Madison Avenue and the Color Line: African Americans in the Advertising Industry

Jason Chambers
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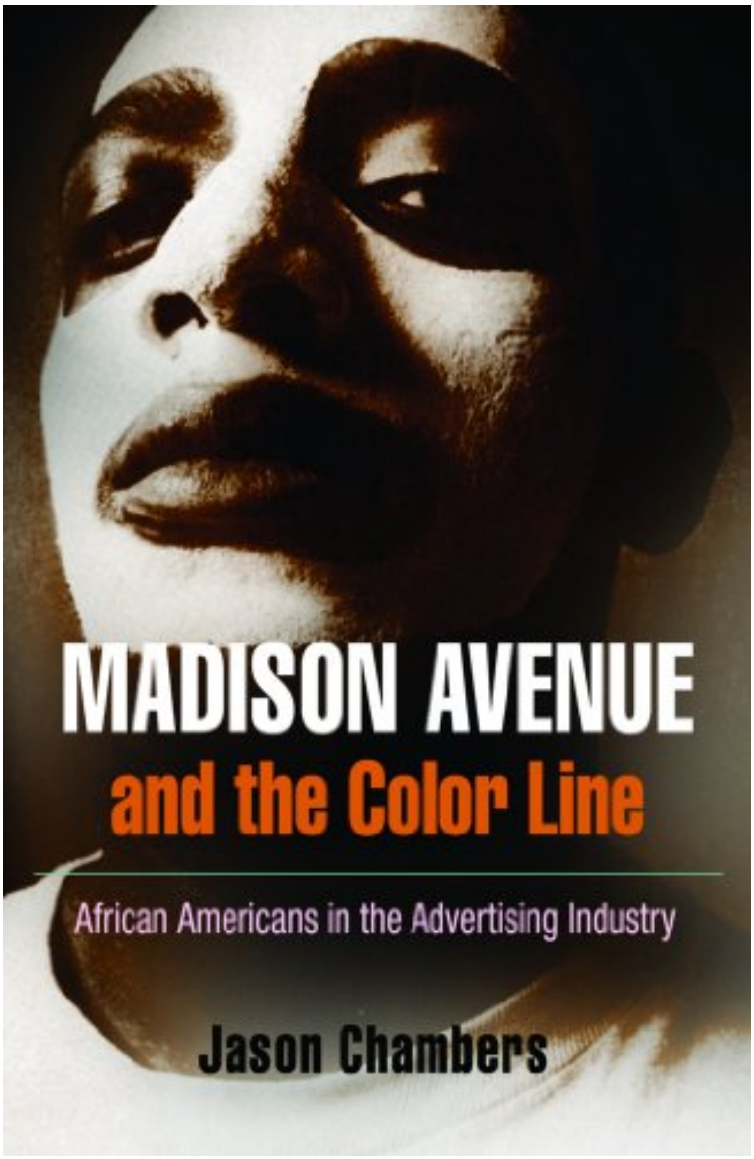

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Jason Chambers : Madison Avenue and the Color Line: African Americans in the Advertising Industry before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Madison Avenue and the Color Line: African Americans in the Advertising Industry:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A must read for anyone searching for understanding and perspective on the topicBy Carol WatsonThe lack of diversity in the advertising industry has received considerable press coverage

recently with many thoughts and opinions about the reasons for the lack of diversity and the perspective of the agencies in New York and nationally. The book provides an incredibly well researched account of the history of blacks in the advertising industry far beyond anything ever published. The names, companies, trade organizations and the challenges that have come before us provide factual perspective on the efforts, success and challenges that have come along the way.If you are in the industry or interested in entering the industry Madison Avenue no matter what color, culture or background the book is a great baseline to examine the history of people of color without the emotional accusations.1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A MUST READBy Arthur (Chicago, IL)Madison Avenue and the Color Line is a difficult book to put down. Professor Chambers is lucid in his chronicle of the history of African-Americans in print, radio, television, and advertising. This book describes the emergence of the black consumer market and accounts for the many, unknown champions who fought for "positive" and "real" portrayals of African Americans in communication mediums. As America continues to morph from a bowl of milk, with a few fruity pebbles, into a tossed salad, where unique taste and cultures are celebrated, Chambers book is "a must read" for anyone working in advertising, aspiring to reach segmented consumer markets, or making marketing decisions.1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Madison Avenue and The Color LineBy Food Books* Excellent blend of the academic and anecdotal* Provides great insight on the realities for African-Americans and people of color in the advertising industry and the larger media industry.* A must read for everyone working in the advertising/media industry or people entering the industry* Also a good resource for college courses in advertising/communications/media studies

Until now, most works on the history of African Americans in advertising have focused on the depiction of blacks in advertisements. As the first comprehensive examination of African American participation in the industry, Madison Avenue and the Color Line breaks new ground by examining the history of black advertising employees and agency owners.For much of the twentieth century, even as advertisers chased African American consumer dollars, the doors to most advertising agencies were firmly closed to African American professionals. Over time, black participation in the industry resulted from the combined efforts of black media, civil rights groups, black consumers, government organizations, and black advertising and marketing professionals working outside white agencies. Blacks positioned themselves for jobs within the advertising industry, especially as experts on the black consumer market, and then used their status to alter stereotypical perceptions of black consumers. By doing so, they became part of the broader effort to build an African American professional and entrepreneurial class and to challenge the negative portrayals of blacks in American culture.Using an extensive review of advertising trade journals, government documents, and organizational papers, as well as personal interviews and the advertisements themselves, Jason Chambers weaves individual biographies together with broader events in U.S. history to tell how blacks struggled to bring equality to the advertising industry.

