Chapter 16
Understanding Community Perspectives: A Step Towards Achieving Food Marketing Equity

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Introduction

This chapter will examine how historical and social factors impact community perspectives, receptivity, and potential motivation to improve food marketing environments. We explore the diversity of Black Americans' perspectives of marketing and the contextual factors that support different beliefs and responses. Given the nature and history of Black Americans as consumers, it is no surprise that de-marketing unhealthy food and beverages proves to be quite challenging. Insights from the community perspective are necessary in order to develop social and counter-marketing activities to support healthy food environments.

First, we briefly overview obesity rates and then describe how food marketing environments may contribute to these disparities. We define "food marketing environment" from not only the marketer perspective but also from the consumer and community perspective. Subsequently, we summarize key historical points that provide context for understanding consumer response to current targeted marketing efforts. We then discuss qualitative research examining Black consumer perceptions of marketing, and how they navigate inequitable marketing environments. We end with a discussion of results and related implications for increased understanding of how to shift Black consumer demand towards healthier foods.

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Obesity and African Americans

Obesity rates are alarmingly high among African Americans, especially women and girls. In 2007–2008, 46.3% of African-American girls between the ages of 12 and 19 (as compared to 29.9% of White adolescent girls) were overweight or obese (Ogden, Carroll, Curtin, Lamb, & Flegal, 2010). Further, although the prevalence of high BMI is declining for some groups, this is not uniformly observed in data on Black girls (Madsen, Weedn, & Crawford, 2010). If current trends continue, African-American teens will have some of the largest increases (a 1.8-fold increase) in overweight and obesity (Wang, Beydoun, Liang, Caballero, & Kumanyika, 2008). And with African Americans, we do not see the same inverse relationship between youth obesity and parental increases in education or income (Ogden, Carroll, & Flegal, 2008). In fact, among girls aged 10–17 years old research has found that obesity rates are highest among African-American girls at the highest socioeconomic status level (Wang & Beydoun, 2007). Nonetheless, the effects of income on obesity among Blacks may be more pronounced given that significant numbers of Blacks are lower income.

Overweight and obesity are often preludes to serious chronic conditions and increase the risk of diabetes, asthma, cardiovascular disease, and other health complications (Caprio et al., 2008). Further, childhood obesity increases the risk of adult obesity (Daniels, 2006) and Black Americans generally face a disproportionate amount of diet-related diseases. The observed differences in overweight and obesity also manifest among adults, as Black adults, especially women, also have higher rates of overweight and obesity than White adults (Flegal, Carroll, Ogden, & Curtin, 2010). The elevated rates among adults may present to black youth a heavily biased weight norm.

The high rates, significant racial disparities in obesity, as well as the grave consequences, underscore the need for more tailored interventions and policies that target high-risk groups. Food marketing has proved an important area to consider in terms of these disparities given that strategies may focus on specific groups and support unhealthy food marketing environments (Grier & Kumanyika, 2008).

The Food Marketing Environment

It should come as no surprise that food marketing is implicated in the obesity epidemic as it is a system designed to affect consumption. Marketing is perceived as influencing the awareness of, attitudes about, and availability of food, beverages, and related information. The American Marketing Association defines marketing as "the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large" (AMA, 2008). Central to the definition is a notion of self-interest as people buy and consume products out of their own perceptions of value. Food marketers

thus design strategies to create perceptions of value among consumers so that they will think positively about, buy, and consume their products.

Although advertising is often the most visible aspect of marketing, this is less than one-quarter of the story. Marketing efforts are also implemented through the integration of product, distribution, price, and promotion strategies, known as "the four P's" or the "marketing mix". The first "p", *product,* reflects what is offered to a market, including tangible goods or services, Distribution strategies encompass the next "p" of *place* which refers to how products are made available to consumers. The p*rice* "p" refers to the cost that is exchanged for the product, in absolute terms and relative to alternatives while the *promotion* "p" involves persuasive communications that convey product benefits, prices, and availability. Advertising is just one promotional tool used to reach consumers. There are a wide array of promotional strategies beyond advertising, including sales promotions, food sampling, direct mail, digital marketing, corporate sponsorship, and product placement. Marketing strategy involves coordinating these four "P's" for optimal effect, so one cannot consider them solely in isolation.

Target marketing, where research-based strategies are aimed at a particular subset of consumers is the basis of contemporary marketing (Kotler, 1997). Targeted marketing strategies affect the products people in the subgroup are exposed to, that are promoted and available to them, and the prices they pay. It is in this way that marketing may contribute to obesity disparities. Specifically, the cross-cutting strategies among the marketing mix of product, price, promotion, and place result in a particular food marketing environment for target consumers, one that may challenge or support people's ability to eat healthfully. The targeted marketing environment may also counteract the effect of general initiatives as commercial marketing messages often overshadow public health messages that encourage healthier behaviors.

Research supports the notion that targeted food marketing may contribute to food marketing environments that challenge the ability of Black consumers to eat healthy. A systematic review of empirical research on targeted food marketing to Black consumers examined the evidence that describes what food products Black Americans are made aware of, have access to, and the cost (Grier & Kumanyika, 2008). Articles were identified through a search for empirical literature in eight major databases across disciplines over a 14-year time period. Only studies that compared marketing practices directed towards a Black versus a White or general market were included to help understand if the marketing practices differed by group.

The search identified twenty articles over the 14-year period; eight were content analysis of ad messages, one was an assessment of in-store promotions, eleven studies were of food outlet locations, and three were comparisons of food prices. Analysis of the identified articles demonstrated that products marketed to Black consumers are dominated by low-cost foods that are high in sugar and low in nutrition (Grier & Kumanyika, 2008). Black consumers saw more in-store promotions although they were less likely to be for healthy items, and they also saw fewer positive nutritional messages and healthier foods than other target markets. One study focused on children

found that ads with Black characters were more likely to promote convenience and fast foods instead of foods consistent with dietary recommendations, depict more snacking between meals, and less likely to have overweight characters or adult supervision (Harrison, 2006). Additionally, results show that Black consumers tend to have less access to supermarkets and greater access to fast food restaurants than their White consumers. Other recent studies are consistent with these findings (Hillier et al., 2009; Yancey et al., 2009).

Marketing not only promotes behaviors but also reinforces them and contributes to the development of norms. Norms, like attitudes, may serve as a belief mechanism through which marketing activities influence consumption on an ongoing basis. Social norms encompass shared beliefs about behavior and capture the social influence that a consumer perceives regarding consumption behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). The social influence may come from one of two types of norms. First, subjective norms involve people's perceptions of what is appropriate behavior, based on their beliefs that people important to them believe that they should perform a particular behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen).

