, principally parents. This conceptualisation of responsibility worked well for the regulation of children's diets where parent's had strong control of what children ate (from the home), but became much weaker when applied to the regulation of children's exposure to marketing on new media, because parents were far less involved in this aspect of their children's lives. Notwithstanding the dominant discourse of neo-liberalism, both parents and children problematised the marketing of EDNP foods as both an individual and social problem. Both groups understood that the types of foods marketed and the techniques used, carried risks for children's nutritional health and wellbeing. While parents accepted primary responsibility for mitigating the adverse effects of marketing, they also saw a role for government regulation to control the unhealthy practices of food corporations. The paradox of individualising social problems that emerges out of a neo-liberal discourse, typifies the policy stalemate that Australia finds itself in, whereby the health risks of EDNP food marketing are well understood by policy-makers, but the overriding political climate favours individual regulation over government regulation.

Parents in this study were particularly concerned about the influential power as well as the ethics of particular marketing techniques used on the Internet and product packaging. This

included product placement and viral marketing on the Internet, and cartoon characters, celebrities, premiums and movie tie-ins on product packages. The World Health Organisation global strategy on prevention of non-communicable diseases (2010) identifies the power of marketing techniques for EDNP foods as problematic and requiring restriction.

In this study the children's responses as consumers of marketing demonstrate the strong 'social' power of marketing vis-a-vis children's sense of belonging within society and their peer group. Their sophisticated use of claims in their persuasion attempts with parents, their perception of themselves as resilient to branded marketing in spite of valuing and desiring these products, and their confusion about the nutritional benefits of branded and unbranded foods, suggest a complex and paradoxical mix of naïve as well as savvy consumers. From a public health policy perspective, it cannot be assumed that children over the age of eight years have sufficient cognitive or behavioural defence against food marketing. Parents also were enmeshed in a complex relationship with marketing as primary purchasers of their children's food; they both resisted marketing for ethical reasons and engaged with it for pragmatic reasons. Their relationship with EDNP foods as treats was emblematic of the complex rationalities involved in parenting and regulating children's diets. The social power of brands and the normative use of commodified goods to show love and care, reveal parents' own vulnerabilities to marketing persuasion. This raises concerns about the widely held neo-liberal assumption that it is parents' responsibility to mitigate the adverse effects of marketing EDNP foods on their children's food choices and nutritional health.

This research can make a positive contribution to the current policy debate in Australia on restricting children's exposure to EDNP food marketing, by showing the perspectives of parents and children on some of the central elements of the debate, namely ethics, responsibility and regulation.

Areas for further investigation raised by this research include: how parents conceptualise and regulate EDNP foods and treats in children's diets; and children's conceptualisations of branded and non-branded foods. Future research with children should explore less abstract and more projective and creative methods of investigation.

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# Appendices

Appendix 1: Information sheet for potential participants

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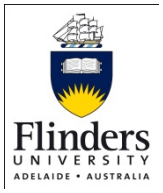
## Appendix 1: Information sheet for potential participants

# Research on parents' and children's experiences of food and drink marketing directed at children.




Why are we doing this research?

Overweight and obesity have been increasing in Australia. The marketing of unhealthy foods and drinks to children, is one of many causes of overweight and obesity. The views of parents and children will be important in assisting governments to develop the best strategies to tackle childhood overweight and obesity.

How will the research be conducted?

This research project will interview one parent and one child (aged 8 to 12 years) from 50 families, about their experience of food and drink marketing directed at children. The interviews will be conducted face-to-face or over the telephone (for rural participants only), and should last between 30 - 60 minutes for each participant (parent and child).

The interviews will be conducted by the Research Officer, Kaye Mehta, who is a doctoral student with the Department of Public Health at Flinders University. Kaye will ask a series of questions to each parent and child separately. The interviews are voluntary and participants are free to refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the interview entirely. The interviews will be taped to assist with accurate recording and analysis of the information provided. A small gift of $35.00 will be given to each family as a token of appreciation for participating in the interview. The information provided will be treated with the utmost confidence, and participants will not be identified in any reports or publications about this research.

