

## Introduction

When considering Black American images on television and the question of whether such images are accurate, balanced, or diverse, is there one television program that the American audience would accept as a standard against which to weigh the question? As a likely candidate, consider the iconic *60 Minutes*. Take this epitome of television fairness, evaluate the program's content, and determine whether the program portrays Black Americans in a manner that might lead its viewers to form adverse stereotypical opinions of Black Americans. If it can be established that *60 Minutes* reflects a preponderance of adverse stereotypical images of Black Americans, then the evidence discussed in previous chapters can be used to conclude that *60 Minutes* may be a contributing factor in promulgating adverse outcomes for Black Americans.

Chapters 3 and 4 were exercises in assessing television images of Black Americans from a random and broad perspective. This chapter drills down to one regularly scheduled 60-minute swatch of television programming and, by applying some of the evaluative techniques and principles used in chapters 3 and 4, determines the nature of that programming vis-à-vis Black Americans. The program is considered holistically; i.e., not only are the *60 Minutes* segments reviewed, but also the advertising and promotional materials are examined. *60 Minutes* is packaged as a television experience. Consequently, it is important to assess the entire package if one intends to assess what audiences see and how the program might affect them.

The extent to which *60 Minutes* is found to portray adverse stereotypical images of Black Americans has significant confirming implications for the scenarios and statistical results that were presented in Chapter 5. Given *60 Minutes*' hallowed position among television programs, its longevity, and its audience, one may be able to use the results of this chapter's analysis to assign directly connecting process dots from adverse stereotypical images on television to adverse economic outcomes for Black Americans.

The chapter begins with background information on the *60 Minutes* program, which establishes it as the "perfect" standard against which to assess the connection between television and outcomes for Black Americans. Afterwards, qualitative and quantitative information from the *60 Minutes* program are presented for the fall 2003 season. The chapter concludes with analyses of those data and with a discussion of the resulting implications.

### *60 Minutes*

Spurred by the creativity of conceiver and producer Don Hewitt, the Columbia Broadcasting Company (CBS) launched a novel "magazine"

television program format titled *60 Minutes* in 1968. The program was designed to expand CBS' strong news reputation by providing information in entertaining packaging. Prior to *60 Minutes*, CBS featured very short news updates, 30-minute news programs that included a sequence of short news stories, or hour-long news documentaries. The magazine format served as a bridge between short news pieces and documentaries. Narrated by well-known CBS news personalities, at least three lengthy news stories provided hour-long entertainment during the *60 Minutes* program.<sup>1</sup> The length of the news segments facilitated development of a context for stories and the presentation of relevant events—often including dramatic re-enactments—which gave the audience a sense of complete familiarity with the news story. In addition, *60 Minutes* producers selected stories for broadcast that were intriguing, controversial, about underdogs, or that could be considered crimes against average citizens. Consequently, *60 Minutes* satisfied key criteria for a very successful program: It was news, it was entertaining, and it was engrossing.

How successful a program has *60 Minutes* been? During the 1979-80 television seasons, *60 Minutes* was the top ranked regular program series, according to Nielsen (2000). It achieved this rank again during the 1982-83, 1991-1992, and 1992-93 seasons. A top ranking for four seasons has been exceeded by only one other program, *All in the Family* (1971-76), and is only equaled by two other programs, *Gunsmoke* (1957-1961) and *The Cosby Show* (1985-89). In 1999, *60 Minutes* was the 7<sup>th</sup> most watched series on television.

Interestingly, Black Americans do not share the same affinity for *60 Minutes* as does the remainder of Americans, according to Nielsen (2000). For the 1998-99 seasons, *60 Minutes* was not among the 15 top rated programs for Black American Households, though it attained that ranking for the remaining households in the nation. In fact, the top 15 primetime programs for all U.S. households and for Black American households for the 1998-99 season had only two intersecting program, *NFL Monday Night Football* and *NFL Monday Showcase*.

