Introduction

Having presented detailed and extensive evidence on Black American images on television and the outcomes produced by them, it is appropriate to now venture a formal statement of key auestions and problems that have been discussed and to offer relevant answers and solutions. In the first case. the question to which we refer is not related to adverse stereotypical images themselves, rather it is to the question of "Why such images persist on television?" Notably, a "Chicago School" of economics adage is, "If it exists, it must be efficient, otherwise it would not exist." The adage implies that adverse images of Black Americans would not exist if there were sufficient reasons and incentives to remove them from the airwayes. If our elaborate arguments against them constitute sufficient reasons for their elimination, again we ask, "Why do such images persist?" In the second case, we ask, "If these images create such overburdening negative externalities for Black Americans, why have Black Americans not undertaken efforts to eliminate them?" This chapter provides answers to these questions and solutions to the related problems.

We approach these questions and problems by translating them into a game theoretic framework. After providing answers to the questions, we use the answers as springboards for solutions to the problem. The solutions point toward the need to form a special interest group (SIG) to address adverse images of Black Americans in the media. Currently, no nationally known Black American organization exists solely for this purpose. As an indication of the success such an interest group might experience, we consider the efforts and outcomes of selected interest groups formed by other American ethnic groups to combat adverse images in the media.

This chapter represents an effort to go beyond just a statement of the questions and problems. We realize that the answers and solutions offered are not exhaustive; therefore, we invite others to join the dialogue and propose their own answers and solutions. More importantly, we challenge individuals and organizations to actively engage in developing mechanisms, which will bring an end to pervasive adverse images of Black Americans on television and in other media *genre*. Until this occurs, Black Americans, as an ethnic group, will face constrained development in all forms.

Game Theory: Questions, Problems, Answers, and Solutions

The question restated is: "If they are harmful, why do adverse images of Black Americans persist on television?" Of course, there are numerous contributing reasons for why these images persist. Given the time and wherewithal to collect relevant data plus a complex computer model, we could analyze most, if not all, of the contributing reasons. However, from an economic perspective, there is primarily one major reason why these images

persist: Television networks find the existence of these images in their programs to be beneficial. Here, by beneficial, we mean that networks do not experience a decline, and often experience increases, in their viewing audience when these images are included in programs. Stable or increasing viewership translates into improved "bottom lines" for the networks. Consequently, the networks have no economic incentives to remove these images from their programs.

The foregoing discussion points to the "networks" and the "viewing audience" as key players in determining why the images persist. As you know, the viewing audience is comprised of Black Americans and "Other" Americans. Given these players, we can develop a simple game theoretic framework, which explains why the images persist and which illuminates the strategies required to eliminate them.

At the outset, the following simplifying assumptions are established before constructing the game:

- The "networks" will be a game player and they can choose to air programs with or without adverse images of Black Americans.
- The audience is comprised of Black Americans and "Other" Americans. Of the two, only the Black American audience will be a game player and this audience can choose to view programs with or without adverse images of Black Americans.
- 3. The Black American and "Other" American audiences are represented by the value "3". The two audiences, each with the value 3, are initially assumed to have the following preferences: One-third of the Black American and "Other" American audiences prefer to view programs without adverse images (PWOAI) of Black Americans; the remaining two-thirds of these audiences prefer to view programs with adverse images (PWAI) of Black Americans.
- 4. The payoffs for the choices to air or view programs with or without adverse images reflect the following characteristics:
 - a. For the networks, the payoffs are based solely on the viewing audience, which chooses to view programs: PWOAI or PWAI.
 - b. For the non-game playing "Other" American audience, there is no payoff. However, the networks receive a payoff from this audience based solely on the proportion of the audience that receives utility (benefits) from and prefers to view the types of programs that are aired; 2 points for PWAI, and 1 point for PWOAI.
 - c. For Black Americans, the payoffs have three components:
 - i. The first component is related to Black Americans' receipt of utility from—that is the preference to view—the types of programs being aired, and is indicated by the

proportion of the audience with that preference; 2 points for PWAI, and 1 point for PWOAI.

