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Pepperdine University
Graduate School of Education and Psychology

OVERCOMING THE INDUSTRY DRIVEN BARRIERS TO THE CREATION OF
BLACK INDEPENDENT FILM

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

by

Tara R. Jiles

October, 2013

James R. Dellaneve, Ed.D.—Dissertation Chairperson

This dissertation, written by

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under the guidance of a Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my dad, J.D. Jiles,
who taught me the value of hard work, tenacity and dedication,
and to my Brother, Jovan D. Jiles
who always shows me the importance of happiness and an appreciation for life,
and
to my mom,
Daria C. Jiles
who has taught me to always persevere through adversity with courage and faith.

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Finally, I want to express my heartfelt thanks to my significant other, Taj Powell, and my friends and extended family, for their support and encouragement throughout the years. Thank you all for being my biggest fan club.

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ABSTRACT

In our society the media has presented itself as an important tool in shaping both the identities of groups and individuals. In film, and possibly more deeply in African American films, the prolonged emotional and multi-sensoral experience heightens this importance. In America, there has been a historical presence of stereotypical characters in Black film and television shows as early as the 1800s. My assertion is that African Americans who are exposed to media images with stereotypical African American characters are affected negatively in psychological and social respects. The impacts include but are not limited to self esteem issues, poor identity development, negative social perceptions from non-Black groups, and a diminishing of confidence in Black capabilities (e.g. professionalism, intelligence etc.). In addition, it is my assertion that African Americans can take control of stereotypical images in the media through the development of independent film projects. There is a hunger for palatable portrayals of African Americans, and the presence or absence of such portrayals is experienced severely by African American viewers. This research will take a historical look at stereotypical images, the difference in content when examining commercial and independent film releases, and the motivations of Black independent filmmakers to change the landscape of Black film.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Despite the strong sense we have of ourselves as autonomous individuals, evidence consistently shows that contingencies tied to our social identities do make a difference in shaping our lives, from the way we perform in certain situations to the careers and friends we choose. (Steele, 2010, p. 14)

Stereotype is a word that we hear and use often when discussing character portrayals in media. Several cultures could assert that they are always depicted in a certain manner when it comes to film, television, and in the news. The ways in which these portrayals are carried out can prove to be detrimental, especially if they are negative and/or unrealistic. The long lasting psychological and social affects go unnoticed. Media portrayals often impact the perception that one has of themselves as well as the perceptions of others. Oftentimes groups will allow the media to dictate their roles in society or how they should behave. Even though audiences typically watch movies for entertainment purposes, the portrayals and associations between characters can influence the manner in which the viewer actually perceives themselves and also others. Kellner (1995) asserted that “media images help shape our view of the world and our deepest values: what we consider good or bad, positive or negative, moral or evil” (p. 5). The attitudes people have towards others are influenced to some degree by their perceptions of the personal qualities of the other individual or group of individuals (Asch, 1946; Freedman, Carlsmith, & Sears, 1970). There are, however, several other important factors that operate in the dynamic process of interpreting sensory input. Cognitive data, past occurrences, and the environment of the sensory input add to the perception of individuals (P. Reid, 1979).

In a *Journal of Black Studies* piece written by Glenn and Cunningham (2009), they explain a distinctive personality and history of race relations and imagery in the country that contributes to the intricacy of studying and analyzing communication and race. The media tends to develop images that have an effect on the observations that people have of one another. The movie industry illustrates the commonness of these media-projected images. The producers of major film projects aim to entertain and stimulate the interest of the masses to generate large profits. Millions of people go to theaters to view the dream world that Hollywood has created. A large amount of this information that is presented in films actually guides the configuration and expectations in actual society. The images that pertain to the dealings and relationships between people from different ethnic and racial backgrounds have significant connotations for audience members' perceptions of race relations.

However the consumer has the power to take control of the images that they are presented with in films. Also the filmmaker who's motivated to change the template for films can make a difference with regard to how cultural groups (e.g. African Americans) can and will be perceived in the future. The way to take control of this situation is for African American directors to develop and produce independent films. This gives the opportunity for movie goers to have the opportunity to see home grown productions that depict more of a realistic portrayal of African Americans.

Glenn and Cunningham (2009) explain that films tend to use exaggerated characterizations and narrow roles of Black characters to appeal to a broader audience. Ashmore and McConahay (1975) found that Whites often feel threatened and hesitant to interact with Blacks, who are often presented in negative ways. Therefore it is believed

that Blacks on White programs would behave more like the White characters than like the Black characters on Black programs. This would allow White characters to interact with Blacks as they would with other Whites (P. Reid, 1979).

So the question is: Why not take back the image of the African American through independent film? A film subculture exists where Black independent filmmakers are creating films that do not contain any of the stereotypical characters that are repeatedly seen in the big blockbuster, mainstream productions. Independent film is a way to focus the audience's attention towards films that have realistic portrayals of African Americans, broader character development, and to reinforce positive imagery to the general public as a whole. The goals of this research are as follows:

- Identify whether the filmmaker is consciously motivated to make films that speak to alternate and/or more realistic depictions of Black characters and culture
- Identify possible patterns that may exist within Black independent filmmaking that can be used to possibly change larger or commercially released film projects
- Create an awareness to the effects of the exposure of constant negative imagery in the media on the Black psyche
- Create a sense of social responsibility in the consumer to be more selective and/or open minded when supporting certain Black film projects

What is Independent Film?

In short, independent film as described by Shepard (2011) consists of a low budget and an emphasis on character and story. Though true indie films still exist we're seeing increasing numbers of indie movies with eight-figure budgets, movie stars, and the support of if not the studios, then of important Hollywood people and *their* important

people. Gilmore (2001) describes indie film as aggressively, passionately, creatively driven and original. The fact that indie film provides a platform with limitless freedom creates a great opportunity for African American filmmakers to create projects that are far more positive than popular mainstream culture depictions.

To date there are several Black independent filmmakers who are taking the “do it yourself” attitude very seriously when it comes to filmmaking. These projects are being pushed by film festivals and organizations that have the Black interest at the forefront of their mission. Their purpose is to create quality Black films that are made by Black directors. Independent films do not reach the large audience numbers that traditional blockbusters are able to consistently maintain. This is due to the fact that indie films are advertised through word of mouth and other very accessible mediums. In the *New York Times* article “Building an Alliance to Aid Films by Blacks,” Michael Cieply (2011) interviewed Black independent filmmaker, Ava DuVernay, states that the plan is to “put Black-theme movies in commercial theatres, initially from the independent film program recently begun by the AMC theater chain” (p. C1). In the article she went on to say that her independent films are supported by “social networks, mailing lists and other buzz-building services at the disposal of allied ethnic film festivals” (p. C1).

This type of small scale filmmaking and advertising draws an audience that is very conscious. Black consciousness can be defined as a state of mind or practice where the goal is to work together to in order to fight oppression, celebrate culture, exude cultural pride and build communities/institutions that will uplift the race. The astute moviegoer attempts to make intelligent choices about the imagery that they are presented with. Exposing these intellectual leaders to positive images will in turn have a positive

impact on the community as a whole. These moviegoers will share their film experiences with others and possibly even invite others who may not have been familiar with indie films to participate in this different cinematic platform.

Stereotypical Depictions of African Americans in Film

In order to refrain from repeating historical depictions in film we must examine the past and determine exactly how it has affected our current society. Since colonial times negative depictions of African Americans have been prevalent in American history. The early Blackface minstrel shows of the 19th century show Blacks as happy, naïve, gullible, and uninformed. These characteristics are related to the way slaveholders in earlier years believed them to be. Scholars such as Patricia A. Turner (1994), note that well known stereotypical items in the American culture give a picture of Blacks as servile, primal or unsophisticated. In turn this explains how slight influences of such ostensibly undamaging portrayals strengthen anti-Black attitudes.

Martin (2008) asserts that television is a powerful medium. Peffley, Shields, and Williams (1996) found in their study that racial stereotypes about African Americans are easily stimulated through visual means, which speaks to the idea that TV can be persuasive because of its ability to capture the attention of its viewers. Oftentimes TV serves as a way for people to scrutinize the world around them and TV characterizations, whether negative or positive, can manipulate people's attitudes towards one another. A study done by Wright et al. (1995) support the Cultivation Hypothesis, and assert that media exposure can actually influence a person's acumen of reality. In addition they explain that children often learn social information from what they see on television.

Martin (2008) points out that there are two main themes regarding the Black presence on television. Historically there has been a reoccurrence of negative or distorted images of African Americans on TV or an absence of the culture altogether. There have been some changes to the depictions of African Americans over the years, however the underlying impact remains on the majority society at large and how African Americans are seen or how they see themselves. Oftentimes Blacks are portrayed as lazy, very religious, or even magical in a sense. Other common stereotypes that emerge include Blacks having a love for Kool-Aid, watermelon, and fried chicken. Often African American men are portrayed as athletes, musicians, criminals, streetwise, uneducated, unemployed, etc. Other Black stereotypes include mammies, jezebels, the magical Negro, and Uncle Toms. Unfortunately when watching films with these types of characters in them, there is no platform in place where the players can be examined and discussed. Oftentimes when one leaves a movie theater they engage in a dialogue with the person that they have just seen the film with. However there is no way to ensure that the dialogue does not just contain superficial observances about the characters in the film. This is dangerous because the non-Black moviegoer may have no realistic reference point to utilize in order to formulate constructs about the African American culture. On the flip side, Black moviegoers may internalize those negative images and begin to believe that this is how society views them and/or this is how society expects them to act when it comes to daily interactions.

Martin (2008) described five common distortions of Blacks in media, as outlined by Bogle (1989), which he deemed their usage as a means to entertain by “stressing the inferiority of Blacks” (p.339), the Uncle Tom or *Good Negro* who was “socially

acceptable, submissive, often insulted” (p.339), but who exhibits any disloyalty against their slave master; the Mammy, closely related to the comic Coon, was often depicted as “fat, fiercely independent, ill-tempered” (p. 340), and often troublemaking; the Mulatto, who was considered to be an acceptable Black, because of their Caucasian features and White heritage; the Buck, who was represented as “big, oversexed, savage-like” (p.340), and dangerous; and the Coon, of which there are three types—(a) the pure Coon, who is “unreliable, lazy” (p.340), and spends all his time eating watermelon and speaking English very poorly, this was popularized by the famous Black actor StepinFetchit; (b) the Pickaninny, the “harmless Negro child whose eyes bulged and whose hair stands on end” at the slightest provocation; and (c) Uncle Remus, who was satisfied with his place in life as a slave or servant, and appeared to be harmless and naïve”(p. 340).

Other negative depictions of the Black female included that of the Jezebel who was seen as seductive, enticing, and vulgar, and the Sapphire who was seen as angry, domineering, loud, and emasculating. Black men were also seen in the role of the Sambo. These characters were always laughing, carefree, musical, and subservient (Martin, 2008). Although these obvious negative depictions have changed over the decades, there are still subtle remnants of these old stereotypical images. Instead of “Coons, Mammy, and Sambos, African Americans are now often characterized in the media as criminals, delinquents, and entertainers and athletes, irresponsible, lazy, arrogant, or devoted sidekicks to or in need of being saved by Whites”(p. 340). These images can further promote the already accepted stereotypes of African Americans within majority culture. But they also persist to create caricatures of the Black experience, reducing African Americans from “whole beings to an image or stereotypical behavior” (p. 340). In a study

conducted by Rich, Woods, and Goodman (1998), gender and race in music videos and underscores were examined. There is the idea that these stereotypical images have not gone anywhere at all. Through their research they have found that Blacks are often commonly represented as the antagonist and the sufferer and they hypothesize that the videos may reaffirm the negative images of African American males as aggressive.

The Mammie. Collins (1999) asserted that the mammy image stems from the era of slavery to uphold society's majority group's desire to be in command of the view of roles for black women. Collins further described this controlling image as "the faithful, obedient, domestic servant. Created to justify the economic exploitation of house slaves and sustained to explain Black women's longstanding restriction to domestic service" (p. 72). The traditional characteristics of the mammy is that she loves the white family that she serves even more so than her own. The family that she works for may care for her, but she continuously provides them with compliant service and has accepted her role as a servant. Depictions of mammy tend to portray a woman that has a darker complexion and larger build. In addition the character appears to have no sexuality, which in turn makes them undesirable to men (Davis, 1983). Christian (1980) described her as:

Black in color as well as race and fat with enormous breasts that are full enough to nourish all the children of the world; her head is perpetually covered with her trademark kerchief to hide the kinky hair that marks her as ugly. Tied to her physical characteristics are her personality traits: she is strong, for she certainly has enough girth, but this strength is used in the service to her white master and has a way of keeping her male counterparts in check; she is kind and loyal, for she is a mother; she is sexless. (p. 12-13)

The mammy role has come to be a conventional model with regard to black women's relationships with powerful whites in mainstream society (Collins, 1999). These roles have been seen in movies such as *The Imitation of Life* (1934) and *Gone with the Wind* (1939). West (2008) suggests that we are still seeing the Mammy character in our daily lives. In the 1990s, the Quaker Oats company did away with Aunt Jemima's trademark red bandana and jettisoned her slave dialect. Despite the mammy revamp, presentations of the archetype still continue to surface. Consider the Pine-Sol lady, a dark-skinned, slightly overweight, motherly figure who smilingly announced, "Honey, its rain clean Pine-Sol" (p. 289). Another modern representation of the mammy figure is the spokeswoman for Popeye's chicken. She is similar in physical description and she also uses the word *honey* on a regular basis while she talks about their Louisiana style chicken. Modern film representations of the Mammy character include Jennifer Hudson in *The Secret Life of Bees* (2008) and Viola Davis's character in *The Help* (2011).

The Jezebel. Glenn and Cunningham (2009) define the role of the jezebel where it depicts Black women as hyper sexualized beings. This image conceptualizes Black women as sexually deviant and aggressive, which helped dominant society demote them to the role of reproduction during slavery. The jezebel exemplifies the belief that Black women have voracious appetites and are eager to participate in any aberrant sexual behavior in order to give pleasure. This character is easily found in the Blaxploitation movies of the 1970s. Those films include titles such as *Sweet Sweetback's Baadass Song* (1971) and *Foxy Brown* (1974). A modern movie representation of this archetype was shown with Halle Berry's character in *Monsters Ball* (2001).

The Magical or Wise Negro. Crowds and Georgakas (2001) state that film director Spike Lee commented on the absurdity of the magical Negro characters. Lee stated that the “magical, mystical Negroes generally appear in the form of a spirit or angel” (p. 5). He further noted that “the Black characters in these films use their powers to help the White characters, but do not utilize them to help themselves” (p.4). These roles have been seen in movies such as *The Green Mile* (1999) and *The Legend of Bagger Vance* (2000). “Consistent with the magical Negro characterizations in film, these stereotypes depict Blacks’ primary function as using their gift or power to please Whites’ characters or aid them with their problems”(p. 4). A modern depiction of this character could include Denzel Washington’s character Eli in *The Book of Eli* (2010) or Queen Latifah’s portrayal of August in *The Secret Life of Bees* (2008).

The Uncle Tom. The Uncle Tom controlling image stems from Harriet Beecher Stowe’s (1852-1998) poignant novel, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. Originally published in 1852, the novel details

Uncle Tom and his family’s trials and tribulations during slavery and aimed to promote the abolitionist movement. Uncle Tom’s noteworthy traits include his friendliness with one of his White slave owners, selfless assistance to White characters in the novel, and strong religious convictions. In his plight, Uncle Tom saves a young White girl from drowning, befriends her, and sacrifices his life to protect others. (Glenn & Cunningham, 2009, p. 139)

The Uncle Tom character can be seen in movies such as *Driving Miss Daisy* (1989) and *To Sir with Love* (1967). This characterization was most recently seen in Samuel L. Jackson’s characterization of Stephen in Quentin Tarantino’s *Django Unchained* (2012).

Statement of the Problem

These images are based on ideologies that represent real aspects of social existence, such as race relations and stereotypes. Without taking control of Black images in film, the culture would be doing itself a disservice. For example, if images of African Americans achieving success (e.g. educational) are not shown, then the educational priority may not be as high as it could or should be. Additional effects include negative perception that non-Blacks formulate about African Americans after being exposed to less than desirable imagery. Non-Blacks could potentially perceive the cultural group as being less ambitious, educationally unmotivated, and disinterested in progress. For African Americans exposed to this imagery they may even feel as though they are not suited for higher education.

Rocchio (2000) stated, "The contemporary status of race in mainstream American culture is intimately bound to the process of representations within and through the mass media" (p. 4).

Media images impact the way that Whites perceive Blacks. As Blacks move closer to the realm of acceptability with Whites, the images in movies can be critical to the extent of this acceptance. These images are significant because Whites have not completely accepted Blacks as equals and remain ensconced in attitudes that confer superiority to Whites. (Mazama, 2003, p. 13)

Glenn and Cunningham (2009) assert that Whites may believe that these ideal harmonious relationships depict current social status; therefore, racial problems only exist in the minds of Black people. As a result of Blacks transitional status, the magical Negro has

emerged as a new version of traditional racial stereotypes because most Hollywood screenwriters do not know much about Black people other than what they see or hear in other media forms. Consequently, instead of having life histories or love interests, Black characters possess magical powers. (Farley, 2000, p. 14)

Hollywood screenwriters are often unaware about what it means to be black. Therefore they create images that will appeal to white viewers and that they will be comfortable with. Historically images of racism exist within these roles where the sullied black role and glorified white hero are not just characters for the viewer but they are emblematically used so that white audiences do not have to consider the ethical implications or accuracy of these roles (Snead, 1994).

Martin (2008) asserts that there has been an increase in more suitable and constructive representations of African Americans in the media. This is most often seen when discussing this change with its interpretation of African Americans as sophisticated and family-oriented. Other shows seen in the past made the existence of African Americans on TV more noticeable, but oftentimes there was still a subtle stereotypical reference of the past. Movies have also enhanced their depiction of African Americans. Sidney Poitier was one of the first male Black actors to play characters that showed him in non-stereotypical and affirmative roles for audiences to see. Other actors, like Denzel Washington, Halle Berry, and Morgan Freeman came after Poitier and have established parts that have broken the limitations of race—as police officers, heroes etc., but the number of caricatures that still exist appear to sometimes overshadow the positives. With its disappearance in the 1980s, most African Americans in TV appear

mainly in comedies and hardly ever in dramas or in leading roles. In the 2007/2008 season, Blacks were more often represented in dramas, but for the most part in ensemble roles and not as leading actors. The shows that had predominately African American characters were comedies. Ultimately, this is where representative stereotypes such as the *athlete*, *buck*, *jezebel*, and *sapphire* were still being shown. Although progress has been made, there are still issues that need to be examined and overcome.

Statement of the Purpose

Author Bell Hooks (1995) explained that Whites who have no contact with Blacks still think they have an understanding about what it means to be Black. They hold this belief because of their actual status, and by viewing the roles played by Blacks while acting. This method of creating constructs and assumptions about other cultures proves to be quite detrimental. The person who has never been exposed to Blacks may be conditioned to construct ideals about their culture and implement those ideas in possible future interactions. Racial isolation heightens the importance of the messages Whites receive about Blacks from the mass media, and especially from the most widely consumed source, television. Its invariable stream of messages designed to inform, enjoyably distract, and, above all, put targeted audiences in the frame of mind to buy, creates two influential roles for television. Along with other media, it is both a measurement of race relations and a potential accelerator either to racial unity or to cultural division and political inconsistency. Because Whites control mass media groups, and because the White mainstream status make their tastes the most prominent in audience-maximizing calculations, media productions offer an illuminating gauge of new forms of racial demarcation. Beyond providing a diagnostic tool, a measuring device for

the state of race relations, the media also acts as a contributory agent: they help to shape and reshape the culture (Entman&Rojecki, 2000).

Weigel, Loomis, and Soja (1980) point out that for many viewers, the vicarious interracial contact provided by television may be their only interracial contact. In one survey done by Greenberg (1972) of 300 White elementary school children for example, 40% of the subjects reported that television was their best source of information about how Blacks look, talk, and dress. Yet despite the possibility that vicarious cross-racial experiences could affect viewers' *real-life* relations, the only study that has attempted to evaluate television's portrayal of cross-racial interactions (Mendelson& Young, 1972) focused exclusively on children's programming and assessed the quality of the interactions only in terms of the number of Blacks and Whites present and their relative status.

Ultimately this can cause for a very awkward or offensive interaction between an African American and someone of non-Black origin. It is probably not feasible for everyone to know everything about all other cultures. However it is important for cultures to have sensitivity for one another and learn of those sensitivities through realistic and accurate depictions of that culture. Unfortunately everyone does not always have the best discernment when it comes to deciphering whether the images in films are accurate portrayals or not. Therefore it is the responsibility of Blacks to take control of images that are being presented in order to insure that people have the opportunity to be exposed to this positive imagery. However, some scholars conjecture the country has experienced enough forward movement with regard to race relations, which negative

references to black are rare and often trivial outside the aptitude to carry an actual impact (Mendelberg, 2008).

The purpose of this effort for transformation of African Americans is to not only better society but also address the lasting psychological effects that negative images have on the Black community as a whole. With African American directors taking charge of movies made about African Americans the prominent image when one goes to the theater.

Research Questions

For the purpose of this study it's desired to examine what template Black independent filmmakers utilize in order to create their movies. Ultimately it needs to be determined whether there is a distinct motivation to create projects that will not resemble large/popular box office releases. This study will take a qualitative approach in an effort to examine themes that may emerge during interviews with Black independent filmmakers. Specifically, a grounded theory approach will be utilized as the research strategy for this study. The following five research questions will be examined:

1. Does the filmmaker use their films to educate or just to entertain?
2. What barriers impede on the creation of an independent Black film?
3. Will independent film ever be as widely received as large box office releases?
4. Does the filmmaker feel a sense of social responsibility with regards to the content of their films?
5. Are there any negative stereotypes in film that have done damage to the Black culture?

Summary

If the images of African Americans in the media improve then the outlook within the community will improve as well. Ultimately, when positive images are shown the Black viewer will begin to believe that positive goals and achievements are more realistic. Taking control of Black images in film can be achieved through the medium of independent film and documentaries. These filmmakers are not motivated by huge film budgets and the pressure to draw large audiences. They are, however, motivated to develop characters with more substance and realistic qualities. This motivation to make real films about real African Americans can give the non-Black society an opportunity to truly expose them to the Black culture. In turn, the independent films will allow for a dialogue to take place amongst movie goers that view films containing images that are far more tangible and genuine than those that have been presented throughout America's cinematic history.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The Black presence in the film industry has been ever changing. Since the 19th century the characterization of Blacks in film has evolved from less than desirable depictions to more palatable ones. Robinson (2007) described this evolution when he stated that Black minstrelsy countered Blackface minstrelsy's race movies countered the misrepresentation of the Black middle class and when the capitalization of films all but removed an alternative Black cinema, Black comedians produced an oppositional nuance, which they insinuated into Hollywood itself. The purpose of this chapter is to provide the reader with pertinent literature that pertains to this topic. This literature review will look at the Black presence in film starting from pivotal points during the 19th Century to present day. More specifically, this section will define what *indie* film is, the historical depictions of Blacks in film, how negative images affect the psyche of the African American, the motivation of movie makers to produce certain depictions, how these depictions have changed over the years, and also the involvement of Blacks in independent film.

What is Independent "Indie" Film?

Holmlund and Wyatt (2005) stated that for numerous critics and many audience members too, the name *indie* implicates social engagement or even an artistic experimentation which could include a very distinctive presentation, an unusual delivery of the narrative and a self reflective style. The definition advanced in 2003 by the editorial board of *Filmmaker Magazine*, the journal of the Independent Feature Project, and the Independent Feature Project/West. It acknowledges cross-over potential. In an annual article introducing "25 New Faces of Indie Film," *Filmmaker Magazine's* editors

speculate that independent films are broadly associated with unconventional viewpoints, whether they be conveyed in untried approaches or through crowd-pleasing humor (Filmmaker Magazine, 2003).

Holmlund and Wyatt (2005) explained that audiences for indie films vary by age, across religion, and in size, because certain indie films target *niche* audiences, while some tap into diasporic populations, and others address trans-national communities. The authors went on to explain that hundreds of other independent movies see no distribution, in part because—like production costs, price tags for prints and advertising have soared. Holmlund and Wyatt explain that Contemporary American independent films run the financial gamut, from *no budge* (under \$100,000) to *micro* or *low budge* (under \$1 million) to *tweeners* (\$10-30 million) produced and marketed by mini-majors. Mini-majors pertain to independent film houses teaming up with major motion picture companies. Distribution as well may or may not be handled independently.

M. Reid (1993) defines Black independent films as those that concentrate on the Black community and that are written, directed, produced and distributed by Blacks. This ranges from blacks taking part in films that were developed during the turn of the century up through the civil rights movement of the sixties. This also includes the recent renaissance of feminism in the Black culture production.

Distribution

It has been explained that distribution has conquered the Hollywood production, distribution and exhibition sequence since the industry was shaken up by the Paramount Consent Decree. The fact that it controls large numbers of the industry's products, the films themselves, are the main thing that give distribution power. A film production

company usually caters to a particular audience segment with a small number of directors and creative people committed to a particular product style. In contrast, exhibitors try to own as many screens as they can fill to attract a wide audience to their theaters. Their goal is to show as many films as they can get that will attract the largest possible number of paying customers. A film that will encourage repeat viewing by customers who speak favorably about the film, and bring friends, is an exhibitor's ideal (Rhines, 1996).

Producers depend on distributors to get their films to theaters and to advertise them. Exhibitors depend on distributors to supply them with enough films to keep their screens filled 12 months a year. Placed between these two businesses that have invested millions in a film's creation or in theater construction and amenities, the distributor is in an ideal position to influence the entire trade. The majors are primarily film distribution companies, not film production companies. Although the list has changed over time, the major Hollywood studios include *20th Century Fox*, *Paramount*, *MGM*, *United Artists*, *Warner Bros.*, *Columbia*, *Universal*, and *Disney*. By financing the production of films, these large companies ensure that they will have a product to distribute. Exhibitors base expansion of facilities on prediction of a marginal increase or decrease in the number of film distributors supplied the previous year. Essentially, what a distributor does is (a) convince an exhibitor that showing a particular film will be profitable, (b) entice the public to pay to see the film, (c) deliver a print (copy) of the original film to the theater owner, and (d) collect a portion of the box office receipts taken in at the theater (Rhines, 1996).

Lastly, Rhines (1996) goes on to say that distribution is the greatest obstacle to multinational success for Black feature filmmakers, crews, and cast members. From the

early 20th century until now, the lack of eagerness that distribution companies, (the vast majority of which are controlled by Whites), have exhibited for managing films controlled by Blacks has meant a scarcity of Black entrepreneurial and employment success in the Hollywood film industry. Although there are obstacles Guerrero (1993) indicates that Hollywood's continuous efforts to outline blackness are constantly confronted by the cultural and political self-definitions of African Americans, who overall have been established since the start of commercial cinema to fight against this restrictive system of representation. Guerrero goes on to explain that there is a dialectical push of Hollywood's cultural construction and domination of the Black image and the pull of an insistent Black social consciousness and political activism that has recently generated waves of Black-focused and independent films into commercial cinema's trajectory.

Movie Maker Motivation

In Knight's (2002) book *Disintegrating the Musical*, he explained the specifics pertaining to why Hollywood film studios rationalize, control, and expand the production and consumption of movies. These efforts at vertically integrating the business a film has as their aim creating and maintaining the largest possible audience. Consequently, these efforts not only affected economic decisions (i.e., decisions to invest in all the layers of production, distribution, and exhibition as well as in ancillary industries like music publishing) but also influenced the form film would take, and crucially, the types of spectators these films imagined and tried to posit for themselves. Rhines (1996) asserts that while the new Black filmmakers openly admit to fears and skepticism derived from their perceptions and expectations of hostile, discriminatory, or condescending treatment

by White film professionals, White political scientist Andrew Hacker (as cited in Rhines, 1996) says what his research indicates might undergird White financiers' racial ideas:

There is a fear of Africa. A fear of the United States becoming "Africanized." That this will somehow pull us down from our European origins. From the kind of civilization that White people have built up over the centuries. As a result we are willing to integrate Hispanics and Asians. We draw the line at people of African origin. (p.6)

Knicht (2002) goes on to say that the film industry's efforts to create a mass audience homogenous enough, or at least consume homogeneously enough, to be an efficient market for its integrated business structure would at least in theory, run a fool of the fact that across the classic era of filmmaking much of the United States was legally segregated, and virtually all of it was informally segregated by race.

With regards to modern day indie filmmaking Holmlund and Wyatt (2005) explained that a director often sets their signature on an indie feature while making these films, as opposed to studio blockbusters, more genuinely the work of the filmmaker. Holmlund and Wyatt went on to state that for those without production backing or distribution help from majors or mini-majors (i.e., the majority of documentarians, everyone who makes avant-garde work and many young and old hopefuls, in particular African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, and/or women) who helm short and feature fiction films-the situation today is far worse than when the current indie boom began in the late 1970s and early 1980s. State and Federal funding has dried up, and although there are literally hundreds of festivals screening independent films, only a few, *Sundance* and *Toronto Prime* are among the-net pickups.

Despite its significance, race is not the primary concern of Blacks in the modern film industry. Theatrical feature films are first and foremost, commercial ventures. John Izod (1988), head of Film and Media studies at the University of Stirling, says “Profits have always, from the earliest days, been the primary objective of the American film industry” (p. 56). From the standpoint of the movie business, the main goal of any feature filmmaker, regardless of race or gender, is making money. However, there is also no doubt that because they are not White, Black men and women are generally relegated to the margins of the film industry (Rhines, 1996).

Blackface and minstrelsy. The primary convention that identified the minstrel show as entertainment was burnt cork makeup. The mixture of charred, crushed champagnes corks and water (sometimes petroleum jelly or a like substance) acts as a mark of race that an actor or company presented what were selected facets of the Black culture to audiences that were intrigued by how racial gaps and enslavement reiterated dissimilarities between blacks and whites (Mahar, 1998). Robinson (2007) explained that Blackface minstrelsy was essentially a forgery of Black culture as Frederick Douglass characterized it in 1848, is routinely assigned by its historians to the nineteenth century. Lott (1995) stated that in an October 27, 1848 issue of the *North Star*, Douglass wrote that Blackface performers were “the filthy scum of White society, who have stolen from us a complexion denied to them by nature, in which to make money, and pander to the corrupt taste of their White fellow citizens”(p. 15). Indeed, minstrelsy is frequently nominated as the dominant venue of popular entertainment in America in that century. Knight (2002) argued that the origin of “Blackface” is unknown. However Robinson (2007) asserts that it has become quite obvious that minstrelsy persisted into the 20th century and beyond. He

went on to point out that it has survived on the stages of burlesque and musical comedy in the earliest decades of the last century, and acquired its most robust impact on American popular culture as a persistent trope in American Silent films. Mahar (1998) indicated that the makeup was also a mask for White performers who chose caricatureskits as techniques to parodypopularbeliefs, while still strengtheningextensively held traditionalviewpoints. Minstrel players made Blackface a medium for the establishment of an *American* style of commercialized popular culture in what was fundamentally a post-colonialist entertainment setting. One man says the first person to use cork to put over a song and dance was an English *varieties* artist. Some say that the original Blackface was actually a former slave who sang his song to a stable of Kentucky thoroughbreds as he groomed them daily in Louisville (Knight, 2002). Robinson (2007) explains that the traditions of Black representation on the minstrel stage were invented during an era in which most Blacks appeared to be permanently confined in slavery a world away. In the urban setting of this minstrelsy, targeting Blacks for caricature was coincident with a lack of concern for any retaliation. Mahar (1998) also indicates that burnt cork was a cover that allowed professional and amateur entertainers to protect themselves from, andexpressindividual and emotional identification with the material they were performing.

