



Discussing School Commercialization:
A Focus Group Report about Kansans' Views of Corporate Advertising
in Public and Private Schools

A FrameWorks Research Report

Prepared for the FrameWorks Institute
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Introduction

This report recounts findings from focus groups conducted for the FrameWorks Institute as part of a multi-method investigation into how Kansans think about commercialization in public schools and what communication efforts are needed to help make schools commercial free zones. In collaborating with the FrameWorks Institute, the Bovitz Research Group incorporated a Strategic Frame Analysis™ perspective into the development and analysis of this qualitative research.

Frames are “organizing principles that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world.”¹ How citizens think about commercialization in schools is invariably affected by such frames. The FrameWorks Institute, on behalf of Kansas Action for Children, previously conducted a media content analysis study to examine how the topic of school commercialization is presented in Kansas’ newspapers.² This analysis showed how newspaper coverage often obscures harmful effects associated with school commercialization and inhibits discourse about public solutions to the challenge of school funding. Further research by the FrameWorks Institute, also on behalf of Kansas Action for Children, utilized a cognitive approach with one-on-one in-depth interviews to show how default patterns of reasoning prevent citizens from recognizing school commercialization as a potential problem for their communities.³ This cognitive research also suggests alternative frames that could be developed as the basis for effective messaging for advocates concerned about school commercialization.

The alternative frames implied in the cognitive research were fleshed out by the FrameWorks Institute so that they could be tested qualitatively in the focus group phase reported here. These frames are designated as (1) the Unwanted Influences/Toxic Influences Frame; (2) the Schools as Protective Space Frame; and (3) the Harmful Marketing Frame.

The Unwanted Influences Frame seeks to move citizens past the default assumption that school commercialization is not a problem by raising awareness of the real and potential harm for child development associated with advertising and consumerism in the school environment. The basis for pursuing this frame as a potential communication opportunity is the hypothesis articulated in the cognitive elicitations research that, in an environment where advertising is ubiquitous and accepted as a “fact of life,” putting forward compelling reasons why school commercialization is in fact harmful can help motivate public support for imposing restrictions. In order to operationalize this idea of harmful effects associated with school commercialization, the execution of this frame as tested in the research focuses on the adverse consequences for both young children’s and adolescents’ healthy development. The focus on the consequences to the development of healthy “brain architecture” is driven both by the academic literature on child

¹ Reese, Gandy, Jr. and Grant. 2001. *Framing Public Life: Perspectives on Media and Our Understanding of the Social World*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum as cited from E-Zine No. 8 “A Five Minute Refresher Course in Framing,” © FrameWorks Institute 2007.

² Aubrun, Brown, Grady, and Emanatian. 2007. *Patterns in Newspaper Coverage of School Commercialization*. © FrameWorks Institute 2007.

³ Aubrun, Brown, Grady, and Scull. 2007. *Keeping our Schools Afloat: Findings From Cognitive Elicitations on School Commercialization in Kansas* © FrameWorks Institute 2007.

and adolescent development and by insights from prior research by the FrameWorks Institute regarding successful frames for communicating children's issues.

The Schools as Protective Space Frame emphasizes the common understanding that schools have an unwavering mission to keep children safe, and therefore the environment must uphold the highest possible standards in terms of what is being let inside. The rationale for exploring this frame is the insight from the cognitive elicitations that people see "...a contradiction between schools' mission and of teaching students critical thinking and healthy living on the one hand, and the reality of bombarding students with advertising and surrounding them with temptations (many of them unhealthy) on the other."⁴ The hypothesis is that if the frame successfully evokes this sense of mission, then people will be more likely to reject the idea of allowing commercial messages in school.

The Harmful Marketing Frame is in some ways an offshoot of Unwanted Influences/Toxic Influences insofar as it seeks to raise awareness of negative consequences associated with school commercialization, but it focuses more on macro public health implications (e.g., the childhood obesity epidemic) rather than on individual child development. This frame is inspired in part by the finding in the media content analysis that coverage of school commercialization was most likely to be critical and portray it as a problem when it revolved around "...the topic of junk food and children's health, particularly as it relates to obesity. Here there were articles that treated some marketers and some marketing as harmful to children, and a few articles that called into question the trade off between the benefits of allowing junk food in the schools and the costs to children's present and future health."⁵ The challenge in executing this frame is that it has the inherent limitation of being somewhat narrow and therefore not necessarily addressing the full scope of the school commercialization issue. Nonetheless, as emphasized in the cognitive elicitations report, the "obesity epidemic"⁶ is a widespread concern and as a result is hypothesized to be a powerful anchor for a broader argument that exposes the potential of harm associated with advertising in schools.

This qualitative research, which involved six focus groups conducted in three Kansas cities, endeavors to enrich the previous work completed by the FrameWorks Institute by assessing the effectiveness of the communication platform set forth for each frame. The frames are exposed to focus group participants in the context of newspaper Op-Ed articles that are strategically crafted to communicate frame elements identified by the FrameWorks Institute (i.e., values, simplifying models, messengers, etc.)⁷, and the results presented here highlight which aspects of the frames as executed in the articles are working and what can be improved.

⁴ Aubrun, Brown, Grady, and Scull 22.

⁵ Aubrun, Brown, Grady, and Emanatian 3.

⁶ Aubrun, Brown, Grady, and Scull 18.

⁷ For more on elements of the frame, see "A Five Minute Refresher Course in Framing, FrameWorks E-Zine #8 at www.frameworksinstitute.org.

Guide to Focus Group Sessions

All focus group sessions were conducted using the discussion guide located in the appendix of this report. Focus group sessions commenced with opening remarks to help establish rapport with the participants. The opening remarks included moderation information, session parameters, participant introductions, and an explanation of the purpose of the focus group. After the moderator's opening remarks, a warm-up exercise was introduced in which participants brainstormed all of the different environments outside the home that affect children in either a positive or negative way (or both). Three separate articles were then provided to participants in a rotated order across groups. The participants read each article, and then were asked to provide open-ended responses regarding what information was new to them. After the moderator provided a brief recap of the articles, participants were posed specific questions about their reactions to the arguments contained in the articles. The participants were next exposed to a closing exercise that attempted to probe questions as to which frame they would likely support, whether they thought "school commercialization" is a good name for the issues raised in the group, whom else they would expect or like to hear from on this issue, and how they would describe to their family and friends what was talked about during the group.

Method

In order to test the three frames, six focus group sessions were conducted in April of 2007. The focus group sessions occurred in three geographically dispersed Kansas cities. The participant demographics and qualifications included the following:

Demographics:

Groups had a mix of:

- Males/Females
- Ages 26-70
- Political Party Affiliation
- Ethnicities
- Education level
- Employment/occupation

Respondent Qualifications:

- Registered voter
- Extremely/very interested in current events/news
- Reads the newspaper three or more times per week
- Belong to two or more groups, such as the PTA, Rotary, neighborhood watch, or groups at their place of worship
- Expressed their opinion by writing a letter to a newspaper, contacted an elected official or spoken publicly about a cause they cared about
- Have not participated in a focus group in the past 12 months

In addition to these core screening requirements, the screener was also set up to facilitate segregating the groups as follows based on experience sending kids to public schools vs. private schools:

- Public School Groups – Half of the participants have a child K-12 enrolled in public school. The other half had a child graduate from public school or do not currently have any children.
- Private School Groups – Half of the participants have a child K-12 with no experience in public school. The other half had a child graduate from private school or do not currently have any children.

The focus group sessions were conducted in the following locations:

Wichita, KS, April 24, 2007

- Private
- Public

Salina, KS, April 25, 2007

- Private
- Public

Kansas City, KS, April 26, 2007

- Private
- Public

David Schaich, Psy.D., moderated all of the focus groups. Throughout this report, focus group participants are noted by their location, gender, and whether they were in a public school or a private school group. The focus group guide and the articles provided to the participants are listed in the Appendix. It should be noted that the focus group guide was changed just slightly after the first group session in Wichita to make the warm-up exercise easier to administer and more engaging for the participants.

Analysis of the Unwanted Influences/Toxic Influences Frame⁸

Prior research by the FrameWorks Institute suggests that the broad public lacks an understanding of the mechanism of how children develop. Absent that understanding, they tend to reason with narrow and incomplete explanations of what children need for healthy development, such as parents being singularly responsible for children's development, safety being the primary concern and discipline the solution to most developmental issues. FrameWorks has established that a critical element of the frame in communicating children's issues is a model or metaphor that provides an explanation of that mechanism of development. That model explains how development happens by invoking the metaphor of the developing *architecture* of the brain. Namely, that the brain's architecture is built over time and, in the case of this particular execution, was intended to show how exposure to advertising at key stages of the formation of that brain architecture is an unwanted influence on children's development.

