

Is there an age at which children are too young to be the targets of commercials and marketing? Is every person, regardless of age, a potential consumer? The market potential of young people is huge. According to one 2001 report, children's spending tripled in the 1990s. Children between the ages of 4 and 12 spent \$2.2 billion in 1968, \$4.2 billion in 1984, \$17.1 billion in 1994, and more than \$40 billion by 2002. Estimates are that direct buying by children is expected to exceed \$51.8 billion by 2006. This makes young people an attractive target for marketers, and where better to target marketing than in schools?

Commercials in schools occur in many forms. Products are directly advertised in a variety of formats and circumstances, including on school buses and through Channel One, a for-profit media company that produces news programming shown daily in thousands of middle and high school classrooms. Indirect advertising occurs with sponsorships of school activities and supplies. Many products are sold in and by schools and many schools participate in a variety of marketing research studies. In every case, schools provide the occasion for students to learn about some commercial product.

- Should advertising be allowed in schools?
- What facts would you want to know before deciding this question?
- What alternative marketing practices are open to companies that sell products to children? If some school districts propose advertising on and in buses, which are public property paid for by tax dollars, does that raise additional issues?
- Who are the stakeholders of your decision? What is the impact of each alternative decision on each stakeholder you have identified?
- What rights and duties are involved?
- How would you decide the case? Is it mostly a matter of consequences, or are important principles involved?

people. Companies that market alcoholic beverages in poor inner-city neighborhoods must take this ethical guideline into account. Marketing malt beverages, fortified wines, and other alcoholic drinks to poor inner-city residents must acknowledge that many people in such situations are not fully autonomous consumers. Many people in such situations drink to get drunk; they drink to escape; they drink because they are alcoholics. (For an examination of online marketing that targets children, see the reading from the Kaiser Family Foundation included at the end of this chapter.)

One final form of marketing to a vulnerable population involves potentially all of us as consumer targets. We are each vulnerable when we are not aware that we are subject to a marketing campaign. This type of campaign is called **stealth or undercover marketing** and refers to those situations where we are subject to directed commercial activity without our knowledge. Certainly we are subjected to numerous communications on a regular basis without paying much attention, such as the billboards at which we might glance sideways as we speed past on a highway. That is not undercover marketing. Instead, undercover marketing is an intentional effort to hide the true marketing element of the interaction. For example,