The history of Blackface does not touch every form of fashionablecomposition; it is connected to the very arrangement of antebellum popular culture. The commanding effect of market domination of the minstrel show was based on the range of amusementBlackface offered at a relatively low cost and resulted from the recurrent content modifications managers and performers made to meet the expectations of

antebellum viewers. Minstrelsy was a product, a compilation of freely related genres, addressed to the lowest common denominator viewers for the express purpose of providing at least a modest living for performers who seldom “crossed over” to other musical venues (Mahar, 1998). Robinson (2007) stated that in silent movies when melodrama, romance, costume drama, Western, or any of the other genres adapted from the stage or literature drew on Blackness, minstrelsy dictated the semiotics. Because for the new racial regime, minstrelsy embodied the iconography of Blackness in popular culture, minstrelsy held absolute domain over Blackness and the imagery of Blackness.

Robinson (2007) explained that the administration of the substitution of filmed Blackface minstrelsy for staged minstrelsy was performed with a difference. On the stage, Blackface minstrelsy projected the Negro, the effect, according to James Dormon (1988), was that the minstrel was presented as a harmless figure. He (or less frequently she) was indisputably ignorant (though not always unwise: the minstrel could be cunning and even clever), inept, and eccentric in his misappropriations of the customs of the white culture. Mahar (1998) argued that Blackface entertainers accomplished the following:

- Borrowed from a variety of English, French, and Italian musical, dramatic, and literary sources imported in the United States as part of a concerted effort to establish some sense of cultural parity with European society
- Appropriated basics from African American and Anglo-American musical and cultural practices and represented them originally to primarily urban audiences
- Toured on three main circuits giving the musical and theatrical contents of variety shows widely through the South, Midwest, West, and North

- Contributed to the sometimes contradictory American beliefs and attitudes about race, gender, and class
- Established themselves as the principle characters in a primarily masculine entertainment preserve that exalted competitiveness and helped to define acceptable standards for the expression of male sentimentality
- Marginalized women in songs and sketches that restricted their sexual, domestic, and public roles in American society
- Demonstrated the possibilities for developing a popular, accessible, and profitable commercial product from the fusion of what often appeared to be mutually exclusive stylistic ingredients.

Each of the previously mentioned arguments assumes that burlesque was one of minstrelsy's essential traits, and that existing as they did in post-colonialist society without a strong indigenous music style, Blackface music and theatre began with parodies or imitations of African American, English, Italian, and Anglo-American sources.

Knight (2002) pointed out that WhiteBlackface, in its most obvious, ritualized, mask-like form, still had not completely run its course in U.S. film in 1949. The last Blackface Hollywood films were made in 1953. In combination with mass mediation, however, Blackface had done its critical work for African Americans, who had forsaken Blackface as a Black performance tradition and who, at least judging from the printed record, had lost interest in WhiteBlackface in general. Mass mediaBlackface had made clear for African American critics, and probably for larger Black audiences, that

pleasure or criticism internal to Black communities and audiences could no longer be enough; they had to struggle to express cultural and political alternatives to Blackface that would be visibly different from, or disconnected from Blackface, even to White audiences reluctant to see such a difference. (p. 91)

Robinson (2007) stated that the difference between staged and filmed Blackface, Consequently, was a result of the radically distinct historical eras in which these venues Were generated, the audiences for whom they were created, and the cultural shields required by their respective spectators. And, as we shall see, what would complicate this transfer from stage minstrelsy to movies was the now contested terrain of minstrelsy itself. By the late 19th century, minstrelsy had come to contain concealed resistances, gestures of opposition smuggled in, and hidden by the Black minstrel performers so prominent in the form. Their impact was to be reflected in a second cinema: the independent Black film or all-Black-cast film. Given the generally decreasing number of references to *southern plantation darkies* and *northern dandy negroes* as the minstrel show developed; there was every reason to question minstrelsy's alleged connections with African American music and dancing. Nonetheless, the minstrel show "was the first point of intersection between and African American culture with a rich musical heritage that included African retentions and a largely derivative English and Italian stylistic tradition mixed occasionally with Anglo-American folk materials" (Mahar, 1998, p. 4).

Blacks in film during the 1800s. Robinson (2007) claimed that in the United States, the technical development of moving pictures in the late 19th century was soon enveloped in the formation of an industry, which, in turn, became an agency of power and wealth. Prior to these events, the disintegration of a century-long slave system had

deposited a racial regime in American culture. Without a hint of irony, that racial regime had achieved its maturity at precisely the moment when its internal contradictions were most marked (the great slave rebellions of the 19th century) and domestic and international opposition was amassing. With the collapse of the slave system, a different racial regime was required, one which adopted elements from its predecessor but was not buttressing the domination of free labor.

The needs of finance capital, the dominant center of American commerce in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, determined the construction of successive racial regimes publicized by motion pictures. Racial constructs predate the arrival of moving pictures, and thus the representations of race and ethnicity (as well as gender) were transferred from the stage, literature, and popular culture. Robinson (2007) also explained that the appearance of moving pictures coincides with Jim Crow and the development of American national identity in the midst of dramatic demographic and economic changes.

Cripps (1977) explained that during the first 10 years of commercial cinema, starting in 1895, Afro-Americans through

luck and accident appeared on the screen in a more favorable light than they had done before in theater or fiction. Indeed, they portrayed a range of roles far more varied than American society would grant them in everyday life.(p. 8)

Unfortunately for Negroes, Whites slowly acquired technical and financial control over the motion picture industry and combined the many tiny studios into a nationwide system. This time period was also known as the silent film era. D.W. Griffith brought cross-cutting, close ups, and epic scope together to create the first feature film, *The Birth*

of a Nation. Oscar Micheaux responded to the racist tenor of Griffith's film and launched his own cinematic career (Rhines, 1996).

Cripps (1977) went on to explain that the first Negroes to appear on film were a group of West Indians who appeared in a series of short pieces shot for Edison *Kinetoscopes* in 1895. They danced, bathed, and coaled ships in film uncorrupted or altered by editing. Many relatively benign, vaguely anthropological vignettes followed, including a few Indian subjects. Occasionally in the 1890s there were humiliating bits such as Edison's *Watermelon Contest* in which four grinning Negroes choked down melons and spat seeds. Robinson (2007) explained that in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, contrarily, Blacks were loose in American society. They were still grotesque buffoons, but a certain vigilance was appropriate, even a modicum of violence:

Early motion pictures supported barbarism toward Black men because the aggression did not really appear to be damaging and because this use of vigor upheld the moral order. Of course, this harmless violence served as an accompaniment to the actual brutality of the new racial regime. (Robinson, 2007, p. 232)

Many of the audience members were recent immigrants who not only carried no baggage of racial lore, but were insulated from Southern literary racism by their own illiteracy and were receptive to the cinema, which, like Vaudeville, demanded little knowledge of English. Cities accommodated the presence of Blacks and immigrants, while the countryside exhibited nativism and condoned lynching. In cities the older forms of entertainment, the minstrel shows and tent shows, slowly declined as movies first merged which then replaced Vaudeville (Cripps, 1977).

Cripps (1977) described that most early Negro appearances in film followed the Southern stereotypes of the dejected freeman, the comical Negro, the Black brute, and the tragic Mulatto, in keeping with fictitious and melodramatic tradition. The primitive techniques of early cameras made it difficult to convey these stereotypes, so visual reality often appeared despite the filmmakers. For one thing editorial cutting did not exist until 1903, so there could be no real screen narrative.

Cripps (1977) explained that in more primitive movies some Blackface figures made a strong impression. A cameraman shooting the 9th Colored Calvary had no way of cutting to Blacks serving mint juleps under a Southern moon. They were Black troops and had to appear as such. Location shooting (the filming of pictures on actual sites rather than stage sets) further gave a tone of authenticity to images and prevented distortion. Years passed before the medium moved beyond simple novelty.

Cripps (1977) describes how Afro-Americans suffered a major disadvantage during the three decades of silent film. So much Black entertainment had a strong musical element and depended upon audience reaction and participation for full effect. The absence of sound restricted the Black actor's range. Black movie audiences did try to make up for this lack of sound by rhythmic shouts, clapping, foot-tapping, and yells of encouragement to the heroes on screen. Robinson (2007) also asserted that the silent film era and the first decade of sound allowed us to map the forgeries of memory and representation, which served the most powerful interests in the country and their cultural brokers.

Cripps (1977) explained that in a pet project of Thomas A. Edison of *Kinetoscope*, a sharper deviation from racial typing appeared with disarming surrogate

Negroes in Blackface, allowing both aggressive and sexual roles. Edison had hoped to use minstrelsy in a test reel which was to synchronize sound-on-cylinders with film. In one of the reels the Blackface minstrels act out the traditional forms, with men in striped pants waving tambourines, but in another, *Minstrels Battling in a Room*, a White man in light clothing contrasts with the dark makeup of the minstrels who pummel him with a bottle. Cripps went on to explain that as White men learned the craft of the cinema, Blacks would find it less hospitable. But for the moment at least there were roles for Blacks other than the plantation slavery or the mulatto rotting in freedom. The worst problem for Blacks remained exclusion from the seats of power. An aggressive Black was usually enacted by a White man.

Blacks in film during the early 1900s. Cripps (1977) explains that by 1905 the old Negro stereotypes came back and catalogue writers who described the hundreds of films in release described their products as though they had learned nothing and forgotten nothing since the first *darkey* stories. Robinson (2007) stated that as a testament to its cultural vigor, minstrelsy eventually trolled through post-World War II American television. And in the 20th century, inasmuch as a persistent form may be so described, it was revived in television and films, thus acquiring the privilege of being the most recognized form of Black performance. With regard to the resurgence of stereotypical Black characters, Cripps describes that the script pages were thick with chicken thieves and crapshooters, and their appeal was to the *proverbial* and the old fashioned. Chicken thieves or some variation of the theme appeared in several catalogues, the most typical featuring a *colored dominie*, who joined in the feast just before the denouement under the

muzzle of a shotgun. Robinson stated that the largest subgenre of early films with Black depictions were films that featured African American men as chicken thieves.

Cripps (1977) described that in the early 1920s Hollywood could offer no mythic or artistic expression to Blacks fragmented by the urban experience. Hollywood continued to depict the old Southern stereotypes of Negroes as happy, lazy workers on the plantation. For the most part Black actors and audiences assimilated and preferred the slick Hollywood invention to *race* movies clumsily produced by Blacks. Cripps went on to explain that it must be said that Black actors in Hollywood were not traitors to the race. However, the general gist of Hollywood was liberal, and held out a promise of change that dulled Black disapproval over the decades.

Cripps (1977) explained that by the end of the Great Depression, popular taste had become more sophisticated and no longer was willing to accept so readily the old Southern stereotypes that Hollywood was offering. Black protests against these stereotypes were having their effect, too. Blacks were soon making Hollywood careers as character actors. Progress continued to slow, but all-Black Hollywood films appeared, and individual Black actors gained recognition through excellent parts often relatively free of racist overtones.

Cripps (1977) explains that Black gains were largely the result of White patronage and White liberalism. The Black enterprise to develop film talent also existed, however, it operated underground, inadequately financed, plagued by technical inadequacies and inexperience, and severely hampered by problems of distribution and publicity. The people at the fore front of the movement-the Lincoln Company, Oscar Micheaux, the Colored Players, Reol, Ralph Cooper, and George Randol. Unfortunately

Black audiences did not respond as Black filmmakers had hoped they would. The Black middle class found their films to be “ridiculous in their imitation of White norms of behavior, while many poorer Blacks must have strained unsuccessfully for a glimpse of themselves”(p. 6). Ultimately the moviegoers knew that Black sheriffs and millionaires did not exist in real life. Meanwhile in Europe, American expatriates as Paul Robeson, Josephine Baker, and Lewis Douglas appeared in movies that dealt with racism. Afro-Americans found little identity in such a role, so these films too, were rejected by Black audiences.

Knight (2002) explained that for Blacks in 1934 (also 1944 and 1954), going to the movies meant attending segregated but White-owned and managed theaters that played films employing mostly White performers and made by companies owned and controlled by Whites. Holmlund and Wyatt (2005) stated that in the 1930s the “Big Five” (*Warner Brothers, Paramount, MGM, Twentieth Century-Fox, and RKO*) consolidated their control over big budget and “programmer” production, contracting workers from directors and stars on down, and dominating a good deal of distribution and exhibition as well. Yet so great was the need for “B” and specialized products that independent studios sprang up to fill the need, churning out cheap westerns, exploitation, ethnic, and Black-cast films.

Blacks in film during the 1940s. Cripps (1977) explained that in the spring of 1942 during war, a page-one banner line in the show business trade paper, *Variety*, proclaimed “Better Breaks for Negroes in H’Wood” (p. 1). The news marked a watershed in the history of American racial arrangements that would have far-reaching implications for future social change. During the 1940s a century of dominance

of Southern racial metaphors in popular entertainment had come to an end. Movies, cartoons, mass-produced graphics, Tin Pan Alley music, and other popular diversions stopped depicting Afro-Americans as accommodating, contented, comic figures.

Cripps (1977) describes that in 1942 after many years of running fight, delegates of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the heads of several Hollywood studios met and codified some social changes and procedures. The studios agreed to abandon derogatory racial roles, to place Negroes in positions as extras they could rationally be expected to engage in in their society, and to begin the slow task of incorporating Blacks into the ranks of studio technicians. The contract directly affected only a small group of Hollywood Negroes, but the implications for the future were unlimited.

Cripps (1977) went on to explain that by 1942 the critics had turned away from race movies and now supported Hollywood and the NAACP as the most effective means to bring about proper depiction of Blacks on screen. The keenest of these writers recognized that, for all their symbolic value as Black enterprise, race movies tended to accept segregation, place White greed off-limits as a theme, rehash many stereotypes for which Hollywood had been blamed, set Black against Black, and imitate White movies.

Blacks in films of the 1970s. Weigel et al. (1980) point out that not so long ago, questions about the portrayal of cross-racial relationships in television broadcasting would have been ludicrous, since the frequency of Black appearance was negligible (e.g., Smyth, 1954). The situation had changed markedly by the 1969 season, however, when Dominick and Greenberg (1970) reported that 52% of all entertainment programs and 10% of all product commercials broadcast during prime time contained at least one

Black character. Indeed, on April 12, 1978, the *Washington Post* ran a front-page article under the headline, "On Television, Race No Longer Divides Us." Greider (1978) stated, "Every evening, America gathers in front of the television set and watches scenes from a different country—a vibrant land of Blacks and Whites together in living color" (p. 1). In supporting his view, Greider pointed to Black celebrities vending all manner of products, to the camaraderie among Black and White workers socializing together over a beer, and to similar increases in interracial dramatic programming. Ironically, only 2 weeks earlier *Time* magazine's main editorial (Morrow, 1978) complained about the *disturbing* way in which television depicted Black people and cross-racial interactions. Here, Morrow claimed that despite the increased visibility of Black characters, stereotypic roles and superficial relationships predominated.

When describing the climate of Blacks on television in the 1970s the numbers indicate a very lower occurrence in this decade. P. Reid (1979) states that in a preliminary survey of commercial television programs (focusing on dramas and situation comedies) occurring between the weekday hours of 3:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m. and the weekend hours of 8:00 a.m. and 11:00 p.m. was conducted by the author and a colleague during the spring of 1977. The findings confirmed those of previous researchers (Gerbner, 1972; Tedesco, 1974) with respect to the limited number of Blacks appearing on the regularly scheduled programs. In this survey, Blacks constituted about 1% of the characters appearing in weekly series. The data revealed that there were no dramatic programs dominated by Blacks or with a Black character in the major role. It was indicated that virtually all regularly appearing Black characters on television were on comedy programs.

When describing the films of the 1970s Bogle (2001) indicated that no other period in Black movie history, however, has been quite as energetic or important as the frenetic 1970s. More Black actors worked in films than ever before. Black writers such as Richard Wesley, Bill Gunn, and Lonnie Elder III wrote scripts for significant productions. Such Black directors as Gordon Parks, Sr, and Gordon Parks, Jr., as well as Sidney Poitier, Michael Schultz, Stan Lathan, Hugh Robertson, and Ossie Davis all made major studio films. For the first time in film history, the studios produced Black-oriented films slanted directly at pleasing Blacks. Audiences saw Black movie characters speaking in a new expression and cadence. Movies sought to give some resemblance of a Black community with a set of attitudes, aspirations, and gripe all its own. These two comparisons show the importance of Black participation in the creation of film and television projects.

In a study completed by P. Reid (1979) the behavioral characteristics of White and Black characters were examined. The primary purpose was to determine whether Blacks were portrayed as behaving differently from Whites on television programs. The hypothesis that Black characters would behave differently from Whites was formulated in terms of specific behavior categories. These categories were previously denied and utilized in the Sternglanz and Serbin study. Additional predictions were made concerning the effect of the racial composition of television programs on characters' behavior. It was expected that Blacks appearing on White-dominated programs would behave differently from those on Black-dominated programs. This expectation was based on studies of other media, such as films (Darden & Bayton, 1977) and print (Culley & Bennett, 1976).

The behavior categories and definitions of the Sternglanz and Serbin (1974) study were used with two modifications. The category magic was omitted, since supernatural powers were not presented in any of the programs. The category aggression was considered in relation to the victim of the aggressive act and was expanded as follows: aggression-m, aggressive behavior directed toward a male character; and aggression-f, aggressive behavior directed toward a female character. The other 10 categories remained the same: activity, achievement, dominance, deference, autonomy, harms avoidance, succorance, nurturance, recognition, and self-recognition. An example of Sternglanz and Serbin's (1974) definitions is as follows: "Deference—To follow directions or example (imitate) of a leader (except to ridicule) — either willingly or under threat. To admire or compliment" (p. 712).

A total of 28 television episodes were videotaped and 5 raters were randomly assigned to observe one character at a time in the show. They were asked to record the instances where the characters exhibited behavior in the categories that they had been trained on. P. Reid (1979) indicated that the ratings given to television characters on their performance of 12 types of behavior indicate that the race and sex of characters are the basis for portrayals on television comedy programs. Black female characters, for example, were rated as especially low on achievement, succorance, and self-recognition, whereas they rated high on dominance and nurturance. White female characters, on the other hand, were represented in a different manner. They appeared submissive and helpless, as evidenced by low ratings on dominance and high ratings on succorance. The characteristics described for the Black and White females imply racial stereotyping and seem to conform to images often portrayed in the media (King, 1973)

Bogle (2001) described that while images of the 1970s were far different from those of preceding decades; often enough the old stereotypes resurfaced, simply dressed in new clothing to look modern, hip, confrontational, and politically pertinent. The early years of the era might best be described as “*the age of the buck*, a period when a band of aggressive, pistol-packing, sexually-charged urban cowboys set off on a rampage, out to collapse the system and to right past wrongs” (p. 232). Other familiar faces also appeared: the beautiful doomed light skinned Black woman (also known as the tragic mulatto) and some fast-talking coons. Then, while the 1970s opened with films with some political heat, the age closed with movies that were increasingly more escapist. By the era’s end, there was even the return of a large-scale all-Black musical.

Bogle (2001) pointed out that Director Melvin Van Peebles emerged as somewhat of a hero in the Black community, partly because of the daring way he had produced his movie outside the Hollywood system. Working under the pretense of making a porno, Van Peebles used a nonunion crew (Blacks and Whites) and shot the picture in 19 days, all on a budget of \$500,000. At one point, Bill Cosby loaned him \$50,000. After most distributors refused to touch the film, *Cinematation* picked it up. Within a few months, *Sweetback* grossed \$10 million. In interviews Van Peebles used the tone appropriate for the times. He told *Time* in its August 16, 1971, issue,

Of all the ways we've been exploited by the Man, the most damaging is the way he destroyed our self-image. The message of *Sweetback* is that if you can get it together and stand up to the Man, you can win. (p. 238)

Bogle (2001) indicated that the Black films of the 1970s appeared to be Black and while they were anxiously promoted and advertised as such, they actually were no such

thing. Many of the new Black-oriented films were written, directed, and produced by Whites (the same, of course, had been true of the latter part of the race movie movement). Worse, many of the new movies were often shot with small budgets, were badly directed, and were technically poor. The film industry hoped simply to make money by indeed making use of an audience need. Eventually, there was the rise of what came to be known as the "blaxploitation film:" a movie that played on the needs of Black audiences for heroic figures without answering those needs in pragmatic terms.

Black Impact on the Box Office

Bogle (2001) asserted that capable Black actors, directors, and writers were rapidly taken out of studio hack rooms, modeling agencies and ghetto theaters, and given assignments on new Black projects, written in *Newsweek* in its October 23, 1972 cover story on the new Black movie boom. "But an astonishing number of Black films have been paying off at a rate to put their White counterparts in the shade...and...have... produced the first gold mine in years for a struggling industry" (p. 241). The Black audience's support of the new Black films may well have saved the commercial film industry at a time when general ticket sales were in a slump. However, in 1995 there were fewer than 10 Black-owned movie theaters in the entire country, and because most Blacks see movies, even Black movies, in suburban multiplexes (not in the inner cities where they live), it is almost impossible for Black people's admission fees to benefit their communities. Thus, at a time when more Black films are released than perhaps at any time in history, and when economic conditions in Black America are worse than in 1960, significantly less than one-quarter of the \$4.6 billion spent by African American moviegoers helped to improve their living conditions. In fact, the structure of film

distribution and exhibition created a net outflow of cash from Black neighborhoods. A wholesome economy is not a drain on its constituents. After nearly several hundred years, race remains a hugely important factor in getting African Americans employed, particularly behind the camera (Rhines, 1996).

The 2000 U.S. Census illustrates that although African Americans represent 12% of the U.S. population, they still comprise a large proportion of TV spectators. The 2005-2006 Nielsen Media Research report (as cited in Martin, 2008) expressed how

African American screening levels have enlarged by 4%, as compared to the 2004–2005 seasons, with the bulk of the swell seen among children and teenage girls. African American children ages 2–11 and teenagers ages 12–17 were shown to watch more TV in the 2005–2006 seasons, by 10% and 9%, respectively, in contrast to the previous year's totals. It has also been stated that in Black homes, the TV is typically on 11 hours and 10 minutes a day (79 hours a week) compared to 7 hours and 34 minutes a day (52 hours per week) in White homes (8). As a result, African Americans are viewing on average 20 hours more than their Caucasian counterparts and African American youth are reported to watch 2 hours more (14 hours per week) more of TV than Caucasian adolescents.(p. 339)

Rhines (1996) indicates that despite the demeaning portrayal of Blacks in many American films, African Americans comprise one-third of the paying audience for motion pictures. The NAACP itself estimates total industry revenues at \$4.6 billion “with Black moviegoers making up over 25% of box office ticket sales”(p. 7). A primary characteristic of a wholesome economic system is that money spent by consumers be invested locally to improve the conditions lived in by those spenders. AyokaChenzira(as

cited in Rhines, 1996), writer, director, and producer of the independent film *Alma's Rainbow*, noted the importance of this stating that she prefers to film in Black neighborhoods because even the mom and pop shops and local hardware stores make money when film crews eat lunch and buy various items needed during a shoot.

Given the high levels of time spent watching Television it is impossible to disregard the fact that the images seen can have influence on the viewer. If the images they see promote who they are in a negative way, does this affect how they see themselves? A relationship has been found between the amount of TV exposure and low self esteem seen in African Americans. It is believed that frequent exposure of majority-focused shows or portrayals of African Americans in negative roles cause low self-esteem in the Black audiences who view it. It is hypothesized that through media portrayals, negative stereotypes may actually be a vital part in developing negative self-images within a stereotyped group (Cosby, 1994; Tan & Tan, 1979). Barnes (1980) asserted that African American images seen on TV are negative and that these portrayals could actually perpetuate the internalization by African American youth that they are not important—thus leading to negative self-image and lower self-esteem. Norton (1983) reported that self-esteem and self-image directly relate to one's insight of one's own group.

Miller (1999) expands on Leon W. Chestang's theory that covert and overt racism can affect the character development of African Americans, "leading to a sense of worthlessness, inadequacy, and impotence that is incorporated into a devaluation of the self" (p. 497). Banks (1972) discussed how African American children originate their idea of themselves mainly from White society and their traditions and often accept a lot of the

stereotypes about themselves, and that they can develop a low self-concept by seeing a constant downplaying of their Blackness. He also notes that the effect of the child's environment can negatively or positively impact his or her racial identity, feelings of self-hate, and ultimately the mental image that they have of themselves. Mays (1986) points out that Black history and ethnicity play a large part in the maturity of self-identity. Mays further cites Mosby's (1972) work, which proposes that African Americans develop within a culture that teaches that their performance, philosophy and individualities are looked at as subpar, estranged and insufficient. Blacks also seem to internalize a view of themselves with feelings of inadequacy. Cultural images may have more of a powerful influence than the positive influences that occur during their development. Williams-Morris (1996) further explains how racism adversely affects the physical health of African Americans who are vulnerable to this type of adversity, which leads to mental health and medical problems as internalization of the negative stereotypes and beliefs about themselves become embedded. With the extensive viewing of media by African American youth, there could be a greater chance of these negative images decreasing the youth's self-esteem, increasing their identification with the negative attitudes, and the possible disruption of their racial identity.

Dissatisfaction with Stereotypical Black Images

In Toni Morrison's (1992) work, *Playing in the Dark*, she describes how she has thought at length about the validity or vulnerability of a certain set of assumptions conventionally accepted among literary historians and critics that are commonly circulated as "knowledge." The knowledge that she speaks of holds that traditional, recognized American literature is free of, uninformed and unshaped by the four-hundred-

year-old presence of, first, Africans and then African Americans in the United States. Morrison goes on to state that this presence, which shaped body politics, the Constitution, and the entire history of the culture, has had no significant place or consequence in the origin and development of that culture's literature. Moreover, such knowledge assumes that the characteristics of our national literature emanate from a particular "Americanness" that is separate and unaccountable to this presence.

Ultimately what Morrison (1992) illustrates is that there seems to be an agreement among literary scholars that, because American literature has been clearly the preserve of White male views, (genius, and power) are without relationship to and removed from the overwhelming presence of Black people in the United States. Although this dissertation deals specifically with motion pictures, it is important to discuss the context and practice in the creation of literary works as well. It is often that motion pictures are adapted from literary works that are created by a non-Black or White population. Therefore, one must question the validity of the literature or artistic work that is being presented. Is it possible for someone who is not a part of the Black culture to create an accurate depiction of it? Morrison would argue that the major and championed characteristics of our national literature include individualism, masculinity, social engagement versus historical isolation, and acute and ambiguous moral problematic. The thematic of innocence are not in fact responses to a dark, abiding, signing Africanist presence.

Some critics might argue that it's not just non-Black directors and distributors who are responsible for disseminating subpar depictions of African Americans in television and film. More specifically, there are some African American filmmakers that

are criticized for the method in which they depict characters of African descent in their projects. Jamilah Lemieux's open letter to the writer/director/producer, Tyler Perry, received nationwide attention in late 2009 after *NPR* posted it on its website. In the letter, Lemieux thanked Perry for his humor and his "positive message about self-worth, love, and respect." However she took issue with the images of Black people Perry presented in his TV shows and movies:

Your most famous character, Madea, is a trash-talking, pistol-waving grandmother played by none other than you. Through her, the country has laughed at one of the most important members of the Black community: Mother Dear, the beloved matriarch. I just can't quite get with seeing Mother Dear played by a 6-foot-3 man with prosthetic breasts flopping in the wind. Our mothers and grandmothers deserve much more than that. Heck, our fathers and grandfathers deserve more.

Burrell (2010) speaks to this dissatisfaction with negative images of Blacks in the media by saying that he supports self-responsibility, but he does not think that it would be entirely fair if the Black community looked to Tyler Perry to singlehandedly become the pioneer in the renaissance of current Black images. He goes on to point out that Perry's projects would not be as successful as they are if Blacks didn't have a raging appetite for messages and images that project them as dysfunctional or incompetent. He goes on to say that attraction to the self-demeaning images came way before, and goes far beyond the modern day images seen portrayed today in film and television.

Martin (2008) explains that racism and discrimination continue to be an omnipresent problem within society. The images seen in media bring about these

negative stereotypes with regard to African Americans and impact the majority of society's view of Blacks. These images may also have an effect on the minority cultures' vision of themselves, and have the possibility to affect the developing psyche of African Americans. Negative stereotypes may be highly unfavorable to African American children and adolescents as they attempt to navigate their way through the normal process of identity development. Television acts as a potent source of stimulation and cognitive information about other cultures and groups. Television also provides a perspective that constantly provides an intermixing of truth and reality. Ashmore and McConahay (1975) suggest that media, especially television, perpetuate racial prejudice and stereotypical attitudes by their portrayals of, and omissions of facts about minority groups. They contended that by emphasizing one type of behavior as characteristic, certain perceptions and attitudes among viewers were encouraged (P. Reid, 1979).

Burrell (2010) states that woven into the Black American experience is a strong thread of avoidance, an aversion to critical thinking, and an abnormal embrace of anything that appeals to our emotions rather than to our reasoning. Regarding marketing and mass communication, he goes on to illustrate that the means by which people are convinced to buy rarely has anything to do with reason or logic, and humor is one of the most powerful tools in the arsenal of persuasive communication. It is often used to distract, control, and keep people from pondering too long or thinking too critically. Therefore one might argue that in order to change the mindset of the consumer, we must take a deeper look at how the consumer arrives at their decision to support the latest Black film release that may not support positive notions about the culture.

Bogle (2001) asserts that within the Black community, protests were voiced. “We must insist that our children are not constantly exposed to a steady diet of so-called Black movies that glorify Black males as pimps, dope pushers, gangsters, and super males” (as cited in Bogle, 2001, p. 242), announced Junius Griffin, the head of the Hollywood branch of the NAACP. Bogle’s assertions are supported by actual studies that have been done to measure the change in attitudes amongst viewers who are exposed to negative stereotypes. Meltzer (1935) points this out when discussing a study conducted by Blumer and Hauser (1933) entitled *Movies, Delinquency, and Crime* that exposed children to movies dealing with race and crime issues and then measured their attitudes before and after the films. The instruments used in this study were attitude scales and comparison schedules. These scales were given to groups of children before and after a select picture had been shown measuring the difference between the affective value of before and after measures. Results are reported in terms of measures of central tendency and measures of variability. The cumulative effect of the pictures used was measured in a similar manner. The issues considered incorporated outlook towards race, crime, punishment of criminals, capital punishment, and prohibition. The researchers concluded that the most striking change of attitude found in these experiments was the change of attitude with regard to negroes as a result of the showing of the picture, *The Birth of a Nation (1915)*. *All Quiet on the Western Front (1930)* is more potent as an instrument for directing children's attitudes away from war and towards pacifism than is *Journey's End (1930)*.

