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WHEN THE SILVER SCREEN FADES TO BLACK: AN ANALYSIS OF BLACK
FACES IN FILMS

By

Travesheia Rashel Bass

B.A., Tuskegee University, 2011

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of the

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in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

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Master of Arts

in Pan-African Studies

Department of Pan-African Studies

University of Louisville

Louisville, Kentucky

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A Thesis Approved on

July 11, 2016

by the following Thesis Committee

Dr. Theresa Rajack Talley

Dr. Latrica Best

Dr. Siobhan Smith

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my aunt

Jacqueline Coar

who first ignited my interest in Black movies.

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I would like to thank my thesis director, Dr. Theresa Rajack-Talley for the guidance she has provided to me throughout the years; both academically and personally. I would also like to thank the other members of my committee, Dr. Latrica Best and Dr. Siobhan Smith for making themselves selflessly available to me throughout this thesis process. I am grateful to my family, friends, and students who continue to encourage, inspire, and support me. I would also like to thank the faculty and staff of the Department of Pan-African Studies for the love and care rendered throughout the years.

ABSTRACT

WHEN THE SILVER SCREEN FADES TO BLACK: AN ANALYSIS OF BLACK FACES IN FILMS

Travesheia Bass

July 11, 2016

The Black Film Industry emerged with the goal of challenging the misrepresented images of African Americans that were promoted in early American Films. The Black Film making process promoted a centrality of stories told from an Afrocentric point of view. This thesis analyzes how Black Film has been defined over the last sixteen years and how it has impacted American society. Films that were made by or in collaboration with African American writers, directors, and producers with a focus on the African American community (its values, cultural aesthetics, and practices) and featuring an all or primarily Black cast were found to be indicative of Black Film. Black Films offer a more holistic representation of African Americans that challenge the common stereotypes and stereotypical roles that are often included in mainstream film productions. Furthermore, the stories within these films recount relatable common experiences of African Americans and embody African American cultural elements that celebrate Black Cultural Identity.

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INTRODUCTION:

HOLLYWOOD, A DIFFERENT TYPE OF RACIST?

Background to the Study

The annual Academy Awards aired on Sunday, February 28, 2016. Although this was the eighty-eighth Oscar celebration, it was a highly anticipated event due to controversy surrounding the Academy's 2016 nominees. In the month preceding the awards show, African Americans in the film industry threatened to boycott attending and viewing the event at home due to a lack of diversity in the nominations from the Academy. This year, no African American actors received nominations in any category, for the second year in a row. This situation revived a common critique regarding the lack of diversity within Hollywood film productions.

On January 18, 2016, prior to the show airing, actress Jada Pinkett-Smith released a two-and-a-half-minute video criticizing the lack of diversity among the 2016 Academy nominees. In this short speech, Jada spoke of her disapproval of the Academy's choices. She continued:

Here's what I believe. The Academy has the right to acknowledge whomever they choose to invite whomever they choose. And now I think it's our (people of color) responsibility now, to make the change. Maybe it is time that we pull back our resources and put them back into our communities, into our programs and we make programs for ourselves that

acknowledge us in ways that we see fit. That are just as good [as] the so called mainstream ones.¹

Smith's video went viral and a media firestorm ensued regarding the validity of her argument and accusations against the Academy as being an exclusionary institution. Numerous Hollywood celebrities contributed their opinions (whether in support of Smith or accusing her of adding fuel to an already flaming fire).

Jada's message, although unexpected, was not saying anything that had not previously been said about Hollywood. Likewise, this was not the first time the Academy has been criticized by African Americans in the film industry. More than twenty years earlier, during the 60th annual Academy Awards, comedian and actor Eddie Murphy was asked to present the award for *Best Picture*. When he got on stage he recalled:

My management came to me and they told me that the Academy had picked me. My first reaction was to say no I ain't going. And my manager asked why. I said I'm not going because they haven't recognized Black people in the Motion Picture Industry. He said what are you talking about, Black people win Oscars. I said well the Black actors and actresses [that] have won Oscars within sixty like years [are]: I think Hattie McDaniels won the first one, then Sidney Poitier won one, and then Louis Gossett won one.

And you know I'll probably never win an Oscar for saying this, but hey, I gotta say it. Um actually the way it's been going, every twenty years we get one, so we ain't due for about...till about 2004, so by that time this will have all blown

¹ Brucculieri, Julia. "Jada Pinkett Smith Boycotts Oscars for Lack of Diversity." *The Huffington Post*. N.P., 17 Jan. 2016. Web. 30 June 2016.

over. I said I wasn't going and my manager said you just have to go, you can't snub the Academy. So I came out here to give the award, but I just feel that we have to be recognized as a people. But I just want you to know, I'm going to give this award, but Black people will not ride the caboose of society and we will not bring up the rear anymore and I want you to recognize that.²

To date, outside of the music based categories, only a handful of African Americans have won Oscars. In lieu of the 2016 Oscar snub, it seemed like Murphy's speech had fallen on deaf ears since the same diversity issue he addressed twenty years earlier had reemerged.

This year's Academy Awards host was African American comedian, actor, director, writer, and producer, Chris Rock. Due to the impending boycott, Rock faced a difficult dilemma. Should he quit and stand in solidarity with African American actors, or should he use this platform to address the issues of diversity and racism that had long plagued the Academy and the Hollywood Film Industry in general. Rock chose to use his role as host to discuss what he described as Hollywood's tendency to perpetuate a different type of racism. While many opinions exist regarding his critiques, Rock addressed the pink elephant in the room in his opening speech. His address was loaded as he stated:

But here's the real question. The real question everybody wants to know, everybody in the world wants to know: Is Hollywood racist? [repeats] Is Hollywood racist? You now, that's a ... you gotta go at that the right way. Is it

² Johnson, Todd. "Flashback: Eddie Murphy Rips the Academy for Lack of Diverse Nominees Back in 1988." *The Grio*. N.p., 19 Jan. 2016. Web. 30 June 2016.

burning-cross racist? No. Is it fetch-me-some-lemonade racist? No. No, no, no. It's a different type of racist.

Now, I remember one night I was at a fundraiser for President Obama. A lot of you were there. And you know, it's me and all of Hollywood. And it's all of us there. And it's about four black people there: me, uh, let's see, Quincy Jones, Russell Simmons, and Questlove. You know, the usual suspects, right? And every Black actor that wasn't working. Needless to say Kevin (Hart) was not there. O.K? So, at some point you get to take a picture with the president, and, you get a little moment with the president. I'm like Mr. President, you see all these writers and producers and actors? They don't hire Black people, and they're the nicest, white people on earth! They're liberals! Cheese! That's right. Is Hollywood racist? You're damn right Hollywood is racist. But it ain't that racist that you've grown accustomed to. Hollywood is sorority racist. It's like, "We like you Rhonda, but you're not Kappa material. That's how Hollywood is."³

Many people within the movie industry (including directors, producers, writers, actors, and actresses) as well as those outside of Hollywood had long ago arrived at that same conclusion as Rock, concerning Hollywood's racist tendencies. The claim that Hollywood is a racist institution is not new. Academics and film critics have long ago created much research to support their claim of Hollywood's lack of diversity and exclusionary practices. Many have noted Hollywood's tendency to relegate African American actors and actresses to stereotypical roles (Bogle, 2001; Cham, 1988; Cripps,

³ "Read Chris Rock's 2016 Oscars Opening Monologue." *LA Times*. N.p., 28 Feb. 2016. Web. 30 June 2016.

1993; Reid, 2005; Snead, 1988). In his analysis of the evolution of representation of African Americans in the movie industry, Donald Bogle (2005) noted that African American actors were restricted exclusively to subservient positions in early films.

African Americans actors also have continued to receive the short end of the stick as they continue to be typecast in Hollywood productions. Rock addressed the issue of typecasting subtly when he got on the topic of the types of opportunities that are offered to African American actors in Hollywood. Rock stated that few opportunities have been made available for African American actors to display a range of representation within their profession due to racial prejudice within the Hollywood Industry.

Actor Idris Elba also noted how the opportunities available for African Americans in mainstream Hollywood productions were scarce. They are all too frequently looked over, not because of lack of talent or their ability to demonstrate range, but simply because of the color of their skin. Last year, amidst circulating rumors of Idris Elba playing James Bond, the author Anthony Horowitz declared Elba was “too street” to play the role. In an address to the British Parliament on diversity, Elba recounted:

My agent and I would get scripts and we were always asked to read the Black male character, alright. Or the athletic character. And that was just *Crime Watch*. But when the script asked for a Black male, it wasn't describing a person or character, it was describing a skin color. Now a White character, a White male was called a Caucasian or a man with a twinkle in his eyes. Now my eyes may be dark, but they definitely twinkle. And I was like I want to play the guy with the twinkle in his eyes.

So I got to a certain point in my career where I saw the glass ceiling. I was so close to it, I was going to hit my forehead on it. Too often people get locked into boxes. And it's not a great place to be. Now ask women, they'll say the same thing. Or disabled people. Or gay people. Or any number of unrepresented groups. So today, I'm asking the TV and film industry to think outside of the box. In fact, just get outside of the box, just forget it. This isn't a speech about race, this is a speech about imagination, and as I said before a speech about diversity of thought. ⁴

Rock and Elba's critiques came at a critical time in American History, during the so-called "Age of Color-Blindness," which was symbolized by the election of President Barack Obama (Alexander, 2010). Rock's speech and self-admitted statement to President Barack Obama pointed out the presence of underlying systemic racism within not only Hollywood, but in American society at large.

Rock's acknowledgement of Hollywood's "different type" of racism though presented jokingly, picked scabs at seemingly bandaged wounds between African Americans and the Hollywood Film Industry. Furthermore, Pinkett-Smith's call for a boycott continued to resound an all too familiar narrative of the marginalization commonly experienced by African Americans. In the wake of these comments, the #Oscarssowhite hashtag, which originally emerged the prior year when African American actors failed to receive nominations from the Academy, resurged on all social media

⁴ Jaafar, Ali. "Idris Elba Posts Full Text of Powerful Diversity Speech Online." *Deadline Hollywood*. N.p., 20 Jan. 2016. Web. 30 June 2016.

outlets, creating a necessary conversation about the lack of diversity with several big names in various roles in the Hollywood Industry chiming in.⁵

Chris Rock concluded his opening speech by assuring viewers that the Academy would be making changes to address the issue of the lack of diversity. However, he did not explicitly state what these changes were at the time, what they would consist of, how they would be implemented, or how they would help alleviate marginalization and bias within the Academy. While Rock failed to deliver on the details, Smith's plan of action was not ambiguous in nature. Simply put, she believes African Americans need to utilize their own resources to create an institution that would recognize and honor them. Jada's suggestion, although not original, was rooted in a history of African American resistance to the marginalization they commonly experience within American society.

An African Proverb once stated, "Until the lion learns to write, every story will glorify the hunter." This metaphor posited the tendency of historians to present altered historical accounts that commonly misrepresented or omitted Blacks (Brantlinger, 1985; Pieterse, 1992; Pratt, 1986; X, 1992). This was similarly the case in the early American Film production. Thus, in light of the pejorative images of Blacks that were promoted by the Hollywood Film Industry, the Black Film Industry (BFI) emerged, utilizing its power to challenge widely publicized images such as those in D. W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* (Snead, 1988).⁶ The Black Film Industry offered a platform where Blacks

⁵ "Oscar Nominees Discuss Diversity in Hollywood amid the #OscarsSoWhite Backlash." *LA Times*. N.p., 25 Feb. 2013. Web. 1 June 2016.

⁶ *Birth of a Nation* was the widely controversial film created by D. W. Griffith that popularized common stereotypes representing African Americans.

reclaimed their agency, recounted their own experiences, and challenged the dominant narrative that early American films put forth (Cripps, 1993; Snead, 1988).

Though liberating in its endeavor, the freedom to create counter narratives through film often came at a steep price that most Black filmmakers struggled to afford (Iverem, 2007). Due to lack of monetary resources, funding presented a hurdle that filmmakers would have to jump in order to get their productions out to the public. Most have relied on funding from white benefactors at the expense of stifling their creative visions by forcing them to give up full creative control of the film (Entman and Rojecki, 2000; Rhines, 1996; Snead, 1994). This practice of resorting to outside funding continues to be an issue faced by those in the BFI.

Though many political and social changes have occurred since the inception of the Black Film Industry, writers, directors, and producers are still subjected to pigeonholing due to Hollywood power brokers' apprehension in funding the endeavors of African American filmmakers. CNN commentator Roland Martin posited that one such reason for the apprehension was because these movies had the tendency to be labeled as Black Films or movies.⁷ He also mentioned that within the larger movie industry, little value was ascribed to movies deemed as Black Films. Many scholars have studied the development and proliferation of the Black Film Industry (Bogle, 2005; Cham, 1988; Cripps, 1993; Diawara, 1993; Guerrero, 1993; Hooks, 2009; Iverem, 2007; Reid, 2005; Snead, 1994). However, little clarity has been unanimously agreed upon as to what specific elements are universally indicative of Black Film productions.

⁷ Martin, Roland. "Hollywood's Irrational Allergy to 'black' Films." *CNN*. N.p., 14 Jan. 2012. Web. 30 June 2016.

The purpose of the current study is to reduce the ambiguity of the term Black Film and evaluate the extent to which recent Black Films have met the original intent of the Black Film Industry. This project explored the following research questions in an effort to determine what constitutes Black Film: Is it the themes of, or representational images of African Americans or African American culture onscreen? Is Black Film labeled as such because those who are funding the production are Black? Is a film, considered Black because the writers, directors, producers, and/or actors are Black? Or are certain films dubbed as Black Films because their intended target audiences are African Americans?

This research is important because since its inception, film has become one of the most pervasive forms of media (Brooks and Hebert, 2006; Guerrero, 1993). Perhaps in contrast to other media, movies frequently permeate all screens: our television, computers, smartphones screens, and other electronic devices. Despite the rising cost of admission into movie theaters, indulging in the escapist utopia of watching films has remained a favorite pastime among Americans, especially African Americans. The 2015 Theatrical Market Statistics Report concluded that more than 69% of the U.S./Canada population (235.3 million people) attended a theater at least once in 2015. Box office receipts for that same year totaled \$11.1 billion.⁸

Technological advances continue to make the consumption of films more readily available and cost effective (Snead, 1988). With the magic that is simply known as the

⁸ "Theatrical Market Statistics 2015 Global." *Mpaa.org*. Motion Picture Association of America. Web. 3 June 2016. Web.

‘Redbox,’ the hassle of getting dressed and leaving home to watch a film is alleviated and accommodations are made for avid movie fans. One needs to get dressed only to go to the nearest grocery or pharmacy store to grab a movie. Other technological advancements that bring movies into the home have included video streaming online as well as through movie apps such as Netflix and Hulu. Standing in line outside of a theater to buy a ticket to the show has become outdated but popular as box office sales continues to accrue billions annually.

In addition to film’s function as a tool of entertainment, it serves a variety of other functions such as: educational, propagandistic, recreational, and aesthetic (Cham, 1988). Different genres within film recount and recreate fictional, nonfictional, historical, as well as, futuristic events and experiences. This presents another function of film as a pedagogical tool which serves to educate its audience. All these different potential functions of film suggest that film is undisputedly one source of media which has a drastic impact upon the audiences who consume the finished products (Altheide, 1984; Guerrero, 1993; Reid, 2005).

Maybe Cham (1988) notes “Even at the beginning of film, it was obvious film was a new way of perceiving reality” (16). This statement suggests that the lessons within films have the power to resonate beyond the big screen and become more personal as they are embedded into the lives of the patrons that watch them. Many scholars agree that the influence of the images presented within film productions traveled beyond the act of its presentation to the moviegoer which complicates the experience of watching a film (Cham, 1988; Iverem, 2007; Reid, 2005; Snead, 1994). Cham also observes that from the inception of motion pictures, film possessed the potential to perpetuate good or evil

within the society of its consumers. Unfortunately, early American films perpetuated evil as the images that were publicized in film format misrepresented the Black population.

Black Film scholars have agreed that film has the potential to transcend the realm of observation and can affect perceived reality. In *Framing Blackness*, Ed Guerrero (1993) points out the existence of symbolic, mythical, and political meanings within cinema, countering the notion that film is only a medium of entertainment. Cripps (1993), Hall (1997), and Snead (1994) also assess the effects of racially coded images in film and the major role they play in the misrepresentation of Blacks in the film industry. The potential effects of film consumption could be either minor or major (Cham, 1988). The images within films have the potential to alter one's reality in many ways (Snead, 1988). For instance, the content could potentially distort the current state of the way in which a person experiences reality and cause what was thought to be a stable, validated truth to be reexamined or totally rejected. In short, film is one of the most salient media which has the power to either perpetuate or challenge status quo ideas regarding race, class, and gender (Brooks and Hebert, 2006; Guerrero, 1993).

Films are viewed by international audiences as well American audiences. The messages contained in film productions is one way in which international viewers may become socialized with American culture and people. Therefore, the misrepresentation of Blacks in early American film was problematic both to the audiences that viewed them as well as to those who were demonized in early film productions. The Black Film Industry emerged as an alternative to the mainstream Hollywood Film Industry and challenged the dominant narratives that painted them as stereotypes.

Since it emerged, the Black Film Industry has become very successful. It has produced films that are appealing to African American audiences, a minority group once alienated by the Motion Picture Industry. Last year, African Americans represented 12% of the U.S. population and 11% of moviegoers.⁹ Esther Iverem (2007) notes the common tendency for African Americans to see their lives and experiences depicted on the big screen. Similarly, she acknowledges the proliferation of the number of films starring African American actors in what she credits as the “New Black Film Wave.” She examines the inception and development of this new film wave over a twenty-year period, beginning in 1986 and ending in 2006. Since little prior research collectively examines Black Films released since the new millennium, this study examines films released between 2000 and 2015. In doing so, this research determines how Black Film has been defined over the last two decades.

This introductory chapter sets up the current state of Black Film and the struggle it faces within the Hollywood filmmaking industry. The remaining chapters provide background history on the relationship African Americans and film, the emergence of the Black Film Industry, theoretical frameworks used in analysis, methodological approaches applied to the study, findings of the study, and culminates with a discussion on the findings and impact of Black Film.

The first chapter, *Black Faces in Film*, examines the functions of Black Film and the impact of film within American society. The film industry, like other forms of media,

⁹ "Theatrical Market Statistics 2015 Global." *Mpaa.org*. Motion Picture Association of America. Web. 3 June 2016. Web.

has long been criticized for representing minority populations unfavorably. Perhaps more blatantly than other media outlets which usually use coded language, film (through a guise of entertainment) has perpetuated pejorative images of minority groups.

Furthermore, this chapter discusses how the denigrating images of Blacks in early film facilitated the creation of a separate film industry. The purpose of the Black Film Industry (BFI) was to counteract the narrative created through early American Film that depicted Blacks with negative imagery. In addition to the emergence of the BFI, this chapter also covers the changes, traditional influence, and issues arising within the BFI.

The second chapter, *Gaze, Representation, and Control* explores two theoretical frameworks: Michele Foucault's "Panopticism" and Antonio Gramsci's "Cultural Hegemony." These two psychological philosophies are broken down to ascertain the psychoanalytic meanings involved in the filmmaking process. The Black Filmmaking process utilizes these theoretical frameworks to: control the gaze upon African Americans and to counter dominant narratives that perpetuate cultural hegemony and subjugates Black characters through film.

The third chapter, *Methodology*, uses a Qualitative Approach to determine, what, if any, definitive definition of "Black" film exists. Movies that were labeled by viewers as Black Films over the last sixteen years (2000-2015) were compiled for analysis. Thirty-two films were selected and evaluated to determine if they fit the criteria set forth by two film scholars Mark A. Reid (1993) and Esther Iverem (2007).

The fourth chapter, *Black Film Is...*, reviews the findings of the research. Correlations and overlapping information from the spreadsheet data set of the thirty-two

films reviewed are noted and discussed. These findings are further evaluated in greater detail in chapter five to ascertain if a definitive definition of Black Film has been determined. Furthermore, the culminating chapter explains the impact of Black Film and other issues arising from the research.

CHAPTER I

BLACK FACES IN FILM

Cripps (1993) noted the beginnings of the film industry as he reviewed the connections between Black faces in film. In its early stages, film closely followed the example set by the minstrel shows of imposing racial superiority through mimicry and displaying distorted perceptions of Blacks. However, while the Black person was the main attraction in the minstrel performance, in film, the Black character (whether depicted in Blackface or by an actual Black actor or actress) was constructed as a minor character, mainly of some subservient position or line of employment in respects to whites (Pugliese, 2003). Stereotypes, such as, the mammy, sambo, coon, Uncle Tom commonly fit the description for such minor roles that proved to be monumentally detrimental to the reputation of African Americans.

It did not take long for the poisonous perceptions associated with these depictions of Blacks to spread and infect the perceptions of the people that consumed these images. It also influenced the types of action taken toward African Americans in the public sphere. Larry Levine expressed how dangerous the internalization of these stereotypical images were and added:

Blacks don't really look like that. So why is it so appealing to people to think they look like that, to pretend they look like that, to like icons that look like that. You look at them often enough and Black people begin to look like that even though they don't. So that they've had a great impact. They therefore, tell us both about

the inner desires, of the people who create and consume them and also they tell us about some of the forces that shape reality for a large portion of our population.¹⁰

After so many depictions of mammies, coons, sambos, etcetera in films, stage plays, cartoons, these caricatures became to be accepted within society further devaluing and dehumanizing Blacks (Riggs, 1986). These caricatures became iconic and served as reference points, images, and signifiers to validate the inferior/backward nature of Blacks (Brantlinger, 1985; Pratt, 1985).

Consequently, in the early American films, images of Blacks became synonymous with stereotypes. These stereotypes, whether overt or covert, were damaging and affected the way Blacks were perceived by the larger population (Bogle, 2005; Cripps, 1993; Guerrero, 1993; Hall, 1997; Hooks, 2009; Reid, 2005; Snead, 1994). While examples can be found in all sources of media, film contained the most blatant depictions of stereotypes. With film being such a universal and wide-reaching source of media and tool of socialization, the presence of stereotypes became more detrimental to Blacks as they experienced marginalization as these films were viewed both at home and abroad (Wilson, Gutierrez, and Chao, Squires, 2003).

