

Food advertising and eating behavior in children.

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Folkvord, F., Anschutz, D. J., Boyland, E., Kelly, B., & Buijzen, M. (2016). Food advertising and eating behavior in children. *Current Opinion in Behavioral Sciences*, 9, 26-31.

Link to original paper online:

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2352154615001564>

Project created for the class:

Visual Thinking and Composition, Winter 2020

Tilburg University, Department of Communication and Cognition

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**Summary “Food advertising and eating behavior in children. Current Opinion in Behavioral Sciences” (Folkvord, Anschütz, Boyland, Kelly, & Buijzen, 2016)**

Several studies have repeatedly shown that food advertising affects children’s eating behavior. The biggest number of food advertising promotes unhealthy, rewarding and palatable products. Advertisements are considered to be an important contributor to the obesity epidemic. This study shows the findings of recent studies that have tested the effect of food advertisements on the eating behavior of children.

Food brands advertise in a way that they create positive brand associations. They do this by using engaging themes and to link with attractive nonbranded content. They seek to create craving for the foods they advertise by these persuasive messages.

According to nutritionists 98% of advertised food products are considered unhealthy. These foods are typically high in added sugar, salt and fat. This makes the food energy dense. Advertisements expose the children to food cues. Different studies found this is related to increased choice and actual intake of foods among children. This is especially the case for snack foods. Food cues are mental, auditory or visual signals in ads that may evoke affective and behavioral responses towards eating. These cues can trigger several physiological responses like increased heart rate, gastric activity and salivation. They can also trigger psychological responses like for instance thoughts about food. These responses increase subsequently eating behavior. This is called the advertising effect process.

Two communication processing models will be discussed that may help to explain how food cues affect eating behavior, and that can provide a foundation for an integrated food cues model. The Processing of Commercialized Media Content (PCMC) model predicts that when children use less cognitive elaboration to process the food cues in the advertisement, the advertisement will have a stronger effect than when children use more cognitive elaboration.

The Differential Susceptibility to Media Effects Model predicts that not all children process and react to food cues in advertising the same way. There are individual differences in impulsivity and attentional bias. Relevant for children who are more susceptible to food cues, such as impulsive [24] and children [26,40], or children with increased attention for the food or snack [25, 32]. According to the incentive-sensitization theory [33,40], in the long run, eating these energy-dense foods may thus result in neurological adaptations and sensitization of these foods.

The Reactivity to Embedded Food Cues in Advertising Model (REFCAM) is based on three foundational assumptions, based on previous studies. It includes a two-step process, where “(1) food cues induce physiological and psychological reactivity to food (advertising effect process), which (2) leads to a recipro-

cal relationship with eating behavior (incentive-sensitization process).” (Folkvord, Anschutz, Boyland, Kelly, & Buijzen, 2016).