- ii. The second component is related to the disutility (economic,
 - educational, political, etc.) incurred by Black Americans when a PWAI is aired; -3 points. It is assumed that no disutility is incurred when a PWOAI is aired (0 points).
- iii. As in the case of the "Other" American audience, the networks receive a payoff from the Black American audience based solely on the proportion of that audience that receives utility from, and prefers to view, the types of programs that are aired; 2 points for PWAI, and 1 point for PWOAI. Given that there is no aggressive and sustained effort to oppose adverse images on the networks, it is reasonable to assume that the networks incur no disutility as a result of viewing audience protests.

Before presenting the payoff matrix for the game based on the foregoing assumptions, let us analyze a little more closely assumption 3 in an effort to show that the assumptions are not completely arbitrary. Assumption 3 states that only one-third of Black American and "Other" American audiences favor television programs without adverse images. Is this alarming? It should not be. To address concerns about this assumption, let us reduce the issue to simple economic terms. Considering the assumption from the "Other" American perspective, a majority or supra-majority preference for programs without adverse images is a preference for improved outcomes for Black Americans—in this case, economic outcomes. Do most "Other" Americans prefer such outcomes? We dare say not. If they did, we would expect to observe more favorable economic outcomes than currently exist for Black Americans; specifically, improved employment, income, and wealth. In this regard, it is worth noting Konow's (2003, 1194-5) recent article, which discusses Americans' strong aversion to action to equalize incomes, even when such egalitarianism is premised on "justice." Therefore, it appears acceptable to assume that no less than two-thirds of "Other" Americans have a preference for viewing PWAI.

Considering assumption 3 from a Black American perspective, one might argue that the assumption is erroneous. This is not so. Why? First, because the effects of adverse images on television are not widely known among Black Americans; that is, Black Americans are irrationally ignorant of the harm caused by these images. If these effects were known, it is highly probable that this would not be the first book to examine these effects. Second, we call upon Nielsen (2000) and McWhorter (2003) to substantiate that Black Americans not only prefer programs that include adverse stereotypical images, but that Black Americans absorb and inculcate these

images and use them to build cultural capital—negative though it may be. Thus, the assumption that the majority of Black Americans prefer to view programs that contain adverse images is not erroneous, and is, in fact, well founded.

Now consider the previously-described payoff matrix below:

Figure 1.--Payoff Matrix: Airing and Viewing PWAI and PWOAI

		Black American Viewers			
	T		PWAI		PWOAI
Television Networks	PWAI	(1)	-2,4	(II)	-2,4
	PWOAI	(III)	-1,2	(IV)	-1,2

The first numerical entries in the cells labeled I through IV represent the payoffs to Black American viewers, while the second entries are the payoffs to the television networks. For example, the entries in cell I (-2,4) are derived using the following calculations:

- 1. The value –2 is the result of Black Americans incurring –3 in disutility because a PWAI is aired, -1 in disutility by Black American viewers who prefer to not view PWAI, and +2 in utility incurred by Black Americans who prefer to view PWAI.
- 2. The value 4 is the result of the networks receiving 2 points from both Black American and "Other" American viewers who receive utility from and prefer to view PWAI.

Obviously, the dominant strategy apparent in this payoff matrix is for the networks to air PWAI; to not do so would result in a loss of viewing audience, a decrease in ratings, and a reduction in advertising revenue. Given the absence of a countervailing force to motivate adoption of another strategy, the networks have used this strategy persistently. Hence, this game reveals, in a very concise manner, the answer to the question, "Why do programs that contain adverse images of Black Americans persist?"

Black Americans and the Media: An Economic Perspective

¹ Nielsen (2000, 42) shows that most of the top 15 primetime programs for Black American viewers include adverse or stereotypical images. Although McWhorter (2003, 130) may very well oppose our treatment of adverse and stereotypical images of Black Americans, we do agree on the fact that television programs, which feature such images are "extremely popular with black viewers."

Solutions to the Problem Through a SIG

It is transparent from the payoff matrix presented in Figure 1 that the networks could be forced to adopt a new strategy if conditions changed and payoffs were reconfigured. Consider, for example, the case where payoffs changed such that networks received 3-point payoffs in cells I and II as opposed to 4, and 3-point payoffs in cells III and IV as opposed to 2. In this case, the networks would be indifferent between airing PWAI and PWOAI. If the networks become indifferent about airing the two types of programs, then other factors, not accounted for here, might determine which types of programs are aired. So the question surfaces, "What changes are required to effect the aforementioned changes in payoffs?"