As a result of its broad success, *60 Minutes* has marshaled the power to shape opinion and, because it has the power to motivate action, it operates as a market mover. In a profile of *60 Minutes*, *U.S. News Magazine* (1967) delineates the extent to which the program moves its audience to respond to the information presented:

**When a [*60 Minutes*] story endorsed moderate consumption of red wine to prevent heart disease, sales of red wine jumped significantly. Although the use and gradual discontinuation of**

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<sup>1</sup> The primary CBS news personalities who have narrated *60 Minutes* segments include: Mike Wallace, Harry Reasoner, Morley Safer, Dan Rather, Andrew Rooney, Ed Bradley, Diane Sawyer, Meredith Vieira, Steve Kroft, Leslie Stahl, Bob Simon, Christiane Amanpour, and Scott Pelley.

Alar on apple crops received moderate coverage by the press, *60 Minutes* addressed the issue of this use of the cancer-causing agent in 1989. The story, and other media reports contributing to what became a national hysteria, cost the agriculture industry over 100 million dollars. The series' scrutiny of companies even led to tangible effects on their stocks. During one two year period, stocks rose an average of 14% for companies negatively profiled on *60 Minutes*. Market insiders, aware of the upcoming story, bought to increase shares, knowing that the market had previously responded to the companies' problems.

### Why has *60 Minutes* Been so Successful?

Frank Coffey (1993, p. 165) provides a long list of reason why *60 Minutes* may have enjoyed as much success as it has:

- Its people (reporters)
- Its time slot
- The changing world—Watergate created news junkies
- Its potpourri formula: Money, diet, sex, drama, informality
- Its appeal to “Middle America” (Rotarians, Lions, Kiwanas, business (Hewitt pitched the show to these Middle Americans))
- What Hewitt believed in—Hewitt programmed for himself—and what America likes.
- Its vigilance: Its only goal was to inform the public.
- Its story telling.
- Its Hollywood look

However, one of the key reasons why *60 Minutes* has experienced so much success is the audience's view that it is an independent voice, that it is not part of the establishment, with no strings attached to special interests and, thus, no incentive to lay off certain subjects. Palmer Williams, a long-time senior producer for *60 Minutes*, had this to say about the latter topic:

We don't even know in advance who our sponsors are going to be from week to week. The only bone the network throws to sponsors is that if we're doing a piece on, say, the malefactions of the automobile industry, the order of commercials may be changed around so that one for a motor company doesn't appear directly before or after our attack. (Coffey (1993), p. 95)

In Coffey (1993, p. 144), the producers of *60 Minutes* go on record explaining that the program is successful because it addresses the changing

American landscape and that it holds up a looking glass for the nation to see itself. Hewitt stated that he does not view the program so much as representing “news,” but more as dealing with “reality.” Even with its frankness, there has been no successful court-settled lawsuit against the program.<sup>2</sup> To its credit, the program has covered most, if not all, of the major topics that surface in the U.S.

No doubt, *60 Minutes* has been, and is, successful for all of the reasons given. Although numerous television programs air today that mimic the original magazine format that began with *60 Minutes*, they cannot claim the popularity or the longevity of *60 Minutes*. Plainly put, *60 Minutes* is an icon, and the American people fall and stay in love with icons—for better or worse. In *60 Minutes and the News: A Mythology for Middle America*, Richard Campbell (1991) states:

...*60 Minutes* is contemporary storytelling, enriching and simplifying, transforming and distorting experience. *60 Minutes* locates us in its world—a world we share—gives us characters to identify with and take exception to, and bridges the jagged gap between the private and the public domains. The stories and discourse of *60 Minutes* carry a mythology for middle America—what David Thorburn might call “consensus narrative” It is a mythology in search of middle ground and common sense. In other words, it is this powerful mythology that, like church, draws both an immigrant Croatian grandmother and her Northwestern Ph.D. grandson back to this same place Sunday after Sunday. (p. xxiv).