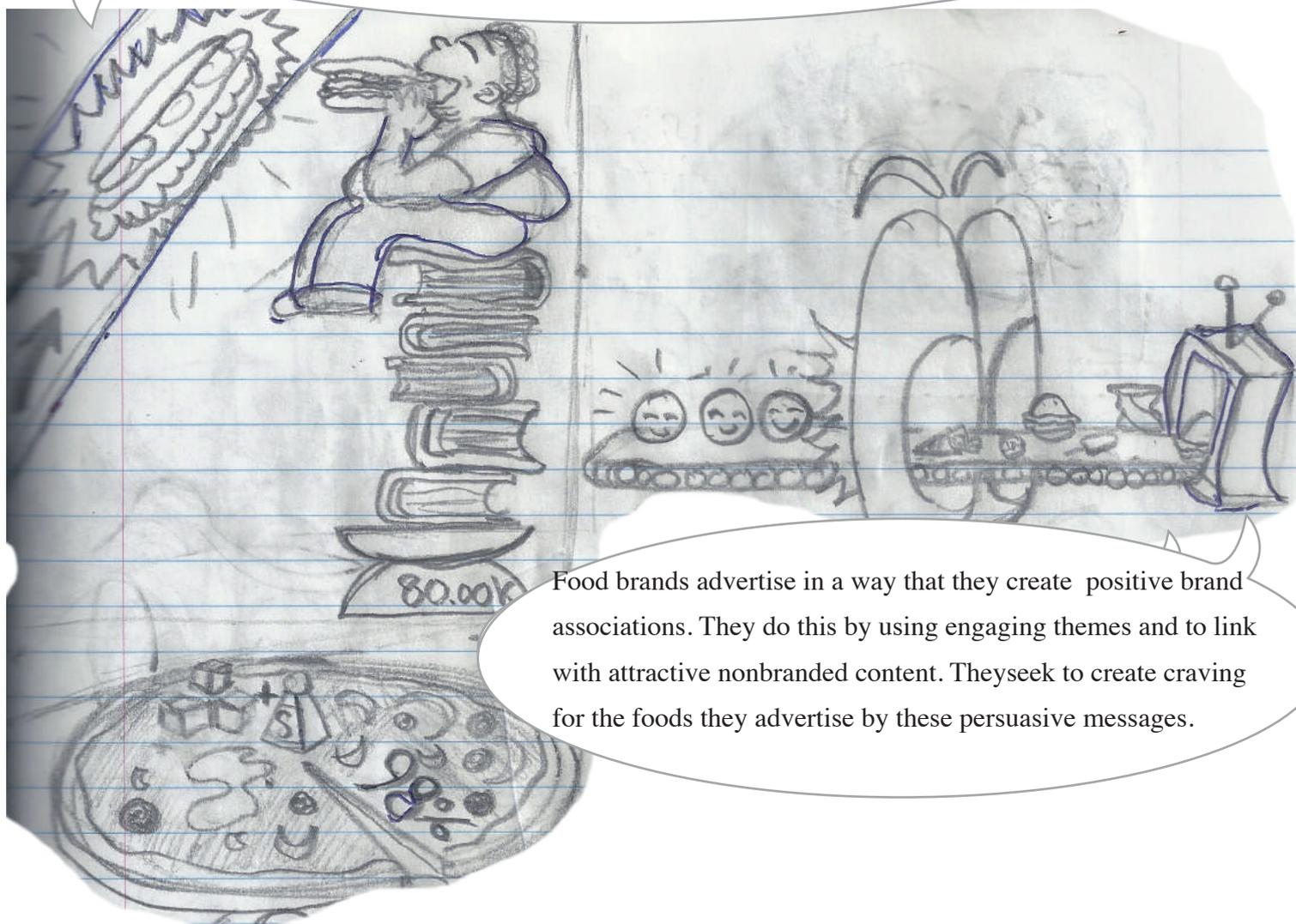
Television food advertisements involve relatively high awareness and elaboration and they have a smaller effect on food intake than advertisements. The PCMC-model includes that in low elaboration scenarios there is not enough cognitive capacity available to activate skepticism. It states that it does not matter what the intention of the commercial message is. The incentive-sensitization theory states that, therefore, on long term, eating energy-dense foods could result in neurological adaptations and sensitization of these foods.

The incentive-sensitization theory states that, therefore, on long term, eating energy-dense foods could result in neurological adaptations and sensitization of these foods. The Differential Susceptibility to Media Effects Model states that some children have a greater tendency to consume unhealthy and rewarding snacks after advertisement exposure than others. Thus not all children react to these cues to the same extent.

REFCAM is relevant for parents. It provides them with more information on the cognitive processes relevant for foodmarketing. With this knowledge they can adjust their feeding behavior. REFCAM is also relevant for health professionals, and policy makers, for whom the model can identify at-risk children and inform food advertising policy. The insights gained from the REFCAM model could help teachers to provide children the right literacy to protect themselves against foodmarketing campaigns. The insights could make it possible to develop effective intervention strategies to inform these risk groups like children and to nuance it to address the determinants of these individual susceptibility factors.