As a first example of a change that would alter payoffs, opposers of PWAI might seek to decrease the probability that such programs are aired by initiating a campaign to educate Black Americans to the adverse economic effects of these programs and by persuading Black Americans to reduce their preference for these programs. If this effort produced say a one-third downswing in the preference for PWAI and a one-third upswing in the preference for PWOAI, the above-described change in payoffs would be achieved.² This is a demand-side strategy.

Another demand-side strategy would extend the first strategy by prompting those Black Americans who are persuaded to increase their preference for PWOAI to engage in agitation with the networks against the broadcast of PWAI. Such agitation against the networks, even when performed on an "unorganized" basis, would create disutility for the networks, would alter the payoff matrix when factored into the above described game, and would result in a new equilibrium favoring decisions to reduce broadcasts of PWAI.

A supply-side strategy for modifying the payoffs in the above matrix could be modeled in the Coasean tradition.³ In this case, we would resolve the negative externalities incurred by Black Americans from the airing of PWAI by considering the total social product engendered by efforts to resolve this externality. If, for example, we assume that the social costs imposed on Black Americans (those being harmed) by the airing of PWAI by the television networks (those producing the harm and liable for it) is greater (in the current period and all future periods under the currently existing condition) than the cost imposed on the remainder of the society by a decision to discontinue the production and airing of PWAI (in the current and all future periods under the currently existing conditions), then we can conclude that overall social welfare will be enhanced by a decision to

² The network payoffs in cells I and II would equal 3 based on 2 points from "Other" American viewers who prefer PWAI plus 1 point from Black American viewers who prefer PWAI. Network payoffs in cells III and IV would equal 3 based on 1 point from "Other" American viewers who prefer PWOAI plus 2 points from Black American viewers who prefer PWOAI.

³ See Coase (1960).

discontinue the production and airing of PWAI. Under these circumstances, it is appropriate to implement a public policy that mandates the elimination of PWAI.⁴ In the context of the game under consideration here, the elimination of PWAI would result in the networks only receiving points for airing PWOAI. We hasten to add that, given the effects of adverse images, it does not appear appropriate to invoke an alternate decision to have the networks compensate Black Americans monetarily, while continuing to produce and air PWAI.⁵

Barring use of the Coasean approach to resolve the negative externality, another strategy for eliminating PWAI could involve Black Americans recognizing that the cost imposed by adverse images far exceeds the cost required to eliminate PWAI through direct payments to the networks. Black Americans could raise financial support for PWOAI to such an extent that it becomes unprofitable for the networks to broadcast PWAI.⁶ This supply-side strategy would result in the networks only receiving points for airing PWOAI.

An additional supply-side strategy for modifying the payoffs could also be enacted as a public policy initiative and could be regulatory in nature. The impetus for this strategy can be found in *Window Dressing on the Set: An Update*, which was prepared by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (1979), now known as the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). An important recommendation in *Window Dressing* states:

This Commission, in recommending an inquiry and rulemaking proceeding on the portrayal of minorities and women, advocates no infringement on the First Amendment rights of broadcasters. Rather, this Commission seeks an FCC inquiry into the causes of and possible remedies for the continued underrepresentation and stereotyping of minorities and women in television drama. It urges further exploration into the effects on both majority and minority viewers of underrepresentation and stereotyping. This Commission also urges the FCC to search for ways—either by making rules or by exercising

⁴ Although interest group theory espouses the idea that "Small groups of non-wealthy and non-vocal members are unlikely to exert effective political pressure" (Rowley, et al, (1995, 92)), we are not as pessimistic about Black Americans' prospects for lobbying for a public policy to eliminate PWAI using an interest group strategy. Consider, for example, the excerpt from the 1979 U.S. Commission on Civil Rights' report, *Window Dressing on the Set: An Update*, which is presented below.