Capitalizing on these insights regarding public understanding (or, lack thereof) of child development and how to communicate children's issues effectively, the Unwanted Influences/Toxic Influences frame emphasizes that our children's healthy development is put at risk when they are bombarded with product advertising. This may occur both from an early age, when children are too young to understand the motives of commercials, and during adolescence, when advertising can prey on youth's fragile identity development. Since schools should be places that foster development, we should consider limiting the unwanted influences of commercial advertising in schools, so that during school time children are not targets for corporate profits (at the expense of valuable educational time). A faux Op-Ed by a university brain scientist entitled "How Advertising in Schools Hurts Our Kids", as strategically written by the FrameWorks Institute, is how the frame is executed for purposes of testing in this qualitative research.

This research has identified several elements of the execution of the Unwanted Influences/ Toxic Influences frame that appear to be working well:

(1) Participants understood the argument that companies advertise in schools based upon ulterior motives other than an unbiased interest in student education; (2) Some participants were drawn to the frame because they felt that what children are exposed to in school has more influence over them than what they might see outside of school because they are taught by their parents to be particularly attentive in that environment; (3) The scientist (messenger) was generally well received. Each finding is supported by relevant quotes from focus group participants.

Participants understood the argument that companies advertise in schools based upon ulterior motives other than an unbiased interest in student education. This is important insofar as the prior cognitive elicitation research highlighted how desensitized citizens often are to the real reasons why businesses seek access to students through school-based sponsorships, advertising, etc.

⁸ See Article #1 in the Appendix.

I think the advertising industry knows this, and realizes this. If they can learn the ABCs, why not teach them to buy a Snickers' bar. My child actually learned an advertisement jingle around the same age she learned her ABCs. –Male Private, Salina.

I think that he has a good point, and why haven't schools caught on with this quicker? They are educators! Day after day, repeated exposure to something is how kids learn. –Female Private, Salina.

It is about our children, and I want what is best for them. Why would I want to make someone rich at the expense of my child? –Female Public, Kansas City.

I think that what they are saying here is that a kids' judgment is not fully matured, and these advertising maggots have a real advantage on them. –Male Private, Wichita.

A number of participants responded to the argument by expressing the notion that what children are exposed to in school has more influence over them than what they might see outside of school, and this makes advertising in schools particularly problematic. This realization on the part of participants in response to the Unwanted Influences/Toxic Influences Frame dovetails nicely with the findings of the cognitive elicitations study which also introduced the Schools as Protective Spaces Frame as a related messaging opportunity. Children may be more apt to let their guard down and be influenced by advertising messages that are exposed within an environment that is widely understood as having a clear mission to keep them safe.

The problem I have with this type of advertising is that anything that is presented in the schools has a totally different context to the child, because we as parents tell our child to go to school, be respectful, learn, pay attention and get as much as you can. Then we turn around and put something in front of them on the TV that has advertising in it that bears more weight than that very same advertisement has at home during Sunday morning cartoon, simply because that advertisement is being presented in a schoolroom or classroom environment. If that advertisement is there in that environment it does bear more weight. –Male Private, Wichita.

I think the children are also paying more attention to the advertisements during school than they do at home. –Male Private, Wichita.

They have a more captive audience with no parental guidance. Schools should be more responsible. –Female Public, Salina.

The scientist (messenger) was generally well received.

One participant clearly communicated her perspective of the messenger when she stated, *this is very important. She has supported what I couldn't say verbally: that a child's brain is still in development. Even though we want them to be independent thinkers, as parents it is our responsibility to limit their choices. They are not mature enough to make choices, and to do things right. This is powerful. The fact that she is a Ph.D., it adds to her credibility.* –Female Public, Kansas City.

Another participant stated, *I tend to believe with what she wrote about the research because she is a brain scientist.* –Female Private, Salina. She seemed to indicate that the scientist was concerned about the issues because of her accurate knowledge in the subject area.

Others also appeared to place emphasis and respect on the scientist's credibility as a messenger:

I said the scientist and the pediatrician, simply because they have more of an intense education in those fields, [as compared to] the businesswoman, and they are more likely to be able to support their conclusions scientifically. –Male Private, Salina.

I picked the scientist because she spelled out exactly how the brain grows, how it develops, and how is directly affected by all types of advertising at different points. –Female Private, Salina.

The scientist. I liked how she looks at how it can affect their self-esteem, and their mood when they are not living up to their expectations. –Female Public, Salina.

The scientist. She sounded like she knew more of what she was talking about in comparison to the other writers. She knew her field. –Male Private, Wichita.

A number of **Obstacles** (Barriers to Frame) were identified within the execution of the Unwanted Influences/Toxic Influences frame. A review and consideration of these obstacles may be useful for developing communications strategies to assist in overcoming resistance to the frame and the tendency to place the responsibility on parents to combat the influences of in-school marketing.

- Many participants did not appear to understand the argument that older children are just as vulnerable to manipulative advertisements, but in different ways than younger children. A number of participants did not view their older children as susceptible to marketing messages. For example, one participant stated, *I think that kids [teenagers] are a lot smarter than we give them credit for.* –Male Public, Wichita. Another participant stated, *I think that it insults the intelligence of our [older] kids. If she thinks that our kids don't know how to differentiate between what is advertising and what is not...* –Female private, Kansas City. Another participant responded similarly; *I think these articles are pushing the nature vs. nurture theme. They are saying that kids are going to be exploited by anything that you put in front of them. Basically, they are not going to be their own person, that if you put anything in front of them, they will automatically be drawn to these things. I think that this is a little far-fetched.* –Male Private, Wichita.

A related barrier to the frame as executed in the article is that many participants are not even buying into the argument that *younger* children are especially vulnerable to advertisements. For example, one participant stated, *my kids are in fifth grade and younger, and I don't see this. The only things my kids ask for is the box tops so the school can get money from Campbell's soup labels.* –Female public, Wichita. Another participant conveyed that, *you...can teach them [children] early on the exact opposite of what these people [advertising agencies] are trying to say to them, I think they can make their own choices.* –Male Private, Wichita. The execution of the frame could be improved if the

susceptibility of younger children to advertising was emphasized, and if the article clearly explained why susceptibility continues to be a problem with older children.

In the article's explanation of the susceptibility of younger children, it states that: "Children under roughly age 8 are not yet able to understand the motives of commercial advertising....when young children are exposed to a corporate marketing message in school, they learn that message in the same way they learn their educational lesson. An ad telling kids that the latest videogame is necessary for their happiness has the same formative effect on a young child's brain development as a school poster teaching them their ABCs." In addition to this explanation, the article could reference the developmental stages of young children, highlighting ages at which children may be able to detect and understand lies and manipulation.

In explaining how older children can continue to be susceptible to marketing advertisements, the article could give specific examples of how older children are manipulated by the advertisements of harmful products. However, the article only focuses on explaining brain development and the fragile development of the teenage brain, which tends to be lost on some participants. In general, it is important that the communication demonstrates both the high level of susceptibility in young children, and the degree of susceptibility that continues even with older children. Moreover highlighting the impact that advertising has on adults may also be useful in demonstrating its effects on children of various ages.

It is also noteworthy that some participants became defensive and moved to a parental responsibility frame in response to the article. For example, one participant stated, *yes, but they [advertiser] have a few seconds of commercials with them, and I have seven days a week. I can counteract anything they say to them. –Male Private, Wichita.* Another participant commented *...It is a parenting thing, and you have to be able to teach your kids. –Female Public, Salina.* The execution of the frame could be enhanced by expressly communicating the idea that parental guidance is crucial but at the same time is not sufficient to prevent undesirable effects.

- Another barrier to the frame is that many participants felt that advertising in the schools of harmful products was not occurring in their communities. Even though the article was authored by a local individual, many participants did not see the advertisement of harmful products in schools as an actual problem for them. In the execution of the frame, the article did not highlight specific examples in the relevant communities; this led some participants to comment that "this is not going on in my community." For example, one participant stated, *this argument, I just don't see how it applies here, maybe in bigger cities. –Female Public, Salina.*

Other related quotes included:

I never knew that they did the advertising. –Female Public, Wichita.

I agree with how the advertising is affecting the children, but again I don't see it in the actual schools. I see it in the homes and outside. –Male Public, Wichita

I don't understand where they are getting the advertisement in schools. –Female Private, Wichita.

I don't see much advertisement in grade school. –Female Public, Salina.

It all depends on what they mean by advertisement. I'm thinking of corporate advertising. We don't have this. –Female Private, Wichita.

I work in a school, and I've never seen an advertisement there. –Female Public, Salina.