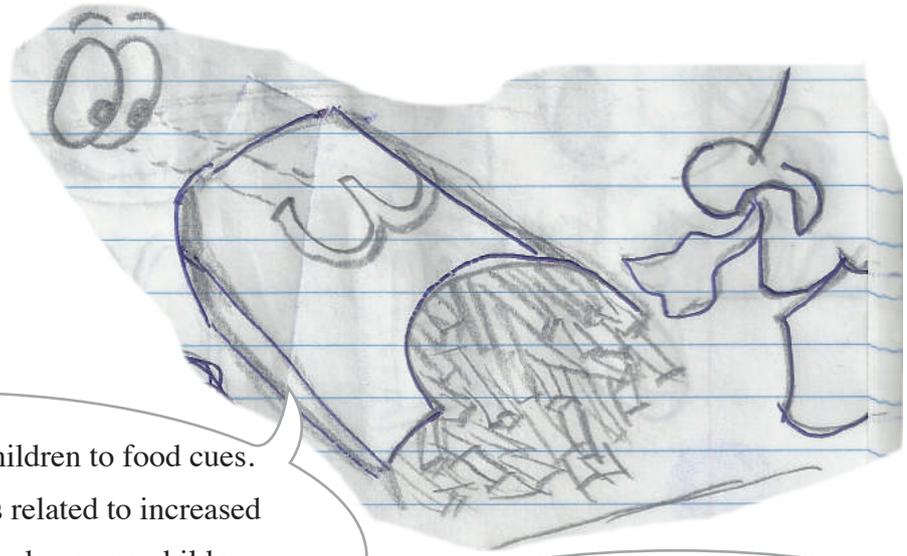
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This comic shows the findings of recent studies that have tested the effect of food advertisements on the eating behavior of children.



