

The implications of gendering childhood obesity PSAs

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The percentage of overweight and obese children is at or above 30% in 30 U.S. states [1], including Kansas which ranks 22nd with 31% of its children rated as overweight or obese [1]. Nationally, 15.1 % of girls vs. 16.4% of boys are overweight [1]. Due to the recent rise in the number of overweight and obese children, organizations throughout the U.S. have allocated millions of dollars for prevention efforts with the intention of lowering rates [2]. Most recently, Michelle Obama has introduced “Let’s Move”, a campaign whose goal is to eliminate childhood obesity in a generation [3]. One of the strategies organizations and campaigns like “Let’s Move”, employ is Public Service Announcements (PSAs). In marketing, gender is one of the leading variables often employed to tailor messages to audiences [4]. Because campaigns typically utilize PSAs and because they are often tailored to females or males specifically, it becomes crucial to examine the messages PSAs disseminate to their audiences. The Constant Comparative Method [5] was used to compare and contrast through content analysis, a criterion based sample of 20 childhood obesity PSAs found on YouTube and the 10 PSAs found on the “Let's Move” website. Analyses indicate that PSAs on YouTube, are gender biased, using twice as many male voiceovers as female voiceovers. 2) Males are more likely to be featured in PSAs than females. The PSAs on the “Let’s Move” website are even worse. It is critical to effective strategies for managing childhood obesity that PSA messages be either gender targeted or gender neutral.