"A cogent analysis of an important aspect of race relations in the US. . . . Highly recommended."mdash;Choice"A major contribution to the history of advertising, consumption, and African American history."mdash;Lizabeth Cohen, author of A Consumers' Republic"Rarely do scholars look beyond consumer-directed messages to explore the battlegrounds from which they emanate. Jason Chambers succeeds at this splendidly in analyzing African Americans' struggles with the advertising industry, both inside and outside of it, through the twentieth century."mdash;Journal of American History"The book offers perspective for those entering the industry as well as those who don't understand what all of the fuss is about."mdash;Advertising AgeAbout the AuthorJason Chambers Associate Professor of Advertising at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.Excerpt. copy; Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.Introduction"The most difficult and bewildering thing about the white world is that it acts as if blacks were not there."mdash;James BaldwinIn the early 1990s, Kay Lorraine, a Chicago-based advertising producer, assembled a cast and crew on location to film a commercial for a Cleveland grocery chain. She hired a multiracial cast to reflect Cleveland's diversity, but the client representative, after seeing the black actors at the taping, "had a fit and wanted them off the set." Lorraine refused. After several tense moments, he relented. "O.K.," he allowed, "they can push the shopping carts around in the back, but make sure they don't touch the food." So Lorraine filmed the commercial with the black actors in the back of the scene and not touching any of the productsmdash;quietly pretending that they were not there.Although Lorraine's encounter with a prejudiced executive took place late in the twentieth century, it could have happened in nearly any decade and in any place in America. For much of the century, to include African Americans in a commercial, even one aired in a city with a large black population, was anathema to many executives. Indeed, many of the people who decided the advertising and marketing direction for their companies simply acted as though blacks did not exist as consumers for their products. Therefore, they often gave them no place in their advertising, unless individuals like Lorraine, black consumers, or advocacy groups pressured them to do so.Lorraine risked losing the account when she openly confronted the representative's prejudice. Advertising is a service business. Agencies exist to meet the needs of clients and those clients have complete power over where their advertising dollars go. That Lorraine, a white woman, took this stand was due in part to the hard work of numerous African Americans in

the advertising and media industries. Over the course of several decades, these men and women stood up to the negative and denigrating treatment by advertising agencies and American corporations, and their hard work helped make the black consumer market visible. As this examination of the advertising industry will show, too few others acted with Lorraine's courage to include blacks in advertisementsmdash;or as employees in advertising agencies. Yet it was only through this sort of pressure that the advertising industry ever changed at all.The struggle of African Americans for inclusion in the advertising industry is the central concern of this book: it connects the growing visibility of African Americans in advertisements with the increasing presence and hard work of African American advertising professionals. African Americans, both inside and outside the advertising industry, viewed advertising as an employment and financial opportunity and as a mechanism to effect cultural change in both the white and black communities. They actively engaged in defining the black consumer both for potential clients and for blacks themselves. They used advertising not only to promote images of consumption but also, within the advertisements, to promote positive images of black life and culture, from family life and academic achievement to religion and community.Scholars like Marilyn Kern-Foxworth and Anthony Cortese have examined changes in blacks' representation in advertisements, documenting the transition from negative and disparaging stereotypes, through their virtual invisibility in advertisements, to the beginnings of genuine and realistic representations. But no one has fully explored the breadth of changes in the racial makeup of the agency world responsible for those advertisements. In fact, beyond a few brief references in historical works, scholars have ignored the experiences of black professionals in the advertising industry. In doing so, they have turned existing histories of the advertising industry into a story of white men and women only, and they have created the dangerous and inaccurate impression that African Americans have not fought for inclusion in this industry. This work shows that blacks contested discrimination in advertising employment much as they did in more recognized areas like politics, law, and manufacturing. Further, existing histories imply that the industry's racial homogeneity was simply a reflection of larger society, the result of a lack of interest from blacks or the absence of talented blacks. This work documents a history of active, systemic discrimination.It also documents the history of the pioneering African Americans who transformed the advertising industry in the face of that discrimination. It offers a broad historical examination of blacks' struggle for work in an industry that did not welcome them and examines their role as image makers for a market that that industry could not see. It shows how black advertising professionalsmdash;as sales representatives, as agency owners, and eventually as mainstream agency personnelmdash;worked to develop corporate executives' appreciation of the black consumer market, and their advertising and marketing efforts targeting that market. Blacks' multifaceted development of this market directly led to the opportunities to advance into the advertising industry. This book thus provides a more complete picture of the history of advertising in the United States and contributes to the growing body of literature on the history of African Americans in business.There are three major components to this book. The first examines how African American professionals in journalism, sales, and advertising changed the perceptions of black consumers among corporate executives and then used that interest as a foundation to gain wider participation in the advertising industry. Over the course of the twentieth century, African American advocates of the black consumer market gradually shifted from emphasizing the presence of black consumers to white business leaders, to stressing the pressure those consumers could create on a company or industry when they acted as a cohesive force. Second, I analyze how civil rights and government organizations used this pressuremdash;specifically, through tactics of boycotts and selective purchasing campaigns, as well as legislation outlawing employment discriminationmdash;to catalyze changes in the institutional culture