#### *60 Minutes*: Data from the Fall of 2003

The goal in assessing *60 Minutes* programs was to determine whether the program as a whole (content and accompanying advertisements and promotional materials) presented a generally positive or negative image of Africa-Americans. The *modus operandi* was to videotape 13 complete programs from the fall 2003 season so as to capture about one-half of what has traditionally been a 26-week television season. Clearly, observation of only 13 programs does not constitute a definitive study of *60 Minutes*, but such an effort should capture the general tone and flavor of the program—at least on a contemporaneous basis. Taping began with the opening program of the fall 2003 season (September 28), and continued taping programs until the 14<sup>th</sup> program was reached on December 28, 2003. Week 11, December 7, 2003, was eliminated from consideration purposely because it was a special program that featured the capture of former Iraq

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<sup>2</sup> See Coffey (1993) p. 122. CBS did settle a lawsuit out of court for \$5,000.

President, Saddam Hussein. Practically speaking, this program could not be viewed as generally representative of most *60 Minutes* programs.

Having completed the taping, each program was viewed and appearances of Black Americans in *60 Minutes* segments, in commercials, and in promotional materials were catalogued. These appearances were recorded as negative (N) if they fit the definition given below and positive (P) otherwise:

Negative, adverse, stereotypical, or mundane images are those that present Black Americans as exhibiting antisocial (criminal) or non-productive (engaging in meaningless activities) behaviors, that present Black Americans in “accepted” or “stereotypical” roles (i.e., as athletes, musicians, comedians, social workers, law enforcement or military officers, or religious celebrants), that link Black Americans to problems that are viewed as being uniquely connected to Black American communities, such as AIDS or Cycle Cell Anemia, or that present Black Americans in mundane or non-dynamic roles.<sup>3</sup>

We tracked these appearances separately for the program content and the accompanying advertisements and promotions. Tables A through C (available from the author upon request) provide detailed information about the 13 programs. Table A presents the titles of each *60 Minutes* segment by program, along with information about the appearance of Black Americans in the segments, whether Black Americans were featured, and denotes details about those Black Americans; i.e., whether they were males, females, adults, or youths. Most importantly, the table provides a sign (P or N) for the appearance of Black Americans and a brief explanation delineating why the respective overall sign was assigned. Tables B and C provide similar information for *60 Minutes* commercials and promotional materials, respectively. Based on these tabulations, we can determine whether the program content (*60 Minutes* segments), the commercials, or the promotional materials can be viewed as presenting a positive or negative image of Black Americans. The decision rule is a ratio: The number of featured appearances of Black Americans that are signed negative over the total number of featured Black American appearances.

Before turning to the results, it is important to note that sightings of Black Americans were based on a combination of skin color and hair texture. Numerous fair-skinned Black Americans with relatively non-curly hair appeared in the taped materials; therefore, it was occasionally difficult to assign race to observed individuals. However, it is believed that errors in making these assignments were very small and probably offsetting. Also, by featured appearances is meant that Black American subjects are the

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<sup>3</sup> This definition is consistent with the one outlined in Appendix C of Chapter 3.

primary role players and speakers during a segment, commercial, or promotional spot.

It is important to recognize that this *60 Minutes* evaluative study is not viewed as an attempt to uncover a grand conspiracy to denigrate or sublimate Black Americans. Rather, it is an effort to objectively evaluate program content using a pre-specified definition, which may or may not be compatible with others' definitions of what constitutes an adverse, negative, or stereotypical image of Black Americans. Whatever "evidence" is identified concerning adverse or stereotypical images of Black Americans on *60 Minutes* programs through this limited study should be attributed to the conscious and unconscious, yet systematic, treatment of Black Americans in television in general, which has evolved over decades. The following results are not an assignment of blame to *60 Minutes*, they are simply the findings.