Second, descriptive norms pertain to people's perceptions of the actual behavior of people important to them (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1980). The high prevalence of a behavior or perceived approval of the behavior among important reference groups influences a person's performance of that behavior (Bagozzi, Wong, Abe, & Bergami, 2000; Cialdini, Kallgren, & Reno, 1991). In this way, norms can either support or inhibit particular choices.

Marketers strategize to develop positive attitudes and norms so that they support product and brand consumption. Of course many factors besides marketing influence normative behavior, such as news and entertainment, family, other people, and personal experiences. However, marketing can reinforce existing behavioral patterns by convincing consumers of specific product benefits and the pervasiveness of consumption. For example, a consumer's preference can be influenced by price promotions which elicit product trial, encourage repeat purchases, and contribute to beliefs that the promoted items are frequently eaten (Hoek & Gendall, 2006). Thus, marketing efforts can send an implicit message that certain consumption behaviors are socially supported and facilitate the likelihood of the behavior.

Research among an ethnically diverse sample of parents of 2- to 12-year-old children in medically underserved communities found that greater exposure to fast food promotion is associated both with beliefs that eating fast food is normative and with more frequent fast food consumption by their children (Grier, Mensinger, Huang, Kumanyika, & Stettler, 2007). Furthermore, parents' perceptions of more favorable social norms mediated the relationship between fast food promotional exposure and children's more frequent fast food consumption. If fast food marketing contributes to perceived social norms about fast food consumption in a community, differences in the amount and content of targeted food marketing may create, or support differences in the healthfulness of attitudes and norms toward fast food and its consumption. This is especially important given the attenuated access to affordable and healthy foods in Black communities which challenges attempts at healthy eating (Kumanyika et al., 2007).

While the described research does not establish a direct link between marketing and food consumption, it illustrates how the food marketing environment of Black consumers is more likely to challenge healthy eating. A food marketing environment that encourages consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages and high energy dense foods in preference to healthier and lower calorie food and beverage options may contribute to overconsumption of calories. Thus, inequities in food marketing environments merit particular concern given the higher risk of obesity in the Black community, especially among Black youth.

The "food marketing environment" from the consumer and community perspective involves the set of factors that influence consumers' preferences for, ability to acquire, and actual acquisition and consumption of food, including not only the traditional "4 P's" of marketing but also the psychobiological, ethnic and cultural, social, and setting-based factors that influence the interactions of individuals, families, and communities at large with these marketing variables. Further, inequities in food marketing also relate to what marketers have done historically and consumer response to these strategies.

Historical Foundations of Target Marketing to Black Consumers

Marketers have historically targeted Blacks, although how they have been targeted and how they have been represented has shifted. A full description of the history of Black consumers and marketing is beyond the scope of this chapter, and more detailed and comprehensive treatments of the topic are available (Branchik & Davis, 2009; Weems, 1998).

Nonetheless, some historical remnants highlight points that help provide context for the target marketing that we see today. Although a variety of factors contributed to the growth in Black consumerism over the past decades since slavery, the civil rights and Black power movements were especially significant events (Weems, 1998). In both social movements, the struggle for racial equality encompassed consumption equality, and target marketing was desired and in fact demanded as a signal of citizenship. As a result, for Black consumers, consumption is perceived as a means of expressing mainstream social participation, marketplace equality, and ethnic pride (Branchik & Davis, 2009; Chambers, 2006; Lamont & Molnár, 2001; Tharp, 2001). Some scholars argue that consumer rights are as important as labor and production rights to African Americans (Mullins, 1999). A study of marketing professionals who specialize in the African-American market found that they viewed Black consumption behavior as motivated by a desire for societal inclusion, and cultural distinctiveness, and this perception underlies their developed target marketing approaches (Lamont & Molnár, 2001). Further, they note that the use of consumption in this way is reinforced because, as a Senior Black ad executive noted, "branded consumer goods may be obtained more easily than employment, housing or membership in certain groups and organizations" (page 38). Nonetheless, the discrimination observed in employment and

housing markets is also a significant issue in the consumer goods context (Williams, Henderson, & Harris, 2001).

Marketers thus frequently target Blacks using strategies to convince them that purchasing power is an expressive collective tool to signal being a full member of society (Lamont & Molnár, 2001). Such motivations may be reflected in political ideologies which undergird African-American strategies to allocate resources amid disadvantage, such as in the case of attenuated access to food (Crockett & Wallendorf, 2004). The current day "food deserts" which exist in many Black communities and relate to marketing distribution strategies have emerged from supermarket flight which started over 50 years ago. In addition, the use of specific strategies and tactics including an emphasis on celebrity advertising, the importance of Black radio as a media vehicle, and corporate sponsorships of community activities also reflect historical patterns. Overall, many practices and perceptions observed in the Black community today have emerged from the specific history of the relationship between Black consumers and the marketplace.

Black Consumer Exposure and Response to Targeted Marketing

The persistence of historical factors related to the promotion and availability of food contributes to the continuity of social and cultural adaptations developed in Black communities in response to these factors. Marketers recognize Black consumers as a distinctive market and work to exploit preferences that may have developed over time for specific food and beverage options. Even highly motivated individuals must continually work against the tide of commercial marketing forces that promote unhealthy eating and perpetuate the norms of unhealthy eating. A comprehensive understanding of the effects of target marketing must include an understanding of how consumers respond to the marketing efforts, especially as a precursor to integrating community perspectives. Consumer behavior, i.e., what people buy, what they purchase, how often, how much, etc. is influenced by marketing strategy in two important ways: marketing exposure and consumer response.

Frequent media exposure can increase the influence of marketing messages on consumer behavior. Viewing the same or similar messages has been found to increase belief in the message, suggest certain behaviors as normal, and affect how quickly people spread the message to others (Hornik, 2002). Thus, repeated exposure to food-related marketing messages can influence the awareness and meaning of specific types of foods, affect brand attitudes, and contribute to food-related norms (Grier, 2009). Increased media usage, especially TV, is associated with increased caloric intake and weight (Escobar-Chaves & Anderson, 2008; Institute of Medicine, 2005). A study of adolescents 10 to 15 years old found that the odds of being overweight were almost five times greater for those who viewed 5 h of TV per day vs. those who viewed two or less hours (Gortmaker et al., 1996).

Research shows that Blacks consumers have high rates of media use, especially TV. Black youth average about 13 h of media exposure daily, almost 5 h more than

the 8½ h among White youth (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010). The biggest differences are among television time, where Black youth spend almost 6 h daily watching TV compared to 3½ h among White youth and are also significantly more likely to report that the TV is on during meals (78% for Blacks vs. 58% for Whites). The most recent figures reflect increased differences in media use by race and ethnicity over the past five years. Similarly high rates of media usage, especially Television, have been noted among adults. This heavy media usage also extends to certain digital media which are a core strategy of modern targeting efforts (Grier, 2009). The increased media exposure translates to increased food marketing exposure. For example, research has shown that African Americans aged 12–17 view 14% more food product advertisements than their White peers (Powell, Szczypka, & Chaloupka, 2007).

