

The infants' is much more highly concentrated because it is intended to be dosed in smaller volumes. Reports began to arise about young children overdosing on Tylenol because their parents mistook the infants' formula for the children's formula. Parents were grabbing the similar looking bottle of concentrated infants' Tylenol and giving children a quantity equal to the recommended dose of the children's formula. The result was liver damage and in some cases death. This was clearly an unintended and, initially, unforeseen, confusion. But when Johnson and Johnson (the parent of Tylenol's manufacturer McNeil Pharmaceuticals) learned of this, do you believe they had a responsibility to respond in a way that reduced the potential for confusion and harm? (Do an Internet search to discover how this case was handled over a period of at least fifteen years.)

These last points raise some important questions about consumers' vulnerability and the responsibility of marketers, advertisers, and salespersons. Might some persons or populations be more vulnerable to advertising campaigns and more easily deceived or manipulated? Might specific populations, or the society as a whole, be less able to resist consumption of particular products, or consumption in general, because of the cumulative exposure to advertising? There is some evidence, for example, that the grinding stress of poverty makes people more prone to seek escape through drugs. Alcohol and tobacco are known to produce feelings of relaxation and euphoria. Is it possible that the poor are more vulnerable to advertising for these products because of the conditions of their lives? Certainly the harmful effects of alcohol and tobacco are more frequent among the poor. Yet poorer neighborhoods are often the most intensely targeted by outdoor advertising of these two products. Is there an argument that companies in the industries in question bear some collective responsibility to address the social and health problems created by abuse?

The reading by Glenn Braunstein, "Let's Junk Junk-Food Advertising to Kids," focuses on a specific case of special vulnerability. Braunstein is objecting in particular to food advertising aimed at young children because he believes it contributes to the growing problem of obesity in our society. Look carefully at his arguments about the connection between exposure to advertising and childhood obesity. Braunstein also raises a more global question about the propriety of advertising to children. He notes research in psychology that shows that children younger than eight are not cognitively or emotionally capable of understanding the commercial intent of ads they see. He reports that, as a result, they largely accept ads as fact rather than subjecting them to skeptical scrutiny. This suggests an argument about advertising to young children: If advertising must respect the autonomy of consumers and if children are not yet capable of reasoned judgment, serious questions arise for children's advertising.

A common response to critics of children's ads is beside the point for this argument. Sometimes people say that advertising to children is acceptable because parents can simply tell a child "No" when the child requests some advertised item. However, parental control of the purse strings is not a response if the original