Additionally, within mainstream American films, the Black actor was rarely given the opportunity to allow the film narrative to be told from her or his perspective and vantage point (Bogle, 2005; Iverem, 2007). Black Film emerged as an alternative to

¹⁰ *Ethnic Notions*. Dir. Marlon Riggs. *California Newsreel*. N.p., n.d. Web. 30 June 2016.

mainstream Hollywood productions which facilitated such perpetuations of stereotypes and typecasting of African American actors through negative images.

The Power of Image

Alice Walker suggests that images have the power to become a prison; as was the case of the pervasive nature of stereotypical images used to trap and enslave Blacks. Images are powerful and are a medium of politics (Neale, 2013). An image is a tool of agency and thus has the power to facilitate control. It is not just a physical representation that appears on a piece of paper or on a screen. It inherently embodies the politics that are associated with that image as well (Guerrero, 1993). Thus, the image of a stereotypical caricature also carries its historical, social, and cultural relations (Bogle, 2005; Guerrero, 1993; Snead, 1994).

Guerrero (1993) notes the historical and social relations that are embedded within stereotypes as he insists that with the proliferation of early American film productions, the public sphere became the new plantation as early American films continued to represent the former slave population through images which reinforced the agenda of white superiority. His analysis is built upon creating a historiography which exclusively looks at the changing portrayals of Blacks in film starting from slaves, monsters, servant, etcetera. These films also reinforced a dominant culture which has historically been synonymous with white American, culture.

Donald Bogle (2005) assesses that through stereotypical images, the Black population continues to be controlled physically, and mentally. Guerrero insists that the damaging images of Blacks as stereotypes were used by the film industry to “keep Blacks

in their place” and this place was under whites. Historically, this “place” that Blacks were relegated to in American society and culture was situated on the margins of society. This place ensured that they would remain dependent upon the system of society that was strategically structured to facilitate their exploitation (Mills, 1997). No spaces of contestation were made available for them to express discontent or challenge the status quo (Cripps, 1993). Survival both in real life as well as in the fictional mainstream productions was directly connected to one’s ability to internalize and thus act in accordance to the cards that were handed down to African Americans.

In film, the control cards dealt to African Americans translate into the scripts and roles that they were made available to African Americans by the mainstream film industry. Guerrero (1993) and the film *Ethnic Notions* (1986) film both agree that although film appeared following the era of slavery, the images of Blacks that were created glorified the former institution. Pugliese’s documentary (2003) adds, that as more time had passed since the institution had been abolished, technological advances facilitated the shift from the “silent” to “talking” film era, agency became more obtainable. However, in this new era, the images of Black in mainstream film were reminiscent of the stereotypes that had formerly represented the Black population during the slavery and silent film eras.

Frederick Gooding Jr., author of *You Mean There’s Race in my Movies* (2007), posits that while the new images were not as overt as the previous stereotypes, mainstream films began to utilize new patterns in representing Blacks. This was done through using archetypes. Archetypes are universally understood symbols, terms, statements, and patterns of behavior. Archetypes, like stereotypes, thus become signifiers

of the continued subjugation of African Americans, another control tool to keep Blacks in their place. Although archetypes are more subtle, they are equally pernicious as stereotypes. Both are both built upon perpetuating the subordination of Blacks and remove agency from Black characters.

D. W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* served not only as an incubator of stereotypes and racism, but this film would also set the premise for the archetype of projecting Blacks in subordinate and isolated positions that Hollywood Films today continue to revisit (Riggs, 1986). Ed Guerrero's (1993) research is centered on assessing the "over determined" way that mainstream Hollywood films frame "Blackness" through the use of archetypes. He asserts that while mainstream films no longer blatantly create outright racist film productions, they are infused with certain elements that continue to promote the stereotypes through image. These stereotypes reinforce racial domination through adhering to system supporting themes which subordinates Blacks in Hollywood Film productions.

Guerrero's (1993) argument suggests that the images that are used to frame Blackness by Hollywood are rooted in the stereotyping of African Americans. Gooding (2013) insists that much has not changed since the inception of film as far as mainstream representation of minorities is concerned. He assesses, minorities continue to be presented in minor roles, if they are present or recognized at all. Often these roles are ones that allow little room to maneuver outside of the dominant racial paradigm. Agency is minimalized. One example of the way in which this aim is achieved is through mainstream film's strategy to feature Blacks in subordinate occupations, often in the capacity of servants (Bogle, 2005; Guerrero, 1993).

Gooding (2007) and Bogle's (2005) research notes that, historically and in contemporary context Blacks have little or no agency at all in mainstream productions; however, mainstream projects have implicated the opposite. These mainstream films developed a framework that was grounded in providing little, if any, content that examined the life of these people beyond their occupation. Riggs (1986) and Guerrero (1993) allude, that this was done purposefully, to promote the dominant narrative which insisted that Blacks were happy in their relegation to subservient positions. Doing this also suggested that Blacks did not have, nor did they desire to have a life outside of their servility to whites. The Black Film Industry challenged these types of denigrating images of Blacks. The Black Film Industry (BFI) complicated the politics of image by presenting a more holistic representation of Black life in America.

The Black Film Tradition

Pugliese (2003) suggests that by African Americans noticing this one sided presentation of their lives and experiences in film, an emerging counter film culture emerged under the pretense that the stories of those who were presented in the domestic positions by mainstream films were no less important or valuable than the white people that they commonly depicted as serving (Riggs, 1986). Anna Everett (2001) insists that resistance was prevalent against the limitations imposed to keep African Americans from operating outside of the "system supporting themes," such as those presented through stereotypical messages embedded in images and through uncomplimentary representations, starting with the most inflammatory film, *Birth of a Nation*.

D. W. Griffiths *Birth of a Nation*, which was released shortly after the American film industry appeared, is deemed as one of the most notorious films to perpetuate stereotypical images of Blackness (Riggs, 1986). Black Film scholars agree that this movie set the precedence for the denigrating portrayals of African Americans in mainstream films that movies for centuries to follow abided by. These types of portrayals, as well as, the laws of segregation, would isolate African Americans both in film and physically. As African Americans were not allowed into theaters, Black Film houses popped up which would cater to Black audiences. Although these film houses allowed Blacks, the film industry was still excluding them, physically as they continued to be portrayed by actors in Black face and secluded to the margins within the film industry, never straying from stereotypes which displayed them as imbecilic and infantile (Bogle, 2005; Reid, 2005; Riggs, 1986).

Pugliese (2003) asserts that in lieu of distortions of African Americans in film, African American filmmakers set about trying to reclaim their omitted voices through providing an alternative depiction of them which challenged the distorted or misinterpreted representations of them as being savage, unintellectual, and childlike. Black Film addresses the issue of mainstream film's limited and exclusive portrayals of African Americans stereotypically as well the film industry being another media outlet having too long spoken for them.

Protests were made against films such as *Birth of a Nation* and other similar films by Blacks. The common response of the guilty party was that these were fictional portrayal and thus harmless. Although it was recognized that the early films were supposedly fictional and created solely for the purpose of entertainment, the nonfictional

damage that was experienced by these early films was proof of the power of image. Thus, the debate became more so not about the content of film, but its potential functional purpose. Apart from serving the function as an event of leisure, cinema also serves numerous other functions outside of it simply being a medium of entertainment (Bakari, 1996). For example, film can be used as a pedagogical tool which promotes propaganda with the overarching goal to assert agency.

Most Black Film researchers (Bogle, 2001; Gooding, 2013; Pugliese, 2003; Riggs, 1986) agree that the content of the early film promoted racist propaganda under the guise of entertainment with real life implications. Thus, early film became a tool of control which facilitated the continued defaming of Blacks. The endeavor of creating Black Film noted the way in which fiction could have a profound impact on the lived experiences of those portrayed. Hence, Black Film sought to utilize film to revalorize the African American, taking him from the position of spectacle as he was often portrayed in these films, to that of spectator, participant, and producer (Pugliese, 2003).

Richard Iton (2008) uses the outside/inside dynamic to describe the consciousness that befell African Americans as they were made aware that their experiences had been either misrepresented or excluded by the mainstream film industry. However, African Americans, a group which was made to be the “outsiders” of the mainstream film industry, created an alternate industry to place themselves inside of the larger industry. Pugliese’s documentary follows in the rich legacy of historiography; however, through adding a visual component. The Lincoln Motion Picture Company was founded in 1915 by brothers George and Noble Johnson. This marked the beginning of the independent film tradition which offered African Americans freedom and a space to counteract the

mainstream industry which marginalized them and sought to continue to make them dependent.

Black filmmaking would be heavily influenced by this strategy as it recognized that the act of cultural resistance by “writing back” is stifled by donor funded films (Pugliese, 2003). Simply put, the person that allocates the money from which a film is made ultimately has the power to insert their opinions and their values and thus alter the project minimally or majorly. (Bryce, 2010) summarizes critiques of donor funded films and notes that since these productions are more so geared towards commercialism and gaining a return on investment, they tend to adhere to universal appeal, aesthetic, and audience desire while perpetuating dependency and undermining real acquisition of skills. Thus, it was clear to the Johnson brothers that only through creating independent, self-sufficient companies “outside” of the broader film industry that they could achieve total creative control of the project. Having this control was important to those who would become involved in Black filmmaking in later generations.

Having this control was also important as the goal of the Lincoln Company was to cater to Black audiences who were aware that the early films such as Griffith’s, etcetera were not reflective of their experiences. Black audiences noted these films as foreign to them and recognized:

the ideologies of these products never ‘represent’ their personality, their collective or private way of life, their cultural codes, or, of course, the least reflection of their specific ‘art’ their way of thinking, of communicating—in a word, their own history (Bakari, 39).

Thus, the quest of Black filmmakers to “liberate the screens” of their people from these “foreign” movies and instead create stories that relate to themselves about their people and for their people. In taking this position, the function of the endeavors of Black filmmakers is simultaneously linked the potential influences that their contributions can make in deconstructing the myth of other by presenting African Americans in more holistic manner; thus challenging the mainstream depictions of them.

Oscar Micheaux would pioneer this endeavor to challenge the status quo representations of Blacks in films. He was the first African American to produce a feature length film. He produced the *Homesteader* in 1920. This was only a couple of years following Griffith’s film, thus Black Film has for the most part always been around to oppose the mainstream film industry and offer a more realistic portrayal of Black life and cater to a Black audience. Noting that although film was a form of entertainment, Micheaux also realized that “to make a film is to take a position” and film could be used as a pedagogical tool. Thus, he took on a position of advocacy as he implemented social issues in his personal dramas composed of all Black casts.

The Lincoln Company and Micheaux would leave a monumental impact on the Black Film Industry. The elements of catering to a Black audience, films being produced by Black producers, using Black actors and all Black casts, presenting Black narratives or storylines became indicators of the Black film brand. The inclusion of social issues faced by African Americans also branded a film as being considered to be a “Black Film.”

The Black Film brand became more complex as other social and historical events continued to influence the Black Film Industry. The evolution of Black Film began with

race movies at its inception through the 60's, moved on towards the Blaxploitation films in the 70's, then hood movies of the 90s. The growing trends in Black Film and the strides made to enhance the quality of life of African Americans, assisted the Black Film Tradition in gaining notoriety. The social strides achieved by Blacks toward achieving social equality in American strengthened the Black Film Tradition by providing content for storylines, broadening the audience base, and overall helping to legitimize the Black Film Industry and appropriate Black Culture. The outcome of these influences on the Black Film Industry led to Black Film becoming a more abstract and inclusive term. Thus today, the term has become all-encompassing of several coded-signifiers that are commonly associated to be representative of Black Film.

Yearwood (2000) refers to the Black Film Tradition as being not just an alternative film industry, but as a countermovement against the mainstream film industry. Yearwood's (2000) reference to the Black Film movement credits the Black Film Industry and the strides that it has made. However, although Black Film has gained much popularity since its inception, it has continued to be marginalized within the film studies discipline. This could possibly be because of the complexity of its politics, aesthetic preferences, changing of film objectives, trends, or a combination of all of the above. However, a major consideration to its absence in the film studies canon can be attributed to it still being an unofficial abstract genre. Unlike other genres such as romance, comedy, etcetera. Black Film remains in limbo as it can be encompassing of any of the sub genres; however, are marketed under the Black Film brand. Although much scholarship has focused on creating a historiography of the Black Film Industry or Tradition, the definition of Black Film remains unclear. This too could be a reason that it

is seldom explored in film studies. Perhaps, since there is no framework available to help deconstruct the Black Film brand, it remains on the margins.

What is Black Film?

This research deals exclusively with the entity of Black Film, with one of the objectives to provide a new framework which will define Black Film in its contemporary translation. The following section will explore several ways in which Black Film has been defined. The differences and commonalities will be deconstructed to contribute to the overarching goal of creating a contemporary definition of the term and thus demystifying Black Film as one homogenous entity.

Trying to assess a succinct definition of the meaning of the Black in Black Film, conflicts surrounding the larger framework of the state of “being” emerges. In the first attempt to define Black and recognizing that it is commonly defined by what it is not, the notions of its tendencies to be/embody/infect, think/reflect, or act/ project or perform Black/Blackness comes to mind. Simultaneously, these tendencies of “being Black” suggest the context of the term Black to encompass some type of emotional, cognitive, and/or physical processes. Thus, the Black Film can be assessed to be inclusive of the emotions, thoughts, or visible features of those who are Black. This can be manifested in various ways, thus, the interpretations of or the way of performing Blackness varies. This can be noted in the varied representations of Blackness that are created under the Black Film genre that conflate the meaning of the aesthetic art form and Black Film Tradition.

Scholars who have braved the task of providing historiography of Black Film suggest different elements as being indicators of the potential sub-genre. Thus, the

“Black” in the phrase “Black Film” takes on many translations. In deconstructing the “Black” in Black Film, a complex task is at hand; as there are various interpretations of the term Black. For instance, Black can be indicative of ethnic orientation of the producers, writers, or cast, the intended audience (Harrigan, 2003), or the tone (Iverem, 2006), context, content, or storyline. Furthermore, Mark Anthony Reid (2005) suggests that Black Film is composed of African American films and black-oriented film types:

African American film is any film whose central narrative explores the life and experience of the African Diaspora in the United States. [Furthermore] African American film refers only to films directed, written, or co-written by members of this community. The term *black oriented film* denotes similar black-focused films whose directors and screenwriters are nonblack (Reid, 2005).

Reid’s (2005) term black oriented film types, is classified in the works of film critic, Esther Iverem (2007) under the term “Other People’s Movies or OPM.” This term specifies Black Films that are of some significance to the African American community that were not made by us or with us in mind. Iverem (2007) also creates another subcategory under the heading of the Black Film title, which is “movies featuring Black stars” which is also developed along the same line. In combination, both Reid (1993) and Iverem’s (2007) contributions to categorizing and extracting signifiers of Black Film prove the evolving nature of the definition of Black Film. The shifts in the definition of Black Film contribute to the different interpretations of it and thus affect the cultural production of Black Film universally.

Much dissention has taken place concerning what should, can, or should not be classified as Black Film since its inception. Recently, controversy has resurfaced surrounding the Black Film Industry. Most of the commentary critiques not only the function of Black Film, but also its aesthetics and values. Essentially, the overarching question of what makes a Black Film a “good” Black Film resides in the ways that Black Film is perceived in accordance with how film producers, critics, and audience think that it should function, be presented, or defined. As proven in Iverem (2007) and Reid’s (1993) assessment of Black Film, the definitions and interpretations of the term Black Film is fluid. Yearwood (2000) defines Black Film as narrative film texts that are mediated by the African American experience. Thus, for Yearwood (2000), Black Films examine fundamental issues that are related to the existence of Blacks and are presented through an Afrocentric perspective which centralizes African Americans.

Although the definition of Black Film varies as well as the interpretation and literal translation, several Black Film critics note that historical moments are essential in contributing to the multiple definitions of Black Film. Black Film scholars also agree that Black Film is the cultural product that is influenced by socio-historical events and experiences of African Americans and should thus be analyzed by its own traditions, instead of being measured according to the mainstream standards, aesthetics, and traditions that Hollywood follows (Francis, 2014).

In conclusion, the Black Film Industry is one space of contestation that has long sought to mitigate the denigrating representation of African Americans that Hollywood Films continue to portray. The representation of African Americans in mainstream films abides according to a framework that is composed of images that are presented subtly,

usually in the context of being a joke, but really being nothing more than stereotypes and archetypes. It is these one dimensional portrayals of African American identity that Black Film challenges. Black Film is invested in framing Blackness through displaying the multiplicity of Black identities (Guerrero, 1993). This is achieved through Black Film offering Afrocentric storylines that don't push African Americans to the margins like mainstream films, but rather push them and their stories to the fore front (Yearwood, 2000). Black Film doesn't place African Americans in minor roles, but features them as the star of the production (Iverem, 2007).

Black Film must be defined in its own right. Audre Lorde insists that if you do not define yourself, for yourself, then you'll be crushed into other people's fantasies of you and be eaten alive. The previous quote indicates Black Film's original intent to combat the racialized images that were being propagated by the mainstream film productions in Hollywood. It is through deconstructing these images that we can appreciate the attempt on the part of Black film on behalf of all African Americans to define their self for themselves and disassociate their true identities and lived experiences from the fantasies that portray them in mainstream films.

CHAPTER II

GAZE, REPRESENTATION, AND CONTROL

This chapter explores two integral theoretical perspectives that situate the overall goal of exploring how Black filmmakers have seized the reins of power to contest, control, [re]produce, [re] present, and [re]distribute images that accurately display Black Identity. Control and power are essential to the creation, production, and distribution processes of Black Films (Cripps, 1993; Iverem, 2007; Reid, 2005; Snead, 1994). Agency is projected through the narratives that are embedded within films (Cripps, 1993; Reid, 2005). Black Filmmakers use their creative control to give voice to African Americans who have been marginalized by society (Guerrero, 1993).

Black Film's portrayals challenge the preconceived ideas of Black life and present a multidimensional view of the reality that Blacks face in America. Additionally, Black filmmakers use their creative power to explore the African American experience through including the issues, culture, and experiences commonly experienced by (Iverem, 2007; Reid, 2005). All in all, Black Filmmakers are able to utilize their creative power to control the way in which African Americans are viewed in the larger society. Black Film uses power similar to the Panopticon structure that Michel Foucault examines and the outcome is the mitigation of the type of cultural hegemony that Antonio Gramsci notes which perpetuates the ideology of a dominant white culture.

Michele Foucault's theory of "Panopticism" and Antonio Gramsci's theory of "Cultural Hegemony" are analyzed to provide an in-depth analysis of the individual dynamics of control that create power. Furthermore, the way in which this power is

utilized is also explored. Specific focus is placed on the extent to which control/power has been used within society to achieve the following functions:

- project agency
- influence the structuring of belief systems
- aid in the process of establishing identity/personhood
- assess an individual's human and social capital (specifically as it relates to creation of the social structures of race, class, and gender).

Panopticism, Michel Foucault

“Panopticism” is a chapter in French Philosopher, Michel Foucault's book, *Discipline and Punishment* (1975). It seeks to expose the subtle manipulation of human behavior through the disciplinary mechanisms imposed by society, specifically, as it applies to the power/knowledge binary. He begins by providing the reader with an in-depth description of how a specific town functioned under panoptical ramifications during the Black Death plague.¹¹ Precautionary measures such as data collection and reporting processes used to protect citizens from potential harm and infection from a plague revealed three essential points. Among these precautionary measures, the idea of partitioning/separation and delineating spaces was introduced, surveillance was conducted, and an all-powerful gaze was imposed.

Delineating Spaces through Gaze

From the town settlement being divided into distinct quarters, to each family having to be held hostage in their own home and having food and rations sent to them through

¹¹ Epidemic outbreak of the Bubonic Plague that killed one third of the population in Europe and Asia in the 14th century.

their roofs, Foucault shows how the government used the plague as a means of controlling and maintaining order in this particular town. Thus, the Panopticon was a tool of control, both physically and metaphorically. The separation of the town into districts under the watch of an attendant created the existences of a hierarchical relationship between those who held positions of power and those who were subjugated by that power. Also, with the separation of spaces, the people were forbidden from leaving their residence unless it was approved by the attendant, and in such a case, if they were to come in contact with another person, communication was forbidden. Thus, the agency of the people was taken away.

Physical designation of spaces was important, as people were forced to stay inside the space created for them. They were coerced to operate only within those physical and spacial ramifications and were punished if they did not follow the blueprint that was set forth for them. This was problematic as the attendants essentially had the power to control the physical bodies and actions of those within his district. This delineation of space is also problematic in that these physical spatial assignments also gave the attendants power over the mental operations of their subjects. The power in which the attendant operated facilitated the physical and psychological enslavement of those in his district.

In the plague scenario, attendants were assigned to a designated district. There were no particular criteria given as to how these attendants were selected, trained, or signifying the qualifications that they held to govern these districts. The attendants were responsible for policing their particular district through conducting surveillance that would help to contain the disease. The power held by the attendant and inflicted upon his district was similar to a king and his subjects. Both examples signify the way in which

power within a hierarchy operates is through the imposition of binary opposites. For instance, those who held the power were considered to be “superior” and those who were subjected to it were “inferior.” Other binaries included mad/sane, dangerous/harmless, normal/abnormal (Foucault, 1975). Labels created and placed upon the people affected the people individually and the broader society. Furthermore, these binaries proved that the partitioning of the town delineated not only physical spatiality, but also biological as well as psychological connections to the establishment of power.

The most vital component of the Panopticon machine, was the “gaze” that facilitated surveillance. Through a metaphor of comparing the “sovereign gaze” of the king to the commoner’s gaze, the gaze was a mechanism used to chastise, and subconsciously mold or influence the actions of individuals. This gaze was one disciplinary method used to manipulate the actions of individuals within a society. The policing of the plague was carried out through the attendant patrolling the people within his district and subjecting them to inspections carried out through the “gaze.” The gaze imposed by the attendant was physical. It was carried out as the people that are imprisoned within their homes were called, by name, to take their turn and stand in front of a window and were physically looked upon by the attendant to assess if they had been infected by the disease and thus, posed a potential threat of passing the infection to others. Although the gaze was physical, it is also connected to the cognitive process, so it implicated a psychological aspect as well. The gaze was psychologically processed by those upon which it was given to and redirected their behavior.

