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How Media and Family Build Children's Persuasion Knowledge

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ABSTRACT

The changing media landscape alters media use and advertising exposure, which impacts advertising literacy. We investigate socialization forces (media, family) on advertising persuasion knowledge in preschool children. Findings from in-depth interviews with 29 parent–child dyads revealed prevalent on-demand mobile media use with less live commercial TV viewing and parental co-viewing. Preschool children are exposed to fewer commercials in their home yet are still exposed to advertising messages outside the home, which parents view as having powerful, direct effects on their children. Our data reveal perceptions of children's coping effects, as well as parental strategies for addressing advertising for their children. Future research related to the nature of parents' persuasion knowledge and advertising literacy discussion among their children is advised.

Today's media environment is changing the ways families consume media. Cord-cutting from cable television and on-demand media viewing on multiple devices are on the rise (Whitney 2014). Although television may remain the primary medium for families (Connell, Lauricella, and Wartella 2015), fewer children have televisions in their rooms and more children—including 3- and 4-year-olds—have tablets (Malnick 2014). These trends in media use likely reflect changes in advertising exposure as well, which impact parents' and children's knowledge of advertising and its various forms (e.g., advergames; Evans, Carlson, and Hoy 2013). Advertising literacy, “the skills of analyzing, evaluating and creating persuasive messages across a variety of contexts and media” (Livingstone and Helsper 2006, 562; Young 2003), develops from persuasion knowledge (PK), which is a broader concept related to the understanding of how, when, and why persuasion attempts are made (Wright, Friestad, and Boush 2005).

PK evolves across a person's life span from firsthand experiences with persuasion tactics, such as advertising, as well as social interactions and conversations about persuasion (Friestad and Wright 1994). Studies of children's understanding of advertising have focused on how television (e.g., Macklin 1987; Oates, Blades, and Gunter 2002), family interactions (e.g., Ward, Wackman, and Wartella 1977; Reid 1979), and parental mediation relate to children's understanding of advertising and its effects (e.g., Buijzen and Valkenburg 2005). Importantly, the studies typically use television as the exemplar for advertising (e.g., Rozendaal, Buijzen, and Valkenburg 2010; Rozendaal, Oprea, and Buijzen 2014). For example, in a meta-analysis of children's understanding of advertising, Martin (1997) only includes those studies that address the questions: “What is a commercial? Why is a commercial on television? What is a commercial trying to do?” This may not be surprising given that in the 1970s, when research on children and advertising developed, television was still the predominant medium. Indeed, several studies show

the influence of television on children's product preferences (Moore and Lutz 2000), purchase requests (Buijzen and Valkenburg 2000), and consumption of foods (Harrison, Liechty, and The STRONG Kids Program 2012). However, there is some evidence that changes in media use necessitate a reexamination of advertising literacy and persuasion knowledge. For example, parents' persuasion knowledge of newer advertising forms such as advergames is quite low compared with their persuasion knowledge about traditional advertising (Evans, Carlson, and Hoy 2013).

Friestad and Wright (1994) recognized that persuasion knowledge can shift: "The culturally supplied folk wisdom on persuasion changes over time, so that each generation's and culture's thinking may differ somewhat from that of past generations and other cultures" (1). This point was echoed by Mallalieu, Palan, and Lacznia (2005), who warned that "relying on results from research that is ten, twenty, even thirty years old is not ideal given the changing nature of the media environment to which different generations of children are exposed" (62). Therefore, given the media shifts in recent years, we focus on the development of advertising persuasion knowledge and how it has changed.

Rather than investigating what happens when children are exposed to advertising in an experimental setting or asking parents to self-report media use behaviors on a survey, we take a consumer socialization perspective (development of skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for proper functioning within the marketplace; Ward 1974) and rely on a qualitative approach. We focus on two environmental factors (e.g., John and Whitney 1986) of consumer socialization: media and parents. Although there are additional consumer socialization agents (e.g., peers, siblings, school), parents remain the primary caregiver for our population of interest: preschool children (Raley, Bianchi, and Wang 2012; Laughlin 2013). Further, media usage among young children remains high (about 20 hours per week; Harrison, Liechty, and The STRONG Kids Program 2012), with most of the media consumed in the home (Connell, Lauricella, and Wartella 2015).

The majority of scholars studying children and media are behaviorists (Harrison 2015), yet "there is no substitute for the opportunity to observe behavior *in vivo* if one wishes to map its complexities" (Harrison 2015, 4). Indeed, Connell, Lauricella, and Wartella (2015) suggest that future research should examine media "co-use more closely within the context of family life in order to increase understanding regarding differences in such practices and the outcomes they might have" (17). Therefore, by entering the homes of parents and their young children, observing their media devices and use, and talking with them about the role of media in their lives, we were able to gauge the everyday lived media experiences of families and how they perceive and cope with persuasion episodes. Specifically, we ask the following research question: [How] do media exposure and parents help young children develop advertising persuasion knowledge and cope with advertising? To answer this question, we rely on in-depth interviews of parents and their children ages 3–5 years. We focus on media environments and consumption patterns of contemporary preschoolers and the ways in which these exposure patterns combine with parental influences to cultivate advertising literacy and persuasion knowledge.

Consumer socialization and persuasion knowledge

Consumer socialization focuses on the development of skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for proper functioning within the marketplace (Ward 1974; Moschis and Churchill 1978). Perspectives on consumer socialization are typically divided into the psychological developmental approach and the socialization approach (Buijzen and Valkenburg 2008). While the psychological approach focuses on the age-related cognitive and information-processing aspects of socialization (for review, see John 1999), the socialization approach examines the dynamic interplay of various socialization agents, including media, family, and culture, on the development of consumer competencies (Ward 1974; Moschis 1987). Both approaches contribute to the collective knowledge about children's market-based knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors (Buijzen and Valkenburg 2008).

Persuasion attempts are prevalent in the marketplace. Understanding what individuals know about persuasion and how they might use that knowledge to cope with a particular persuasion attempt is captured within the Persuasion Knowledge Model (PKM; Friestad and Wright 1994). The model assumes that gaining persuasion knowledge will help targets better cope with a persuasion episode and that

people “develop and refine persuasion knowledge continually over their life span” (Wright, Friestad, and Boush 2005, 226). Although persuasion can occur in many situations, advertising is a particular form of persuasion tactic. Most of the scholarly work on advertising has focused almost exclusively on the “conceptual knowledge of advertising” with these components: (1) recognition of advertising; (2) understanding selling intent; (3) recognition of advertising’s source; (4) perception of intended audience; (5) understanding persuasive intent; (6) understanding persuasive tactics; and (7) understanding advertising’s bias (Rozendaal, Buijzen, and Valkenburg 2011, 346). Beyond understanding commercial intent, understanding occurs when “children appreciate the use of advertising techniques, strategies, and production values” (Lawlor and Prothero 2008, 1206). Understanding the meaning of advertising and ways that children come to know about advertising is underresearched, especially among children younger than 7 years (McAlister and Cornwell 2009).