### Results

This section provides high-level results from the fall 2003 season. Table 1 shows summary results for the 13 *60 Minutes* programs that were observed.

**Table 1.—Summary Results of 60 Minutes Programs: Fall 2003**

Program Component	Total Number	Included Black Americans			Featured Black Americans		
		Total Number	Signs		Total Number	Signs	
			Positive	Negative		Positive	Negative
Program Segments	51	32	12	20	6	2	4
Commercials	304	91	78	13	17	15	2
Promotional Materials	281	72	32	40	20	14	6

The table shows that 51 program segments were presented during the 13 programs; 32 or 63 percent of the segments included appearances of Black Americans.<sup>4</sup> However, only six or a little less than 12 percent of the segments actually featured Black Americans, which means that *60 Minutes* nearly meets the representativeness criteria.<sup>5</sup> Twenty or 62.5 percent of the program segments that included appearances of Black were signed negative; 66.7 percent of the program segments that featured Black Americans were signed negative.

<sup>4</sup> The program segments, commercials, and promotional materials were scanned for the appearance of African-Americans only, not for appearances by other black persons; i.e., Africans, Caribbeans, etc.

<sup>5</sup> As of July 2003, African-Americans constitute 12.76 percent of the U.S. population; see <http://www.census.gov/popest/national/asrh/NC-EST2003/NC-EST2003-03.xls>.

## Program segments

The six program segments that featured Black Americans included (table A): (1) “Tulia, Texas”; (2) “Mary J. Blige”; (3) “Alice Coles of Bayview”; (4) L.T...Over the Edge”; (5) “King Solomon”; and (6) “Michael Jackson” (Parts I and II). The two positively signed segments (numbers 3 and 5) featured a Black American community rising from poverty and despair to a condition of respectability and a Black American performer and an entrepreneur/entertainer with strong family values succeeding against all odds. The remaining four negatively signed program segments involved Black Americans who were indicted and jailed on drug trafficking charges (later exonerated), a Black American performer whose self-destructive nature likened her to the great Billie Holiday, a prototypical professional athlete whose primary preoccupation was cocaine (now clean), and one of the world’s greatest entertainers who was under a cloud of child molestation and other charges. Although there were certain positive elements to most of the segments that were signed negative, the negative aspects of the segments were overwhelming. Likewise, even the positively signed segments included certain negative elements.<sup>6</sup>

Black Americans were presented in a variety of circumstances in the 26 segments that did not feature Black Americans: From U.S. presidential candidates to cabinet-level officials to a musical *savant* to youth meeting with the nation’s first lady to college students engaged in a class-action law suit against a prominent national retailer. However, upon close observation, one is surprised by the regularity with which Black Americans continue to be shown in stereotypical roles. Notably, 10 of the 26 segments showed Black American males and females as military, safety, or security officers. One might attribute the latter outcome to the time during which the 13 programs were prepared, but it could simply be that Black Americans continue to be heavily employed in military and security-type occupations.<sup>7</sup>

## Commercials

Ninety-one or nearly 30 percent of the 304 commercials that were presented during the 13 programs included appearances of Black Americans (table B). As expected, more than 85 percent of these commercials were signed positive. Advertisers wisely portray prospective customers in a positive light in hopes of winning their patronage. Only two of the 17 commercials that featured Black Americans were signed negative. They were duplicate LIPITOR commercials, which featured a Black American basketball coach and her players in a game setting.

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<sup>6</sup> For example, the “Alice Coles of Bayview” segment could be interpreted as reflecting African-Americans asking for a handout--at the expense of American taxpayers.

<sup>7</sup> The nation was engaged in the War against Iraq during 2003 when these *60 Minutes* program segments were prepared.

The 11 commercials that presented Black Americans in non-featured roles and that were signed negative, showed Black Americans in the following roles: Athletic (3); gambler (1); musician (2); security personnel (1); laborer (2); customer (1); and pedestrian (1). None of these roles reflect Black Americans as constructive and productive citizens who contribute in a more than mundane way to improving societal outcomes.