Meltzer (1935) went on to report that *The Social Conduct and Attitudes of Movie Fans*, a 1933 study done by Shuttleworth and May of Yale University, which in published form is combined with the previous study, addresses a problem similar in character but

more general in implication than the previous study. That is, the aim of this study is to gauge the influence of, not the feelings developed by particular cinema, but a universal representation of what power the total-motion-picture-experiences of children had on their attitudes. To get at this problem, Dr. Shuttleworth and Dr. May decided to abandon the experimental method and adopted the survey method. To overcome the limitations of this method because of the lack of controls, the investigators attempted to equate their groups and make detailed analyses of differences found within the total group. Some of their general findings include: children average lower behavior records, on the average they do poorer work in their school subjects, are rated lower in reputation by their teachers, are rated lower by their classmates on the *Guess Who* test, are less accommodating and less self-controlled as calculated both by ratings and conduct tests, are slightly more deceiving in school situations, are slightly less adept in judging what is the most useful and helpful and sensible thing to do, are slightly less psychologically stable, are mentioned more frequently on the *Guess Who* test as a whole, and are named more frequently as best friends by their classmates. One of the most significant differences about which the authors make, much ado is the fact that movie children desire to be *a popular actor* much more frequently than non-movie children, conversely, non-movie children desire to be *a college professor* much more frequently than do movie children.

The level of description used by Blumer and Hauser (1933) in their study, *Movies, Delinquency, and Crime*, is sociological: the general setting of the problem, the methods used, and interpretation of findings. Methods used included autobiographical accounts, personal interviews, and questionnaires. Subjects investigated included young criminals

in a large state reformatory, ex-convicts(most of them on parole) girls and young women delinquents in a state training school, and delinquent boys. Not all of the methods were used on all of the subjects. One of the main conclusions of this study is that the strength of the cinema in conveying a culture is in converseratio to the strength of the family, community and church. An interesting finding concerning the way of transmission is the fact that, contrary to the general will-to-believe of alarmists in the moral field, *moral* endings of pictures in which wrong-doing is punished and virtue rewarded does not overshadow the existing little episodes within the movie itself. In fact, according to the investigators, it was quite clear that the occurrences of information or components of the image could be selected out as majorly significant to the barring or reduction of the concluding episode(Shuttleworth& May, as cited in Meltzer, 1935).

Bogle (2001) believed that one can readily understand why Black audiences respond to the theme of these movies, which touch upon the fundamental dissatisfaction of dispossessed people. One can also appreciate the demand of the new characters, which were intimidating figures, far different from the submissive pacifying Black types of the past. The films touched also on an additional need: that of entertainment. But the worlds those films regularly presented, despite the pretentiousness, were often just as romanticized and artificial as those of previous all-Black Hollywood movies. And often the rough and tough militant heroes were no more bona fide than the servants of the 1930s or the entertainers of the 1940s.

How Negative Media Images Affect the Black Culture

The old adage *teach people how to treat you* comes to mind when exploring the portrayals of African Americans in the media. Numerous pieces of literature and

research show that persons of non-Black ethnicities do in fact glean information about the Black culture from movies, television, and media images. With this supporting research it becomes apparent that African Americans will need to take responsibility for the character portrayals that are illustrated in films. Weigel et al. (1980) point out those studies have provocative implications with respect to race relations. For example, if viewers can model complex patterns of behavior, then the character of the cross-racial interactions they observe on television could predispose them to engage in similar types of behaviors in real-life, cross-racial encounters. In this context, it is fortunate that other research has begun to specify the conditions under which cross-racial interactions promote friendliness and mutual respect between individuals from different racial or ethnic backgrounds.

Conversely, based on the phenomena of *The Third Person Effect*, some consumers of media may believe that they aren't affected by what they see at all. This phenomenon explains that wherein viewers believe that others are persuaded by media messages, they themselves are immune (Davison, 1983). Perloff (1993) found that when people don't agree with the message or judge its source as negative, the third-person effect becomes even stronger. The effect is also stronger when messages aren't directly relevant to people.

The exclusion of Black characters in film and television, also known as media exclusion, can also have negative effects on the Black culture or psyche as a whole. In the field of social psychology, the theories of interpersonal social exclusion and discrimination offer clues as to how individuals might perceive media exclusion. Interpersonal social exclusion, or the experience of being ostracized or rejected by others,

results in increased negative mood and threats to psychosocial needs including self-esteem, belonging, control, and perceptions of a meaningful existence (Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

Although instances of discrimination are correlated with lower self-esteem and increased negative mood, awareness of discrimination can lessen personal distress (Stroebe, Ellemers, Barreto, & Mummendey, 2009). Combined, this work on social exclusion and discrimination implies that media exclusion will induce negative intrapersonal effects (e.g., self-esteem), and the effects may differ by gender and race. Research regarding the effects of exclusion and discrimination on identification with the superordinate group (e.g., national identity) is limited. Studies investigating social exclusion have demonstrated that exclusion leads to lower ratings of (Williams & Sommer, 1997), less desire to engage with (Williams et al., 2002), and greater aggression towards the rejecter (Buckley, Winkel, & Leary, 2004). Furthermore, post-exclusion behavior can be moderated by a desire for future interactions with the excluding group (participants ostracized by a desired group), or a group with whom future interaction is expected (e.g., work group, long term-companions), tempered negative reactions towards the rejecter (Williams & Sommer, 1997). Research in discrimination reveals that targets of discrimination may avoid contact with the discriminating group (Brehm & Brehm, 1981), and increase their identification with the targeted subgroup as a coping strategy (Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999; Crocker & Major, 1989; Wohl, Branscombe, & Reysen, 2010), but this effect is only present for disadvantaged groups and does not measure identification with the superordinate identity (Schmitt, Branscombe, Kobrynowicz, & Owen, 2002).

Television and music strongly shape adolescents' attitudes toward people, places, and things (Adams, Gullotta, & Markstrom-Adams, 1994). Martin (2008) explains that the process of adolescent identity examination is burdened with elements of anguish and constant discovery. Adolescents have the task of trying on new roles, coming to terms with their sexuality, separation and individuation from their family, establishment of independence, and accepting their place in society and the world. Meltzer (1935) explains that factors of age, intelligence, school grade, and home background are just as important and possibly more important in influencing the conduct and attitudes of children as a movie does. In the case of attitudes, the influence of the community far overshadows in importance the influence of the movie. Meltzer goes on to suggest that future studies regarding viewer attitudes and movies are in need of supplementation by more genetic studies of whole personalities in which movies are considered as one of the factors influencing the direction of personality growth.

Beyond establishing the massive exposure of time that television commands of both children and adults (Gerbner & Gross, 1976a; Liebert & Poulos, 1975; LoSciuto, 1972; Lyle & Hoffman, 1972), a substantial body of research has begun to articulate the conditions under which observational learning occurs in response to symbolic media. Although the literature on the modeling of aggression (e.g., Bandura, 1973; Bandura, Ross, & Ross, 1963) represent the most salient example of this trend in psychological research, an equally intriguing line of inquiry has focused on the medium's capacity to promote interpersonal interaction (O'Connor, 1969) and to foster such widely esteemed behaviors as sharing, helping, and cooperation (e.g., Bryan & London, 1970; Bryan & Waibeck, 1970; Krebs, 1970). Preliminary evidence (Gorn, Goldberg, & Kanungo,

1976) also indicates that television programming could encourage interaction with members of different ethnic groups.

Martin (2008) explains that

African American youth are met with the additional challenge of discovering what it means to be Black. They must also discover their racial identity. This endeavor can prove to be difficult because they find that the world around them has already defined them by the color of their skin. They are bombarded with negative images of the self—reinforced by the media, either overtly or subtly, which may ultimately have an impact on their development and their overall sense of who they are or who they can become. African American youth struggle to define what it means to be Black in spite of the stereotypes which are seen around them.(p. 338)

One of the potential implications of African Americans viewing these negative portrayals is *stereotype threat* (Steele & Aronson, 1995). Stereotype threat is described as the trepidation that someone will corroborate an obtainable stereotype of a faction with which one identifies. It can be assumed that if a person is continuously flooded with these negative images, he or she will begin to believe that these images are true. In result, the fear of living up to the stereotypes leads to its actualization, thus unintentionally promoting a self-fulfilling prophecy and the possibility for emotional anguish. This can affect a person's ability to perform in academics, athletics, and in the workplace. There is empirical support for domain disengagement as an immediate consequence of stereotype threat. For example, women exposed to gender-stereotypic television commercials later avoided math items in favor of verbal items on a standardized test and indicated fewer

aspirations toward math-related vocations than those women who did not view the commercials (Davies, Spencer, Quinn, & Gerhardstein, 2002). Stereotypes significantly reduce women's aspirations toward leadership roles (Davies, Spencer, & Steele, 2005). Both music and television exposures "influence adolescents' character evaluation of different races. It is important to consider the effects that a proliferation of these images can have on male, as well as female viewers. One study found that the perpetuation of misogyny in rap music videos can lead to the degradation of Black women, but not necessarily White women by White audiences (Gan, Zillmann, & Mitrook, 1997). Music and television preferences also influenced early adolescents' expressed preferences for Black and White social interactions (McCrary, 1991).

Arroyo and Zigler (1995) expand on Fordham and Ogbu's (1986) concept of *racelessness* in describing how African Americans struggle to promote a *raceless* persona in order to navigate both worlds, leading to interpersonal conflict and ambivalence because of the difficulty they have in integrating the demands of their own culture and those of the majority culture. If there is a continual devaluation of the person and his or her culture, a sense of low self-esteem, poor self-image, and conditioned helplessness can be created, putting the person at risk for potential mental health issues.

Fernando (1984) explored how this sense of helplessness can lead to symptoms of depression. Williams-Morris (1996) describes racial identity as the aptitude to recognize racial variances and to identify oneself as a member of a cultural group and have a positive sense of self-causing positive self-regard. This process occurs by first intellectualizing racial differences and then assessing one's affiliation within a group.

However the images that one sees may have an effect on their general personal valuation and growth through the stages of racial identity development.

Theoretical framework: Nigrescence. For the purpose of this dissertation, the researcher will examine how negative racial images in the media can affect the development of the Black identity and psyche. The models or theoretical frameworks that will be used to illustrate these effects include the Critical Race Theory and the Cross Model of Nigrescence(which has also been reworked in later years) and is now labeled as the Cross and Fhagen-Smith's Model of Black Identity Development. The researcher chose to utilize the initial version of the Cross model with relation to this study. Cross (1971) adopted the idea of nigrescence, the process of becoming Black, as the foundation for the later sector model developed with Fhagen-Smith. In a 1991 publication entitled *Shades of Black*, Cross (1991) highlighted a number of revisions in the nigrescence model. Like the original, the revised theory describes different ideologies of Black identity that African American people may have. However, Cross made substantive revisions to the nigrescence theory. The changes in the revised theory fall under two broad areas: (a) the distinction between group and personal identity and their influence on self-esteem, and (b) revisions in the number of stages and identities within those stages (Vandiver, Cross, Worrell, &Fhagen-Smith, 2002). The model looks at the progression of identification of individuals as they move towards a healthy Black identity.

Cross (1991) described the concept of Nigrescence or the *process of becoming Black* as an internalization of positive attitudes about a person's racial identity characterized by the development of comfort, tolerance, and confidence in self-image. In

the original model he outlined four stages of racial identity development: pre-encounter, encounter, immersion-emersion, and internalization.

Pre-encounter stage. Low race salience individuals will assimilate into mainstream with an appreciation of Black culture, while internalized racism individuals will become anti-Black. Persons who are in this stage will both consciously or unconsciously diminish their own sense of Blackness and simultaneously value the ways of the majority. Their feelings of self-worth will come from a White standpoint and there is a powerful desire to incorporate and acculturate into White society. The negative depictions and depreciation of the black culture as seen in the media can amplify this stage as well as stop a person from surpassing it if the only sense of self that they have is the result of negative depictions which in turn creates a sense of self-hatred(Cross, 1991).

With regard to this study one could examine the media images that are presented in commercial versus independent film releases. Independent film does not appear to be as accessible as commercial film releases; therefore a person would be more likely to consume film that developed with more of a commercialized formula. Throughout this chapter, the literature has supported that commercial releases may have a tendency to include portrayals that are more stereotypical, negative, or even poorly developed with regard to the depth/complexity of the character. More specifically, depending on whether the adolescent resides in a metropolitan area versus a suburban area, that may not have film houses that are screening independent films, it could be postulated that the adolescent would be mainly exposed to commercial film releases (Cross, 1991).

Therefore, if an individual is constantly being exposed to film projects that do not necessarily celebrate or examine the Black culture it is possible that the viewed works

will begin to subconsciously devalue their own sense of Blackness. In turn the adolescent may begin to have the tendency to develop a preference for non-Black or majority ideals that are more than likely presented in the commercial films they watch. As Cross (1991) mentioned, a child's feelings of self-worth may begin to come from a perspective that contains themes of the White culture. Not having access to properly developed Black film images or Black films in general, means that the adolescent does not necessarily get an opportunity to be exposed to realistic illustrations or a variety of depictions of Black characters. Ultimately there is a strong possibility that the adolescent will begin to make attempts to incorporate themselves into the White society because of what they constantly see. In addition if the only thing to supplement the White themed images are negative media images about Blacks, it's plausible that the adolescent viewer will begin to develop a sense of self-hatred.

Encounter stage. In the encounter stage, the individual encounters a profound crisis or event that challenges his or her previous mode of thinking and behaving and begins to reinterpret the world and a shift in worldview results. There is a rejection of the White social, cultural, and institutional standards. There may be a feeling of being miseducated. This may be aided by more positive images of African Americans in the media or counter stereotyping, as well as positive influences from the outside world which would be in direct conflict with previously seen images, causing a disruption and search for the truth. In the immersion-emersion stage, the individual withdraws from dominant culture and immerses him or herself in African American culture. Black pride develops and feelings of anger and guilt may dissipate with an increasing

sense of pride. In the internalization stage the individual incorporates into his or her self-concept a sense of self-confidence and secure identity. The individual can own and accept those aspects of American culture that are seen as healthy and can stand against those that are toxic.(Martin, 2008, p. 341)

According to Smith, Choueti, Prescott, and Pieper (2012),

Compared with all characters, we see a similar pattern regarding gender differences in how characters are sexualized when focusing solely on Black males and females. Black females are more likely than Black males to be presented in sexually revealing or alluring attire, as partially nude, and as attractive, potentially reinforcing a value on how Black girls and women look over other traits.

Repeated viewings of these types of portrayals may reinforce male and female beliefs that Black girls/women are to be valued for how they look rather than who they are. Overall, young consumers are still receiving a relatively homogenous view of race/ethnicity in popular motion picture content. Such portrayals may communicate to children and adolescents of color that their stories are not as important as their Caucasian counterparts. (p. 3)

Immersion-emersion stage. This stage can be described as an immersion into Black culture. The person then becomes a Black nationalist or pro-Black and entrenches themselves in the culture and issues of the group. Contributing factors such as families, social networks, and historical events all play a role in the early socialization of Black children. Parents, guardians, and those who are present in a child's life have routines and norms that emulate the Black culture and an individual is consistently being socialized into the Black culture, almost through osmosis. The routines and norms that take place in

the home can include media representations. Typical American families own televisions and will gather around the device in order to take in programming for entertainment or educational value. With regard to this study, media images that involve African American representations are more than likely included during these viewings. Therefore it is important for parents to monitor the media their child intakes, as it has a direct effect on their development in this stage. If the child is constantly confronted with movies that contain negative or stereotypical images, it is possible that the child will make associations with regard to how they view themselves.

Internalization stage. Development in this sector is influenced by the parent. The household can either exhibit a high or low race salience or internalize racism. High race salience means that there is an instillation of importance of being Black, and Black culture is most important. In an instance of low race salience there is no emphasis on race, although the child and/or household are aware of race issues. It is also suggested that internalized racism can take place at this stage. The adolescent could possibly experience negative issues with Black community, and consequently develop self-hatred and hesitancy to identify as Black. It's also asserted that an individual who has high race salience is more likely to develop the post positive self-concept, in terms of his or her Black identity (Cross & Fhagan-Smith, 2001). The media, more specifically films, can have an affect on each of these stages because of its positive or negative illustrations of the Black culture.

Sellers, Caldwell, and Schmeelk-Cone (2003) described the process of identity development within a different format and terms using the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity. The four dimensions are as follows: “salience of identity, centrality of

identity, and the ideology associated with identity, and the regard with which the person holds the group associated with the identity” (p. 717). Racial salience is described as the extent to which a “person’s race is relevant as a part of his or her self-concept” (Martin, 2008, p. 341). Centrality is the extent to which a “person defines himself or herself with regards to race”(p. 341). Ideology is the “individual’s opinions, beliefs, and attitudes with respect to the way he or she feels Blacks should act”(p. 341). And lastly, regard refers to a person’s judgment of his or her race publicly and privately—private regard being how one “holds positive or negative attitudes toward Blacks and one’s own membership in the group” and public regard being the perception of how “others view Blacks, positively or negatively” (p. 341). Again, the images seen in media can help promote positive or negative attitudes about the self, but unfortunately, even today, negative images are more “reflective in our society and African Americans must fight against these representations. If they can, the results can lead to a positive strengthening of their racial identity” (p. 341).

Nigrescence. Martin (2008) points out that successful completion of this developmental process can be protective for African American youth as they encounter racism, discrimination, and the experiences associated with being a minority in a majority society in which the negative images that they have seen about themselves continue to be expressed as true, or part of popular opinion.(p. 341)

Miller (1999) describes how racial identity development and socialization can promote resiliency, protecting African Americans against racism and discrimination. Protective factors have been identified which can increase resiliency and

counteract the effect of the negative images. They include positive family interaction, exposure to positive culturally relevant information, and images that convey the importance of pride in an individual's race, self-development, and awareness of racial issues in society at large. Media could help with this as well by presenting more positive non-stereotypical images of African Americans.(p. 495)

Sellers et al. (2003) found that those who developed a high central identity were more likely to report “lower levels of subsequent psychological stress”(p. 341), suggesting that identifying with one's race may be beneficial and protective.

Cripps (1977) explained another element in the Black struggle for an indigenous cinema was the attempt of the Negro press to create a Black aesthetic. Such writers as Lester Walton, Harry Levette, and half a dozen more wrestled with the duality—*thetwონess* (as W.E.B. Dubois put it)—of American racial codes as they impinged on the cinema. This ideal also speaks to the theoretical framework of the Cross Model of Nigrescence.

Theoretical framework: Critical race theory. This theory focuses on race and how racism is deeply embedded within the framework of American society (Parker & Lynn, 2002). Racism has directly shaped the U.S. legal system and the ways people think about the law, racial categories, and privilege (Harris, 1993). According to Parker and Lynn (2002), critical race theory has three main goals. Its first goal is to present stories about discrimination from the perspective of people of color. This may be qualitative case studies of descriptions and interviews. These cases may be drawn together to build cases against racially biased officials or discriminatory practices. Since

many stories advance White privilege and through “majoritarian” master narratives, counterstories by people of color can help to shatter the complacency that may accompany such privilege and challenge the dominant discourses that serve to suppress people on the margins of society (Solorzano&Yosso, 2002). As a second goal, the theory argues for the eradication of racial subjugation while simultaneously recognizing that race is a social construct (Parker & Lynn, 2002). In this view, race is not a fixed term, but one that is fluid and continually shaped by political pressures and informed by individual live experiences. Finally, the third goal addresses other areas of difference, such as gender, class, and any inequities experience by individuals. In research the use of this methodology means that the researcher foregrounds race and racism in all aspects of the research process, challenges the traditional research paradigms, texts, and theories used to explain the experiences of people of color, and offers transformative solutions to racial, gender, and class subordination in our societal and institutional structures (Creswell, 2007).

This study utilizes Critical Race Theory in order to examine how race plays a role with regard to the filmmaker. There has been a historical presence of racism and discrimination throughout film history. In the past, the representations were more overt in nature. However in today’s film, racism and discrimination are still present. It can be argued that these concepts take place in a more covert nature in present day. In addition the perpetuation of stereotypes in Black films is now being illustrated by some Blackfilmmakers. Using this cultural context will aid in a critical analysis of the motivations and actions of Black independent filmmakers as well as barriers that are present within the film industry.

The Importance of Developing Our Own Black Characters

Race often seems to be a determining factor where non-White filmmakers' goals dovetail with the goals of Anglos and other Whites in decision-making positions. This interaction between race and filmmaking processes may be an outcome of deeply held ideas on the value and structure of relations between different races (Rhines, 1996). Shohatt and Stam (2004) argued that in order to meet the burden of historical representation, individuals of underrepresented groups should be depicted in a multifaceted and in-depth way that humanizes their characters at the same level with White characters. Cripps (1977) indicated that Hollywood films were written, directed, and produced to fit current American values and tastes. Although the number of Blacks and other minorities on television have increased since the 1960s (Maloney, 1968), the proportions in which they appear are not representative of their proportions in the U.S. population. In fact, a report by the U.S. Civil Rights Commission (1977) cited evidence that Blacks have been treated as mere *window dressing* on television. A survey of the overall number of Blacks on television by Donagher, Poulos, Liebert, and Davidson (1975) confirmed that the variety of roles of Blacks has remained limited.

Cripps (1977) indicated that a factor contributing to the Black apathy toward cinema was an apparent lack of a functional past. Even the practice of minstrelsy gave Negroes no sustenance because White imitators had take over its forms and cast aside its roots in stick dances, bones, strings, shuffles, *dancing all over*, plantation walks, and *patting juba*. He went on to say that in the absence of a usable past, Blacks depended on urban pluralism and the tolerance it produced, along with the sheer primitiveness of movie technique, to preserve them from distortion at the hands of White producers. For 10

years they survived, “especially in reportorial footage, suffering less than in other media but unable to create a Black cinema from scratch”(p. 11).

Martin (2008) points out that unfortunately, people often believe that what they see on TV is a true symbol of the world and the people around them, especially when they have no other frame of reference or experience in their own lives with which to compare or conflict with what they have seen. Adolescents often look to the media to “explore new roles, observe the way they are depicted, and see if they can identify with these images. This can prove dangerous because groups of people can be condensed to negative depictions or categorized in uncomplimentary ways which may then be accepted by the majority and possibly minority cultures as fact”(p. 341). Gerbner and Gross (1976b) describe TV as a means of socializing people into homogeneous roles and behaviors. This regularity provides people with a broad backdrop of conjecture and contributes to the preconception of social reality. Their study further supports the idea that people develop conceptions about the world as a result of repeated exposure to consistent and repetitive images in the media. Children Now (1999; 2003-2004), a national organization that strives to advance public policy with regard to children, explored this idea and found that children and adolescents are vulnerable to these images; across races, children and adolescents linked “positive characteristics to Caucasian characters on TV and negative characteristics to minority cultures, Latinos and African Americans in particular” (Martin, 2008, p. 339). They also report how the absence of minorities on TV, in general, makes children feel that they are not worthy of “attention” and that the stereotyped and negative roles they encounter suggest that they are not worthy of “respect.” In addition, Children Now (1999) described how television’s limited

portrayals of minorities may lead youth to get the sense that other groups are more greatly valued in society than their own. They “get messages about their race by how often their members are portrayed in the media” (Martin, 2008, p. 339). When the messages are well received, children learn that their race is important. This helps children to feel included and provides them with positive role models.

Racist Values in Film

During a survey conducted by Stoddard and Marcus (2006) amongst 84 Wisconsin and Connecticut U.S. history teachers, open-ended questions were asked regarding the teacher’s usage of film in their classroom. When one of the educators was asked to explain their use of Hollywood film in her U.S. history class, one teacher responded, “I use *Glory* every year to reinforce the role of African Americans in American history” (p. 26). Depending on this teacher’s exact classroom practices, this statement is both hopeful and challenging. On the hopeful side, it is the suggestion that the educator has included the stories and characters of African Americans in her course. The teacher’s use of *Glory* (1989) also needs to be scrutinized, and forces us to ask numerous key questions. What else is being reinforced when films describe stories of groups traditionally marginalized in history? What are students learning about the history of African Americans and their role within U.S. history when films like *Glory* are used as part of the program of study—and how does this line up with one of the core goals of social studies—to develop citizens for a pluralistic equality (Stoddard & Marcus, 2006)?

When speaking about depictions of Blacks in the 1800s, Cripps (1977) stated that Lester Walton of the *Black New York Age* noticed early on that Negroes had no such visible past that Whites could draw upon. Instead, Southern literary tradition shaped

Black images, chiefly because Whites knew nothing about Blacks. It did so through the sentimental racism of popular melodrama, the infiltration of Yankee literary life by genteel Southerners, the sentimental *Uncle Tom's Cabin* road shows, and the early infusion of moviemaking with Southern lore. In present day classrooms Stoddard and Marcus (2006) found that the two films identified as being used most often were *Glory*, a film about the all Black Massachusetts 54th regiment that fought during the U.S. Civil War, and *Amistad* (1997), a film about a group of African slaves who revolted against their captors aboard ship en route to a slave market and ended up fighting for freedom in the U.S. Court System during the 1830s. Both films were created by large studios with big name actors during the late 1980s through the 1990s, a period that saw a cultural and economic demand for stories and films about and for African-Americans. Contrasting these two time period's similarities for the type of movies that are desired by audiences can be found. These examples of films that were developed in the 1980s and in the 1990s, share a commonality in that they were both developed by White directors who may not have known much about the Black or African culture. Anyone of any culture can conduct extensive research in order to produce a work of artistry such as a film but one must consider that there may be gaps in the cultural relevance and accuracy due to the creator's lack of knowledge of the Black experience.

Cripps (1977) explains that both intellectual and urban masses of Negroes, shared an indifference to the cinema. Because of their deep puritan fundamentalist roots, Black churches eschewed film as needless frivolity. Organized Negro groups such as the Afro-American Council and the American Negro Academy struggled for survival against injustices. Not until the spring of 1909 would fragments of the Niagara Movement and

the Constitution League join with other Blacks and liberal Whites to form the National Associate for the Advancement of Colored People, and not until 1915 would its house organ, the *Crisis*, speak to a national Black audience on the subject of cinema.

Critical race theorists argue that racism permeates American institutions and is widespread in American life (Ladson-Billings, 2003). This means that filmmakers have racist values that may be conscious or subconscious and that the Hollywood film industry as an institution is structured in a way that is intrinsically racist (Yosso, 2002). There is ample research documenting the racist history of the Hollywood film industry (e.g., Bernardi, 1996; Bogle, 2001; Shohat & Stam, 2004), much of which is driven by the economic demands of producing films that will be popular and financially successful. In the film industry, the reliance on sources of financing and studios to produce and distribute films controls both who gets to make the films, and how those films are constructed. That being said, Hollywood films have been produced at different times to consciously convert public outlooks toward issues of social or political importance” (Stoddard & Marcus, 2006).

Cripps (1977) described that from its very beginnings film honed in on the division between Black and White experience and excluded Afro-Americans from the screen. Three great traditions of American popular culture came immediately to the screen: the western with its roots in the Wild West shows, the melodrama with its roots in traveling repertory companies, and slapstick comedy with its roots in ethnic vaudeville, all of which only allowed only marginal Black contributions. Later genres of Americancinema, such as musical comedy, gangster film, and *screwball* comedy helped to perpetuate racial exclusivity in keeping with social custom.

Summary

This chapter outlined all of the pertinent literature as it pertains to African Americans in the media. More specifically the literature review covered the historical involvement of African Americans in film starting with the 1800s to the present. In addition, the review defined independent film and also gave a high level overview of what it takes to actually distribute films. In addition, the literature review discussed the psychological and social impact that negative depictions can have on the Black psyche and world experience. In summary all of these components have set the stage for a complete and thorough illustration of how negative images have had longstanding effects on African Americans.

Given the negative images coupled with the level of sensitivity that other cultures may or may not have towards this demographic, eludes to the fact that efforts should be made to control these images in order to create more of a realistic depiction of Blacks in America. With images that encompass a wider scope of the Black Diaspora, both persons of African descent and those who are non-Black will be exposed to more of a realistic portrayal of what it means to be Black in America. Ultimately, the permeation of more positive and/or realistic images will destroy negative constructs that are commonly applied to all Blacks and that are not representative of the Black culture as a whole. It is important to widen the lenses that capture the Black culture as the media does with other non-Black cultures. Those who are responsible for media portrayals have the opportunity to speak to more realistic portrayals instead of those characters that are traditionally embellished for entertainment purposes.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The qualitative research paradigm has its roots in cultural anthropology and American sociology (Kirk & Miller, 1986). The intent of qualitative research is to understand a specific social situation, event, role, group, or interaction (Locke, Spirduso, & Silverman, 1987). It is in principal an analytical process where the researcher regularly makes sense of a social phenomenon by contrasting, comparing, duplicating, cataloguing, and classifying the object of study (Miles & Huberman, 1984). Marshall and Rossman (1989) suggest that this entails engagement in the daily life of the situation that has been chosen for the study. The investigator goes into the informant's world and through ongoing interaction, seeks the informants' viewpoints and connotation. The methodological perspective of this research was guided by an interpretive philosophy of science in which the individual's perspective about his/her social world is central to understanding his/her experiences (Little, 1991; Prus, 1996) The purpose of this chapter was to propose a research design, the rationale, methods, and procedures that addressed the following five research questions:

1. Does the filmmaker use their films to educate or just entertain?
2. What barriers impede on the creation of an independent Black film?
3. Will independent film ever be as widely received as large box office releases?
4. Does the filmmaker feel a sense of social responsibility with regard to the content of their films?
5. Are there any negative stereotypes in film that have done damage to the Black culture?

Each of the research questions were geared towards examining components such as social responsibility, education, history, and distribution. Other themes emerged after the completion of the coding process however these are the themes that the researcher identified initially while creating the inquiries for this study.

The study presents the perceptions of African Americans in the media by examining the motivations of Black independent filmmakers to create projects that do not resemble large box office releases that oftentimes contain stereotypical Black roles. The researcher interviewed independent filmmakers who identify as Black or of African descent. This chapter format includes the introduction, followed by the research design, a description of the setting and participants, data collection and analysis, ensuring thoroughness, as well as summary of the methodology and possible results.

Research Design

Qualitative research. The role of the researcher is to serve as an instrument of data collection and analysis in qualitative research. Naturally, the researcher has beliefs and assumptions towards the subject being studied which must be examined. With the inquirer typically involved in a continued and concentrated experience with participants this introduces a range of tactical, ethical, and individual issues into the qualitative research process. It is important to discuss this fact so that the researcher can remain cognizant of them and thus monitor their subjectivity. With these concerns in mind, inquirers overtly identify automatically their predisposition, values, and personal background such as gender, history, culture, and socioeconomic status, that may outline their interpretations formed during a study (Locke, Spirduso, & Silverman, 2007). By doing so the researcher increases their awareness of any way by which these views may

skew the research, and perhaps use them in a positive way. They may be utilized to help the researcher learn more about their own values, attitudes, beliefs, interests, and needs (Glesne, 2006).

Treating qualitative approaches as method, according to Hammersley (1990), involves the following:

- Individual behavior is studied in everyday context rather than under experimental conditions created by the researcher.
- Data are gathered from a wide range of sources such as interviews or participant observations.
- The approach to data collection is *unstructured* in the sense that it does not involve proceeding accordingly to a predefined data collection plan set up in advance, nor are the categories for interpreting data fixed.
- The focus of a qualitative study is usually a single setting or group on a relatively small scale. In case and life history research, the focus may be on a single individual.
- The analysis of data involves interpretation of the meanings and functions of human action and mainly takes the form of verbal descriptions and explanations.