of the advertising industry. These changes led to greater employment opportunities for blacks in mainstream agencies and as owners of independent firms. Finally, I show how black men and women, once they achieved power in the industry, used decision-making positions to present what they viewed as accurate, non stereotypical visions of African American life in advertisements.Beyond Salesmanship in PrintThe first responsibility of any advertisement is to persuade. In the first years of the twentieth century one influential copywriter, John E. Kennedy, offered a simple, yet still suitable, definition of advertising: Advertising, he said, is "salesmanship-on-paper." Whatever a salesperson might say to a customer on the sales floor, whether selling cars, clothes, automobiles, soda pop, or something else, that sales pitch is what an advertisement should communicate. Yes, advertisements are entertaining and their creators design them to grab and keep our attention, but their first job is to persuade us to take an action, to buy a product. But because of the ubiquity of advertisements, we sometimes fail to recognize the role advertisements have in persuading us about things beyond the particular product or idea they sell.In the early twentieth century, advertisements told consumers of innovations in technology and interpreted the meaning of those advancements in their lives. In addition, their depictions of everyday life gave consumers an image of who they were and what the population of the country looked like. In presenting that vision, however, advertising personnel made no effort to be inclusive or even accurate. Instead, they addressed their work to the most powerful group: those consumers who had the economic power to buy, and thus uphold, the market society. Historian Roland Marchand theorized that advertisers worked in the framework of a "market democracy," in which one dollar equaled one vote. Within this structure those with more money had more votes than others, and those groups received more active attention from advertisers; in contrast, advertisers left those with little or no money or influence outside the system. Thus first years of the twentieth century, advertisers and

advertising agencies did not recognize everyone as an equal citizen. Blacks were among those whose lowly status in advertisements confirmed their economic disenfranchisement, just as violence and Jim Crow laws confirmed their political disenfranchisement. But Marchand and other scholars have failed to account for how these "outsiders" reacted to the advertising vision of the consumer society. One way in which African Americans reacted to this economic exclusion was by fighting for changes in advertisements and employment in advertising agencies throughout the twentieth century.As both consumers and advertising professionals, blacks in the industry linked the ideas of consumer and citizen as understood by the broader African American population and expressed them in their work. They knew from their experience as consumers, and from their research as advertising professionals, that blacks fervently wanted recognition as full and equal members of society and that a key part of that definition lay in their status as consumers. They used this awareness not only to position themselves for jobs within the advertising industry but then to also work from the inside to change how others conceived of black consumers and to influence how advertisements expressed that view. Not every African American in the industry was a card-carrying advocate, pressing the case for inclusion or for targeting black consumers. But even those who did not do so found that white companies sought them out primarily for their expertise in this new market. By clarifying blacks' struggles for citizenship in the consumer arena, this study sheds important light on both their market activity and their broader quest for equal citizenship in all areas of life in America.Consuming is not the same as voting. It does not provide tangible liberation or freedom in the same manner as extending political and civil rights. But scholars have shown that over the course of the twentieth century, consumption became a key aspect of citizenship, even, as McGovern argues, "a symbol of American social democracy." Therefore, advertising's positive and representative depiction of blacks fulfilling their role in the consumer society would be symbolic evidence of blacks' accepted status in society: stereotypes and subservient roles pointed to and justified discrimination, while positive or even simply accurate representations would point to their role as equal consumers and equal citizens. As one black advertising specialist observed, "Advertising plays an important role in demonstrating upward social mobility and is a yardstick in charting progress in the search for acceptance and recognition by the majority society."As Anthony Cortese has observed, "Ideologies are often latent or unrecognized; they are taken for granted as real, commonsense, or natural. The structure of ethnic, gender, and class inequality is justified as being profoundly destined by nature." Advertisements confirm to the viewer the current ideologies about race and the place of blacks in society. Yet, even in lieu of this sophisticated scholarly analysis of the sociocultural impact of advertising, African Americans' actions show that they recognized the utilitarian possibilities of advertisements. They knew that advertisements, with books, radio shows, music, and literature, formed one of the lenses through which others gained information about them. The increasing ubiquity of advertisements throughout the twentieth century made them one of the primary visualization mechanisms of that information. Specifically, blacks recognized that, because advertisements so effectively reinforced inequality, it might be possible to reverse their power to reinforce a message of equality. Positive and realistic images of African Americans could not only reflect the levels of their penetration into different areas of American life, that is; they could also ease white acceptance of them in those once closed areas.Advertisements maintain a vexed relationship to reality. Their world is one of myth and makebelieve. In that world, everyone is beautiful, has ample leisure time, and has the time and money to buy and enjoy a bewildering array of goods. Additionally, if one looks at advertisements as documentaries, then the world for much of the twentieth century was one in which whites enjoyed the fruits of consumption and blacks, if visible at all, contentedly served them from the margins, just slightly out of view or focus. This reliance on myth has meant that advertisements have not challenged socially erected ideologies about race. Rather, they have reproduced those ideologies and in so doing have helped to reinforce them. Instead of presenting Aunt Jemima (or anyone related to her) in a position of consuming the pancakes she made, advertisements depicted the portly black female joyfully serving them to whites. Historian Grace noted, "Americans were people who could command the service of both blacks and consumer products." Blacks in twentieth century