Even when one participant was redirected, he stated, *My kids go to private school, and nothing like this is happening there. –Male Private, Salina.*

When one participant was asked, was there anything in the article that was new, he responded, *No, because I don't see it. –Male Private, Kansas City.*

Citizens need to know that this problem is happening in their communities before they will accept the argument. The following quotes show the desire of many participants to learn about clear examples of this happening at the local school level:

It would be good to have some specific examples, even within one school. What are the things she is talking about? –Female Public, Wichita.

I didn't know the schools could make a deal to include advertising. I guess I need to find out what my school is doing. –Female Public, Wichita.

They do not provide any examples [of advertising to children in schools]. –Male Private, Wichita.

I don't recall seeing any corporate logos or anything like that in gymnasiums, or along the playing fields. As far as I thought, advertising wasn't allowed in schools. –Male Public, Salina.

The prevalence of advertisements within schools allows them to blend into the environment without being consciously noticed, so there may need to be an explanation in the execution of the frame regarding how logos, vending machines, and some corporate-sponsored programs (such as Pizza Hut book drives) are, in fact, advertisements. In the current execution of this frame, many participants did not view these types of marketing campaigns in the same category as more explicit forms of advertising such as a print ad or a television commercial. For example, one participant stated, *some places like Pizza Hut advertise to kids by stating that if you eat there on a certain night of the week, a percentage of the proceeds go towards your school, and I just never thought of that as offensive. –Female public, Wichita.* During a discussion of another article, one participant commented, *It is not a bad thing that McDonalds gives us*

money and provides TVs. It could be a positive thing. Kids may think, hey when I grow up I want to work for a corporation that does good things. You don't have to look at it in a negative way. –Female private, Wichita. Another participant stated, *I know they have McDonald's Day because the schools get money, and it [the money] goes towards educational things. –Female private, Kansas City.*

- For a number of participants, the article appeared to include too much jargon. Participants had to be stimulated during group discussions in some cases by having the moderator offer simple definitions. For example, participants appeared to respond better when media literacy was re-defined by the moderator as “educational courses to teach children the real motives of marketing companies.”

For example, one participant stated, *It is very hard to read. I don't know where she is going with this. The only thing I got out of this is that we don't want advertisements in our schools. But we can't keep them away from TVs, billboards, and things like that. – Male Public, Salina.*

Another participant queried, *What is she talking about...? –Female Public, Salina.*

In summary, response to this execution of the frame indicates that Kansans made the connection that companies have ulterior motives when advertising in schools. Given what the prior research found regarding the difficulty with overcoming the Ubiquity in Advertising frame (that advertising is a fact of life and relatively harmless), this is no small outcome. Additionally, many participants were sensitive to the idea that advertising exposed within the school environment can be particularly influential on children. The messenger (scientist) of this frame was also generally well received. However, some aspects of the execution of the frame appeared difficult for many participants to accept. Some participants did not appear to understand that older children continue to be susceptible to advertisements, or how especially vulnerable young children are to marketing messages. In the current execution of the frame, some participants became defensive and moved to a personal responsibility stance; participants claimed that a child's susceptibility to advertising can be prevented by parental guidance.

Another barrier to the frame was that many participants seemed to feel that advertising of harmful products in the schools was not occurring in their communities. For the argument to be more effective, citizens need to be shown that this problem is happening in their communities. This is in line with what earlier research identified, namely, that commercialism in schools is “not a topic” in Kansans' minds. “While they may have heard something about the vending machine issue, or some other particular controversy, the broader question of the increasing presence of commercial activity in schools is not a coherent *topic* in people's minds, not an idea they have heard about, not an organizing principle that could help them think about particular cases.”⁹ Moreover, there may need to be an explanation of how certain types of marketing efforts currently in the schools (Pizza Hut's book drive) are, in fact, advertisements of harmful products.

⁹ Aubrun, Brown, Grady, and Scull 2.

Analysis of the Schools as Protective Space Frame¹⁰

Prior research by the FrameWorks Institute suggests that citizens generally share a common belief that schools should be protected spaces where children are physically safe. However, the idea of protecting children from commercialization in schools is not top of mind due to the default understanding of advertising as ubiquitous and of limited import in terms of its influence upon young and adolescent children. As the cognitive elicitation research demonstrated, once people are aware of potential harmful effects associated with advertising in schools then they readily move toward a position of wanting to protect children from such influences within the school environment.

The foundation of the Schools as Protected Space Frame is this insight from prior work that citizens have the instinct to make schools a protected environment but do not necessarily recognize why it would be important to protect students from advertising in schools. The rationale of this frame is to reinforce the notion that shielding students within the school environment from harmful influences is paramount to the mission of public schools *and* to make the case that we have the responsibility to proactively regulate all entities seeking any influence—including businesses that provide corporate funding.

An additional key component of this frame is that it explores the communication benefits associated with more of a “middle ground” solution that may allow *some* corporate funding as long as that funding is approved by responsible managers. This is in contrast to the message implicit in the other frames tested here that argue more strongly that *all* advertising in schools should be removed. One key reason why this frame incorporates this idea of a responsible manager that allows for some corporate funding is to acknowledge the insights from the prior research (media content analysis and cognitive elicitation) which show how businesses are very commonly portrayed and perceived as extremely positive local entities that are natural partners for local schools. Based on this strong default belief, a frame that does not allow for some middle ground may be too extreme to change the way people think about the issue.

A faux Op-Ed by a mother and businesswoman entitled “When Business is a Bad Strategy for Schools”, as strategically written by the FrameWorks Institute, is how the Schools as Protected Space Frame is executed for purposes of testing in this qualitative research.

The focus group research has identified several elements of the execution of the Schools as Protective Space Frame that appear to be working well:

(1) The article stimulated a conversation that prompted many participants to be concerned with advertisements in their schools; (2) Participants agreed that we need responsible managers in the schools to monitor what advertising is permitted; (3) While many participants viewed corporate advertising as inevitable, they wanted it to be only from positive products and brands; (4) Some participants were not happy with lost educational time; (5) The mother-businesswoman was positively received by most participants as the messenger. Each finding is supported by relevant quotes from focus group participants.

¹⁰ See Article #2 in the Appendix.

The article stimulated a conversation that prompted many participants to be concerned with advertisements in their schools. This is significant given the obstacles identified in earlier research that many individuals revert to the Ubiquity in Advertising Frame, and the related implication that children should be taught to choose wisely. The article stimulated a dialogue that allowed many participants to move beyond a default acceptance of the notions that (a) advertising is just a fact of life and (b) children can easily ignore it so there is really no harm.

For example, one participant said, *If schools have this advertisement, then our kids will think that this is okay also, and that it is what they should believe in. This hits the point that you can't really trust your school system. -Male Private, Salina.* Another participant noted, *I don't like that one bit. I don't think that businesses belong in the schools in that sense. -Male Private, Salina.*

Similarly, *The last sentence almost sums it up. When you confuse the goals of the marketplace with the common good goals of the schools you are heading for trouble. Look at the statistics of the kids that have those Xbox games and they go out and kill people. It is obvious that it influences them. -Female Private, Salina.*

Another participant conveyed, *I think that schools need to stop taking money from places like pop companies, chip companies, and vending companies, even if it does give them the money to build things. The cost is too high. Schools do have a captive audience, especially when you have an eight year old that sees a Coke machine outside her classroom every day. You tell your kids that pop is not good for you, but then they see that Coke machine sitting outside right their classrooms. -Female Private, Salina.*

Many participants appeared most comfortable with the idea of a balanced solution, rather than extreme solutions which call for *all* advertisements to be removed from schools.

Participants often agreed that we need responsible managers in the schools to monitor what advertising is permitted. The execution of the frame appears to successfully leverage such phrases as “not shutting all business out of schools entirely,” “creative partnerships between businesses and schools, and “win-win situation” in order to be clear about what this middle ground solution would entail. This language is based on a key insight from the cognitive elicitation report that “critiques of commercialization that pre-suppose people regard business critically or suspiciously are likely to be rejected, because they seem to violate common experience and common sense.”¹¹

When asked about who could be a regulator of advertising, participants seemed to want someone in the school such as a “teacher,” “parent,” “PTA member,” or even a student. Similarly, participants were clear in their preference for a local manager on these issues rather than “big government.” As expressed in the cognitive elicitation report, schools are seen as community (not governmental) institutions, which is “in part symptomatic of the importance of local autonomy and of Kansans’ distaste for any hint of big government.”¹²

One participant stated, *Defining and enforcing what should constitute a legitimate contribution would be helpful. -Female Public, Wichita.*

¹¹ Aubrun, Brown, Grady, and Scull 12.

¹² Aubrun, Brown, Grady, and Scull 8.

Another participant suggested, *I believe the teachers have a say in it too. Maybe they should teach to turn off the TV when the commercials come on.* –Male Public, Salina.