What is most striking about the commercials that were presented during the 13 programs is the predominant types of commercials that featured and included Black Americans. Interestingly, five or about 30 percent of the 17 commercials that featured Black Americans concerned pharmaceutical products. This is, in part, a result of the fact that a high percentage of the commercials aired during *60 Minutes* are for pharmaceutical products.<sup>8</sup> There were two commercials each for food products, Fannie Mae, cable/satellite television, and computer software; and there was one commercial each for computers, electronic goods, insurance services, and telephone service. It is noteworthy that, with the exception of Fannie Mae, no commercial that featured a Black American advertised a product that was valued at more than \$500 to \$1000 dollars.<sup>9</sup> In other words, all commercials that advertised highly priced goods and services did not feature Black American actors—again, Fannie Mae was the exception.

#### Promotional materials

Seventy-two or 26 percent of the 281 promotional spots in the 13 programs included appearances by Black Americans (table C). However, 40 or 56 percent of those 72 promotional spots were signed negative. Because the promotional materials normally feature efforts to inform viewers concerning upcoming television programs on the network, the just cited statistics imply that Black American appearances in the actual programs previewed in the promotional materials may reflect unfavorable images. Six or 30 percent of the 20 promotional spots that actually featured Black Americans were signed negative: (1) “The Mayor’s Plan for D.C. Public Schools”; (2-4) “Enforcer”; and (5-6) *60 Minutes II*. Like the “Alice Coles of Bayview” segment, “The Mayor’s Plan for D.C. Public Schools” promotional spot reflected positive and negative elements; however, unlike the former, the promo reflected no work ethic on the part of those lobbying for tax dollars, and hence was signed negative. The “Enforcer” promo, which was aired three times during the 13 programs, featured a Black American mother’s effort to keep her son out of the drug culture. The promo was signed negative not only because of its heavy stereotypical content (Black

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<sup>8</sup> Fifty-six or 18 percent of the 304 commercial were associated with pharmaceutical products; this proportion is surpassed only by automobiles, which accounted for 61 or 20 percent of all commercials.

<sup>9</sup> At the time, Fannie Mae’s chief executive officer was an African-American, Frank Raines. Also, as a government sponsored financial institution, Fannie Mae may have gone out of its way to present commercials featuring diverse subjects.

American male youth involvement with drugs), but because it reflected an ambiguous conclusion; that is, at the end of the promo, Black American youth are shown walking away and it is uncertain whether they will, in fact, participate in drug consumption. One of the *60 Minute II* promos concerned a Black American family, which was allegedly linked to starving foster children, while the second concerned a classic, yet stereotypical, spiritual singing group—the Five Blind Boys of Alabama.

Also, the data show that 246 or 88 percent of all promotional spots were from the CBS network; only 35 or 12 percent were from the local station (WUSA Channel 9 in Washington, D.C.). Fifty-four or 22 percent of the network promos included Black American appearances, 38 or 70 percent of which were signed negative. Six or 11 percent of the 54 network promos that included Black Americans actually featured Black Americans, five of which were signed negative. That is, when a Black American was featured in a network promo, 83 percent of the time, the Black American was presented in an adverse or stereotypical manner. All of this is somewhat astonishing because a sizeable proportion of the network promos during the *60 Minutes* program feature the Monday night line up of *Everybody Loves Raymond*, *Still Standing*, *Yes Dear*, *Two and a Half Men*, and the *Late Show*; these programs almost never include Black Americans in their casts.<sup>10</sup>

Eighteen of the 35 local station promotional spots included Black Americans, 14 of which actually featured Black Americans—quite often as news announcers. Two of the 18 promos were signed negative. Only one of the 14 promos that featured Black Americans was signed negative; it was the previously mentioned “The Mayor’s Plan for D.C. Public Schools” promo. The remaining negatively signed promo was for a local news program that showed several Black American football players in a game setting. In other words, less than 6 percent of the local station’s promotional spots presented Black Americans in a negative or stereotypical manner.