Research designs in qualitative research, although not as rigid in structure as those in quantitative research, vary due to the context, purpose, and nature of the research (Wiersma, 2000). Patton (1990) asserts, “qualitative methods permit the evaluator to study selected issues in depth and detail. Approaching fieldwork without being constrained by predetermined categories of analysis contributes to the depth, openness, and detail of qualitative inquiry” (p. 13). Leedy and Ormrod (2001) note that qualitative

research continuously unfolds throughout the study due to its flexible and open-ended nature.

Qualitative researchers must guard against using produced data, particularly those derived from interviews, to verify that something occurred or to prove that a phenomenon exists (Garman, 1994). Garman astutely notes, “the essential mode of inquiry of qualitative research is for portraying deeper understanding not for verification of the phenomenon under study” (p.13). The author says that researchers tend to verify as opposed to explain, to interpret, and to illuminate. Qualitative researchers must guard against this pitfall and focus upon deeper understanding so that they may exhaust the very purpose of this type of research.

Strauss and Corbin (1990) offer five reasons for doing qualitative research: (a) The certainty of the researcher based on research experiences, (b) The nature of the research problem, (c) To expose and understand what lies behind any phenomenon about which little is yet known, (d) To gain new and fresh slants on things about which quite a bit is already known, and (e) To give obscure details of phenomena that are not easy to convey with quantitative methods.

Grounded theory. In this study, the researcher conducted interviews and then coded the data. More specifically the researcher transcribed each of the interviews that they conducted and then proceeded to identify themes that occurred during the dialogue. The researcher’s primary means of data collection were through interviews. This qualitative research utilized the grounded theory approach. This is an approach to the analysis of qualitative data that aims to generate theory out of research data by achieving a close fit between the two (Bryman, 2008). In the most recent incarnation, grounded

theory has been defined as ‘theory that is derived from data, systematically gathered and analyzed through the research process. Sometimes the term is employed simply to imply that the analyst has grounded his or her theory in data, so that grounded theory is more or less synonymous with an inductive approach’ (p. 12). In this method, data collection, analysis, and eventual theory stand in close relationship to one another’ (Strauss &Corbin, 1998). Thus two fundamental features of grounded theory are that it is concerned with the expansion of theory out of data and that the approach is iterative, or recursive, as it is sometimes called, meaning that the data collection and analysis proceed in tandem, repeatedly referring back to each other.

IRB procedures. Creswell (2009) indicates that as researchers collect data, they need to respect the participants and the sites for research. Many ethical issues arise during this stage of research. He goes on to state that it is important not to put the participants at risk, and respect vulnerable populations. As with any study, this research will be reviewed by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). For a researcher, the IRB process requires assessing the potential for risk, such as physical, psychological, social, economic, or legal harm (Sieber, 1998), to the participants in a study. The major purpose of an IRB review is to ensure that the rights of human subjects are properly respected. These are important considerations since most people are not able to tell whether a study follows appropriate practices. The investigators themselves may not recognize all of the potential risks. Thus, the IRB review acts as a third-party guarantor of a study’s ethical soundness. In general, an IRB review functions usefully as a critical reading of the study’s ethical character (Lindlof&Copeland Taylor, 2010).

Lindlof and Copeland Taylor (2010) go on to explain that the ethical issues of qualitative research are not different in most respects from other social-scientific approaches. However by the high merit of the contexts in which qualitative studies typically take place, as well as the interactive relations enjoining investigators and participants, qualitative studies do pose special challenges. Interview studies are often exempted from review because they are viewed as very low risk. However, the IRB will examine the interview guide anyway and possibly flag questions that delve into illegal or otherwise incriminating activity, matters of personal privacy (e.g. sexual practices), or past events that have caused psychological trauma (e.g. rape incident).

In order to minimize these ethical concerns in this research, the follow steps were taken:

- Prior to inviting subjects to participate in this study, the researcher was reviewed and approved by the IRB committee of Pepperdine University by submitting an IRB application with all supporting documents.
- In compliance with the IRB guidelines and in accordance with Pepperdine University policy on research involving human participants, the subjects were given informed consent and made aware of their rights to protections under federal, state, and university laws. The researcher explicitly received permission to use information obtained in the interviews for the purpose of the study.

According to Creswell (2009), an informed consent form includes identification of the researcher, the sponsoring institution, of how the participants are selected, the purpose of the research, and the benefits to participants. In addition, the form included notation of risk, confidentiality guarantee to the participants, assurance

of the right to withdraw from the research, and names of persons to contact with questions and concerns. A copy of the informed consent document can be found in Appendix B.

- The identities of all participants will be kept confidential. The researcher marked the surveys with a number that corresponds to a specific subject. This number will be placed in the box at the end of the survey that says “For researcher use only.” Please see Appendix A for this information. In addition, the names of the participants are known by the researcher and will not be shared with any outside audiences.
- The records of the subjects were protected in accordance with Institutional Review Board’s requirements. More specifically, the documents were electronically stored on the researcher’s personal computer. All files were password protected. After the close of this study all of the research documents were purged from the researcher’s computer files.

Process for the Collection of Data

Snowball sampling. This study employed snowball sampling. This is a form of convenience sampling. With this approach to sampling, the researcher makes initial contact with a small group of people who are relevant to the research topic and then uses these to establish contacts with others (Bryman, 2008). Becker (1963) indicates that this sample is, of course, in no sense *random*, it would not be impossible to draw a random sample, since no one knows the nature of the universe from which it would have to be drawn. What Becker is essentially saying here is that there is no accessible sampling frame for the population from which the sample is to be taken and that the difficulty of

creating such a sampling frame means that such an approach is the only feasible one (Bryman, 2008).

In qualitative research, the orientation to sampling is more likely to be guided by a preference for theoretical sampling. There is a much better 'fit' between snowball sampling and the theoretical sampling strategy of qualitative research than with the statistical sampling approach of quantitative research. This is not to suggest that snowball sampling is entirely irrelevant to quantitative research. For example, when the researcher needs to focus upon or to reflect relationships between people, tracing connections through snowball sampling may be a better approach than conventional probability sampling (Coleman, 1958).

Qualitative interview. Qualitative interviewing is usually very different from interviewing in quantitative research in a number of ways. Interviewing in qualitative research is typically of the unstructured or semi-structured kind. Qualitative interviewing is meant to be flexible and to seek out the world's views of the research participants. For some authors, this term seems to indicate a formless interview (e.g. Mason, 1996), but more often it is a universal term that embraces interviews of both the semi-structured and unstructured kind (e.g. Rubin and Rubin, 1995).

Semi-structured interview. Bryman (2008) describes that this term covers a wide range of instances. It characteristically submits to a context in which the interviewer has a sequence of questions that are in the general form of an interview but is able to vary the progression of questions. The questions are frequently somewhat broader in their structure of orientation from those characteristically found in a structured interview. Also, the interviewer usually has some room to ask additional questions in

reaction to what are seen as noteworthy replies. If the use of an interview guide is employed, it should not be too structured in its application and should allow some flexibility in the asking of the questions.

Definition of Analysis Unit

The units of analysis for this study were African American independent filmmakers who were at least 18 years of age. The researcher included all of the following positions within their definition of a filmmaker: Director, Producer, Actor, Cinematographer, Writer and Editor. The survey allowed the filmmaker to also specify any other positions that they may have held that do not fall within the positions that were previously listed. The filmmaker needed to have released at least one film or was in the process of creating a film for future release. For the purpose of this research, those persons who identified as either Black, or African or African American were considered for this study. Merriam Webster (2012) defines the term African American as an American of African and especially of Black African descent. It goes on to define the term Black as a person belonging to any of the various population groups having dark pigmentation of the skin. Per the 2010 census, Black is reflected in the Black alone-or-in-combination population. One way to define the Black populace is to combine those respondents who reported Black alone with those who reported Black in combination with one or more other races. This creates the Black alone-or-in-combination population. Another way to think of the Black alone-or-in-combination population is out of the total number of people who reported Black, whether or not they reported any other races. This example is just an illustration to show that any respondent who identifies as Black could participate.

Data Collection Procedures

The researcher conducted their study over a 2-week period. Subjects for the study were solicited through word of mouth, face to face meetings, Internet web searches for independent film related websites, and social networking applications such as Twitter and Facebook. The researcher made contact with filmmakers by attending screenings for their films that are to take place during the data collection period. Ultimately the researcher was able to obtain the participation of 16 filmmakers for the purpose of this study. The researcher introduced herself to the filmmaker and gave them a short synopsis regarding what the study examined. They were provided with the researcher's contact information and a written description of the study, which can be found in Appendix C, in the efforts to set up a future meeting or conference call for the interview to be administered.

The researcher generated a portion of the participants through social networking websites, namely, Twitter and Facebook. The researcher searched for independent Black filmmakers on each of these websites and then privately made contact with them from their personal profile. The researcher also made contact with possible participants through email addresses and *Contact Us* functions that were provided on the filmmaker's personal website. The use of social networking accounts for recruitment was utilized solely for the sake of making private invitations via internal or direct messaging. At no point did the researcher utilize these applications to solicit participation in a public manner such as posting on a filmmaker's *Facebook wall* or through *tweet* on Twitter that may have been seen by the public. Public contact was not made as not to threaten the confidentiality of those who elected to participate. Just as with the participants that were recruited during a face-to-face meeting, the social networking population was greeted

with a short description on what the study entailed and then invited to participate in an interview to take place during the data collection period. The printed description that was given during in person meetings also included the Pepperdine University Doctoral Candidate's (Researcher) Business card. This information was provided so that the person being approached could contact the researcher by phone or email to state their interest in the study and/or to pose any questions or concerns that they may have had. The template for the description of the study can be found in Appendix C.

The researcher made contact with each participant via email in order to schedule an interview with them. The interview schedule was kept on a password protected Excel spreadsheet in order to properly manage the time slots that were available. Once the researcher received confirmation of participation the participant's name was logged onto the Excel spreadsheet. Each participant received a reminder the day before their interview was to take place. The reminders were submitted to the participant either via email, or through text messaging from the researcher's personal cell phone.

Lastly, each of the filmmakers interviewed was asked if they could possibly introduce the researcher to other Black independent filmmakers that they may know and that may have been interested in participating in the study as well. The referrer was asked to provide the possible participant with the researcher's contact information. Or if the participant that they have referred agreed, the researcher contacted them directly by using the contact information provided by the referrer. This action implored the snowballing method that was previously described in the methodology section.

All participation in this study was considered to be voluntary and could be stopped by the participant at any time. All of the subjects were interviewed via phone

and the process was digitally recorded and then transcribed for coding. More specifically the researcher was registered as a user for the freeconferencecall.com application. The conference call allows for the researcher to record the interviews and then download the MP3 files onto their computer. From there, the MP3 files were accessed by the researcher, with a password protected log in, in order to transcribe the interviews.

Prior to the interview taking place the researcher emailed each participant with a consent form that had to be signed and dated prior to the commencement of the interview (see Appendix B). Once the form had been signed the participant was provided with instructions for the interview (see Appendix A). Ultimately they were informed that they would be asked a total of 18 questions that pertain to the research and that possible follow up questions may be asked for clarification or further probing. The participant was informed that the interview was to be digitally recorded and then transcribed by the researcher. The interviews lasted anywhere between 30-60 minutes to complete, but the exact time depended on the individual participants. At the end of the interview, the participant was asked if they have any questions or concerns that they would like to discuss. The participant had the right to not answer any questions that were asked. In addition the participant could choose to no longer participate in the study at any time. Lastly, the participant was debriefed and thanked for their participation in the study.

Data Gathering Instrument

Interviews. Each participant was asked 18 questions that relate to one or more of the five research questions that have been previously identified (Appendix A). Specifically, interview questions 1, 2, 4, 16, 17, and 18 relate to research question number 1, 4, and 5. Interview questions 5, 6, 7, 8, 12 and 15 relate to research

questionnumber 2 and 3. Interview questions 9, 11, and 14 related to research question 1. Interview question 9 relates to research question 4. Interview questions 10 and 13 relate to research question 5. A matrix is provided below to illustrate which research questions coincide with which interview questions in Figure 1.

Research Question	Interview Question
1	1, 2, 3, 4, 9,11,14,16, 17, and 18
2	5, 6, 7, 8, 12 and 15
3	5, 6, 7, 8, 12 and 15
4	1, 2, 4, 16, 17, and 18
5	1, 2, 3, 4, 10, 13, 16, 17, and 18

Figure 1. Research to interview question matrix.

Freeconferencecall.com. In depth interviews were used to collect data using freeconferencecall.com application to record them. Prior to the commencement of the interview, the participant was verbally asked if they agreed to the interview being recorded for the sole purpose of the interview. If the participant agreed, then the appropriate dial commands were entered to launch the recording functionality for the call. The researcher used the interview questions to collect data from the participants. The interviews were all recorded and transcribed word-for-word by the researcher. The researcher played all the transcriptions back while reading the transcription notes to check their accuracy.

Data Management

The researcher transcribed the contents of the interviews into a soft copy format on a Microsoft Word document that was stored on a personal computer. The data was

validated by listening to the taped transcripts while reading the typed notes. The recordings were also maintained by the researcher in the digital format that they were recorded in, and stored on the researcher's personal computer as well. The computer that the information was stored on was password protected. The researcher was the only person that had access to information that was collected during the interviews. Names and codes that were developed during the duration of the study were destroyed/shredded by a mobile paper shredding company.

Data Analysis

Wiersma (2000) notes that in qualitative research, data collection and data analysis overlap because analysis naturally begins soon after the onset of data collection. This occurs because the researcher is constantly referring to the working hypothesis and unanticipated results. Furthermore, as data collection progresses, less data is collected and more analysis is compiled. Creswell (1998) notes that data analysis, when graphically depicted, follows a spiral shape that overlaps and repeats over and over. Leedy and Ormrod (2001) endorse this model and agree that it is "equally applicable to a wide variety of qualitative studies" (p.161). Creswell explains that the researcher "enters with data of text or images and exits with an account or narrative. In between, the researcher touches on several facets of analysis and circles around and around" (p. 142).

In open coding, the investigator wrote down impressions and thoughts as she read the first transcribed data. The researcher created a table in Microsoft Word in order to list key words next to their respective interview questions as they emerged during analysis. Similar items were grouped together, and given a name that stood as a common link. The transcribed data was broken down into units of meaning (concepts),

labeled, and critically examined. The coded units of meaning were compared to other coded units of meaning, and the concepts were gradually grouped together into categories that encompassed the concepts. As additional data was gathered, coded concepts continued to be compared to the existing data and (re)categorized; the categories constantly underwent modification to incorporate new information and were constantly examined for coherence and explanatory capacity (Fassinger, 2005).

The second level of coding in grounded theory analysis is axial coding, in which similar categories formulated by constant comparison during open coding were conceptually grouped together. Axial coding focused on the conditions that give rise to a category (Phenomenon). The purpose of axial coding was reassembling data that were fractured during open coding. Categories were related to subcategories along the lines of other properties and dimensions. A category stood for a phenomenon that was defined as being significant to the participants. A constant comparison method was used, with four different types of comparisons: (a) comparing and relating subcategories to categories, (b) comparing categories to new data, (c) laying out properties of a category and its dimensions, and (d) exploring variations in the data and reconceptualizing the categories and their relationships. Axial coding categories were related to subcategories to form some explanation about a phenomenon. The investigator looked for repeated patterns of happenings, interactions/actions that represented what that participant said or did (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). As with the first example, repeated happenings, such as interactions/actions that represent industry driven barriers, were placed in one category to identify a phenomenon.

The third and final stage of analysis in grounded theory was the creation of a substantive theory. This stage began with selective coding in which a central or core category was selected that integrated all other categories into “an explanatory whole” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 146). The emerging theory was constantly compared to the data to ensure that it was grounded in the participant’s experiences. It was also compared to the existing literature to enrich understanding of the explanatory power. The researcher reduced data from cases into concepts and sets of relational statements to explain the experiences of a Black independent filmmaker. The theory was validated by comparing it to the raw data to ensure it was grounded in the data.

Validity of Data Gathering Instrument

Validity is one of the strengths of qualitative research, and it is based on determining whether the findings are precise from the point of view of the researcher, the participant, or the readers of a report (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Terms abound in the qualitative literature speak to this idea, such as dependability, genuineness, and integrity, and it is a much-discussed topic (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). Concerns about external validity and the ability to generalize do not appear as large within a qualitative research strategy as they do in a quantitative research one. The key issues in discussions about quality and rigor of qualitative research may be summarized by three distinct positions (Klenke, 2008). The conventional trustworthiness criteria of internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity do not fit evaluation criteria in a naturalistic inquiry but are similar to truth-value, applicability, consistency, and neutrality in qualitative research (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). First, there are qualitative researchers who openly adopt positivistic criteria for qualitative research. For example, Mays and Pope (1995) claim

that reliability should be a benchmark of qualitative research. Others (e.g. Kirk & Miller, 1986) note that “issues of reliability have received little attention from qualitative researchers, who have instead focused on achieving greater validity in their work” (p. 42).

The second position calls for the establishment of distinct and separate criteria from those adopted in quantitative research. For example, Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson and Spiers (2002) encouraged qualitative researchers to resist the urge to adopt the validity criteria used in quantitative research. Instead, they suggest that qualitative researchers devote their energy to challenging the notion of a universal set of quality criteria (whether qualitative or quantitative) rather than acquiescing to them. Likewise, reconceptualization of traditional definitions of reliability and validity based on the work of Guba and Lincoln (1989) also reflects this second position. Sandelowski and Barrosa (2002) argued that the epistemological scope of qualitative methodologies is too broad to be represented by a single set of criteria. Instead, they advocate that qualitative research should be judged according to aesthetic and rhetorical considerations, pointing out that the “only site for evaluating studies-whether they are qualitative or quantitative-is the report itself” (p.8). And finally, the third position advocates a complete rejection of all predetermined quality criteria. A theoretical resolution of these divergent positions is impossible as the core of their ontological epistemological assumptions is so different.

Internal and external validity are criteria used for justifying knowledge production within the positivistic tradition. These criteria are based on an objectivist epistemology that refers to an objective, knowable reality beyond the human mind and that specifies a correspondence standard of truth (Salner, 1989). As Salner observed, the correspondence

criterion of truth implies that “facts are out there to which our ideas and constructs, measuring tools, and theories must correspond” (p. 47). In qualitative research for which positivist criteria are appropriate, answering questions about quality and rigor is less likely to be based on clear, unambiguous criteria. Positivist criteria such as reliability and validity may be misleading in qualitative research and therefore have been redefined by various scholars. Although qualitative researchers working within positivist assumptions may not necessarily use the term *validity* to denote their methods of assessment, they nonetheless utilize terms parallel to those of quantitative research designs (Sparkes, 2001).

Reliability of Data Gathering Instrument and Data Gathering Procedures

In qualitative research, reliability can be looked upon as a fit between what the researcher records as data and what actually happens in the natural research setting, (i.e. a degree of exactness and depth of reporting) (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). This is not an attempt at standardization; researchers who are studying a particular situation may come up with diverse results but both sets of findings might be consistent. Kvale (1996) proposes that, in interviewing there may be as many dissimilar versions of the qualitative data as there are researchers. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) recommend that reliability as replicability in qualitative research can be dealt with in several ways:

- Constancy (Stability) of observations (whether the researcher would have made the same observations and elucidation if they had been observed at a different time or place)

- Parallel forms (whether the researcher would have made the same observations and interpretations of what had been seen if they had noticed other phenomena during the observation)
- Inter-rater reliability (whether another observer with the same theoretical framework and observing the same phenomena would have made interpretations in the same way)

Studies reported by Cannell and Kahn (1968), in which the interview was used, seemed to indicate that validity was a persistent problem. The cause of invalidity is bias, which they define as a methodical or constant propensity to make inaccuracies in the same way, that is, to exaggerate or understate the true meaning of an attribute (Lansing, Ginsberg, & Braaten, 1961). In order to minimize these types of occurrences Creswell (2009) explains that statistical procedures or reliability subprograms in qualitative computer software packages can be used to determine the level of uniformity of coding. Miles and Huberman (1994) recommend that the consistency of the coding be in agreement at least 80% of the time for good qualitative reliability.

Oppenheim (1992) suggests several causes of bias in interviewing:

- Biased sampling (sometimes created by the researcher not adhering to sampling instructions)
- Poor connection between interviewer and interviewee
- Changes to question wording (e.g. in attitudinal and factual questions)
- Poor prompting and biased probing
- Alterations to the sequence of questions
- Inconsistent coding of responses

- Selective or interpreted recording of data/transcripts
- Poor handling of difficult interviews

There is also the issue of leading questions. A leading question is one that makes assumptions about interviewees *orputs words into their mouths*(i.e., where the question influences the answer perhaps illegitimately). On the contrary, Kvale (1996) makes a case for leading questions, arguing that they may be necessary in order to obtain information that the interviewer suspects the interviewee might be withholding. Leading questions may be used for reliability checks with what the interviewee has already said, or may be deliberately used to elicit particular non-verbal behaviors that give an indication of the sensitivity of the interviewee's remarks.

To ensure reliability in qualitative research, examination of trustworthiness is crucial. Seale (1999), while establishing good quality studies through reliability and validity in qualitative research, states that the "trustworthiness of a research report lies at the heart of issues conventionally discussed as validity and reliability" (p. 266). When judging (testing) qualitative work, Strauss and Corbin (1990) suggest that the 'usual canons of 'good science'...require redefinition in order to fit the realities of qualitative research' (p. 250). In order to ensure reliability in this particular study the researcher plans to utilize Gibbs' (2007) suggestions for achieving reliability in when conducting qualitative research. The recommendations that will be used for the purpose of this study are as follows: (a) Check records to make sure that they do not contain noticeable mistakes during transcription,(b) Make sure that there isn't any change in the definition of codes, a shift in the meaning of the codes during the process of coding. This can be accomplished by constantly comparing data with the codes and by writing memos

about the codes and their meaning, and (c) Cross check codes developed by researchers by comparing results that are independently derived.

In addition, the researcher utilized inter-coder agreement in order to further ensure reliability. This method is also known as cross-checking (Creswell, 2009). Ultimately the research for this study will reach an agreement based on whether two coders agreed on codes used for the same passages in the text. Please note that the coders did not code the same passages of text. However, this was utilized to ascertain whether another coder would code it the same way, or with a similar code.

Summary

Chapter 3 begins with reintroducing the purpose and goals of the study. The restatement of the research question lends itself to information that includes an outline of the proposed data selection process, and definition of the analysis unit of the proposed research design. The section included discussion on qualitative research and grounded theory. The plan highlighted the advantages and disadvantages of utilizing these research methodologies, leading to the overall proposal of a qualitative analysis design for the current study. Ethical considerations like the protection of human subjects were discussed in order to address ethical concerns in compliance with IRB standards, which were also discussed. The process of data collection was identified, outlined, and detailed to include both semi-structured interviews and survey data collection. Validity and reliability discussed and outlined how the use of coders would be demonstrated. The researcher role was defined and researcher bias was outlined in order to add to the agreement of validity of the study. Lastly, in-depth interviews provided valuable information about the population studied and added to the current state of knowledge.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Findings

The purpose of this study was to examine the motivations of Black independent filmmakers regarding depictions and images of persons of African Ancestry in the media. Grounded theory was used to develop an understanding of their filmmaking process and motivations behind the images depicted in the film projects. The use of grounded theory allowed for the emergence of a core category which was: industry driven barriers. Among the 16 participants, each of them identified as a Black or African American independent filmmaker. The results from the data analysis from the 16 interviews produced a substantive theory about the process of making an independent Black film with interactions, actions, and practices within the core category that was previously identified.

Demographic Data

The demographics of the filmmakers that were interviewed included both male and female participants. The researcher interviewed a total of nine males and seven females. The ages ranged from 31-60 years old. All of the participants identify as African American. The number of years as a filmmaker ranged from 1-30 years. Twelve percent of the participants reside on the East Coast while the remaining 88% of the sample reside on the West Coast. All of the filmmakers identified as one or more of the following filmmaking positions: Director, Producer, Actor, Cinematographer, Writer and/or Editor. Each of the filmmakers have completed or released a minimum of one film project.

The Core Category: Strategies, Conditions, Consequences and Intervening Conditions

Stauss and Corbin (1990) prescribe the types of categories identified around the core phenomenon. They consist of causal conditions (which factors cause the core phenomenon), strategies (actions taken in response to the core phenomenon), contextual and intervening conditions (broad and specific situational factors that influence the strategies), and consequences (outcomes from using the strategies). These categories relate to and surround the core phenomenon in a visual model called the axial coding paradigm. The final step is selective coding, in which the researcher takes the model and develops propositions (or hypotheses) that interrelate the categories in the model or assemble a story that describes the interrelationship of categories in the model.

The core category that emerged in this study reflected intervening conditions and consequences within the realm of independent filmmaking. The category of *industry driving barriers* emerged consistently through my interviews. Within these intervening conditions, filmmakers who were participants had different actions, interactions, consequences, strategies, and situational factors that they have experienced. In this intervening condition of *industry driven barriers*, filmmakers did everything and anything to overcome the barriers that existed as a traditional independent filmmaker and secondly, as an African American filmmaker.

There were various stages in the intervening conditions of *industry driving barriers*, and it was not linear in any way. Participants spoke of ways and choices they had to make in order to overcome industry driven barriers as a Black independent filmmaker. *Industry driven barriers* were composed of causal conditions, intervening

conditions, strategies, and consequences within a four stage process. Stages that emerged from the data include:

1. Marketing
2. Distribution
3. Financing/Money
4. Artistic Expression

Figure 2 is a graphical representation of the four stages of *industry driven barriers*.

This intervening condition presents itself during various stages of the filmmaking process ranging from the creation of a project, determining sources for financial backing, distribution, and finding an audience to market the project to. The consequences of this condition present themselves as outcomes from using the strategies that the filmmaker has prescribed for each of the previously mentioned areas. More specifically the consequences for the filmmakers involve the commercial success of their film and the audience perceptions towards their films.

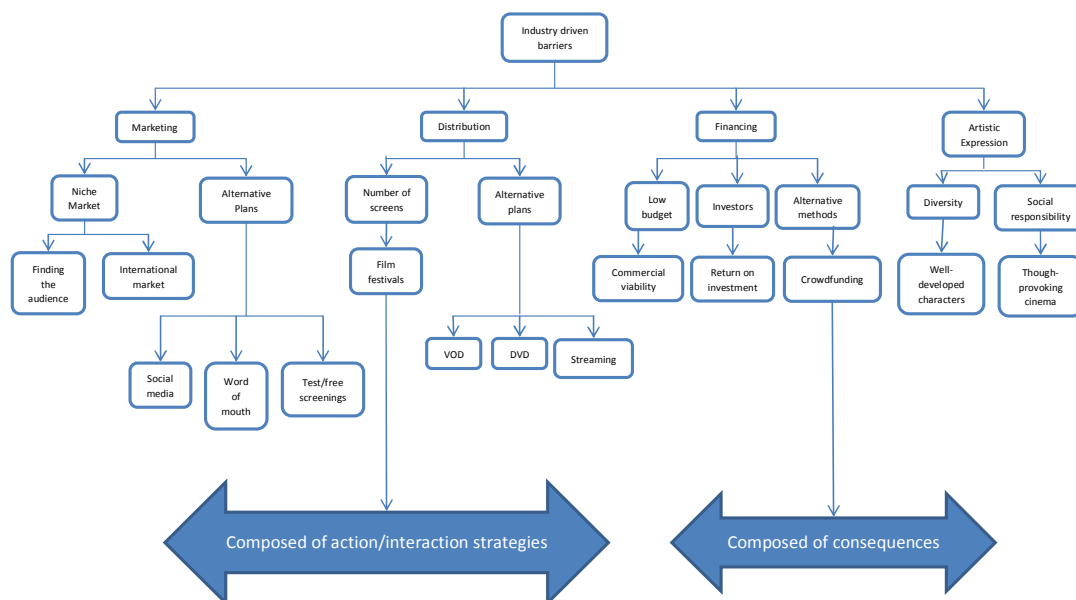


Figure 2. Core categories: Industry driven barriers

Open Coding of the Interviews and Finding Core Phenomenon

By using an inductive, grounded theory approach, the researcher identified themes that arose from the responses that the filmmakers gave during the interviews. Within the section below the researcher outlined the themes that emerged from the core phenomenon. The themes or codes emerged through the analysis of each of the 16 interviews that were completed. The themes were identified through the practice of open coding and this helps to identify major categories that support core phenomena. Each section analyzes the themes that arose after evaluating the responses of each filmmaker for each question. Figure 3 is an illustration of the themes that arose during the open coding process. In addition, the types of categories were defined for each question. As previously mentioned, the types of categories identified around the core phenomenon are as follows: causal conditions, strategies, intervening conditions, and consequences.

For the purpose of this study each of the interviewees has been assigned a number to protect their identity. The researcher has extracted quotes from each of their interviews and referred to the participant by their identifying number when referencing quotations. As identified in Figure 1 in Chapter 3, some of the interview questions overlap with regard to their relationship to the associated research question. Therefore the interview questions will appear out of sequence. This method was used in efforts to provide answers to the actual research questions that were posed in the study. The interview questions are reported under the first research question that it is reported to respond to. For example, interview question 1 applies to research questions 1, 4 and 5. Therefore in the section below in response to the research question the researcher only lists the answers once under the first reported interview questions that it relates to.

Thus in the example given, interview question 1 will only be listed under the subject heading for research question 1 and will not be seen again or duplicated as responses to research questions 4 and 5. The researcher also reiterated which interview question falls under which research question within the introduction to the interview responses as well.

Each of the major categories that were identified is italicized underneath each of the interview questions. An illustration of these themes found during open coding can be found in Figure 3. The quotes are used to support and illustrate the themes that emerged during the interviews. After the completion of the open coding the researcher identified one open category to focus on called the core phenomenon. The core phenomenon that was identified is: *industry driven barriers*.

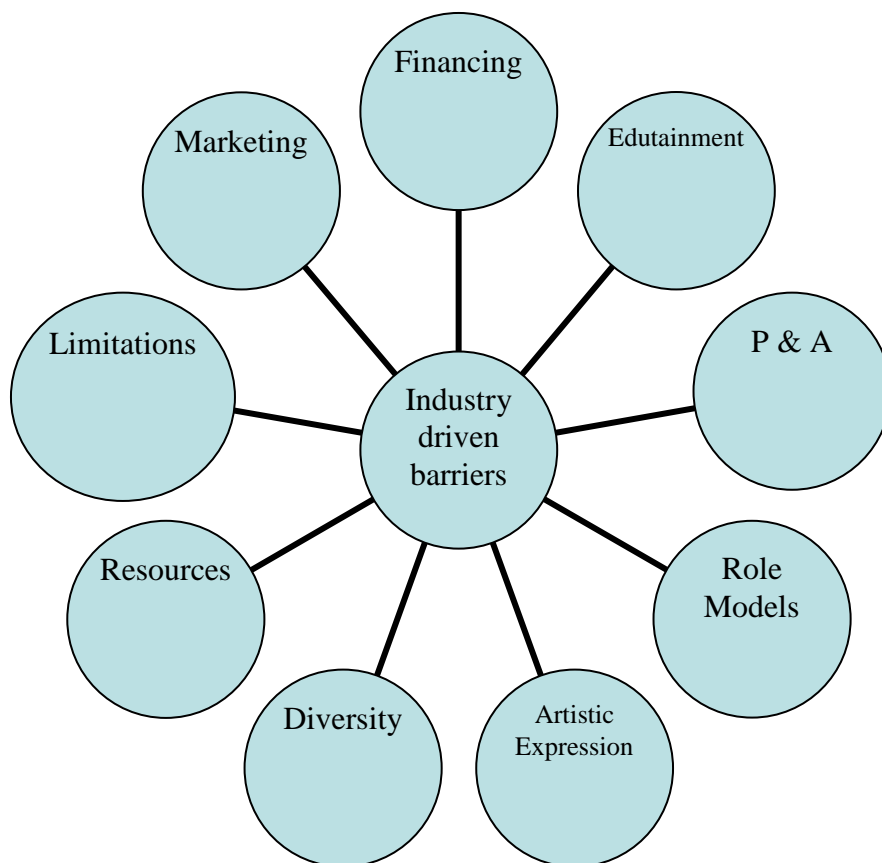


Figure 3. Illustration of open coding themes.