Maybe there is a way to reverse the contract if schools have a say in it. If they go to these people and say, 'I appreciate Channel One and we are willing to keep it, but we are not willing to keep the advertisement that you have on there.' If they don't want to change it, then I don't think that it is that important to keep this channel. A teacher can stand up in front of the kids and do the lessons herself. –Female Public, Salina.

We should have a checks and balances system; for example, to have Home Depot donate labor and parts to help and build the school, and not promote junk food and video games. I see it as a simple thing: to screen the advertising that is coming in. –Male Public, Wichita.

While many participants viewed corporate advertising in schools as inevitable, they wanted it to be only from what were considered to be positive products and brands. This is notable because in the cognitive elicitations people felt it was a sufficient solution to simply offer a healthy choice in vending machines; they did not feel that it was necessary or advisable to eliminate unhealthy choices altogether. In other words, people could not get past the idea of *individual* choice as the solution to the problem. The important implication here for the Protective Space Frame is that it manages to inoculate against personal choice and responsibility as the only solutions by successfully advocating for a “Responsible Manager” public solution.

When participants were asked “do you think there are other healthier foods that could be sponsored in schools” one participant stated, *Sure there are.* –Male Public, Salina. Another stated, *I have seen Gatorade.* –Male Public, Salina. Yet another stated, *I have seen Sunkist.* - Female Public, Salina.

Similarly, *Home Depot doesn't bother me, Coca-cola bothers me. Maybe because of the caffeine and sugar in it. I think kids get too much sugar!* –Male Public, Wichita.

Some participants talked about a balance between having a corporate presence and being strictly an educational institution. For example, one participant remarked, *I think that our society is based on consumerism. There has to be a balance, and it should exist in our schools. The most important thing is education.* –Male Private, Wichita.

Other participants provided salient examples on this issue as well:

A salad bar would be good. There are a million alternatives that teens could eat that are much healthier than having fast food stations right there in the cafeteria. -Female Private, Salina.

We can advertise, but use it in a positive way. Something like 'the more you know' campaigns that promote education. Advertising could be educational as well as advertise a product. – Female Public, Kansas City.

There is good and bad, and we need to monitor it. –Female public, Kansas City.

I think that she is trying to make a distinction between what is blatant and not blatant commercialism, and I think that she is doing a good job. –Female Public, Wichita.

The frame worked to inoculate against the distorting effects of what the cognitive elicitations referred to as the Local Sponsorship Frame.

When citizens think of corporate involvement in schools, they tend to default to the idea of sponsorships coming from local businesses that are “iconic citizens of communities.”¹³ By showing through the Channel One example how school commercialization can take the form of traditional television advertising from large national or international corporations and not just local company sponsorships, the frame recasts how citizens might think about the nature of business involvement in schools. This may serve to inoculate individuals against distorting effects (e.g., obscuring government accountability; introducing a blindness to corporate intentions)¹⁴ that are caused by the default image of local sponsorships as ideal community partnerships between schools and businesses. In this sense, the frame helps to overcome one of the dominant frames (Local Sponsorship or “School-Raising” Frame)¹⁵ on the issue of school commercialization in Kansas.

Examples of participants raising concerns about television advertising in the classroom include the following:

They have a very captive audience to do this advertising to very impressionable kids, especially starting at the elementary level. It is ridiculous that those schools would even allow advertising like that in this day and age! It is hard enough when your kids are watching cartoons and they have one commercial after another, but you can always turn the TV off. If they sit in a classroom the TV stays on, they shouldn't have that. –Female Private, Salina.

We should disallow television programs in our classrooms. We can prevent schools from engaging programs sponsored by corporations. –Female Private, Wichita.

Some participants were concerned with lost educational time due to advertising.

The fact that Channel One has advertised so much time in the school day, and that two minutes of each day is devoted to this advertising, is new to me. They don't have enough hours in the school day now to teach the children the things that they need to learn. If they take time with this advertising, this really bothers me. More importantly, what really bothers me about this whole article, is that her whole spin was about the money, and how taxpayers were being charged more money. This means nothing to me unless my child is not being educated. Her focus was more on how much it is costing me as opposed to how much it is costing my child. –Female Public, Kansas City.

Last year they added five minutes to the school day to comply with the government, so those 12 minutes of teaching they are losing are critical. –Female Public, Wichita.

¹³ Aubrun, Brown, Grady, and Scull 7.

¹⁴ Aubrun, Brown, Grady, and Scull 12.

¹⁵ Aubrun, Brown, Grady, and Scull 2.

When one participant was asked if she was concerned that educational time was being replaced with advertisements, she said, *absolutely*. –Female Public, Kansas City.

The mother-businesswoman messenger was positively received by most participants.

The following quotes are indicative of many participants' responses to this messenger:

I think that it is better because she is one of them. –Female Public, Wichita.

I thought that she was objective. –Male Private, Wichita.

She probably has what is good for the school in mind. She is probably thinking out of that mind, [rather] than on a business level. –Male Private, Salina.

A number of **Obstacles** (Barriers to Frame) were identified within the execution of the Schools as Protective Space frame. A review and consideration of these obstacles may be useful for developing communications strategies to assist in overcoming resistance to the frame and the tendency to place the responsibility on parents to combat the influences of in-school marketing.

- Participants wanted examples of advertisements in schools. Many quotes suggested that participants were not aware of the advertisements emphasized in the article.

I haven't thought about it [advertising], because I haven't seen it. I wouldn't be happy if I did see it. –Female Public, Salina.

We would need to see it [advertising] actually happen in our schools. –Female Public, Salina.

I never thought of advertisement this way. –Female Private, Salina.

It never occurred to me that this was even possible. –Male Private, Salina.

I don't understand what Channel One is advertising here. –Female Public, Kansas City.

We are playing devils advocate. We don't know enough information about what is being advertised. She just gives a couple of examples. –Male Public, Kansas City.

[what else would you need to know?] Some examples of specific schools in the Kansas City area that have this kind of advertising. –Female Private, Kansas City.

It is important to note that many participants began to question whether certain instances represent commercialism. Participants provided specific examples, and started to question whether such examples were actually “advertising” to children. Raising awareness of how certain activities are in fact advertising with clear profit motives is a significant opportunity

for shifting the way in which citizens are thinking about the topic of school commercialization.

- Many participants did not understand or relate to the Cincinnati and Seattle examples. Quotes suggested that some participants felt lost, and did not understand the content of these case descriptions. Many participants appeared to want simple examples of traditional corporate advertising that is positive (e.g., promotes healthy products in schools). Participants suggested examples such as Nature Valley products or types of sports drinks such as Gatorade as more positive corporate sponsors.

For example, when one participant was asked, “What kinds of advertisements should there be?” she responded that they should be, *More educational*. –Female private, Wichita.

Another participant stated, *there could be an Office Max sponsoring....* –Female private, Kansas City.

Another participant noted, *They could replace the advertisements with something else, like Apple computers, instead of something that is going to harm them.* –Female Public, Salina.

- Participants seemed to prefer local monitors over higher level intervention.

There should be a standards committee in the schools that is going to say ‘our kids can watch this or that’. It has to be on the local level. –Male Public, Wichita.

Yes. I would like to see it corrected on a local level, but I don’t think that you would need formal laws on it. –Male Public, Wichita.

I agree that some kinds of commercials are good and some commercials are bad. I think that local involvement with the schools is a good idea, and it should be discussed in PTA meetings. –Male Public, Wichita.

- Another barrier, related to the findings in the media content analysis study, is that school budgetary concerns lead to more receptivity to commercialization in the schools. The idea of schools securing “creative” funding through corporate advertising/sponsorships is often lauded by the media as entrepreneurial, thereby obscuring any deleterious effects. In other words, citizens become desensitized to school commercialization as having any potential adverse consequences when it is presented as a resourceful solution to a hopeless situation. One participant said, *if these businesses are advertising on our buses and book covers, and they are constantly contributing to the school system to buy gyms, musical instruments and books; this is a good thing. They are willing to invest in our youth. Why would we complain about that?* –Male Private, Wichita. Therefore, if citizens are to acknowledge—let alone complain about—potential harms associated with school commercialization, they must be shown that there are viable *public* solutions to addressing education funding shortages. For example, one participant stated, *I think that*

if we lived in a perfect world, legislation could mandate corporations to give such money [for school educational programs], and you wouldn't have to advertise. –Female Private, Wichita.

Common recommendations from participants for the parameters that responsible managers should follow included obtaining financial resources from companies that (1) are perceived positively, (2) provide or promote healthy products, and (3) restrict their school advertising to activities and topics that are truly educational.

It is worth noting that the McDonald's restaurant chain was brought up numerous times by participants as the prototypical "bad guy," and participants appeared more readily accepting of the bad influence that McDonald's has on children's health. Many participants mentioned examples of companies that promoted healthier products as appropriate in-school advertisers. The idea of having a local responsible manager identifying these opportunities for positive corporate involvement was viewed as a proper balanced solution.