According to the developmental approach of socialization (e.g., Piaget 1929), from ages 2 to 7 years, children are in the preoperational stage. Children in this group mostly rely on perceptual features of stimuli and are only starting to develop symbolic thoughts and meanings (John 1999). Further, they exhibit “centration, the tendency to focus on a single dimension” (John 1999, 185). Thus, these young children typically lack the ability of their older counterparts to consider and relate multiple dimensions. As a result, preschoolers “distinguish commercials from programming on the basis of perceptual features (e.g., ads are shorter) instead of motive and intent (e.g., ads are intended to sell products)” (John 1999, 185). However, children as young as 2 years can recognize brand logos when prompted (Valkenburg and Buijzen 2005) and can spot brands in their daily lives by the age of 3 years (Kinsky and Bichard 2011). Some children ages 3 to 5 years can understand the notion of “selling intent,” especially in nonverbal tasks (e.g., Donohue, Henke, and Donohue 1980; Macklin 1985; McAlister and Cornwell 2009).

The ability to think about advertisers’ motives (i.e., selling intent) and their own possible behaviors depends on the children’s ‘theory of mind’ (McAlister and Cornwell 2009). Theory of mind is “a form of social development that encompasses the ability to attribute mental states (beliefs, intentions, and desires) to oneself and others and to use that mental state understanding to theorize about future behavior” (McAlister and Cornwell 2009, 176). Studies typically find that children younger than 5 years are not yet able to recognize differences between different kinds of beliefs or emotions (i.e., that others may know, believe, or feel something different from their own personal feelings or thoughts), although individual differences exist (McAlister and Cornwell 2009).

Indeed, the general consensus is “that before about 5 years of age, children do not consistently distinguish advertising from programs and so regard advertising as entertainment or as information about products rather than persuasion” (Livingstone and Helsper 2006, 562). After two studies with preschool children, McAlister and Cornwell (2009) conclude that “preschool children’s persuasion knowledge is not advanced but is developing” (182). This study seeks to provide qualitative evidence of children’s persuasion knowledge in the contemporary media context and discern how various socialization agents contribute to its development.

Family influence on consumer socialization, media use, and persuasion knowledge

Research using the socialization perspective is less likely to study persuasion knowledge directly. Rather, this stream of research has studied consumer socialization more broadly. For instance, research has consistently argued that parents, specifically mothers, play a primary role in consumer socialization (Ward, Wackman, and Wartella 1977; Carlson et al. 1994), despite the presence and influence of other environmental and contextual factors such as peers, other family members, and the mass media (e.g., Littlefield and Ozanne 2011). In particular, studies have shown how parenting style (e.g., permissive, authoritarian, authoritative), embodied in childrearing practices, directly influences the physical, cognitive, and social development of children (Baumrind 1966, 889). In turn, these parenting styles directly influence family communication patterns (FCP), which are assessed by examining the frequency, content, and structure of informal parent–child communication (e.g., Moschis 1985) to explain variations in socialization efforts and outcomes within unique communication environments (Carlson, Laczniaik, and Wertley 2011). With respect to consumer socialization, FCP indicates that socio-oriented families promote deference to

parents and monitoring and/or controlling children's consumption activities. In contrast, concept-oriented families foster development of children's autonomy, consumer skills, and competencies. FCP can also influence mothers' goals for children's consumer socialization, the type and restrictiveness of attempts to mediate the effects of media exposure, and responses to consumption and media-related requests (Carlson and Grossbart 1988; Carlson, Grossbart, and Walsh 1990). For example, Fujioka and Weintraub Austin (2002) conclude that concept-oriented parenting results in critical viewing and open discussion among parents and children, whereas socio-oriented parenting, such as rule making, can result in counterproductive outcomes, such as reinforcement of marketing messages, rather than critical discussion. Concept-oriented parent communication was also found to be more effective than socio-oriented communication in reducing unwanted effects of television ads, including purchase requests and materialism (Buijzen and Valkenburg 2005).

Interestingly, research suggests that exposure to television serves as an important source of product information (Buijzen and Valkenburg 2000) and that greater exposure results in more frequent attempts by young children to influence parental consumption (Buijzen and Valkenburg 2003; 2008). How parents deal with advertising exposure relates to their advertising mediation strategy, which can be *active mediation* (involving discussing and making active judgments about television commercials and pointing out the selling intent) or *restrictive mediation* (which purposely reduces exposure of the children to advertising; Carlson and Grossbart 1988; Buijzen and Valkenburg 2005). Findings are mixed with respect to which strategy can mitigate advertising effects, with some research suggesting more restrictive mediation results in fewer advertising effects (Wiman 1983) and other research suggesting the opposite (e.g., Bijmolt, Claassen, and Brus 1998; Buijzen and Valkenburg 2005).

As a whole, research shows that age-related cognitive development influences children's development of advertising persuasion knowledge, and that media exposure and parents can directly and indirectly socialize their children about consumption and advertising. Yet not much research has explored or directly observed the interrelationship of these influences among the youngest consumers in the contemporary media landscape. We take up this issue in this study.

Method

This study is based on parent and child interviews from a longitudinal, multisite, multimethod data set. Data were collected from 2011–2014 at three sites in the United States, including a large city in the Midwest (population 1.7 million), a large city in the Southwest (population 1.8 million), and a midsized city in the Midwest (population 231,000). Informants were recruited through parent groups and day care centers. The only eligibility requirement for participation was that parents have a child between the ages of 3 and 5 years, our focal age group. Informants were offered a financial incentive to participate: \$50 for the interview.

Our sample consisted of 29 parent–child dyads (see [appendix](#)). The sample ranged in ethnicity, religiosity, and occupation, yet all of the informants were born in the United States. All interviews were transcribed, and detailed field notes and photos of the home environments were taken, which resulted in more than 827 single-spaced pages of text.

Qualitative research in the form of a quasi-ethnography allowed researchers to gain an understanding of the context and to build rapport with the individual children and parents (Elliott and Jankel-Elliott 2003). Interviews took place in the home and included time spent interviewing a parent and then their preschool child, often in the child's bedroom or primary playroom. Interestingly, although we attempted to use a method similar to that of Reid (1979) (i.e., interview in the home and co-viewing of television), many of the informants indicated that their children did not really watch much live television, so we eliminated this aspect of the interview. Ethical procedures were followed in line with institutional research board guidelines, including obtaining written consent from parents and assent from the children.

Interviews were semistructured. Questions for the parent interview started with a grand tour question (McCracken 1988) to get to know the informant and build rapport (“tell me a bit about your family”). Subsequent questions were divided into three main sections focusing on (1) family life and parenting; (2) media exposure; and (3) consumption experiences. Beyond the general questions, probing

questions delved more deeply into emergent themes and fostered a contextualized conversational approach to interviewing (Stage and Mattson 2003). Parent interviews lasted from 45 to 65 minutes. The researcher then played with the child, often sitting on the ground and asking her or him to show the researcher toys or coloring with the child. After building rapport with the children, semistructured interviews were conducted using “task centered activities” (Banister and Booth 2005), such as drawing pictures. Children were asked about their friends, favorite book, TV show, movie, game, toy, and so on. Probing questions assessed contextual details. These play-based interviews averaged about 30 minutes.