Who is funding this research?

The South Australian Health Department is funding this research.

What will be the outcomes of the research?
The interviews will be transcribed and analysed. The results will be published in a variety of forms, as a thesis, as a report to SA Health, as information to the public, in academic journals and at conferences. A copy of the research findings will be available to you on request.

How will this research benefit the wider community?
This research will help the South Australian government to better understand how food and drinks are marketed to children, and what regulations are needed to protect children. This may be an important strategy to prevent childhood overweight and obesity.

Are there any risks to me and my child in taking part in this research?
We consider there to be negligible risks, as you will simply be talking about your experiences with food and drink marketing directed at children.

For more information about the research project, please contact:
Professor John Coveney, Department of Public Health, Flinders University.
Phone: 08 8204 5862, E-Mail: john.coveney@flinders.edu.au

## Appendix 2: Demographic survey

# Children and Food Marketing

This questionnaire collects information about you and your child. Please read and answer every question. All information provided will be treated in strict confidence and will not be made available to any other source.

Please complete this survey before your interview and keep it for collection. If you are not able to answer any of the questions, or need clarification, we can assist you at the interview. Please tick the correct box and write information on the line provided.

**About You**

1. Your name: _____

2. Are you: **Male** ☐ **Female** ☐

3, Postcode: _____

4. Your age:

| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 18 - 24 | 25 - 29 | 30 - 34 | 35 - 39 | 40 - 44 | 45 - 49 | 50 - 54 | 55+ |

5. Your marital status:

| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Never married | Defacto or live together | Married | Separated or divorced | Widowed | Other |

6. Your Schooling or post-school qualifications:

| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Year 10 or less | Year 12 | Diploma or certificate from a college or TAFE, including an apprenticeship | A degree or diploma from a University | None of these |

7. Your household's combined annual income, from all sources, before tax:

| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Under $30 000 | $30 -59 000 | $60 - 89 000 | $90 000+ | No Answer |

---

Office Use Only:

Code _____ Date of Interview / /

**About Your Household**

8. How many children aged 0-17 years, live in your household ?:

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6+ ☐ No Answer

9. Into which age groups do these children belong?: (write number of children under each category)

| 0-4 yo | 5-7 yo | 8-12 yo | 13-17 yo | No Answer |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |

10. How many televisions sets do you have in this household?:

☐ None ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 or more ☐ No Answer

11. How many computers do you have in this household?:

☐ None ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 or more ☐ No Answer

12. How many video game consoles (for example, XBox, Nintendo or Playstation) do you have in this household?:

☐ None ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 or more ☐ No Answer

**About Your Child (who will be participating in this survey)**

13. Child's name:_____

14. Are they: Male ☐ Female ☐

15. Child's Age

☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10 ☐ 11 ☐ 12

16. Your relationship to the child

☐ Mother ☐ Father ☐ Step-mother ☐ Step-father ☐ Carer/Guardian ☐ No Answer

17. Does he/she live with you for at least 50% of the time?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ No Answer

18. Does he/she have their own television

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ No Answer

19. If answered yes, is it located in their bedroom

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ No Answer

20. Does he/she have their own computer

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ No Answer

21. If answered yes, is it located in their bedroom

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ No Answer

22. Does he/she have their own video game console?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ No Answer

23. If answered yes, is it located in their bedroom?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ No Answer

24. Does he/she have their own mobile phone?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ No Answer

25. Does your child participate in any sporting or recreational activities, or does he/she belong to a club?

☐ Sporting club? ☐ Recreational club? ☐ Social Club? ☐ Other Please specify _____

26. Does he/she have access to children's magazines (for example DMag or KidZone)?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ No Answer

**Thank you for your participation in this survey.**

**Your questionnaire will be collected at the time of your interview.**

## Appendix 3: Child-friendly pamphlet

This is a prototype and does not resemble the actual pamphlet.