Analysis of the Harmful Marketing Frame

The idea behind the Harmful Marketing Frame comes in part from the cognitive elicitation research which highlighted how the specific (i.e., narrow) topic of school vending machines may be an opportunity for increasing public understanding of the potential harms associated with school commercialization. "In the case of vending machines, there have been three distinct aspects of harmfulness that have a cumulative effect and which have created some consensus about the need to limit access."¹⁶ The salience of the school vending machine issue, coupled with the fact that unhealthy snacks and drinks are a primary blame target for the increasingly high profile childhood obesity epidemic, creates a window of opportunity for building a communication platform exposing harms associated with a specific case of school commercialization. It is important to note, however, that a junk food-focused argument is limiting insofar as its restricted scope may not allow it to carry over in citizens' minds to the issue of school commercialization more generally. The issue of course encompasses the full array of corporate advertisers, not just the food and beverage industry. Indeed, the cognitive elicitation research acknowledges that "the debate about vending machines is a good case in point in that it demonstrates both the opportunities and limitations associated with getting Kansans to see school commercialization as a problem."¹⁷

Drawing on these insights, the FrameWorks Institute has fleshed out the Harmful Marketing Frame in an effort to leverage the compelling nature of the junk food problem while also striving to have this relatively narrow example carry through in citizens' minds to the broader issue of school commercialization. A faux Op-Ed by a pediatrician entitled "Protect America's Most Captive Audience: Schoolchildren," as strategically written by the FrameWorks Institute, is how the Harmful Marketing Frame is executed for purposes of testing in this qualitative research. This execution of the frame is structured in part to rely on the compelling analogy of junk food to tobacco as a dangerous product from which schoolchildren should be protected.

¹⁶ Aubrun, Brown, Grady, and Scull 18.

¹⁷ Aubrun, Brown, Grady, and Scull 18.

This research has identified several elements of the execution of the Harmful Marketing Frame that appear to be working well:

(1) Participants were appreciative of the point that junk food is unhealthy for children and should not be promoted in schools; (2) Participants generally identified with the tobacco analogy; (3) Participants responded well to this messenger—a pediatrician.

Although many participants did not necessarily see junk food in the schools as an issue in their community, the discussion of junk food encouraged many participants to move toward the larger issue of school commercialization. The junk food focus was a benefit insofar as its narrow scope helped to keep participants more focused and stimulated. The problem (junk food) appeared to be quickly identified and tangible in the context of the focus group dialogue. Therefore, using a narrow focus may in fact work as a *positive* dynamic in terms of driving dialogue toward the broader issue of school commercialization, which is in contrast to what the cognitive elicitation work indicated. One possible explanation for this apparent contradiction is that, unlike participants in the cognitive one-on-one interviews, focus group participants were exposed to frames on the issue—and in most cases one or more frames was exposed before the Harmful Marketing Frame.

For those who were exposed to the Harmful Marketing Frame after having seen another frame or two, they are already primed to think about potential negative consequences associated with commercialization before seeing the narrow example; then when a salient and easily digestible case such as junk food and vending machines is introduced, it helps to concretize the issue (whether or not they feel the problem exists in their community) and in turn enables participants to conceptualize the broader problem of school commercialization which may have otherwise been perceived as somewhat abstract. Finally it is also important to note that, unlike in the cognitive elicitation work, focus group participants' exposure to the narrow focus of junk food was contextualized within a broader scope of public health overall through the use of the tobacco analogy. Therefore, this analogy appears to increase the salience of the frame and that may have caused participants to think about the issue differently (i.e., more broadly) than they did in the cognitive elicitation work.

When asked what else would you need to know to buy into this argument, one participant stated, *It's there! We all know that junk food is bad for our kids' diet.* —Male Public, Wichita.

Other participants also voiced their perspectives on the junk food problem:

Junk food is never good! Maybe if these companies move out, better ones can move in. —Male Private, Salina.

I think that they should take out the vending machines from the schools. There is plenty of access to that stuff outside of schools. —Female Public, Kansas City.

Participants generally identified with the tobacco analogy. Quotes such as, “we should eliminate junk food advertisement to children just as we did with tobacco” supported this finding. This stimulated participants to think about the important role that the school

environment plays in the overall health of their children. Additionally, since the tobacco companies are clearly understood by citizens as large corporations far beyond the local level, the analogy also serves to get people past some of the distorting effects of the dominant Local Sponsorship Frame discovered through the cognitive elicitations work. In particular, the default image of corporate funding as coming from local businesses that are iconic community citizens begins to fall apart when large junk food conglomerates are being called into question as parallel to “big tobacco.”

For one thing, I agree with this statement “advertisements from junk food companies, whose products also harm children’s health, should not be held to a lower standard.” Look where the tobacco people were put at! The junk food companies need to be held to the same type of standards to help our children.” –Female Private, Salina.

It wasn’t new but it was powerful. He made some good points that made me think. Why not do with food what we did with the tobacco? –Female Public, Kansas City.

...we don’t have cigarette machines in schools! There is no smoking in schools. We should eliminate as many unhealthy choices as possible. –Female Public, Salina.

Participants responded well to this messenger, the pediatrician. The pediatrician was perceived as a concerned and educated professional. In addition, even though the pediatrician was a medical doctor, the wording of the article was not overly scientific or technical. The language was straightforward enough to keep the attention of participants.

It does give it an expert point of view. –Female Public, Wichita.

It is good that it is coming from him rather than a fiction writer. –Female Public, Salina.

He knows the seriousness of what’s happening. –Female Private, Salina.

He probably sees it [childhood obesity] day in and day out. –Female Private, Salina.

It matters to me. I listen to my pediatrician more than anybody else. –Female Public, Kansas City.

He is a professional, and knows what he is talking about. He is a specialist in this area, and in what is good for our kids. –Female Public, Kansas City.

A number of **Obstacles** (Barriers to Frame) were identified within the execution of the Harmful Marketing Frame. A review and consideration of these obstacles may be useful for developing communications strategies to assist in overcoming resistance to the frame and the tendency to place the responsibility on parents to combat the influences of in-school marketing.

- Although participants connected junk food to poor health outcomes, they did not see the advertisement of junk food as being extremely prevalent in Kansas public schools today.

I didn't know that they [companies] advertised in schools. –Male Private, Wichita.

I don't recall seeing any corporate logos or anything like that in gymnasiums, or along the playing fields. As far as I thought, advertising wasn't allowed in schools. –Male Public, Salina.

This confuses me because I have never seen any of what is stated in the article. –Female Public, Wichita.

He is talking about corporate interaction in schools, but I don't see that. –Male Public, Wichita.

I heard about the vending machines having to be at least 50% containing healthy food items. As far as I know, there are no fast food offerings in the schools. –Female Public, Wichita.

The only reason why I can't go with this is because my kid goes to a private school, and these machines are turned off. It is not allowed in the school. They aren't allowed to serve candy either. –Female Private, Wichita.

I've seen some advertising in schools. They are mainly about computers, and things that deal with school. I haven't seen any fast food advertisements, just the vending machines. –Male Public, Salina.

I don't think it is a problem. –Male Public, Salina.

I don't think that the advertisement in our schools, here, is a problem. –Female Public, Salina.

What schools do these kids attend? Where my child goes, only faculty has access to vending machines. –Female Private, Kansas City.

Some of the figures in here kind of surprised me; that nearly 20% of the schools offer the name brand things. I didn't realize that it was that high. I knew that high schools had begun to use them, but 20% that is a high number. –Female Private, Salina.

In order for Kansans to buy into this frame more readily, they need to first be made more aware that junk food is in fact a problem in the schools today.

- Participants had a difficult time viewing some junk foods as harmful, such as pizza and diet soda; definitions of junk food varied among participants.

There is something in it that I think is strange: the comparison of junk food with tobacco. Is the food poison? Should we compare it with the tobacco? When you say junk food, it is very broad. It needs to be more specific. –Male Public, Wichita.

My daughter likes her ice cream at the end of the meal. There is nothing wrong with that. –Male Private, Kansas City.

I have to tell you, in my kid's school, they have two vending machines side by side. One sells pop and the other sells water and flavored water. I would say that 90% of the kids walk out with water. –Male Private, Kansas City.

- Parental responsibility appears to be a recurring theme with participants in response to the execution of this frame, perhaps more so than with the other frames.

It [the article] says that children need to be taught that good health matters. That idea is taught in the homes. –Female Public, Wichita.

[Buy into this argument?] No. I just think that as parents we need to teach our kids that this is what is best for you, and this is what you should choose. –Female Private, Wichita.

I disagree with him. I know it is our choice. We have the right to choose, but it is the parents' responsibility to make sure that their kids eat healthy. –Female Public, Salina.