Research Question 1: Does the Filmmaker Use Their Films To Educate or Just Entertain?

Question 1: Do you intentionally avoid stereotypical depictions in your film projects? This interview question answers each of the following research questions: 1, 4 and 5. Each of the filmmakers responded to this question either in the affirmative or the negative. Most of the filmmakers then went on to expound on their answers and provide the logic behind them. The responses yielded themes that fell under the category of consequences that show outcomes from using strategies including the following: a deliberate effort to avoid stereotypical depictions. The themes that emerged from this ideal are as follows: realistic depictions and stereotypes are relative

Realistic depictions. Filmmaker 14 stated that “early in my career I was afraid to write the truth of characters because I thought they would be seen as stereotypes. But as I matured as a producer I give myself the freedom to just write the truth of the character.” Filmmaker 9 states that they “cannot perpetuate the same stereotypical buffoonery and kind of behavior that’s been perpetuated throughout cinema here in America.” More specifically the filmmakers feel that this is an important practice because they essentially want to portray what they see in their everyday lives. This is not to say that stereotypical images do not exist in reality; however it is to say that this is not the norm or the only way that the Black culture can be defined. Filmmaker 16 supports this notion when they say that “there can be some characters that are stereotypical just to represent that reality that there are some stereotypical African Americans.” Filmmaker 6 indicated that this is a necessary practice because “someone has to provide a balance.” Filmmaker 4 indicated

that they are “trying to capture people in real life they aren’t stereotypical...they’re all unique in some way.”

Filmmaker 5 explains that “the thing about stereotypes is that it’s often used to the filmmakers advantage.” More specifically the filmmakers feel as though stereotypes can be used to appeal to the senses of the audience. Filmmaker 5 goes on to say that “you know that due to implicit bias of the audience...that becomes a hook by which you lull the audience into a false sense of understanding which you take apart over time.”

Filmmaker 1 indicated that they “would not be opposed to using stereotypical subject matter if it leads to an honest interpretation of the character, role, or film.” They went on to say that they would “never take on a project that purposely perpetuates many of the negative stereotypes and images of African American characters.” Filmmaker 16 indicated that they “intentionally look to craft some type of image or model of a figure that is more dynamic, progressive, kind of unpredictable, and outside the mold of a stereotypical image.” The same filmmaker went on to say that they are looking to be “non-dogmatic and broad, not just locked into the Afrocentric perspective.”

Stereotypes are relative. Filmmaker 2 took the standpoint that “stereotypical depictions are all relative.” They went on to say that if they don’t view something as stereotypical they could easily avoid it or included it. In addition, filmmaker 2 feels that it’s all “dependent upon my upbringing, my definition as a Black man, my sensibilities, what I like to see and what I don’t like to see.” This statement indicates that what’s considered to be stereotypical will depend upon what you see in your daily life. It is possible that one characteristic that may be seen as stereotypical to some may not appear that way to another group. Even though the commonality amongst the viewer may be

that they both identify as African American, the perception of the image that's being presented may differ.

Diversity. Some of the filmmakers were more specific as to why they intentionally avoid stereotypical images. They may feel that this approach is overdone and that some new and fresh images need to be seen with regard to Black characters. Filmmaker 10 believes that “we don't need to perpetuate the negative imagery that those [stereotypical] characters presented back then, now.” For example, Filmmaker 18 feels that “there are too many films out there that are not made by African Americans that depict us in a negative way.” This filmmaker went on to say that a lot of the characters in their films “have been upstanding characters.” Filmmaker 7 explains that one of the reasons they got into filmmaking was to have a “way to control or have some sort of input on the projects” that they are dealing with and also to “have a voice in the process.”

Question 2: Are you making an attempt to create new positive stereotypes about africanamericans in your films? This interview question answers each of the following research questions: 1, 4 and 5. Each of the filmmakers responded either in the affirmative or the negative. Following their response they each went on to elaborate as to why they felt that this was the case. The overall consensus was that each filmmaker is looking to make a truthful depiction of what they see in the Black culture. The common threads that emerged from these interviews dealt with the desire to create more positive images, illustrate and/or create role models, depict more developed characters, exhibit a sense of social responsibility to the view and the community that they are depicting, and lastly make sure that the depictions in their films exhibit real or normal qualities. The responses yielded themes that fall under the category of consequences that show

outcomes from using these strategies. More specifically the theme that emerged was to be a realistic storyteller. The components that support this theme core phenomenon are as following: telling realistic stories well developed characters, role models, and diversity.

Telling realistic stories. Filmmaker 10 explains that they aren't trying to "recreate the wheel" but they are "trying to depict African Americans in a normal light (e.g. architects, doctors, lawyers, psychologists, educators)." Filmmaker 6 says that they are "making an attempt to tell realistic stories...I just want to show what happens in everyday ordinary life." Filmmaker 8 explains that it's really important that we "advance our depictions of African Americans. Biggest problem I find is that there is often a divide between what is truthful and what is commercial." Filmmaker 4 indicates that they are "not making an attempt to depict positive examples because I do not think that positive examples are the most productive." They went on to say that "If it's truthful it's productive. That's my main goal, to release as much truth as I see it."

Well-developed characters. Filmmaker 11 explains that they "look to bring more human expression as opposed to a limited expression to the Black characters" that they develop. Filmmaker 18 explains that they "make strides to make positive characters...there's a lot of images out there that don't really equate with what we really do" so that's what they strive for. However filmmaker 17 describes that it's "not the only mandate or requirement for me getting involved in a picture." Filmmaker 1 explains that they are "looking to avoid films that promote stereotypes in future work. This is a big goal moving forward. We need to produce more films that kill negative stereotypes." Filmmaker 5 supports this when they say "that we're aware of the lack of certain images when we make a film. So our goal is to complicate the depiction of African American

people of color but if I'm saying I'm making a positive image, I'm really making a mediocre film because if I'm avoiding an image...I really limit the kind of film that I can make."

Role models. Filmmaker 2 explains that they are "making an attempt to provide positive role models and influences." Filmmaker 12 explains that they "tend to work on projects that are more uplifting or on things we want to see. For me I would like to see more positive images or things that depict us in a better light." Filmmaker 8 also mentions that "less than positive stereotypes result in films that might be commercial or more easily produced, it's much more challenging to present truthful depictions of African Americans....rather than trying to create something that will be profitable." Filmmaker 7 explains that they are a parent and that the more involved that they get into filmmaking they "have a greater responsibility for that I put out into the world."

Diversity. Filmmaker 5 explains that "the reality is that African Americans are so limited in their depiction that almost any image is positive." They go on to examine whether "there is a balance of one image which allows you to responsibly display another image without the whole world believing that this is the only image that exists." Filmmaker 16 describes that "acknowledging that stereotypical characters do exist" and that "it's just where's our lateral flexibility to move beyond that as we are."

Question 3: Do you consider the perceptions that non-blacks may formulate after watching your film? This interview question answers each of the following research questions: 1, 4 and 5. The filmmakers responded to this question either in the affirmative or negative. Thereafter most of them proceeded to elaborate as to why they were responding in that fashion. The responses yielded themes that fall under the

category of consequences that show outcomes from using these strategies. The themes that emerged from the responses are as follows: profitability versus social responsibility. The common threads that emerged throughout the analysis of these interviews involved ideals of changing Black representations in film and commercial viability.

Commercial viability. Filmmaker 6 puts it in simple terms by saying that “it’s no different from White filmmakers making a film for their audience.” Filmmaker 2 explains that they do consider others’ opinions from the “standpoint that I realize as a people we tend to rely on the media for our relative understanding of other races.” Filmmaker 5 explains that when they make a film they not only “think about what Black people think but also what White people think, foreigners think, Latinos think...I’m beyond the duality of Black and White. Because I don’t make a film for the world, I make a film for the world that I live in.”

Filmmaker 12 says that they do consider the viewpoints of non-Black audiences because “it’s a business and you want to be able to produce a film that’s going to transcend because you want to tell a story. That’s why you try to be as least stereotypical as you can. If it’s a human story that others relate to then we would probably view it from the point of it just being more commercially viable.” Filmmaker 7 says that they now consider the perceptions of others because “knowing more about the distribution end of it and hearing how executives who make decisions on distribution and how they think.”

Changing perceptions. Filmmaker 1 explains that “sometimes you have to keep your films honest regardless of the perceptions that others have prior to watching the film. It’s impossible to approach filmmaking trying to avoid all misperceptions. People

are going to have their perceptions, stereotypes, and opinions regardless. However, film is a medium in which we can potentially change those perceptions, stereotypes and opinions.” Filmmaker 20 actively does this by facilitating “discussions with the audience to see where they change their views or mine after the screenings happen.” Filmmaker 16 explains that “for other groups to view us I think it’s important for us to move the narrow categorization because that’s what structures the mind, your categories” and that’s what shapes the viewpoints for “the rest of the globe.”

Filmmaker 4 does not consider others’ perceptions because typically they are “moving from my own observations and perceptions. If you think about what other people will think of that the more mottled the ideas and the characters become.”

Filmmaker 11 explains that the projects that they are currently working on “are strong projects and they either carry a universal theme or the characters are great characters and race to me is not necessarily the highest priority.” Filmmaker 4 states that they “have never really had to think that way because I try to make mainstream films. Even though they’re African American casts I try to stay within the mainstream guidelines.”

Filmmaker 9 doesn’t consider the perceptions of non-Black audiences and says that they are more interested in “how the mainstream public accepts the truth. Although there are some commercial elements and formulas that are necessary that has to be in those films for them to be successful.”

Question 4: Do you use your films to educate or just entertain? This interview question answers each of the following research questions: 1, 4 and 5. Each of the filmmakers gave responses that indicate that they either used their films to educate, entertain or to do both (edutainment). Additionally some of the filmmakers indicated that

they desired to plant seeds for future thought in their audience members. The responses yielded themes that fall under the category of consequences that show outcomes from using strategies. The theme that emerged is: edutainment which is a combination of education and entertainment.

Educate or entertain. More specifically, filmmaker 2 explained that “if you’re going in to just be entertained you still may have a subliminal message that may be planted then and it may not sprout until later on in life. You may reflect on it when you watch the movie 10 years from now but it’s there.” Filmmaker 1 explains that it is their “goal to usually entertain and evoke emotion in audiences.” Filmmaker 7 explains that when they first started “it was all about entertainment and making people laugh or feel some sort of emotion. But now it’s about being socially responsible. Education is an underlying theme within everything that I do now.” Filmmaker 9 believes that we do not have the “luxury of just continuing to entertain and make the mainstream laugh at us.” They go on to say that this is “one of the problems with getting films made that are of a serious subject matter if you’re an African American; because they’re not accustomed to us dealing with very complex and serious issues.”

“Edutainment.”Filmmaker 2 explains that they use their films to “educate, entertain, and inform.” They also added that through various issues presented in their films, they can “easily educate and inform but at the same time we use a guise of entertainment to draw in the audience that normally wouldn’t see it.” Filmmaker 6 explains that “education shouldn’t translate into boring, it can be just as exciting if you know how to titillate with the message that you’re sending. This is show business so we have to know how to do both effectively because it makes for a great movie.” Filmmaker

4 explains that they just try to “illuminate certain things and maybe show underrepresented characters or underrepresented things.” Filmmaker 17 chooses to do both, however, they “think that it is dangerous to put the education first...If you’re too heavy handed then you defeat even the purpose that you have for yourself to educate. You don’t have to have them teaching per se, but if they feel edified by having watched a story where Black people are central there is a benefit to that.” Filmmaker 11 explained that there is project that they are currently working on that has a historical context. More specifically “the project is based on a book that’s already in schools but with the development of the film we’ve brought in an educator to actually write a syllabus to go along with the film and develop a workbook companion for the film.” Filmmaker 8 says that they use their films to do both. They go on to mention that this is “important because people go to the movies to be entertained but they also want to learn something. Nobody really wants to sit in the dark for an hour...and not come away wiser than they were before.” Filmmaker 14 states that they like to have both and that they go “hand in hand. By entertaining for me its not always laughing, coonery or buffoonery. Its having a true emotional response to some universal theme. That’s my definition of entertaining...that is makes you feel something.”

Question 9: What obligation, if any, does the Black filmmaker have to the Black community? This interview question answers the following research questions: 1 and 4. Each of the filmmakers responded to this question with thoughts that either the Black filmmaker did or did not have an obligation to the Black community. Therefore the 1st theme that arose from this interview question is that of: Social Responsibility. The quotes below illustrate each filmmaker’s stance as to whether they feel there is an actual

obligation or if this is something that the filmmaker should not have to consider. This section also yielded codes that deal with positive images and accurate depictions. The responses yielded themes that fall under the category of consequences that show outcomes from using these strategies.

Social responsibility. Filmmaker 9 believes that “we are the modern day griots of our culture. We are the keepers of the record for our culture.” Filmmaker 8 explains that “the word obligation implies that as a Black filmmaker you are somehow responsible for not only uplifting the race but satisfying the race and empowering or making the Black community happy. That’s not necessarily the job of an independent filmmaker. There’s always the question of ‘if I’m making a film about the Black community or about something dealing with Black history or a Black narrative’ I am somewhat responsible for the content because I am inherently representing the race.” Filmmaker 17 feels that there is a tremendous obligation. They went on to say that “if you’re going to make movies where you clearly have Black characters, themes, stories and interests in your movie then you owe it to the community that birthed those themes and stories to be responsible.” Filmmaker 6 says that “if they are expecting support from the Black community, if they have been raised by the Black community, if they are related to Black people they have every responsibility not to embarrass their audience.” Filmmaker 5 explains that “they have an obligation to themselves and if I’m going to make an image of Step and Fetchit I’m going to have to live with it and my children are going to have to live with it. I have to determine within my own values what’s important. Who makes the decision as to what’s acceptable in the Black community or not? I really think that if the filmmaker makes a commitment to complicated characters that overcome obstacles and is

aware of issues of race and class they'll do right by the Black community or any other community. I think that there are some universal truths and if I should decide that I want to be cognizant of how my film impacts the Black community I have that right or not." Filmmaker 4 explains that "if you are aware of certain issues that are happening within this close circle then as an artist you have the power to project them into the larger circle and to get them into the public sphere."

Filmmaker 11 says that they do not think that the filmmaker has an obligation to their people. However "there's an obligation for filmmakers to be a part of the top heavy decision making process and not just the cast or production crew. I think it's important for the Black filmmakers to be in those executive positions so that they can make decisions that affect the overall project."

Positive images. Filmmaker 10 says that they think "the obligation to the Black community is to perpetuate positive imagery for not just the demographic that you're programming to, but for everyone in the community...to keep the images positive. We don't need to see the 'Corner' anymore." Filmmaker 18 explains that they think that "we owe the audience positive images. Not every film is going to have that and you're going to have some negative things in films, that just goes with it. I think that we need to see more African American people doing things in an upstanding way as opposed to the negative. Why can't we be the lawyers, doctors, and Presidents in the films? We have an African American President but we're still seeing shows that are portraying the President as Caucasian." Filmmaker 20 asserts that they "want to show people in complicated or in complex terms. There shouldn't just be a simplistic viewpoint of a male, a hustler, or something like that who's always trying to get over on women."

Accurate depictions. Filmmaker 17 asserts that this “doesn’t mean that you can’t have negative depictions or sad stories but I think that you make stories for that audience. Especially since that audience collectively, and other times, are responsible for generating those themes and characters. To make stories for them without consciously considering ‘What am I putting out there?’ If it’s a negative story is there a counterbalance? Am I being reckless? Am I being too stereotypical? Those are the kinds of things that I think you need to be responsible for to consider.” Filmmaker 12 says that we “do hold a level of responsibility but we can’t be so sensitive about it... ‘oh don’t do that’ or ‘we don’t want to show ourselves in that light.’ But if that’s your reality and there’s some truth and beauty in that reality and as long as its shows with taste and integrity...” Filmmaker 2 explains that “there are some Black filmmakers that don’t truly understand the Black community. There are others that understand it but can’t accurately depict it. So the only obligation you have is to be true to yourself. If you’re completely true to yourself then you won’t try to tell a story that you don’t fully understand.” They also went on to say that “it’s your obligation to do the research and to get viable resources from that community so that you’re not depicting inaccuracies and using the guise of you being a Black person. Truthfully, someone on the outside looking in can’t tell the difference so they’re counting on you to handle it accurately and that could easily turn into a falsehood.” Filmmaker 4 points out that there are things happening in the Black community that aren’t being spoken of in public or only being spoken of in very close circles. I do think there is a responsibility as a Black filmmaker, if they are aware, of those things. Because there are some Black filmmakers who aren’t aware of those

things and who are either willfully or blissfully ignorant of those things and you can't expect those people to take on the responsibility of speaking on them."

Question 11: If you could eliminate one stereotypical character from film history, which one would it be and why? This interview question answers the following research question: 1. Each of the filmmakers responded to this question with a specific character or negative stereotype that they feel should be eliminated or should have never existed. This is due to the fact that the character may have caused some level of damage to the Black culture in film media. The first theme that emerged after coding is: Archetypes. This term can be defined as a very typical example of a certain person or thing. The codes that delineate the designated are as follows: the Mammie, Uncle Tom, Jezebel, and the Sambo. The second theme that emerged after coding is: character development. More specifically the codes indicate that filmmakers had a desire to complicate characters instead of eliminate them from film history. The second code under this section is: historical acceptance. This deals with the notion that the filmmaker believes that all characters have some sort of historical value that stems from negative or positive depictions. The responses yielded themes that fall under the category of consequences that show outcomes from using these strategies.

Mammie. Filmmaker 14 explains that "the mammie character still lives. Not as a knock to any of these actresses but it feels as though the Academy of motion picture arts and sciences has long embraced a specific body type and character that they feel safe with." Filmmaker 18 would eliminate "films like *The Help*. We're raising their kids but we're not good enough to go to the toilet. I would give them a little props for showing that there were African Americans raising these Caucasian people's children but at the

same time why do we constantly have to see us in an apron?” Filmmaker 8 would also eliminate the mammie or maid figure. They go on to say that “even though historically Blacks and the underclass in general, have been in subservient roles its unfortunate that people have come to see that image and expect that people of color should be second class and should serve others. These are depictions of characters that not only resonate but reflect class and divisions of race in our society.” Filmmaker 4 states that they too would eliminate the “happy to suffer in this life because there’s glory in the next life African American Saint. Which is normally played by a woman, usually a maid. I do think that that character in particular has probably been the most detrimental to African American depictions in films and the perception by the populous that consumes certain types of media. I don’t see anything productive in that character because it doesn’t give rise to action. Its such a passive depiction of anybody’s experience, in particular our experience, and what it does is present the status quo with the notion that there will be rewards in the by and by.”

Uncle Tom. Filmmaker 1 says that if given the choice they would eliminate “the Black guy that only dates White girls. I also get tired of seeing educated Black women in roles that only date White men. Hollywood refuses to showcase a positive, educated Black couple. We usually see Black men with a Hispanic or Caucasian woman in cinema.” Filmmaker 17 states that the most “despicable character in theatres right now is the role that Sam Jackson played in *Django*. For the record, I liked that movie a lot. However the character was a ‘house nigga’ and he was just a despicable character.” Filmmaker 6 says that they would eliminate the “helpless, hapless Black male character

typically portrayed as a big hearted ignoramus that needs to be saved by a White character.”

Jezebel. Filmmaker 11 says that they would eliminate “Halle Berry for her character in *Monster’s Ball*. I feel like it fulfilled every man’s fantasy of having Halle Berry. It’s like the White male savior who has sex with this Black woman and it’s supposed to be a feel good story.” Filmmaker 20 says that they would eliminate ‘the video vixen.’ The sexually promiscuous Black woman would be more of the stereotype. I think that Black women are more than that.”

Sambo. Filmmaker 2 would eliminate this character because of “how hurtful it was. All of the Blackface characters of the early 20th century. Our people and the country were going through so much to be depicted in that way. It was used to oppress Black people and stereotype them and put them into a category and keep them separate.”

Complicate instead of eliminate. Filmmaker 5 indicates that they “don’t want to eliminate, I want to complicate. The problem is not that step and fetchit was negative, it’s just that he was the sole representation at that time.” Filmmaker 16 explains that “it’s just the imbalance. The character doesn’t need to be eliminated, they could be portrayed. Where is the array of heroic figures and the polyphrenic blend of this hero villain layering of our human make up? The character repertoire needs to be expanded, that’s the issue.”

Historical acceptance. Filmmaker 7 believes that stereotypical characters are “all a part of history whether we like it or not. I think there’s a message or a lesson in all of that stuff. I don’t think that in this day and age people will come out and make stuff like that now. I think to have historic characters like that informs our choices for now and I

do believe that when people know better they'd do better. I think it all teaches people something in the end so I don't think I would eliminate anything."

Question 14: How important is it that every facet in the Black community is captured in film? This interview question answers the following research question: 1. Each of the filmmakers responded to this inquiry stating that they felt that this was an important or unimportant component for Black filmmaking. The themes that emerged from the response were that of character diversity. The concepts that were most frequently mentioned within this phenomenon dealt with the following: diversity, the African Diaspora and building the Black self-image. The responses yielded themes that fall under the category of consequences that show outcomes from using these strategies.

Diversity. Filmmaker 20 states that they think "there's a whole other spectrum of Black life that doesn't get depicted, that we need to bring into play. It's important to include communities that haven't had the opportunity to be revealed to audiences." Filmmaker 16 says that "it would be important to capture the greater number of facets in relationships and power dynamics figures and models who deal with political, cultural, philosophy, spirituality, and male/female relationship models."

Filmmaker 8 points out that there has been at least "40 years of Black indie cinema and we haven't really made enough strides toward equality to be able to have all of the aspects of our lives link, with say White or European themes, morals or values that are exhibited. Ultimately it's important but we aren't there yet. What's important is really that we're trying to get there and that we're trying to depict these things and move beyond what is expected to be commercial. A lot of elements that are shown in independent film are not considered to be commercial and therefore they won't get as

much exposure. I think we are definitely making strides towards equality in that way.” Filmmaker 7 says that what they would really like to see is “not really a Black thing or a White thing, but I would like to see the humanity behind the stories that are told and I think that’s the thing that will give our stories more mass appeal. How can you connect with everyone?”

Filmmaker 5 feels that it’s important to capture varying facets of the Black culture in films. More specifically they say “the more complicated the better. The more varied the images...I want Black superheroes and villains, postmen and doctors. Diversity works for me.” Filmmaker 17 explains that “you’ve got to be considerate as to whether there’s another image to balance the potentially negative or tragic story that you want to tell. We just need more product and more diverse stories out there.” Filmmaker 11 says that they “think that there is the idea that Black American life is somehow the same across the board and it is not. I think that in terms of perceptions and perspectives, Black folks and how we live and what we do is more diverse at times than we maybe allow to be expressed. If your relationships with Black people are limited through how you may see them through your work interaction, if you have no true personal relationship, what can your perspective be other than what you expect it to be? It’s very important to show all aspects because you’re taking it out of the expected norm.”

Filmmaker 9 says that they think that “Spike has always said that we can’t tell our whole 100 million year history on the planet in one film. It’s important that all films cover an aspect of it. Most of our films have yet to be untold, it’s an untapped reservoir of stories, an array of just fascinating heroes where I could just spend the rest of my career doing biographies and we wouldn’t even touch the surface. It’s important that we

have a variety of films and not just have one kind. We need these films to make up the totality of our cinematic diet.”

African Diaspora. Filmmaker 12 explains that “the African Diaspora has us in other parts of the world. Wouldn’t it be interesting to understand our roles as Black from African or from other Islands who have gone over to Europe, Paris, and London, and tell those stories? We talk about how Black films do not transcend as well as other films over to Europe, but it would be interesting to see Black films that actually have been done overseas and coming back to the U.S. Not only is it important for us to make films that Blacks can see in Africa, Brazil, or South America, we also need to be more open to see films that come from Africa. Just like we create stars here we should be aware of the Black stars in other countries.”

Building the Black self-image. Filmmaker 4 states that it’s important to capture our experience in every variation and shape there is to most accurately preserve a document of our experience at this time. It’s important if you’re a young kid growing up that you are presented with the full range of experiences. When I watch a *James Bond* film I think “ah there’s some White kid somewhere and he gets to watch *James Bond*, *Batman*, *Die Hard*, *12 Angry Men*...” this whole spectrum of experiences. There is always this White male character in the film who could be the good or bad guy, romantic....all of these different ranges and reflections of himself and he’s sort of building his personality. Now if you’re a Black kid growing up the same way you’re not seeing that full spectrum of characters on the screen or on the television so your idea of what’s possible is much smaller.”

Question 16: Is it your intent to change the portrayal of Black characters?

This interview question answers the following research questions: 1, 4 and 5. Each filmmaker responded to this question either in the affirmative or the negative. Most of them went on to provide explanations as to why they felt this way. The main theme that emerged from the responses is: Character development. The themes that emerged from this section deal with the desire to complicate Black characters, and the motivation to show realistic portrayals. The responses yielded themes that fall under the category of consequences that show outcomes from using these strategies.

Complicating Black characters. Filmmaker 5 states that their intent is to “complicate and to add to the mosaic. That’s the radical step.” Filmmaker 7 says that this is why they got into filmmaking. It was “because I did not like what I was seeing.” Filmmaker 17 explains that it’s their intention “to augment the portrayal of Black characters. My goal is not even to change some of the stereotypes out there because it’s true and real. It’s my goal to broaden the aperture and show that there’s a lot more going on in our community.” Filmmaker 4 says that they “don’t want to eradicate the current depictions of Black characters. I just think that there’s a much wider spectrum and we need to fill them all. I do want to change the totality of the depiction of Black characters.”

Realistic portrayals. Filmmaker 6 explains that “it’s my intent to present them realistically. It’s my intent to introduce characters that are rarely seen here in the U.S. I think that it’s up to the people who know the culture better than anyone else to move forward with that.” Filmmaker 18 points out that “we’ve invented too many things. We’ve strived for quality as independents and we need to be cognizant of the things that

we do and say as filmmakers. Once it's out there, it's out there." Filmmaker 10 explains that their "intent is not to change. It's to create positive images that African Americans can represent and be proud of, when they see themselves on the screen." Filmmaker 11 explains that "it's about fully developed characters. It's about allowing the lens to see more subjects. It's important to me with the imaging of Black people in general that the projects and the stories are full and wholly developed and the typical characterizations that we are used to seeing." Filmmaker 16 says that "if your commitment is to bring something that has contributed to the community and the characters that have realness then that's great. That's where I think that commitment is and that whole crusade (making a film) will be involved in that. Transforming the state of what we see for Black figures."

Filmmaker 2 says that this is their indirect goal. It's their "intent to make great, memorable films in that I'll have characters that I can relate to, be intrigued by, disgusted with. Sometimes you make stories that aren't true...its entertainment. True role models should be in the home, or neighbors, or professors. It can't be to look at a character that's made up for motivation."

Question 17: How much Black history if any do you try to put in your films?This interview question responses to this inquiry was the filmmakers' motivation to include historical notes or components in their films. The themes that emerged from this section are as follows: historical awareness and the inclusion of history only when apropos. The responses yielded themes that fall under the category of consequences that show outcomes from using these strategies.

Historical awareness and importance. Filmmaker 6 states that “any image that endures is Black history. I don’t have to write a script about someone who is long gone for the film to have historical significance. I think that if it has a message that resonates, that’s historical as well.” Filmmaker 16 states that they “try to put it in as much context as possible because African American life without any context of history with the experiences we’ve had with things being erased, omitted, marginalized, etc. In context it would help with any portrayal of any figure.” Filmmaker 18 states that “people need to be aware of what we’ve done and strived for in our history because the history books are not saying it.” Filmmaker 17 says that “it’s not really a consideration. It’s going to show up. If you’re telling Black stories with Black folks in them they have been raised on the same stories I have.” Filmmaker 9 says that “it depends on the story. In everything that we do I don’t think that you can tell a story outside of the historical context and background from which we have come. There’s history throughout every story that I’ve attempted to tell thus far.” Filmmaker 5 states that their “characters are almost always Black and what we’re trying to do is character development so there’s always history.”

Appropriate historical inclusion. Filmmaker 10 says that they “don’t put Black history in my films unless the film calls for it. If it doesn’t call for it then I don’t touch it.” Filmmaker 18 explains that “if you can get it in the film and it makes sense that’s great. I don’t think it’s a necessity to have Black history in every film. It depends on where the project is going and what you’re really striving for in your story.” Filmmaker 7 explains that they “try not to make things a Black, White issue. I just try to focus on the person in the film.” Filmmaker 16 says that the film that they did “intended to go

universal with it. When I did my theatrical draft I was coproducing it with a White filmmaker and his sensibilities, and we were attempting to go in a universal direction even though it started from an Afrocentric viewpoint.” Filmmaker 17 explains that they are “working on something right now that has a lot of history to it, but that’s just a function of the story. We’re not injecting that stuff to teach anyone about anything.”

Filmmaker 8 states that “Black history is very important so I try to put in as much as I can. I try to inform all of my projects with as much Black history as possible to contextualize the contemporary issues and to show us how far we’ve gone and how far we have yet to go to achieve equal representation in cinema.” Filmmaker 20 says that they try to put Black history in their films as much as possible. They go on to say that they would be “very happy if I could make historical narratives for the rest of my life. But unfortunately there isn’t a lot of funding to be able to do that. There’s a prejudice in terms of financing that goes towards feature filmmaking. I think that there are so many stories that have not been told, and have yet to be told, so that we could continue to make those types of films for a very long time. In my own filmmaking practice I often will go back to historical subject matter, but then I may fictionalize certain elements to be able to tell the story.”

Filmmaker 4 says that “thinking of the audience, I try not to make those depictions overt. It’s much more digestible if you make it the subtext of the piece instead of the text. I made a short film and we pulled a piece from the James Baldwin documentary called *Take this Hammer* and we put it in the film and it’s really subtle and nobody ever mentions it. I think those things work best now as the sub, sub text.”

Question 18: Do your films always have a message? This interview question answers the following research questions: 1, 4 and 5. Each of the filmmakers responded either in the affirmative or the negative. Most of them went on to provide explanations as to why they gave this particular response. The main theme that emerged from these responses deals with the filmmakers' sentiments towards the importance of messages in their films. The themes that emerged are as follows: obligation or requirement, overt vs. covert messages, and thought provoking cinema.