This brings in the idea of the seen and unseen binary. While the people, in the plague scenario, were physically seen or recognized, they were judged according to

abstract notions that are physically intangible and thus unseen. These people become subjects not only to the attendants, but were psychologically imprisoned as they had no power to combat this gaze which sees them as a threat to the larger society and treats them as such. The seen and unseen dichotomy is better presented through the depiction of the tower. Foucault suggests that the dichotomy of the seen and unseen work within the Panoptical model in relation to the power-knowledge relationship.

Figure 1: Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon Model

Jeremy Bentham converted the idea of the seen and unseen binary into an architectural infrastructure known as the Panopticon (illustrated above). In his work,

Foucault drew reference to Bentham's model, the Panopticon was a building with a tower at the center which made it possible for the observer or guardsman to see each cell in which a prisoner or schoolboy was incarcerated. These prisoners were under the surveillance of the guards who were in a tower which they can see, but the guards cannot physically been seen. Within this structure, each individual is seen but cannot communicate with the wardens or other prisoners. The crowd situation is eliminated; thus eliminating the spectacle aspect of self-discipline. The Panopticon induces a sense of eternal visibility that ensures the functioning and continuation of power. Bentham declared that "power should be visible yet unverifiable" (167). The prisoner can always see the tower but never knows from where he is being observed making them the subjects of observation.

Thus, those imprisoned were aware that they were being subjected to the gaze and were seen even if they cannot see who was watching them. This again brings up the psychological aspect of the seen and unseen dichotomy. Foucault commented, "The major effect of the Panopticon is to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power" (2005). This structure suggested, that by creating a permanent surveillance, a person would be aware that they were constantly being monitored, and therefore, reform their behavior by engaging only in acceptable behaviors. The prisoners modified their behavior because they were aware that although they cannot see the guards, they were being watched and would be punished if they acted inappropriately. This was all due to the fear that was imposed through that sovereign gaze.

In the plague scenario, the inspections upon the people in the town caused them to live in a state of fear of being subjected to punishment. The citizens were controlled by the fear of being found to be infected by the disease. This fear was internalized and caused the citizens to adhere to the rules set forth by the governing faction. The gaze was used to instill fear and thus can be considered a tool used to project psychological control upon the enslaved people.

The gaze was social and cultural in nature. It influenced not only the individual, but also the society as a whole since there were social interactions between the ruling and subjugated populations. The preventative measure that the Panopticon employed was controlling behavior through knowledge. Through Panopticism Foucault alluded that the Panopticon was not meant to become a dream building, but a diagram of power reduced to its ideal form. He added, “The Panopticon was also a laboratory; it could be used to carry out experiments, to alter behavior, to train or correct individuals” (169). It gave power over people's minds through architecture. Furthermore, it perfected the procedures of power by increasing the number of people who can be controlled, and decreasing the number needed to operate it. And because it can be inspected from outside, there was no danger of tyranny because:

Any panoptic institution ...may without difficulty be subjected to such irregular and constant inspections; and not only by the appointed inspectors, but also by the public; any member of society will have the right to come and see with his own eyes how the schools, hospitals, factories, or prisons function (171).

Foucault does not overtly state if the Panopticon diagram was destined and designed to spread throughout society; however, he notes that it had become prevalent in

the operation of other institutions, perhaps because of its economic viability. The Panopticon made authoritative more economical and effective.

Foucault pointed out that while this structure was economically friendly, and may operate under teleological and utilitarian principles, the end might not justify the means. Foucault forewarns, “What is now imposed on penal justice as its point of application, its “useful” object, will no longer be the body of the guilty man set up against the body of the king; nor will it be the juridical subject of an ideal contract; it will be the disciplinary individual” (186). Foucault suggested that subconsciously such schemas had already begun to affect the general population and that these defense mechanisms such as the “gaze” have become innate, thus influencing actions of others clandestinely.

Foucault’s criticism of the Bentham’s model, suggested the intrusion of privacy, and the loss of freedom that this disciplinary model created. Overall, he suggested that power comes with a price, and in the case of the Panoptical model, the price is freedom. The Panopticon operated under utilitarianistic principles as well as on the dichotomy of the seen and the unseen where the most can be controlled by the least. However, if fewer observers are monitoring the subjects, and essentially remain unseen, then the integrity of the observer cannot be corroborated because they are the possessors of power. The disciplinary mechanisms that the observers employed to control others were not applicable to their own actions and did not intrude on their privacy. Foucault offers that while it is permissible for the Panoptical structure to be subjected to unexpected inspections, the “supervisor” or brains of the operation, ultimately makes the final decision.

Foucault also pointed out that a power structure such as the government was not always the entity that employs disciplinary mechanisms to achieve desired results as in the case of the plague. He claimed, “Our society is one not of spectacle, but of surveillance” suggesting that anyone with the ability to observe can become the subject and the observer of the Panopticon machine.

Malcolm X (1992) also noted physical and psychological abuses that are inflicted upon a society of people to reinforce power of the gaze, when he spoke of the slave breaking process. X (1992) noted that the outcome was similar to the Panoptical process which created conformity. The slaves became homogenized in thought and action similar to the way in which those in the plague situation were controlled. The purification process noted in Panopticism played an integral role in the plague stricken city scenario, as well as European conquest. Purification was facilitated under the guise of protecting the society, from disease in the plague scenario. Bentham’s overarching objective of the Panopticon structure was to separate the abnormal people of society from contaminating the general population that were considered to be normal. The separation also had social implications which created a hierarchy that influenced the way that these two populations interacted within themselves and with one another. Thus, the purification process was carried out through the imposing of discipline by the normal group upon the abnormal. The Panopticon model was not just a control system; it was also a metaphorical device consisting of disciplinary mechanisms in place to prevent revolt among the subjects that it governed in a colonized society.

When a power structure is adopted, resistance of the subjects is anticipated; therefore, a means of reprimanding any disturbances that might threaten the functioning

of power structure must be readily available. When this precautionary model isn't successful, other measures must be taken to ensure that the hierarchical system is not at risk of being overthrown. When the subjects of these systems rebel, other disciplinary mechanisms must be employed to put the subjects back into their place, cultural hegemony would facilitate this need.

In closing, Foucault satirically acknowledges that ironically, "prisons resemble factories, schools, barracks, hospitals, which all resemble prisons" (186). Schools, factories, hospitals and prisons resemble each other, not just because they look similar, but because they examine pupils, workers, patients and prisoners, classify them as individuals and try to make them conform to a "normal society." This normal society was created through the use of another method that helps aid in controlling the minds and actions of people. This method of control was carried out through the implementation and perpetuation of cultural hegemony within a society.

Cultural Hegemony, Antonio Gramsci

Antonio Gramsci, an Italian Marxist theorist, was interested in assessing how power was obtained, used, and how it could be taken and coopted to create a more just society (Lears, 1985). A conscious connection was made between the culture and power within a society and the way in which the two separate entities directly and indirectly affected one another. Broadly, cultural hegemony was defined as the control that is used by the ruling class to subjugate groups in society.

According to Mills (1997), this control was carried out through the implementation of hegemonic discourses in the favor of the ruling or dominant class. These hegemonic discourses were perpetuated through the rhetoric, law, or system of governance and

hierarchical institutions that facilitate subjugation under the guise of “tradition” or under the unprovable superior nature of a certain group (Ranger, 1989). T. J. Jackson Lears’s (1985) assessment of the work of Gramsci asserts that in looking at cultural hegemony, three important concepts emerged. These concepts were: domination, consent, and force. Mill (1997) also explored the connection between the three concepts through viewing them individually as well as cohesively through assessing the difference between the social and racial contracts. Terance Ranger’s *Invention of Tradition in Africa* was also rooted along the lines of the previously mentioned writers; however, his focus brings a nuance to the larger debate which was the role in which “tradition” had played in facilitating domination through projecting consent conceived falsely under the guise of being tradition; however, Ranger (1989) insists that a closer evaluation will show the way in which force was imposed to create these dominating traditions.

Ideally, by Gramsci’s definition of cultural hegemony, the ruling class within a society held the power which was forcefully wielded upon the “other” populations who consent to the rhetoric or superiority of the ruling class. Mills (1997) acknowledges that those who are subjugated by the ruling class have not always willingly agreed to the rules that imprisoned them. They did not receive an invitation to choose their positions in society; rather, it is bequeathed to them through the hegemonic discourses that privilege and reward the dominant group while punishing the minority population which is perceived to be incapable of being involved in political and social processes (Mills, 1997).

Gramsci notes, cultural values and norms were the units of observation that were used to decide if punishment needed to be utilized to correct or modify behavior of those who were under the domination of the ruling class. In essence, it was cultural hegemony

that facilitated Foucault's seen and unseen dichotomy and thus manipulated behavior. Duncombe (2002) insists that because culture is invisible, it is a form of politics that doesn't look like politics. Thus, cultural hegemony was achieved much like Panopticism through surveillance. Both Panopticism and cultural hegemony also achieved the same goal of asserting power and controlling the behavior of the subjugated group through teaching them to recognize, fear, and abide in accordance with the power structure. However, in the subordinate groups doing so, their consent was assumed. Also, their allegiance was considered to legitimize the superiority and credibility of the dominant class.

By inflicting the "sovereign" gaze upon the society which was in alignment with the goals and ambitions of the ruling class, cultural hegemony was physically, mentally, and socially imposed. It was prevalent throughout the everyday lived experiences of the subjugated people. It was so engrained in the society that it, like the Panopticon, became a self- operating machine and those who ran it could be removed and it would continue to operate because it was such a powerful tool. As Bentham suggests that power should be unverifiable, cultural hegemony was an unverifiable social construct that was invisible; however, simultaneously ever present and visible in the lives of those who were victims of it. The way in which they lived, learned, worked, and interacted with one another was in accordance to the social concepts, constructs, and hierarchies that were created through cultural hegemony.

The objective of cultural hegemony was to erase and replace one's lived experiences with a set of ideas that would support the propaganda handed down from the ruling class. These ideas were the norms that a society should conform to. If one chose to be a nonconformist, they were deemed as being deserving of punishment because of their

non-existent loyalty to the system. Thus, to avoid committing treason, all that was formerly “known” or learned must be unlearned and the societal norms must occupy the space that was formerly held by these products of knowledge. Thus, the power/knowledge binary within the person that is under rule rather than making rules must be repositioned. The subordinate group must be reconditioned to love, hope, fear, and operate only in the confines of the social constructs that the hegemonic culture prescribes. They are marginalized by the cultural dominance and forced to serve only in a mediocre position and pledge loyalty to the society at the expense of sacrificing himself and individuality to take on a collective identity. The subjugated group’s identity must be renegotiated and be abandoned to take on the identity of the society (Mills, 1997).

The person that is subjected to hegemonic discourses and interactions occupies a space of permanent visibility, while operating only in the capacity of inflicting limited visibility upon the watchful eye that watches him. He is a spectacle with little power to impose voyeurism back upon the voyeur. His eyes have been blinded by facades made to create the illusion that he is an active participant of society rather than a victim to it. He cannot communicate with those around him. His voice has been muted. Linguistic hegemony has been imposed to facilitate the larger goal of cultural domination (Lears, 1985).

Cultural hegemony as a tool of colonial conquest promoted not only a legacy of assimilation to the dominant culture, but one of forgetting. If forgetting didn’t work, then the false or distorted narratives that were popularized in the society would get the job done (X, 1992). Ngugi wa Thiongo (2009) insisted that this objective is achieved through “dismembering” the colonial subject psychologically as he is relocated from his homeland,

routine, and traditions by the new governing systems. Narcissistic doctrine under this new colonial regime replaced the old laws and customs of the indigenous population (Fanon, 1965; X, 1992). Colonization becomes more than an event; it becomes a mental process. Self must be denied and a collective, normalized identity must be accepted (Mills, 1997; Wa Thiongo, 2009). This is done through the policing of self that takes place within the colonized individual's psyche. He knows the outcome of deviating from the norms.

However, post colonialism, is more concerned with assessing how the newly freed individual free himself from the grips of the former chains that held him in bondage physically, mentally, and socially. Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1965) questions how does one shed the skin of inferiority that has been placed upon him. Wa Thiongo (2009) insists that he must not only "decolonize the mind" but also make a conscious effort to "re-member" that which he was disconnected from and forced to forget. The overarching question of how one can free himself from the heavy laden culturally hegemonic discourses has often been answered in many ways, in some way or another suggesting physical or cultural resistance whether through the act of violence or the revitalization of former cultural customs.

Essentially, a disconnection must be made from the colonial state of mind. A mental component of liberation and independence must take place in addition to the physical (X, 1992). The former spectacle of the gaze must become the spectator, not in the sense that they take on the mentality of their former voyeurs, but in the sense that they must look back on the institution that held them within its grip. They must reject the formal system create their own blueprint. They must reconcile with their former self. Because only at this point can total decolonization be achieved (Fanon, 1965). Only then will they begin "re-

member,” reconcile, and re-present themselves outside of the perimeters of the Panopticon machine (wa Thiongo 2009). This was the objective of the Black Film tradition.

Historically, there have always been endeavors led by African Americans to address, confront, and rebel against the culturally bias propaganda permeated through film. Resistance to forces, like the early American Film Industry, which created denigrating representations of African Americans became known as “writing back.” The notion of writing back, as an act of resistance against the dominant culturally hegemonic narratives can be applied to the struggle of people of African descent to do damage control to mitigate the impact of the perpetuation of such denigrating images of them as spectacle (Ashcroft, 1989). Ashcroft et. al (1989) notes the ways in which post-colonial “subjects” (formally its objects) began to counteract the colonial system through their written communication by rejecting the linguistic hegemony that had been placed upon it. This was done through the switching of the “official” language to English as well as by the literature that was used in the institution of education and the creation of the “English” department which praised the white male canon and subtracted agency from other minority groups (Ashcroft, 1989).

In addition to promoting linguistic hegemony, cultural hegemony is engrained as well as these institutions taught against the culture of the people by attacking it as either non-existent, backwards, or trivial. Post-colonial literature both reflects and deflects this cultural hegemony that was promoted. Through “writing back” to the colonial structure, the people disconnect themselves from the identity of being the object of the gaze of the colonial structure and reflect the gaze back upon the institution, returning the gaze upon the former “gazer.” By “writing back” those who were once relegated to the position of

outsiders have carved a space to insert themselves into history by [re] presenting themselves and projecting agency. The Black Film does just that through redirecting the gaze.

Redirecting the gaze upon Blacks in film has been a long process set with twists and turns and beset with much controversy both internally and externally. Technological advances have helped catalyze the presence of Black Films. However, gaining inclusion, appreciation, and acceptance by the white film industry has and continues to be an uphill battle. Most often, the door to create Black Films has remained closed to Black filmmakers seeking financing for their films. This has often resulted in writers, directors, and producers independently funding their own projects, if they could afford to.

Lacking the power and access to easily get their films made has resulted in many Black Film projects being drastically altered to fit the tastes of whoever is financially backing it. In this case, the filmmakers often lose creation control and their films are altered and the content and meaning become diluted. Much like the Panopticon, the mainstream film industry sought to create docile filmmakers that adhere to the blueprint of film which includes stereotypical depictions. Thus in respects to the Panopticon structure, the mainstream film industry held the power and became the operator of the Panopticon, the inflictor and subject of the gaze. By exuding cultural hegemony through the use of image, control was utilized by the film institution to assure that the Black population would internalize and act in accordance to the images that represented them.

It is within this context that the Black Film Industry sought to deflect the cultural hegemony and racial superiority that Hollywood promoted and add their voices, experiences, hoping to gain agency by also adding reality (their truths) through their films

to counter the perceptions that had been perpetuated about their social and mental abilities. This research explores the extent to which through Black Film productions, the white gaze in general (and specifically as it relates to the Hollywood film industry) has been redefined, redirected, and increased in scope changing the dynamics of who the gaze had been originally been directed towards/upon (African Americans by Europeans), to who the gaze would be conducted by and towards (from African Americans to Europeans).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter notes the methodology that was used to determine how recent Black Films measured when compared to the definitions set forth by Iverem (2007) and Reid (1993). Academic critics have suggested that the term Black Film has been ambiguous in meaning and this meaning has changed since its inception (Iverem, 2007; Reid, 1993,2005; Snead, 1988). Despite the lack of a grounded meaning by the term, Black Film, film critics have agreed that a Black Film aesthetic exists (Bogle, 2005; Cripps, 1994; Guerrero, 1993; Hooks, 2005; Iverem, 2007; Reid, 1993, 2005; Snead, 1994). But what are the elements that compose this Black Film aesthetic?

This research proposes to make the term Black Film less ambiguous through determining what elements collectively comprise Black Film and to assess whether the original objective or intent of Black Film is being met. This project examines how Black Film has been defined over the last two decades by exploring what the “Black” in Black Film has signified? Are the themes or images of African American culture represented on screen why films are labeled Black Films? Or does the categorization of Black Film simply represent the ethnicity of a film’s writer, director, producer, actors, or audience?

Research Approach

This research used a Qualitative research approach to answer the previously listed questions. This approach was used because:

Qualitative research is exploratory research used to gain understanding of underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations. It is used to uncover trends in thoughts and opinions and dive deeper into the problem (Wyse, 2011).

For the purposes of this research endeavor, qualitative research was used to ascertain the trends of films classified by viewers as Black Films. This project reviews the validity of their claims by testing the films they classified as Black Films against set definitions of two Black Film scholars, Mark A. Reid (1993) and Esther Iverem (2007). The outcome of cross referencing these films classified by viewers as Black Films against Reid and Iverem's definitions of Black was to understand the possible reasons and motivations of viewers in denoting these films as Black Films.

The films selected were used to construct a case study of Black Films: This was then used to compare these films to the definitions set forth by Reid (1993) and Iverem (2007). Case studies are a qualitative research strategy in which the researcher explores in depth a program, event, or activity, process, or one or more individuals (Cresswell, 2003). Movies that were classified as Black Films served as the subject of these case studies. The cases in this research were restricted to films released in theaters between 2000 and 2015.

Method of Data Collection

This research purposively sampled films that had been classified as Black Films. This was achieved through the following process. First, the search terms "Black" or "African American" Films, were used to filter lists of films that viewers claimed were Black Films. Eight lists of films were evaluated from the Internet Movie Database, an online search engine which houses detailed information of movies, television programs, and videos. This database was befitting to evaluate films since it publishes all information found in the fast rolling credits at the end of a movie, show, or video. By gaining access

to all of this information, a more in depth and specific analysis of all individuals involved in the filmmaking process was possible.

Audience opinions also were made available to be assessed since the Internet Movie Database allows fans to post on the website. Specifically, viewers commonly post film reviews, ratings, summaries, as well as in depth lists of films they consider to be of some type of significance. These eight lists found using the search terms “Black Films” or “African American Films” pulled up lists of films the imdb viewers considered to be the best, top, or most important Black Films. The titles are listed below:

1. 100 Best Black/ Urban Movies of All Time
2. Best Black Comedy Films
3. Best Black Movies of All Time
4. Top African American Films
5. Best Dark/Black Comedies
6. African American Films
7. Black Comedies and Romances
8. Black Cinema Gems

While some lists included specific genres, others were composed of various genres. For example, three out of the eight lists noted Comedies and Romances as genres. The other five fail to specifically note a genre. This could be problematic as the term Black or African American Films may be classified as a genre in its own right by some viewers. In *Black Lenses, Black Voices: African American Film Now*, Mark A. Reid (2005) offers the following subgenres and styles within African American cinema: Black Family Films,

Black Action Films, Black Horror Films, Black Female-Centered Films, and Black Independent Films.

Collectively, these eight lists consisted of 1,091 viewer classified Black Films dating from the early 1900s-2015. Since the literature on the Black Film Industry noted that copious research already existed for most of the films that appeared in the early years of Black Film up until 2000, I decided to look at Black Films produced over the last sixteen years (2000-2015). Additionally, a lot of academic research covers Race films, Blaxploitation, and the Hood films. However, many films that have been released since the new millennium have received isolated attention, so it was fitting to document recent familiar “Black” Films collectively to determine how they have met the original intent of Black Film. Also the observation of the proliferation of viewer classified Black Films between 2000 and beyond among the original eight lists prompted the choice to analyze films in this sixteen-year period. Furthermore, films from this period represented 35% of the 1,091 films included on the eight lists. Esther Iverem’s project (2007) examined Black Films released between 1986 and 2006. In her study, films were evaluated and either categorized as Black Films, Films with Black Stars, and Other People’s Movies. This research is similar since it used her criteria for defining Black Film as well as Reid’s (1993).

In order to select the sample, I gathered the eight lists and coded each by highlighting only the films that premiered 2000-2015. After coding lists, I cross referenced the information with the Internet Movie Database (imdb.com) to ensure the title and release dates were correct. Next, I compiled a list of all the highlighted films from each list. Three hundred and eighty-two (382) entries (35%) of all the films were

produced between 2000 and 2015. All eight lists were juxtaposed into the table, eliminating, but noting the film titles that were repeated on the lists. (See pages 87-97 in appendix).

The highlighted films (276) were repeated on multiple lists. (See pages 98-100 in appendix). Films that appeared on two of the eight lists are highlighted yellow. Films that appeared on three of the five lists are highlighted orange. Films that appeared on four of the eight lists are highlighted pink. Lastly, films that appeared on five out of the eight lists are highlighted green. No film was repeated more than five times throughout the eight lists.

Data Analysis

Fifty-five of the ninety-eight- films from the Best Dark/Black Comedies (which represented 56% of the films from that list) were only listed once. The fact that this large proportion of the sample was only repeated once could be attributed to the lack of clarity in the meaning of the term Black and thus, the importance and necessity for this research.

Seventy-four (74) out of the 276 titles were repeated an average of 2-5 times throughout the eight lists. One film, *Love & Basketball* (2000) was repeated on five out of the eight lists. Six films: *All About the Benjamins* (2002), *Brown Sugar* (2002), *Friday After Next* (2002), *Hustle & Flow* (2005), *Next Friday* (2000), and *Undercover Brother* (2002) were repeated on four out of the eight lists. Seventeen films were repeated on three of the eight lists: *Are We There Yet* (2005), *ATL* (2006), *Bad Boys II* (2003), *Barbershop* (2002), *Barbershop 2: Back in Business* (2004), *Beauty Shop* (2005), *Big Momma's House* (2000), *Big Momma's House 2* (2006), *Black Dynamite* (2009), *Brooklyn's Finest* (2009), *Death at a Funeral* (2010), *Fat Albert* (2004), *First Sunday*

(2008), *Littleman* (2006), *Norbit* (2007), *Paid in Full* (2002), *The Best Man Holiday* (2013). Fifty films were repeated on two out of the eight lists.