**1. Food and Drink Advertising to Children Research Project**

We want to know what children aged between 8 and 12 years, think about food and drink advertising.

The research will be done by Kaye Mehta from Flinders University.

We hope this pamphlet answers your questions about the research project.

**2. Why this research?**

Companies spend lots of money advertising their products. This research project wants to find out how food and drink companies advertise their products to children. Your opinions will help us to understand more about how advertising works.

**What questions will the research**

We will ask you about Food and Drink Advertising that you may have noticed, in some areas such as, school, sports, computer, video games, mobile phones, television programs, movies, DVD's, kids magazines, supermarkets, and on the street.

**How will the research be done?**

You will be interviewed by the researcher, Kaye Mehta.

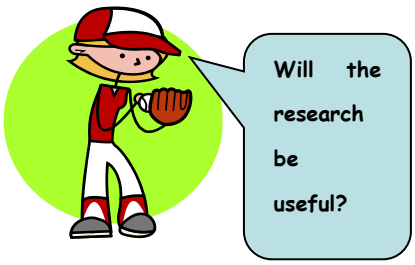
The interview should last about 30 – 45 minutes.

She will record the interview on a tape recorder to analyse your comments and write a report.

4


- You decide if you want to take part or not.
- Even if you say "yes", you can change your mind at any time.
- Your parent will be present during the interview.
- During the interview, you can tell Kaye if you want to stop or have a break.
- You don't have to answer all the questions and you don't have to tell her anything that you don't want to.
- If you feel uncomfortable at any stage, you can tell your parent or Kaye about it.

5




We will produce a report that will tell the South Australian government what children think about food and drink advertising.

**Who will know if I am in the research?**

Kaye Mehta will know that you are in the research. She will not tell anyone what you have said.

She might break this promise if she thinks someone might be at risk of getting hurt. If so, she will talk to you first about the best thing to do.

In the report, your name will be changed so that no one will know what you have said.

The tapes of the interview will be stored in a safe place.

**6. Will I know the research results?**

A Short Report of the research findings will be sent to you and your parent if you would like it.

**Other project details**

This Research is funded by the South Australian Department of Health.

**If you do decide to take part,**

**please keep this pamphlet and**

**bring it with you on the day of interview.**

For more information contact the Chief Researcher:

Associate Professor John Coveney

Department of Public Health, Flinders University

Ph: 8204 5862

E-Mail:

john.coveney@flinders.edu.au

**Appendix 4: Children's activity sheet**

## Food and Drink Advertising Project

# DETECTIVE TASK

Dear ……. I will be coming to speak with you about food and drink advertising, very soon. To get ready for our chat, can you please be a detective and see how much food and drink advertising you can find.

I have listed some common **activities**, and would like you to write or draw, any food and drink ads, that you have seen or heard, next to the activity.

Food and drink ads can be **pictures**…




**Songs**…

**Competitions**


And much **more**…

| Activity | What food and drink ads have you seen or heard? |
|---|---|
| **At school** - learning, playing, being active | |
| **Playing sport and being active,** for example swimming, dance, cricket, netball | |
| **Using the computer for** games, chatting on-line, browsing information, listening to music | |
| **Playing video games** on Nintendo, Playstation, Wii | |
| **Watching movies** | |
| **Reading magazines** | |
| **Shopping at the supermarket** | |
| **Receiving information at home** for example fast food company brochures | |
| **Riding in cars, buses, trains** | |

Thank you, Kaye

## Appendix 5: Interview Schedules Round 1 and 2 with Parents

### Round 1: Interview Schedule Parents

Introduction preamble not described here.

1. For a start, we use a number of terms that have similar meanings and I wonder which term you are most comfortable with, between – 'advertising, marketing or promoting' food and drinks to children?