Analytical approach

The three authors who collected data engaged in note taking, interpretation, and analysis throughout the data collection. A fourth author not involved in data collection read the entire set of transcripts to help identify underlying themes. Data were analyzed using a grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss 1967) to discover and enrich existing theory. According to Strauss and Corbin (1994), grounded theory “is a general methodology for developing theory that is grounded in data systematically gathered and analyzed” (273). Thus, grounded theory represents a mode of inquiry, analysis, or the product of analysis (Nyilasy and Reid 2009).

Interpretation of the data and the emergent themes were systematically verified throughout the analysis by referring to existing literature on persuasion knowledge (e.g., Friestad and Wright 1994; Wright, Friestad, and Boush 2005) and advertising literacy (e.g., Rozendaal, Buijzen, and Valkenburg 2011) through a “constant comparative” process. That is, data were analyzed at the intra- and inter-informant level, patterns and themes were identified, existing theory was consulted and adapted to fit the phenomenon under examination, and data were reanalyzed in light of insights gleaned from this comparative process. This iterative process of coding and analysis aided in the verification and correction of the emergent theory’s “fit” to the phenomenon under investigation and hindered premature theory generation (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Likewise, this approach embraces both inductive and deductive thinking (Charmaz 2005). In the Findings section, we outline the media environments and then discuss advertising literacy and persuasion knowledge.

Findings

Limited live commercial television exposure

To ground our discussion of PK acquisition among preschoolers, we present an overview of how the preschoolers in our sample use media. By entering the homes, we were able to witness the ownership and placement of a traditional television versus other media devices. As a whole, the families displayed a variety of media consumption patterns reflecting a balance of traditional viewing and newer forms of media consumption (e.g., tablets). Consistent findings, however, emerged for limited live commercial television viewing. Self-report surveys typically ask questions such as “time spent” with each medium (e.g., Harrison, Liechty, and The STRONG Kids Program 2012; Connell, Lauricella, and Wartella 2015), whereas rarely do they ask more specific questions about “live versus time-shifting,” about channel (e.g., commercial vs. noncommercial), or about content. By actively discussing media use with our informants, we were able to probe more deeply into the how, what, why, when, and where of media use.

Many informants were “cord-cutters” (i.e., they had no cable television) and watched content “on demand” on the television or other mobile devices or put in a DVD movie. Others let their children watch television shows from limited advertising sources like public television (PBS). Reasons for these media habits differed from cost savings to preference for on-demand content. Other informants explained conscious choices to limit commercial television as a way of avoiding advertising.

For some parents, their child’s media consumption presented a ritualized viewing of media based on habit and attachment to the medium itself (Rubin 1994) or at least to child-appropriate content, which acted as a source of escape (“downtime”) or reward (Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch 1973). Media viewing occurred on a repeated basis at a specific time and represented a specific form of content (e.g., a

Table 1. Functions of media and limited co-viewing: Example excerpts from data.

Parent (child)	Media function	Verbatim
Dawn (Amanda age 5)	Reward/downtime	They have a TV in their room, but it's not connected. We disconnected it, and we only connect it as a reward. So he'll go into her room and watch something in her room and sometimes that'll wake her up. Generally on school days, there is no TV until she gets home and I try get her to take a nap as soon as she gets home so I'll give her a snack and she goes straight to her room and watches a show.
Lisa (Ethan age 5)	Downtime	If we watch shows during the day, it's usually after lunch. Like because I'm usually pretty tired right about then so we watch those (prerecorded shows) for about an hour and then we go do something for the afternoon.
Carmen (Levy age 5)	Downtime	He is either picked up from school at 12:30 or 3:30, depending on the day. He is in school and I work during those hours and then we come home. He is allowed to—I call it de-stress, kind of detox from the day with another 30-minute program and then the rest of our day is play, dinner, bath, all that kid stuff. I used to think TV is this evil and I don't want that kind of influence on him. Now it's not even a necessary evil for us, it's necessary to an extent. My husband comes home and the first thing he does is turn on the TV and watch something. It's a mode of decompressing for people, so I've learned to embrace it.
Nicole (Ava, age 3)	Babysitter	Interviewer: So from your perspective when she's watching a show, what are you typically doing? Nicole: Housework, trying to get work done.
Anna (Melanie age 4)	Babysitter	I pay for Netflix in my family. They like to watch <i>Phineas and Ferb</i> and <i>Johnny Test</i> is one of their favorites. So usually if we need to get something done, they can go watch TV. So it is a babysitter all the time.
Carmen (Levy age 5)	Babysitter	Carmen: A typical workday is we wake up and Levy is allowed to choose a 30-minute program to watch on TV. It's usually either <i>Dino Dan</i> , <i>Dora</i> , <i>Sid the Science Kid</i> or <i>Clifford the Big Red Dog</i> ; one of those four. During that time, I normally get my workout done. Then after that it's breakfast and play time, clothes, get ready, head out the door at 8:30. He's normally up at 6, so we have plenty of time to ease into our mornings. Then off to school on the mornings he goes to school. Interviewer: What is a typical weekend day where you don't have the same pressure of having to get to school or work? Carmen: He still wakes up at 6 a.m. Holidays, rain, shine, it doesn't matter; 5:30 usually, 6 o'clock if we're lucky, ever since birth. On the mornings it's a little more flexible my husband and I take turns sleeping in. I get up on Saturday mornings and he gets up on Sunday morning; usually the first thing we'll do is we'll let him choose a full length movie, so it's usually about a 90-minute movie, your typical Disney flick. We just kind of ease into our day then. It allows me to work out or do some other things on the computer where I don't feel like I have to interact with him as much because I use the TV as a babysitter.

movie or pre-determined show); see Table 1. Importantly, the advance of technology has meant that the predominant form of media consumption was based on asynchronicity (Ruggiero 2000), allowing for on-demand media. Consequently, very little live commercial television was mentioned.

Although survey research provides a broad understanding of “how much” media is watched (e.g., never, only once in awhile, some of the time, all of the time), our conversations about media use revealed more in-depth understanding of why, when, or if parents spent time with media with their children (“parent co-use”; Connell, Lauricella, and Wartella 2015). Parents often used their children’s screen time for their own nonmediated “escape,” such as sleeping or doing household chores. Several informants explicitly referred to media as a “babysitter.” As a result, there was very limited discussion of co-viewing media in daily routines. This suggests that there were very few opportunities for parents to explain or help interpret advertising messages or other persuasive content (e.g., product placement) for their children. This development is significant. Thirty-five years earlier, Reid (1979) had found through observational data of families and television viewing that “the meaning of television commercials is a product of parent/child interaction and those experiences that the child carries to the viewing situation” (18). Without extensive television commercial media exposure or opportunity to talk about media content or television

advertising messages, children of this generation may be experiencing a fundamentally different media environment today than in the past. That is, it appears there are fewer opportunities for active parental mediation (Buijzen and Valkenburg 2005). This raises important questions about the acquisition and development of persuasion knowledge in general and advertising literacy specifically. The next findings focus on children's advertising PK and perceived effects of advertising, followed by parents' strategies to cope with advertising.