Obligation or requirement. Filmmaker 2 states that their films do always have a message but "I'm not bound to that. We have an obligation to always support the Black community. But I need to put myself in a situation so that I can tell any story. I may not get another opportunity to be a major filmmaker." Filmmaker 10 says "Yes. Every story has to have a message for me. It has to have a moral and norms." Filmmaker 9 says that they "can't see how we can waste this enormous opportunity to make films without having some form of message in it." Filmmaker 17 says "Yes, there should be a message conveyed." Filmmaker 8 says that "there is definitely a message of positivity and knowing one's history. In order to move forward we must be able to look back and understand where we are and how far we've come. I think it's very important when you're presenting an African American-themed film to have a message because it would be a lost or missed opportunity to spend so much time and money and create a presence without imparting some important knowledge or some important message."

Overt vs. covert messages. Filmmaker 20 explains that they "don't necessarily want the message to be clear-cut, I basically want people to think about my films or the images that I create. They don't have to be so blatant or on the nose." Filmmaker 18

says that “sometimes I look at my film in post-production and I’m like “oh yeah, it does have a message.” When you have a message it’s a great thing. I strive to have messages. I want to make you think and say “I didn’t see this coming.”

Thought-provoking cinema. Filmmaker 20 says that “I am trying to get people to think and talk about the films afterwards. Hopefully when you see our films you want to go out and talk to your friends about it after you’ve seen it. It’s not mindless entertainment, where you forget what happened as soon as you step out of the theatre.” Filmmaker 9 explains that “people come to the cinema, which is a communal environment, to share this experience where you’re going to take me from my reality to another reality. And this reality is going to transform me hopefully, change me and give me something to understand this phenomenon we call life.” Filmmaker 6 says “it’s not always a message you may be comfortable with. The goal is to make films that make you laugh and think. My characters are in everyday life situations and you may not be comfortable with the choices they made but you’re going to learn from it. It’s not always going to be this ideal comfortable position that we’re in, but it’s honest and it’s real. If I can continue to maintain some honesty and reality in how we respond to certain situations, then my job is done.”

Filmmaker 4 explains that so far their films do always have a message. However they “try not to make a message of it. I usually feel like I have a question and if it’s valid its worth asking and considering. The film is the process of investigating the question and that’s it. I don’t want to tell anyone what the answer is or what to think. I just want to take people on the journey of investigating this question. Why is this the way it is? Let’s ask Why it is the way it is? If you have a character who’s stereotypical...why is

that? Let's investigate that...I think it's more productive than just saying this character is stereotypical or is not."

Filmmaker 17 says that "hopefully your main character has got an arch that's believable and compelling and it's going to hit some very human notes that your audience will connect with. There's a message there, the growth that character experiences, there should be a message or lesson in that."

Research question 2: What barriers impede on the creation of an independent Black film?and Research question 3: Will independent film ever be as widely received as large box office releases?

Interview questions 5, 6, 7,8,12 and 15 all provide answers to both research questions 2 and 3. Therefore the subject heading for this section states that of both research questions 2 and 3.

Question 5: What barriers impede on the creation of an independent Black film? This interview question answers the following research questions: 2 and 3. The 1st phenomenon that was identified is: industry driven barriers. The responses yielded themes that fall under the category of contextual and intervening conditions that hold specific situational factors that influence the strategies. The themes that emerged after an analysis of this interview question were as follows: distribution, financing and marketing. The second phenomenon that was identified is: lack of resources. The themes that emerged after an analysis of the responses are as follows: opportunities, resources, and limitations. Each of the filmmakers described instances, from their experience, that dealt with each of these components.

Distribution. Filmmaker 9 explains that if you “don’t have your own distribution mechanisms in place I don’t care how well done or excellent the film is made, if no one knows about it then only your family is going to know about it and pat you on the back.” Filmmaker 8 points out that “there are a number of new platforms that are opening up and the DIY (do it yourself) era is becoming quite popular.” Filmmaker 4 explains that with distribution if an audience doesn’t have an appetite for your film “it makes it much harder and what ends up happening is that the distributors know that it’s harder for those characters to reach the target audiences. Or they assume based on a very small amount of data that says audiences will not be able to find an interest in those types of characters. So it makes it difficult because the prospect of any indie feature film making back its investment is very slim and then you reduce that with smaller numbers of African American filmgoers.” Filmmaker 14 indicates that “its wrong to assume that they [filmgoers] all have the same sensibilities. That’s something that impedes independent black film because there’s an incorrect perception that everybody is having the same sensibilities to start with so you only really market it one way or you only come up with one type of idea when there’s a whole gamut of people that you haven’t hit because you’re not taking into account the Diaspora of people, different ideas and backgrounds.”

Filmmaker 11 speaks to international distribution in their response to this question. They explain that “sometimes there is a diminished value that doesn’t translate culturally.” Filmmaker 7 points out that “a lot of distributors will tell you that when they go to sell in the foreign markets, that we do not sell well overseas.” Filmmaker 6 believes that it’s a “false belief that our films don’t sell when our films have saved

Hollywood. In the 70s when certain studios were about to go broke, Blaxploitation films came in and saved the day.”

Financing. All of the filmmakers indicated that money was a hurdle with regard to filmmaking. Filmmaker 5 believes that there is a need for a “critical mass of funders. That’s both for the filmmaking community in general and for the African American community.” Filmmaker 10 explains that the big question is “Will the movie make the money back? Its normally an investor hurdle that we have to get over as producers. Trying to convince them that it will if we shoot for a certain amount then you’re guaranteed this back through domestic, international, and all other revenue streams.” Filmmaker 8 explains that as an independent filmmaker “you don’t have the support of a large studio. You can try to partner with production companies and other like-minded organizations but you really have to have your funding in place or you risk going bankrupt from spending personal money.” Filmmaker 18 explained that “when you have people who want to invest in your film then they try to impede on the goals and direction of the film.”

Opportunities. Filmmaker 5 suggests that there are barriers “every step of the way. Barriers in terms of writing, development process, fundraising, distribution, and just being included in the film festival circuit.” Filmmaker 16 suggests that the “barrier is figuring out what to say in a pitch meeting. How do we present that our films and marketing strategies are going to be viable to bring back a return on the projects? They’ve got to figure out how to deliver it and how to close a deal and how to impact the thought process of an investor. What are they looking for?”

Resources. Filmmaker 5 explains that some barriers are “structural and it’s just that we have less money, we have less access to the education that was required to make these films. Even if you have that, you really have to have very close ties with the community. Some levels of mentorship that takes you through the unknown corridors where decisions are made as to which festival you’re in or who’s going to get this funding.” They go on to say that “if you’re not of that community and at the same bars, or going to the same schools, churches or synagogues, then you’re at a disadvantage.”

Limitations. Filmmaker 1 speaks to limitations when they explain the nomenclature for films with predominantly Black casts. They believe that they have grown tired of the term “Black Film.” It’s a terrible and foolish way to label a film. We do not refer to films that have Caucasian leads as a “White film.” Filmmaker 2 believes that the biggest barrier “is the filmmaker themselves.” Not understanding that you don’t have to have everything in place in order for you to compete on a larger scale.”

Filmmaker 4 explains that the “strata of Black characters does not know what to make of these different aesthetics or genres. Because the films that get released fall into such a narrow point of view both in the types of films and characters featured, it creates a barrier for indie filmmakers who are usually pushing for characters that are non-stereotypical.”

Another limitation that filmmaker 20 believes should be considered is gender. They stated that “sometimes being a woman can be a problem in terms of working with crews and also talking to people who have finance.”

Question 6: Why do you think that attendance for independent films isn’t as high as commercial releases? This interview question answers the following research questions: 2 and 3. The responses yielded themes that fall under the category of

contextual and intervening conditions that hold specific situational factors that influence the strategies. The responses to this question yielded themes that suggest that marketing, distribution, Print, advertising budgets, and number of screens that the movie is shown on were to blame with regard to the lower attendance numbers for independent films.

Marketing. Filmmaker 11 believes that “a lot of independent filmmakers are newbies and they don’t understand the value of marketing enough to have started the process of the production of a film and to start engaging the audience sooner rather than later.” Filmmaker 8 explains that “there’s also an aesthetic, and because there hasn’t been a lot of African American independent films statistically, there hasn’t really developed a significant desire or taste for independent films. I just think if more films are made more independent Black films, we’ll get used to these options and seeing these films and not feel limited by what’s available commercially.” Filmmaker 17 indicates that “it’s not as though Black audiences are clamoring for the product. Black audiences particularly haven’t been raised culturally or independent, art house, or alternative types of storytelling.” Filmmaker 12 indicates that there are so many independent films and that “people are not aware of them.” Filmmaker 7 believes that “people think that they cannot relate to our story.” Filmmaker 18 says that independent films “do not have the marketing that the *Weinstein Company* does or other companies have. As an independent you have to rely on word of mouth, little money going into film festivals. You can do really well in film festivals and people will spread the word about your films.” Filmmaker 17 asserts that “until very recently you couldn’t get surgical with your targeting of a message for a low budget independent film. You had sort of clunky marketing tools at your disposal.” Filmmaker 8 explains that independent films not only

rely heavily on word of mouth but also “popular reviews, blogs, word on the street because they don’t have the same P & A money in their budget. So that’s really the difference...when you have a commercial release there’s a whole studio behind that.” Filmmaker 11 conveyed that they thought that independent film, *Beasts of the Southern Wild*, was smart in terms of how that film rolled out. They went on to say that *Fox Searchlight* did a nice amount of testing on film in order to figure out the best marketing strategy for the film. Films that maybe aren’t picked up by a *Fox Searchlight* don’t have the resources to test the film and see what works, what doesn’t work, to see the sensitivities that the audience may have to the subject matter or not.” Filmmaker 12 indicates that it’s important for the filmmaker “to understand who their audience is and who they are making it for.”

P & A (Print and advertising budgets). Filmmaker 2 explains that “for every major film you see they spend at least 30 million dollars advertising it. That’s every billboard, every commercial spot you see, those half hour specials...that’s all a ploy to get more people to come out and watch the movie. But an independent film...you don’t see ‘The making of...’ specials being broadcast on major networks about the independent film. If you see anything its usually word of mouth.” Filmmaker 12 explains that filmmakers have to “create their own street team which is social media now.” They also need to “team up with a marketing person immediately to make sure that they understand how to reach your audience. It’s not that they will not go, it’s just that they aren’t aware of the film.” Filmmaker 16 explains that a “commercial release is going to have a budget. If it’s a commercial release the formula is in the sheer resources. If it’s a 60 million dollar budget they’ve got a 3rd of it matching it with a budget on promotion. So

they've got 20 million dollars going on promotion. So it's an 80 million dollar project because 60 maybe went into the film and 20 went into the promotion or something like that. With those types of models with how they allocate the budget, what chance do you have?" Filmmaker 5 agrees that "you can't compete with that. Not on any level and even those films, and there are films that are made at a lower budget, to break out is essentially a miracle. It's a perfect storm that's happened once a year where certain publicists come together, certain awards happen, you have to have a high level of quality and then it could happen."

Number of screens. Filmmaker 4 explains that "the number of screens that these movies have been placed on in general, black and white, is much smaller than the screens that the big movies are being put on." Filmmaker 8 says that "advertising dollars equates to the number of people in the seats, so that's why you have more people attending commercial releases than independent films." Filmmaker 2 explains that "if you only get one or two theatres then you need to sell a certain amount of tickets...and then have the right contacts. You need to get that information to the right people so that they can consider giving you 5-10 theatres all over the country. And if you do well there then you'll get 500...then you'll probably get another opportunity to make another movie." Filmmaker 10 indicates that you "have to have the advertising dollars for radio and television to get those trailers in the theatres in a timely fashion so that people are aware that the film is even coming to town. If people don't even know that your movie is in that particular theatre or city then no one is going to come and see your film." They went on to say that "an independent filmmaker could say that their movie is being independently released and they are showing it 5 times a day. However one needs to

consider that “for two of those showings people aren’t going to really be there because it’s the middle of the day during the week, so people don’t really account for that. And you also have to think of what the split is with the theatrical and the distributor once you actually show your film.”

Distribution. Filmmaker 8 gives the example of the “African American Film Festival Releasing Movement (AFFRM) which is a distribution run by Ava DuVernay...very successful independent filmmaker, she really relies on word of mouth and different Black film festivals across the country to support the film and then has a strong social media campaign. She doesn’t have the money for posters, buses or ads on television.” Filmmaker 17 believes that “those who have the decision power about making movies they feel... ‘Well why would you we make more of that if nobody is asking us for that?’ This question presupposes that the product is out in the market.” Filmmaker 4 explains that the independent filmmaker is “trying to push a product that isn’t an easy commodity and then you’re only pushing it in the tiniest window possible. That makes it that much harder to reach the audience. If you want to talk business I will say that there is a monopoly on the distribution complex in the U.S. It’s just making it harder and harder for things outside the mainstream to get on the screens and reach their audiences.” Filmmaker 2 says “the simple answer is that independent film doesn’t have the same distributing and marketing that a major film does. So numbers wise you won’t have the same attendance. Any independent film that gets major attendance is because it did well on the independent circuit. So the majors only look at the numbers.” Filmmaker 2 went on to say that “you’ll probably just have 2 or 3 theatres, go straight to DVD and then from there’s you’re trying to make your next project. “ Filmmaker 6 suggests that “it

goes back to the belief that these films don't have an audience. If you start with that core belief then you're going to be hesitant to put the same amount of marketing dollars behind a film that you don't really believe in."

Question 7: Do you think that independent film will ever be as widely received as large box office releases? This interview question answers the following research questions: 2 and 3. The filmmakers responded to question 7 either in the affirmative or the negative. They then proceeded to expound on their response in order to support why they felt this way. The responses yielded themes that fall under the category of contextual and intervening conditions that hold specific situational factors that influence the strategies. The overall response was that independent film is a niche market and that may be why it won't be as widely received as large box office releases. In addition there is suggestion that alternative distribution plans will be the way for independent films to reach more audiences. Lastly, the filmmakers indicated that there are independent films with large budgets that are successful but should not necessarily be deemed as an independent film.

Niche market. Filmmaker 20 states that if indie films were to become popular "then it wouldn't be independent filmmaking anymore. It's always going to be a niche market." Filmmaker 14 states that "on purpose it will never be as large as a box office release because certain box office releases try to get the broadest stroke imaginable." Filmmaker 4 believes that independent films "have a more immediate impact and longer lasting impression." Filmmaker 7 says that "independent films are meant to be just that. It's a way for very creative people who will not traditionally tell stories under the Hollywood structure. That's a way for them to tell their stories and tell it their way

without being under the form of a studio.” Filmmaker 17 believes that indie films will eventually be widely received “but it will be dispersed over a great many more titles. By definition independent films can’t be as big because they would sort of no longer be independent. The long tail phenomenon is a real one and it’s already happening and I think that...the dollars that are spent to buy tickets for alternative or independent films could come to rival big blockbusters. It may take 50 independent titles to equal that.” Filmmaker 9 feels that indie films will not ever be widely received because of “its very nature if they had the same wide mainstream acceptance as your major Hollywood blockbusters then they will no longer be independent films. But there will always be that one or two that make it out of the independent circuit and become either a cult hit and make it to the mainstream. That’s the American dream quite frankly.” Filmmaker 16 stated “Look what *The Hurt Locker* did....there’s nothing in the cosmos that’s saying that African Americans can’t pull off what they did. You just got to be savvy and very involved in your approach with the timing of an idea.”

Alternative distribution plans. Filmmaker 8 points out that “it’s not necessarily that the films aren’t being made but they’re not necessarily being seen and they don’t have a machine behind them.” Filmmaker 6 says that “even when the film has proven itself, it still gets a platform release or it doesn’t get released in thousands of theatres like a film that struggles and costs more money.” Filmmaker 18 believes that it can. They indicated that “if you have a good product I think it can. With the surge of On Demand, Netflix, and things of that nature people are looking to the independents now. Filmmaker 1 hopes that one day independent film will be widely received. They explain that “it usually comes down to distribution rights and buzz. If a film receives a lot of buzz and is

distributed widely, yes. Until then most independent films will not have a chance to make a large profit.” Filmmaker 4 points out that “one of the great things about digital technology is that if you don’t reach your audience there’s still plenty of other avenues where you can reach them. People will either find you or you can find them. Whether it is streaming, Blu-ray, or YouTube. But the downside is that that’s not really sort of a track able asset.”

Filmmaker 8 feels as though “the tide is changing. There seems to be a larger presence of films that delve within the subject matter of people of color and it’s seen more widely at film festivals now than they have been before. When Black films or independent films are seen in the festivals, more distributors go to the festivals and they might be more likely to acquire these films.” They go on to say that with the increasing number of Black film festivals “it’s really important that Black films not only be seen and Black film festivals, but that more opportunities evolve at regular festivals. The problem is that most film festivals are really competitive and you’re dealing with the sheer volume of many different types of films. There’s no quote on how many Black films will be at *Sundance* but say that there are films that are perceived as better or more interesting and they aren’t necessarily Black that automatically will decrease the number of films.”

The phantom indie film. Filmmaker 12 explains that “if you raise funds independently it’s considered independent so you have to further define what you mean as independent.” Filmmaker 2 speaks of the “writer’s strike of 2007/2008 you had so many of the majors trying to cope with the loss of production budgets. Most budgets were cut by 50-80% sometimes, so you had a lot of people who were used to big budgets that were starting to make independent films. But that independent film still had a budget of

1 or 2 million dollars. Whereas someone that's always made independent films and has only had 20 to 50 thousand to make a movie, they still had that. Now I can make my 2 million dollar movie and I say I'm independent because I don't have a major studio behind me."

Filmmaker 12 explains that independent film has "the Spirit Awards right before the Oscars and for years they would pride themselves on being the indies and a little bit more casual. But it seems as though there were a lot of filmmakers that had done studio films and because the model has changed everyone, even big directors are trying to find money themselves to make the movies that they want and they call that independent." Filmmaker 11 mentioned that "the big winner at the Spirit Awards this year was *Silver Lining Playbook*. Weinstein controlled that project and it had a 25 or 35 million dollar budget which in the independent film space is huge. Most independent films are really made at the 5 million dollar mark and below. It was also cast with a bunch of well-known actors. It's great when movies like this get made because it's sort of in the theme of independent filmmaking and it brings attention to other independent films. It also outshines them at an award ceremony that's supposed to be geared for independent filmmakers." Filmmaker 2 points out that "there's various films that were noted as independent but if you notice their cast list, production quality...everything was extremely high even though it was made for considerable less by Hollywood standards, yet considerably more than a true independent." Filmmaker 5 does not think that this is even a fair question. They went on to say that "Do I think that a 900 lb. Gorilla is going to command less space than a 5 lb. weakling with all of the resources, access, and influence? Now that's a movie!"

Question 8: How important is the commercial success of your films? This interview question answers the following research questions: 2 and 3. Within this section the filmmakers responded to this question by stating that they felt that commercial success was either important or unimportant. The themes that arose from the responses indicated that filmmakers were concerned with the following dynamics: Commercial success or viability, and alternative distribution and individual concerns. Financial stability and/or artistic expression were also a highly discussed topic in the interviews. The responses yielded themes that fall under the category of contextual and intervening conditions that hold specific situational factors that influence the strategies.

Commercial success. Filmmaker 17 explains that “it’s a business. If you don’t make money you can’t make the next one.” Filmmaker 1 explains that commercial success is extremely important. They go on to say that the “goal is always to get people in the theatres. This is a business. One can never control the commercial success of a film. The key, for me at least, is to provide viewers with an honest interpretation of the script.” Filmmaker 2 describes that it’s also very important to them as well. They indicate that as a filmmaker “they understand the business as well as the creative. I want to be able to make another movie and the only way that I’ll be able to do that is if I’m able to make my investors’ money back.” Filmmaker 4 supports this notion as well when they say that “as a commercial artist I should be very concerned with the commercial viability of my films because if film A is successful then that’s what’s going to enable you to make film B and film C. If film A is not successful then when you go to make the proposal for film B it’s going to make investors and distributors less than enthusiastic about putting up the funds to make the film. If you’re not aware or not tracking or

concerned with the commercial viability of the projects after you make them then you're not going to be to make very many of them. Which makes it tough if you want to create atypical depictions of the African American diaspora or even just regional cinema with people in different parts of the country which inherently makes your project sort of a niche product which lowers the commercial viability how can you possibly sustain yourself with making these kinds of films when you're not generating a return on the capital?"

Filmmaker 11 says that their "goal is always to get enough butts in the seats to pay the investor back and maybe have some gravy after we've paid the investor back. That's always our goal. Its commercial success so that we can get to this again. If you can pay your investors back and say that independent film is a viable investment and that allows other independent films to be made." Filmmaker 8 explains that celebrities that you have in your film...play into the commercial aspect of it. That's just society, people like celebrities."

Alternative distribution. Filmmaker 8 explains that "films are being released simultaneously on the same day when they open in theatres. They're also available on VOD (Video on Demand), Netflix or Hulu. So it's hard to really gauge commercial success but it's also really important because whether it's independent or not what the success says is 'yes there is an audience for this content' and 'yes you deserve to have the opportunity to make more films.'" Filmmaker 10 explains that their films "are going to make money through VOD, home video and other ancillary revenue streams. The commercial aspect of my films doesn't really matter to be because I know that more

people are sitting at home watching TV now and they are pressing that VOD button instead of going to the theatres and spending \$100 for a night out.”

Filmmaker 9 says “what Ava DuVernay just did with her film...I think you’re going to start seeing more of these. We’re going to take the distribution mechanisms into our own hands, get the films to our audiences and say “Hey, we’re here”. The audience will then say that they want to go to the movies and not only be entertained but they will also want to be inspired and delve into some serious issues so that we can have a debate and discussion with the group afterwards.”

Financial stability. Filmmaker 5 states that they’ve “never made a film for more than \$1 or 2 million. I don’t live in that world. But I’m looking for critical success and I’m looking for the ability to pay my bills. I have other motivations, I have kids, we own a home, and both my wife and I have jobs. So that is always nice to have some level of financial support but that’s really not why we make films.” Filmmaker 8 says that “it’s always important in terms of being able to have another opportunity to make another film. Visibility is very important. Commercially it would be great if we could recoup the amount that’s actually spent on the film production.”

Artistic expression. Filmmaker 9 points out that commercial success leads to your ability to get more successes. Although this is an artistic endeavor it can’t purely be that. We’re about creating a new Black film aesthetic. This movement is about creating an audience that is not accustomed to seeing serious African American subject matter in films.” Filmmaker 12 explains that “the problem is that filmmakers are creative and they are not business people and even though they’re great at selling their film they are not great at handling their business. A lot of times they will get funds from their investors

and not be prudent about the money and make sure that they're reporting to their investors and make sure that the investors understand the process because anybody investing in the film has to know that the likelihood of you losing your money is very likely." Filmmaker 18 says that they "have a core basis of people that really like what I do. I don't really worry about the commercial success because it will come. Right now it's not pivotal in my career but I know that eventually it will be." Filmmaker 4 explains that "as an artist it's not important at all. You make the movie three times: you write the film, you go out and physically make it and then it's released. Each of those times is a completely different experience." Filmmaker 20 explains that it's not important to them "if it was I wouldn't keep doing it. I've never made any money off of my films. It's more of an artistic expression and it's also just a chance to give that community an opportunity to see images of themselves."

Question 12: Do you think that it is possible for someone who is not a part of the Black culture to make an accurate depiction that includes a majority Black cast or deals with the Black culture? This interview question answers the following research questions: 2 and 3. Each of the filmmakers responded to this question either in the affirmative or the negative. Most of them then went on to expound as to why they had arrived at their standpoint. The first of the themes that emerged focuses on the accuracy of the depiction. The codes that stem from this theme are research that may be done by the filmmaker and the authenticity of the actual film project. The second of the phenomena is: limitations. More specifically, the code that falls under this category speaks to the lack of understanding that the filmmaker may have with regard to the Black

culture. The responses yielded themes that fall under the category of consequences that show outcomes from using these strategies.

Research. Filmmaker 14 states that “the beauty of filmmaking is that its not a singular expression and it’s a very collaborative effort. I do think that they could accurately, with the right team” make accurate depictions. Filmmaker 2 explains that “if you grew up in a Black neighborhood or you did not, your job as a filmmaker is to be as detailed as possible.” Filmmaker 1 says that “a good director should be able to provide an honest interpretation of any culture. We are a vessel for storytelling. A story is a story. Characters are characters. Yes, we do have cultural differences. However, it really does take experience, research, and gaining a stronger understanding of the material to produce accurate interpretations of cultures in cinema.” Filmmaker 11 says that they “think that there are sensitivities that a non-Black producer would need to be aware of or made aware of in order to tell a story in a convincing way.” Filmmaker 8 says that “what’s important is that you have well written or well-drawn characters in an accurate setting and context.” Filmmaker 7 thinks that this is possible just as “a Black person can make a movie that’s not only about the African American culture. I think that for most filmmakers if they do their homework and research and what they don’t know they’ll find out.”

Filmmaker 4 explains that “rather than working the logic the way that the question is posed I would sort of put the observation on myself. I do think that If I was sensitive enough and did the research and approached it with empathy that it would be possible to produce something that takes heed to the truth. So I don’t see why it’s not

possible for someone to do it for someone who's not of my culture. It's tough and a lot more people get it wrong than get it right."

Authenticity. Filmmaker 20 states that "if we didn't have some directories of other cultures or races doing some of these stories, we wouldn't have some of these stories at all unfortunately." Filmmaker 12 explains that if they were "to work on a project where a White producer was trying to produce a Black film, I would have to understand their reasoning for wanting to do it and see if its genuine enough or if they're just trying to tell you a story they think is going to make a lot of money." Filmmaker 10 submits the example of the recent film *Betty and Coretta* that recently showed on *Lifetime*. They indicated that "there was an all-White crew down to the director. Why was it necessary to get a Caucasian person to direct this movie when there are qualified African Americans out here to direct the movie? Why we feel that White is right and that they can tell our stories the way that we want our stories told...doesn't make sense to me never has." Filmmaker 9 explains that they "hope that our brother of the other persuasions would do us the honor and have the respect to decline to interpret our history and story for us. That is the greatest disservice. I would never do that to our brethren of the Jewish culture. How presumptuous of me to think that I could tell a truly accurate Jewish story. If I told a story it would have to be from an African American perspective of the Jewish culture." Filmmaker 17 mentions Quentin Tarantino's film *Django* and says that they think that Quentin "actually did a very good job. I don't know just how accurate his depiction is because it's very stylized because of everything he does. I think that he captures the spirit of the brutality and he captures the depth of love that existed in Black folks even back then." Filmmaker 11 talks about a film that they are currently

working on that was adapted from a book with predominantly Black characters. They go on to say that the film is being done by “two Jewish White producers and I think their approach to the story and the author of the book and allowing him to be a part of the process, I think that’s a very non-Hollywood model. They’re casting their characterization and depiction and retelling of the book in a film format is dead-on and race is not an issue, it’s them wanting to tell a beautiful human story.”

Filmmaker 6 explains that “there’s always examples of non-Black filmmakers who just want to tell a Black story and get it right, that’s key. That’s the problem that I have with Spielberg when he directs Black films because he misses the key elements. When I read *The Color Purple* I said that he was not going to portray an African like it was written in the book. How do you tell the story of the Civil War and African Americans are the reason why the war was won, and not to mention Fredrick Douglass? He was his advisor at that time and convinced him to allow Blacks to fight in the civil war.” They then go on to share a personal story where they had a discussion with friends of theirs who are Jewish regarding the recent release of the film *Amistad*. Filmmaker 6 explains that they had this discussion “about White folks taking license to tell our story. They replied with ‘well they’re artists’ and they gave this whole speech. They also said ‘color shouldn’t matter’ and I said ‘maybe I should direct a film about the Holocaust’ and then the response was ‘well there are limits.’ So why is it that our culture is up for grabs?”

Lack of understanding. Filmmaker 5 suggests that it’s possible but “you really have to be able to complicate characters and you have to be able to have an emotional range. Many times a director or writer is working with a limited understanding of those

people and they will limit their range on what those characters think or feel or the actions that they take or they will fail to give them motivation. We can list thousands of examples where you were clearly moved by a script that was directed by a White person because the elements that I just discussed were in existence.” Filmmaker 18 suggests that “there are some people out there that are capable. I don’t think they can really grasp the culture. If you’re on the outside looking in you can’t tell me how I talk or how I converse with certain people. They can try but it really has to come from us.” Filmmaker 16 states that this is “possible, it’s just a handicap. It just more of a long shot if I don’t have an interment insider ship. Meaning if I haven’t been on the inside of the cultural experience. If I had that experience where I authentically came up around the culture, value, and experience” then it would be possible.

Question 15: Do you feel that non-Black filmmakers are sympathetic to the realism of Black characters? This interview question answers the following research questions: 2 and 3. Each of the filmmakers responded to this question and stated whether they did or did not feel that non-Black filmmakers are cognizant of the realities of Black characters. The theme that emerged from these responses is Stereotypes. The themes that came out of this section speak specifically to the perpetuation of stereotypes by filmmakers and also the Black filmmakers’ impression of the non-Black filmmakers’ awareness of the authenticity of Black characters. The responses yielded themes that fall under the category of consequences that show outcomes from using these strategies.

Non-Black filmmaker awareness of Black character authenticity. Filmmaker 1 believes that “Hollywood continues to perpetuate stereotypes in cinema.” Filmmaker 2 states that non-Black filmmakers “aren’t sympathetic because they don’t have to be.

They just accept stereotypes in the media and there are not consequences for doing so.”

Filmmaker 10 believes that “there are some that really don’t care. There’s some that want to change our history if we allow them to. And there’s some that really do care about telling the story the way a story needs to be told.” Filmmaker 11 believes that “you can be sensitive to something that you have no familiarity with. If you have familiarity with something you can be more sensitive to it because it’s true to you.” Filmmaker 12 explains that “if I understand their motivation and I see that they are willing to learn and really understand the character then it would be a good film. You can tell in the writing. If their writing shows that they don’t understand, then you can see that they are not taking the time to understand their subject matter.” Filmmaker 16 explains that “in the creation process with a film you’re actually going from concept and script to development and casting. The process of the actual filmmaking comes down to that gut sense about things. You don’t have a gut feeling about something you don’t have the cultural experience or comprehensive encounter with that cultural experience or history.” Filmmaker 17 explains that they do not think that “White folks think of Black characters in a certain way. Black filmmakers are not all purists and certainly there are White filmmakers like that. The reverse is also true in both groups. There are Whites that are sympathetic to the authenticity of stories and doing right by those characters.”

Safeguards against stereotypes. Filmmaker 8 states that they think that “it’s harder for them in general to be realistic unless the script is well informed.” Filmmaker 5 states that Black filmmakers “are too focused on stereotypes with regard to the White filmmaker and how he treats us. I’ve suggested that the more people of color get involved in the process, the less likely we’re to get those stereotypes. That doesn’t say

that Whites cannot do that without Blacks on the crew, in the writing process, or the actors. There have been some very bad films with some very terrible stereotypes made by African American directors as well.”

Research Question 4: Does the Filmmaker Feel a Sense of Social Responsibility with Regard to the Content of Their Films?

Interview questions 1,2,4,16,17, and 18 all provide answers to this research question. As previously mentioned most of the interview questions overlap with the research questions. Thus the interview questions that correspond to this research question have already been reported under the first research question that it was described to respond to.