The orientation of Black consumers, especially Black youth, to the marketing they are exposed to is also positive and strong. Black consumers appear more favorable towards marketing generally, and especially towards targeted marketing that "speaks" to them. Research suggests that Black consumers are more likely to pay more attention to identify with and trust spokespersons of similar ethnicity and to have more positive attitudes and purchase intentions towards a brand when it features ethnic cues (Aaker, Brumbaugh, & Grier, 2000; Appiah, 2001, 2004; Grier & Brumbaugh, 1999). Black consumers are also more favorable to in-store sales promotions (Green, 1995). Black consumers have also been characterized as highly brand loyal, are seen as new product trendsetters, and will readily spread word of mouth about products within their networks. Further, as a member of a minority group, Black youth also encounter and may respond positively to marketing targeted to all youth, to other minority youth (e.g., Latinos), to minority adults, to marketing efforts targeted at White consumers, and to efforts based on other segmentation criteria besides race.

The frequency and resonance of identity-linked targeted marketing which promotes less healthful products may support the development of less healthful eating patterns and result in adverse health effects. Thus, in many ways public health views marketing as "bad", i.e., as a force not working to support health. Of course, marketing is not all bad, although those concerned with the health effects of frequently promoted unhealthy products might see it that way. Marketing can also be a positive force for health, both in terms of social marketing, as well as conscious and responsible commercial marketing activities. The positive use of targeted food and beverage marketing to Black consumers appears an open opportunity in light of what has been observed and documented.

The Black Consumer Market and Targeted Food Marketing

Black consumers continue to be a vital demographic in terms of market growth and profitability, and very important target markets for food and beverage marketing. Black Americans' buying power has increased from $316.3 billion in 1990 to

$946.6 billion in 2010 and is projected to climb to $1.3 trillion in 2017 (Humphries, 2012). Black consumers comprise one of the fastest growing segments of the youth population (Frey, 2003; Humphreys, 2006; Zhou, 1997) and ethnic minority families are also growing at a faster rate than the total population (The Nielsen Company, 2009). Spending on target marketing geared to Black consumers was $2.3 billion for 2006–2007 (Nielsen, 2008). Specific to food and beverages, Black consumers are a very desirable market as they shop for food more often, and spend more money per food shopping trip compared to the rest of the population (Grier & Kumanyika, 2008).

Food and beverage advertising expenditures represent a significant proportion of overall ethnically targeted marketing. Although it is often argued that any food and beverage can be part of a balanced meal, fast food and soda are seen as two likely contributors to the obesity epidemic and Black youth are heavy consumers of both products. Marketers are aware of this and their targeting strategies reflect this knowledge. Ad spending in African-American media fared better than overall ad market in 2009 with fast food restaurants increasing ad spend by 19.2% in Black-oriented media (Bachman, 2010). And soda companies continue targeting efforts directed to African-American youth which began in earnest in the 1940s (Grocery Manufacturer, 1971; Tharp, 2001). For example, in 2006, Coca-Cola re-established a dedicated African-American marketing group in order to better connect with "key consumers, including teens, moms and multicultural consumers" (Zmuda, 2009).

Marketers design strategies to specifically reach Black youth, while also reaching them with their general youth targeting efforts. Food marketers use techniques that have been observed historically to reach Black consumers, including the use of popular Black celebrities, ethnic symbols, and music to link the consumption of specific products with Black culture (Grocery Manufacturer, 1971). Fast food marketing targets Black children and teens with TV advertising, targeted websites, and banner ads, and Black children and teens see at least 50% more fast food ads than other children and teens (Harris, Schwartz, & Brownell, 2010). For example, Pepsi used hip-hop singer Busta Rhymes to increase relevance and awareness of Mountain Dew and Code Red and reported that the results of their campaign led to "all-time highs in awareness and conversion of the two brands among African-Americans and Latinos" (Radio Advertising Bureau). Sprite, part of Coca-Cola's soda portfolio, has a consumer base that is about 30% African American, and the company targets them with customized promotions including digital marketing (Khan, 2009; MacArthur & Neff, 2004).

A campaign entitled "365 Black" by McDonald's demonstrates a variety of marketing tools working together. The campaign includes a targeted website that promotes the year-round celebration of African-American culture and achievement. The campaign uses ads that feature Black celebrities such as Venus Williams, communicates "little known Black history facts" to over 122 million listeners on a daily radio show, displays posters in the fast food outlets, distributes Black history booklets in schools in collaboration with Coca-Cola, and supports community events including a Black college tour and an academic achievement program for middle school students (McDonald's Corporation). The use of ethnic cues in the campaign

(e.g., Black celebrities, African cultural symbols, support of cultural institutions) and ethnic media (e.g., Black radio) can increase favorable responses towards the campaign.

Fast food marketers are also cognizant that their products serve a particular need among low income and minority consumers, so price-based marketing is also a common strategy (Warner, 2006). *See Table 16.1 for a description of marketing techniques and examples of how markers use these techniques.* The diversity of marketing strategies highlights the complexity likely inherent in consumer perceptions of marketing. For example, corporations provide product information, as well much needed funds such as through sponsorship and support of Black media, yet at an often unacknowledged cost of increased exposure to less healthy food and beverage products.

In the age of new technologies, consumers are not just recipients of marketing messages but also message creators such as through blogging, word of mouth, and even the creation of marketing campaigns (Montgomery & Chester, 2009). Companies no longer solely control product messaging; instead they are facilitators of the conversation. Marketing is a three-way conversation in which the food marketer and public health perspective need to integrate community perspectives in order to develop "win-win" business and community health solutions. Although marketers have integrated new technologies, data, and analytical know-how to engage in marketing focused on particular communities, the power of the consumer-driven marketing paradigm has yet to be fully realized in support of the health of Black communities. Thus, it is important to understand how Black consumers perceive the food and beverage marketing they encounter.

Engaging Communities to Address Childhood Obesity

There is a growing focus on policy and environmental interventions (e.g., food taxation, restrictions on targeted unhealthy food and beverage marketing, zoning to increase access to healthy foods and to encourage physical activity, etc.) to help address the childhood obesity epidemic and particularly in high-risk populations (Dietz, Bland, Gortmaker, Molloy, & Schmid, 2002). However, the importance of rapid population-based action to address childhood obesity should not outweigh understanding the unintended consequences of establishing policies without evidence of their potential effectiveness with specific populations. Understanding the current challenges in implementing evidence-based practices and existing policies will also be critical for developing future interventions.