Children's advertising persuasion knowledge

Limited advertising exposure = less literacy? Advertising literacy and persuasion knowledge include the components of recognizing (e.g., Rozendaal, Oprea, and Buijzen 2014), analyzing, and evaluating persuasive messages (Young 2003). As such, recognition, the ability to discern programming content from advertising content, is a key step in advertising literacy (Robertson and Rossiter 1974; Rozendaal, Oprea, and Buijzen 2014). Some informants linked the lack of advertising exposure directly to lack of advertising recognition. For example, Amy (a cord-cutter) describes an incident when her daughter Emma (age 3½) saw a television commercial while the family was watching a movie. "We have to laugh because at Christmas and something like a classic movie like *Charlie Brown Christmas* ... We went to sit down and watch it as a family, the commercial comes on, she's like, 'What is this?' So she clearly knows that something is going on there." Similarly, Nicole's daughter Ava (age 3) watched mostly PBS or Netflix because her favorite shows tended to be on those networks. As a result, Nicole explains, "To be honest, the first couple of times she ever saw a commercial she didn't really know what it was." When asked whether she knew what they were now, Nicole replied, "Not completely. No."

Despite minimal exposure to commercial television, however, a few children revealed some understanding, albeit rudimentary. For example, Brian (age 5) described a commercial as "a break in a movie," which demonstrates a level of understanding based on perceptual features (John 1999). When probed about what happens during a commercial, Brian responded, "Commercials are just for—for people to—for kids to ask their moms for things." This response reveals elements of one of the key components of advertising literacy: understanding advertising's selling intent—"that advertising tries to sell products" (Rozendaal, Buijzen, and Valkenburg 2011, 335). When asked more directly how the family responded to advertising, Brian said, "Sometimes we fast forward through them and sometimes we watch them," demonstrating an awareness of the family's coping responses.

Similarly, Levy (age 5) understands the selling intent of advertising and describes a commercial as "something that wants your money." But he also claims advertising has very little impact on him. As part of a discussion about Harry Potter movies, Levy made reference to some commercials he had seen but did not attribute any commercial influence on himself: "I'm going to get Harry Potter Legos. And it was not on a commercial. There was some commercial on Harry Potter and I didn't get interested in it. The one that got me in mind was that one of my friends, his name is Sander at [school], he had a Harry Potter sticker and Lego book and he was like freaking me out, like everything I saw. That's what got me in mind, weird."

Given the evolving media diet of our informants, many were exposed to advertising via nontelevision sources. That is, restrictive mediation of commercial television content was possible, but restricting all commercial media was not possible. Within the contemporary mediascape, children are active consumers of a multitude of media including persuasive messages, such as billboards, radio ads, licensed books, and, in limited instances, websites and applications (e.g., on smartphones or tablets). And in some instances children's persuasion knowledge from one medium transfers to another. Lisa, for example, described a time when her children were looking at toy catalogs. As they were flipping through the pages, Grace (age 3½) commented on how cool some of the toys were. Lisa recounts how her 5-year-old son responded: "Ethan was like, 'Grace, that's an advertisement. They are not really having fun with that' or something like that. 'They are just trying to trick you.' And Grace was like, 'oh?' And then they just left it." This notion of advertising being inherently deceptive did not extend to every ad the children saw and not every ad was seen as an attempt at trickery. "We have Hanna Andersson [catalogs], it's a clothing thing and they like to look at those pictures, but they'll talk about this is an advertisement. Like

they know when something is advertising. They don't always necessarily think that they are trying to trick them into something, but I think it's good for them to at least recognize the difference between the news and an advertisement." In this way, Lisa's children are talking about and developing persuasion knowledge together. Although they have not yet developed a more sophisticated notion of bias, they are talking about the recognition aspect of advertising from other forms of content (Rozendaal, Buijzen, and Valkenburg 2011).

Perceived effects and effectiveness of advertising

In addition to recognition and understanding the selling intent of advertising, persuasion knowledge also includes understanding of the perceived effectiveness of persuasion tactics. Friestad and Wright (1994) suggest that "People will hold beliefs about the nature of the causal relations between an agent's actions, the psychological effects those actions produce in targets, and subsequent behavioral outcomes" (5). In our data, parents mentioned several ways in which they believed their children were influenced by advertising, which exhibited notions of strong stimulus-response type advertising effects. What is most interesting is that when parents acknowledged that their children were exposed to less commercial television in their home, they attributed even greater influence to commercials viewed in other places. For example, visits to other people's houses often led to television watching and advertising viewing. Extended family, grandparents in particular, were the most frequently cited responsible party for this out-of-home exposure. Anna tells us:

So we do not do a lot of commercials because we have Netflix and Amazon Prime and not cable and we do a lot of videos and things like that. So when they go to my parents, my parents have the full Dish package. Then they always want something because then so for Christmas, Melanie [age 4] had seen the Stuffies on the TV [at her grandparents' house] and [directed to Melanie] ... so you ask Grandpa specifically to buy you a Stuffie for Christmas, correct?

Melanie nods yes and smiles and her mom continues:

So my dad called me and said what is the Stuffie and I said I have absolutely no idea so I would ask my nephew what is this Stuffie and then he could tell me because "as seen on TV," right. So you will see when you are up to her room she has all kinds of "as seen on TV" products because when she goes to Grandma on the TV and then Grandma buys them for you [to Melanie] or uncle John and Aunt buy them for you ... so we deal with commercials because we have to go to Grandma's.

For some parents, like Anna, this raises broader questions about parenting styles and introduces struggles about what constitutes an acceptable and desirable level of advertising exposure. Parents who strictly controlled or limited advertising in their homes describe a feeling of losing control when their children viewed TV at extended family members' homes. Many parents framed this exposure as a direct effects kind of relationship. Because a child had not developed a "thick skin" of persuasion knowledge and the ability to cope with or resist the persuasion attempts, the child was seen as being more directly and immediately affected by it. For example, Jennifer, the mother of Emma (age 4), says: "So, with their sudden exposure to commercials, they are asking for things." Florence offers a similar story about her son Ryan (age 4):

He was at my mom's house, I had noticed when a commercial would come on for toys he would be like, "Mom, buy me that" or if there was a girl toy, he'd be like "I'm going to buy that for my cousin," for his girl cousins and I was constantly telling him like "I'm not going to buy that, I'm not buying you that." So then he stopped asking me and he started telling my mom and he's like "Grandma, buy me that, grandma, buy me that."