### Other concerns about *60 Minutes*

The following three issues or questions come to mind as part of this effort to assess whether *60 Minutes* paints a positive or negative picture of Black Americans. First, what is Ed Bradley’s role in presenting Black American images on the program, given that he is the lone Black American correspondent on the program? Second, are the segments that feature Black Americans truly newsworthy, or are they included to create a sense that Black Americans are represented, statistically, on the program? Third, Andy Rooney’s segments present a special quandary, because his grandfatherly messages have such powerful impacts on viewers. Does Andy Rooney present Black Americans in a negative or positive light?

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<sup>10</sup> The five programs cited accounted for 75 or just over 30 percent of the 246 network promotional spots that were presented during the 13 programs. Only the *Late Show* promos included Black Americans.

It turns out that Ed Bradley was the correspondent for six or about 12 percent of the 51 segments presented during the 13 programs (see table A): (1) "Tulia, Texas"; (2) "Terror in Moscow"; (3) "Mary J. Blige"; (4) "Jeopardy"; (5) "Alice Coles of Bayview"; and (6) "Michael Jackson" (Parts I and II). Four of the six segments actually featured Black Americans, three or 75 percent of the four segments were signed negative. The data speak for themselves; Ed Bradley is linked to *60 Minutes* segments that present Black Americans in a negative manner--at least for the 13 programs under consideration. Mike Wallace, the dean of *60 Minutes* correspondents, presented the remaining negatively signed segments that featured a Black American—"L.T...Over the Edge." Leslie Stahl, presented the remaining positively signed segment that featured Black Americans—"King Solomon."

On the question of whether the 60 Minutes segments that feature Black Americans are truly newsworthy, there are mixed results. If one defines "newsworthy" to mean that other news organizations present similar stories during the same time period, then one could conclude that only three or one-half of the six stories were newsworthy: "Tulia, Texas"; "King Solomon"; and "Michael Jackson" (Parts I and II). The "Tulia, Texas" story appeared in the press during the period leading up to the airing of the segment. As the "King Solomon" segment indicated, Solomon Burke's musical comeback received press attention and a Grammy Award nomination during 2003. Finally, Michael Jackson's alleged misconduct was widely publicized during the period leading up to and beyond the airing of the segment. However, the "Alice Coles of Bayview," "Mary J. Blige," and "L.T...Over the Edge" stories had little to do with current events in the popular press. Consequently, one might view the producers of 60 Minutes as including segments that feature Black Americans in an attempt to meet a representativeness criterion, not necessarily because the stories reflected high "news" content.

Finally, on the question of Andy Rooney's presentation of Black Americans, the following statistics shed some light. Andy Rooney's commentaries appeared in 12 of the 13 programs under consideration; six or 50 percent of the commentaries included Black Americans, but none of the segments featured Black Americans. Three or 50 percent of the six segments that included Black Americans were signed negative. Overall, however, only 25 percent of all Andy Rooney commentaries reflected negative or stereotypical representations of Black Americans. The three negatively signed segments received that designation because one showed Black American baseball players, while two showed Black Americans in military roles. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that two of the three Andy Rooney commentaries that were signed positive included negative language vis-à-vis Black Americans. First, in discussing the 2004 democratic presidential candidates, Rooney questioned the veracity of Al Sharpton's claim that he was an ordained priest, and he said that Carol Mosley Braun "would get no closer to the White House than New Zealand"; former Senator Braun was also former ambassador to New Zealand. Second, in a segment

on road rage, Rooney said "I hate" this type of solicitation while a Black American fireman was shown collecting charitable contributions at an intersection. On the other hand, and to be even-handed, it is important to acknowledge that Rooney called a group of Black American youth who had an audience with First Lady Laura Bush "cute kids."

