

decades after Galbraith's book was first published. In our final reading, economist Juliet

offers an analysis of why we consume as much as we do. Consider a question that concerned earlier generations of economists. At first, one assumes that people work in order to earn money to buy what they need. However, satisfying needs became less of a challenge to most people as industrial economies grew and became more productive. Logic might suggest that as people came to satisfy their needs they would begin to work less in order to enjoy leisure time. But, if people began to work less, the economy would slow down and head into a recession. Economic growth and productivity seemed to contain within itself the seeds of its own destruction. This was a real challenge to economic theory.

But, of course, nothing at all like this occurred. As industrial economies became more productive, the amount of time spent working increased rather than decreased. The desire for luxury goods has kept many workers in industrialized countries working longer and longer hours. Critics charge that this consumerist culture, fueled by contemporary advertising and marketing, causes significant and widespread social harm.

Schor argues that advertising and marketing do contribute to excessive consumption, but that various structural features of modern economies are equally responsible. These structural features include a "work and spend" cycle in which individuals are not free to decrease the time and effort spent at work, an ecological bias in which ecological resources are treated as free goods, and the emergence of consumption as a form of social competition. In a world in which meeting basic human needs is a dream for hundreds of millions of people and in which ecological systems are under real threat by economic exploitation, Schor suggests that there are pressing reasons for asking, "Why do we consume so much?"

Her analysis also forces us to consider the degree to which our values are shaped by a culture dominated by advertising's ubiquity. As Schor and others have noted, advertising communicates messages about what is valuable, even about who is valuable. Consider the role advertising plays in our understanding of the good life to which we should aspire and in our understanding about conceptions of personal worth. Many have, for example, decried the influence of advertising on conceptions of female beauty, helping to create an unrealistic, unhealthy, and unattainable ideal. (See Decision Exercise C.) It is worth considering the extent to which advertising might reinforce potentially harmful ideals and stereotypes, and worth considering the responsibilities of advertisers and marketers. Are they responsible only to employ whatever images, words, and stereotypes work to sell the product? Or do they have some responsibility to resist the powerful yet socially harmful ideals and stereotypes?

### CORPORATE POLITICAL ADVERTISING

The final issue we address in this chapter on marketing and advertising is the use of corporate funds for political advocacy. Corporations have long been held to be legal persons. And since the *Bellotti* decision in the late 1970s, legal limits on corporate