advertising were subservient objects that served the cornucopia of products hawked in advertisements, but rarely subjects who used them. The explicit message that ads delivered with crystal clarity was that consumers were white. In picturing blacks in servant roles and whites in command, advertising images visibly upheld the assumed social organization of everyday society.Beyond their role as servants, advertisements in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century commonly represented blacks as lazy, ignorant, violent, or as little more than comic relief. Negative images of blacks also frequently circulated in the broader culture on trading cards, dolls, children's books, cooking utensils, and other products. Caricatures of African Americans advertised Niggerhead Tobacco, and coal-black children, the Gold Dust Twins, were symbols of a popular soap powder. Already the proliferation of degrading images of blacks in commercial and leisure items helped transmit ideas of black inferiority even as real blacks tried to claim the full privileges of citizenship in the early twentieth century. "The child growing up in the home of an average northern family may not have been taught to hate the black race, but more than likely the child caught the basic principle of prejudice from day to day living," noted one scholar.After the First World War, advertisements widely depicted blacks as cooks, porters, or agricultural laborersmdash;a step up from items like Niggerhead Tobacco to be sure, but images that were nonetheless servile and demeaning. Advertisements used representations of black occupational skill and expertise to promote areas that existing

stereotypes labeled blacks as naturally gifted in, such as cooking. Some advertisers used this ethnic shorthand as a testimonial of product quality and even, as archivist Fath Davis Ruffins has explained, as a metaphor for product authenticity. If a black cook like Aunt Jemima or a black waiter like Uncle Ben said the pancake mix or rice was good, then (advertisers assumed) consumers would accept their recommendation as authoritative.As in other areas of life, African Americans did not accept this subservient role. Rather, as historian Robert Weems pointed out in his pioneering study of black consumerism, Desegregating the Dollar, blacks tried throughout the twentieth century to use their economic power to gain respect. But they fought for a recognition of dignity that went beyond mere appreciation for their economic ability to buy consumer goods. For example, few whites are familiar with the embarrassing and painful daily experiences of segregation. Blacks who traveled around the country, especially in the South, carried guides that listed where they could find restaurants or hotels without facing discrimination; places where they could use the rest room or simply receive treatment as an equal citizen. As one black traveling salesman recalled, having these books "prevented some very serious racial incidents." Beyond their travels, even in their local communities blacks were also limited in public spaces: prevented from trying on clothes in stores, not seated at restaurants, and charged higher prices for lower quality goods than other consumer groups. Thus, the repeated disrespect blacks faced in their consumer activities continually reminded them of unequal treatment within the larger society. By acknowledging the link blacks' made between their consumer activities other social goals we illuminate their agency. In particular we can more clearly see their sophisticated linkage between consumption and their quests for rights in other areas of life. Those other areas, including political, civil, and social rights, as well as racial violence, understandably occupied blacks' attention throughout the twentieth century. But the images circulated in advertisements never completely disappeared from their purview.Indeed, blacks perceived these negative images as part of the collective whole of repression. So blacks, individually and collectively, expressed their displeasure with product advertisements through boycotts, selective purchasing campaigns, and other less formal measures. By voting with their dollars, blacks advocated for more positive representations in advertisements and for recognition of their involvement in the consumer society, and, by relation, their citizenship. As a result, because advertisements were one of the filters that distorted the reality of African Americans' lives, aspirations, and societal contributions, blacks could not leave advertisements and the industry that produced them unchallenged.In Making Whiteness, Hale explained that the growth of consumer culture provided blacks with a host of physical spaces, such as stores or trains, within which to challenge their status as second-class citizens. This work takes her argument a step further. Just as consumer culture in general gave blacks spaces within which to challenge their social status, likewise, the ubiquitous nature of advertising gave blacks access to a visual space and a set of practices to challenge the existing images of themselves as a group and to present an alternative vision.Battle for the African American ImageIn 1926, African American writer Langston Hughes described the efforts of black artists during the Harlem Renaissance to define their group and individual identity: "We younger Negro artists who create now intend to express our individual dark-skinned selves without fear or shame. If white people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, it doesn't matter. We know we are beautiful. And ugly too." Throughout the twentieth century, blacks have sought to emancipate and rehabilitate the impression presented in advertisements and other forms of media. Communications scholars Jannette Dates and William Barlow characterized their struggle as a "war" over the African American image. Blacks' awareness of their invisibility and marginalization in advertisements made them more critical of advertisements. As one of the leading image-producing industries, advertising has been in the forefront of the industries presenting an effectively negative image of African Americans. Thus African Americans developed a more adversarial relationship with the advertising industry than any other racial or ethnic group in the United States."The definition and control of black images in the mass media," Dates and Barlow wrote, "has been contested from the outset along racial lines, with white cultural domination provoking African American [economic and] cultural resistance." On one side were white image makers who reproduced and maintained the negative, stereotypical portrayals of blacks. On the other have been the dual efforts of black consumers and black image makers. Black consumers responded to negative representations by avoiding the products advertised either individually or as part of collective boycotts or selective patronage campaigns. Black image makers in the advertising industry have responded to the humiliating depictions by creating their own versions of the African American image. In so doing, their work has often paralleled that of black artists. These black professionals in the advertising