⁵ Like Coase (1960, 41-2), the difficulties are recognized of quantifying (at a point in time and through time) the social product when production results in negative externalities. However, unless we assume a zero-sum-game, it appears obvious that the overall cost imposed on Black Americans by past and present PWAI is considerably greater than the cost that would be imposed on the networks and their staff by discontinuing the production of PWAI, because, logically, the displaced staff could be employed to produce additional PWOAI that would replace the PWAI.

⁶Black Americans could pay the networks outright to produce PWOAI or to not produce PWAI, or Black Americans could generate new demand for advertising for PWOAI.

leadership through the issuance of recommendations addressed to the industry—to increase the numbers of minorities and women who appear in television drama and to increase the diversity with which they are portrayed (63).

If Black Americans engaged in rent-seeking with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) on the issue of adverse and stereotypical images on television, the FCC might be persuaded to establish rules that prohibit or reduce the prevalence of such images. The imposition of these rules could cause a significant reduction in the supply of PWAI. As in the previously discussed supply-side strategies for modifying payoffs, networks would only receive points for airing PWOAI.

It goes without saying that both demand- and supply-side strategies should be employed to produce a stable equilibrium in which only PWOAI are aired because demand and supply interact to produce equilibrium. Although this outcome may be achieved through a strategy that focuses only on the demand- or only on the supply-side, the outcome will prove to be temporary. Without a two-sided strategy, forces will ultimately produce a resumption of PWAI broadcasts.

Notably, strategies for altering the viewing behavior of "Other" Americans are not considered. Although these strategies may constitute a viable approach for modifying payoffs in the PWAI – PWOAI game, they are likely to be very costly due to the group's size and attitudinal predisposition. Therefore, consideration has been restricted to strategies based on the most favorable pre-existing circumstances; i.e., the relative smallness of the Black American group and its apparent vested interest in the elimination of PWAI.

Forming a Special Interest Group(s)

Close consideration of the strategies just outlined reveals the requirement for an organized entity to: (1) "Educate" and "persuade" Black American viewers; (2) instigate "a public policy initiative"; (3) "raise the level of financial support" for PWOAI; and (4) "rent-seek" the FCC. In other words, Black Americans should form a SIG to organize, administer, and execute action that addresses the adverse image issue. Although various Black American organizations have responded to this issue in the past, and some are addressing the issue today, namely, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), no nationally-known organization is solely dedicated to the elimination of Black American adverse and stereotypical images on television or in other media genres. "Why does such an organization not exist?" The answer to this question has at least two

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⁷ For an example of the NAACP's spotty attention to the adverse and stereotypical image issue, see the October 28, 2003 press release, "NAACP TV Diversity Report Yields Mixed Results on Network Performance."

parts. First, such an organization does not exist for the same reason PWAI persist on television; namely, Black Americans are rationally ignorant of the adverse effects of such images and do not recognize the need to form a SIG to address them. Second, Black Americans who are informed about the adverse effects are probably able to avoid much of them; therefore, the harm that they experience from these images is likely to be less than the costs that they would incur as a sub-group to address them. SIG theory predicts that SIGs will not form unless the benefits accruing to each member of a SIG exceeds the cost incurred by each member.⁸

If a Black American interest group does not exist to address adverse and stereotypical images on television, and if theory argues against broadbased individual support for such a group, what options exists for addressing the issue? Realize that, while theory argues against the formation of SIGs with broad support (large memberships), the theory is more accepting of the notion that small SIGs can form. The preeminent SIG theorist Mancur Olson (1971) determined that small SIGs are more likely to form to engender the production of a collective good than large SIGs; also, small SIGs are more likely to operate optimally than large SIGs. This latter finding is consistent with a long-held notion among Black Americans that a small group, Dubois' "Talented Tenth," can organize to effect significant change and alter outcomes for the small group and, in the case of collective good production, for the larger group as well. 10

What gains can a SIG inure to itself? Members of a SIG designed to combat PWAI should be able to strategize and position themselves and their progeny to capture a portion of the increased income, wealth, and stature that Black Americans will realize when they are no longer affected by the vagaries of the negative externalities resulting from the production and broadcast of PWAI. Generally, SIG members who position themselves in commercial endeavors, which are designed to meet the demands of both Black American and "Other" American clients today, are likely to reap considerable future benefits when their establishments are no longer stigmatized by the effects of PWAI, and when Black Americans and, especially, "Other" Americans patronize their business as they would any other. Of course, these businesses may be forced to survive on the patronage of Black Americans alone in the interim, until the effects of PWAI dissipate.