Research question 5: Are there any negative stereotypes in film that have done damage to the Black culture?

Question 10: What, if any, negative stereotypes in film do you think has done the most damage to the Black culture? This interview question answers the following research question 5. Each of the filmmakers responded to this question with a specific character or negative stereotype that they feel has been damaging to the Black culture in film media. The theme that emerged after coding is: Archetypes. This term can be defined as a very typical example of a certain person or thing. The codes or themes that delineate the designated phenomenon are as follows: the Drug Dealer, Jezebel, or the Buck. An additional topic that surfaced during the interviews dealt with the poor development of independent film projects. The themes that relate to this component deal with sub-par production and one dimensional characters. In addition some filmmakers indicated that that film actually does not have any damaging effects on the culture. The

codes under this section deal with dynamics such as the viewer's home life or just that the medium does not have the power to be damaging.

Filmmaker 6 tells us to “pick your poison. Does showing a pimp have more of a damaging effect than showing a heartless drug dealer? Does a heartless drug dealer have more effect than showing a rapist or the Black brute or the imbecile? They're all negative!”

The Drug Dealer. Filmmaker 17 says that the roles that “narrowly case the circumstances in which we live. Black folks don't all live in the hood.” Filmmaker 11 says that “the Black male, thug, drug dealer, can take the first shot and then his character doesn't live beyond that moment” would be the most damaging. They go on to say that its typical and certainly has diminished the value of the roles for Black men.”

The Jezebel. Filmmaker 17 says that they think that the roles “that over sexualize Black folks” have done the most damage. Filmmaker 7 believes that “videos have done a disservice to us more than films. Objectifying women, making us look a certain way, killing out men and everybody's rapping with gold teeth. I have a problem with that kind of stuff.” Filmmaker 20 says that “sometimes you just get tired of seeing Black women in music videos with hardly any clothes on and they always got to be either hoochie mamas or some kind of whore or something like that.” Filmmaker 14 says that they think that the fact that “African American women have been seen as the hooker, the sex pot, the oversexed object of desire has done a lot of damage to our community in the way people are perceived by people who don't know any better.”

The Buck. Filmmaker 5 indicates that if they had to pick one it would be the show of “male virility and strength. I think that buying into the fact that we are not

empathic or sensitive” are harmful. Filmmaker 1 says that they feel that “Black men specifically have received a bad rap in film. We’re often seen as violent, sexist, criminals, and that’s not really accurate at all for the majority of Black men.”

The Coon. Filmmaker 9 selects the Step and Fetchit or Coon archetype “that’s simply there to bring comic relief in a story. He has no relationship, no girlfriend or wife, no kind of family life. He’s just there to make White folk laugh.”

Sub-par production. Filmmaker 8 explains that it’s “the quality of films what concerns me moreso than stereotypes. It’s really difficult when you see bad films in general, but when you see bad films that happen to be Black it makes you frustrated because what that then says to the public and the industry is ‘Black films are destined to fail’ or ‘Blackfilms can’t find their audience’ or ‘they’re just perpetuating stereotypes.’” Filmmaker 8 goes on to explain that “what we tend to see is more formulaic than negative in terms of stereotypes and formula with regard to what works or if it sold before. If it’s a story about the ghetto and it works well then you’ll see more of that.” Filmmaker 2 explains that “we as a Black community accept poor quality films. And by that I mean we will support a movie that isn’t well produced just because it’s a Black project. I don’t like the stereotype that the Black community will settle. I don’t want to be that filmmaker that settles for bad audio, horrible acting, bad picture, and incomplete story lines. I think that our people deserve good entertainment.”

One-dimensional characters. Filmmaker 11 explains that characters that are “silent but present on the scene...are an understated stereotype. I don’t think it does Black characters or the storytelling of Black people or even give any depth to characters. They are not developed human beings in terms of characterization.” Filmmaker 8 believes

that this speaks to “the writing and creating more in depth characters and you will see more of that in independent films than you will with Hollywood films.” Filmmaker 16 explains that “there’s got to be an array of expression so whether you judge the characters as a negative...you’re talking about in a narrative representation there’s going to be a diabolical or negative character and maybe a positive character. You can’t have all positive characters, that’s not going to work in a narrative. It’s stupid to think that negative characters are not going to show up; they’re there legitimately just like everybody else. They bring forward the narrative and the aspect of the themes that make the encounter happen. It’s not that they’re problematic, but when you don’t have the other end of the spectrum of characters, you don’t have the broad dynamic of character...the wise and poly-dimensional characters...real people are not just Black and White they have complexities and intricacies. Real characters will be heroic in one sense and they they’ll have flaws in one area. The spectrum is not full; it’s not that negative characters are doing all the damage. The damage is the lack of fullness of the range.”

Film has no power to have a damaging effect. Some of the filmmakers felt that it was actually the home life of the viewer that had more of an effect than film. Filmmaker 10 indicates that they “don’t think that films actually play a role in the negativity inside the communities. I think it comes from the home; it doesn’t come from what they see on TV. I think that more negative images are on the computer or video games.”

Filmmaker 4 explains that “they don’t really think that films have that much power.” Filmmaker 9 thinks that “gangster rap has done more damage to us as a people than any one film.” Filmmaker 16 explains that they don’t “feel like it’s the negative

stereotypes that have done damage. I feel like it's the lack of broad representation of images that is problematic."

Question 13: How do you feel about the portrayal of Black characters in film? This interview question answers the following research questions: 5. Each of the filmmakers responded to this question and stated that either they felt that the representations/portrayals were getting better or worse. The codes that emerged state that there have been representation gains and strides: character representation. In addition there are still areas for improvement. The codes that frequently appeared are as follows: character representation, film industry positions, and areas for improvement. The responses yielded themes that fall under the category of consequences that show outcomes from using these strategies.

Character representation. Filmmaker 14 says that they think "it has improved greatly but still has limited scope." Filmmaker 20 states that they think that "compared to the 1980s there's a lot more variety in the portrayals now. There are a lot more people making films that are more reflective of different communities than it has even been." Filmmaker 5 indicated that they felt that portrayals were getting better every day. However we are overrepresented in many ways in front of the camera, our numbers are good in comparison to Latinos and Asians my wife says on TV but not in the movies. Filmmakers tend to prefer watching the underclass struggle and overcome obstacles and that appeals to their audience." Filmmaker 4 says that they think "what reaches us the most is what we see on television and the 24 screen multiplex is still very narrow. I also think that there's a generation of young Black filmmakers who have grown up in a changing society so I do think that they are getting it more right than wrong. Those films

are hard to find...you have to be at a festival but I do think that in the realm the experience is broader and you're seeing a wider range of characters in the Diaspora."

Filmmaker 18 says that there have been improvements and that "you don't really see a lot of the slave stuff like we used to in the early 1980s and 1990s. We're starting to see professional African American people. I'm glad to see that it makes me want to strive to do that same thing as well. It's been an influx of positive films out there within the last five years and it's really making great strides in the independent circuit and its positive images." Filmmaker 16 states that "there's some diversity. We've got intelligent characters and they'll put us in a position of authority inside power dynamic situations in the corporate or governmental realm."

Filmmaker 1 feels that there is still improvement to be made. More specifically they feel that current day depictions in a variety of films have been "outrageous, unfortunate, clichéd, and stereotypical." Filmmaker 17 feels that things are getting better however "Tyler Perry really oversimplified single note kind of stories. He has done some stuff that is actually pretty good and I think that he's attempting to do better and complicate his characters and stories. I think that audiences are starting to tire of that one note being played." Filmmaker 16 believes that "we don't have much alternative model stance with it comes to power issues that show up in our characters. It's continually hurtful to the community. That situation is going to have to get real transcendent for something to shift." Filmmaker 8 also feels that "there is a need for a lot more improvement. They go on to say that they would "love to see more honest depictions of African Americans in film. I would love to see more dealing with everyday aspects of life and not just violence and comedy but more complicated layers and more well-written

in-depth characters that represent the real people and the varying degrees of not just culture, but class. That will happen with the success of more independent film.”

Film industry positions. Filmmaker 5 points out that there is “a big difference in terms of what directors, producers, and distributors do and what they’re looking for. There’s always a need for improvement and that will come when we are represented in other areas. We need to be VPs, funders, producers, distributors. The more representation the more we will have a stake in how we are represented in every level of the filmmaking process.” Filmmaker 12 points out that “independent film allows anyone creating to create something and tell their story. The studio may not get it but independent means “I’m going to go make it myself, somebody’s going to like it and if I make it great enough everyone’s going to like it!” Filmmaker 10 believes that “we need to reach outside of the United States and try to program or cast internationally and I think we’ll have a much better go at a theatrical run or VOD. You’ll get more nationalities involved in watching your film.”

Filmmaker 8 talks about independent filmmaker Ava DuVernay and how she has helped to push a higher quality of Black films. They go on to say that “she not only knows the inside game of Hollywood, she has a really good knack for the art of making film and she knows how to make independent film popular. The best thing about her is that she’s creating a new distribution channel and that helps to get her movies and other movies out there and that will help with the varying depictions of African Americans in film.”

Areas for improvement. Filmmaker 11 says that they “think its unfortunate that in mainstream films there’s no risk. If you have a great story then you can be creative with

your casting. And I understand from the studio perspective why you always want the a-list talent because a-list talent delivers at the box office. But I think it's somewhat limiting because there are so many talented African American actors and actresses who don't get a minute to shine. *Silver Lining Playbook* could have been done as a Black film...would it have gotten all of the hoopla? Maybe if Denzel did it but why is it always that Denzel or Will Smith is the go to? I just think that studios need to assess who they cast when themes in stories are kind of universally based." Filmmaker 10 states that the portrayal of Black characters in today's film is "typical. Films that are coming out today pretty much have mainstream characters that could be any color."

Filmmaker 12 points out that it's important for studios to "allow us to have sequels. How many Black sequels do you see? They've been talking about *The Best Man* and *Love Jones* coming back...when's it coming back? I don't know why it takes 20 years to get a sequel. There is an audience for them."

Summary

Chapter 4 begins with reintroducing the steps that were accomplished in order to complete the interview process. This section included a synopsis of the timeframe within which the interviews took place, the method of soliciting participation and the medium through which the data was collected. The researcher then went on to describe the actual participants and provided demographic information that was collected during the interview process. The following section dealt with the actual coding of the data. It went into detail regarding research approach that the experimenter utilized in order to report the results/responses that were collected on the survey. The researcher also went on to

reiterate how the responses from each of the survey questions speak to each of the five research questions that were initially introduced in Chapter 1.

Chapter 5: Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

Study Findings

The purpose of this study was to produce a theoretical explanation of the motivations of the motivations of Black Indie Filmmakers regarding depictions and images of persons of African ancestry in the media. Sixteen filmmakers who identified as either African or African American were interviewed. All of the participants lived on either the East or West coast. Data analysis revealed a causal condition called *industry driven barriers*. *Industry driven barriers* was a four stage process with intervening conditions and consequences. For the purpose of this study it was desired to examine what template Black independent filmmakers utilize in order to create their movies. Ultimately the researcher wanted to determine whether there was a distinct motivation to create projects that would not resemble large/popular box office releases. The following five research questions were to be examined:

1. Does the filmmaker use their films to educate or just entertain?
2. What barriers impede on the creation of an independent Black film?
3. Will independent film ever be as widely received as large box office releases?
4. Does the filmmaker feel a sense of social responsibility with regard to the content of their films?
5. Are there any negative stereotypes in film that have done damage to the Black culture?

The investigator used the qualitative approach of grounded theory for this study. The stages in the process that stemmed from the core phenomenon, *industry driven barriers* were: *marketing, distribution, financing and artistic expression*. In this chapter,

findings will be compared with existing literature and discussed in terms of future research, self-image effects, trends in funding, and distribution as well as character development with respect to artistic expression and challenging stereotypes.

Demographics

The demographics of the filmmakers that were interviewed included both male and female participants. The researcher interviewed a total of nine males and seven females. The ages ranged from 31-60 years old. All of the participants identified as African American. Although the study was open to those who identified as African, none of the participants in the sample were actually of African descent. The fact that 100% of the sample identified as African American could be due to the convenience or *snowball* sampling method. Participants who called into the researcher's designated freeconferencecall.com number and met the criteria were interviewed. After each filmmaker's interview, they were asked by the investigator to provide other Black filmmakers that they knew with the information for the study. A total of seven filmmakers were recruited by the snowball technique.

The number of years as a filmmaker ranged from 1-30 years. Twelve percent of the participants reside on the East Coast while the remaining 88% of the sample reside on the West Coast. All of the filmmakers identified as one or more of the following filmmaking positions: Director, Producer, Actor, Cinematographer, Writer and/or Editor. Each of the filmmakers have completed or released a minimum of one film project.

Core Phenomenon: Industry Driven Barriers

Ample evidence suggests exists indicating that there are significant barriers that can inhibit the production of an independent film, or any film for that matter. By nature

independent films tend to have very small budgets in comparison to film projects that are produced by larger world renowned movie studios. This is an automatic barrier for an independent filmmaker because more than likely they will never get access to a budget that is as large as a typical commercial release. This puts the filmmaker at an immediate disadvantage that's caused by the way that the film industry is constructed. In addition it has been illustrated that as an African American filmmaker there are additional obstacles due to race, representation, access to resources, distribution, and marketing.

Even though this is the case, the filmmakers that were interviewed understand that this is just a part of what they signed up for. Rather than worrying about the predisposed industry barriers, independent filmmakers are not only getting creative with the film projects that they generate, but they are also creating their own version of the "studio push" that is commonly seen with large box office releases. In reality a lot of the filmmakers view this handicap as a part of the aesthetic of independent filmmaking. This genre of films tends to be more intimate and personal in many ways. It's common that one could come in contact with the filmmaker during a screening and proceed to have a conversation with them in the theatre lobby regarding their choice of allegory in the film or have the opportunity to have a dialogue with the filmmaker and other audience members during a Q & A following the screening of the film.

The theoretical frameworks that were utilized in the research can act as a scaffold to interpret the industry driven barriers, as they relate to black indie filmmakers, and point out the intersection between psychological, experiential and institutional disparities that exist. To demonstrate how this works a statement that was made earlier in the text will be used to show the overlapping nature of the two theoretical frameworks with

regard to this study. The researcher indicated in the last sentence in the first paragraph of this section that “it has been illustrated that as an African American filmmaker there are additional obstacles due to race, representation, access to resources, distribution, and marketing.” This reality speaks to one of the theoretical frameworks that were introduced in Chapter 2: Critical Race Theory. This illustrates an intersection between race and power. More specifically that there isn’t an audience for black indie films and/or they do not sell and in turn the funding is sparse for these projects which is a demonstration of power amongst those who are in a position to provide funding for films. This causes a domino effect because this now means that less black indie films are being made and distributed in comparison to those that are being created by white filmmakers. With a smaller number of black indie films being presented this lowers the level of representation of alternative and realistic black images to the consumer. The consumer will then be forced to either consume poorly developed or typical representations in other black commercial film only because they are more accessible or they may even view films where there is no black representation in them at all. When there is no black representation in films the black consumer may become discouraged or begin to internalize feelings of conscious or unconscious inferiority or inadequacy. More specifically the film goer may begin to make statements like “Black people can’t make those kinds of films” when making a comparison to a great film that has all white actors and/or white crew that produced the film, excellent character development and large commercial success. This statement may be made because the consumption of films with predominantly non-black casts or a minimal number of black, leading or supporting, characters that have stereotypical traits. The black filmgoer may even internalize

statements like “I don’t see myself [Black people] in this film, maybe we are not there because we are not capable or skilled enough to be involved.” Statements such as these speak to the second theoretical framework: the Nigrescence model.

The discussion below will address each of the themes that were identified to have emerged from the core phenomenon. The themes that resulted actually do not specifically speak to the culture of either the filmmaker or the filmgoer except for those sections that speak to the motivations behind the artistic expression of the filmmaker. The themes that did emerge essentially speak to the indie film industry as a whole and do not appear to be related to systematic discrimination as listed in Critical Race Theory or the negative effects that poor character representation can have as outlined in the Nigrescence model to a lesser extent. However there does appear to be an undertone regarding race within the film industry that may need to be further examined in future research. Each of the filmmakers appears to be operating at a level where race matters but it is not necessarily the sole defining factor for what they do. Each of the filmmakers indicated that they do not just make films for black people and that they want to be able to appeal to wider audiences just as films in other genres do. In addition some of the filmmakers indicated that they plan to make films that have predominantly white characters in them, or even characters of other non-black ethnicities, just as white filmmakers currently do with regard to black characterizations. There did not appear to be an assumption that they were automatically at a disadvantage because they were black. However it was recognized that there are some scenarios and isolated incidents where race does come in play. Therefore the discussion of race was only included in the sections below if it was applicable and/or if the concept was mentioned during the

interviews. Ultimately the industry driven barriers that were identified appear to have transferability to most indie filmmakers irrespective of race. The themes that emerged appear to speak to a typical experience that any independent filmmaker may go through when attempting to create and release a film project. A list of the themes that materialized can be found in Figure 2 and are illustrated in an axial coding diagram format.

Stage 1: Marketing

Marketing is the key to making any product work. The assembly of films and their marketing campaigns may be heavily influenced by powerful executives aiming to maximize revenue through the execution of carefully tailored strategy (Nowell, 2012). It's required to generate consumer interest in your project. With regard to the independent filmmaker, this is arguably the most crucial piece of the filmmaking process. Although all other areas are of great importance, everything may have been done in vain if there is no one in the audience except for a few friends and family members. The Black indie filmmaker has made it clear that they do not just make films for the people they know. They create their films in order to get the product and the message so that it disseminates the ideas, storytelling or messages that they are trying to convey. In order to market a product you have to understand who your audience is. Independent film is a unique product in that a large studio format is not always the driving force behind the camera. Independent films can draw in a cult-like following because of the subject matter and stylization of the movie. In the format the filmmaker doesn't really have to follow the rules and one may find like-minds in the audience with similar sensibilities as

the filmmaker. In turn this creates a niche market that speaks to atypical genres and discriminating tastes.

Deciding whether to market the film to just black audiences or all audiences is a decision that the filmmaker will need to make. Research has shown that if the movie contains predominantly black characters then it is considered to be in the black film genre. However when films contain predominantly white characters they are not classified as being in a white film drama. In addition films made with predominantly white characters do not seem to promote the same hesitancy with black audiences with regard to watching the film. It appears as if black audiences will more readily accept films that do not have black characters in them as opposed to other cultural groups and their selection of which films they want to watch. This statement may be bias or assumptive however it is a notion that must be considered when making a decision on how to appeal to certain audiences and which audiences it is desired to reach.

Niche market. As previously described the independent film arena is a niche market all on its own. Independent film can also be identified as a genre. Separately black films can be defined by a genre on their own. Coupling each of these labels makes for a unique cinematic presentation that can encompass several different nuances that speak to either independent film and/or the social theme of the project. A genre can be seen as a product of the various discourses that have circulated films which have been deemed to share common characteristics (Browne, 1998; Mittel, 2001; Naremore, 1998). Audiences use genres to organize fan practices (generically determined organizations, conferences, and websites), personal preferences, and everyday conversations and viewing practices(Mittell, 2001). When you consider race as an additional nuance, this

creates additional possibilities with regard to creating a unique piece of art. As with any type of art it's open for interpretation and the audience has to have a palate that is open to seeing unconventional character portrayals that stray from the commercial formula that is often seen with large box office releases. It's the job of the filmmaker to take this unique situation and turn it into an opportunity to appeal to the senses of a sub or counterculture. Therefore it's important for the filmmaker to find those people who the film will appeal to the most. This can prove to be difficult because to start, independent films have P & A (print and advertising) budgets that are dwarfed by that of a larger box office release. Therefore the filmmaker has to get creative with regard to finding the audience that would appreciate the body of work.

Finding the audience. This concept emerged as a theme from the core phenomenon. When each of the filmmakers spoke about the audience that views their films, the researcher found that each of them described it in a unique fashion. More specifically, in reality it's the audience that finds the film within the independent model. When considering large box office releases it's quite easy to find these types of films. They are literally everywhere in that they have large advertising budgets, so you constantly see images from the films wherever you look. Commercial releases can afford to place ads on the back of buses, billboards, magazines, radio spots, commercials, "The making of..." television specials and the list goes on. The marketing campaign for an independent film is so incessant that it's hard for anyone who's paying attention not to know what's in the theatres and when the film will be released. In addition it makes it easy for the consumer to know about the film before its release and visit any local movie theatre that has the same film on multiple screens with numerous showtimes. The

commercial film becomes iconic and people start to incorporate the marketing buzz and the release of the film into their daily lives. With a large commercial release you'll find people waiting in line for hours to get a glimpse of the new Star Wars epic or fully grown adults in Harry Potter costumes who are waiting for midnight showing. America's older generation will associate memories of their youth with the Black and White films of yesteryears that starred icons such as Sidney Poitier, Marilyn Monroe, or Josephine Baker. In this case the film finds the audience because of its accessibility and overwhelming presence in America's communities.

Unfortunately, independent films do not have the opportunity to get sensationalized in a manner that will build audiences prior to the film's release causing people to come out in droves for the opening weekend of a film. With an independent film it's often that the audience is built after the film gets released. More specifically, it's common for films to gain popularity after they have been seen by smaller audiences and then its existence is spread by word of mouth. In addition it's not uncommon for independent films to become popular or gain a following months or years after its initial release date. Therefore the independent filmmaker must get creative with the way that they market their films. Ultimately since the marketing presence isn't as strong, it's the audience that finds the independent film.

The independent film consumer consists of people who are looking for something different. One could assert that the independent filmgoer has an appreciation for artistic expression, looks to film as a medium intellectual stimulation and has the desire to be ahead of trends or even create them. It takes a unique audience member to do their research to find out where the next indie film will be playing. As an independent

moviegoer it may take hours to surf the web, attending screenings at art house theatres, word of mouth or thumbing through their local alternative weekly newspaper to find listings for the latest independent release. The actual profile of the independent movie goer is important for the filmmaker to consider when creating marketing strategies. This clamoring for something new and unique creates an opportunity for the black indie filmmaker to create fervor about black indie films amongst indie filmgoers. Adding culture as a covert theme and creating a storyline that has not been seen before has the potential to bring in audiences and sensationalize the fact that something new and fresh is on the screen for them to take in and analyze.

International markets. Targeting international markets is a theme that emerged from the core phenomenon. The interviews revealed that there is the thought that Black independent films should consider reaching out to international sources in order to grab the attention of those audiences. There is a perception that Black independent films do not do well with international audiences. This could be due to cultural themes that are in Black American films that are not transferrable to audiences overseas. However if the right formula was put in place it is possible for the Black independent filmmaker to penetrate an international market with their film. More specifically the Black independent filmmaker should consider the content of their films and develop projects that will translate to international audiences. This will in turn make the film more marketable and will widen the net that's cast to generate audience members. In addition this creates an opportunity for a cultural exchange within those international markets that are comprised of persons of African descent. The black media content that international audiences consume tends to be based on popular culture which has already been

identified to often contain stereotypical themes. Therefore just as a white teen in Middle America learns about the African American culture, an international comparative to that may be the media images that are being consumed in African countries, South America and even parts of the United Kingdom for example. Participating in international markets allows the indie filmmaker to challenge the popular images that are communicated internationally with alternative African American images just as it does in the United States. In turn this could help to alleviate or eliminate stereotypes that may be held about the African American culture abroad by both persons of African descent and those who are not.

In terms of the titles they distribute themselves, Stehlik (as cited in Guerassio,2003) says that distribution company: facets takes a "curatorial" approach, seeking out and filling holes in the home video landscape. In practice, this can mean a single film title that is not available, but more often it means films produced in certain areas of the world that are under-represented in the North American market. Stehlik opposes this to what he calls the *clearinghouse* model adopted by Amazon and Netflix. As of today, he has said,

Facets Video hosts three exclusive video lines: Accent Cinema, a world cinema label that has particular strengths in Europe; Cinemateca, a Spanish world cinema label that features films from Spain and Latin America; the Facets Video label, a world cinema label that has particular strengths in Middle Europe, the Middle East, and American independents. (para. 8)

Stehlik has said that they acquire approximately twelve to eighteen films on a yearly basis for a limited release on the Facets label; [and] another twenty for limited

distribution, and four to five thousand new titles every year for nonexclusive distribution. Whereas distribution company: Kino offers *The Best in World Cinema*, (although they demonstrate a particular strength in Russian cinema), and whereas Criterion provides a highly restrictive selection of *A-list* foreign films. Facets has carved a niche within niche home video by distributing films from areas that are more under-represented than other more recognized national cinemas. Stehlik has publicly emphasized Facets' exclusivity, stating, "it is very difficult [for Facets] to distribute independent features that aim at a broad, middle-brow audience, and which emulate Hollywood films or television. There are other distributors that are perfectly capable of moving these films into the marketplace" (Guerassio, 2003, para. 15)

Cultural translation is not only important for international markets but also within the spectrum of American audiences as well. During the study, filmmakers were asked if they consider the perceptions that non Blacks may have after watching their films. Some of the responses indicated that the filmmaker did not make this consideration and others conveyed that they do in fact make this consideration when developing projects. The number one reason that this consideration was made is to ensure that their project had marketability to outside or non-Black audiences. It appears that the filmmaker understood that Black audiences would not be able to sustain Black independent films on their own. More specifically during the interviews it emerged that Black audiences may not have the palate for independent films because they do not subscribe to a commercial template. Therefore the Black independent filmmaker must consider one of two things: (a) they will need to find methods of marketing their films to non-Black audiences, or (b)

they will need to consider efforts that will draw in Black audiences that may not be accustomed to this unique film format.

Distribution companies maintain a sense of exclusivity through their access to international cinema at film festivals and the distribution markets that occur there; moreover, this process combines the sense of exclusivity with that of cosmopolitanism. Kino International regularly sends representatives to the festivals at Rotterdam, Toronto, Cannes, and Sundance, and Zeitgeist likewise sends scouts to these festivals and others that cater in international art cinema, such as Berlin. Certainly, this is not a surprising practice on their part, as the markets at international film festivals have served as crucial links between the production and consumption of world cinema for many years. The point is that by entering these markets and engaging in these social arenas, these companies position themselves in competition with larger distributors, such as the specialty divisions of the major Hollywood studios, which often focus on theatrical distribution. Even more importantly, participation in these festival markets aligns these video distributors with a stratum of cinema culture where select films gain early approval and cultural consecration. This puts Kino and Zeitgeist in a privileged position to internalize and subsequently disseminate the values regarding cinema fostered at these festivals (Herbert, 2011).

Alternative plans. Since independent filmmakers do not usually have a large budget for marketing, alternative strategies must be identified in order to ensure that the film becomes recognizable by audiences, film critics, distributors etc. The basis for these alternative plans is to identify the opportunities that will cost the least or nothing at all for the filmmaker. The audience for an independent film could potentially become *partners*

with the film project in order to push awareness from the film among their own communities and social circles. The independent filmmaker should look at their audience as more than a ticket purchase or a box of popcorn from the concession stand. More specifically, the independent filmmaker should look to the audience member to take more of an active role in the process of marketing their film. It's about "social capital" and setting up good, memorable experiences for the audience member. People want to brag, to share information with their peers about new things they haven't heard about yet. That feeling is part of what makes talking about the next indie film project rewarding (McCluskey, 2012). The marketing tactics that are used to promote products and services can be just as effective when applying them to the independent film model.

Social media. Social media or networking can be used by an independent filmmaker as an alternative plan for marketing. This approach allows the filmmaker to grow brand awareness, engage in a dialogue with audiences, increase opportunities for sales and partnerships, and lastly reduce marketing costs or compensate for a small or lacking budget. Experts suggest that if one plans to use social media as a marketing tool, then that it's important to use multiple applications instead of just one. For example, there are numerous sites that are currently popular such as: Facebook, Twitter, Vimeo or YouTube. Though it takes planning and significant time investment, spreading the word about a movie over several networks not only helps you gain exposure, it can keep the filmmaker from getting lost in a site that gets millions of posts a day (Chessher, 2011). Websites such as these can help independent filmmakers build their brand, as well as to get in touch with the audience that will view their film. Leads, links, and referrals can come from relationships that the filmmaker establishes by participating in not only the

popular local social network, but from anywhere in the world (Chessher, 2011). In a recent study by the Pew Research Center (Duggan & Brenner, 2013) it was determined that young adults (users under 50 or more specifically ages 18-29) are more likely than older adults to use social media. Women are more likely than men to be on these sites. Those living in urban settings are also significantly more likely than rural internet users to use social networking. In this study, those that identify as black (non-Hispanic) comprised 68% of internet users who use social networking sites. Twitter proved to be the preferred method of social networking with 26% of its users being Black in comparison to 14% white and 19% Hispanic. Only 8% of the users surveyed utilized Pinterest for social network while 18% of the White participants utilized the site and the remaining 10% was comprised of the Hispanic users. African Americans were shown to be more likely than whites to use Instagram. The studied yielded the results of 23% of the users being black, 11% were White and 18% were Hispanic. When examining Facebook usage, 72% of the participants surveyed reported that they lived in an Urban area. Taking social network usage into consideration is important for the black filmmaker. It could provide information as to what sites to utilize for their campaign push as well as what cities to bring their movies to for screenings.

In addition the filmmaker can gather information regarding awareness, perceptions, and interests of their audience through a mechanism such as Twitter hash tags. This allows the filmmaker to filter conversations that only apply to their film projects. This is a simple, but laser-focused way to get several opinions in a concentrated setting. The big difference between offline word-of-mouth marketing and conversations that happen in the digital world is that the filmmaker can observe online buzz much more

directly and mine information from it much more efficiently. Facebook can be used to do that same thing. One of the first things that an independent filmmaker does is to create a Facebook page specifically for their independent film project. This is a free way to create one central location for audience members to go and learn about the development of a film project, events related to the release of the film, funding efforts, and even complete listings of the cities and theatres where the film will be available. This is the answer to the good old fashioned website because it offers more of an interactive experience with the film, and higher traffic by the consumer. Experts suggest that the filmmaker carve out a really deep engaging experience for the moviegoer. This can be done through creating a unique online event for them to be apart of (McCluskey, 2012). The moviegoer will remember this experience for a very long time, and this could potentially be a way to sensationalize the indie film in a similar fashion to the emotional connection the American moviegoers may have with large commercial releases.

Word of mouth. Word of mouth, one of the oldest communication tools, is an effective marketing tool. Research findings show that people rely greatest on family and friends when making a buying decision (Richard K. Miller & Associates, 2006). In a study involving the analysis of the long term effects of social networking it has been determined that the consumer will take an invested interest in a product long after its social media launch. Even though this study speaks to *products* the filmmaker can still utilize this knowledge and apply it to the marketing of their films. Word of mouth has long been the best way to advertise a product, but how long does that buzz last, especially in the digital age? Customers-turned-volunteer “brand advocates” are still much more likely to buy and recommend products than they were before they got involved in the

marketing campaign a year before. When a campaign wins over a volunteer advocate, the goodwill can last for awhile. For example, 91% of those who said right after the campaign that they were likely to recommend the product remained likely to recommend it a year later (McCluskey, 2012). While online buzz is capturing media attention, 80% of word of mouth occur offline (Richard K. Miller & Associates, 2006).