These examples illustrate that even in those homes where children's exposure to live commercial television was limited, parents could still readily cite examples where the children viewed television advertising in other people's homes. Most frequently, the other people were grandparents, which have been cited as an increasing influence on child consumer socialization as family structures change (e.g., Hunter-Jones 2014). As a result, the impact of the persuasion attempts—especially in the area of pester power or nagging for advertised toys—was seen as swift and powerful. This suggests a strong boomerang effect of limited media exposure or restrictive media use. That is, while such limits work when the child remains

in the primary household, they seem to exacerbate the effects of advertising exposure when it happens outside the home and the child has not developed sufficient tools to cope with or deflect the messages. This raises the possibility that even though some children demonstrate advertising literacy (see previous section), this literacy may be little more than a parroting back of what their parents have told them.

Coping tactics: Parents' strategies

The PKM suggests that targets of persuasion tactics will “develop beliefs about the cognitive, emotional, or physical actions they can execute to manage a persuasion attempt’s effects on them” (Friestad and Wright 1994, 4). These are described as coping mechanisms, which can allow the target to evaluate her capacity to manage attention or control over the persuasion. Several strategies such as disengaging, ignoring, discounting, counterarguing, and even support arguing have been offered as examples of ways to cope with a persuasion episode (Friestad and Wright 1994). In its overview of how targets perceive and develop coping mechanisms, the PKM focuses on the targets themselves, that is, the children. While the children had yet to develop coping mechanisms, we heard and witnessed numerous ways that parents try to help their children develop coping mechanisms. Past research has identified different strategies that parents rely on when teaching their children about persuasion. Based on observational data of families watching television in the 1970s, Reid (1979) noted different consumer “teaching modes” used by parents to socialize their children about advertising and consumption, which were similar to strategies noted by Ward, Wackman, and Wartella (1977). Such strategies ranged from prohibiting certain behaviors, such as watching TV, to discussing advertising. Following are the main strategies that emerged from our data. See also Table 2 for data exemplars.

Advertising avoidance. Strategies for limiting advertising exposure ran the gamut from completely eliminating televisions and cutting out cable to watching only commercial-free public television or relying on timeshifting devices like DVRs. This prohibition against certain technologies, like TVs, has been seen in previous research (e.g., Ward, Wackman, and Wartella 1977). Since these studies were carried out in the 1970s, however, the range of technology has changed dramatically to facilitate greater advertising avoidance via widespread use of recording and fast-forwarding devices like DVRs and greater access to noncommercial program content through Hulu and Netflix. Our data suggest that as a result of this expanded menu of technology options, parents might feel more comfortable with letting their children watch media, knowing the commercial content has been filtered out. For example, Katie explains her decision to let her daughter Raylee (age 3) watch an hour of television by saying most of the shows have no commercials.

We always say one hour and if we know for some reason like she woke up at 5 and we’re not going anywhere till 9, we have a few hour-long *Doras*, so we’ll push one of those because somehow that’s okay. But they are mostly DVR shows. Some of them have no commercials of course because it’s PBS and sometimes they do have commercials. If we’re around we’ll fast-forward the commercials, if we’re not, then they see them.

As this quote suggests, Katie allows a degree of inconsistency in her mediation practices. While she would prefer that Raylee not see any commercials, she recognizes that there are times when she will. Katie justifies the inconsistency in her mediation by saying Raylee most likely does not understand what the commercial is: “On PBS, of course they have the micro commercials but [Raylee and her brother] think that’s all PBS Kids, so they think Chuck E. Cheese is part of PBS Kids. Or if they see *Curious George* or they see a bunch of things, that’ll be PBS Kids. So it’s all kind of combined.” Katie believes that at 3 years old, Raylee cannot distinguish advertising from regular programming yet. Without any built up persuasion knowledge, Raylee is seen by her mother as lacking in sophisticated coping mechanisms. She does not want Raylee to see commercials, because she sees the central point of advertisements as inducing children to want to “buy, buy, buy” and worries it will lead to pestering for advertised toys and to a high degree of materialism. Despite these preferences, Katie still relies on a restrictive mediation approach in which she fast-forwards through the commercials when she can and does not explain to her

Table 2. Parents’ coping or child socialization strategies: Excerpts from data.

Parent (child)	Strategy	Verbatim
Limit exposure		
Lisa (Ethan age 5)	No TV	Interviewer: You mentioned that as a strategy in general, you guys don’t watch shows with the kids that have commercials in them. Lisa: We don’t actually watch commercials ourselves. We don’t have a TV. We watch it on Netflix or now HBO directly. Yeah, we actually don’t have a cable or whatever. We don’t even know how to get channels, we don’t know how the mystery thing works. Interviewer: So what brought about the going cableless? Lisa: I made a conscious choice when I had kids that we were going to get rid of the TV because pretty much—I just didn’t want them getting used to watching TV all the time and having all the screen time and I have a feeling the more you do it, the longer it’s going to get and the more they’ll want to do it and— Husband: I had made the conscious decision before. I didn’t want to expose myself to it either because I don’t know, I don’t have any interest in being advertised to and that’s mostly what I feel like TV is, because it’s five minutes of the show and then five minutes of advertising.
Michelle (Brian age 4)	Fast-forward ads	Michelle: And then, on the rare occasions that we’re watching something that we’ve DVR’d from regular TV, I fuss at them to fast forward the commercials. If I hear the commercial come on I say, fast forward, fast forward, fast forward. Interviewer: You tell them to fast forward. Michelle: And they know how to use the remote and they fast-forward—and they’re now getting that kind of instinct of if it’s commercial, we fast forward. Interviewer: Yeah. Michelle: And then, every now and then I’ll catch them kind of watching the commercials and I’ll go fast forward, fast forward. And I don’t know how many commercials they would be able to recite or jingles that they would know. I honestly don’t know because usually if they’re watching TV I’m not supervising them. Because I’m using that as an opportunity to do something else.
Jamila (Megan age 4)	No “TV” /cable	Jamila: Because we’re—we’re kind of an anti-media family. Not completely. We do allow it. But we’re very, very limited and we don’t even have cable or TV. We have a—in there (pointing to another room) is a flat screen TV and a DVD player, but that’s all we use it for, as a DVD player. And we have Netflix instead that’s hooked to the Internet there so we can pull up Netflix instead. We got rid of it [TV] when she was four months old. So, I’ll watch shows on Hulu and I’ll watch things on Netflix so we watch—I mean we’re both huge film buffs. We love to watch films, so. You know, we definitely didn’t take that out of our lives, but we don’t watch the crap. And we don’t watch the advertising. You know, I don’t know what the commercials are that people are talking about. Interviewer: Yeah. So when Megan watches something on DVD, do you fast-forward through any commercials ... Jamila: There’s a Chucky Cheese and there’s a PBS commercial. I think I’ve let that play. Interviewer: Yeah. The Earth’s Best. They have a lot of ads. Jamila: We haven’t seen the Earth’s Best ads but we’ve seen a lot of ads for other videos. <i>Backyardigans</i> and things like that. And so, we tend to fast forward through all that if we can. Interviewer: And, do you explain to her why you’re doing that or do you just fast forward through it? Jamila: We kind of just fast forward through it and she’s asked and I’ve said, “oh yeah, I don’t think you’ll like that one.”
Discuss		
Lisa/husband (Ethan age 5)	Discuss advertising; advertising bias, skepticism	Lisa: And I kind ruined them on advertising. Husband: You don’t get the credit for that, that was me. Interviewer: How did you ruin them on advertising? Lisa: From the time they were really small, I told them if they see an advertisement, it’s always going to show people that are really happy and excited about this product because they want you to think that if you get that product you’re going to be really happy, but they are actually just trying to trick you and that’s the simplest way I could put it to them because it’s not necessarily going to make them happy. So sometimes if they see an advertisement and they notice that it’s an advertisement, they are like oh, they are advertising to us. They are trying to trick me, aren’t they? Husband: I kind of built on that too. You’re right, you started that. I kind of went with—because they asked why are they trying to trick me? I’m like because they want your money. That was kind of my contribution to that was to kind of explain that sales people will lie to you and to trick you into giving them your money. People are like that, they want your money. So they can consciously look at advertisements and be like, that’s advertisement, they are trying to trick me.

