A Family-Based Media Literacy Approach to Improving Youth and Family Nutrition

Washington State University (WSU) Murrow Center for Media and Health Promotion Research1; WSU Extension 4-H2; WSU Food $ense3; WSU Human Development4; University of Washington5

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Justification
- TV use is a risk factor for children’s overweight, independent of (sedentary) TV watching
- Having TV on during meals is associated with fewer fruits and vegetables (F/V) served at mealtimes
- 1-2 exposures to food ads influence children as young as 2 years of age

Central Hypothesis
- Improved family media management and message interpretation skills will improve children’s nutrition knowledge and behaviors.

Project Goals (Over 5 Years)
- Develop a youth media literacy-based nutrition intervention using a family-based model for families with children 9-14 years of age (in 3rd – 8th grades).
- Test the efficacy of media literacy education as a nutrition-improvement strategy for children and parents.
- Identify differential effects for families over time, and for families at higher versus lower risk.
- Disseminate validated media literacy-based nutrition curriculum, training, and research findings through appropriate channels.

Methods
- Participant Recruitment:
  - Using existing partnerships in Food $ense* and 4-H
- Focus Group Protocol:
  - Procedures by Greenbaum (1998)
  - Short questionnaire administered at each session
  - Audio-recorded sessions transcribed
  - Content analysis of transcriptions (Weber, 1990)

Validity and Reliability of Instruments:
- Multi-stage peer review and pre-testing of discussion guide and questionnaire (Carbone et al., 2002)

Participants

Year 1: Formative Research, Stage 1
11 Focus Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Parents</th>
<th>Youth 3rd-5th</th>
<th>Youth 6th-8th</th>
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<td>Spokane</td>
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Parents reported about their families:
- 45% eat dinner together 7 days per week
- TV turned on during mealtimes sometimes (32%), usually (20%) or always (11%); 37% never or rarely
- 52% in the National School Lunch Program

Focus groups confirmed parents’ concerns and interest in the topic:
- Pervasive influence of marketing on kids: “The TV told ‘em that, so it’s true.”
- “You can’t peel my nine-year-old away sometimes [from TV]. What has her, when it comes to those commercials?”
- Confusing/misleading ad claims and packaging: “…My kids try to flip that on me. ‘Okay, but did you look at what it all has in it?”
- “Gatorade is important for people who play sports since lots of athletes drink it.”
- “I think commercials lie to us a lot…”
- “Frozen yogurt is better for you because the freezing changes the sugar.”

Youth and parents were receptive to program ideas and contributed more:
- Cooking: “Hands on for kids, hands-on for adults”
- More Cooking: as experiment; contest; discovery

Timeline:
- Year 1: Formative Research, Stage 1
- Year 2: Developing intervention strategy through focus groups and curriculum-planning work groups with target audiences
- Year 3: Pilot test curriculum at 5 county sites; Refine curriculum and evaluation measures
- Year 4: Field test revised curriculum across 5 county sites with control groups; Field test both youth-only and family versions
- Year 5: Continue field testing; Conduct delayed post-tests
- Field test curriculum at 5 county sites
- Analyze, report, publish data
- Train and disseminate program and results

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* Food Sense is the brand name used by Washington State University to represent its two federally funded nutrition education programs for low income audiences: Washington State University (WSU) SNAP-Ed and WSU EFNEP. These programs are community based and implemented collaboratively with community partners.