industry, heretofore overlooked contributors to the struggle to redefine and shape the African American image, were heirs of the tradition that Hughes described. For besides crafting art and copy to sell the product in question, they often created empowering and uplifting images representative of the goals and aspirations of the black population.Gaining Entry and Access to the IndustryEven when pressed to present positive images of blacks, white advertisers and agency personnel balked. Some protested that to depict positive images of blacks would offend white consumers and lead them to avoid the products so advertised. Others argued that white consumers would view positive images of blacks as a direct challenge to both white authority and obvious societal norms, and that such "social policy" stood outside the role of advertisements. Their strongest rationale was an economic one: advertisers and agency personnel did not believe blacks had the economic wherewithal to be an important consumer group. So advertisements did not need to appeal to black consumers for their patronage. Similarly, white advertisers and agency personnel saw

no need to hire black professionals for their African American market expertise. This was more than a passive stance: most agencies actively enforced a policy restricting black participation at anything beyond a menial level. This has been, as one black advertising man put it, the advertising industry's "dirty little secret." Thus for most of the twentieth century both advertisements and the advertising industry remained "lily-white."The rejection of African Americans stood in marked contrast to the industry's acceptance of women. Indeed, the advertising industry was unique among professions in that it was fairly open to hiring and promoting women. During the early development of the industry, several major agencies actively sought out female employees and advanced them to professional or managerial positions. But compared to hiring African Americans, hiring women was both fiscally justified and socially acceptable. Many in the industry accepted the idea that women either made or influenced upward of 80 percent of all buying decisions. Thus, many executives had to admit, though begrudgingly, that white women had a potentially useful expertise and could help produce agency profits. Advertisers could readily see women as powerful consumers and, in search of workers with expertise in reaching them, agency executives recognized the need for a "woman's perspective." Given the paucity of consumer research in the early twentieth century these arguments were more anecdotal constructions than factually determined ones but they were, nonetheless, powerful rationales supporting the employment of women. Because executives lacked a similar opinion of the impact of blacks on purchasing, they had no economic reason to challenge racial conventions and pursue blacks for their marketing or advertising expertise. Moreover, men working in agencies had mothers, daughters, sisters, and girlfriends, so at a minimum they had a level of close personal interaction with women. Although the appearance of women in professional positions was new, their involvement in agency work lacked the visually arresting nature of a black face in the office. At best African Americans served or entertained the white advertising professionals; they did not work side by side with them. Finally, executives had little interest in upsetting the existing social fabric by hiring an African American for the intimate role of communicating with the white, middle-class women who were the targets of most advertising (or to work with the white women who crafted that advertising). As a result, for much of the twentieth century, racism and discrimination kept the doors of most mainstream agencies closed to African American professionals.In contrast to other industries, until the mid-twentieth century blacks overlooked the racism and discrimination in agency employment. This primarily resulted from two factors: industry size and visibility, and the educational pathway into advertising. In comparison to other large industries such as construction, manufacturing, or mining, the advertising industry is small. Therefore, for much of the century, black activists and the government pressed for equal opportunity in larger, more visible industries first. Also, although the products of the advertising industry, the advertisements, have long been widely visible, the actual creators of those advertisements have not. If asked, many Americans could name their favorite commercial or trade character but not the name of the individual or agency behind its creation. Thus the advertising industry, may be the most visible, yet most hidden industry in the United States. That invisibility has helped the industry avoid much of the public scrutiny and investigation that helped effectively diversify other areas of both white- and blue-collar employment.The lack of a specific educational route into the industry also limited blacks' entry and advancement in the industry. While a college degree has often been a necessity for some jobs in the industry, there has been no consensus on what areas of study that degree should encompass. (Further complicating matters, some of the most recognized industry figures of the early twentieth century openly disagreed that a college degree was necessary.) The creative side of the trade, such as creating art, music, or copy, has the fewest recognized standardsmdash;other than the subjective measurement of "talent." In the absence of standard requirements, agencies sought people with experience in advertising or persons they could train for specific jobs within the agency. Many of the large agencies, such as J. Walter Thompson, developed agency-based "universities" in which they trained people for work in the company; that knowledge was transferable to other agencies. So, in contrast to aspirants to other professions such as accounting, law, or medicine, blacks were not able to look to the educational system for a guaranteed path into advertising. Racism and discrimination, combined with the aforementioned invisibility of the industry, made gaining the experience necessary for employment equally challenging. Nevertheless, over the course of the twentieth century, blacks gradually began to find positions in mainstream firms, and open independent agencies.As this book details, getting into the industry was not the end of the problem: black agency owners quickly found that, to many potential clients, their skin color and perceived advertising expertise rested solely in selling products to African Americans. As a result, this perception may have limited their business opportunities and the broader development of black entrepreneurialism in the advertising industry.An Economic Opportunity or DetourAs Juliet Walker brilliantly showed in her sweeping book, The History of Black Business in America, African Americans have a long history of business participation. An unfortunate aspect of that history, however, has been the limits placed on black business development by racism and segregation. In 1940, Merah Stuart published An Economic Detour: A History of Insurance in the Lives of American Negroes. He argued that throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, racism and segregation drove most blacks businesses to operate in an "economic detour" where they served an almost exclusively black clientele (for example, barbershops, insurance companies, mortuaries, newspapers, beauty products manufacturers). Later, scholar Joseph Pierce extended Stuart's analysis and argued that black business owners faced a two-edged sword: segregation allowed them to set up profitable companies serving black consumers, but it