Limited data exists on community-level interventions with sustainable outcomes for Black children at risk or currently affected by childhood obesity. Examples of community-level interventions, including the Girls health Enrichment Multi-site Studies GEMS (Robinson et al., 2003), the Central California Regional Obesity Prevention Program (Schwarte et al., 2010), Shape Up Somerville: Eat Smart, Play Hard (Economos et al., 2001), and Hip Hop to Health Jr. (Fitzgibbon et al., 2011)

Table 16.1 Examples of ethnic marketing techniques used to market foods and beverages to Black consumers

Technique	Definition	Example
Advertising	Any paid form of nonpersonal communication about an organization, product, service, or idea by an identified sponsor[a]	McDonald's and KFC targeted African American youth with TV advertising, websites, and banner ads. The African American teens saw 75% more TV ads for McDonald's and KFC than white teens[b]
Event Sponsorship	A type of promotion where a company provides financial support in return for the right to display a brand name, logo, or advertising message and be identified as an event supporter[c]	In order to increase engagement with multicultural college-age consumers, Sprite sponsored and hosted a step dance competition open to step troupes from college campuses across the nation.[d] Stepping is an ages-old tradition of African-American sororities and fraternities
Product Placements	References to or inclusion of a product or service within some media (e.g., movie, song) in return for payment or other benefits[e]	McDonald's Corp. hired an entertainment marketing firm to design strategies to encourage hip-hop artists to integrate the Big Mac sandwich into their songs. Artists receive $1–$5 each time their song is played on the radio[f]
Street Teams	A group or organization called upon to promote and advertise an event or venture[g]	Pepsi sent six vans and six trucks carrying disc jockeys and soda products to Black and Hispanic neighborhoods in 22 cities. The vans and trucks went to schools, parks, and basketball courts, and asked audiences to sing and rap for Mountain Dew items. They also distributed 20-ounce bottles which included offers under the cap for another free bottle[h]
Giveaways, Scholarships	A product given away to potential customers without demanding any payment for it[i]	Coca Cola awards $125,000 in scholarships to five Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) in Louisiana to support women's empowerment and education initiatives[j]
Internet Websites	An organization makes information available about their product on the internet. The website allows for use of additional marketing techniques	On the Reese's Puffs cereal website one can listen to a predominately Black youth band rap about the taste of Reese's Puffs, or create one's own mixes with the online mixing board (reesepuffs.com)
Mobile Marketing	The use of mobile medium as a marketing vehicle. May involve text messages, delivery of coupons, or access to internet marketing	Coca-Cola's and Church's chicken collaborated on the "Be Heard" mobile promotion allows customers to text a code on their mobile devices for coupons and to enter a sweepstakes for a chance to win cash awards[k]

Table 16.1 (continued)

Technique	Definition	Example
Social Media Marketing	Social media involves an online platform or site that focuses on building and reflecting on social relations among people, who for example, share interests and/or activities.[l] Social Media Marketing involves activities directed at these networks	Sprite developed the Sprite Yard program for mobile phones to interact with its "mostly African American youth target audience" by letting them download information, share pictures, and text with friends.[m] The Sprite Yard example reflects the use of a social media for marketing on a mobile platform
Community Relations	Community Relations is the process that an organization uses to connect with its various constituents such as clients, volunteers, donors, community partners, and peers[n]	General Mills created the "Feeding Dreams" program to recognize everyday people in the Black community who positively impact their communities.[o] The program gives cash prizes and donations to the recognized individuals' favorite charities

[a]Belch, G., & Belch M. (2012). Advertising and promotions: An integrated marketing communications perspective. 9e

[b]Harris, J. L., Schwartz, M. B., & Brownell, K. D. (2010). *Fast Food F.A.C.T.S.: Evaluating Fast Food Nutrition and Marketing to Youth*. Rudd Center for Food Policy & Obesity

[c]Belch, G., & Belch M. (2012). Advertising and promotions: An integrated marketing communications perspective. 9e

[d]Sprite Step Off. (2010). Promo Magazine, Jul 3, 2010. Accessed 4 Oct, 2011, from http://promomagazine.com/pro_awards/sprite-step-off/

[e]Percy, Larry. (2008). Strategic integrated marketing communications, new media and other IMC options (pp.131–132). Oxford, UK: Elsevier

[f]Graser, M. (2005, March 23). McDonald's buying way into Hip-Hop Song Lyrics. *Advertising Age*

[g]News Marketing Group. Street Team. Found on October 5, 2011, from http://newsmarketing-group.com/site/earning-while-learning/street-team/

[h]Adage. (2000). Urban warfare; Hip-hop and street savvy are soda marketers' weapons in the battle for minority kids. Found on http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1G1-65103765.html.

[i]The Internet Marketing Dictionary. Giveaway. Found on October 5, 2011, from http://www.internetmarketing-dictionary.com/Give-Away.html

[j]Coca Cola jazzes up the Essence music festival with $125,000 in scholarships to schools in Louisiana. Found at http://www.eurweb.com/2011/07/coca-cola%C2%AE-jazzes-up-the-essence-music-festival%E2%84%A2-with-125000-in-scholarships-to-schools-in-louisiana/

[k]Butcher, Dan. (2009) Church's Chicken, Coca-Cola use SMS to connect with urban youth, (January 28), Accessed 1 Oct, 2011. http://www.mobilemarketer.com/cms/news/messaging/2532.print

[l]Mashable. Social networking. Found October 5, 2011, from http://mashable.com/follow/topics/social-networking/

[m]Khan, M. A. (2007). Coca-Cola debuts ambitious mobile push for Sprite *DM News, June 06*. Retrieved from http://www.dmnews.com/Coca-Cola-debuts-ambitious-mobile-push-for-Sprite/article/95828/

[n]Marketing and Community Relations Module. Found on October 5, 2011, from http://www.nonprofitinclusiveness.org/files/Module%2015.pdf

[o]General Mills expands its Feeding Dreams programs to honor heroes in 10 markets, (August 3, 2010). Accessed 7 Oct 2011. http://www.targetmarketnews.com/storyid08041001.htm

have engaged Black children in healthy eating and/or active living demonstrating modest improvements in outcomes. Still, clearly additional research is needed to elucidate both the targets (e.g., school settings, family-based, etc.) for interventions and the community processes whereby changes can be accomplished.

Collaborating and working with members of the community is fundamental for efforts to improve the health status of communities, and particularly in communities of color. Communities have been described as physical or social entities that are sufficiently defined to support focused interventions (Robinson, 2005). History, culture, context, and geography provide the core basis for understanding the consciousness, experience, and social boundaries of communities as well as how and why people are exposed to particular factors. Communities are complex systems and understanding how communities are organized and operate may increase researchers as well as community-based research partners' ability to take a holistic or integrated approach to the design of programs to address food, activity, and weight.

A universal definition does not exist for community-centered approaches. However, community-centered strategies similar to community engagement approaches have been described as strategies that utilize community assets, community capacity and research to develop effective interventions (Lindau et al. 2011; Wandersman, 2003). The value of community-centered approaches is their ability to strengthen communities from the inside out. Community-centered approaches are highly effective because they do not merely address the impact of environmental factors on an individual's health and lifestyle, but on the community as a whole.