(Continued on next page)

Table 2. (Continued)

Parent (child)	Strategy	Verbatim
Lisa (Ethan age 5)	Show/discuss advertising	If we encounter something I'll try to point it out. And they notice billboards sometimes, but they can't read yet, so they sort of just see the pictures and they talk about hey, there is an alligator on that billboard or something. They know that that's advertising too, but it usually doesn't bring up something that they want necessarily.
Katie (Raylee age 3)	Advertising skepticism	Interviewer: Do you talk to them about this is a commercial? Katie: I think not too much with her just because she doesn't seem old enough, but we were saying how sometimes you have a lot of dollies and they show you a lot of dollies on TV, we can't get all of them and they just—sometimes those ones break—so it's just really talking about the marketing.
Mary (Noah age 4)	Discuss advertising selling intent	Interviewer: Have you had those discussions (about products and advertising)? Mary: A little bit, a little bit. For example, he told me recently that he wants—I forget what it's called, it's some kind of lunch bag that is for keeping your food really fresh and cold and you can get two of them, and I can't think what it's called but you can get two of them for \$19.99 or something like that and he wants one when he goes to kindergarten. So he has told me not just once but like four or five times I want this lunch bag. And I have tried to express to him that we can buy lunch bags similar to that, that that's marketing. But he's like, but it keeps your food fresh. He will repeat whatever the ad has said. And I can't remember what that exact ad what it exactly said but he will repeat it. And it's like my husband and I say it all the time, he's going to be an excellent salesman one day because he knows—he will reiterate whatever they have said exactly as they have said it and then he will reiterate it another way like he is working you. And it's amazing to watch him do that. So he definitely listens to the ads and I have talked to him and told him, I told him just probably two weeks ago that they are trying to market, they want you to buy it, they are trying to get you to buy it, they are trying to tell you all the things why you should buy it, that's called a commercial.
Denise (Braden age 3)	Discuss advertising, counterargue	(PBS sponsorship): It's been hard because now he's learning about Chuck E. Cheese. We were never ever going to take him to that, but he now he would be saying let's go there and so we're trying because we record some of the shows, but they still have that at the beginning even when you record it. So yeah, I've just been kind of ignoring it and my husband is pretty much "Oh no you don't want to go there, that's not a place for kids" which is really funny. He's been trying to convince him otherwise—it's full of germs. "You don't want to go there, we'll have much more fun at home."
Jessica (Dion age 5)	Discussion	Jessica: I'm like no, you don't need to watch the commercial and you're okay. I just keep talking to him about it. I don't know what else to do. I mean we just keep talking and there is something else that came up with a commercial and he was telling us that we needed to get it and it happened when he used to watch cartoons; like there is <i>Sid the Science Kid</i> that he'll still occasionally watch and <i>Dinosaur Train</i> : they are always selling toys and it's the same kind of thing. I think it has been because they notice; they go I want to get this because I saw this and they said that it's the best so I should get this. Interviewer: And they will, verbatim repeat the commercial to you. Jessica: Yes. Now, how much understanding, I don't know.

daughter why. Instead, she tells Raylee she can put the toy on her Christmas list, even though the family does not consider Christmas to be an important holiday. "I just say it because I didn't know what else to say, it's a way to put it off but no, we don't really talk about them too much because we're fast-forwarding I guess."

For other parents, the restrictive mediation efforts were more forceful and consistent. Pam, for example, emphasizes how much she, but more so her husband, detests advertising. "He thinks it's disgusting that there are advertising firms who know how to market to children and so our hope was just that we wouldn't get around Christmas 'Oh I have to have this. I have to have that.'" In this case, Pam's husband's negative attitudes about the manipulative intent of advertising caused them to shield their daughter Hannah (age 5) from its influence, to avoid "pestering" in particular. In this way, the parents' persuasion knowledge about the "appropriateness" of advertising (Friestad and Wright 1994) was reflected in their own child consumer socialization strategies. This finding also echoes earlier research that found positive correlations between parents' negative attitudes toward advertising and their restrictive control over their children's commercial media use (Wiman 1983). On the other hand, a few parents who limited advertising exposure worried that this strategy may end up harming their children. As Michelle, mother of Brian (age 5), articulates, "But the number of commercials they've been exposed to is really, really, really minimal and it's interesting because it's a double-edged sword. That on the one hand I don't have

the commercials in their brains. But on the other hand, I also know that they're very susceptible to commercials. That they haven't developed a thick skin about it."

Discussion—"Giving lectures." In contrast to the restrictive mediation efforts applied (however inconsistently) by parents, other informants engaged in active mediation and talked with their children about commercial influences or the products featured in the ads (Ward, Wackman, and Wartella 1977; Reid 1979), similar to a concept-oriented communication style (Carlson et al. 1994). Many of the discussions focused on the central elements of advertising literacy, but they went beyond television advertising. For example, some parents were mindful of persuasion episodes in their daily lives and actively discussed commercial influences with their child. Michelle was quick to point out all examples of advertising that she might come across with her children. This extended beyond the obvious ones, like television advertising, to the less apparent ones.

A coupon is an advertisement. Our tae kwon do place just this week was passing out gift certificates for a month of free lessons. Well, anybody that walks in the door can get a month of free lessons. And we said well, that's an advertisement and how is that working. What are they trying to do? They're trying to get people to feel like they're saving money. And so we try to at least talk about what advertising is. And what they want to do. And then—movie previews, you know, that—if you're watching a movie and you see the previews, that's advertising. We always try to use that word.

In this way, Michelle used everyday persuasion tactics (e.g., flyers, offers) as a way to talk about the prevalence of advertising messages and to teach her children how to recognize them. It was also an opportunity to talk about what advertising does (or tries to do) and the persuasion tactics involved. This sort of discussion reflected a desire to instill in her children a sophisticated understanding of advertising literacy related to understanding persuasive tactics, or what has been called "the ability to understand that advertisers use specific tactics to change consumers' attitudes, cognitions, and behaviors" (Rozendaal, Buijzen, and Valkenburg 2011, 346; see also Robertson and Rossiter 1974).