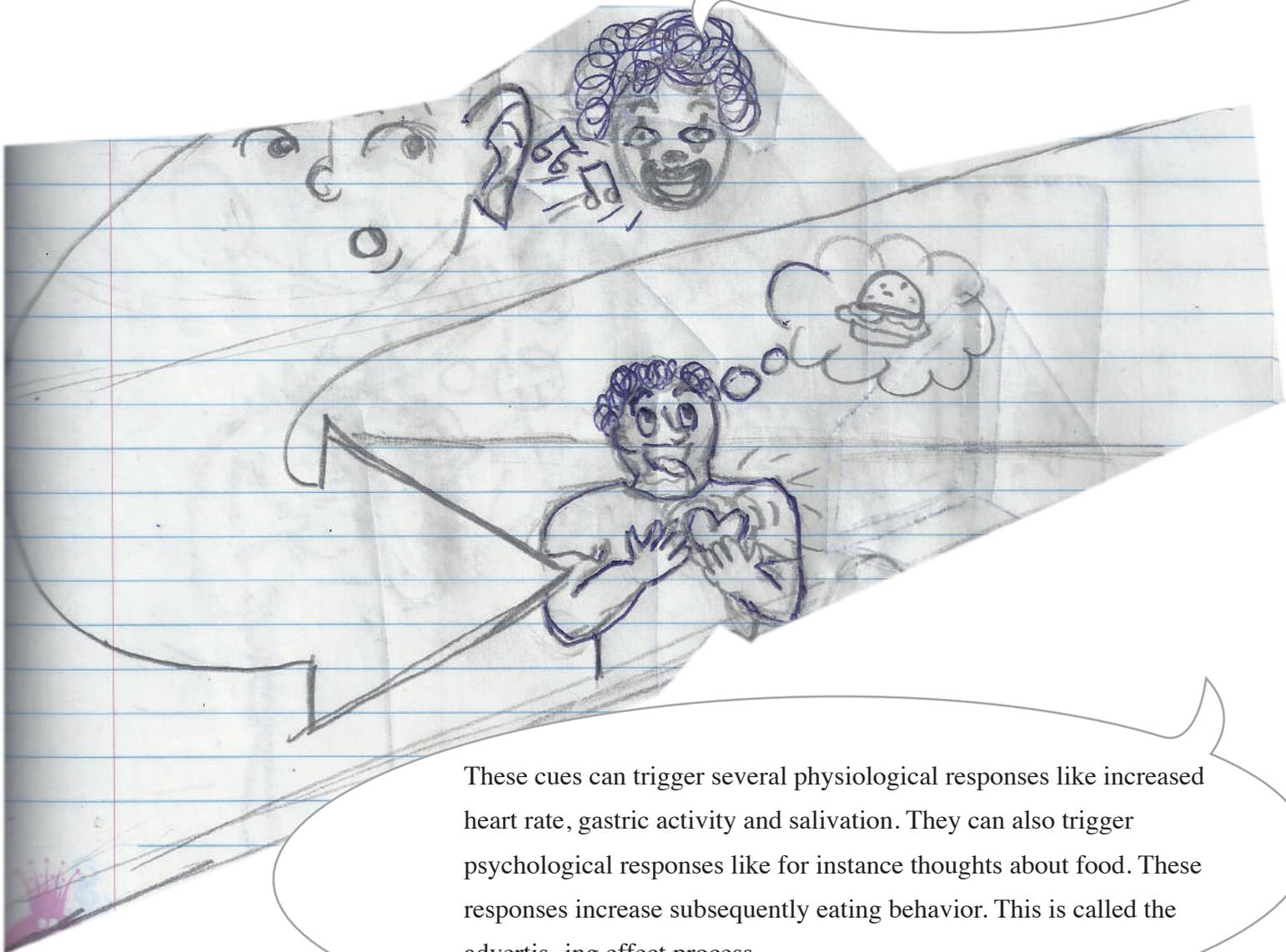
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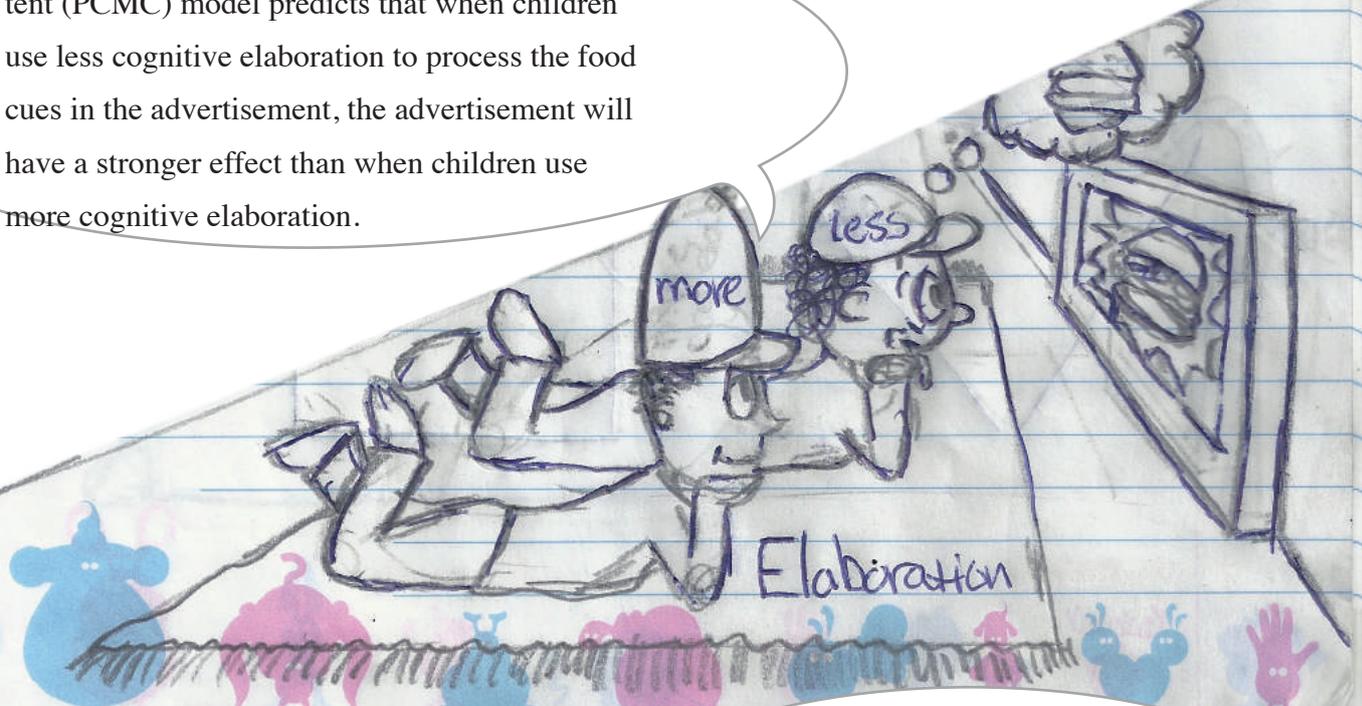
Advertisements expose the children to food cues. Different studies found this is related to increased choice and actual intake of foods among children. This is especially the case for snack foods.