Out of these seventy-four films, five straight to video releases were eliminated since this study sought to analyze only theatrical releases: *Baller Blockin'* (2000), *Full Clip* (2006), *Paper Soldiers* (2002), *Repos* (2006), and *The Hustle* (2011). One television movie, *Disappearing Acts* (2000) was eliminated. Biographic films were also excluded because according to Reid (1993), Black Films are full length fictional films. After these films were eliminated, sixty-nine (69) full feature films that were classified as Black Films and released 2000-2015 remained from the original eight lists were. Since the aforementioned titles were included in multiple lists, this suggests some type of likeminded thinking among the viewers that or conceptualization of what a Black Film was.

To further assess this like-mindedness, a spreadsheet was compiled examining the suggested elements that various film scholars defined as being indicative of Black Film by noting an entry for each film. Within the spreadsheet, the following information for the remaining sixty-nine films are noted: release date, movie title, movie rating, genre, directors, production companies, production budget, box office revenue, producers, cast members, plot summary, awards and nominations for each movie title.

The Internet Movie Database (www.imdb.com) was used to find all information with the exception of the production budget, box office revenue, and plot summary. Box Office Mojo (www.boxofficemojo.com) was used to ascertain the production budgets and box office revenue accumulated from the films. All plot summaries were provided by Metacritic (www.metacritic.com). By including all of these entry categories, the

researcher was able to evaluate if films were classified as Black Films based on similarities in representation of African American culture, funding and financial backing, writing, acting, or target audience, etc. Furthermore, creating this data set allowed the researcher to more quickly be able to identify overlap of people involved in the making of these Black Films. They are organized according to release date. (See pages 101-109 in appendix).

Limitations of the study:

Limitations of the study included the availability of the lists posted on the Internet Movie Database. The date of publication of these lists also created a limitation to the study. Most of these lists were published on the Internet Movie Database between 2011 and 2013, so fewer films from 2014-2015 were present. However, some lists were updated, while others were not. Additionally, the availability and accessibility of the films selected for the case study limited the study. In some cases, films originally chosen for evaluation had to be substituted because they were not easily accessible. Finally, the use of the Internet Movie Database could have limited the study since it is a subjective source with information controlled by anonymous contributors.

CHAPTER IV

BLACK FILM IS...

This findings chapter reviews how Black Film has been redefined throughout the years and how the Black Film Industry continues to combat the negative stereotypes and misrepresentation of African Americans that are regularly perpetuated by the mainstream film industry. In “Whose Black Film is This,” Terry Francis (2014) evaluates three current challenges facing in the field of Black Film Scholarship:

Navigating the nationalistic and auteurist rubrics of film studies curricula, weighing how movies convey past and present experience in complicated ways, and advocating for Black Film against the backdrop of an absurd media environment and popular culture in which African American audiences both distrust Hollywood and at the same time seem skeptical of black independent media that challenges representational comfort zones (147).

Collectively, these challenges center around the overall task of assessing the value associated with Black Film. In this article, Francis (2014) also addresses the issue of the ambiguity of the term Black Film, adding:

If the Black in Black Film is to be defined, it’s surely more of a psycho-social-aesthetic non-location, a site of citations; the Black in Black Film is an idea. If it is a form, then it can be made and unmade. Blackness is a tenuous and uncertain platform within a hall of mirrors where reality is reflected, refracted, and crooked (147).

This research sought to deconstruct how this idea of “Blackness” has been framed, formed, and defined in recent films, and to assess whether the intended effect of Black filmmaking is being achieved.

Two Black Films per year from 2000-2015, were purposively selected from viewer rated lists taken from the Internet Movie Database. The thirty-two films were organized chronologically by release dates. Synopsis tables included on pages 110-126 of the appendix provide a brief overview of all the films that were examined including information of the production team involved with the films such as the director, producer(s), writer(s), box office earnings, and movie summaries.

All films included as part of the Black Film case study were analyzed according to how Black Film had been defined according to two major film critics, Mark A. Reid (1993) and Esther Iverem (2007). The definitions provided by these two scholars were combined to create a chart examining each element included in Reid (1993) and Iverem’s (2007) definitions of Black Film.

Mark A. Reid (1993) was careful to differentiate between Black Commercial Films and Black Independent Films. By Reid’s (1993) definition, Black Commercial Film includes the following:

1. The film is a feature length fiction film.
2. The African American community is the central focus of the film.
3. The film is written, directed, or produced by at least one Black person in collaboration with non-Black people.
4. The film is distributed by major American film companies.

Contrarily, by Reid’s (1993) definition, Black Independent Film included the following:

1. The film is a feature length fiction film.
2. The African American community is the central focus of the film.
3. The film is written, directed, and produced by African Americans and people of African ancestry who reside in the United States.
4. The film is not distributed by major American film companies.

While Reid's (1993) definition is mostly rooted in who was involved in the filmmaking process, Iverem's (2007) definition of Black Film is more complex. Iverem (2007) recounts, "Before 1986, a Black movie meant a mindless production starring Richard Pryor or Eddie Murphy." This observation suggests the meaning of Black Films has changed, moving beyond simply meaning a film starring a Black actor. Iverem (2007) complicated the term Black Film noting what she referred to as a new wave of film which started with the release of Spike Lee's *She's Gotta Have It* in 1986. Iverem asserts:

Black movies no longer meant a film with a Black actor in a starring role, but a film that was Black in content and tone. Films not made with us included, but specifically made with us in mind. Films noting our stories, experiences, joys, pains, our cultural intricacies, lingo, and practices.

Iverem's (2007) definition was composed of two important elements that must be noted in so called Black Films: that they be made with Black people in mind and Black in content and tone. Furthermore, her critique noted films that do not achieve these goals as being just films featuring Black stars and consequently, not a Black Film; but Other People's Movie(s). As Iverem (2007) highlighted the importance of casting, three other

criteria examining Black Films were included: All or Primarily Black Cast, Just Films starring Black stars, and Other People's Movies.

Collaboratively, both authors note the importance of the African American community and Black experiences being portrayed not as stereotypes or archetypes in Black Films. Reid's (1993) qualification that the Black community playing a central role in the advancement of the plot was equivalent to Iverem's (2007) criteria that Black Films must be made with Blacks in mind and include their experiences, issues, and culture. Furthermore, Reid's (1993) analysis of who was involved in the filmmaking process is also similar to Iverem's (2007) analysis of the roles of the Black Film auteurs.

Reid (1993) notes films that are distributed by major American Film companies as being Black Commercial Films while those that aren't distributed by major American Film companies are regarded as Black Independent Films. Iverem (2007) also notes that though many tend to separate Hollywood produced films and independent projects, most of the Black Films land distribution deals with major Hollywood studios. Whether a film was classified as commercial or independent bared no importance to the findings of this study, so distribution was not included in criteria. Instead, the chart evaluates only the essential elements that Reid and Iverem state as indicative of Black Film.

Figure 2: Scene from Spike Lee's *Chi-Raq* (2015).

Case Study:

The findings of this case study were collected in a chart to examine how the films measured up to the definitions of Black Films provided by Reid (1993) and Iverem (2007). For film summaries for each film examined, see pages 110-126 in appendix. Furthermore, the differences in definitions between the two critics are noted, as well as any nuances that appear.

Film	Feature Length Fiction Film	Central Focus is the African American Community	Written, directed, OR produced by at least one Black Person in collaboration with non Black people	Written, directed, AND produced by Black people and people of African ancestry who reside in the USA	Made with us (Blacks) in mind	Black in content and tone	All or Primarily Black Cast	Just films featuring Black Stars	Other people's movies
1. Next Friday	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	x	x
2. Love & Basketball	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	x	x
3. Two Can Play That Game	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	x	x

Film	Feature Length Fiction Film	Central Focus is the African American Community	Written, directed, OR produced by at least one Black Person in collaboration with non Black people	Written, directed, AND produced by Black people and people of African ancestry who reside in the USA	Made with us (Blacks) in mind	Black in content and tone	All or Primarily Black Cast	Just films featuring Black Stars	Other people's movies
5. All About the Benjamins	✓	x	✓	x	x	x	x	✓	✓
6. Paid in Full	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	x	x
7. Bad Boys II	✓	x	✓	x	x	x	x	✓	✓
8. Love Don't Cost a Thing	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	x	x
9. Barbershop 2: Back in Business	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	x	x
10. White Chicks	✓	x	✓	x	x	x	x	✓	✓
11. Hitch	✓	x	✓	x	x	x	x	✓	✓
12. Four Brothers	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	x	x	x
13. ATL	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	x	x
14. Akeelah and the Bee	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	x	x
15. Norbit	✓	x	✓	x	x	x	✓	✓	✓
16. Why Did I Get Married?	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	x	x
17. First Sunday	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	x	x
18. Hancock	✓	x	✓	x	x	x	x	✓	✓
19. Obsessed	✓	x	✓	x	x	x	x	✓	✓
20. Precious	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	x	x

Film	Feature Length Fiction Film	Central Focus is the African American Community	Written, directed, OR produced by at least one Black Person in collaboration with non Black people	Written, directed, AND produced by Black people and people of African ancestry who reside in the USA	Made with us (Blacks) in mind	Black in content and tone	All or Primarily Black Cast	Just films featuring Black Stars	Other people's movies
22. Death at a Funeral	✓	x	✓	x	x	x	x	✓	✓
23. Madea's Big Happy Family	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x
24. Jumping the Broom	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	x	x
25. Note to Self	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	x	x
26. Think Like a Man	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	x	x
27. The Best Man Holiday	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	x	x
28. Peeples	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	x	x
29. About Last Night	✓	x	✓	x	x	x	✓	✓	✓
30. Dear White People	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x
31. Dope	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	x	x
32. Chi-Raq	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x

Sixty-six percent (66%) of films analyzed fit Reid (1993) and Iverem's (2007)

definitions of Black Film. These films were *Next Friday* (2000), *Love & Basketball* (2000), *Two Can Play That Game* (2001), *Paid in Full* (2002), *Love Don't Cost a Thing* (2003), *Barbershop 2: Back in Business* (2004), *ATL* (2006), *Akeelah and the Bee* (2006), *Why Did I Get Married* (2007), *First Sunday* (2008), *Precious* (2009), *For Colored Girls* (2010), *Madea's Big Happy Family* (2011), *Jumping the Broom* (2011), *Note to Self*

(2012), *Think Like a Man* (2012), *The Best Man Holiday* (2013), *Peeples* (2013), *Dear White People* (2014), *Dope* (2015), and *Chi-Raq* (2015). Thirty-four percent (34%) of films did not fit Reid (1993) and Iverem's (2007) definition of Black Film. These films were: *How High* (2001), *All About the Benjamins* (2002), *Bad Boys II* (2003), *White Chicks* (2004), *Hitch* (2005), *Four Brothers* (2005), *Norbit* (2007), *Hancock* (2008), *Obsessed* (2009), *Death at a Funeral* (2010), and *About Last Night* (2014). Results for each of Reid (1993) and Iverem's (2007) definition category are analyzed in the table below.

100% Full Length Fictional Film
68% Central Focus is AA community
90% Written, directed, or produced by Blacks in collaboration with non-Blacks.
10% Written, directed, and produced by Blacks/ people of African Ancestry.
68% Made with us in Mind
68% Black in Content and Tone
68% All or Primarily Black Cast
28% Just Films with Black Stars
28% Other People's Movies

Full Length, Fictional Films

Per Reid's (1993) definition of Black Film, films must be full length fictional films. One hundred percent (100%) of the films evaluated fit this description. Films that did not fit this criterion were eliminated from the case study since Reid's definition excludes films biographical or historically based in content. The exclusion of these film types is further discussed in following chapter.

Centered on the African American Community

Sixty-eight percent (68%) of films evaluated focused on the African American community. This outcome notes the significance of this community to Black Films. Mark A. Reid (1993) also notes the importance of the centrality of the African American

community in Black Films. In his opinion, Black Films display African Americans as the main focus of the film. Furthermore, the community which Blacks are a part of and interact with on a daily basis are key elements within the production of Black Film. Specifically, the intricate details in the personal and professional lives of Blacks must be depicted in the Black Films. For example, their neighborhoods, relationships, employment, problems, etcetera. In including all these aspects, the African American community is made the central focus of the film.

African American Community was often depicted through the portrayal of the individual and collective experiences of African Americans in the films that were analyzed. For instance, Romance Films such as *Love and Basketball* (2000), *Jumping the Broom* (2011), and *Note to Self* (2012) all recount the personal romantic experiences of lead African American characters. These films also explore the complexities of the characters' experiences through their connections with others in their circle such as family, friends, coworkers, etcetera. The inclusion of the Black Family is often used in film narratives centering on the collective experiences of the African American community.

The African American community also represents a physical, geographical location such as a Black neighborhood and the community that surrounds that area. Films set within Black neighborhoods and communities present an Afrocentric point of view centering the film's narrative on the experiences of Black characters in their natural surroundings.

For example, in the opening scene of *Dope* (2015), the narrator Malcolm introduces the audience to his community in the Darby-Dixon neighborhood known as

“The Bottoms” in Inglewood, California. He describes where he lives as a “poor crime-filled area” and explains “when you live in The Bottoms, a bad day could actually mean you getting killed.” The film is centered on the everyday experiences of Malcolm and his friends living in The Bottoms: attending public schools, being bullied for being geeks, safely navigating their way through gang territory and high crime areas, and the occasional outcome of miscalculating their journey and ending up in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Spike Lee’s *Chi-Raq* (2015), addresses the experiences of citizens in the Southside neighborhoods in Chicago, Illinois. This film also had a central focus within the African American community. The neighborhood is a war zone as two rival gangs, the Spartans and the Trojans are at odds and fighting for territory and respect. The Black community suffers as innocent bystanders die in the crossfire. However, the code of silence within the Black community is challenged by Irene when her daughter is gunned down in the streets.

Barbershop 2: Back in Business (2004) and *ATL* (2006) both include plots centered around community and class. In the second installment to *Barbershop*, gentrification of a neighborhood in the Southside of Chicago, threatens to close down the barbershop that has been in Calvin’s family for generations. *ATL* (2006) explores a tale of two cities through Rashad and NuNu’s relationship. Rashad is an orphan who was raised by his single uncle. He is rough around the edges, but has a good heart. NuNu is a “ghetto fabulous” chick that was really comes from a rich family and goes to private school. The perceptions and reality of different classes within the African American community are addressed when Rashad finds out NuNu has been lying to him. In a heated scene after he

finds out the truth, he snatches off the chain he gave her and insists that since she's rich and used to the finer things in life, she must've had a good laugh about it.

Putting the African American Community at the center of the film is pivotal in Black Films. Black Films may do so in various ways for various reasons. However, the outcome is almost always an Afrocentric narrative giving context to the diversity of the African American experience and including Black cultural practices. The collaboration of Black writers, directors, and/or producers often make this Afrocentric narrative possible. Sixty-eight percent (68%) of films had a central focus on the African American community, were also thought of as being made with us (African Americans) in mind, Black in content and tone, and with an all or primarily Black cast.

Black Collaborators

Ninety percent (90%) of the films evaluated were written, directed, or produced with at least one Black person in collaboration with non-Blacks. The remaining ten percent (10%) of films analyzed were written, directed, and produced by Black people and people of African ancestry living in the United States.

It was found that movies that featured collaboration between Black writers, and directors were very likely to include a central focus on Black life and community, and in turn, be considered to be a Black Film. This was almost always the case when the director of a film is also the writer or co-writer like in the case of films such as: *Love & Basketball* (2002), *Two Can Play That Game* (2001), *Why Did I Get Married* (2007), *First Sunday* (2008), *The Best Man Holiday* (2013), *Dear White People* (2014), *Dope* (2015), and *Chi-Raq* (2015). Two exceptions to this statement were *White Chicks* (2004) and *Akeelah and the Bee* (2006). Though Keenen Ivory Wayans directed and co-wrote

White Chicks, the film was void of any connection to Black life which may be, in part, due to the fact that the whole premise of the movie is to make fun of White girls. *Akeelah and the Bee* is an exception for a different reason. Non-Black director and writer Doug Atchison succeeds in addressing the Black community and sheds light on the problems African Americans face in American society.

Additional to the likelihood of a film featuring collaboration between Black writers and directors being very likely to be considered Black Films, films written, directed, and produced by Blacks are most likely to be considered Black Films. Almost twenty percent of films were written, directed, and produced by the same (Black) person (whether in conjunction with non-black producers or not). These films were *Two Can Play that Game* (2001), *Why Did I Get Married* (2007), *First Sunday* (2008), *The Best Man Holiday* (2013), *Dear White People* (2014), and *Chi-Raq* (2015) and were all considered Black Films.

Cultural Identity: Iverem's Mind, Content, and Tone

Collaboration from Black writers, directors, and producers proves to be an important factor in establishing Black Film. More than their role and specific job in the filmmaking process, the cultural identity of the Black collaborators, especially writers, is often infused in the film narrative. Whether done voluntarily or involuntarily, the firsthand experiences of Black collaborators often explore issues faced by African Americans. By doing this, Black Film collaborators continue to achieve the original intent of Black Film to challenge the dominant beliefs and perceptions of Blacks by offering a more holistic panorama view of Black life that displays the complexities of being Black in America.

Issues within Black communities such as crime, violence, police brutality, etcetera are addressed in Black Films. However, instead of just showing scenes depicting these issues, and perpetuating stereotypes, like mainstream films, Black Film offers an essential background component to provide context to display a more accurate depiction of the realities of these situations. *Paid in Full* (2002) is an example of this practice. Instead of simply painting a picture of Ace as another drug dealer in Harlem, flashbacks are used to give his backstory. By holistically depicting the circumstances that led Ace to start selling drugs, the viewer notes that he's not just another thug. This film also explores the difference in the mentality or mind set through Ace and Mitch's relationship.

Black Films capture the essence and complexities of Black romantic relationships. This is often depicted through the romance movies featuring Black actors. Also, Black Films recount the experiences of Blacks in career and education not the stereotypes of coons, mammies, brutes, etcetera. The hardships and obstacles African Americans endure just existing in American society are also featured in these films. These films are Black films not for the singular explanation of who star in the production, or because of who wrote, directed, and produced them. These films are Black Films because they tell stories of the Black experiences and include multifaceted images and views of Black Life as well as a more holistic perspective.

Iverem (2007) notes two key elements of Black Film that are linked to Black Culture. She explains films, "made with us in mind," don't just include African Americans, they are written directly for them. The "in mind" portion of the phrase could mean a few things. These films are made with African American characters, culture, narratives, issues, and audience in mind. Iverem (2007) also explains her definition of

Black in tone and content encompasses “Films noting our stories, experiences, joys, pains, our cultural intricacies, lingo, and practices.”

Casting, Black Stars, and Other People’s Movies (OPM)

For a film to be “made with us in mind, the roles of African Americans must be essential to the film. This was not the case in non-Black Films. The films that did not fit Reid (1993) and Iverem’s (2007) definitions of Black Film could have had the African American community as the focus of the film and been a collaborative effort with contributions from Black writers, directors, or producers. However, these films embody no connection to authentic representation of Black culture and rarely feature more than a few Black actors. Instead, these films simply feature Black actors in starring roles.

Iverem’s (2007) inclusion of the role of casting is important. Films that are composed of an all or primarily Black cast are most likely to be Black Films. Films that do not feature an all or primarily Black cast are more likely to be considered non-Black Films, Black Star Films, and Other People’s Movies. Likewise, these films lack diversity and often feature a primarily white cast. The role of Black characters is trivialized and their exposure in the film is minimized. These productions are void of Black cultural cues, jokes, and practices. The Black character is removed from a physical African American community (and often African Americans in general) and catapulted into a white narrative that intentionally fails to acknowledge and/or recognize his or her difference in order to perpetuate a “post-racial” identity. Essentially, if the Black stars in these non-Black films are removed or replaced by non-African American actors and actresses, the movie would have little variation because cultural identity has been stripped from Black characters.

This was the case in *Hancock* (2008), a film about a superhero who happens to be the last of his kind on Earth. The main character, John Hancock, is a Black superhero; however, his race is not acknowledged in the film. The movie's plot centers around Hancock overall identity and him being "different" and how that causes him to be marginalized within society. In the portrayal of his differences, his strength, powers, and immortality are noted, but not his race. With the exception of a few Black characters in minor roles, Will Smith is the only major Black actor in the film. Being so, he could have easily been replaced by a white actor and the film would continue with few adaptations because his cultural identity is nonexistent.

Similar to how Black actors can be replaced with white actors in non-Black films, the reverse is also true. White actors can just as easily be substituted for Black actors. This is the case in two of the non-Black films that were analyzed. *Death at a Funeral* (2010) and *About Last Night* (2014) both recent films star Black main characters. However, both films are also remakes of films by the same names which originally starred white characters.

The fluency of the reversibility of casting in non-Black films is critical. As a result, the actors casted in these films typically fit Iverem's (2007) criterion of Black Star films. The Black Star films simply feature a Black actor or actresses, but are void of Black cultural content. The common link between Reid (1993) and Iverem's (2007) definitions of Black film is the presence of Black cultural practices. Inherently, Black Films contribute cultural capital to the filmmaking process.

Cultural Capital

The Sixty-six percent of films that this research found to be Black Films satisfied all of the following criteria: Full length feature film, focused on the African American Community, written, directed, and/or produced by collaboration of Blacks with non-Black, made with us in mind, Black in content and tone, and featured an all or primarily Black cast.

Reid's (1993) requirement of Black Films to have a center focus on the African American community is synonymous with Iverem's (2007) requirements that these films be made with Blacks in mind and be Black in content and tone. Both of these requirements are linked to the African American cultural identity. The inclusion of cultural identity in Black Films gives agency to a minority group that once been silenced and misrepresented through films. The experiences of African Americans are legitimized through Black Film which gives them the space and platform to offer a more holistic view of their lives.

The remaining thirty-four percent of the non-Black Films are: full length feature films, rarely included a focus in the African American community, are written, directed, or produced in collaboration between Blacks and non-Blacks. Non-Black films feature Black stars and essentially are considered Other People's Movies.