My thing is, there are going to be vending machines everywhere you go: if you go on vacation, or if you go to a different school. It has to be taught within the individual home and parents. If you don't give your kids money, they cannot buy snacks. –Female Public, Salina.

When asked about possible solutions one participant stated, *Better parenting, and a lot of communication. –Male Public, Salina.* Another stated, *It starts at home. –Female Public, Salina.*

The children need to be taught that good health matters, and it needs to start at home. It should be carried out and supported by the schools. –Male Private, Salina.

Children really only eat at school once a day. I understand what is being said, but in the end you are responsible for your own children. –Male Private, Salina.

The goals of parents are to educate the children. –Female Public, Kansas City.

- An additional barrier is that this execution of the frame does not alleviate concerns about how schools could handle budgetary pressures without allowing corporate advertising.

The 20% thing is kind of new. One thing I thought of with advertising is how much money the schools would potentially lose if Coke and Pepsi would take the machines out of there, because they are paying the schools for that. How do you subsidize the money that the school would lose, would it be by putting in healthy companies? –Male Private, Wichita.

The administration should understand that there is this balance, 'I have children in school and I have to have enough money for books, arts, sports. I have to have this machine to make this money because they do not give me enough in the budgets'; but in reality it is the children they are harming, and they need to take look at that hard line. – Male Private, Wichita.

They are still going to do it, if the schools don't have the money. –Female Private, Wichita.

When asked are there bigger issues that affect parental responsibility? A participant responded, *it costs more to eat healthy. –Male Private, Wichita.*

He was asking why are we still allowing the drug industry to advertise, and the answer is money. If you can solve the need for the school to have money for it, and provide that money in some other way, then they won't be so apt to go with it. –Female Public, Salina.

To address these concerns, the article could be revised to include the line of argument used in the Schools as Protective Space frame to support a more balanced solution, emphasizing how more positive corporate sponsorships would be a preferred way to raise funds.

In summary, in the Harmful Marketing Frame, participants were readily aware that junk food is unhealthy for children, and in general, participants wanted some limitations on junk food. The data from the focus groups suggests that there was a quick identification with junk food as an “enemy” of child development, and that a focus on stopping this could be used as a starting point toward a larger effort to curtail school commercialization. Although participants generally connected junk food to poor health, many did not see the advertisement of junk food as prevalent in schools today. Some participants indicated that the articles seemed “dated.” Raising awareness about the problem of junk food in local schools may be a critical prior step to achieving more acceptance of the frame. Participants also had a difficult time viewing some junk foods as harmful, such as pizza and diet soda. Moreover, participants often concentrated on parental responsibility instead of policy issues within this frame. In general, participants felt that it is the job of the parents to teach children about healthy eating, and to provide children with the tools to combat the effects of advertising. Evidence of how much unhealthy food is actually being consumed by children in the schools (despite parental input) should prove helpful in future executions of the frame.

Cross-Frame Comparisons

In addition to the frame-specific findings discussed above, this research also uncovered some findings that generalize across all of the frames. Perhaps of greatest significance were:

1. **Participants encountered difficulty in recognizing that school commercialization is a current problem in their schools.** This finding is consistent with the prior cognitive elicitations research which showed that school commercialization is simply not a salient topic in Kansans' minds. Across all of the focus groups, there was a low level of concern expressed regarding the presence of advertising and marketing of products in private and public schools. As described in the cognitive elicitations findings and as evident in the focus group discussions here, school commercialization may be so deeply embedded and socially accepted that it is simply not viewed as a problem. Therefore, for any of the frames to be effective, awareness of the presence of school commercialization needs to be increased.
2. **People are open to the idea of programs designed to educate children about the motives of advertisements; however, this concept needs to be put forth using less jargon, as participants did not readily understand what it meant.**

Perceptions of the term "School Commercialization"

The notion that school commercialization is harmful was important to the participants, and many felt that the term for the concept should convey that it entails potentially negative consequences for the children who are affected. Participants gave examples of alternative terms for the concept, such as "negative school commercialization." Other quotes include "negative advertisement in our schools." Communication could also include phrases such as "the school commercialization epidemic." This language highlights that school commercialization is not only present, but a problem as well.

Influential Environment Brainstorming

The brainstorming exercise seemed to be a good introduction for the participants. This exercise prompted the participants to commence thinking of environments outside the home that had negative and positive effects on children. Surprisingly, "school" was not mentioned in a few of the groups.

Conclusion

A brief review of the pattern of reactions to the frames reveals at least three key conclusions. First, the article for the Schools as Protective Space Frame appears to have the greatest number of effective elements, suggesting that it may have the most potential as a communication platform in support of curtailing commercialization in schools. Second, the execution of the Schools as Protective Space Frame may be improved considerably by simply changing the examples of the problem that are presented. The barriers to the other two frames cannot be addressed in such a straightforward manner. Third, the Unwanted Influences/Toxic Influences Frame may have the most significant barrier to acceptance insofar as it tends to make people defensive about kids' abilities to avert advertising effects and this type of response undermines appreciation of the problem and tends to reintroduce the dominant Ubiquitous Advertising Frame identified in the cognitive elicitation work. That said, because the Unwanted Influences/Toxic Influences Frame has some critically important effective elements, it will be important to carefully integrate some of its key qualities into any reframes on the issue.

The following recap of the effective elements and the key barriers for each of the frames provides the basis for drawing the three conclusions just described. Please note that technical barriers are distinguished from framing barriers in this recap for an important reason. Technical barriers are those that relate to how the frame is executed in the context of the Op-Ed article in terms of specific language, examples used, etc. These types of obstacles are not inherent problems with the reframes and can generally be fixed through some relatively minor copy editing. Framing barriers, on the other hand, are those that tend to trigger a return to the dominant and problematic frames (i.e., the default ways in which people tend to think about the issue). A framing barrier is a much more significant problem for a reframe because it is causing people to think about the issue in unproductive ways that undermine the goal of the communication. These types of barriers are not as easily fixable through basic copy editing and may even be immovable if they are determined to invariably undermine the structure of the argument.

Unwanted Influences/Toxic Influences Frame

<u>Effective Elements</u>	<u>Technical Barriers</u>	<u>Framing Barriers</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants recognized that companies advertise in schools based upon ulterior motives other than an unbiased interest in student education. • Participants indicated a belief that what children are exposed to in school has more influence over them than what they might see outside of school. As a result, several participants noted, exposure to advertising may be particularly harmful in the school environment. • The scientist messenger was received positively based on her Ph.D. status and demonstrated expertise. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many do not recognize that older children are susceptible to marketing messages. • Low awareness of the existence of the problem in the schools in their communities results in thinking it must be “someone else’s problem.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In general there is a strong resistance to the idea that kids are so vulnerable to advertising effects; there is a belief that parental guidance can forestall such adverse results.

(Recap continued on page 29)

<u>Schools as Protective Space Frame</u>		
<u>Effective Elements</u>	<u>Technical Barriers</u>	<u>Framing Barriers</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This article stimulated a conversation that prompted many participants to be concerned with advertisements in their schools. • The concept that advertising in schools was taking away from instructional time was very powerful and increased people's concerns about the problem. • Many participants agreed with the idea that there is a need for responsible managers in the schools to monitor advertising. • Participants agreed with the idea of only allowing "good" products (e.g., educational products; healthy foods) to be marketed in schools. This was more seen as much more practical than completely eliminating advertising in schools. • The mother-businesswoman was positively received by most participants as the messenger. They could relate to her and felt she was giving an unbiased opinion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many participants are unaware of Channel One and those that are aware think of Channel One as an educational tool that does not incorporate advertising into its programming. • Participants did not relate well to the Cincinnati and Seattle examples. Many did not understand the content of these examples. Specifically, if the examples were more straightforward cases of traditional corporate advertising in schools (e.g., signage, product giveaways, etc.) coming from "positive" brands, then they might be more easily understood. The corporate volunteerism, charitable donations, and workforce programs are not naturally regarded as corporate advertising activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A

(Recap continued on page 30)

Harmful Marketing Frame		
<u>Effective Elements</u>	<u>Technical Barriers</u>	<u>Framing Barriers</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants agreed that junk food is unhealthy for children and should not be promoted in schools. • The analogy of junk food to tobacco was quite compelling to many participants and it made sense that junk food should not be advertised in schools—just like tobacco. • Participants responded well to the pediatrician as an expert and caring messenger. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants connected junk food to poor health outcomes, but did not see the advertisement of junk food as prevalent in Kansas schools. • Junk food is a relative term. Many participants did not agree that pizza and soda are “junk food.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many indicated that promoting healthy eating to children is primarily a parental concern—not necessarily the school’s responsibility—and should be taught at home.