also prevented most from having access to larger markets serving white consumers. While black-owned businesses never formed a totally separate economy, and they continually competed with white-owned companies, segregation gave them some shelter from significant white corporate intrusion. Although they were able to sustain, and sometimes economically thrive, in these segregated enterprises, black business owners lacked access to consumer groups and markets that might have allowed their firms to grow larger.Taken together, the work of Stuart, Pierce, and Walker demonstrates that black companies in segregated businesses sometimes had a finite lifespan. Eventually, larger white-owned corporations took over their areas of operation. These white-owned companies had the size and racial authority to deliver goods and services to black consumers, but usually black business owners lacked the capital and authority to do the same among whites. For example, two of the most successful fields for African Americans have been insurance and beauty products. Ignored by white-owned companies, blacks turned to their own race's enterprises for their needs. Black-owned companies like Supreme Life Insurance flourished by providing affordable insurance to black consumers. With beauty products, blacks found preparations more applicable to their skin tones and hair textures from companies, such as the Madame C. J. Walker Company, that were sensitive to their physical differences from white consumers. However, as awareness of the black consumer market grew among manufacturers and advertisers, so too did competition from white firms seeking the profits available in this niche. Black firms were often unable to compete because of their small size and relative lack of resources. As a result, once segregated but profitable companies gradually closed, merged, or sold their operations to white firms.Does the history of African American-owned advertising agencies follow the same arc as these other areas of black business activity? That is, does it fit Stuart's model of businesses working within an economic detour, or does it markedly diverge from it? As Judy Foster Davis pointed out, black-owned advertising agencies may fit into at least the initial criteria of Stuart's theory. Several black entrepreneurs set them up in part because larger advertising agencies overlooked a possible area of service: the development of advertising campaigns specifically targeted to African Americans. Although some of these new owners initially sought to position their firms as general market agencies, they quickly found that their perceived expertisemdash;and the best route to client accountsmdash;was in the black consumer market. In other words, their clients' acceptance of their expertise in crafting advertising campaigns to black consumers did not usually evolve into significant opportunities to develop campaigns to reach non blacks. Certainly, white-owned agencies created advertisements to reach black consumers, but for most this was an intermittent area of activity. Therefore, as with black-owned insurance and beauty products companies, the economic detour in the advertising industry offered at least the potential for African Americans to carve out an area in which to operate. So one area explored in this book is how advertising has and has not been an example of an economic detour.Beyond the model of economic detour, another useful way to think about blacks in advertising is to compare their experience with that of blacks in white-collar professions. In fact, the experience of African Americans in the advertising industry parallels that of blacks in other white-collar professions, especially accounting and insurance. For blacks in mainstream agencies, their experiences mirror that of blacks in accounting, while for independent black-owned agencies, insurance companies are the closest parallel. For example, mainstream accounting agency executives claimed an inability to find qualified blacks. When qualified blacks began to apply for positions, executives justified their continuing refusal to hire blacks by arguing that their clients would not want them involved in their financial affairs. These are precisely the evasive strategies that ad executives took, and as this book shows the structure and nature of advertising led them to argue that agency clients would not want blacks involved in the creation of their advertising campaigns.When we combine the experience of blacks in the advertising industry with examinations of blacks' efforts to enter other white-collar professions, a disturbing historical continuity of racism and prejudice is evident. This prejudice often hampered blacks' ability to develop a career path in working for white corporations as well as limited their success in developing black-owned enterprises. Certainly other factors have been important in constraining blacks' success in advertisingmdash;inexperience, undercapitalization, mismanagementmdash;but racism and discrimination, as well as the government's failure to adequately protect and encourage black business development, were the most damaging causes preventing greater development of black business enterprises. Further, one of the very things that could have enhanced blacks' chances to develop successful agenciesmdash;a broader range of agency experiencemdash;was also limited by existing racism and discrimination within the industry.Rehabilitating the African American ImageOnce in the industry, African Americans combined their knowledge of consumers with their own individual experience as consumers. Those in black-owned advertising firms, advertising products mainly to black consumers, used their knowledge proactively to define the black consumer as one who shared the consumer values of the larger society but who had a unique history and social and cultural outlook that needed special expertise to target properly. Black media, sales, and advertising professionals actively countered the prevailing idea that black families were poor and unstable, redefined blacks as having the financial means to take part in the consumer society, and then actively promoted the idea that they had the aspirations to do so. They viewed consumption as a tool through which African Americans could express their goals and desires for social membership. Blacks created advertisements that represented blacks' need for social membership as equals within society as a whole, as well as membership in the imagined communities of middle-class homeowners and automobile buyers constructed by advertising.What types of images of blacks did they