Moreover, the impact of Black Film has been long lasting. Since the Black Film Industry emerged, Blacks have been able to recount their historical legacy on camera. Black history that had previously been misrepresented by lie or omission has since been documented through Black Films. Alternative accounts of historical events were

[re]presented to the American public. Black Films have redefined what it meant to be Black in America. Black Film gives voice to the grievances of its people.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Today, the African American Film Industry is a multi-billion-dollar industry. However, its contemporary success must have been unfathomable when it first made its debut over more than a century ago. The road to the Black Filmmaking Tradition gaining notoriety was not only tedious in respects to the time it took to create it, but also in the nature within which it developed which was amongst much turmoil and within the backdrop of negative race relations in American History (Cripps,1993; Guerrero,1993; Sneed,1988).

The intent of this research was to explore how the definition of Black Film changed over time. This research also evaluated how the Black Film Industry, many years later, continues to strive to more accurately represent African American experiences and diversity. Many scholars have contributed to the discipline of film criticism. Their research endeavors resulted in variations of the definition of the term Black Film. Their interpretations of what has and continues to constitute Black Film also differ. Among these possible defining characteristics of Black Film, previous literature cited the following criteria as being indicative of Black Film.

1. Black Film was constituted based on themes or content that focused on the Black experience.
2. Black Film was constituted in relation to who was involved in the film making process. This included, but was not limited to the writer, director, producers, production companies, financiers, and actors.

3. Black Film was constituted in reference to the target audience that would most likely watch the film.

These three criteria were used to evaluate how thirty-two films produced within the last sixteen years fit within those broad definitions of what a Black Film is and what it is supposed to do. Essentially, the findings of this research proves that the Black filmmaking process has always been and continues to be inextricably connected to the intent of adequately portraying the experiences of African Americans and African American culture.

Through this research, the following criteria is established for defining Black Film. Black Films are feature length fictional films that do all of the following: have a central focus within the African American Community, is written, directed, or produced with at least one Black person in collaboration with other Non-Blacks, or is written, directed, and produced by all Black people, is made with Blacks in mind and not just included, is Black in content and tone, consists of an all-Black or a primarily Black cast. Any film that failed to have a connection to the Black community through the content of the film and representation are just films that feature Black actors in starring roles.

Black Films capture the essence of the lives of African Americans holistically. Characters within Black Films are thoroughly developed and viewed in various spaces including their home, neighborhood, job, etc. Their roles as a member of a family and broader community are explored. Issues commonly faced in the Black community are addressed. Black culture is explicitly portrayed in the film. The world is experienced from their African American point of view.

In doing all these things, the Black Film Industry has obtained the goal it originally set out to achieve, challenging the dominant misrepresentation of Blacks in films. Through creating and disseminating images that adequately project the plight of African Americans, the Black Film Industry has been able to combat the pejorative images that were commonly used to depict them in mainstream films. These denigrating images that were commonly projected in mainstream films were perpetuated through the use of stereotypes.

The underlying reasoning for the proliferation of stereotypes in Hollywood productions was the fact that there had not been a space contracted in which Black actors could display a range of their talent. In the acting profession there were limited roles for actors that would adequately reflect their lifestyles and promote positive images to counter negative depictions. In respects to the profession, the inclusion of African Americans in Hollywood films were limiting in the way in which they were being depicted. More commonly, their presence was reflective of a dependent white lead character.

For instance, the white character was expected to be of a certain social, economic status, and moral piety. This character was always constructed as an intelligent character, business like, and serious. However, the black side-kick character's main role was to provide comic relief. However, this comical relief was short-lived and also meant that in order to achieve this goal also meant reinforcing ideologies of the racial superiority of the white character at the expense of exacerbating the inferiority of the African Americans.

Stereotyped images of Blacks, though once socially acceptable and overt, have become more subliminal and covert. Additionally, the old stereotypes that became

popular in the minstrel shows and early films have evolved. New stereotypes have been created and are subtly placed as identifying characteristics in mainstream film productions. The films from the case study that were found not to satisfy the criteria for Black Film present a few examples.

In *How High*, Silas and Jamal are two buffoon like characters similar to the coon stereotype. Despite being accepted into an Ivy League school, the two potheads display no respect or value for getting an education. Silas only wants to use his education to learn how to grow weed. Jamal's only interest in education centers around his probation situation. Also, in *White Chicks*, the film capitalizes on the stereotype of the Black brute that lusts after white flesh. Latrelle, the big burly football star incessantly pursues one of the Wilson sisters. When he finds out that he had been duped and Marcus was really posing as her, he was more upset that the woman wasn't white than the fact that it wasn't a woman at all.

Character and plot development play a major role in combating stereotyped images of Blacks. Mainstream films purposely fail to fully develop Black characters and often relegate them to a specific role through typecasting. However, the Black Film Industry sought to redirect these one dimensional gazes upon Blacks as spectacles for white audiences by eliminating stereotypical images.

In addition to challenging stereotypes, Black Films created a visibility for African Americans through allowing them to be perceived through a different lens than they are portrayed in mainstream films. This visibility also created opportunities for African American actors. As a result of Black Film, no longer are Black actors stereotyped,

relegated to the background, included in the subplot, or silenced as they are in mainstream films. Black Film gives agency through the perspectives that are included.

For the aforementioned reasons, Black Filmmaking is valuable, still relevant, and very much necessary. In lieu of the recent Oscar Nominees, Jada Pinkett-Smith notes why it is still essential for separate film endeavors that acknowledge Blacks in ways they see fit which are just as good as the mainstream productions. Black Films cater to Eddie Murphy's call for Black actors to be recognized by the Motion Picture Industry. Additionally, as Rock notes Hollywood's "different type of racism," Black Film continues to present a counter-narrative that challenge this institutional racism. Furthermore, Black Film creates opportunities for Black actors to play diverse roles and demonstrate range in their profession. Black Film also creates opportunities for Black stories that are often excluded, adapted, or marginalized to be presented on screen unabridged

Through Black Film, African Americans become the controllers inside of the tower in the Foucault paradigm. They control the narrative and put out the gaze (vision) they want others to see. This gaze reflects holistic Black cultural experiences. This gaze challenges other films that perpetuate cultural hegemony. This gaze forces others to adapt their thinking-reshaping the thoughts, actions, and practices of those who produce mainstream films that show one dimensional views of Black life. This gaze values Black lives, experiences, and the African American plight. This gaze, shifts the narrative and challenges cultural hegemony of the white ruling classes in the United States.

Foucault's gaze created a psychological imprisonment for those who were subjected to it in the plague scenario. These people were judged by abstract notions put in

place by the district guards. Much like those subjected to the gaze in the plague scenario, Blacks were psychologically imprisoned by the gaze that was popularized in mainstream filmmaking which portrayed them as stereotypical spectacles. The proliferation of stereotypical images portraying Blacks on screen was normalized through the mainstream film industry and became commonly accepted in society amongst those who viewed the films. Blacks were depicted as abnormal and as a result, they were treated as such in society. Black Film challenged the attempt by mainstream filmmakers to promote cultural hegemony which relegated white American society as the dominant society and declared Blacks were inferior to whites (Guerrero, 1993). To further perpetuate and popularize this belief, mainstream filmmakers always put Blacks in subservient positions to whites (Bogle, 2005; Guerrero, 1993) and alienated them in the background of the films as well as society. Essentially, Blacks were “seen,” physically in mainstream films, but still “unseen” because their roles in the productions were minimal and one dimensional.

Foucault’s seen and unseen binary is also pertinent in evaluating the psychoanalytic impact the Panopticon had on the creation and demonstration of power and control within the Black Film Industry. Blacks were initially included in minstrel show and films as spectacles to perform for and appease the whims and entertainment styles of white audiences. The Black Film Industry breaks the binary of being a spectacle for white audiences, as Black actors/characters play a central role in these films instead of being forced into a background narrative through their subservience to whites. Additionally, through Black Films, Blacks are seen not just physically, or in respects to their subservience to whites, but they are also seen through a more holistic gaze.

In general, Black Film provides not only a different type of gaze, but it also presents a different lens through which Blacks should be viewed. This lens does not subjugate Blacks like mainstream films, but instead give them agency. Black Film allows Blacks to be the main subject of a film and not just treated as an object being acted upon throughout the film which is very much the case in most stereotypical mainstream film productions.

Behind the scenes of what is “seen” and “unseen” within film productions, the funding aspect is often “unseen,” however, its role is pivotal to the overall gaze that is projected as it relates to the creation and distribution of Black Films. As scholars have notes, funding Black Films is important and where there is a lack in the ability to finance Black filmmaking productions, control is lost, creativity is stolen, and agency is muted (Iverem, 2007). Unity amongst Black collaborators is essential since there is an aversion to finance or greenlight Black Films from Hollywood financiers due to the meager earning these films average in comparison with other Hollywood Films. In light of this apprehension, those who have established a name for themselves within the industry as writers, directors, and producers have sought to eliminate the loss of control through impacting what narratives actually get to be “seen,” literally.

This often the case when Black collaborators have created more power for themselves through establishing their own film or entertainment companies within the larger film industry and help employ others who are involved in the Black filmmaking process. For example, Spike Lee’ 40 Acres and a Mule Film company produced Gina Prince- Bythewood’s *Love and Basketball* (2000). Recently, Actors Viola Davis and Kerry Washington started their own production companies. As Black collaborators gain

higher status and positions to help others perpetuate Black Film narratives, the lion no longer allows the hunter to tell a story that glorifies himself. Not only does the lion tell its own story, it also challenges the validity of the narrative that was previously written by the hunter.

Issues Arising

A couple issues arose from this study. In researching Black Film, the notion of Black Film being a genre is suggested. The Internet Movie Database provided the genre of all films that were used for the purpose of this research. The films that this research found to be fitting of the Black Film title fell within the following genres, as defined by the Internet Movie Database: Action, Adventure, Comedy, Crime, Drama, Fantasy, Romance, Sport, and Thriller. Action, Comedy, Crime, and Drama were commonly linked to Black Films.

Seventy-five percent (75%) of the films that were analyzed were tagged as Comedies. This can be explained, in part, due to the fact that three out of the eight film lists were restricted to recognizing Black Comedies. However, this could also be due to the fact that most films, even from other genres include comical content. These jokes or references often link to Black cultural practices.

Although all of the Black Films were noted as other genres, I would argue that Black Film can be considered to be its own genre for the following reason. Black Film is not just the Black version of a film from any other genre. As it was previously mentioned, Black Films are heavily infused with Black cultural aspects. Black Film includes its own aesthetics through how it is written, filmed, and distributed. By the examples of *Death at*

a Funeral (2010) and *About Last Night* (2014), simply trying remake the Black version of a film does not go over well in general and certainly doesn't automatically create a Black Film version of that genre.

Another issue that came up is the exclusion of biographically based films. Specifically, for research purposes, these film-types were omitted to satisfy Reid's (1993) definition of Black Films being fictional in content. However, this issue does deserve dialogue. Perhaps the reason biographies were eliminated by Reid (1993) was due to the fact that these types of films often offer little room for creativity for writers because they are based on historical events and must be presented as such. However, by Iverem's (2007) standards, these film-types are also inclusive of Black Films.

Observations

A couple of observations that that came from the study included the following: correlations among writers, directors, and producers from all of the films that were initially labeled as Black Films, in depth participation from Black music, sports, and actors, and a lack of female inclusion in the making of Black Films.

Who is involved in the production of Black Films as well as what was portrayed in these films played a significant role in this research. In addition to this criterion, the following observations were noted. Films that were noted as Black Films commonly had similar collaboration amongst the writers, directors, producers, and production companies; these correlations are listed on pages 127-131 in the appendix. All of my observations are centered around who gets to be included in the Black filmmaking process and who can make authentic Black Films. As noted in the finding chapter,

collaboration amongst Blacks and non-Blacks in the filmmaking process usually results in a Black Film. Among that collaboration, the role of the writer is essential. Without the writer, no product is created to be directed, or produced. Furthermore, the content informs the others roles of filmmaking such as how scene should be directed or the angle from which it must be shot through message, feeling, or tone they are trying to convey. Black writers are essential to the Black filmmaking process.

Another observation regarding who is involved in the making of Black Films included a proliferation in heavy involvement from Black celebrities from the music, music video, and sports industries. For example, rapper Jay Z and Roc-a-fella Records producer, Damon Dash helped to produce *Paid in Full* (2001), *State Property* (2002), and *State Property 2* (2005). Musicians, Dallas Austin and T- Boz were noted as producers for *ATL* (2006). Dallas Austin also produced *Drumline* (2002). Chris Robinson directed *ATL* (2006) and Benny Boom directed *Next Day Air* (2009); both transitioned from directing music videos to film. Basketball star, Magic Johnson also collaborated as a producer on the *Brown Sugar* (2002) and *Hair Show* (2004) projects. Tyler Perry and David E. Talbert were both renowned playwrights in the Black community. Since his fame onstage, Tyler Perry has written and directed numerous films and television shows. David E. Talbert wrote and directed *First Sunday* (2008).

Music stars and athletes were not the only celebrities experimenting in the film industry. The actors from the industry were also heavily involved in a lot of the projects they starred in. A lot of actors such as Ice Cube, Chris Rock, Eddie Murphy, Martin Lawrence, Will Smith, Kennen, Marlon, and Shawn Wayans have started to get involved in the roles of writer, director, and producer. Some actors have also started their own

production companies such as: Ice Cube's Cube Vision, Martin Lawrence's Runteldat Entertainment, the Wayans clan's Wayans Bros Entertainment, and Will Smith's Overbrook Entertainment, following the example of Spike Lee who created 40 Acres & a Mule Filmworks. These advances have helped to greenlight Black Film projects that might have otherwise never seen the light of day.

While many Black artists have contributed to the development of Black Film over the last two decades, very few Black women have been involved, consequently, the voices and experiences of Black women have been silenced (Iverem, 2007). Of the sixty-nine Black Films released (2000-2015) only four films were directed by women. Gina Prince Bythewood wrote and directed *Love & Basketball* (2000). Troy Byer/ Beyer wrote and directed *Love Don't Cost a Thing* (2003), Cherly Dunye directed *My Baby's Daddy* (2004). Ava DuVernay directed *Selma* (2015). Additionally, few women from the films evaluated were involved in the writing process of these films. Tina Gordon Chism co-wrote *ATL* (2006) and *Drumline* (2002). She also wrote and directed *Peebles* (2013). Elizabeth Hunter co-wrote *The Fighting Temptations* (2003) and *Beauty Shop* (2005). Further research may address these observations or specific issues within the Black community and how they have been depicted through films.

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APPENDIX

Case Study Film Descriptions and Box Office Revenue			
Release Date	Movie Title	Descriptions	Box Office
January 12,2000	Next Friday	Takes up where "Friday" left off with the action switching from South Central L.A. to suburbia.	\$57,328,603
April 21,2000	Love and Basketball	Two college basketball players have known each other since childhood. Their love of basketball sometimes conflicts with their love for each other.	\$27,459,615
June 2,2000	Big Momma's House	Disguised as an old lady, an FBI agent (Lawrence) attempts to protect a beautiful federal witness and her son.	\$117,559,438
July 28,2000	Nutty Professor 2: The Klumps	A University Professor (Jackson) becomes the love interest of Klump (Murphy).	\$123,309,890
September 29,2000	Remember the Titans	In 1971 high school football was everything to the people of Alexandria, Virginia. The very foundation of football's great tradition was put to the test when forced to integrate.	\$115,654,751
October 6,2000	Bamboozled	An Ivy-League educated writer (Wayans) joins a comedy show at a major network.	\$2,274,979
March 23,2001	The Brothers	Traces the hilarious journey of four African-American men as they take on love, sex, friendship and two of life's most terrifying prospects -- honesty and commitment.	\$27,457,409
August 3,2001	Rush Hour 2	Detective James Carter (Tucker) once again teams up with Detective Lee (Chan) to trap one of the world's most feared gangsters.	\$226,164,286

September 7,2001	Two Can Play that Game	In this comedic battle of the sexes, Shante (Fox) is about to discover that not only are there no rules -- she's not the only one playing.	\$22,235,901
November 14,2001	The Wash	In this comedy set against the backdrop of a busy carwash, Dr. Dre and Snoop star as a pair of mismatched roommates.	\$10,097,538
November 21,2001	Black Knight	After falling into Medieval park's fetid moat, Jamal crawls out into fourteenth century England. The Middle Ages will never be the same.	\$33,426,971
December 21,2001	How High	Rap stars Redman and Method Man star as Jamal and Silas, two regular guys who smoke something magical, ace their college entrance exams and wind up at Harvard.	\$31,178,740
January 18,2002	State Property	Frustrated with being broke, "Beans" (Sigel) decides that the only way to grasp the "American Dream" is to take it.	\$2,106,838
March 8,2002	All About the Benjamins	A Miami bounty hunter (Ice Cube) and the fast-talking bail jumper (Epps) he is pursuing end up in the middle of a major diamond heist.	\$25,916,319
May 18,2002	City of God	Welcome to the world's most notorious slum: Rio de Janeiro's 'City of God.' A place where combat photographers fear to tread, where Police rarely go, and residents are lucky if they live to the age of 20.	\$7,564,459
May 31,2002	Undercover Brother	A live-action comedy based on Urban Media's popular website series.	\$39,089,928

July 3,2002	Like Mike	Hip Hop star Lil Bow Wow stars as Calvin, a fourteen-year-old with the dream of becoming a famous basketball star. He laces up a mysterious pair of old sneakers inscribed with the faded initials "MJ," and he makes the leap to NBA superstardom.	\$51,432,760
July 3,2002	Men in Black II	This sequel to the 1997 hit, which was based upon a Marvel Comics comic book, features Agents J and K in battles with alien rabble-rousers.	\$190,418,803
September 13,2002	Barbershop	A comedy about a day in the life of a barbershop on the south side of Chicago.	\$75,782,105
October 11,2002	Brown Sugar	Dre and Sidney can attribute their friendship and the launch of their careers to a single childhood moment - the day they discovered hip-hop on a New York street corner. As they lay down the tracks toward their futures, hip-hop isn't the only thing that keeps them coming back to that moment on the corner.	\$27,363,891
October 25,2002	Paid in Full	Amidst the 1980s drug scene in Harlem, a young native (Harris) builds an illegal empire only to have a crisis of conscience.	\$3,090,862
November 22,2002	Friday After Next	In this third installment in the hit "Friday" film series, Craig (Ice Cube) and Day-Day (Epps) are back in the old neighborhood and ready for Christmas.	\$33,253,609
December 13,2002	Drumline	A unique look at the world and culture of show-style marching bands at America's black universities.	\$56,399,184
January 17,2003	National Security	Two L.A.P.D. rejects end up partnered as security guards and uncover a sophisticated smuggling operation.	\$36,381,186

March 28,2003	Head of State	Mays Gilliam is a Washington, D.C. neighborhood Alderman who is plucked from obscurity and thrust into the limelight as his party's nominee -- for President of the United States.	\$38,125,247
April 18,2003	Malibu's Most Wanted	Malibu's most wanted rapper, Brad "B-Rad" Gluckman, maintains a hip-hop lifestyle that is seriously hindering his father's bid for governor.	\$34,432,201
July 18,2003	Bad Boys II	Will Smith and Martin Lawrence are back -- and oh so bad -- on the streets of Miami in Bad Boys II, reuniting them with producer Jerry Bruckheimer and director Michael Bay.	\$138,608,444
September 19,2003	The Fighting Temptations	A New York advertising executive (Gooding) must return to his Georgia hometown when his aunt dies. He soon finds that he must help the local gospel choir with a competition in order to collect his inheritance.	\$30,250,745
December 12,2003	Love Don't Cost a Thing	In an attempt to improve his reputation in school, an unpopular but super-intelligent teenage boy (Cannon), hires a cheerleader (Milian) to pose as his girlfriend.	\$21,924,226
January 9,2004	My Baby's Daddy	After a lifetime or hard partying, three bachelor buddies from the hood are in for a rude awakening when their respective girlfriends all get pregnant at the same time.	\$17,669,317
February 6,2004	Barbershop 2: Back in Business	The crew is back in Barbershop 2. The world changes, but some things never go out of style -- you can still say anything you want at the barbershop.	\$65,111,277

April 7,2004	Johnson Family Vacation	Nate Johnson (Cedric the Entertainer) sets out on a cross-country trek from California to Missouri, with three unruly kids and one unsatisfied wife in tow, in order to attend the Johnson clan's annual reunion/grudge match.	\$31, 203,964
May 14,2004	Breakin' All the Rules	In this comedy of errors, a man (Foxx), who is unceremoniously dumped by his fiancée pens a "how to" book on breaking up and becomes a best-selling author on the subject.	\$12,264,319
May 28,2004	Soul Plane	After a humiliating and horrific experience on a commercial flight, Nashawn Wade sues and is awarded a \$100 million settlement. Determined to make good with his newfound wealth he decides to create the airline of his dreams.	\$14,190,750
June 23,2004	White Chicks	Two African-American men trying to pass themselves off as very, very, very white women when they go undercover as Hamptons' socialites Tiffany and Brittany Wilson.	\$70,831,760
October 6,2004	Taxi	New York's fastest cabbie uses her skills behind the wheel of her souped-up car to help an overeager undercover cop pursue a gang of female bank robbers.	\$36,611,066
October 15,2004	Hair Show	Peaches an award-winning hair stylist from Baltimore, and her estranged sister Angela (Smith) get reacquainted when Peaches visits her sister in Beverly Hills.	\$305, 281

October 29,2004	Ray	Ray is the never-before-told, musical biographical drama of American legend Ray Charles. Featuring Jamie Foxx in the central role, Ray follows the inspiring story of a one-of-a-kind genius.	\$75,331,600
25-Dec-04	Fat Albert	As Fat Albert makes the jump to the big screen, its much beloved characters face challenges they couldn't have dreamed of as cartoon figures.	\$48,116,322
January 21,2005	Are We There Yet?	In this family comedy, Nick a smooth operator, is trying to land a date with a young, attractive divorcee, Suzanne (Long). He gallantly offers to drive her children from Portland, Oregon to Vancouver to be reunited with their mom.	\$82,674,398
February 4,2005	Hotel Rwanda	Based on true events from the civil war in Rwanda, this film profiles Paul Rusesabagina (Cheadle), the manager of a luxury hotel who opened his establishment to Tutsi refugees despite the danger to himself and his family.	\$23,530,892
February 11,2005	Hitch	In this sophisticated romantic comedy, Alex "Hitch" Hitchens (Smith) is a legendary - and deliberately anonymous - New York City "date doctor" who, for a fee, has helped countless men woo the women of their dreams. Hitch finally meets his match in the person of the gorgeous, whip-smart Sara (Mendes), a gossip columnist who is on to him.	\$179,495,555
March 25,2005	Guess Who	Kevin Rodney Sullivan directs this decidedly modern take on an overprotective, but loving, father confronted with the unexpected arrival of his prospective son-in-law.	\$68,915,888