Recommendations

Based on the research presented here as well as insights from the prior media content analysis and cognitive elicitations, we recommend the following Dos and Don'ts as communication strategies for the development of reframes on the school commercialization issue:

Dos

- Redirect attention away from the *Local Sponsorship Frame*, identified as a framing barrier by the cognitive elicitations research, by expressly highlighting the fact that companies have ulterior motives for pursuing in-school advertising and they are not just being “iconic citizens of their communities.”
- Convey new information about the prevalence of school commercialization and its effects. Make it clear that *any* corporate involvement constitutes advertising and should be regarded as such. Awareness of the problem needs to be raised.
- Challenge people's tendency to question advertising effectiveness. Explain how corporate messages can be more influential when delivered in a school environment, as children are more susceptible in what they rightfully believe is a *safe* and *protected space*.
- Emphasize the “...contradiction between schools' *mission* of teaching students critical thinking and healthy living on the one hand, and the reality of bombarding students with advertising and surrounding them with temptations (many of them unhealthy on the other).”¹⁸
- Offer a “middle ground” solution rather than advocating a complete elimination of corporate involvement in schools (i.e., the local responsible manager approach).

Don'ts

- Don't assume that people fully recognize the degree of commercialization that exists in their children's schools today. Awareness of the problem is low.
- Don't confound advertising effects in school with advertising effects outside of the school environment. Portraying children as malleable and easily influenced by advertising messages that are delivered in the “real world” *outside* of schools often evokes a strong resistance; moreover, it can trigger a return to the default *Ubiquitous Advertising Frame* in which it is assumed that parents can teach kids the good judgment required to render all ads (even those exposed in schools) impotent.

While these dos and don'ts should not be viewed as a literal recipe for reframing, they can be achieved in a variety of ways by combining various frame elements. School commercialization advocates can use these recommendations as a checklist by which to judge the degree to which they avoid problem elements in their own communication and successfully redirect opinions.

¹⁸ Aubrun, Brown, Grady, and Scull 22.

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BOVITZ RESEARCH GROUP, based in Los Angeles, CA, is a full-service market research firm that serves domestic and multinational Fortune 500 companies, major privately held corporations, and non-profit organizations through its expertise in survey methodology, data quality assurance and advanced analytics. Annually, BRG gathers data from tens of thousands of respondents through telephone, mail, mall intercept, central location testing, online surveying, and qualitative methods. Founded by Greg Bovitz (Ph.D., Political Science; University of California, San Diego), BRG utilizes an interdisciplinary approach to research design and analysis that integrates principles from political science, economics, psychology, and cognitive science in order to deliver unique insights regarding consumer behavior and public opinion.

Appendix

Focus Groups Kansas Action for Children

I) Intro (10 minutes)

- A) Standard intro – not vested, kitchen table conversation, one at a time, audio, video, speak opinion, etc.
- B) Let's go around the table and introduce ourselves. Just say your name, a little about yourself and your family, and how you are involved in the community.

II) Public v Private Environments (20 minutes)

- a. Purpose of session: Today, we're going to talk about your opinions regarding children and the different environments that help to influence their development. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers so please be as open and honest as you can.

Moderator: As Children grow, many aspects of their environments can influence their health and development. The realm of parents and family is of course central to a child's development but other environments also influence development. For example, institutions such as churches and organizations such as sports teams can contribute to children's development. In a moment I will ask you to take five minutes to think of as many environments outside the immediate family that influence children's growth and development. These could be places, people or institutions. Remember to think of both young children and adolescents.

When I say go, write your ideas down on the sticky notes in front of you. Write one environment outside the home for each sticky note. I also want you to identify whether this is a positive or negative influence by putting a plus or minus sign next to the word; if you don't know which is it or think it's both just put a star next to the word. Does everyone understand the exercise? Are there any questions? Okay, let's go ahead and start.

(MODERATOR NOTE: Collect the notes and stick them to the easel at the front of the room)

Moderator: Now I'm going to name some of these and I want you to tell me: (1) what the role **should be** in supporting the healthy development of children and (2) how well do you think it is doing that, you can give it a grade to make it easier, and finally (3) what one thing should we do more or less of to make this environment fully contributory to positive child development?

(Moderator Note: We imagine they will give examples such as schools, libraries, doctors/health care system, the media, church, sports or arts organizations or programs, business, government. Pick two environments – media would be a good one, and volunteering, group sports or music programs as the other (one we know is negative and is related to our inquiry and the other we know serves as a positive prime to discussion of child development. This can subsequently segue into a Mission discussion of schools v

business. Of the sticky notes on the board, single out schools for a mission discussion, and then proceed to business).

Moderator:

1. Okay. Let me ask you another couple of questions. I see schools here repeatedly. Tell me what you see as the mission is of schools. (Discussion)
2. I see (or don't see) businesses here. What about business? What is the mission of business relative to children's development? (Discussion)

III. Introduce Series (75 minutes, 25 minutes per article)

Tonight we are going to review a new series of expert opinions about what we've been talking about – how to make the public environments of children's lives more beneficial to their healthy development. This series is called "Kansas Weigh in on Improving Our State for Kids" and it has asked a number of leaders from the state to describe what they think we should focus our energy on. And they describe why they think positive change is possible.

We're going to read three of these guest editorials tonight. We've tried to choose very different authors, but there are a range of people beyond these that are writing similar op/eds. Each of the ones we will review tonight covers a different topic, but they are related. We will read each one silently all the way through, and talk about our overall impressions. Then we'll read parts aloud and I will ask you to give me your thoughts and reactions. The goal of all of your feedback is how to help these experts translate their observations so that citizens can understand and evaluate their recommendations.

- A) The first one is from a [scientist]. Take a copy and pass it around and read through it, underlining anything you find especially interesting.
1. Was there anything written in this article that was new information for you and could change the way you think about these issues?
 - i. What specifically within the article made you feel this way? Why?
 2. What is the problem that this expert thinks we need to address? Probe: How does that work?
 3. What is the solution? Probe: How does that work?

- Now let me provide a short recap on the article for you....

[The article suggests that our children's healthy development is put at risk when they are bombarded with product advertising both from early ages, when they are too young to understand the motives of commercials, and during adolescence, when advertising can prey on youth's fragile identity development. Since schools should be places that foster development, we should consider limiting the unwanted influences of commercial advertising in schools, so that during school time children aren't targets for corporate profits.]

4. Had you thought about advertising to children in schools this way before?
5. Do you buy into this argument or not? Why? (If not because reverting back to the home (parents), then ask: “Is *any* part of the situation that we’re in due to these bigger issues beyond what is taught in the child’s home?”)
6. What else would you need to know about this line of argument to really be convinced about this being the source of the problem?
7. How is your reaction to the article shaped by the fact that the message is coming from a [scientist]?

B) Okay, wipe that one out of your mind as much as you can, so that we give each expert a fresh hearing. This one is from a [businesswoman]. Again, Take a copy and pass it around and read through it, underlining anything you find especially interesting.

1. Was there anything written in this article that was new information for you and could change the way you think about these issues?
 - i. What specifically within the article made you feel this way? Why?
2. What is the problem that this expert thinks we need to address? Probe: How does that work?
3. What is the solution? Probe: How does that work?

▪ Now let me provide a short recap on the article for you...

This article says that schools are essential public structures on which we depend for tomorrow’s competent citizenry - schools are the machinery that produces American quality of life and success, and so it is a violation of the American value of public education when schools are used as captive marketplaces for consumer profit. We need to be responsible managers of these public spaces by working together to set parameters that will ensure that any business influence in schools supports educational, not commercial, goals.

4. Had you thought about advertising to children in schools this way before?
5. Do you buy into this argument or not? Why? (If not because reverting back to the home (parents), then ask: “Is *any* part of the situation that we’re in due to these bigger issues beyond what is taught in the child’s home?”)
6. What else would you need to know about this line of argument to really be convinced about this being the source of the problem?
7. How is your reaction to the article shaped by the fact that the message is coming from a [businesswoman]?

C) Finally, let’s take a fresh look at this one from a [pediatrician]. Take a copy and pass it around and read through it, underlining anything you find especially interesting.

1. Was there anything written in this article that was new information for you and could change the way you think about these issues?
 - i. What specifically within the article made you feel this way? Why?
2. What is the problem that this expert thinks we need to address? Probe: How does that work?
3. What is the solution? Probe: How does that work?

- Now let me provide a short recap on the article for you....

This article reminds us that we rely on our public institutions to set and enforce the regulations that will protect us from physical harm. When we learned the negative health effects of tobacco on kids, we required industry to stop marketing to kids. Schools are public institutions, and so we need to limit the advertising of junk foods in schools as they have a harmful effect on our children's health.