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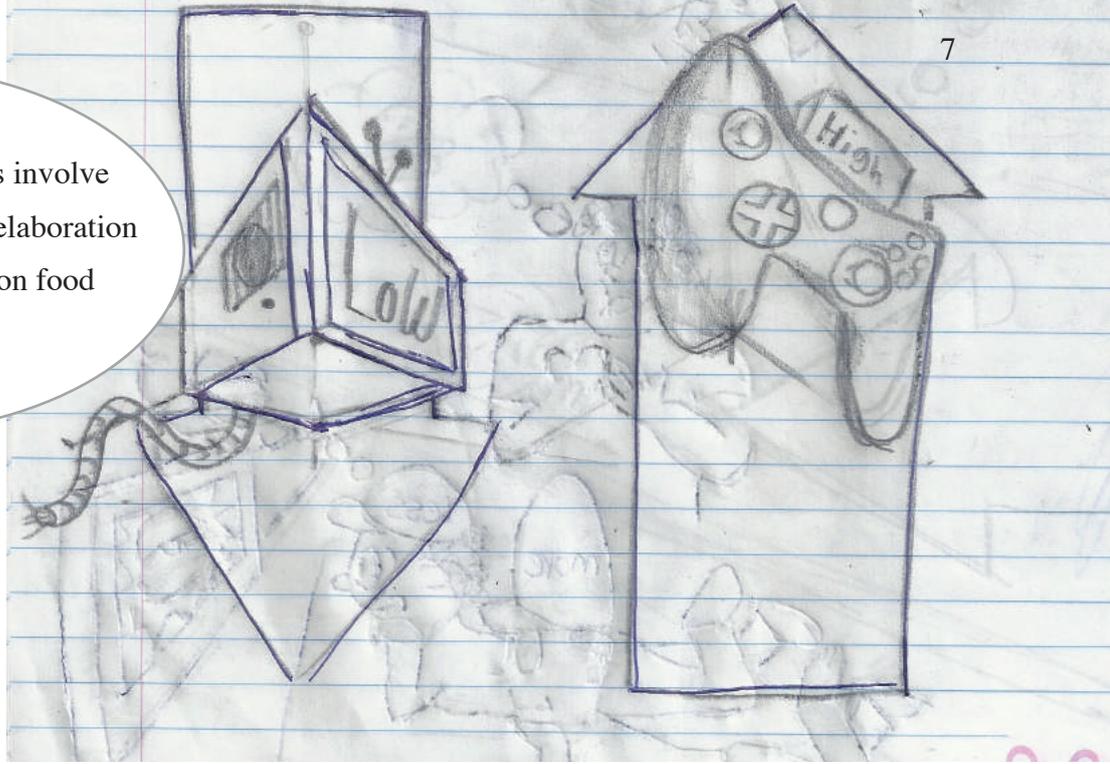