However, these gains create obstacles to the formation of a SIG. For a Black American entrepreneur, these gains are expected in the future, they are somewhat nebulous, and they are uncertain gains. Consequently the prospective gains are discounted heavily. When the net present value of these gains (benefits) is juxtaposed against the cost of participating in a SIG

⁸ See Olson (1971, 22-4).

⁹ See Olson (1971) Chapters I and II. The "collective good" that would be produced by a SIG designed to combat PWAI would be improved economic outcomes for all Black Americans.

¹⁰ See Dubois (1995, 136).

today, the benefit-cost ratio may not indicate participation in a SIG to eliminate PWAI.¹¹

For these reasons and more, there is no nationally known and respected SIG designed to combat adverse images of Black Americans on television. Currently the discounted benefits of forming such a SIG may not appear to be as great as the cost of doing so. This is not to say, that a SIG is not a good strategy for eliminating PWAI. It simply means that the correct circumstances do not exist to spark the formation of the SIG. Nevertheless, a turn of events—such as a sudden realization of the true cost of PWAI or a decision by a Black American entrepreneur to invest an unexpected surplus to eliminate PWAI—can occur and can motivate the development of a SIG to fight PWAI.

Next, we consider efforts by other ethnic groups in the United States (U.S.) to combat adverse images through SIGs.

SIGs' Successes: Four Examples

Internet research will reveal that there are numerous U.S. SIGs that are designed to fight adverse media images of ethnic groups. In this section, Asian, Hispanic, Jewish, and Italian SIGs, which address adverse media image issues, are discussed. In most cases, the effort to address media image issues occurs under an umbrella of broader support for the ethnic groups. This outcome is consistent with Olson's (1971) finding that efforts to lobby for collective goods often occur as a "by-product" of organizations designed to perform other functions. 12 He notes that organizations that have the power to coerce prospective participants to join or that have sources of positive inducements can be successful in forming large SIGs. After forming, these SIGs may set aside some of their resources to lobby for collective goods. Therefore, it is not surprising to find that large ethnic SIGs engage in efforts, as a subsidiary operation, to address media image issues. These efforts gain national notoriety and have clout due to the size and stature of the umbrella organizations. Consequently, a stand-alone Black American SIG to combat PWAI may not be an optimal strategy. However, the information presented below supports the idea that a SIG, irrespective of its organizational framework, can be a very effective tool for combating adverse media images.

Currently, the NAACP is a prime example of an ethnic SIG addressing media image issues as a by-product of its primary operation. The organization prepares an annual report card on the television networks and has entered into agreements with networks to employ more Black Americans and to reduce the prevalence of adverse or stereotypical images in their

¹¹ Some Black Americans interested in making intergenerational transfers may ignore the low benefit/cost ratio and invest in a SIG to combat PWAI.

¹² See Olson (1971), Chapter VI.

programs.¹³ However, because it may not wish to impose too high a cost on the networks, and because it does not have a mandate to do so, the NAACP does not demand the elimination of adverse images from network programming. Most importantly, the NAACP does not have a subsidiary unit specifically dedicated to the goal of eliminating PWAI.

Asian

An important Asian media image SIG is the Media Action Network for Asian-Americans (MANAA).¹⁴ It differs from the norm because it does not operate under the umbrella of a larger Asian-American SIG, rather it functions as a freestanding media watchdog group. The web site for MANAA does not include a thorough background on the organization. However, it is a nonprofit organization with the following goals and objectives:

- To monitor depictions in the media of persons of Asian Pacific descent.
- To educate the public and the media about what persons of Asian Pacific descent find racially offensive, stereotypical, and/or inaccurate and why it is harmful.
- To advocate and provide reinforcement for fair, accurate, sensitive, and balanced depictions of persons of Asian Pacific descent in all facets of the media.
- To discourage and fight for the end of gender stereotyping of persons of Asian Pacific descent.
- To hold individuals accountable for unfair or derogatory statements made in the media about persons of Asian Pacific decent.
- To serve as a resource for information regarding the treatment of Asian Pacific Americans in the media.
- To support, encourage, and promote Asian Pacific American talent in both the media and the arts, and advocate their increased employment in these fields.
- To organize and operate a network among Asian Pacific Americans and other community organizations in order to develop a national presence as a media watchdog/advocacy organization capable of representing the concerns of the Asian Pacific American community.
- To encourage increased news coverage of significant issues of concern to Asian Americans.