Having completed this limited analysis of *60 Minutes* programs for the September-December period of 2003, it is worth mentioning that Coffey (1993, p. 243-299) provides a listing of each *60 Minute* segments aired through 1993, which could provide a very rich data source for a more comprehensive analysis of the program from a variety of perspectives.

### Conclusion

Consider the following quote from Frank Coffey's 1993 book, *60 Minutes: 25 Years of Television's Finest Hour*.

Yet *60 Minutes*' single, greatest achievement may be one that will never find its way into the record books; its role in enhancing and enriching the lives of the American people. Who hasn't been touched by *60 Minutes* over the years, moved to joy, sorrow, or anger by a story that electrified our collective consciences? (Coffey (1993), p. 13)

Readers might carry Coffey's analysis a step further by posing the following two questions. Is Coffey "collective consciences" referring primarily to all Americans, or mainly to white Americans? Also, has *60 Minutes* moved you to joy when viewing a story that resulted in adverse outcomes for Black Americans; or to sorrow or to anger when viewing a story that showed Black Americans as "winners" over Whites?

These are good questions to ask given the data findings presented earlier concerning the adverse stereotypical images of Black Americans that appear during *60 Minutes* programs. Is it possible that Black Americans incur adverse economic outcomes in everyday life as a direct or indirect result of the persuasive power of *60 Minutes*? Based on the *60 Minutes* data collected for the fall 2003 period, is it legitimate to conclude that the program plays a role in "electrifying the collective consciences" of White Americans to respond in unfavorable ways when they encounter Black Americans in the market place? Related questions could include: (1) Who willingly hires, transacts with, or welcomes into their community people who have the entire world at their feet (the likes of Mary J. Blige and Lawrence Taylor), but who give it all up just to get high on crack cocaine?; and 2) Who wants to be associated with child molesters or parents who starve their foster children? For white Americans who have no personal relationships with Black Americans and who shape their opinions of Black Americans, in whole or in

part, based on their television viewing, the same answer is likely to come forth in response to these questions: “Not !!”

Although *60 Minutes* does not possess the same standing that it once held in network television, it remains a highly respected program. Therefore, Black Americans might use it as a starting point when they begin to seek to modify their image on television. One might argue that it is inappropriate to attempt to persuade a “news” program to modify its presentations. As a response, it is appropriate to recall that *60 Minutes* played an important role in presenting information about tobacco company’s efforts to obscure the true relationship between cancer and smoking. Generally, Americans applauded *60 Minutes* for its effort in this regard, because cigarette smoking was a harmful product. Today, it is illegal to present cigarette advertisements on television. In parallel fashion, Americans should applaud efforts by *60 Minutes* to modify its product, which may be having harmful effects on the economic well-being of Black Americans.<sup>11</sup>

This chapter has singled out the iconic *60 Minutes* to explore whether one of the most highly respected—respected for openness, fairness, and accuracy—television programs presents negative, stereotypical, and mundane images of Black Americans. What we know is that there are numerous highly respected Black Americans who are symbols to the nation and the world (CEO’s, politicians, educators, scientists, etc.), and that it cannot be that they are “exceptions.” Also, the reality is that many Black Americans live lives that are virtually synonymous with the lives that White Americans live. If this is true, then why is it that during the fall of 2003, *60 Minutes* presented more segments featuring Black American that were signed negative than that were signed positive? The answer could be that we selected a bad sample. Or it could simply be the case that news programs always select the “bad,” not the “good.” These may be acceptable answers for White Americans who generally experience more balanced presentations of images on television. However, for Black Americans, these answers are not acceptable because such a balanced set of images are not available for Blacks. Consequently, Black Americans may be harmed by these *60 Minutes* images, by other television news programs, and by network television programming in general.

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<sup>11</sup> Here, the author supports the appropriate provision of incentives for *60 Minutes* to take desired action. Such incentives will be discussed in detail in Chapter 8.

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