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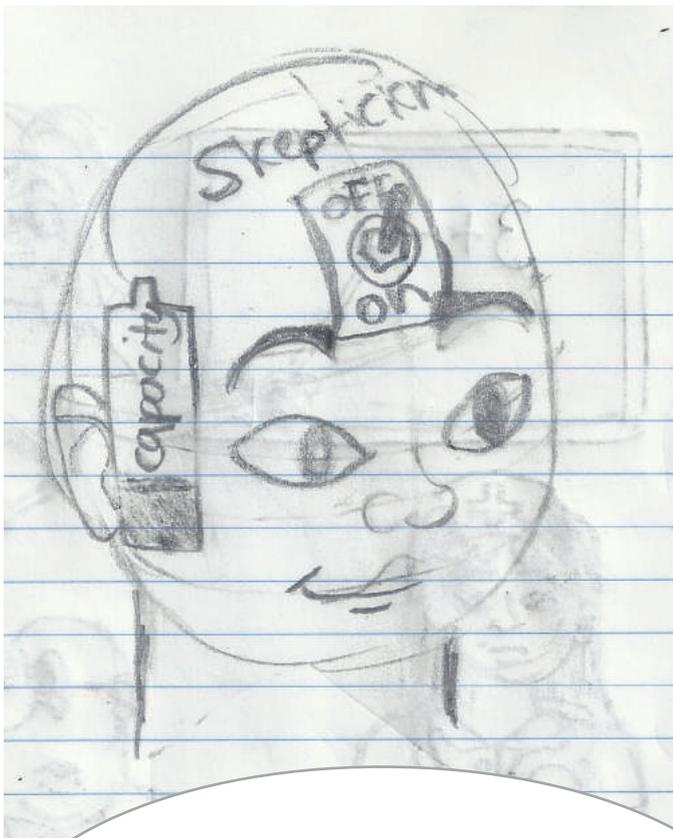


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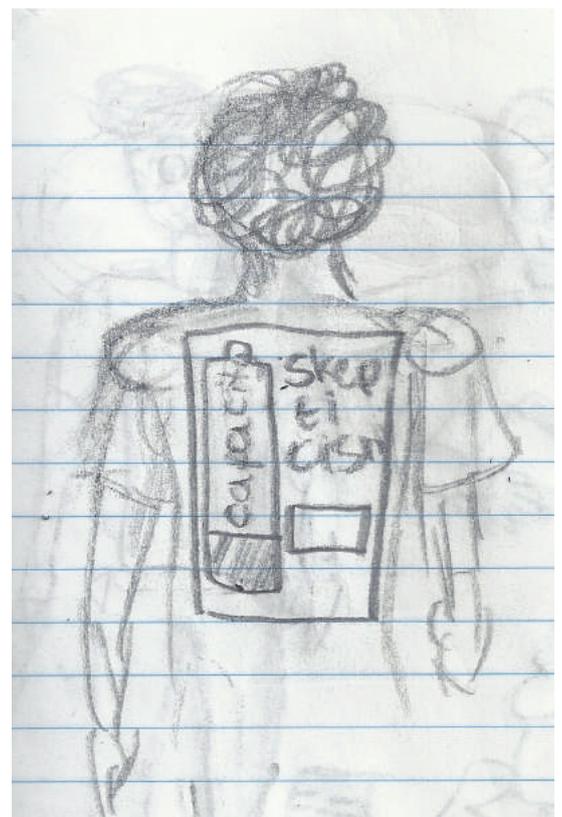
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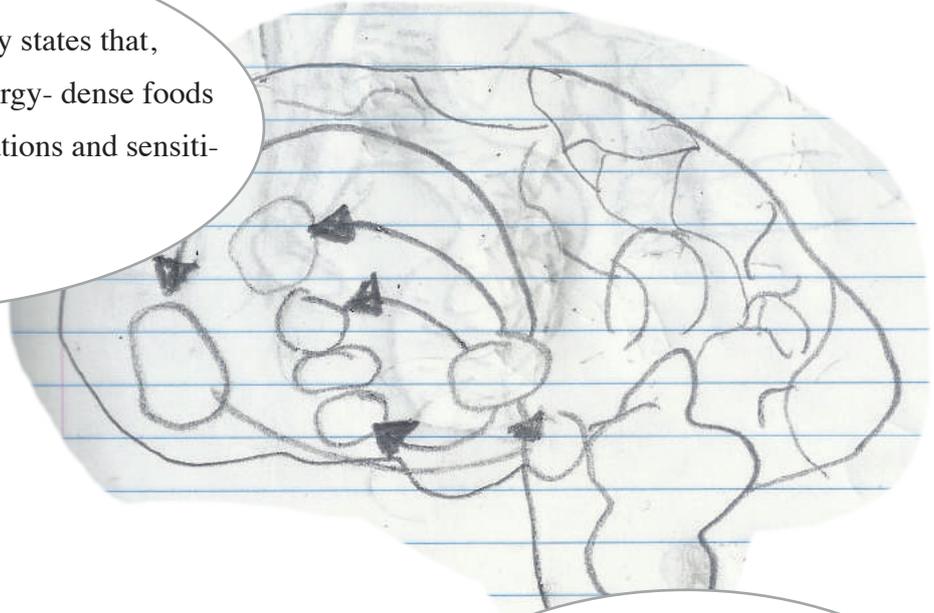
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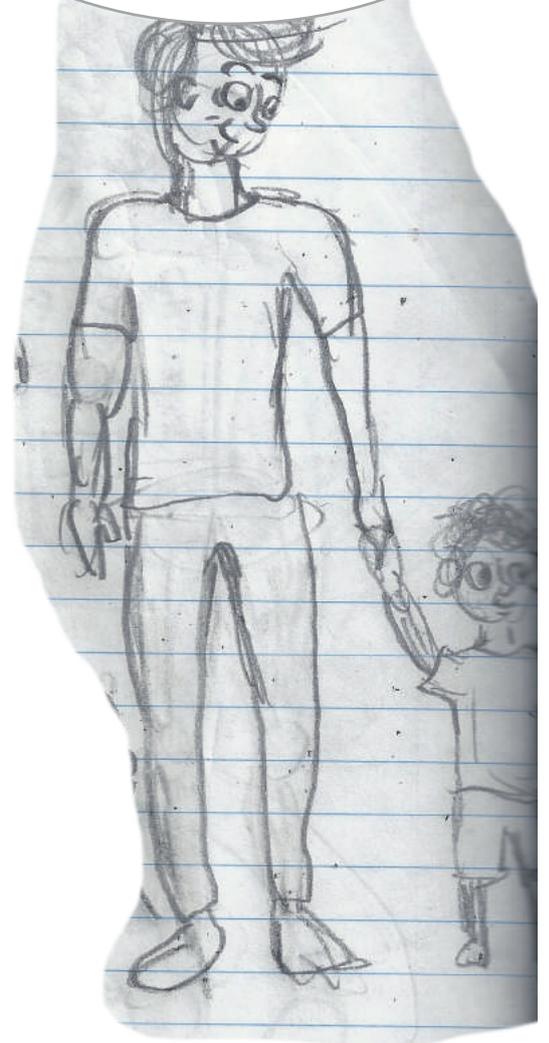