Utilizing community-centered approaches can be a powerful contributor in generating endogenous solutions to combat childhood obesity. Successfully addressing childhood obesity will also require integration and collaboration from all sectors (e.g., education, government, business, faith-based, public health, etc.) and interests or providers that work within specific areas to meet community needs. As we work towards eradicating childhood obesity we must have well-connected, interdependent sectors that share responsibility for recognizing and resolving environmental factors that impact community health.

The *Community-centered View of Influences on Eating, Activity, and Body Weight* (see Fig. 16.1) was developed by Dr. Shiriki Kumanyika, Founder and Chair of the African American Collaborative Obesity Research Network (AACORN) based at the University of Pennsylvania Perelman School of Medicine. This model is based on a systems-oriented framework and was developed for communities and researchers to think through approaches to intervening on obesity in people-oriented rather than problem-oriented terms. The model is geared to a collective or group perspective, i.e., what are the environmental or behavioral issues "on average" or that tend to be the most common in communities. Key questions to understand the dynamics of eating, activity, and body weight include:

- How do eating, physical activity, and weight reflect the opportunities, constraints, and issues in people's everyday lives?
- What aspects of people's everyday lives and circumstances must be considered in order to develop appropriate, effective, and sustainable intervention approaches?
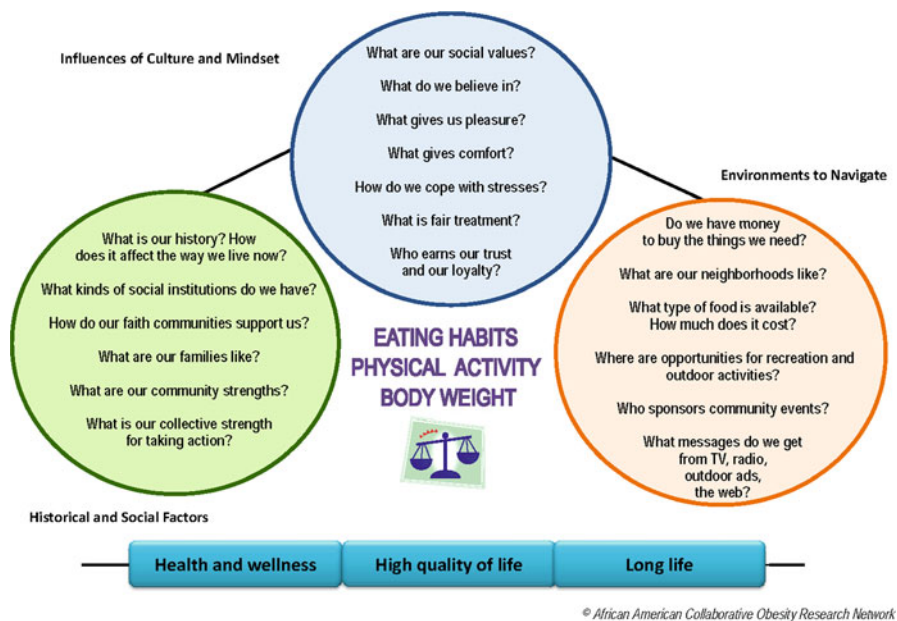
Influences of Culture and Mindset

What are our social values?

What do we believe in?

What gives us pleasure?

What gives comfort?

How do we cope with stresses?

What is fair treatment?

Who earns our trust and our loyalty?

Environments to Navigate

What is our history? How does it affect the way we live now?

What kinds of social institutions do we have?

How do our faith communities support us?

What are our families like?

What are our community strengths?

What is our collective strength for taking action?

EATING HABITS
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY
BODY WEIGHT

Do we have money to buy the things we need?

What are our neighborhoods like?

What type of food is available? How much does it cost?

Where are opportunities for recreation and outdoor activities?

Who sponsors community events?

What messages do we get from TV, radio, outdoor ads, the web?

Historical and Social Factors

Health and wellness | High quality of life | Long life

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Fig. 16.1 A community-centered view of influences on eating, activity, and body weight

- How can interventions on obesity support high quality of life and community priorities that are broader than food, activity, or weight?

In other words, it is not simply a matter of teaching people about how many calories are in their food or how long they would have to exercise in order to burn a certain number of calories. The issue is much more complicated, as many people in Black communities already know this information. To elicit reflection on the complexity of the issue, the model shown in the diagram calls for reflection of several different types of community-level factors that influence (1) eating habits and physical activity and, ultimately, body weight and body fatness; and (2) resources available to take positive actions to address social or health issues that may be associated with eating or activity habits or weight.

This approach recognizes that individuals within a community have a lot of variation in what they eat, how active they are, or whether they are overweight, but focuses on the concept that improvements on these fronts are needed to foster health and wellness and, therefore, high quality of life and longevity. Identifying processes whereby Black communities undergo positive structural and cultural changes and how these processes might apply to food-related and physical activity behaviors is still needed. This model also reiterates the need for endogenous, community-driven solutions that are congruent with community perspectives and preferences.

To understand the community response and perceptions of the food marketing environment, particularly responses by Blacks, it is important to first understand some of the issues facing these consumers. Ultimately food purchases and intake are a matter of individual choice that is greatly influenced by exposure to food marketing strategies and tactics. As described earlier, research suggests that Blacks face challenges with all four components of the food marketing system; namely, place (i.e., geographic location, types of outlets), product (i.e., food attributes, quality and quantity), price (i.e., amount charged, discounts offered), and promotion (i.e., advertising and consumer promotion) (Drewnowski, 2009; Grier & Kumanyika, 2008; Yancey et al., 2009). These challenges are embedded within complex community processes and involve business practices that are driven by profitability of many unhealthy foods. The issue is not only marketers targeting Blacks for unhealthy food and beverages but the perception that Blacks only eat certain foods that may be less healthful. Therefore, marketing continually targets these products to Black consumers.

If current consumer demand has been shaped by marketing and marketing continues to reinforce certain types of demand, even highly motivated individuals are constantly challenged to work against the multitude of commercial marketing forces that promote unhealthy eating and perpetuate the norms of unhealthy eating. One could argue that marketers are only marketing what individuals are willing to buy and ultimately want. However, from an historical perspective we recognize that certain food and beverage products have been aligned with certain ethnic groups over time and since it has been done over time it has shaped individuals' preferences (Birch, 1999; James, 2004). Thus, individual preferences are shaped by the marketing system that reinforces in many cases the unhealthy preferences we want people to avoid. As noted, beyond shaping individual preferences, marketing creates the environments in which individuals interact with food and beverages and therefore influences community norms regarding eating behaviors (Grier & Kumanyika, 2008; Grier et al., 2007; Story, Neumark-Sztainer, & French, 2002). Thus, without ameliorative environmental changes, success in changing community preferences will continue to be limited or absent.