Advertising bias. Robertson and Rossiter (1974) identified five main factors for children to recognize advertising's persuasive intent, one of which is to recognize there may be differences between the way a product is advertised and how the product actually performs. Florence, for example, will explain to her son Ryan (age 4) that toys often perform differently in real life. "Like the Barbie will twist on her own and her hair comes down, it really doesn't do that. Or the biggest one was the Transformers. They are like Lego Transformers; you've got to build them and they do all these actions. Like they really don't do that." Florence, in discussing the quasi-misleading nature of the ads, was trying to instill some skepticism or understanding of advertising bias in her young son (Rozendaal, Buijzen, and Valkenburg 2011).

Jo took these conversations even further with her daughter Emily (age 4). She describes how she tries to teach Emily not only that the ads might be misleading, but that they actively test the products out to verify her claims. "We've talked about how commercials try and always say their product is the best but we've gone and analyzed some of the products to show them what junk they are." Her discussions with Emily focus specifically on the ways in which advertising presents products in a favorable light, but one that is not realistic. Such discussions help instill a specific form of conceptual advertising literacy (understanding advertising's bias), which then may lead to a form of discounting or counterarguing, which is a vital coping mechanism as outlined by the PKM (Friestad and Wright 1994).

Discussion

Our research set out to examine how contemporary media use and parental strategies help inform our understanding of advertising persuasion knowledge among young children. By visiting the families in their homes, we were able to witness and talk with them about the role of media in their daily lives beyond the constrained nature of survey responses or manipulated variables. As a result,

we learned that families from across socioeconomic groups and geographic locations embrace a wider media diet than previous studies have assumed (e.g., Martin 1997). In fact, although survey research suggests that time spent on television viewing has not disappeared (e.g., Connell, Lauricella, and Wartella 2015), our research uniquely shows that the watching of live, commercial television with the family is no longer the norm. Instead, the prevalence of selecting certain (typically, noncommercial) content on demand and on varying devices (e.g., smart phones, tablets) means that children are exposed to fewer television commercials in the home, and they are consuming media content quite often without a parent.

Interestingly, the parents viewed ad-free television as “safe” despite the increased use of product tie-ins, product placement, and other commercial devices within shows (LaFerle and Edwards 2006; Cairns et al. 2013), including sponsorship of PBS (Paradise 2005). This view may be because the parents are not aware of these sorts of embedded persuasion tactics or they do not regard them as “advertising.” Thus, the parents might have low knowledge, experience, and advertising literacy in general for such nontraditional advertising tactics (for low advergame literacy among parents see Evans, Carlson, and Hoy 2013). As a result, parents may not be inclined or adept at discussing advertising literacy with their children about embedded persuasion tactics. Such possibilities raise concerns about the long-term implications of advertising persuasion knowledge for adults and for children. If they are not learning about the tactics at home or from parents, children may not gain the persuasion knowledge they need to effectively cope with persuasion attempts. It would be interesting to see to what extent advertising literacy principles for “old” media such as television would translate into advertising literacy discussion for “new media.” For example, it could be that some of the same basic principles of advertising literacy (e.g., source, selling intent) exist across advertising media, but the format, tactics, and recognition may vary. How and what parents know and how they talk about the persuasion tactics is an area for future study.

In terms of advertising literacy, these findings suggest that there are fewer opportunities for parents to co-view and actively engage in concept-oriented consumer socialization to discuss, critique, and explain television commercials while viewing them with their children (e.g., Buijzen and Valkenburg 2005). Parent mediation is regarded as a positive way to instill coping mechanisms in the children and mitigate unwanted advertising effects. The American Academy of Pediatrics (2013) recently recommended that parents co-view television with their children. Indeed, there is a belief that “practice makes perfect” even among persuasion knowledge scholars. “The development of persuasion coping expertise is also strongly influenced by how much practice a person gets doing particular persuasion tasks. By this we mean practice in such things as recognizing when a type of persuasion tactic is being executed” (Friestad & Wright 1994, 7). As Evans and Park (2015) point out, there is a depth of experience with advertising based on the amount of a particular persuasion tactic exposure and a breadth of experience, which results from exposure across persuasion tactics. In our case, young children no longer have the depth of experience with respect to television commercials. Thus, it is likely that without instruction or practice, children may lack the necessary PK.

In our study, despite the lack of commercial television viewing, parents could not control television commercial exposure outside of the home, in particular in extended families’ homes. Although family has been discussed widely in the consumer socialization literature as an influence on children, most studies focus on parents (e.g., Carlson et al. 1994). Our research uncovered the important role that extended family members, most typically grandparents, play in consumer socialization, especially where media habits diverge. Research has shown that it is currently the younger generation that is cutting cable television and using alternate media devices for media content (e.g., Kafka 2014), but grandparents often were the ones in our study who had cable television and were less discerning about media content. Given that almost 25% of all preschool children are regularly cared for by their grandparents (Laughlin 2013), this socialization agent is an important one to consider. Further, the data showed the possibility that restrictive mediation may no longer be possible in today’s commercial environment—even in extended family members’ homes.

Advertising persuasion knowledge

Past research on young children's understanding of advertising has fit largely into two camps: those who believe that children under 7 years old do not have the capacity for understanding due to cognitive development (e.g., John 1999), and those who believe that even the youngest of consumers have some ability to recognize commercial content (e.g., Moses and Baldwin 2005). The mixed findings could be because of the difficulty in measuring this concept among children (see review by Ham, Nelson, and Das 2015). For example, McAlister and Cornwell (2009) point out that some of the mixed findings could be due in part to this age group's verbal ability. In studies, nonverbal tasks typically demonstrate higher advertising literacy (e.g., Donohue, Henke, and Donohue 1980). Most of the previous research used experimental research or interviews with children (e.g., McAlister and Cornwell 2009) to measure specific discrete examples of literacy (e.g., recognition; Stephens, Stutts, and Burdick 1982).

Our data show a much wider range of examples of advertising PK from "everyday life"—what children do with advertising (act out, ignore, question) as a means to understanding persuasion knowledge. Specifically, our data suggest that even preschool children as young as 3 years old show some evidence of literacy, although it was at a rudimentary level marked by perceptual features, and some knowledge of selling intent. What is perhaps most interesting is the parents' perceptions of their children's persuasion knowledge or effects of advertising. That is, the most protective and restrictive parents could easily relay instances where their children were exposed to advertising (often out of the home) and then they witnessed the effects (e.g., pestering for the featured product).

Parental strategies

Past research on parental consumer socialization has focused on communication and interaction (e.g., Reid 1979). Our research did not show much evidence of co-viewing strategies. In concert with past research (e.g., Carlson et al. 1994; Carlson, Laczniak, and Walsh 2001; Buijzen and Valkenburg 2008), parents varied in their degree of concern over and the use of implicit and explicit strategies to mitigate the influence of media. Despite these variations, it was clear that parents in this study shared a love/hate relationship with the media in their preschoolers' lives. Although there appeared to be specific times when media exposure was allowed, the parents generally engaged in two main strategies with respect to commercial media: restrictive and discussing. Very little co-viewing and concept-oriented communication was observed.