Over the last five years, the NAACP has issues the following four reports on diversity within network and cable television: For 2000, see http://www.naacp.org/news/releases/TVdiv52401.shtml and http://www.naacp.org/news/releases/tvdiversity081601.shtml; and for 2003, see

http://www.naacp.org/news/releases/tvdiversity102803.shtml . Also see "The 'White-Washing' of Television: MANAA's (Media Action Network for Asian Americans) Partnership with the NAACP Media Coalition" at http://www.manaa.org/articles/naacp.html.

¹⁴ See http://www.manaa.org/main.html.

- To foster an environment of increased sensitivity toward, and respect for, the dignity of the Asian Pacific community.
- To improve the present state of the treatment and portrayals of persons of Asian Pacific descent in the media and in society.

MANAA's efforts to achieve these goals and objectives are embodied in educational materials that are posted on their web site, through outreach and through their participation in coalitions comprised of ethnic media watchdog groups. The organization appears to have been successful in influencing networks to seriously consider diversity issues when it collaborated with a multi-ethnic coalition during 2000 and 2001.¹⁵

Hispanic

The key Hispanic media watchdog group operates under the auspices of the National Council of La Raza (NCLR). NCLR is the largest constituency-based national Hispanic organization serving all Hispanic nationality groups in the country. This private nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, which was established in 1968 to reduce poverty and discrimination and to improve life opportunities for Hispanic Americans, reaches more than three and one-half million Hispanics through its operations. NCLR works to achieve its goals through capacity-building assistance to support and strengthen Hispanic community-based organizations and through applied research. The NCLR's Policy Analysis Center operates as a key "think tank" that serves as a voice for Hispanic Americans in Washington, D.C. 16

As part of its work, the NCLR monitors Hispanic media images, although it is not clear whether a permanent subsidiary operation exists currently to perform this function. It produced two major reports within the last decade on Hispanics and the media: Out of the Picture: Hispanics in the Media—State of Hispanic America (1994) and Don't Blink: Hispanics in Television Entertainment (1996). The former provided a synthesis of media research that pointed to the near invisibility of Hispanics in U.S. media and highlighted the preponderance of negative stereotypical images when Hispanics do appear in the media, while the latter is an update of the former report.

The National Hispanic Media Coalition (NHMC) augments the efforts of the NCLR, and the two are viewed as sister organizations.¹⁷ The NHMC's mission is to "improve the image of Hispanic Americans as portrayed by the media" and to "increase the number of Hispanic Americans employed in all facets of the media industry." In addition to its headquarter operations in Los Angeles, the NHMC has operating chapters in New York, Chicago, San Antonio, Albuquerque, Phoenix, San Diego, and Detroit. Importantly, the

¹⁵ See footnote 12.

¹⁶ See the NCLR web site at http://www.nclr.org/about/ for more details.

¹⁷ See http://www.nhmc.org.

NHMC's focus on placing Latinos in media jobs appears to be sufficient to motivate enough support for the organization to also focus on improving Hispanic images in the media.

Without doubt, the portrayal of Hispanics in negative stereotypical light is an adverse outcome, but the paucity of such portrayals and the general invisibility of Hispanics in English language media in the U.S. may be a blessing in disguise. This invisibility reduces the necessity for the NCLR to expend considerable resources on combating adverse stereotypical images. Instead, the organization can focus on promoting positive images in English language media and on the two major Spanish language television networks: Telemundo and Univision.