From a public health perspective, certain groups, such as children and youth, and for different reasons, Black consumers, may be considered vulnerable to aspects of marketing (Grier & Kumanyika, 2010; Mello, Studdert, & Brennan, 2006). However, we have limited knowledge of how members of groups targeted for marketing that can be considered harmful view the marketing they encounter. Do various segments within the Black community view certain marketing strategies and tactics directed towards them as fair or unfair? Also, how do individuals relate these marketing practices to their food marketing environments? Acknowledging the heterogeneous nature of Black communities (Kumanyika et al., 2007) is critical when examining potential answers to these questions.

Examining Black Adult and Youth Perceptions of Food Marketing

Research in marketing pertaining to Black consumers' perceptions of their food marketing environment is fairly scarce. In 2009, AACORN conducted a pilot study to ascertain Black adult and youth perceptions of social injustices, with respect to targeted marketing as a foundation for the development of community-centered approaches to improve food marketing environments. The purpose of this study was to inform the development of a multi-site study that would further examine whether framing adverse marketing practices as social justice issues would be effective as a basis for community mobilization to change demand or stimulate counter-marketing campaigns. Understanding community perceptions of the environments individuals have to navigate in their day-to-day lives is an important first step in determining the trigger points for generating support in terms of what is most needed and desired to sustain the health and well-being of the community.

Six semi-structured focus groups (90 min sessions) were conducted by trained moderators at various community locations (e.g., community center, church, etc.). The study design, which focused on understanding responses of this specific target population for food and beverage marketing, only engaged participants who self-identified their race as "Black" to participate in the study. Stratified sampling by age, gender (youth only), and recent exposure to lifestyle weight loss programs was used based on the expectation that these groups may have different responses to food and beverage marketing practices and that this level of group homogeneity would facilitate focused discussions. Key study inclusion criteria also required adult participants to have at least one child (3–18 years of age) in the household to increase the likelihood that participants would have opinions about scenarios that involve marketing to children and youth.

The focus group respondents included: adolescent males ($N=5$), adolescent females ($N=6$), male and female adult caregivers ($N=9$), adult caregivers who participated in a weight loss program ($N=10$), and older adults ($N=7$). Study participants' education varied from the highest level of education completed being 8th grade to completing a graduate degree. Income data was not collected from study participants. However, all study participants were from the same zip code areas in West and Southwest Philadelphia, PA. Recruitment for this study occurred through AACORN's community partners in these neighborhoods known to have ongoing involvement with the types of participants needed and with facilities suitable for conducting group interviews.

The focus groups explored respondent reactions to brief scenarios designed to reflect the types of marketing practices that might be perceived as unfair, including examples of marketing to both youth and adults. Focus group data was collected through a demographic survey and electronic auto response software. During the focus group sessions, questions and scenarios of different marketing strategies and tactics were presented and individuals responded independently using the auto response software keypads. Individual responses were tabulated and presented during

the focus group to motivate further discussion of individual and group perceptions. All of the focus group discussions were audio taped and transcribed.

The analysis of the pilot study data examined the following questions: would respondents consider any of the scenarios to represent unfair or unjust practices; what the characteristics of those scenarios were; the nature of any specific perceived injustice; what types of actions the injustice would warrant, and by whom; what language and concepts the participants use when discussing these issues; and what demographic or consumer characteristics were associated with particular responses.

The results presented below are based on a data-driven content analysis of partial data (qualitative data only) from the six semi-structured focus groups ($N = 37$). Consequently, the data presented should be regarded as providing preliminary insights rather than summary conclusions about the entire data set. Dimensionalizing techniques (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004) were used to examine a group of codes that were emerging in the data as a category or theme and how the dimensions that emerged from the data were different or similar. Text segments that are most representative of each focus group's theme describing Black adult and youth responses (in the participants' voices) to the marketing system of price, promotion, product, and placement/distribution, and the use of ethnic target marketing strategies are presented in Fig. 16.2.

Marketing Tactic/ Strategy	Price Variation	Placement/ Channels of Distribution	Product	Promotion- Celebrity Endorsement		Cultural References and Cues
Question	Smaller neighborhood stores tend to have higher prices than larger supermarkets or "big box" stores (e.g., Wal-Mart). Do you think this is fair to the consumer?	Do you know of neighborhoods that don't have supermarkets?	Does it matter to you that companies target you to sell certain foods and beverages?	Lil Wayne headlining a Coco Cola concert or Burger King family fun days with Mario (R & B singer) - Do you see this as marketing?	Popular artists' songs (e.g., Chris Brown - Doublemint gum) and images are used to promote specific product brands. Does this type of ad influence what people buy? [youth: "... what you buy"]	Does it matter to you if advertisers appeal to your ethnicity or cultural ties?
Responses from Female Youth (16-21 years of age)	Sue "I said it is not fair to the consumer because even though their stores are smaller they might need more money so they can make it better or make it bigger. But it is unfair to the customer that they have to pay more rather than the bigger companies."	Heather "Yes, and you are not getting the most for your money, if you don't have a supermarket in your neighborhood." Carrie "Yes, people got to travel to go get their food."	Heather "I put no, because it really don't matter to me. I am still going to eat the food or whatever. I mean food is food to me...I really don't take into consideration all that healthy stuff. Do what you are going to do."	Sue "Yes, because he is advertising something and trying to sell it." Ashley "Yes, because he is hot and people will like to buy stuff from him."	Ashley "I was going to say that I don't really care what they wear or whatever. I wear what I want to wear." Heather "Yeah it does matter about the product."	Sue "It don't matter because I'm still going to eat what I want." Christie "Yes and no, you know what I am saying? They just want to make themselves look better."
Responses from Male Youth (16-21 years of age)	Ned "Corner stores are there to meet the needs of the consumer and if the corner store did sell things like a box of cereal for, like, two-fifty, it wouldn't be able to make that much of a profit to actually renew its stock...like, larger stores can sell it at a, like, cheaper price because they buy in bulk, but a corner store doesn't make as much money. I could be wrong; I have the right to be wrong, but that's just what I think." Bob "The corner stores are selfish."	Mike "I've never had to catch the bus with groceries and I hope I'd never have to but I imagine it would be pretty annoying to have to take bags on public transportation. You know, if there's not a supermarket, there is, like they showed in the picture, a gas station or a corner store which seem to, most of the time, have a lot lesser quality when it comes to the care that is used with the food."	Ned "I say 'yes it does matter' because it's you specifically. How could it not, like, matter to you if it doesn't pertain to you. But it affects me and it has me in the category." Phil "Well, I guess I'm neutral in that because... they're targeting me to sell foods and beverages, if I don't want them, I won't get them so it's not really hurting me."	Bob "People like to go with what one person is doing so if they see Lil Wayne, somebody that is famous for being, like, kind of a leader even though he is a horrible leader, doing something like drinking Coca Cola, they are going to think...they are going to try and play on that."	Ned "Because I don't buy it either way. If I don't like, I don't like it, so I will not buy it."	Ned "Yes...it's modern-day racism because what they're blatantly saying is that I want to do something that goes directly to this one minority or one, like, group - period."