March 30,2005	Beauty Shop	When Gina gets fed up with her egotistical boss and buys a rundown salon, she inherits a motley group of headstrong stylists, a colorful clientele, and a sexy electrician.	\$36,351,350
April 13,2005	State Property 2	Three notorious gangsters battle for supremacy in the City of Brotherly Love.	\$1,691,706
July 22,2005	Hustle & Flow	The redemptive story of a streetwise Memphis hustler trying to find his voice and realize his long-buried dreams.	\$22,202,809
August 12,2005	Four Brothers	After their adoptive mother is murdered during a grocery store holdup, the Mercer brothers reunite to take the matter of her death into their own hands	\$75,494,381
November 8,2005	Get Rich or Die Tryin'	This hard-hitting drama stars 50 Cent as an orphaned street kid who makes his mark in the drug trade but finally dares to leave the violence behind and become the rap artist he was meant to be.	\$30,985,352
January 27,2006	Big Momma's House 2	Martin Lawrence is back as the boldest, biggest and baddest Momma ever. This time, Lawrence transforms himself into Big Momma to avert a national security disaster.	\$70,165,972
March 31,2006	ATL	ATL tells the story of a close knit group of working-class teens in Atlanta whose lives revolve around hip-hop music and roller skating.	\$21,170,563

28-Apr-06	Akeelah and the Bee	An inspirational drama, Akeelah and the Bee is the story of Akeelah Anderson (Palmer), a precocious eleven-year old girl from south Los Angeles with a gift for words. Akeelah's aptitude earns her an opportunity to compete for a spot in the Scripps National Spelling Bee.	\$18,848, 430
June 23,2006	Waist Deep	In the urban action thriller Waist Deep, director Vondie Curtis Hall takes audiences on a ride through contemporary Los Angeles -- where a sexy 21st-century Bonnie and Clyde hit the streets.	\$21,344,312
July 14,2006	Littleman	Darryl Edwards is so eager to become a father that he mistakes a short, baby-faced thief (on the lam for an abandoned toddler. He and his wife take the "baby" into their home while the thief's partner tries to help him recover a stolen diamond.	\$58,645,052
December 15,2006	The Pursuit of Happyness	Chris Gardner (Smith) is a bright and talented, but marginally employed salesman. Struggling to make ends meet, Gardner finds himself and his five-year-old son evicted from their San Francisco apartment with nowhere to go.	\$163,566,459
February 9,2007	Norbit	Norbit has never had it easy. Things get worse when he's forced into marriage by the mean, junk food-chugging queen, Rasputia.	\$\$95,673, 607
August 10,2007	Rush Hour 3	LAPD Detective James Carter and Chinese Chief Inspector Lee respectively must travel to Paris to battle a wing of the Chinese organized crime family, the Triads.	\$140,125,968

October 12,2007	Why Did I Get Married?	Why Did I Get Married? is an intimate story about the difficulty of maintaining a solid love relationship in modern times. Over the course of the weekend, husbands and wives take a hard look at their lives and wrestle with issues of commitment, betrayal, and forgiveness as they seek a way forward.	\$55,204,525
January 11,2008	First Sunday	In this hilarious comedy, Durell and LeeJohn are best friends and bumbling petty criminals that come up with a desperate scheme to rob their neighborhood church.	\$37,931,869
January 16,2009	Brooklyn's Finest	When NYPD's Operation Clean Up targets the notoriously drug-ridden BK housing project, three officers find themselves swept away by the violence and corruption of Brooklyn's gritty 65th Precinct and its most treacherous criminals.	\$27,163,593
May 8,2009	Next Day Air	Life isn't going smoothly for Leo Jackson. But Leo isn't one to let a few bad breaks ruin his day—as long as he's got plenty of weed to take his mind off his troubles.	\$10,027,047
11-Sep-09	I Can Do Bad All by Myself	When Madea, America's favorite pistol-packing grandma, catches sixteen-year-old Jennifer and her two younger brothers looting her home, she decides to take matters into her own hands.	\$51,733,921

October 16,2009	Black Dynamite	When "The Man" murders his brother, pumps heroin into local orphanages, and floods the ghetto with adulterated malt liquor, Black Dynamite is the one hero willing to fight all the way from the blood-soaked city streets to the hallowed halls of the Honky House.	\$242,578
March 28,2010	Our Family Wedding	"Our marriage, their wedding." It's lesson number one for any newly engaged couple, and Lucia and Marcus are no exception.	\$20,255,281
April 16,2010	Death at a Funeral	Death at a Funeral is a hilarious day in the life of an American family come together to put a beloved husband and father to rest.	\$42,739,347
August 20,2010	Lottery Ticket	Kevin Carson is a young man living in the projects who has to survive a three-day weekend after his opportunistic neighbors find out he's holding a winning lottery ticket worth \$370 million.	\$24,719,879
February 18,2011	Big Momma's: Like Father, Like Son	Big Momma is back - and this time he has big backup: his teenage stepson Trent.	\$37,915,414
November 15,2013	The Best Man Holiday	When college friends reunite after 15 years over the Christmas holidays, they will discover just how easy it is for long-forgotten rivalries and romances to be reignited.	\$70,525,195

January 9,2015	Selma	In 1965, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (David Oyelowo) leads a dangerous campaign to secure equal voting rights in the face of violent opposition. The march from Selma to Montgomery culminates in President Johnson (Tom Wilkinson) signing the Voting Rights Act of 1965, one of the most significant victories for the civil rights movement	\$52,076,908
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Repeated Film Chart

Release Date	Movie Title	Genre(s)	Release Type
January 12, 2000	Next Friday	Comedy	Box Office
January 25, 2000	Baller Blockin'	Action, Crime	Straight to Video
April 21, 2000	Love & Basketball	Drama, Romance, Sport	Box Office
June 2, 2000	Big Momma's House	Action, Comedy, Crime	Box Office
July 28, 2000	Nutty Professor II: The Klumps	Comedy, Romance, Sci-fi	Box Office
September 29, 2000	Remember the Titans	Biography, Drama, Sport	Box Office
October 20, 2000	Bamboozled	Comedy, Drama, Music	Box Office
December 9, 2000	Disappearing Acts	Drama, Romance	TV Movie
March 23, 2001	The Brothers	Comedy, Drama	Box Office
August 3, 2001	Rush Hour 2	Action, Comedy, Crime	Box Office
September 7, 2001	Two Can Play that Game	Comedy, Romance	Box Office
November 14, 2001	The Wash	Comedy	Box Office
November 21, 2001	Black Knight	Action, Comedy, Fantasy	Box Office
December 21, 2001	How High	Comedy, Fantasy	Box Office
January 18, 2002	State Property	Drama, Crime, Action	Straight to Video
March 8, 2002	All About the Benjamins	Action, Comedy, Crime	Box Office
May 13, 2002	City of God	Crime, Drama	Film Festival
May 31, 2002	Undercover Brother	Action, Comedy	Box Office
June 1, 2002	Paper Soldiers	Action, Comedy, Crime	Straight to Video
July 3, 2002	Like Mike	Comedy, Family, Fantasy	Box Office
July 3, 2002	Men in Black II	Action, Adventure, Comedy	Box Office
September 13, 2002	Barbershop	Comedy, Drama	Box Office
October 11, 2002	Brown Sugar	Romance, Comedy, Drama	Box Office
October 25, 2002	Paid in Full	Drama, Action, Crime	Box Office
November 22, 2002	Friday After Next	Comedy, Drama	Box Office
December 13, 2002	Drumline	Comedy, Drama, Romance	Box Office
January 17, 2003	National Security	Action, Comedy, Crime	Box Office
March 28, 2003	Head of State	Comedy	Box Office
April 18, 2003	Malibu's Most Wanted	Comedy, Crime	Box Office
July 18, 2003	Bad Boys II	Action, Comedy, Crime	Box Office
September 19, 2003	The Fighting Temptations	Comedy, Drama, Music	Box Office
December 12, 2003	Love Don't Cost a Thing	Comedy, Romance, Drama	Box Office
January 9, 2004	My Baby's Daddy	Comedy	Box Office
February 4, 2004	Hotel Rwanda	Drama, History, War	Film Festival

Release Date	Movie Title	Genre(s)	Release Type
February 6, 2004	Barbershop 2: Back in Business	Comedy, Drama	Box Office
April 7, 2004	Johnson Family Vacation	Comedy	Box Office
May 14, 2004	Breakin' All the Rules	Comedy, Romance	Box Office
May 28, 2004	Soul Plane	Comedy	Box Office
June 23, 2004	White Chicks	Comedy, Crime	Box Office
October 6, 2004	Taxi	Action, Comedy, Crime	Box Office
October 15, 2004	Hair Show	Comedy, Romance	Box Office
October 29, 2004	Ray	Biography, Drama, Music	Box Office
December 25, 2004	Fat Albert	Comedy, Family, Fantasy	Box Office
January 21, 2005	Are We There Yet?	Adventure, Comedy, Family	Box Office
February 11, 2005	Hitch	Comedy, Romance	Box Office
March 25, 2005	Guess Who?	Comedy, Romance	Box Office
March 30, 2005	Beauty Shop	Comedy	Box Office
April 13, 2005	State Property 2	Musical, Action, Crime	Straight to Video
July 22, 2005	Hustle & Flow	Crime, Drama, Music	Box Office
August 12, 2005	Four Brothers	Action, Crime, Drama	Box Office
November 9, 2005	Get Rich or Die Tryin'	Biography, Crime, Drama	Box Office
January 27, 2006	Big Momma's House 2	Comedy, Crime	Box Office
March 23, 2006	Full Clip	Action, Thriller	Straight to Video
March 31, 2006	ATL	Comedy, Crime, Drama	Box Office
April 28, 2006	Akeelah and the Bee	Drama	Box Office
June 23, 2006	Waist Deep	Action, Crime, Drama	Box Office
July 4, 2006	Repos	Comedy	Straight to Video
July 14, 2006	Littleman	Comedy, Crime	Box Office
December 15, 2006	The Pursuit of Happyness	Biography, Drama	Box Office
February 9, 2007	Norbit	Comedy, Drama, Romance	Box Office
August 10, 2007	Rush Hour 3	Action, Comedy, Crime	Box Office
October 12, 2007	Why Did I Get Married?	Comedy, Drama	Box Office
January 11, 2008	First Sunday	Comedy, Crime, Drama	Box Office
January 16, 2009	Brooklyn's Finest	Crime, Drama, Thriller	Film Festival
May 8, 2009	Next Day Air	Action, Comedy, Crime	Straight to Video
September 11, 2009	I Can Do Bad All By Myself	Comedy, Drama	Box Office
October 16, 2009	Black Dynamite	Action, Comedy	Film Festival
March 12, 2010	Our Family Wedding	Comedy, Romance	Box Office
April 16, 2010	Death at a Funeral	Comedy	Box Office
August 20, 2010	Lottery Ticket	Comedy	Box Office
February 18, 2011	Big Momma: Like Father, Like Son	Action, Comedy, Crime	Box Office
July 6, 2011	The Hustle	Comedy	Straight to Video

Release Date	Movie Title	Genre(s)	Release Type
November 15, 2013	The Best Man Holiday	Comedy, Drama	Box Office
January 9, 2015	Selma	Biography, Drama, History	Box Office

CASE STUDY WRITER, DIRECTOR, AND PRODUCERS

Movie Title	Writer(s)	Director(s)	Producer(s)
Next Friday	Ice Cube, DJ Pooh	Steve Carr	Matt Alvarez, Douglas Curtis, Michael Gruber, Ice Cube, Matt Moore, Claire Rudnick-Polstein
Movie Title	Writer(s)	Director(s)	Producer(s)
Love and Basketball	Gina Prince Bythewood	Gina Prince Bythewood	Andrew Z. Davis, Cynthia Guidry, Sam Kitt, Spike Lee, Jay Stern
Big Momma's House	Don Rhymer, Darryl Quarles	Raja Gosnell	Peaches Davis, David T. Friendly, Michael Green, David Higgins, Jeff Kwatinetz, Martin Lawrence, Rodney Liber, Arnon Milchan, Aaron Ray
Nutty Professor 2: The Klumps	Jerry Lewis, Steve Dedekerk, Barry Blaustein, David Sheffield, Paul Weitz, Chris Weitz	Peter Segal	James D. Brubaker, Michael Ewing, Brian Grazer, Karen Kehela Sherwood, Arlene Kehela, Jerry Lewis, Eddie Murphy, Tom Shadyac, James Whitaker
Remember the Titans	Gregory Allen Howard	Boaz Yakin	Jerry Bruckheimer, Michael Flynn, Jennifer Krug, Chad Oman, Pat Sandston, Mike Stenson, Bringham Taylor
Bamboozled	Spike Lee	Spike Lee	Jon Kilik, Spike Lee, Kisha Imani Cameron
The Brothers	Gary Hardwick	Gary Hardwick	Paddy Cullen, Doug McHenry, Darin Scott

Rush Hour 2	Ross La Manna, Jeff Nathanson	Brett Ratner	Roger Birnbaum, Andrew Z. Davis, Michael De Luca, Leon Dudevoir, Toby Emmerich, James M. Frietag, Jonathan Glickman, Darryl Jones, Arthur M. Sarkissian, Jay Stern, Charles Wang
Two Can Play that Game	Mark Brown	Mark Brown	Mark Brown, Lana Campbell, Paddy Cullen, Robert N. Fried, Larr Kennar, Doug Mc Henry, Scott Wynne
The Wash	DJ Pooh	DJ Pooh	Phillip G. Atwell, Donna Chavous, Dr. Dre, Rick Freeman, Kip Konwiser, Tom Ortenberg, Michael Paseornek, DJ Pooh, Jeremiah Samuels, Snoop Dogg
Black Knight	Darryl Quarles, Peter Gaulke, Gerry Swallow	Gil Junger	Peaches Davis, Michael Green, Jeff Kwatinetz, Martin Lawrence, Arnon Milchan, Darryl Quarles, Aaron Ray, Paul Schiff
How High	Dustin Lee Abraham	Jesse Dylan	Pamela Abdy, Danny De Vito, James Ellis, Louis G Friedman, Shauna Garr, Michael Shamberg, Stacey Sher, Jonathan Weisgal
State Property	Abdul Malik- Abbott, Ernest "Tron" Anderson	Abdul Malik- Abbott	Phyllis Cedar, Damon Dash, Rob Khristov, Cha-Ka Pilgrim, Ron Rotholz
All About the Benjamins	Ronald Lang, Ice Cube	Kevin Bray	Matt Alvarez, Lamont Cain, Douglas Curtis, Toby Emmerich, Mike Epps, Ice Cube, Ronald Lang, Matt Moore, Ronald G. Muhammad, Claire Rudnick-Polstein

City of God	Paulo Lins, Braulio Mantovani	Fernando Meirelles, Katia Lund	Andrea Barata, Marc Beauchamos, Bel Bernlinck, Daniel Filho, Hank Levine, Vincent Marval, Mauricio Andrade Ramos, Donald Ranvaud, Juliette Renaud, Walter Salles, Elisa Tolomelli
Undercover Brother	John Ridley, Michael McCullers	Malcolm D. Lee	Bill Carraro, Brian Grazer, Mathew Hart, Michael Jenkinson, Damon Lee, Greg McKay, John Ridley, Dana Robin, Kim Roth
Like Mike	Michael Elliot, Jordan Moffet	John Schultz	Teresa Caldwell, Jermain Dupri, Garrett Grant, Peter Heller, Barry Josephson, Michael Maudlin, Adam Silver, Gregg Winik,
Men in Black II	Lowell Cunningham, Robert Gordon, Barry Fanaro	Barry Sonnenfeld	Marc Haimes, Stephanie Kemp, Laurie MacDonald, Walter F. Parkes, Graham Place, Steven Spielberg
Barbershop	Mark Brown, Don D. Scott, Marshall Todd	Tim Story	Matt Alvarez, Mark Brown, Thomas J. Busch, Larry Kennar, Robert Teitel, George Tillman Jr., Rocky Russell
Brown Sugar	Michael Elliot, Rick Famuyiwa	Rick Famuyiwa	Peter Heller, Trish Hofman, Magic Johnson
Paid in Full	Azie Faison Jr. Austin Phillips, Matthew Cirulnik, Thulani Davis	Charles Stone III	Jesse Berdinka, Damon Dash, Jay Z, Lisa Niedenthal, Cha-ka Pilgrim, Brett Ratner, Ron Rotholz
Friday After Next	Ice Cube, DJ Pooh	Marcus Raboy	Matt Alvarez, Douglas Curtis, Toby Emmerich, Ice Cube, Matt Moore, Ronn Riser Muhammad
Drumline	Shawn Schepps, Tina Gordon Chism	Charles Stone III	Dallas Austin, Timothy M. Bourne, Wendy Finerman, Jody Gerson, Greg Mooradian

National Security	Jay Scherick, David Ronn	Dennis Dugan	Moritz Borman, Peaches Davis, Sharon Dugan, Guy East, Andy Given, Michael Green, Jeff Kwatinetz, Martin Lawrence, Robert F. Newmyer, Susan E. Novick, Jeffrey Silver, Nigel Sinclair, Scott Strauss
Head of State	Chris Rock, Ali LeRoi	Chris Rock	Ali LeRoi, Chris Rock, Michael Rotenberg, Ezra Swerdlow
Malibu's Most Wanted	Fax Bahr, Adam Small, Jamie Kennedy, Nick Swardson	John Whitesell	Fax Bahr, Josh H. Etting, Russell Hollander, Bill Johnson, Mike Karz, Ilyse A. Reutlinger, Adam Small
Bad Boys II	George Gallo, Marianne Wibberley, Ron Shelton, Jerry Stahl	Michael Bay	Jerry Bruckheimer, Matthew Cohan, Don Ferrarone, Chad Oman, Pat Sandston, Mike Stenson, Barry Waldman
The Fighting Temptations	Elizabeth Hunter, Saladin K. Patterson	Jonathan Lynch	David Gale, Loretha C. Jones, Benny Medina, Jeff Pollack, Momita Sengupta, Van Toffler, Tierre Turner
Love Don't Cost a Thing	Michael Swerdlick, Troy Byer	Troy Byer (Beyer)	Reuben Cannon, Kira Davis, Alexander H. Gayner, Broderick Johnson, Andrew A. Kosove, Oren Koules, Nava Levin, Steven P. Wegner
My Baby's Daddy	Eddie Griffin, Damon "Coke" Daniels, Brent Goldberg, David Wagner	Cherly Dunye	Coke Daniels, Eddie Griffin, Karen Koch, David Lipson, Scott Nemes, Peter Safran, Happy Walters, Matt Weaver, Bob Weinstein
Barbershop 2: Back in Business	Mark Brown, Don D. Scott	Kevin Rodney Sullivan	Matt Alvarez, Mark Brown, Thomas J. Busch, Alex Gartner, Poppy Hanks, Ice Cube, Jay Roberts, Robert Teitel, George Tillman Jr.