2. Can you tell me what you notice as the different ways that food and drink companies (advertise) their products to children?

3. Has advertising of food and drinks changed much since you were a child? In what ways?

Now I want to go through the different activities that […….. ] engages in over a typical week and I would like you to tell me about the kinds of food and drink advertising that you think, […….. ] would be exposed to. I am using a broad definition of advertising that includes pictures, words, images, sounds, music, games, competitions, give-aways, activities, logos, packaging, pricing, samples, special offers, meal deals etc

4. Go through child activities and explore what marketing parents are aware of:

   School, sport, computer, videogames, television programs, movies, children's magazines, supermarket and neighbourhood.

5. Is your child […..] affected in any way by advertising/marketing of food and drinks? In what ways? What effects do you see? Do you experience the effects of advertising/marketing in any way? What are some things you do to manage the effects of advertising/marketing?

6. Overall how much of a problem do you think advertising/marketing of unhealthy food and drinks to children is? (Serious problem – moderately serious – insignificant problem). In what ways is it a problem?

7. Do you think that advertising/marketing of unhealthy food and drinks to children should be restricted or reduced?

**Round 2: Interview Schedule Parents**

Introduction preamble not described here.

1. Responsibility

i. Who do you see as having responsibility for ensuring that children's diets are not negatively/adversely effected by food and beverage marketing?
ii. Lets look at different but related situation, for example, who's responsibility is it to protect children from exposure to sex and violence on TV?
iii. How do you personally minimize the effects of unhealthy food marketing on your child?
iv. What are the things that get in the way of you exercising your responsibilities?
v. How do you feel about these parental responsibilities?
vi. How well do you think parents in general, are doing in relation to protecting their children from the harmful effects of 'junk food' marketing?
vii. What do you see as children's responsibilities in this scenario?
viii. What are the responsibilities of food and beverage companies? marketing companies?, government?

ix. What do you see as your rights in this situation?

x. What do you see as your children's rights?

xi. What are the rights of food and beverage companies?

2. EDNP foods and regulation

i. Why do you think fast food is so prominent in people's minds?

ii. If fast food represents 'unhealthy foods' , why aren't other foods mentioned as often eg. Chips, crisps, soft drinks, chocolates, biscuits?
iii. Why do you think people link unhealthy foods with treats?
iv. Why aren't healthy foods regarded as treats?
v. How does this 'thinking framework' help parenting and regulation of children's eating?
vi. How do you think this effect children's learning about healthy eating?
vii. Why do you think the allowing of treats sometimes creates inner tensions for parents?
viii. Are there other areas of parenting where similar tensions are experienced eg. allowing children to watch particular Tv programs, play computer games, go out with friends, purchase personal product ....?

3. Children's interactions in family food and drink activities

i. How does your child/children participate in family food decisions– food purchases, meals, eating out?
ii. In your experience, how do your child/children's purchase requests for food items change with age?
iii. Do you take your child/children supermarket shopping with you? Why do you do/not do this?

4. Parental awareness of marketing

i. How would you rate your awareness of marketing via the Internet, videogames, children's magazines, movies and TV programs (this is not advertising but product placement)?
ii. How do you feel about marketing you are not aware of?
iii. I want to know what you think about certain types of marketing that are becoming more common - (a), product placement in computer games and videogames and (b) Product packaging depicting 'cartoon characters, celebrity figures, claims about health or nutrition'
iv. Do you purchase 'kids products'? Why/why not?

## Appendix 6: Interview Schedules Round 1 and 2 with Children

### Round 1: Interview Schedule Children

Introduction preamble not described here.

1. What are the different ways that food and drink companies could advertise their products to children?

2. Have you noticed or seen any of the types of food and drink advertisements that you have mentioned?

3. What food and drink ads have you noticed in: School, sport, computer, videogames, television programs, movies, children's magazines, supermarket and neighbourhood?