promote? One black copywriter answered, "People working productively; people engaging in family life, you know, people being well-rounded, and being thoughtful; people caring about other people; good neighbors, good parents, whatever the case may be; people with dreams and aspirations, people with ambition." Such images had three purposes: First, black professionals wanted and needed black consumers to buy the products of agency clients. Second, the images they created became part of the transformative social narrative of the definition of blackness and of the collective vision of blacks' identity as a group and as individuals. As Hughes charged black artists to do in the 1920s, these representations were part of reclaiming and rehabilitating the African American image. Finally, beyond satisfying the goals of agency clients, the images also helped satisfy the vision of how blacks wished to see themselves depicted. By ingeniously linking the financial and professional necessity of satisfying their clients with the aspirations of black consumers, they satisfied one by doing the other.Overall, African Americans used advertisements to project a vision of a racially diversified consumer market and of African Americans as a middle-class population. However, the images also sometimes closely mirrored ongoing developments within the broader African American community. For example, during the period of Black Nationalism in the late 1960s and early 1970s, some blacks in the industry used advertising to project a vision of pride and liberation and were part of the effort to redefine blackness. Black professionals like Vince Cullers used advertisements, especially for products made specifically for black consumers, to become involved in the ongoing narrative of what exactly it meant to be black.African Americans in the advertising industry were in the unique position of being creators and interpreters of black life and culture. In these roles they actively defined the meaning of "black consumer" for both prospective clients and the public. Additionally, they presented conspicuous consumption to blacks as a means to both middle-class membership and equality with their fellow citizens. Cast in this manner, securing the right to service and to receive equal appeal for one's patronage is but a little different from securing the freedom of choice in other areas of life such as housing, education, or vocation.Throughout the twentieth century, African Americans strove for equality throughout all areas of American life. While most are familiar with their social and political efforts, only recently have scholars began to analyze blacks' struggles in the consumer realm. The black struggle throughout the century was about gaining equality in all of its forms and in all areas of life rather than just a choice few. To accept segregation and discrimination in any area was to raise the possibility of either not eliminating it or seeing it returning in another. Moreover, exclusion was especially painful and maddening in the market democracy, in which every dollar was supposedly equal to the other regardless of the hand that held it. So the pressures blacks generated against consumer industries like advertisingmdash;and their victories and strugglesmdash;are as important to the story of black advancement as the securing of other rights. Certainly extending consumer rights is dependent on others such as an end to racial violence and equal pay measures; but to reach full equality blacks not only had to be able to vote, but, on their way home from doing so, eat at a restaurant or shop in a department store that welcomed them and had also advertised for their patronage. Full citizenship meant full citizenship. Consumer rights formed an important part of that definition.The Layout of This BookHistorical events, to the consternation of authors, do not simply occur in a neat, linear, or ordered progression. Instead, events and individuals, causes and effects, often overlap in time period and in effort. There are necessarily points of chronological overlap in this story; some chapters in this work share the same time period while addressing different themes. Chapter 1 examines the conversation between African American media publishers and executives and white businessmen that led major white-owned companies to their initial recognition of the black consumer market in the 1930s and 1940s. Chapter 2 details the role of black pioneers in the advertising industry in the period following the Second World War but before the racial revolution in the industry in the mid-1960s. As corporate interest in the black consumer market grew, experienced black professionals and entrepreneurs moved to take advantage of it to secure positions in advertising, marketing, and public relations. Much of this chapter details the emergence of the "Brown Hucksters," the African American marketing and advertising specialists in the 1950s who guided corporate clients in their efforts to reach African American consumers. Because of the multitude of changes ongoing in this period, Chapters 3 and 4 share the same chronological period, the 1960s, but each deals with a different theme. Chapter 3 devotes attention to the role of civil rights groupsmdash;the National Urban League, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)mdash;in motivating changes within the advertising industry. The black consumer market reflected the social changes going on within the nation, and blacks used their economic presence to compel concessions from advertisers active both in the black and mainstream markets. Further, this chapter details the ways in which members of the advertising industry dealt with changes among black consumers. Chapter 4 analyzes the impact of state and federal government equal employment commissions on the advertising industry during this same period. The New York City Commission on Human Rights (NYCHR) and federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) each focused significant attention on the advertising industry during the 1960s, and their efforts reinforced and extended those introduced by civil rights activists. The Civil Rights Act of 1964, which outlawed racial discrimination in employment, broke down many of the visible and invisible barriers to blacks in the advertising industry. As a result, many agencies began to lure black professionals from other industries and to recruit at black colleges. Chapter 5 analyzes the Golden Age for blacks in the advertising industry and examines the impact of the