As a result, we see parental strategies that are largely reactive, particularly when it comes to out-of-home exposure. While parents had considerable control over content and traditional advertising exposure in the home, out-of-home viewing results in either more concerted efforts at teaching persuasion knowledge or a resignation to the fact that these exposure moments cannot be controlled. In response, parents interpret advertising as having a particularly powerful and direct effect on their children. Since viewing of advertising content is limited, when children are exposed to it (most often at other people's houses) then the impact is seen as being strong and negative. This suggests an interesting paradox wherein parents seek to limit their children's exposure to persuasive content but this has the unintended boomerang effect of making more pronounced the influence of those few advertising messages that children do see.

Limitations and future research

This study focused on media. Yet, as we witnessed, media were just one part of these families' lives, so it is important to point out that there are other commercial influences, activities, and socialization agents. For example, there were multiple children in several of our families. How siblings contribute to children's socialization is another important factor that should be considered (Kerrane, Bettany, and Kerrane 2015). Similarly, as more children spend time in day-care settings (Larson et al. 2011), interactions among peers may be an important means for socialization before children enter school. Settings outside of the home afford additional ways for children to learn about brands and consumption. Parents have mentioned

how exposure to a product in the retail setting would result in pestering behavior even when they knew their child had not been exposed to advertising (Atkinson, Nelson & Rademacher 2015). Future research might use ethnographic techniques to witness firsthand the children's persuasion knowledge at the point of purchase.

Our findings showed that for this young age group, media use is more controlled by parents than children. That is, the children are just beginning to have "functional media literacy" (i.e., they can turn on television, surf the Web; Buckingham 2007), but what happens to members of this cohort when they are older and may be exposed to commercial TV or other kinds of advertising (e.g., on YouTube or other websites)? Do parents consciously (or not) engage in mediation strategies that relate to their child's advertising literacy and age such that their own behaviors conform to a consistent pattern of (1) shield, (2) discuss, and (3) monitor? Future research might examine more how parents mediate media for various ages in this new environment. Likewise, future research might examine how the mediation strategies observed for television apply to media consumption that occurs online or on other devices. Research among adolescents has suggested that the Internet is regarded as a "parent-free" zone where freedom is experienced (Anderson and McCabe 2012), which suggests no parental mediation. Anecdotal evidence from our study with young children suggests that on-demand and DVR'd television content is viewed as safe because advertising has been eliminated, but the same view does not apply to online or app-based content. Future research is needed to parse out variations between media platforms and types of content.

Despite the advantages of the dyad interviews, the data consisted of self-reports among parents, and primarily mothers. Despite the increase of women in the workforce, mothers remain the primary socialization agent today, even in families when the mothers are the sole breadwinners (Raley, Bianchi, and Wang 2012). At the same time, fathers are increasingly playing a greater role in childrearing (e.g., Gentry, Commuri, and Jun 2003). Future research might attempt to sample more purposively for fathers.

It could be the case in our study that parents underreported commercial media viewing due to social desirability effects (e.g., Rossiter and Robertson 1975). However, there is some evidence of truth in our data. Although the Rossiter and Robertson (1975) study showed exaggerated instances of co-viewing, our parents apologetically admitted to using media as a babysitter (i.e., not co-viewing). Further, we were able to see homes that did not have a television, and we witnessed when the children were playing on a tablet while we were talking to their parents. This observation raises a question regarding parents' persuasion knowledge in this new media environment. For instance, parents spoke at length about television advertising but only briefly about persuasion attempts in other media. Additional research that explores parents' persuasion knowledge across tactics seems warranted, as it is possible they lack the requisite knowledge themselves to adequately socialize their children about digital persuasion attempts (e.g., in-game apps, Web-based targeting). Despite these limitations, we hope our research helps reinvigorate the study of advertising literacy.

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Appendix: Informant demographics.

Child, gender (age)	Parent ^a , gender (age)	Ethnicity	Occupation	Partner occupation (age)	Number of siblings (gender)
Levy, M (5)	Carmen, F (38)	White	Sign language interpreter	Database manager (38)	—
Dion, M (5)	Jessica, F (40)	White	Photographer, SAHM ^b	Art director (43)	—
Brian, M (5)	Michelle, F (39)	White	SAHM (former therapist)	Law student (39)	1 F
Ryan, M (4)	Florence, F (28)	Hispanic	Paramedic	Engineer/grad student (29)	—
Braden, M (3)	Denise, F (38)	White	SAHM (former teacher)	Construction (41)	2 M, 1 F
Hannah, F (5)	Pam, F (35)	White	Photographer	Software developer (34)	1 F
Amanda, F (5)	Dawn, F (44)	White	SAHM	Software developer (45)	2 M
Lauren, F (4)	Helen, F (34)	White	Architect	Car salesman (32)	2 M
Megan, F (4)	Jamila, F (43)	White	Software developer	Hospice care (41)	1 F
Raylee, F (3)	Katie, F (41)	White	Lawyer	Software developer (37)	1 M
Emma, F (3)	Amy, F (31)	White	SAHM	Commercial airline pilot (37)	—
Michael, M (4)	Heather, F (30)	White	Social worker	Social worker (n/a)	1 F
Claire, F (3)	Julie, F (35)	White	Part-time theater manager	Business executive (35)	1 F
Ethan, M (5)	Lisa, F (31)	White	SAHM	Nonprofit information technology (IT) manager (29)	1 F
Noah, M (4)	Mary, F (42)	White	SAHM	Wine distributor/musician (43)	1 M
Jacob, M (4)	Melissa, F (25)	Black	Health care intake specialist	Photographer (n/a)	1 F
Ava (3)	Nicole, F (39)	White	SAHM/part-time paralegal	Customer service representative (35)	1 M
Jeremiah, M (3)	Stacy, F (52)	Hispanic	SAHM/college student	Shipping/receiving (n/a)	1 F
Connor, M (3)	Tatiana, F (30)	Black	Plant, assembly line	Unknown	3 M, 1 F
Rita ^c , F (3)	Nina, F (34)	White	SAHM	Unemployed	2 M, 4 F
Hilary ^c , F (4)	John, M (34)	Black	Unemployed	SAHM	2 M, 4 F
Jami, M (4)	Diana, F (26)	Black	Nurse	—	1 M, 1 F
Kami, F (3)	Janis, F (32)	Black	Administrative	—	1 F
Kathy, F (4)	Cristy, F (33)	Black	Administrative	Unknown; third shift	2 F
Melanie, F (4)	Anna, F (32)	White	Administrative	Construction	1 M
Emma, F (4)	Jenny, F (33)	White	SAHM	Teacher	1 M
Rachel, F (4)	Cherie, F (early 40s)	Black	Medical assistant	SAHD	3
Lynn, F (4)	Kerry, F (40s)	White	Lecturer	Firefighter	1
Ella, F (4)	Jean, F (30s)	White	Library specialist	Pastor	1

^aPrimary parent who participated in the research project.^bStay-at-home mother.^cRita and Hilary are sisters. Each was interviewed separately and with a different parent.