Fig. 16.2 Black consumer responses to marketing tactics and strategies. Pseudonyms have been added to all comments presented in the figure

Responses from Male Parents/ Caregivers (22 to 65 years of age)	Steve "It's a fact that smaller businesses have to pay more for their products than a larger establishment does. Such as if you were to shop at ShopRite, what they're getting for a gallon of milk versus your corner store getting for a gallon of milk, it's going to be almost a dollar difference for that same gallon of milk. Therefore, that corner store, for them to make any profit, may have to charge fifty cents more than ShopRite because they're paying a dollar more to start with."	Jason " I'll go with the fact that would make you have to go to a corner store which can jack up the price for a little more, I won't say a whole lot more, but it's going to be more for you to have that product, whatever it is that you're looking for, in their store. So, you're at their mercy. It's not like there's a ...the word eludes me however, but there's no. competition. "	George "Yes, I guess it shouldn't because ... I'm going to eat what I want to eat. It doesn't matter, you know, what you promote. If I don't like it, it won't get bought."	Gary "I think anytime you have sponsorships, that's a form of marketing because you know that when any type of production, Family Fest, you'll have a lot of different companies and they advertise. If their brand name is there, it's advertising."	Steve "...To me it doesn't matter what the product is because... I won't say the average person, but there's going to be somebody out there that's going to purchase a product that you endorse because you're famous."	Gary "I think there are just certain products that we all use, certain products that we don't all use. I chose that vein because that seems to be the thing that for years...I've been involved in a lot of discussions with a lot of different people, but that is the one thing that has always been plagued or pushed in our neighborhoods because that is one thing that they know people will run after and go after."
Responses from Female Parents/Caregivers (22 to 65 years of age)	Mary "I put 'no' because I figure they know it's unfair, and we can't get to the big market. So lower your prices, so more people can probably come to your store. Anne "I answered 'yes.' The only reason I feel that it is fair to the consumer is because they put the corner stores there for convenience. So therefore in order for the corner stores to be able make their profit, they do have to jack things up a little bit higher than the supermarkets."	Joan "In the first place, they are making you go to a corner store which is higher and it's inconvenient... So you are not getting the most for your money, if you don't have a supermarket in your neighborhood."	Lisa "I agree that it does depend on what they are selling, but at the same time, if you're targeting me, that means that you are targeting the things that I like – what I'm going to the store to buy on a regular basis. If it's not just to me...if it's something that's going to make me obese, that's my decision. They are more interested in money, what can they do to make a profit off of everybody."	Mary "When you bring a group of people together and they're having fun and stuff, you are really putting that advertisement out. So, sooner or later, somebody in the group or family is going to buy some Burger King."	Anne "Yes, if they idolize that certain singer or actor. A lot of times you have young people...or sometimes older people... You might see something and say, "That's nice, I like that." It influences all age groups. It might sound crazy, but some people think that if they dress like that person, they might even be able to sing or dance like that person." Kim "I don't care what the product is...Most of the time it costs too much."	Lisa "I chose 'No' because I feel like a lot of the companies don't care what your ethnic background is, their whole motive is to try to pull you in. You're trying to get everybody to promote it...but you're talking about 'creeping.' If you didn't know that was a commercial, you would think that they were talking about someone cheating on him or something like that. They don't care what your background is; they are just trying to get you to come in and to spend that money."
Responses from Adults with experience in weight loss program (22 to 65 years of age)	Eve "I took into account your point of view that they have less stuff. They have to charge more for profit but I still said that it was unfair because I felt the unfairness is in... when there's no option. When you go to the corner store because it's convenient and you want to pay more for convenience, that's fine, but if you are going there because it is the only store, then it becomes unfair because you don't have an option."	Roxy "Yeah, I mean, if I want to walk to the market, it's not convenient for me to walk to Super Fresh, Fresh Grocer or ShopRite." Val "And If you go on SEPTA, you can't get everything you want."	Melanie "I think it matters simply when they get their facts right."	Celeste "Well basically it's just to promote more business for Burger King...to show what more they might be offering or something like that. That is basically all that I see it as, just something to promote, you know you either go more to Burger King than say, McDonalds or any other place."	Rose "They are the ones promoting this, because these children don't know nothing about that until you brainwash them with this. I believe basically, that's all it is: brainwashing."	Celeste "If it's a negative product, then I would be concerned if it's targeted toward us, but overall it was just something to catch you, and to get you, it doesn't matter to me. But, if it's something like targeting children and is negative and it's targeted to my child, then it would be a problem."
Responses from Seniors (65 years of age or older)	Jen "Because most senior citizens are on a fixed income and they cannot afford to be spending extra money, is what I feel." Lynn "People don't go to them so they have to jack their prices up to make ends meet with rent and... you know you got to pay the government tax and all that. They pass right by their stores and go on to the market."	Nicole "Well I said 'yes' because a lot of stores that had been supermarkets, they closed down because they were not doing the business like they should do and did not have the people to work in it. The prices were too high, so they had to shut down." Joan "You have to go too far to try and shop and then maybe you might settle for whatever is in the way..."	Nicole "I look at it like this now. For instance, say if I had a store and they wanted to get me to sell this or sell that, I don't have to get that product in my store because that is my store, I don't have to take it. Now if I know I can't sell it, nobody's going to buy, why should I put it in stock in my place?"	Chloe "I see what they did as a kind of advertising ...something to make people to buy more from them."	Nicole "Well I said 'yes' because now I have quite a few grands and great-grands, I had an eleven-year-old who wanted Nikes, and then another one, the thirteen-year-old one said, "I want both of them." So it influences the younger kids too."	Courtney "I said 'yes, it bothers me' because I remember when they used to have the Colt 45 ads on the TV and it was always in our neighborhood. You know, some of us, they want us to buy ...it bothers me. I have been noticing that. It does bother me."

Fig. 16.2   (continued)

Preliminary Findings: A Summary of Respondents' Views on Marketing Tactics and Strategies

Price was viewed as very important and respondents were aware of differences in food prices among different types of food outlets. Interestingly, even access to food outlets were described by respondents in terms of price. Respondents associated

smaller food outlets closer to home, with higher prices and the cost of accessing food that is not accessible in your neighborhood. However, several of the respondents, particularly male youth and male caregivers, also appreciated the need for businesses to make a profit. In terms of products, views ranged from product marketing having no effect or some effect on consumers to a desire for marketers to direct certain products towards them. The use of celebrities in promotion was viewed as a positive strategy for businesses but some respondents also found it less favorable for children or individuals easily influenced by others. In general, respondents provided more comments about how the various food and beverage marketing scenarios affected others than about how the marketing directly affected their own actions or behaviors. The data also demonstrated how segments of the community, particularly adolescents and adults, may perceive the same marketing environment in different ways.