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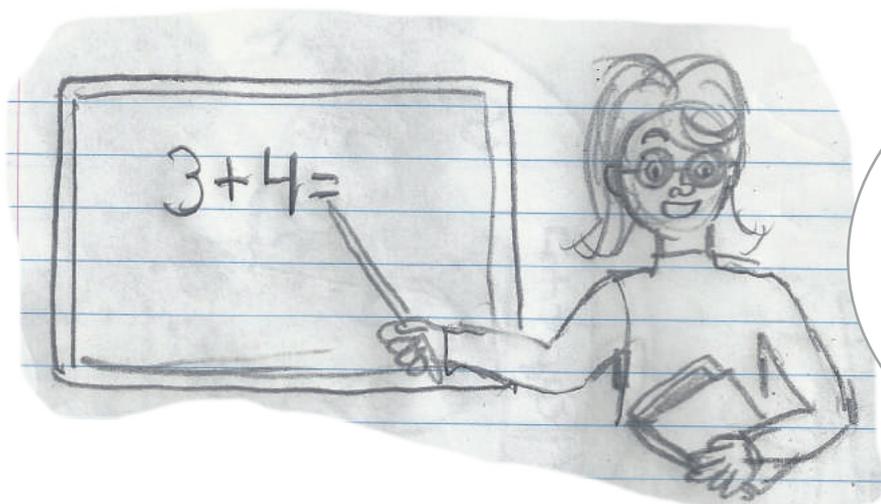


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