racial revolution on the industry. The chapter contains case studies of eight black-owned agencies that emerged between 1965 and 1975 and considers them in the light of Stuart's model of economic detour. The Epilogue examines how in the aftermath of the industry's short-lived racial revolution blacks' renewed their efforts to develop a presence in mainstream agencies as well the smaller, but stronger, black-owned agency niche.Several different sources support this work. A detailed, page-by-page examination of articles in Advertising Age, Adweek, Ebony, Madison Avenue, Printer's Ink, Tide, Sponsor, and Sales Management, most of which have not been indexed, heavily informs its content. Scholars of advertising have recognized the trade press as an especially important source because the articles provide insight into the ideas shared by the members of the advertising industry. The journals also contain revealing discussions about agency leaders and employees changing opinions of all consumers. Thus, they form my principal sources on understanding how the members of the advertising industry thought about both blacks in agencies and the black consumer market.But the journals only tell part of the story. A review of the existing papers of former advertising personnel and organizations, specifically those of Barton Cummings, Caroline Jones, Moss Kendrix, the J. Walter Thompson Company, the Pepsi-Cola Company, the NAACP, and CORE were key to rebuilding the history of African Americans in the advertising industry. And interviews with Tom Burrell, Roy Eaton, Bill Sharp, and Chuck Smith, along with less formal conversations with a number of other black and white advertising professionals, offered insights, vivid detail, and perspective on these struggles for real people.During initial conversations with former industry professionals, several often had the same reaction when I stated I was writing a history of blacks in the advertising industry: "Why?" There aren't that many." My interview subjects were neither sarcastic nor crass in asking this question; in their minds, the low number of blacks in the industry simply ruled out the subject as an area of study. However, the importance of blacks to the advertising industry lies far beyond mere demographic considerations. Just as the advertising industry as a whole has effects beyond its size, numbers say precious little about the actual influence and impact of black professionals on the industry as well as the broader consumer communication field.I admit, though, that I began this undertaking with numbers in mind. I originally started this project with the notion that I would include every black person in advertising who was at any level above secretary and whom I could track down. I envisioned this book as a kind of joint biography of their work. But limitations of space and a desire to explore their historical context (as well as consideration for the patience of the reader) led me away from that to the present goal: an understanding of the key roles and fascinating experiences of these important social actors. This book focuses on blacks in two main roles: as professionals in mainstream (that is white-owned) agencies and as owners of independent firms. In addition to those blacks who worked in black-owned advertising firms, an equally important segment of African Americans worked in mainstream firms. Although much of this work privileges blacks' activity in black-owned firms, the role of blacks in mainstream agencies is significant. When the doors of mainstream firms finally opened to greater numbers of black professionals, work in these agencies provided much needed experience and helped blacks create important networks of contacts that aided them when they created their own advertising agencies. Also, blacks in mainstream agencies fulfilled the key role of opening doors for other aspiring professionals and in countering stereotypes about blacks' abilities to work as advertising copywriters, artists, or executives. So, while the individuals in black-owned agencies often had a greater degree of latitude to use images of black life and culture, blacks in mainstream firms played a key role in developing a black presence in the advertising industry.Regardless of whether in mainstream or black-owned agencies, African Americans have historically been underrepresented in the advertising business. Yet, as will be shown, that has not been the result of a lack of desire on their part. Instead, it has often been the result of a hostile industry where talent supposedly trumps other factors, including race, but it rarely has. Instead, African Americans have had to (and desired to) fight for their positions in the industry. Therefore this book is an effort to understand the role of the pioneers, to focus on specific individuals and their experience and impact on the industry. Of course that means that more than a few people are not present in this story in name. Yet it is my hope that this understanding of the larger story will honor their contributions to the industry's development as well. So, while the experiences of people like Keith Lockhart, Theodore Pettus, Joel P. Martin, Bill Richardson, Phil Gant, Joyce Hamer, Carol Williams, Don Coleman, R. J. Dale, J. Melvin Muse, Billy Davis, Kelvin Wall, and others are not detailed in this work, they are here in spirit.In 1954, historian David Potter declared that as an institution advertising had no sense of any social responsibilities. For African American practitioners of the advertising craft, this has proven false. Throughout the twentieth century, African Americans have struggled to gain control over their images and present their own vision of exactly what blackness represents. Given the depths from which advertising's image of African Americans needed rehabilitation, for blacks there was no question that advertising had a social role and that they had a dual responsibility: to their clients in selling their products, and to the larger African American population in working to change advertising's depictions of them from negative to positive. In turn, blacks created the opportunities for themselves in the advertising industry primarily by establishing the black consumer market.Still, while the racial revolution in the advertising industry does not occur until the 1960s, the foundation of the changes in that period rest on work started by African Americans in the early twentieth century. The development of a black presence in the advertising industry rests on the corporate appreciation of the black consumer market. The initial catalysts in the establishment of that appreciation were black publishers. Two key factors, financial and symbolic,

motivated the men and women who first began pressing corporate America to change its conception of black consumers. Financial interest led black publishers to press agencies and advertisers for increased advertising placements: ad revenues literally supported their publications. The second, symbolic, was part of the broader effort by African Americans to change the negative perceptions of themmdash;that they were dirty, ignorant, poor, or uglymdash;that was so commonly represented in advertisements. Further, they communicated to the broader society that blacks were not, in fact, content to see them exist. Each factor supported the other: publishers needed the revenue, but to display their viability as an advertising medium, the advertised products needed to sell. To sell, however, publishers argued that advertisements to blacks could not feature the traditionally negative and pejorative images of them. As a result, black newspaper and magazine publishers were in the forefront of establishing a portrait of the black consumer that contradicted the prevailing definition. They were among the first to try to create advertiser and agency interest in African American consumers. It is with this group that our story begins.