Jewish

Founded in 1913, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) is a SIG with the capability of serving as a media watchdog organization for Jewish people as one of its many functions. The ADL's mission statements indicates that, "Its ultimate purpose is to secure justice and fair treatment to all citizens alike and to put an end forever to unjust and unfair discrimination against and ridicule of any sector or body of citizens." 18

An international organization, the ADL fought many battles during its over-90-year history on a variety of fronts. However, the history of the organization, which appears on its web site, makes no specific reference to efforts to address adverse television images. On the contrary, the organization's history recounts many occasions when the ADL developed media campaigns to fight for Jewish people. Although the ADL has the capacity to combat adverse stereotypical images of Jews, this does not appear to be one of its primary functions.

Nevertheless, the tools and techniques employed by the ADL to fight for Jewish rights provide a clear lesson on how to organize a SIG. According to its 2001 annual report, the ADL received over \$40 million in contributions, incurred over \$51 million in operating expenses, and owned nearly \$17 million in assets. These resources are used for many purposes in the ADL's 30 regional and satellite offices in the U.S. and offices abroad. The availability of such resources makes it feasible to fight strong campaigns against adverse images of Jews on television—should the need ever arise. The ADL represents a perfect example of how media watchdog services can be provided as a by-product of a broader SIG.

¹⁸ See http://www.adl.org/main about adl.asp.

¹⁹ See http://www.adl.org/ADLHistory/print adl history.asp.

²⁰ See 2001 Annual Report Anti-Defamation League.

Italian

The National Italian American Foundation (NIAF) advocates on behalf of the nearly 25 million Italian Americans. The NIAF mission is to preserve and protect Italian American heritage and culture by: ²¹

- 1. Helping young Italian Americans with their educations and careers working closely with Congress and the White House to promote the appointment of Italian Americans in government
- 2. Encouraging the teaching of Italian language and culture in U.S. schools
- 3. Monitoring the portrayal of Italian Americans by the news and entertainments industries
- 4. Strengthening cultural and economic ties between Italy and the U.S.

Item 4 above is consistent with the role of an ethnic media watchdog organization. Again, the NIAF, which was established in 1975, actively monitors Italian media image issues on behalf of its membership as a subsidiary operation. Labeled "Image & Identify," this operation identifies, reports on, and challenges promulgators of, adverse stereotypical images of Italian-Americans on television and elsewhere. NIAF recognizes that it must combat the types of realities identified by a 2001 Zogby survey of U.S. teenagers, which found that "teens learn the less admirable aspects of their heritage from the entertainment industry's stereotyping and that teens' perceptions of other ethnic, religious, and racial groups are shaped by the entertainment industry's stereotypes." NIAF has received mixed responses to its efforts to eliminate adverse stereotypical images of Italian-Americans; from "sincere apologies to snide suggestions that we 'lighten up." Nevertheless, NIAF is persistent with its campaign and provides results of its efforts regularly on its web site.

An important tactic employed by the Image & Identify program is to promote positive images of Italian-Americans. In addition, NIAF provides a three-step process for fighting adverse stereotypical images of Italian-Americans: (1) "Review" adverse or positive images of Italian-Americans in the media; (2) "Respond" to these images with written comments to appropriate parties; and (3) "Read" to become well informed about Italian-American history and culture so that accurate assessments can be made of media images.

Based on what is available on Internet Web sites, the NIAF appears to possess the most active and systematically organized attack on adverse images of ethnic groups on television. Although the ADL appears to be the

²¹ See http://www.niaf.org/about/mission.asp.

²² See http://www.niaf.org/image identity/fall2002.asp.

most well endowed SIG from a financial perspective, it does not appear to be actively involved in combating adverse television images of ethnics. MANAA is the newest of the four SIGs; however, it is actively involved as a stand-alone television watchdog organization. Although it is involved in addressing television image issues, the NCLR appears to have performed some of its most important work in the area in the mid-1990s.

Clearly, Black Americans can reflect on how other ethnic groups have marshaled their resources to combat stereotypical images and proceed to do likewise. It is probably irrational to hope for a SIG with the sole purpose of eliminating PWAI. Rather, the objective should be to optimize efforts to eliminate adverse images as a by-product of the efforts of as many SIGs as possible. These SIGs should be encouraged to establish subsidiary operations to address adverse media images of Black Americans. We view all national Black American SIGs having improvement in the well-being of Black Americans as a stated goal as candidates for taking on media image issues as a subsidiary activity; including the NAACP, the Urban League, and Black American fraternities, sororities, churches, media, academic organizations, and so on.