Johnson Family Vacation	Todd R. Jones, Earl Richey Jones	Christopher Erskin	Cedric the Entertainer, Lawrence Grey, Paul Hall, Earl Richey Jones, Todd R. Jones, Wendy Park, Eric Rhone, Andre Sugerman
Breakin' All the Rules	Daniel Taplitz	Daniel Taplitz	Paddy Cullen, Kevin Halloran, Lisa Tornell
Soul Plane	Dwayne Adway, Chuck Wilson	Jessy Terrero	Paul Hall, Rick Johnson, David Rubin, Patrick Russo, Jessy Terrero, Bo Zenga
White Chicks	Kennen Ivory Wayans, Shawn Wayans, Marlon Wayans, Andrew McElfresh, Michael Anthony Snowden, Xavier Cook	Keenen Ivory Wayans	Rick Alvarez, Lee R. Mayes, Kennen Ivory Wayans, Marlon Wayans, Shawn Wayans
Taxi	Luc Besson, Robert Ben Garant, Thomas Lennon, Jim Kouf	Tim Story	Luc Besson, Steven Chasman, Ira Shuman, Robert Simonds, Aaron Wilder
Hair Show	Andrea Allen-Wiley, Sherri A. McGee, Devon Gregory	Leslie Small	Jeff Clanagan, Nikkole Denson-Randolph, Magic Johnson, Kimberly Ogletree, Leslie Small, Janis Woody
Ray	Taylor Hackford, James L. White	Taylor Hackford	Howard Baldwin, Karen Elise Baldwin, Alise Benjamin, Stuart Benjamin, Taylor Hackford, Barbara A. Hall, William J. Immerman, Jaime Rucker King, Nick Morton, Ray Charles Robinson Jr.
Fat Albert	Bill Cosby, Charles Kipps	Joe Zwick	Bill Cosby, Camille O. Cosby, John Davis, Alexander H. Gayner, Vanessa Morrison, Jeffrey Stott
Are We There Yet?	Claudia Grazioso, David N. Weiss, J. David Stem,	Brian Levant	Matt Alvarez, Derek Dauchy, Todd Garner, Ice Cube, Dan Kolsrud

	Steven Gary Brooks		
Hotel Rwanda	Keir Pearson, Terry George	Terry George	Sam Bhembe, Roberto Cicutto, Izidore Codron, Sally French, Terry George, A. Kitman, Martin Katz, Francesco Melzi d' Eril, Nick Meyer, Luigi Musini, Keir Pearson, Bridget Pickering, Duncan Reid, Hal Sadoff
Hitch	Kevin Bisch	Andy Tennant	James Lassiter, Wink Mordaunt, Will Smith, Michael Tadross, Teddy Zee
Guess Who	William Rose, David Ronn, Jay Scherick, Peter Tolan	Kevin Rodney Sullivan	Joseph M. Caracciolo, Jason Goldberg, Steve Greener, J. Roberts, Erwin Stoff, Betty Thomas, Jenno Topping
Beauty Shop	Elizabeth Hunter, Kate Lanier, Norman Vance Jr.	Bille Woodruff	Matt Alvarez, Otis Best, Shakim Compere, Davide Hoberman, Ice Cube, Todd Lieberman, Queen Latifah, Louise Rosner, Robert Teitel, George Tillman Jr.
State Property 2	Adam Moreno, Damon Dash	Damon Dash	Antony Adel, Roger M. Bobb, Damon Dash, Petra Hoebel, Luke Hyams, Beth Melillo, Per Melita
Hustle & Flow	Craig Brewer	Craig Brewer	Stephanie Allain, Preston L. Holmes, John Singleton, Dwight Williams
Four Brothers	David Elliot, Paul Lovett	John Singleton	Lorenzo Di Bonaventura, Erik Howsam, Ric Kidney, Sharon Seto
Get Rich or Die Tryin'	Terence Winter	Jim Sheridan	Renata Adamidov, Dayia Gale, Jimmy Iovine, Gene Kirkwood, Arthur Lappin, Chris Lightly, Daniel Lupi, Stuart Parr, Heather Parry, Paul Rosenberg, Sharon Seto, Jim Sheridan, Van Toffler

Big Momma's House 2	Don Rhymer, Darryl Quarles	John Whitesell	David T. Friendly, Michael Green, David Higgins, Jeff Kwatinetz, Martin Lawrence, Arnon Milchan, Darice Rollins, Jeremiah Samuels
ATL	Tina Gordon Chism, Antwone Fisher	Chris Robinson	Dallas Austin, Timothy M. Bourne, Jody Gerson, James Lassiter, Tionne "T-Boz" Watkins, Will Smith
Akeelah and the Bee	Doug Atchison	Doug Atchison	Jaki Brown, Michael Burns, Marc Butan, Mark Cuban, Laurence Fishburne, Sidney Ganis, Nancy Hult Ganis, Michael Johnson, Kent Kubena, Danny Llewelyn, Tom Ortenberg, Michael Paseornek, Nalia Phillips, Michael Romersa, Helen Sugland, Mike Upton, Todd Wagner
Waist Deep	Vondie Curtis Hall	Vondie Curtis Hall	A. Demetrius Brown, Marc D. Evans, Ted Field, Preston L. Holmes, Amy J. Kaufman, Stan Lathan, Trevor Macy, Russell Simmons, Jeremiah Vaughn
Littleman	Kennen Ivory Wayans, Shawn Wayans, Marlon Wayans	Kennen Ivory Wayans	Rick Alvarez, Lee R. Mayes, Kennen Ivory Wayans, Marlon Wayans, Shawn Wayans, Jeff Bowler, Joe Roth, Bret Saxton
The Pursuit of Happyness	Steve Conrad	Gabriele Muccino	David Alper, Todd Black, Jason Blumenthal, Mark Clayman, Louis D' Esposito, Chris Gardner, James Lassiter, Will Smith, Steve Tisch, Teddy Zee
Norbit	Eddie Murphy, Charlie Murphy Jay Scherick, David Ronn,	Brian Robbins	John Davis, David B. Householter, Eddie Murphy, Brian Robbins, Michael Tollin

Rush Hour 3	Ross La Manna, Jeff Nathanson	Brett Ratner	John Bernard, Roger Birnbaum, Samuel J. Brown, Andrew Z. Davis, Leon Dudevoir, Toby Emmerich, James M. Frietag, Jonathan Glickman, David Gorder, Darryl Jones, Arthur M. Sarkissian, Jay Stern
Why Did I Get Married?	Tyler Perry	Tyler Perry	Roger M. Bobb, Reuben Cannon, Ogden Gavanski, Joseph P. Geiner, Tyler Perry
First Sunday	David E. Talbert	David E. Talbert	Matt Alvarez, Robert S. Constanzo, Stacy Cramer, Ice Cube, Trae Ireland, Neil A. Machlis, Jessica McCullagh, David McIlvain, Ronald G. Mohammad, Tim Story, David E. Talbert, Julie Yorn
Brooklyn's Finest	Michael C. Martin	Antoine Fuqua	Eli Cohn, Boaz Davidson, Danny Dimbort, Antoine Fuqua, Robert Greenhut, Basil Iwanyk, Jesse Kennedy, John Langlely, Avi Lerner, Joe Napolitano, Jeanne O' Brien-Ebiri, Kat Samick, Trevor Short, John Thompson, Mary Viola, Marco Weber, Joe Gatta
Next Day Air	Blair Cobbs	Benny Boom	Scott Aronson, Steven Belser, Inny Clemons, Donald Faison, Wood Harris, Melina Kevorkian, Shaun Livingston, Steve Markoff, Bruce McNall, Gerald Rawles, Bryan Turner, Michael R. Williams
I Can Do Bad All by Myself	Tyler Perry	Tyler Perry	Roger M. Bobb, Reuben Cannon, Jerry P. Jacobs, Charisse Nesbit, Michael Pasernek, Tyler Perry

Black Dynamite	Michael Jai White, Byron Minns, Scott Sanders	Scott Sanders	Jillian Apfelbaum, Deanna Berkeley, James Berkeley, Charla Driver, Alison Engel, Nathan Funk, Trevor Funk, Intesar Haider, Seth Harrison, Matt Richards, Jenna Segal, Paul Segal, Jenny Wiener Steingart, Jon Steingart
Our Family Wedding	Wayne Conley, Malcolm Spellman, Rick Famuyiwa	Rick Famuyiwa	Scott Hyman, Edward Saxon, Steven J Wolfe
Death at a Funeral	Dean Craig	Neil LaBute	Dean Craig, Glenn S. Gainor, William Horberg, Trae Ireland, Josh Kesselman, Sidney Kimmel, Laurence Malkin, Chris Rock, Share Stallings, Nicholas Stern, Jim Tauber, Bruce Toll
Lottery Ticket	Abdul Williams, Erik White	Erik White	Matt Alvarez, Timothy M. Bourne, Mark Burg, Yolanda T. Cochran, H.H. Cooper, Ice Cube, Jesse Israel, Broderick Johnson, Brad Kaplan, Andrew A. Kosove, Oren Koules, Carl Rogers, Steven P. Wegner, Andrew Wilson
Big Momma's: Like Father, Like Son	Matt Fogel, Don Rhymr, Darryl Quarles	John Whitesell	William Paul Clark, David T. Friendly, Michael Green, Jeff Kwatinetz, Martin Lawrence, Arnon Milchan, Darice Rollins, Jeremiah Samuels
The Best Man Holiday	Malcolm D. Lee	Malcolm D. Lee	Sean Daniel, Preston L. Holmes, Malcolm D. Lee
Selma	Paul Webb	Ava DuVernay	Nik Bower, Christian Colson, Ava DuVernay, Dede Gardner, Paul Barnes, Jeremy Kleiner, Cameron McCracken, Diarmuid McKeown, Nan Morales, Brad Pitt, Oprah Winfrey

CASE STUDY FILM SUMMARIES

2000

Six films released in 2000 were noted by viewers as Black Films and repeated on multiple lists. These films were: *Next Friday* (released in theaters on January 12, 2000); *Love & Basketball* (released in theaters on April 21, 2000); *Big Momma's House* (released in theaters on June 2, 2000); *Nutty Professor 2: The Klumps* (released in theaters on July 28, 2000); *Remember the Titans* (released in theaters on September 29, 2000); and *Bamboozled* (released in theaters on October 6, 2000). Esther Iverem acknowledged and/or evaluated all of these films in “We Gotta Have It: Twenty Years of Seeing Black at the Movies (1986- 2006).

Love & Basketball was repeated the most times and it was the only film to be repeated on five of the original eight lists. *Next Friday* was repeated on four of the eight lists. *Big Momma's House* was repeated on three of the eight lists. *Bamboozled*, *Nutty Professor 2: The Klumps*, and *Remember the Titans* were repeated on at least two of the eight lists. The top three grossing films from this list were: *Nutty Professor 2: The Klumps* (\$123,309, 890 U.S. Dollars); *Big Momma's House* (\$117, 559,438 U.S. Dollars); and *Remember the Titans* (\$115, 654, 751 U.S. Dollars). *Remember the Titans* was removed from the random sample options since it was a biographical account. Though it was omitted, the film deserves an honorable mention. It was the third top grossing films from the films observed. It also received eight awards and sixteen nominations.

The two films selected for analysis for 2000 were: *Next Friday* and *Love & Basketball*. *Next Friday* was released on January 12, 2000. This sequel picked up where

Friday (1995) left off. Neighborhood bully, Deebo has just escaped from jail and vows to take revenge on Craig for beating him up. In fear for Craig's life, his dad sends him to stay with his uncle Elroy in the suburbs of Rancho Cucamonga, California.

Though Iverem did not explicitly write about *Next Friday*, she had this to say about the sequel and similar films,

There are enough films such as *Friday*, *Next Friday*, *Blue Streak*, *Life*, and now *3 Strikes* to form a new sub-genre of Black film. Let's call this type of film a "lockdown comedy." They all focus on young black men in jail, recently released, or running to stay out of trouble. There is no job or vocation visible or on the horizon. Days or weeks are spent in a haze of weed, women, getting beat down or the fear of getting beat down. The ultimate goal is getting over (177).

Love and Basketball premiered at the 2000 Sundance Film Festival. It was released in theaters on April 21, 2000. The film was directed by Gina Prince-Bythewood, an African American director. This film tells the story of love and sport. Monica Wright's family move to a middle class Black neighborhood in Los Angeles, California. Monica quickly meets and befriends Quincy McCall in an aggressive square off on the basketball court. The duo's relationship advances both on and off the court. They make it official before going to college, but the couple struggles to juggle their love for the game and each other.

2001

Six films released in 2001 were noted by viewers as Black Films and repeated on multiple lists. These films were: *The Brothers* (released in theaters on March 23, 2001); *Rush Hour 2* (released in theaters on August 3, 2001); *Two Can Play that Game* (released

in theaters on September 7, 2001); *The Wash* (released in theaters on November 14, 2001); *Black Knight* (released in theaters on November 21, 2001); *How High* (released in theaters on December 21, 2001). Iverem explores all films, with the exception of *How High*.

For this year, all films were repeated on two of the eight original lists. The top grossing films of those examined were: *Rush Hour 2* (\$226,164,286 U.S. Dollars); *Black Knight* (\$33,426,971 U.S. Dollars); *How High* (\$31, 178,740 U.S. Dollars).

The two films selected for analysis for 2001 were: *Two Can Play that Game* and *How High*. *Two Can Play that Game* was released in theaters on September 7, 2001. This film is a comedic portrayal of battle of the sexes written and directed by Mark Brown. Shante, played by Vivica A. Fox is a successful business woman. Her man, Keith, played by Morris Chestnut, is an equally successful attorney. Shante prides herself on being the person her friends can rely on for relationship advice. In fact, she considers herself an unofficial relationship counselor. Whereas most counselors have extensively studied human psychology and behavior, Shante has extensively studied men and has devised ways to manipulate them and keep them in line.

How High was released in theaters on December 21, 2001. The film was directed by Jesse Dylan, a non-African American. *How High* centers on two friends Silas, and Jamal as they mysteriously receive perfect scores on their preliminary college exams after smoking magical weed. Their perfect scores get them a full ride to Harvard University. The comedy follows the two as they juggle a full schedule consisting of class, smoking, and partying.

2002

Eleven films released in 2002 were noted by viewers as Black Films and repeated on multiple lists. These films were: *State Property* (released in theaters on January 18, 2002); *All About the Benjamins* (released in theaters on March 8, 2002); *City of God* (released in theaters on May 18, 2002); *Undercover Brother* (released in theaters on May 31, 2002); *Like Mike* (released in theaters on July 3, 2002); *Men in Black II* (released in theaters on July 3, 2002); *Barbershop* (released in theaters on September 13, 2002); *Brown Sugar* (released in theaters on October 11, 2002); *Paid in Full* (release in limited theaters on October 25, 2002); *Friday After Next* (released in theaters on November 22, 2002); *Drumline* (released in theaters on December 13, 2002). Iverem explores all films, with the exception of *State Property*.

Majority of these films were repeated on half of the original lists. *All About the Benjamins*, *Brown Sugar*, *Friday After Next*, and *Undercover Brother* were repeated on four out of the original eight lists. *Barbershop* and *Paid in Full* was repeated on three of the eight lists. *City of God*, *Drumline*, *Like Mike*, *Men in Black II*, and *State Property* were repeated on two lists. The top grossing films among those analyzed from this year were: *Men in Black II* (\$190,418,803 U.S. Dollars); *Barbershop* (\$75,782,105 U.S.Dollars); and *Drumline* (\$56,399,184 U.S. Dollars).

The two films selected for analysis for 2002 were: *All About the Benjamins* and *Paid in Full*. *All About the Benjamins* was released in theaters on March 8, 2002. In *All About the Benjamins*, Ice Cube and Mike Epps, formerly costars in *Next Friday*, reunite this time as a bounty hunter and criminal. As Bucum (Cube) sets out to pursue Reggie (Epps), the two stumble upon a diamond heist causing Reggie to drop his winning lottery

ticket. Both interested in bettering their current financial situations, the two team up to solve the diamond robbery.

Paid in Full was released in limited theaters on October 25, 2002. Ace, played by Wood Harris struggles to be content with his life working in a dry-cleaning shop and allows himself to be enticed by the flashy lifestyle his friend Mitch, played by Mekhi Phifer, lives. Sick of his mediocre earnings, Ace gives into the temptation of hustling and becomes good at it. All is going well until he decides to take in a rowdy youngster, named Rico.

2003

Five films released in 2003 were noted by viewers as Black Films and repeated on multiple lists. These films were: *National Security* (released in theaters on January 17, 2003); *Head of State* (released in theaters on March 28, 2003); *Malibu's Most Wanted* (released in theater on April 18, 2003); *Bad Boys II* (released in theaters on July 18, 2003); *The Fighting Temptations* (released in theaters on September 19, 2003); and *Love Don't Cost a Thing* (released in theaters on December 12, 2003). Iverem discusses all of the listed films from 2003, with the exception of *Malibu's Most Wanted*.

Bad Boys II was repeated on three of the original eight lists. *Head of State*, *Love Don't Cost a Thing*, *Malibu's Most Wanted*, *National Security*, and *The Fighting Temptations* were repeated on two lists. The top grossing films from this list were: *Bad Boys II* (\$138,608,444 U.S. Dollars); *Head of State* (\$38,125,247 U.S. Dollars); and *National Security* (\$36,381,186 U.S. Dollars).

The two films selected for analysis for 2003 were: *Bad Boys II* and *Love Don't Cost a Thing*. *Bad Boys II* was released in theaters on July 18, 2003. In this sequel to *Bad*

Boys (1995), detectives Marcus Burnett (played by Martin Lawrence) and Mike Lowrey (played by Will Smith) team up again trying to tackle an influx of ecstasy on the streets of Miami. The case gets more complicated when they find out that Syd, Marcus's baby sister and undercover agent, also has her mind set to catch the supplier, Johnny Tapia.

2004

Nine films released in 2004 were noted by viewers as Black Films and repeated on multiple lists. These films were: *My Baby's Daddy* (released in theaters on January 9, 2004); *Barbershop 2: Back in Business* (released in theaters on February 6, 2004); *Johnson Family Vacation* (released in theaters on April 7, 2007); *Breakin' All the Rules* (released in May 14, 2004); *Soul Plane* (released in theaters on May 8, 2004); *White Chicks* (released in theaters on June 23, 2004); *Taxi* (released in theaters on October 6, 2004); *Hair Show* (released in theaters on October 15, 2004); and *Ray* (released in theaters on October 29, 2004). Iverem discusses all nine films in her book.

Barbershop 2: Back in Business was repeated on three of the eight original lists. *Breakin' All the Rules*, *Hair Show*, *Johnson Family Vacation*, *My Baby's Daddy*, *Ray*, *Soul Plane*, *Taxi*, and *White Chicks* were repeated on two lists. The top grossing films from this list were: *Ray* (\$75,331, 600 U.S. Dollars); *White Chicks* (\$70,831,760 U.S. Dollars); and *Barbershop 2: Back in Business* (\$65,111,277 U.S. Dollars).

Ray was removed from the random sample options since it was a biographical account. Though it was omitted, the film deserves an honorable mention. It was the number one top grossing films of the films observed. The movie also went on to win fifty-two awards including two Oscars. The film received nominations for another fifty-one awards.

The two films selected for analysis for 2004 were: *Barbershop 2: Back in Business*, and *White Chicks*. The old *Barbershop* crew return in *Barbershop 2: Back in Business* facing a new problem when a new barbershop, Nappy Cuts appears in the neighborhood. In the midst of the competition between the shops, the issue of gentrification of the neighborhood further stresses out Calvin (Ice Cube) the owner of the barbershop. Between new competition from Nappy Cuts on the block and shady politicians, Calvin struggles to keep the shop and its legacy afloat.

White Chicks takes viewers on a day in the life of two filthy rich, White chicks, Brittany and Tiffany Wilson. A plot to kidnap the girls leads FBI agents Kevin and Marcus Copeland into going undercover to pose as the girls to ensure their safety. This case is important to both Kevin and Marcus since their last one ended in disaster. Their futures in the FBI are at stake unless they pose as these two White girls and raise no reasonable suspicion.

2005

Nine films released in 2005 were noted by viewers as Black Films and repeated on multiple lists. These films were: *Are We There Yet?* (released in theaters on January 21, 2005); *Hotel Rwanda* (release in theaters on February 4, 2005); *Hitch* (released in theaters on February 11, 2005); *Guess Who* (released in theaters on March 25, 2005); *Beauty Shop* (released into theaters on March 30, 2005); *State Property 2* (released in theaters on April 13, 2005); *Hustle & Flow* (released in theaters on July 22, 2005); *Four Brothers* (August 12, 2005); and *Get Rich or Die Tryin'* (released in theaters on November 9, 2005). All films, with the exception of *State Property 2* were discussed by Iverem.

Hustle & Flow was repeated on four of the original eight lists. *Are We There Yet?* and *Beauty Shop* were repeated on three lists. *Four Brothers*, *Get Rich or Die Tryin'*, *Guess Who*, *Hitch*, and *State Property 2* were repeated on two lists. The top three grossing films from the movies explored in this research for 2005 were: *Hitch* (\$179,495,555 U.S. Dollars); *Are We There Yet?* (\$82,674,398 U.S. Dollars); and *Four Brothers* (\$75,494,381 U.S. Dollars).

Hotel Rwanda was removed from the random sample options since it was a biographical account. Though it was omitted, the film deserves an honorable mention. The movie won sixteen awards and received forty-two nominations, including three Oscar nominations. Another movie from 2005 received Oscar recognition, *Hustle & Flow*. Although *Hustle & Flow* was not among the top grossing films of 2005, it received phenomenal accolades winning twenty-five awards, including an Oscar. The movie was also nominated for forty-four other awards.

The two films selected for analysis for 2005 were: *Hitch* and *Four Brothers*. *Hitch* is a romantic comedy. Hitch (played by Will Smith) is a relationship guru that has finally met his match as he takes on Albert's hopeless case. Albert is in love with celebrity Allegra Cole and wants Hitch to school him on how to get with a lady of her stature. Meanwhile Hitch struggles making his rules workout in his own love life.

Four Brothers is a story about a group of former foster children, now men who are reunited in grief when their former foster mother is murdered. The guys are stricken with grief but equally determined to get answers about her death. These questions lead them into an underground world and they quickly find that the answers they are seeking just might cost them their lives.

2006

Six films released in 2006 were noted by viewers as Black Films and repeated on multiple lists. These films were: *Big Momma's House 2* (released in theaters on January 27, 2006); *ATL* (released in theaters on March 31, 2006); *Akeelah and the Bee* (released in theaters on April 28, 2006); *Waist Deep* (released in theaters on June 23, 2006); *Littleman* (released in theaters on July 14, 2006); *The Pursuit of Happyness* (released in theaters on December 15, 2006). All films, with the exception of the Big Momma sequel were notable to Iverem.

ATL, *Big Momma's House 2*, and *Littleman* were repeated on three out of the original eight lists. *Akeelah and the Bee*, *The Pursuit of Happyness*, and *Waist Deep* were repeated on two of the lists. The top grossing films from the movies examined in this research for 2006 were: *The Pursuit of Happyness* (\$163,566,459 U.S. Dollars); *Big Momma's House 2* (\$70,165,972 U.S. Dollars); and *Littleman* (\$58,645,052 U.S. Dollars).

The Pursuit of Happyness, though the top grossing film of those included on the list, was removed from the random sample options since it was a biographical account. Though it was omitted, the film deserves an honorable mention. The movie won eleven awards and received twenty-four nominations, including an Oscar nomination.

The two films selected for analysis for 2006 were: *ATL* and *Akeelah and the Bee*. *ATL* was released in theaters on March 31, 2006. The film centered on two brothers, Rashad and Antwone Swann, who were orphaned when their parents were killed in a tragic car accident. Rashad (played by Atlanta native, rapper T.I.) is a high school senior whose plans after graduation are up in the air. Meanwhile, his brother Ant, short for

Antwone, (played by Evan Ross) is an ambitious underclassman is also struggling with trying to find his way in life. The two were taken in by their Uncle George following their parents' deaths. The male trio lives a meager life which cause conflicts when Ant's flaunty ambitions leads to a crisis in the family.

2007

Three films released in 2007 were noted by viewers as Black Films and repeated on multiple lists. These films were: *Norbit* (released in theaters on February 9, 2007); *Rush Hour 3* (released in theaters on August 10, 2007); and *Why Did I Get Married?* (released in theaters on October 12, 2007. *Norbit* was repeated on three of the original eight lists. *Rush Hour 3* and *Why Did I Get Married* were repeated on two lists. *Rush Hour 3* (\$140,125,968 U.S. Dollars) was the top grossing film from the movies included in this research for 2007. *Norbit* was the second top box office hit (\$95,673,607 U.S. Dollars) followed by *Why Did I Get Married?* (\$55,204,525 U.S. Dollars).

The two films selected for analysis for 2006 were: *Norbit*, and *Why Did I Get Married*. In *Norbit*, Norbit (Eddie Murphy) has always been an easy going guy. This has become a problem and resulted in Norbit being bullied until he met Rasputia. The two fall in love and eventually get married; however, Norbit quickly regrets his decision when he catches his wife cheating. He faces a dilemma, continue to let others walk all over him or to finally stick up for himself.

Why Did I Get Married captures the annual couples retreat between old college friends. The vacation is abruptly brought to an end when the secrets between the couple are revealed. The couples struggle to deal with the problems in their relationships.

However, for one couple it's too late. Sheila and Mike's relationship ends, but she begins a new relationship with Troy and finds a new love for herself.

