

***The Corporation:
The Pathological Pursuit of Profit & Power***

Directed by Mark Achbar and Jennifer Abbott; Written by Joel Bakan;

Perhaps one of the great insights *The Corporation* yields is that true corporate social responsibility is achieved only through individuals' actions. Institutions are comprised of individuals and it is the character of these individuals that defines the institution. Whereas corporate social responsibility is assigned to the institution, it must be directly owned by the individuals within corporations, lest it become diffused in the abstract entity that is the corporation.

Advertising and Marketing

The filmmakers raise a number of ethical questions about advertising and marketing. For example, the “Nag Factor” sheds light on how corporations advertise to teenagers and children and help them “nag for their products more effectively.” Quite simply, corporations, through television, and other media sources, influence the behavior of children, and in turn, their parents, through the antisocial behavior of nagging. The segment includes a revealing interview with Lucy Hughes, a market researcher who helps corporations “manipulate consumers into wanting and buying your products” or, as Chomsky describes it, helps corporations turn people into “completely mindless consumers of goods that they do not want.” Jonathan Ressler, CEO of Big Fat Inc., also explains “stealth marketing,” a relatively new marketing strategy that uses paid actors to endorse products in apparently casual conversations and interactions in public places. Ressler is a provocative interviewee, arguing that if stealth marketing is “showing you something that makes your life better in some way, then who cares—just say thanks!”

The film opens viewers' eyes to the pervasiveness of corporate advertising. The visceral responses that stealth marketing may evoke reflect the discomfort many people feel when advertising spills into all aspects of their daily lives. The film asks us to consider the potential risk that stealth marketing poses by fraying the social fabric of our community. What happens when we can no longer discriminate between the messages from which