4. Had you thought about advertising to children in schools this way before?
5. Do you buy into this argument or not? Why? (If not because reverting back to the home (parents), then ask: "Is *any* part of the situation that we're in due to these bigger issues beyond what is taught in the child's home?")
6. What else would you need to know about this line of argument to really be convinced about this being the source of the problem?
7. How is your reaction to the article shaped by the fact that the message is coming from a [pediatrician]?

III. Take Aways (15 minutes)

Now that we've worked our way through these editorials, I want us to go back to where we started and think about the public environments that affect children's growth and development.

1. Each of these writers proposed different programs and solutions. Our scientist proposed that schools should promote the development of children by removing the school environment of the unwanted influences of advertising.... Our businesswoman suggested schools must set clear rules if they are to live up to their public mission.... Our pediatrician suggested that junk food advertising is harmful to children's health and that schools, as public institutions, should eliminate that harmful marketing)

PROBE WITH A QUESTION THAT WILL GET AT WHICH SOLUTION THEY WOULD WANT TO SUPPORT/ENGAGE IN HELPING TO ACHIEVE

2. Some people have labeled the problem that these articles address as "school commercialization." Is that a good name for it? Why? How would you define that, if someone asked you what it was?

3. You heard from 3 different people, but they are just part of a larger series. Whom would you expect to be in the series – both the kinds of people and even specific names? Who would you want to hear from in order to believe this is real?

4. Finally, I want you to think about going home and telling your husband, wife, mother, father, daughter, brother or best friend what we talked about tonight. What would you say? Take a couple of minutes and jot down 3 or 4 words to help you remember and then we will go around the table.

How Advertising in Schools Hurts Our Kids

A sound investment in our society's future requires that all children have the opportunity to develop intellectually, socially and emotionally. And science now tells us that children's physical, social and learning experiences all affect the developing architecture of the maturing brain. Because child development is the foundation for community development, we all have a stake in providing our kids with the relationships and experiences that literally wire the brain for all future learning and development.

Recent research on the impact of advertising on children's development suggests that we put our children's healthy development at risk when we allow them to be bombarded with product advertising during key stages in the formation of this brain architecture. Children under roughly age 8 are not yet able to understand the motives of commercial advertising, yet billions of dollars are spent in marketing products to very young kids. And every day, a great deal of this is happening in our public schools.

When young children are exposed to a corporate marketing message in school, they learn that message in the same way they learn their educational lesson. An ad telling kids that the latest videogame is necessary for their happiness has the same formative effect on a young child's brain development as a school poster teaching them their ABCs.

Marketing campaigns also have negative effects on older children, even if those children are able to understand an ad's true intention. That's because a host of structural changes in the architecture of the human brain also occur during the critical years of adolescence. The last area of the brain to mature is the part capable of sound decision-making, "I'll finish my homework, I'll save my allowance, etc." The parts of the brain responsible for things like thrill seeking and impulsive behavior are getting turned on in big ways around the time of puberty, but the parts for exercising judgment are still maturing throughout the course of adolescence.

By design, advertising manipulates viewers into accepting a certain image of cool and material success as they weave messages of empowerment and liberation around their hustling of commodities on our kids. In fact, a new report from the American Psychological Association indicates that the media's sexualization of young women has been intensifying, with a number of negative consequences. The study concluded that this image marketing actually impairs cognitive performance in young women, contributes to eating disorders, body dissatisfaction, low self-esteem, depressive mood, and even physical health problems.

We must do a better job of protecting children from these harmful influences, because it is an unequal contest: adept, money-laden adult marketing experts against intellectually naïve, unformed children still developing the skills needed to cope with a grown up world. What can we do? We can start by keeping corporate marketing out of our schools. We could prevent schools from engaging in programs sponsored by corporations that are linked to product rewards from the company. We could disallow showing television news programs in our classroom that require schools agree to including advertising segments during the programs. We should be able

to depend on schools to promote, not undermine, children's healthy development. Advertising that promotes consumerism and unhealthy behavior should be replaced with messages that promote physical, psychological and academic well being. Only then will children be able to clearly distinguish positive messages - those that come from people who care about their healthy development - from those that are designed solely to take their money. .

Catherine Kelly, Ph.D. is the Professor of Brain Science at Kansas State University.

When Business is a Bad Strategy for Schools

American public schools today have a more challenging job than in any other period of history. With high-stakes testing a norm in every district, and with the high expectations that come from an information-rich, technology savvy society, our children have significantly different challenges than their counterparts in earlier decades. As the main public structure tasked with stewarding the next generation in America, the public school system is entrusted with public funds to help young people learn the skills that will eventually enable them to contribute to the economy and strengthen their communities.

That requires schools, as public entities, to act as counterpoints to commercial culture, not as subsidiaries. Unfortunately, in classrooms across America, children are being greeted by a range of for-profit, commercial influences. One example is ChannelOne, a soft “news” television program that, in return for leasing schools a satellite dish, VCRs, and TV sets, requires that schools air their daily twelve minute broadcasts. A full two minutes of each daily broadcast is devoted to product advertising - mostly junk food and video games - that must be shown under the terms of the contract. The price tag for these advertising spots rivals those sold during the Super Bowl. Companies are spending lots of money to advertise their products to the captive audience of our kids at school. Not only is our children’s school time being traded for product marketing, but new research shows that this actually costs taxpayers money. The Economic Policy Institute found that Channel One costs taxpayers \$1.8 billion annually in lost instructional time.

It is our duty as responsible managers of our schools to ask what direct and measurable impact corporate deals have on our children’s learning. Blatant commercialism such as Channel One, or advertisements on buses and book covers, or logos on school uniforms don’t improve achievement test scores, and they don’t teach our children the values they need to learn.

That doesn’t mean shutting all business out of schools entirely. In fact, there are many creative partnerships between business and schools that contribute to student’s growth and development. For example, in Cincinnati, businesses provide volunteers for service-oriented projects and charitable contributions toward earmarked projects promoting educational excellence. In Seattle, the business community identifies labor and skill shortages that are hampering their city’s economic health and then crafts education and workforce initiatives to fill those shortages. The result is a win-win situation. Employers develop the workforce they need and Seattle residents gain access to career opportunities and higher incomes.

We can all agree that we want the best for our children. High-quality education takes a commitment to maintaining our schools as a place of learning, not of consumer profit. As a business owner, I believe that in order to ensure that the education our children receive is of the highest value, we must be vigilant about defining and enforcing exactly what should constitute a legitimate contribution from the for-profit sector. When you confuse the goals of the marketplace with the common good goals of a public structure like our school system, it’s a bad strategy for everyone.

Deborah Whitney is a mother with children in the Kansas City public schools and CEO of Hammond Lumber and Builders.

Protect America's Most Captive Audience: Schoolchildren

It's hardly news that kids and teens have become targets of corporate marketing. But a disturbing trend is that our children are increasingly inundated not just with toys and games, but with products that harm their health. And unfortunately, schools have become a preferred marketing outlet. We need to get on top of this trend before it harms the health of our kids.

Promotion of junk food in schools is more prevalent today than ever before. Advertising practices such as corporate-sponsored book covers and meal plans designed by fast-food companies are now common. Nearly 20 percent of schools offer brand-name fast food, and vending machines filled with junk dominate school hallways.

As a result of these in-school marketing campaigns, about one-third of an average child's diet consists of junk food. So, it should come as no surprise that childhood obesity has more than doubled over the past twenty years, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Even when junk food does not cause any weight gain, it can lead to other health problems, including dental decay and osteoporosis. In the long term, poor nutrition can also lead to heart disease, liver disease, Type 2 diabetes and hypertension. Given the medical evidence, why are we still allowing the junk food industry to advertise to children in the very place they should be most protected – their schools?

When we learned the negative health effects of tobacco, we required the tobacco industry to stop marketing to children. If the tobacco industry proposed placing ads for cigarettes on school buses or book covers, there would be an immediate protest, because such advertising sends a message to children that smoking is acceptable. Advertisements from junk food companies, whose products also harm children's health, should not be held to a lower standard.

We may not be able to control how companies market to children outside of schools, although there are some efforts to do so in Congress right now. But what we can and should do is eliminate the promotion of harmful products within our public educational system. Children need to be taught that good health matters. When schools allow corporations to market unhealthy foods to students, they learn just the opposite.

At a time when physical education and nutrition education are being cut from school budgets, due to the demands of high-stakes testing, the effects can be even more profound. So we should work together to eliminate junk food promotion in our schools, by requiring that corporate sponsors of any food program in schools meet a specific and uniform health standard. And we should educate kids on how to decipher when they're being marketed to. Just as health classes in schools often include modules on the health dangers of smoking, so could they include broader "health literacy" programs that teach children about the health dangers of junk food, as well, and help kids discern when they are being manipulated by marketing campaigns. Protecting our schools from unhealthy intrusion would be a very productive step toward protecting the health of our children.

John Marsden, M.D, is a practicing pediatrician in Topeka.