Conclusion

If the insightful Latin adage "vestim virden redit" [clothes makes the person] is really true, then we must conclude that Black Americans are harmed significantly by the "clothes" (i.e., their image) in which they appear on television. The representation of Black Americans in primarily adverse ignorant, and non-productive) and stereotypical criminal. (subservient/menial, comedians (buffoonish), entertainers, and athletes) roles on television, motivate the remainder of American society and people around the world to imagine Black Americans as only capable of exhibiting these characteristics in everyday life. Without disconfirming evidence, what else can "Other" Americans be expected to perceive? Because America is still highly segregated, the persistence of these images helps perpetuate an anti Black American mindset among White Americans, other ethnic groups in this country, and people around the world. This outcome produces lower educational, political, social, and economic attainment than would otherwise occur.

But this is not the only unfortunate aspect of the story. The persistence of adverse images of Black Americans on television prompts Black Americans themselves to imbibe these images and make them their own; producing a self-reinforcing feedback loop. After adopting these images as acceptable, Black Americans become part of the viewing audience of programs that feature these images, which causes the networks to benefit from higher ratings and arrive at the decision that it is in the networks' best interest to continue producing and airing programs that incorporate such images.

It is only when Black Americans choose to become informed about the harmful effects of these images, discontinue viewing them, and take action through a SIG, that adverse stereotypical images will be decreased substantially or eliminated. The evidence is that other American ethnic groups have experienced some success in combating adverse media images. There are no good reasons why Black Americans cannot replicate this success.

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Appendix A: The Economics of Externalities²³

In equilibrium and without an externality, the following situation exists in a competitive economy:

Equation 1

$$\frac{MC_x}{MC_y} = RPT = MRS = \frac{P_x}{P_y}$$

Where RPT is the rate of product transformation, which is equal to the ratio of the marginal cost (MC) of goods X and Y that are incurred in production; and MRS is the marginal rate of substitution, which is equal to the ratio of the price (P) of goods X and Y that prevail in the market place.²⁴ In this case, X represents television programs that feature adverse images of Black Americans, and Y represents all other television programs.

As discussed in this chapter and in Chapter 5, television programs that feature adverse stereotypical images of Black Americans appear to create adverse outcomes for Black Americans, including reduced employment. Black American unemployment creates a host of costs for the broader society, because social benefits (unemployment compensation, nutrition support, healthcare, etc.) are usually provided to unemployed persons. The additional cost borne by society, when added to the costs actually incurred by the producer of the television programs, creates total social costs.

Ideally, and in the absence of externalities, the following condition exists from a societal point of view:

Equation 2

 $\frac{SMC_x}{SMC_y} = SRPT = SMRS = \frac{P_x}{P_y}$

Where the leading "S" stands for the "society": i.e., social marginal cost (SMC), social rate of product transformation (SRPT), and social marginal rate of substitution (SMRS).

²³ This appendix presents an algebraic description of the externality discussed in this chapter and the related implications. It presents a partial equilibrium analysis; the focus is only on the output of television programs.

Of the terms introduced, the one most likely to be confusing to non-economists is marginal cost (MC). Marginal costs represents the additional cost incurred in the production of one additional unit of a commodity (good or service). In this case, the commodities under consideration are television programs.

When externalities exist, the following condition arises:

Equation 3

$$\frac{SMC_x}{SMC_y} = SRPT \rangle SMRS = \frac{P_x}{P_y}$$

Equation 3 describes an externality, which is an inefficient outcome where the SRPT is greater than the SMRS. Normally, efforts are taken to re-impose the equality condition presented in equation 2. When this occurs, society is unburdened from bearing the additional social cost imposed by the externality and the producer of the externality is forced to fully recognize all costs incurred as a result of the production. One response that can be adopted by the producer of the externality in addressing the additional costs is to eliminate these costs by discontinuing the production, in part or entirely, of the externality.