The data suggests that although respondents acknowledged and had specific opinions on the use of cultural and ethnic target marketing there was no consensus of viewing these marketing strategies as positive or negative. In general, respondents recognized ethnic marketing and the use of cultural references and cues as the norm. Differences in perceptions were also dependent on the product being directed to certain groups. Products viewed as less healthful or more harmful elicited a strong negative reaction whereas less harmful types of products elicited a neutral response with the use of cultural references and ethnic target marketing.

The findings from this pilot study demonstrate that Blacks of various ages, gender, and life experiences view marketing both favorably and with concerns. The concerns voiced focused on how marketing impacts consumers' choices or lack of choice. The data suggest that respondents may not fully appreciate the interplay between community supply and demand and have accepted the current marketing tactics and strategies directed towards them as part of their overall experience as consumers. However, the opportunity to amplify the consumer voice and have marketers as well as food and beverage companies respond to meet a new consumer demand also exist (Denegri-Knott, Zwick, & Schroeder, 2006).

Respondents are aware that they are reacting to a set of circumstances related to their food marketing environment; however, they seem less conscious of their potential role in changing elements of their food environment that they may believe are not truly working in their favor. The complexity of what individuals perceive as acceptable to the extent that they are not seeking opportunities to change the marketing system but yet still recognize the need for some degree of change is the public health dilemma that necessitates additional research in the domain of consumer response to food marketing environments.

Discussion and Future Directions

Our preliminary findings highlight the diversity of views towards marketing among even a small sample of Black consumers. The semi-structured focus group approach used for this study works well for uncovering individuals' perceptions of marketing

by providing them a forum to share personal experiences as well as other peoples' experiences in a narrative format. The narratives revealed the complex and in some cases misguided perceptions of consumer power. Therefore, the immediate opening for changing the relationship between marketers and consumers may lie in increasing or facilitating opportunities for consumers to recognize their role in the co-creation of marketing.

As mentioned earlier, advances in technology have made it possible for nearly everyone to have an active voice in the conversation and engagement of marketing. This increasing shift in power is regarded as beneficial for consumers (Denegri-Knott et al., 2006). The use of data illuminating the tactics and strategies used in the food marketing system similar to techniques used in tobacco counter-marketing may also prove to be a powerful organizing tool in Black communities and the news media that serve them (Yerger, Daniel, & Malone, 2005).

Additional analyses of the data will provide insights about specific communication strategies to shift community responses to the current food marketing environment towards a demand for marketing of more healthful food and beverages. Often, interventions are framed as actions taken in the "best interests" of the community. An understanding of the best interests of the community in relation to inequitable food marketing environments may be used to develop communication strategies to engender community awareness, interest, and action regarding changing food demand and supply. A critical first step appears to involve increasing the importance of the issue of food marketing to both youth and adults with other major day-to-day interests and priorities in Black communities.

An applicable model that is specifically designed to activate community members using a marketing mind-set is the Community-Based Prevention Model (CBPM). CBPM is a framework for community-directed social change that utilizes marketing strategies and theories to create and evaluate health promotion and disease prevention programs. In the CBPM framework, "prevention" refers to promoting positive health behaviors and minimizing negative health behaviors. "Marketing" refers to the key distinguishing features of commercial marketing normally used to sell a product or service in the consumer marketplace (Bryant et al., 2007). The primary goal of CBPM is to enhance a community's ability to work together to pursue evidence-based strategies to address public health concerns as well as to empower the community by placing community members in control of the issues investigated.

Precedent for solving other public health issues that are similarly woven into the social fabric suggests that the elements of solutions essentially constitute a social movement (Economos et al., 2001). Young people, in particular, are at the center of social change and have a critical voice in helping to improve community environments for healthful eating with reciprocal benefits for youth development and well-being (Millstein & Sallis, 2011). Youth organizing draws on the power of youth to create the change they want to see in their community (Deschenes, McLaughlin, & Newman, 2008). The benefits of having youth actively engaged in decision making about the institutions and systems that affect their communities are numerous. However, the inclusion of youth perspectives, especially from Black youth, in the development and implementation of solutions to address the obesity epidemic has

been largely overlooked. One of the greatest pleasures in working with youth may be the simple, honest, yet unexpected responses they give to complicated problems. Youth have the ability to influence their peers and think creatively in ways adults cannot conceptualize, while adults are able to think systemically and identify unintended consequences of change. Therefore, the need for creative and innovative youth-adult partnered approaches in developing communication strategies and interventions to address childhood obesity is greater than ever. Additionally, further research is still needed on the marketing environment as a comprehensive system, i.e., where all of the components of marketing are examined together. This is critical since this is the way businesses develop their strategies, and this is a way we can understand the marketing context in which consumers make choices and act.

The approach and findings from AACORN's research also suggest that data on ethnic target marketing approaches can be made comprehensible to communities and injected meaningfully into public debates over exposure to marketing practices that can have negative effects on health. The role of public policy with regards to the food marketing environment suggests an important relationship between decisions at all levels of government and the social environment of communities that support, encourage, and promote healthful eating among its members. Determining which policies will be effective in which populations requires evidence in not only objective but also subjective aspects of consumer food purchasing and consumption behavior in relation to food cost availability and promotion.

Conclusions

Given the multifaceted nature of childhood obesity, a multidisciplinary approach, involving collaborative efforts, across fields will be required. In addition to innovative and cross-cutting approaches, funding to support research, interventions and policy initiatives in communities as well as evaluation, will also be necessary. The need for community-centric research questions and the role of community-partner approaches is clear. Integrating community perspectives to develop interventions is an important component of childhood obesity prevention efforts. To a large extent, the literature provides little guidance on communication strategies related to food marketing for obesity prevention in communities of color, and specifically Black communities. This lack of evidence and the complexity of implementing a comprehensive approach to childhood obesity prevention that includes the use of marketing and media communication channels create challenges in moving communities from awareness to action (Swinburn, Gill, & Kumanyika, 2005). Generating endogenous, community-driven solutions that are congruent with community perspectives and preferences is essential for addressing the current inequities in food marketing.

The path to solutions is a two-way street. The current food marketing environment is a result of controllable strategies that businesses develop, therefore proactive corporate interventions, such as increased targeting of healthful foods and beverages,

are also needed. Communities and specifically Black communities must embrace their power to push back on a system that fully recognizes and expects them to participate in co-creation. While a shift in community demand can motivate such changes, companies will need to alter the supply in these communities and ultimately focus on value in terms of community health and choice in relation to food marketing environments.

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