4. When you see (examples ads/marketing)…… do you consider this to be advertising?

5. What do you think when you come across these ads? What do you feel like doing? What do you actually do?

6. When you think about the food and drink advertising we have talked about, do you think it is mostly for healthy or unhealthy foods and drinks?

7. Do you think there is a lot or a little bit of food and drink advertising to children?

8. Would you say that there is anything wrong with the food and drink advertising we have talked about? Why do you say this? (if problematic) how should this be changed?

**Round 2: Interview Schedule Children**

Introduction preamble not described here.

Marketing

1. I would like to show you some examples of advertising and ask your opinion about them - (a), product placement in computer games and videogames and (b) Product packaging depicting 'cartoon characters, celebrity figures, claims about health or nutrition'
   i. How do you think this kind of advertising works? What goes through the mind of a child who sees it?
   ii. Internet – do you think there is any difference in the way product placement or advergames work/affect children?
   iii. Supermarket – how do the different techniques affect children?
   iv. Have you noticed this type of advertising? Have you been affected/influenced by it?
   v. What type of child would be most influenced by this type of advertising?
   vi. Do you like this kind of advertising? Do you think it is a good thing?
   vii. Which type of advertising has a stronger effect on children – Internet or supermarket packaging?

Child consumer

2. Lets talk about children and buying food products. Pick a food product that child mentioned earlier.

So, if we create an imaginary situation where a child is invited to a 'friend's house', and is asked to bring (X food):

   i. Would it matter to the child if they brought a named brand or a home brand version of X?
   ii. What would the friends think about the person if they brought a branded version or a home brand version?
   iii. Would the friends prefer a branded or home brand version?
   iv. Under what circumstances would it matter if a child brought branded or home brand – eg. taking food to a party? school lunch box? giving a present of chocolate or lollies? serving foods to friends who come to their house?
   v. Would the brand matter more/less if the child was with old friends or new friends; friends who were very rich? Friends who were not so rich?
   vi. Is there a difference between children who prefer/use branded and home brand products?
   vii. Would the same rules apply to other food products?
   viii. What about if a child was to bring some ….in their 'lunch box' to school; what would their friends think if they brought a branded or home brand version?
   ix. Do you have a preference for branded or home brand versions of foods and drinks?

Lets imagine that on a particular day, you really want (X food):

   i. How you go about getting it?
   ii. If purchase *independently* – where do they usually purchase? when did they start to purchase themselves? how often? how much are they willing to pay? where do they

get the money from, do they need to consult parents before purchasing, do their parents approve of the purchase, how do they negotiate difference

iii. If they make *purchase requests* – how do you go about asking? when, where, how often,
iv. How do your parents normally react/respond when you ask them for X product? – what are their reasons for agreeing to purchase/refusing to purchase? How often do they agree/refuse?
v. How do you feel when your parents say "No"?; what do you do about it?
vi. If you decide to ask your parents for a product, do you involve your (*brothers or sisters)* in any way? For example some children have told us that they get their younger brother or sister to ask for the product because their parent is more likely to say "yes" to a younger child…

Responsibility

3. So if we think about food and drink companies, they advertise their products to children in order to sell them and make money.
   i. Do you think that as well as making money, food and drink companies also need to care about children's health and wellbeing?
   ii. If child says 'yes' – in what ways do you think food and drink companies can show that they care for children
   iii. Do you think they are doing this, explore to what extent and the reasons

   iv. When it comes to helping children make healthy food choices, who else has responsibility – parents, children, teachers
   v. What responsibility does a child have to make sure they eat a healthy diet? Why should they take responsibility? How easy is it for children to take responsibility?

Governance

4. If you were the president for a day where you had the power to change anything you wanted to about 'advertising food and drinks to children'
   i. What would you change? Why?
   ii. Would it make a difference to children's lives?
   iii. Do you think your parents would choose to do something different? What and why? - explore difference –why would parents' and children's choices be different
   iv. Do you think your friends would choose to do something different? What and why?