2008

One film released in 2008 was noted by viewers as a Black Film and repeated on multiple lists. This film was *First Sunday* (released in theaters on January 11, 2008). This film was repeated on three of the original eight lists. Since there was only one film for this year (for research comparison purposes) the researcher chose another viewer classified film from this year that appeared on the original eight lists for this year but was not repeated.

The two films selected for analysis for 2007 were: *First Sunday* and *Hancock*. In *First Sunday*, Durrell (Ice Cube) is trying to be a good man and father. When his son's mother threatens to take his son out of state unless he can help her pay booth rental fees, he faces a dilemma to risk it all to get the money to keep his son in state. This leads to him teaming up with LeeJohn. The two plan to rob the local church for the money to repay owed debts. However, their seemingly flawless plan becomes complicated when choir rehearsal and a deacon's meeting are going on the same night they plan to rob the church.

Hancock (played by Will Smith) is the unappreciated superhero of the city. While he saves the day, he is frowned upon by the very people he saves. However, all of that changes when Hancock saves Ray, from being crushed by a train, Ray decides to repay him by inviting him to dinner. Ray proposes that Hancock allow him to help clean up his image and change his reputation among the people; Hancock agrees.

2009

Four films released in 2009 were noted by viewers as Black Films and repeated on multiple lists. These films were: *Brooklyn's Finest* (released in theaters on January 16, 2009); *Next Day Air* (released in theaters on May 8, 2009); *I Can Do Bad All By Myself* (released in theaters on September 11, 2009); and *Black Dynamite* (released in theaters on October 16, 2009). *Black Dynamite* and *Brooklyn's Finest* were repeated on three of the original eight lists. *I Can Do Bad All By Myself* and *Next Day Air* were repeated on two lists. The top grossing films from the list of movies examined for 2009 were: *I Can Do Bad All By Myself* (\$51,733,921 U.S. Dollars); *Brooklyn's Finest* (\$27,163,593 U.S. Dollars); and *Next Day Air* (\$10,027,047 U.S. Dollars).

The two films selected for analysis for 2009 were *Brooklyn's Finest* and *Next Day Air*. Due to these films not being easily accessible they were replaced by the following two films: *Obsessed* and *Precious*. In *Obsessed*, the lives of a family are damaged when a new temp shows up in Derek's office. She becomes infatuated with him (played by Idris Elba) when he comforts her after a breakup. Derek tries to hide this from his wife Sharon (played by Beyoncé Knowles), but this only makes Lisa more aggressive in her pursuits.

Precious is based off of Sapphire's novel by the same title. This film tells the story of Precious, a teenager mother struggling with growing up in an abusive home. Her mother (played by Mo'Nique) is physically, verbally, and sexually abusive towards. Precious finally runs away when her mother attacks her following the birth of her second child. She finds a support system within her teachers and new friends. Despite all her trials, she remains hopeful and determined to find her own happiness.

2010

Three films released in 2010 were noted by viewers as Black Films and repeated on multiple lists. These films were: *Our Family Wedding* (released in theaters on March 28, 2010); *Death at a Funeral* (released in theaters on April 16, 2010); and *Lottery Ticket* (released in theaters on August 20, 2010). *Death at a Funeral* was repeated on three of the original eight lists. *Lottery Ticket* and *Our Family Wedding* were repeated on two lists. *Death at a Funeral* (\$42,739,347 U.S. Dollars) was the top grossing film from the movies included in this research for 2009. *Lottery Ticket* was the second top box office hit earning (\$24,719,879 U.S. Dollars) followed by *Our Family Wedding* (\$20,255,281 U.S. Dollars).

The two films selected for analysis for 2010 were: *Death at a Funeral* and *Our Family Wedding*. Due to *Our Family Wedding* not being easily accessible it was replaced by *For Colored Girls*. *Death at a Funeral* captures the shenanigans that take place during grieving. Old family rivalry and long kept secrets are exposed. *For Colored Girls*, is based on Ntozake Shange's play. This film captures the complex relationship amongst a group of women. They help each other through their individual trials and unite despite their differences.

2011

One film released in 2011 was noted by viewers as a Black Film and repeated on multiple lists. This film was *Big Momma's: Like Father, Like Son* (released in theaters on November 13, 2011). This film was repeated on two of the original eight lists. Since there was only one film for this year (for research comparison purposes) the researcher

randomly chose another viewer classified film from this year that appeared on the original eight lists for this year but was not repeated. The two films randomly selected for analysis for 2011 were: *Big Momma's: Like Father, Like Son* and *Jumping the Broom*. Due to *Big Momma's: Like Father, Like Son* not being easily accessible it was replaced by *Madea's Big Happy Family*.

Madea's Big Happy Family was released in theaters on April 22, 2011. This film was based on Tyler Perry's play by the same name. Madea is recruited to help her niece Shirley with her out of control family. While her health is failing her Shirley's son, Byron, is selling drugs, and her daughters won't let go of old sibling rivalry. Madea strives to unite the family before Shirley's death.

2012

No films released in 2012 were noted by viewers as Black Films. Since there were no films for this year (for research comparison purposes) the researcher randomly chose two viewer classified films from this year that appeared on the original eight lists for this year but was not repeated. The two films randomly selected for analysis for 2012 were: *Note to Self* and *Think Like a Man*.

In *Note to Self*, Curtis struggles to stay afloat his senior year in college. His mother's sickness and his strained relationship with his father begin to take a toll on him. At this critical time in his life, Curtis seeks peace and finds solace when he meets Paula. The two work on their issues together.

Think Like a Man was based on Steve Harvey's book *Act Like a Lady, Think Like a Man*. This notes the relationships between men and women. A battle of the sexes ensues when a group of guys find out that their ladies are following the advice from a

book to dictate their relationships. The guys hatch up a plan to make the book work in their favor to close the deal with the ladies they love.

2013

One film released in 2013 was noted by viewers as a Black Film and repeated on multiple lists. This film was *The Best Man Holiday* (released in theaters on November 15, 2013). This film was repeated on three of the original eight lists. Since there was only one film for this year (for research comparison purposes) the researcher randomly chose another viewer classified film from this year that appeared on the original eight lists for this year but was not repeated. The two films randomly selected for analysis for 2013 were: *The Best Man Holiday* and *Peebles*.

In *The Best Man Holiday*, the old crew from *The Best Man* (1999) reassemble to celebrate the Christmas holidays with one another. This film is set fifteen years after the first installment. Most of the relationships have prevailed. However, Lance and Mia's relationship is tested when a secret is revealed.

Peebles is the classic story of meeting the family. Grace's boyfriend, Wade, is ready to propose. However, he wants her father's blessing. This goal seems unattainable when he fails to make a good first impression upon her father. Wade tries to remain positive despite a rollercoaster chain of events that further push him out of his girlfriend's father's good graces.

2014

No films released in 2014 were noted by viewers as Black Films. Since there were no films for this year (for research comparison purposes) the researcher randomly chose two viewer classified films from this year that appeared on the original eight lists for this

year but was not repeated. The two films randomly selected for analysis for 2012 were: *About Last Night* and *Dear White People*.

About Last Night was a romantic comedy remake of a film by that same name. The film premiered at the Pan African Film Festival on February 11, 2014. It captures the adventures of friends Bernie and Dann. The two guys hook up with two friends and hit it off. Both pursue relationships with these women. They both strive to maintain healthy relationships.

Dear White People recounts a chain of events that led up to a Black themed frat party on the campus of Winchester University. Sam White, campus DJ has dedicated her airtime to calling out the racism that she and other people of color experience on campus. Student housing is segregated and Sam runs for president of the dorm and wins. She becomes challenged when her new responsibilities, her radio show, activism, and studies collide.

2015

One film released in 2015 was noted by viewers as Black Film and repeated on multiple lists. This film was *Selma* (released in theaters on January 9, 2015). This film was repeated on two of the original eight lists. However; due to this film being a biographical account, it was omitted. For research comparison purposes, the researcher randomly chose two other viewer classified films from this year that appeared on the original eight lists for this year but were not repeated. The two films randomly selected for analysis for 2015 were: *Dope* and *Chi-Raq*

In *Dope*, Malcolm and his group of friends are the misfits of their high school in Inglewood. The trio dress in clothes from the 90s and listen to all the 90's hip-hop

classics. One day a detour changes their lives. The three run into Dom, a drug dealer who invites them to his birthday party. During the party a shootout occurs. Malcolm grabs his bag and runs out. He later learns that Dom had stashed drugs and a gun in his bag during the commotion. What was supposed to be a night of fun changes their lives forever.

In *Chi-raq*, Spike Lee remixes Aristophanes's play "Lysistrata" into a film that captured the ongoing problem of killings in Chicago. In this film, a gang war is going on between the Spartans and the Trojans. Chi-raq, the leader of the Spartans, vows to get revenge on the Trojans that set fire to his girlfriend's, Lysistrata's home. Meanwhile she witnesses the death of a seven-year-old that became a casualty of the war between the Spartans and Trojans. She is deeply moved and wants justice for the little girl and all of the other victims of this street war. She rallies together all the women to use their power to achieve peace.

Noted Correlations

3 Arts Entertainment- Head of State (2003); Guess Who (2005)
40 Acres & a Mule Filmworks- Love & Basketball (2000); Bamboozled (2000)
Aaron Ray-Big Momma's House (2000); Black Knight (2001)
Alcon Entertainment- Love Don't Cost a Thing (2003); Lottery Ticket (2010)
Andrew A. Kosove- Love Don't Cost a Thing (2003); Lottery Ticket (2010)
Andrew Z. Davis- Love & Basketball (2000); Rush Hour 2 (2001); Rush Hour 3 (2007)
Arnon Milchan-Big Momma's House (2000); Black Knight (2001); Big Momma's House 2 (2006); Big Momma's: Like Father, Like Son (2011)
Arthur Sarkissian- Rush Hour 2 (2001); Rush Hour 3 (2007)
Beauty Shop (2005); First Sunday (2008)
Brett Ratner- Rush Hour 2 (2001); Paid in Full (2002); Rush Hour 3 (2007)
Broderick Johnson- Love Don't Cost a Thing (2003); Lottery Ticket (2010)
Burg/Koules Productions- Love Don't Cost a Thing (2003); Lottery Ticket (2010)
C4 Pictures- Two Can Play that Game (2001); Hair Show (2004)
Cha-ka Pilgrim- State Property (2002); Paid in Full (2002)
Chad Oman-Remember the Titans (2000); Bad Boys II (2003)
Charles Stone III-Paid in Full (2002); Drumline (2002)
Chris Rock- Head of State (2003); Death at a Funeral (2010)
Claire Rudnick-Polstein-Next Friday (2000); All About the Benjamins(2002)
Columbia Pictures- Men in Black II (2002); National Security (2003); Bad Boys II (2003); Hitch (2005); Guess Who (2005); The Pursuit of Happyness (2006)
Cube Vision- All About the Benjamins (2002); Barbershop (2002); Friday After Next (2002); Barbershop 2: Back in Business (2004); Are We There Yet? (2005);
Dallas Austin-Drumline (2006); ATL (2006)
Damon Dash- State Property (2002); Paid in Full (2002); State Property 2 (2005)
Darice Rollins- Big Momma's House 2 (2006); ; Big Momma's: Like Father, Like Son (2011)
Darryl Jones- Rush Hour 2 (2001); Rush Hour 3 (2007)
Darryl Quarles-Big Momma's House (2000); Black Knight (2001); Big Momma's House 2 (2006); Big Momma's: Like Father, Like Son (2011)
David Higgins- Big Momma's House (2000); Big Momma's House 2 (2006);
David Ronn-National Security (2003); Guess Who (2005); Norbit (2007)

David T. Friendly- Big Momma's House (2000); Big Momma's House 2 (2006) ; Big Momma's: Like Father, Like Son (2011)
DJ Pooh- Next Friday(2000); The Wash (2001); Friday After Next (2002)
Don D. Scott- Barbershop (2002); Barbershop 2: Back in Business (2004)
Don Rhymer- Big Momma's House (2000); Big Momma's House 2 (2006); Big Momma's: Like Father, Like Son (2011)
Doug McHenry-The Brothers (2001); Two Can Play that Game (2001)
Douglas Curtis- Next Friday (2000); All About the Benjamins (2002); Friday After Next (2002)
Dreamworks SKG- Head of State (2003); Norbit (2007)
Eddie Murphy- Nutty Professor 2: The Klumps (2000); Norbit (2007)
Elizabeth Hunter- The Fighting Temptations (2003); Beauty Shop (2005)
Epsilon Motion Pictures- Black Knight (2001); Guess Who (2005); Big Momma's House 2 (2006);
Erik White- Lottery Ticket (2010)
Firm Films- Big Momma's House 2 (2006); First Sunday (2008)
Fox Searchlight Pictures- Brown Sugar (2001); Johnson Family Vacation (2004); Our Family Wedding (2010)
Friendly Productions- Big Momma's House (2000); Big Momma's House 2 (2006); Big Momma's: Like Father, Like Son (2011)
George Tillman Jr.-Barbershop (2002); Barbershop 2: Back in Business (2004); Beauty Shop (2005)
Heller Highwater Productions- Brown Sugar (2001); Like Mike (2002)
Ice Cube- Next Friday (2000); All About the Benjamins(2002); Friday After Next (2002); Barbershop 2: Back in Business (2004); Are We There Yet? (2005); Beauty Shop (2005); First Sunday (2008); Lottery Ticket (2010)
James Freitag- Rush Hour 2 (2001); Rush Hour 3 (2007)
James Lassiter-Hitch (2005); ATL (2006); The Pursuit of Happyness (2006)
Jay Scherick- National Security (2003); Guess Who (2005); Norbit (2007)
Jay Stern- Love & Basketball (2000); Rush Hour 2 (2001); Rush Hour 3 (2007)
Jeff Kwatinetz-Big Momma's House (2000); Black Knight (2001); National Security (2003); Big Momma's House 2 (2006); Big Momma's: Like Father, Like Son (2011)
Jeff Nathanson- Rush Hour 2 (2001); Rush Hour 3 (2007)
Jeremiah Samuels- The Wash (2001); Big Momma's House 2 (2006); Big Momma's: Like Father, Like Son (2011)
Jerry Bruckheimer- Remember the Titans (2000); Bad Boys II (2003)
Jody Gerson-Drumline (2006); ATL (2006)

John Whitesell- Malibu's Most Wanted (2003) ; Big Momma's House 2 (2006)
Jonathan Glickman- Rush Hour 2 (2001); Rush Hour 3 (2007)
Kennen Ivory Wayans- White Chicks (2004); Littleman (2006)
Kevin Rodney Sullivan- Barbershop 2: Back in Business (2004); Guess Who (2005)
Lee R. Mayes- White Chicks (2004); Littleman (2006)
Leon Dudevoir- Rush Hour 2 (2001); Rush Hour 3 (2007)
Lions Gate Films- The Wash (2001); Hotel Rwanda (2005); Guess Who (2005); State Property 2 (2005); Akeelah and the Bee (2006); Why Did I Get Married? (2007)
Magic Johnson Entertainment- Brown Sugar (2001); Hair Show (2004)
Magic Johnson- Brown Sugar (2001); Hair Show (2004)
Malcolm D. Lee- Undercover Brother (2002); The Best Man Holiday (2013)
Mark Brown- Two Can Play that Game (2001); Barbershop (2002); Barbershop 2: Back in Business (2004)
Marlon Wayans- White Chicks (2004); Littleman (2006)
Martin Lawrence-Big Momma's House (2000); Black Knight (2001); National Security (2003); Big Momma's House (2006); ; Big Momma's: Like Father, Like Son (2011)
Matt Alvarez- Next Friday (2000); All About the Benjamins (2002); Barbershop (2002); Friday After Next (2002); Barbershop 2: Back in Business (2004); Are We There Yet? (2005); Beauty Shop (2005); First Sunday (2008); Lottery Ticket (2010)
Matt Moore- Next Friday (2000); All About the Benjamins(2002); Friday After Next (2002)
Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM)- Barbershop (2002); Barbershop 2: Back in Business (2004); Soul Plane (2004); Beauty Shop (2005)
Michael Elliot- Brown Sugar (2001); Like Mike (2002)
Michael Green-Big Momma's House (2000); Black Knight (2001); National Security (2003); Big Momma's House 2 (2006); Big Momma's: Like Father, Like Son (2011)
Michael Paseornek- The Wash (2001); Akeelah and the Bee (2006); I Can Do Bad All by Myself (2009)
Mike Stenson-Remember the Titans (2000); Bad Boys II (2003)
MTV Films- The Fighting Temptations (2003); Hustle & Flow (2005); Get Rich or Die Tryin' (2005)
New Line Cinema- Next Friday (2000), Bamboozled (2000), Rush Hour 2 (2001); All About the Benjamins (2002); Friday After Next (2002); Rush Hour 3 (2007)
New Regency Pictures- Black Knight (2001); Big Momma's House 2 (2006); Big Momma's: Like Father, Like Son (2011)
Oren Koules- Love Don't Cost a Thing (2003); Lottery Ticket (2010)
Overbrook Entertainment- Hitch (2005); ATL (2006); The Pursuit of Happyness (2006)

Paddy Cullen-The Brothers (2001); Two Can Play that Game (2001); Breakin' All the Rules (2004)
Paramount Pictures- The Fighting Temptations (2003); Four Brothers (2005); Get Rich or Die Tryin' (2005)
Pat Sandston-Remember the Titans (2000); Bad Boys II (2003)
Peaches Davis- Big Momma's House (2000); Black Knight (2001); National Security (2003); Big Momma's House 2 (2006)
Peter Heller- Brown Sugar (2001); Like Mike (2002)
Preston L. Holmes- Hustle & Flow (2005); Waist Deep (2006); The Best Man Holiday (2013)
Regency Enterprises- Big Momma's House (2000); Black Knight (2001); Guess Who (2005); Big Momma's House 2 (2006); Big Momma's: Like Father, Like Son (2011)
Reuben Cannon- Love Don't Cost a Thing (2003); Why Did I Get Married? (2007); I Can Do Bad All by Myself (2009)
Revolution Studios- White Chicks (2004); Are We There Yet? (2005); Littleman (2006)
Rick Alvarez- White Chicks (2004); Littleman (2006)
Rick Famuyiwa- Brown Sugary (2001); Our Family Wedding (2010)
Robert Teitel- Barbershop (2002); Barbershop 2: Back in Business (2004); Beauty Shop (2005)
Roc-a-fella Films- State Property (2002); Paid in Full (2002)
Roger Birnbaum Productions- Rush Hour 2 (2001); Rush Hour 3 (2007)
Roger Birnbaum- Rush Hour 2 (2001); Rush Hour 3 (2007)
Roger M. Bobb- Why Did I Get Married (2007); I Can Do Bad All by Myself (2009)
Ron Rotholz- State Property (2002); Paid in Full (2002)
Ronald G. Mohammad- All About the Benjamins (2002); First Sunday (2008)
Ross LaManna- Rush Hour 2 (2001); Rush Hour 3 (2007)
Runteldat Entertainment- Big Momma's House (2000); Black Knight (2001); Big Momma's House 2 (2006); Big Momma's: Like Father, Like Son (2011)
Screen Gems- The Brothers (2001); Two Can Play that Game (2001); Breakin' All the Rules (2004); First Sunday (2008); Death at a Funeral (2010)
Sharon Seto- Four Brothers (2005); Get Rich or Die Tryin' (2005)
Shawn Wayans- White Chicks (2004); Littleman (2006)
Spike Lee- Love & Basketball (2000); Bamboozled (2000)
State Street Pictures- Barbershop (2002); Barbershop 2: Back in Business (2004); Beauty Shop (2005)
Steven P. Wegner- Love Don't Cost a Thing (2003); Lottery Ticket (2010)
Teddy Zee-Hitch (2005); The Pursuit of Happyness (2006)

The Firm- Black Knight (2001); National Security (2003);
The Tyler Perry Company- Why Did I Get Married (2007); I Can Do Bad All by Myself (2009)
Thomas J. Busch- Barbershop (2002); Barbershop 2: Back in Business (2004)
Tim Story- Barbershop (2002); Taxi (2004); First Sunday (2008)
Timothy M. Bourne-Drumline (2006); ATL (2006); Lottery Ticket (2010)
Tina Gordon Chism- Drumline (2006); ATL (2006)
Toby Emmerich- Rush Hour 2 (2001); All About the Benjamins(2002); Friday After Next (2002); Rush Hour 3 (2007)
Todd Garner-Are We There Yet? (2005)
Tom Ortenberg-The Wash (2001); Akeelah and the Bee (2006)
Trae Ireland- First Sunday (2007); Death at a Funeral (2010)
Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation- Big Momma's House (2000);Brown Sugar (2001); Black Knight (2001); Like Mike (2002); Taxi (2004); Big Momma's House 2 (2006); Big Momma's: Like Father, Like Son (2011)
Tyler Perry- Why Did I Get Married (2007); I Can Do Bad All by Myself (2009)
Universal Pictures- Nutty Professor 2: The Klumps (2000); Undercover Brother (2002); Ray (2004); The Best Man Holiday (2013)
Wayans Bros. Entertainment- White Chicks (2004); Littleman (2006)
Wayans/ Alvarez Productions (AKA Baby Way Productions)-White Chicks (2004); Littleman (2006)
Will Smith-Hitch (2005); ATL (2006); The Pursuit of Happyness (2006)

CURRICULUM VITAE

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Department: Pan-African Studies

Date: July 11, 2016

Signature: _____

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A. **Current Institution**

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B. **Positions held**

Graduate Teaching Assistant 2011-2013

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Tuskegee University B.A. English 2011

III. **Honors and Awards**

* Alpha Kappa Mu Honor Society

*College of Art and Sciences Outstanding Student

*Fola Iyun Award for Outstanding Achievement

*Golden Key Honor Society

*Graduate's Dean Citation

*Lambda Iota Tau Honor Society for Literature

*President's Award

*Who's Who among College Students

IV. **Teaching**

Russell County School District (2015-2016)

Carver High School (2013-2015)

University of Louisville (2011-2013)

II. **Service to the University**

Campus Organizations

President of Pan African Studies Graduate Student Association (2012-2013)

Pan African Studies Graduate Student Association (2011-2012)

E.S.S.E.N.C.E. Mentor (2011-2012)

Secretary of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Gamma Kappa Chapter (2010-2011)

President of Tuskegee University English Club (2009-2010)