In the past, record companies have used *street teams* to push singles and new artists that were soon to be introduced. This same tactic can be utilized within the indie film schematic. This is also known as buzz marketing. Buzz marketing, with its heavy doses of theatricality, was honed by Hollywood studios, liquor and tobacco companies, and other marketers whose products were either limited in traditional media or simply had too short a self life for a full-blown ad campaign (Richard K. Miller & Associates, 2006).

Marketers are now reaching out to *evangelists*, who are already die-hard fans of a brand, and persuading them to spread the word through their existing social networks. Evangelists should be *influencers*, or people who have large social networks and are good communicators, and *promoters*, people who talk positively about the brand. These types of characteristics are easily found within the indie film audience member. It was previously mentioned that the indie filmgoer will do their research to seek out independent films. This leads to the assumption that the same person will want to take an invested interest in the film project in order to create future opportunities to see more independent films. Marketers have become obsessed with finding ordinary people to endorse, criticize or simply spread the word about new movies and new products on blogs or other consumer-created media (Richard K. Miller & Associates, 2006).

With the Black independent film world one of the best examples of the DIY (do it yourself) concept is that of AFFRM which stands for the African-American Film Festival Releasing Movement. It's an art advocacy movement, powered by people and organizations choosing action over excuses. It explains that they are the people "who don't wait for the go-ahead. They claim to see a void, and they work towards filling it with meaning(African-American Film Festival Releasing Movement [AFFRM], 2012). They go on to invite participation on their website by saying "if you like us, if you care about the diverse images in cinema, if you aren't afraid to roll up your sleeves...we want you to join us. Together, we will cultivate dynamic audiences for filmmakers of color to share their stories, their way" (para. 1).The filmmaking distribution initiative started by American filmmaker, marketer, and film distributor, Ava DuVernay, incorporates the word of mouth approach into its marketing format. More specifically, AFFRM has created opportunities for volunteers who are looking to foster Black film, to volunteer, and be apart of a team. Once the volunteer logs in they will receive working updates, film information, assignments, and other exclusive tools and details. All volunteers must attend a Skype orientation session for an overview of AFFRM and the various volunteer duties. There are four teams that one can be apart of: Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Washington D.C., or digital. Each of the teams is headed up by a city captain. The volunteer captain will reward the volunteer with color blocks for completed tasks as they move along a grid that has been created. The rewards include items such as gift cards or an all expense paid trip to Sundance.

Test or free screenings.Just because you are making a singular artistic vision does not mean that you can't consider who the audience for your vision might be. Many

if not most of the marketing tools that filmmakers can use to reach their audience should not hamper their creativity, and might even enhance it (Reiss, 2010). Like a product, a film can be used in the same fashion when it comes to giving out free samples. Free screenings can be advantageous to the filmmaker just as it is with giving out free samples for a new product that has been developed. Using this model will allow audience members to share their honest opinions about the film with friends and family in person and through online social media such as Facebook, blogs, and videos (McCluskey, 2012). A test or preview screening is a process whereby a selected audience provides feedback to the producers of a film prior to its completion. These are also known as production screenings, as elements of the story and characters can still be refined before the film is finalized and delivered to a distributor. Participants are selected on the basis of their capacity to mirror the film's intended audience (Griff, 2012).

Filmmakers should consider this method because it will help to explore what actually *plays* and how nuances of the film translate with the audience. Filmmakers need to be sensitive and aware of things such as cultural, racial, or gender undertones in their films and how they may affect the perceptions of the viewer. A screening will even help the filmmaker to find their audience. A plethora of entertainment is available on multiple platforms, with social media giving unprecedented power to consumers to pass judgment even before a film's public release. Taking a survey of the viewers that watched the film is a valuable way to analyze key elements of the film such as characters, plot, pacing, and recommendation to friends (Griff, 2012).

Stage 2: Distribution

In the majority of media industry studies, *distribution* primarily refers to that sector of the industry that orchestrates and accomplishes the movement of commodities from producers to consumers. Indeed, in its industrially dominant form, it is the bottleneck through which the mass of productions must pass in order to reach their potentially vast audiences. In critical political economic theory, however, distribution can refer to the general dispersal of wealth in a society. These two meanings of distribution—the process by which specific commodities circulate, as well as the social allocation of wealth, are best understood when set in relation with one another. In this sense, distribution is a determinant moment when the economic and cultural value of a commodity is produced. Conceptualizing distribution in this way is particularly important for understanding cultural commodities, as their value is so closely tied to the formation of ideas, beliefs, and social identities. Thus, assessing how such commodities accrue cultural value requires analysis of the ways in which the forms of their exchange bear upon their relative value in general (Herbert, 2011).

Pierre Bourdieu's (1987) work on social fields, taste, and cultural stratification is instructive on this point. "Taste," he famously wrote, "is a practical mastery of distributions which make it possible to sense or intuit what is likely (or unlikely) to befall...an individual occupying a given position in social space"(p. 466). He elaborated how such taste values, or *dispositions*, operate in the world of cultural production and circulation, and two elements of this seem particularly germane in the context of specialty home video distribution. First, he differentiates between *large-scale* and *restricted* production. According to Bourdieu, "Where large-scale production 'submits to the laws of

competition for the conquest of the largest possible market, the field of restricted production tends to develop its own criteria for the evaluation of its products” (p. 120).

Second, this process of production and of the production of value resonates with a larger social sphere. For both the commercial and art-minded cultural producer, he writes, the

ultimate and often indefinable principle behind his choices finds itself continually strengthened and confirmed by his perception of the selective choices of authors and by the representations authors, critics, the public, and other publishers have of his function within the division of intellectual labor. (p. 120)

Number of screens. The Black independent filmmaker needs to consider that the number of screens that their films will be played on is very small in comparison to large commercial releases. Therefore this limits the opportunities for the film to be seen by the targeted audience. For typical Black independent films, it’s common to see that the film will be shown on one screen in a specific art house theatre with limited show times over a 1-2-week period. In 2006, *AMC* launched *AMC Select*, a program where 72 theaters, roughly one quarter of the chain's reach, committed one screen each to showing art house films. Today, 60 theaters make up the core of *AMCi* with another 18 theaters jumping in when they feel the film makes financial sense for their market. To figure out which theaters should be involved, VP of Specialty and Alternative content Nikkole Denson-Randolph, reached out to distributors to hear their thoughts on markets that tend to support independent film. They also choose circuits based on demographics, but more important are the indexes of where past independent films have done well (Nicholson, 2010).

What matters most, when it comes to getting in art house theatres, is marketability. If a filmmaker has a relationship with a distributor who then has a relationship with a company like *AMC* then the better the chances are that the independent film will be featured on one of their screens. It's important that the distributor believe in the product and understand the niche market of independent film. If they can prove that they know their audiences and believe in the content, then film houses such as *AMC* will support this type of unique film content (Nicholson, 2010).

The filmmaker also needs to think outside of the box when it comes to the screening of their films. More specifically, films may not always be shown in a traditional movie theatre setting. Depending on the film content, the filmmaker can partner with certain organizations that have an agenda that supports the contents of the film. For example, in February 2013 the film *Soul Food Junkies* was screened at a local Long Beach, CA community center by the Coalition for a Healthy North Long Beach (Portner, n.d.). Another example would be for an educationally themed film to partner with a local K-12 educational group to screen their film. Ultimately, finding unlikely sources and uniting with local communities can also increase the number of screens that the independent film actually gets shown on.

Film festivals. There are hundreds, and maybe even thousands, of film festivals that exist around the world. Filmmakers can find comprehensive lists for film festivals in their own city just by going online and conducting a Google search. Film festivals are one of the foremost dynamic curatorial mechanisms in our film culture. Festival programmers can use their role as gatekeepers to strategically challenge dichotomous valuations of film as either art or commerce, and to facilitate ways of looking that allow

for difference rather than enforce nationalistic models of homogeneity (Rastegar, 2011). The goal of a film festival is not only to show the best of the best but to also define film culture on local and global scales by cultivating public notions of quality and taste. There is a science to the film selection process for film festivals. Therefore it is imperative that the Black filmmaker focus on making a quality piece of work that will stand up to the thousands of submissions that are competing for a spot to be showcased within a particular festival.

This is a great opportunity for the Black independent filmmaker to showcase their unique film project to an audience that is looking to take a critical approach to viewing films. This is the platform to showcase Black independent films that contain characters that are more realistic and well developed and ultimately stray away from the stereotypes that may be seen in large commercial releases. The black filmmaker can utilize both African themed film festivals and festivals that cater to all cultural backgrounds in order to generate a following in several different markets. As one of the most powerful curatorial filters of the film world, festivals are the first line of defense; they are the point of crossover between audiences and filmmakers, cinematheques and multiplexes. This is the perfect chance for the Black filmmaker to get their film out to audiences that may or may not have seen their films had they not been featured in the festival. The exclusionary nature and characterizations of quality enforce conventional paradigms of valuing film either through box-office earnings or critical acclaim. These constricting parameters not only render illegible cinematic sensibilities that flourish on the margins of film culture and wider society, but also obscure how cinema reflects social, economic and

political realities (and fantasies), and informs our individual and collective consciousness (Rastegar, 2011).

Alternative plans. A filmmaker should always ask themselves: where will my movie go once it's finished? The obvious answer is that the film will end up in a movie theatre. Sounds logical but due to advancements in technology, limited resources and opportunities, today's independent filmmaker has to explore other avenues with regard to releasing their films. During the interviews with the filmmakers all of them were realistic regarding the limitations in opportunities that they would have to show their films. At best, a filmmaker is afforded with a few screens at a local theatre that usually shows independent or niche films. The screenings can range from one night engagements to a few weeks. It's also common for the screenings to occur in large city markets where there is an audience who actually seeks out independent films. There is a very small window of opportunity to push a film and be able to achieve commercial viability. Therefore alternative plans for distribution must be sought out by the filmmaker.

It's important for the independent filmmaker to find a distributor that believes in their product, and who is looking to expand the market with quality films that include alternative insights and images. During the interviews, most of the filmmakers explained that there is a perception that Black independent films do not do well or more specifically that there isn't an audience for them. Finding a distributor who understands how to market independent films and get the movies into the hands of the right consumer is key with regard to the commercial viability of a film.

There are numerous distribution companies that are looking to do independent films justice. Home video distributors have played a critical role in shaping the

historical shift of *quality cinema* from theatrical to domestic contexts. Distribution companies such as *Kino International*, *Facets Multimedia*, *Zeitgeist Films*, and *Mubi* (formerly *The Auteurs*, a streaming media website)," are mentioned here in order to more fully understand the creation and dispersal of notions of value and quality in the home video arena. Sources indicate that *Kino International* provides an eclectic mix of foreign films and silent film classics, and *Facets* specializes in international, documentary, and children's films, *Zeitgeist* focuses on documentaries and a handful of select auteur. Despite these apparent differences, however, all expand, refine, and complicate quality home video by drawing upon and redeploying qualities of exclusivity, exoticism, intellectualism, and social activism (Herbert, 2011). The distribution process must recognize the unique brand that is independent film and make efforts to exploit these nuances so that they are effectively translated to the consumer.

Video on demand (VOD). Media distribution is undergoing yet another transformation. There has indeed been a proliferation of new means for the dissemination and consumption of moving images. According to Herbert (2011),

This has caused as much experimentation as was seen in the early days of home video, as the Hollywood studios and other major content providers assess new technological possibilities, such as internet streaming and VOD, and economic models, such as subscription-based access to content. (p. 14)

Although VOD has been around for over a decade, it has received little scholarly attention in terms either of the independent cinema scene or of media convergence (Hilderbrand, 2010). Knowing this, the independent filmmaker may see this as an opportunity to use VOD as a vehicle for getting their films out to the masses. There are a

few distribution companies that are in the business of showing independent films via video on demand. This may be the answer to the limited number of screens that an independent filmmaker has access to once they release their film projects.

In 2006, *IFC Films* initiated the new distribution model that has come to define the company's innovations: synchronized VOD availability with theatrical exhibition. In fact, the VOD window, typically spanning a couple of months, actually makes films available to viewers for longer than a film would last at a local theater. IFC Films debuted day-and-date releases for theatrical and VOD with à la carte pay-per-view pricing with *CSA: The Confederate States of America* under the banner *IFC First Take* in 2006. *IFC Films* has expanded this model with more extensive lineups, offering far more VOD features than it releases in theaters. Currently, it promotes simultaneous art house releases as *IFC in Theaters*; cult and horror offerings as *IFC Midnight*; and films acquired at festivals that will not be released theatrically as *IFC Festival Direct* (Hilderbrand, 2010).

DVD. The DVD market has dropped off, and television networks have been talking about audience drift for years. Independent cinema, in particular, seems to be in crisis as the economics simply do not add up anymore (Hilderbrand, 2010). It seems as if the DVD may be turning into what VHS is to American consumers now. In the publishing industry, print-on-demand is also popular with small, independent presses that appeal to a niche audience. It is less common with independent DVD distributors, as the substantial upfront costs involved in producing video masters necessitate a wide retail release rather than incremental sales from MOD or manufacture on demand (Schauer, 2012).

Digital technologies have provided greater access to the means of film and media production for those historically disenfranchised from the process, thousands more films are being made each year than can be catalogued or archived. Programming decisions about what to include or exclude in film festivals directly affect public access to independent films by determining what films critics write about, and what distributors pick up for theatrical, DVD, or online release (Rastegar, 2011).

Indie filmmakers may consider this as a vehicle to distribute their films. However one must note that this type of distribution appears to be on a slow decline. Working with a distributor that specializes in niche markets would be imperative if the filmmaker is looking to take this approach. However DVDs should not be counted out all together. DVDs allow for the movie to have *new legs* and reach more viewers. More specifically, for someone who may not live in a city where the movie was screened, this person can now buy the DVD once it's released so they too can experience the project. Having the DVD available with online vendors (e.g., Amazon) is also important. Once an independent film consumer buys an independent film DVD on the site, the application will then track their buying behavior and make recommendations based on previous purchases. Therefore it's possible that if one Black indie film has been purchased, the consumer will then receive recommendation emails for films that they may like or that other people have purchased in addition to that specific film.

Streaming. In a recent *Los Angeles Times* article, the head of Home Entertainment at *SonyPictures* acknowledged that DVD sales were declining rapidly, that Redbox was causing industry confusion, that Blu-ray was likely never to have the same impact as DVD, and that digital downloading showed *nice growth* (Fritz, 2010). One

possible model for new media art cinema can be seen in the website called *Mubi*, which was originally called *The Auteurs*, in an interesting gesture toward quality. On this website, one can stream any number of both classic art house films, as well as more contemporary prestige pictures. The company was formed in 2007 with funding from Goldman Sachs, and it was conceived as an online outlet for under distributed films. “More importantly, the goal was to overcome time-space barriers for people who like art cinema, so that one could watch an independent film on their laptop for instance” (Herbert, 2011, p. 15). Although the original intent of *Mubi* was to make such movies available for free, the vast majority of their offerings cost around \$3. Unlike other distribution models, including some online firms, *Mubi* does not ask for any minimum from the rights holders in payment for the service of putting the movie online, and they split the revenue 50/50 with the rights holder of any film that gets streamed.

Other websites, such as Hulu and Netflix, are becoming a popular source for the film consumer to stream video of TV shows and movies. Consumers can subscribe to these services and use the applications to find independent films. Both of these services will allow for the viewer to discover and be exposed to independent films that they may not have known about prior to coming across the project on these applications. Some filmmakers are choosing to exclusively premiere their films by using online services such as these.

Stage 3: Financing

The journey to raising money for an independent film can be a difficult one. Finding funding for any indie film can be difficult, but finding financing, distribution, and an audience is particularly tough for African-American filmmakers who tell outside-

the-box stories of ordinary Black Americans. The key reason why securing coin for such projects is so problematic it isn't only race, agree the filmmakers, but it's certainly a factor. Many say studios make business decisions based on the idea that White people don't want to see movies about Black people (Dawn, 2012). Finding money for films proves to be even hard for Black filmmakers because of the product that they are selling. More specifically, there is a perception that there isn't a market for Black films or that they will not appeal to a broader audience. Therefore if you cannot prove that there is a market for your film, then no one will want to invest in the project.

Low budget. Art films are aimed at small niche audiences, meaning they can rarely get the financial backing which will permit large production budgets, expensive special effects, costly celebrity actors, or huge advertising campaigns as are used in widely-released mainstream blockbuster films (Hick, 2010). Because of lower budget ranges independent films are forced to do more with less. But as digital technology has caught up with the indie film marketplace, much higher quality movies have been able to be made at drastically lower budgets. Moreover, the SAG- Indie Modified Low Budget Agreements on theatrical features with budgets of less than \$625,000 (or \$937,500 if casting diversity requirements are met) began being increasingly used to bring most of a film's actors aboard for \$933 a week, with one or two leads making approximately \$65,000 allowing many traditionally small-budget films to shrink to the mid-six/low-seven figure range (Goldstein, 2012).

The Internet, awards coin and a friendly studio can help get a film green lit, but odds are steep (Dawn, 2012). Banker Myles Nestel (as cited in Dawtrey, 2012) says that "We're seeing a lot of big-budget opportunities, \$50 million-plus productions, which is

very attractive to us” (para. 7). LaCour (as cited in Dawtrey, 2012) says, “It’s reflective of the demand in the foreign market for bigger independent films. Independent producers are filling the void that the studios are leaving in the marketplace” (para. 9). Also, organizations such as the National Black Programming Consortium (NBPC) develops, produces and funds media content about the Black experience for public media outlets, including television, digital radio and online. Since 1991, NBPC has invested more than \$10 million dollars in iconic documentary content for public media outlets, including PBS and PBS.org; trained, mentored and supported a diverse array of producers who create content about contemporary black experiences; and emerged as a leader in the evolving next-media landscape (Black Public Media, 2013). This black owned concept speaks to the power struggles that were defined in the critical race theory. Creating opportunities for internal power help to prevent the discrimination or gaps in funding distribution that may occur when utilizing other models or resources that are not tailored to black media content.

Art film directors make up for these constraints by creating a different type of film, which typically uses lesser-known film actors and modest sets to make films which focus more on the main thesis (Hick, 2010). On a positive note, a low budget can add to the aesthetic of the independent film. However, it’s important that the quality of the film is not compromised just because the budget for the film was lower than desired. Oftentimes Black films can be labeled as being *low budget*, because components such as the lighting, production, and acting are poor in quality. That is why it’s important that first and foremost, a quality script has been developed so that it can transcend the fact that the budget behind the film is not as large. The filmmaker’s creativity in establishing

a quality film project with a lower budget is just another nuance of what independent film is.

Commercial viability. The interviews with the filmmakers all indicated that they wish to make more than one movie. The goal for making a movie is to create more opportunities for the filmmaker to continue making projects. This means that they must make a film that has commercial viability and the ability to possibly turn a profit. Investors look for the commercial viability of a film before they will even consider providing funds to the effort. A smart film investor, and the same goes with investment in any arena, will put money into something that will at least return that investment and also draw a profit. Therefore, it is the job of the independent filmmaker to convince investors that Black independent film has an audience that wants to see films in this genre.

Investors

The trend appears to be the investors are looking for new and fresh film projects to put money into. In this era of studios drilling down on franchise tent-poles, the majors still want to release mid-range action films, they just want someone else to foot the tab, especially as the cost of their franchise tent poles continues to soar past \$200 million. The indie sector is benefiting from the declining interest of the majors in financing mid-budget projects in the \$50 million and under range. Financers have been showing a growing interest in the indie sector, funds are available for high-quality projects even without stars attached (McNary, 2012). Finding investors that are interested in funding black projects is a must. Just like the previously mentioned National Black Programming Consortium there are other institutions that exist that are looking to

specifically fund black media content. If those type of funding groups are hard to find it may behoove black business investors to creating funding coalitions that pool funding to add additional resources that are dedicated to producing positive, high quality black independent media content.

Stars have long been willing to cut their fees or work for small scale in return for backend pay on labor-of-love projects and low-budget genre fare. After decades in which investors often received returns and profits before actors began participating, this allows actors to feel they're making fairer deals (Goldstein, 2012).

Return on investment. The independent filmmaker, distributors, and essentially all parties involved in filmmaking are looking for a return on their investment. Each of the filmmakers interviewed indicated that you have to be sure to at least pay your investors back and then look for whatever is left in the end for them. An investor may not want to continue to invest in film projects if they do not get the money back that they put in. Providing a return on the investment also helps to nurture a future working relationship between the filmmaker and the investor. If the filmmaker has a reputation for a return on investment, then the financier will want to work with that filmmaker in the future as well.

Alternative methods. Today's trend in independent filmmaking calls for the filmmaker to become creative with alternative revenue streams, as well as sources for funding. There are opportunities for grants, film festival awards, contests, and funds from investors that can all help to build the budget for an independent film. The issue is that none of these sources for financing are easy to come by. There are disparities in funding due to access, culture, gender, and much more that need to be consider as an

independent filmmaker. The researcher believes that it would be beneficial to examine a collectivistic approach to financing for independent filmmaking.

The researcher suggests that most of the investors for films are non-Black. However there are wealthy members of the Black communities who may be interested in assisting to close the financing gap for Black independent film. Forming a funding coalition of Black investors would allow for the independent Black filmmaker to be able to reach out to investors that share their ethnicity. Just as White filmmakers have the opportunity to reach out to investors who are also White. The goal of this Black indie film investor group should be to create a platform for quality Black independent films to flourish within the market. The selection process should be as stringent as it is with non-Black counterparts in order to ensure that the quality of the projects does not diminish. Ultimately it would behoove the Black independent filmmaker to develop such an entity so that it will change the perception that Black films are not marketable.

Crowdfunding. Crowd funding takes advantage of the desire for the independent filmmaker to seek out projects that they want to see. The audience can now have a vested interest in a film project that's looking to be released. Self-distribution channels, the Internet, and the occasional friendly studio have opened up options for indie filmmakers of all races, and grassroots funders such as *Kickstarter* and *Indie-a-go-go* have been helpful (Dawn, 2012). *Kickstarter*, launched in 2009, has helped members raise a total of \$32 million for film projects. The largest single amount was \$345,000 for *Blue Like Jazz*, a religion drama based on Donald Miller's memoir (Roxborough, 2011). Along with social networking campaigns, the filmmaker can advertise and bring awareness to their films through the use of this funding method. Incentives are usually offered to the person

that chooses to contribute to the funding of an indie film. Reward levels can be set up for certain levels of contributions. This is another opportunity for the filmmaker to get creative and also generate engagement surrounding the film project. For example, the filmmaker could offer a mention in the closing credits or a signed poster from the film. In order for the independent filmgoer to invest in a project, they need to believe in it as well. Therefore the filmmaker needs to make sure that they take any and all opportunities to generate an interest in the film project.

Stage 4: Artistic Expression

Artistic expression is one of the main focuses for an independent film project. The obvious premise for an independent film is that it allows for a format where anything goes. One of the most recent trends in independent cinema has been for filmmakers to avoid using traditional screenplays in making their films. The filmmaker is able to subscribe to a self-devised formula and ideals as far as how an independent film should be presented. In most cases, there is not a large studio that is involved that could potentially have influence on the artistic outcome of the project. Most independent filmmakers scoff at the possibility that someone else may have the ability to influence the artistic outcome of their films. However, given the huge financial risks that a feature film entails, the conventional screenplay allows studio executives, producers and financial backers to have a clear sense of the film they are making (Murphy, 2010). As with any artist, the goal is to make a body of work that is original and open for interpretation by the viewer. At times, this may mean that the audience will be left scratching their heads because the message of the film was not understood. However this is the beauty of the

independent film because while some may scratch their heads, others will *get it* and be able to appreciate the uniqueness of the art form.

Diversity. Almost all of the filmmakers expressed concern with regard to the actual representation of African Americans in film and television. More specifically each of them were concerned with either the type of representations being shown, or the lack of the representation of Black characters in today's films, as well as behind the camera. Smith et al. (2012) found that in 2008 five African American directors headed up a total of six of the top 100 productions. Nearly 63% of the characters with speaking lines in those six films are Black. In the other top 94 films from the same year, less than 11% of the characters with speaking lines are Black. Grouped together, numbers from the top 100 do resemble U.S. population figures, as 13.2% of all speaking roles coded that year went to Black characters. The U.S. Census Bureau (2000) indicates 12.6% of the nation's population then was African American. In 2007, a similar number (13%) of overall speaking roles in the top 100 movies went to Black characters, but that percentage rose to 50% in films with Black directors. Only one of the top 200 movies from 2007 and 2008 was directed by an African American woman. Hollywood movies directed by African Americans are significantly more likely to include African American characters with speaking roles than movies not directed by African Americans (Smith et al., 2012).

What all of this suggests is that in order for African Americans to be able to see more of themselves on the screen, there needs to be a conscious effort to get behind the camera. Having African Americans in positions to cast Black actors, write screenplays, direct and produce projects, the audience will then begin to see more Black projects that are made for, and by African Americans. In turn, the images on the screens are more

likely to be accurate and act as a better representation of today's Black culture. However in order for the accurate depictions to be seen it is the responsibility of the filmmaker to make more of a conscious effort to include well-developed characters and story lines within their films. A common theme that was expressed by the filmmakers is the importance to include all aspects of the African Diaspora as well as historical references. It is important to show the various facets of the African Diaspora because it will allow for multidimensional storylines. Irrespective of culture, no two people are alike. The same is true of African Americans across the country and the globe. There are cultural differences that span from city to city, state to state, and country to country. This creates a treasure trove of cultural illustrations that can be used to create film projects that have never been seen before.

Although diversity is important, the filmmaker may want to consider what outside audiences may think of the project. Andrew Weaver, assistant professor at Indiana University, whose specialty is media psychology, points to a study that maintains that, all else being equal, audiences are less interested in seeing a film that has a cast which is less than 70% of their own race, whether the viewer is White or Black. A second study, which focused more on the reasons for such a swing, determined that a key factor was whether an audience feels a film includes them among its intended audience. For the most part, the movies are not marketed to white audiences so it becomes the default that if a film has a black cast, then it's not made for any audience other than that demographic (Dawn, 2012). At times, the filmmaker has to make a marked decision as to what audience they are making the film for. Most filmmakers would say that they make the film for themselves and if people like it they like it, and if they don't they don't.

Well-developed characters. For those filmmakers who felt that avoiding negative stereotypes was not exactly necessary, it was more so due to the motivation to present honest depictions. As mentioned previously in chapters one and two, stereotypical images do in fact exist within the culture and they should not necessarily be avoided. To avoid these undesirable characters would just be untruthful with regard to how life actually is. For Black audiences and filmmakers a consideration should be put forth to make sure that characters are well-developed. More specifically, a one dimensional character can tarnish the quality of a film and make it less appealing to an audience that may be looking to be intellectually stimulated. There are films out there that contain these “one note” characters and the results are painful and quite noticeable. Bad acting and character development in films can result in a missed opportunity to entertain and inform the very audience that came to see the film project. In addition poor character development can tarnish the reputation of a filmmaker and can cause them to even lose longtime or future followers of their film projects. In the past, so many Black film projects have not done the Black culture justice with regard to overcoming the constantly appearing stereotypical archetypes. In order to change the negative perceptions about Black film, the storylines that make up the films must go through changes as well.

Social responsibility. Out of the filmmakers that were interviewed the sample was split as to whether the Black independent filmmaker had a social responsibility to their Black audiences. Some felt that there was a definite sense of responsibility to show Black characters that were non-stereotypical. In addition, some of the filmmakers actively incorporate Black history and culture facets into their films in order to showcase

the importance of Black traditions. Other Black independent filmmakers are simply looking to make a film that contains well developed characters (irrespective of race) and storylines that are complicated. The researcher believes that neither one of those approaches are incorrect nor that they actually add to the landscape and variety of films that are produced by Black independent filmmakers. However, one could challenge the actual Black independent film moviegoer to be more socially responsible with the films that they choose to support. The research shows that Black audiences do not always look for independent film projects, may it be due to taste or exposure. Therefore the challenge is to get Black audiences who are used to large commercial releases to try something new, and support films that are different from what they are used to.

Black film does not have to be the only medium by which the culture attempts to create a sense of social responsibility. However, film and media images are effective ways to educate and inform the viewer regarding issues that deal with culture and race in today's society. Therefore the opportunities are there in order to change the perceptions of non-Black viewers and also to promote a positive self image in Black viewers.

Thought-provoking cinema. The last theme that emerged from the core phenomenon: industry driven barriers, describes the importance of thought provoking cinema. The research suggests that the consumers of Black films are starting to look for something that is more mindful. Typically large box office releases contain Black characters that have stereotypical traits, or they are not developed. It appears that the Black independent filmmaker is looking to change that format and create cinema that will encourage the viewer to intellectualize the content of the film. In addition there is a generation of Black independent filmmakers that have a desire to make their audiences

engage in a dialogue after films. The goal of the filmmaker is not always to push an agenda or provide an answer to something, but to encourage the viewer to take their own stance and make their own assertions about what they just saw.

Recommendations and Conclusions

The theoretical frameworks that were utilized for this research are supported by the responses from the filmmakers. More specifically with regard to the Cross Model of Nigrescence, the importance of positive black images was a constant theme that was discussed. Each of the filmmakers indicated that it was important for there to be an array of black characters that demonstrate the complexities of the African diaspora. This helps to ensure that the self image and awareness of the viewer are acknowledged. During the stages where the self image is challenged it is important to have material that is well-developed and complicated so that the viewer can internalize and intellectualize these images so that it has meaning in their lives. Ultimately each of the filmmakers indicated that it was important to see oneself in a different light instead of constant characterizations that paint a picture of an underdeveloped black psyche and pride.

The use of critical race theory was also supported within the research findings as well. Each of the filmmakers speaks to the fact that there are disparities with regard to the funding and support of studios when it comes to independent black film. There is a perception that there isn't an audience for black independent film because black audiences do not have a palate for thought provoking or niche cinema. This perception may not be intentionally racist however it does in fact have an undertone that the rational capabilities of the black filmgoer is not conducive to any film apparatus other than those that contain poorly defined images. This says that black filmgoers should accept what

they are given and sends out the message that this is all that is desired of black audiences. The money that is put behind large box office releases that contain stereotypical characters is what drives the continuing perpetuation of these images. If black audiences were to widen their scope with regard to film consumption or even stop supporting films that contain less than desirable images, the landscape of black film would in fact start to change.

By using history as a tool the black independent filmmaker can look at other black art forms and glean information regarding how they overcame industry driven barriers. For example, African American choreographer and Activist Alvin Ailey had to overcome numerous barriers dealing with preconceived notions about race and capabilities only to become one of the most successful dance companies in the world. He founded the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre in New York in 1958. The world renowned Alvin Ailey Dance Theatre has created a niche in the world of dance that not only presents black culture but it does so with originality, quality performances. In addition to that the group has been able to transcend racial lines by making the presentations translate to and incorporate other cultures and make it more palatable for their consumption.

Ailey had a way of allowing the dancers to bring themselves into their stage work- this was a reflective alteration from the blatantly stereotyped behavior solicited from Negro artists before the post-war era. Ailey and his contemporaries revised the minstrel stereotypes, investing them with personal truths drawn from their own experiences. Aided by the nationalistic reassessments of the civil rights era, Ailey fostered an important pedagogical shift that encouraged the enactment of core black performance strategies in concert dance. These strategies include subversion, secrecy,

rupture, participation, dynamic interaction, and, above all, the pleasure of rhythmic musicality (Guillory & Green, 1997).

Ailey created his company with three goals in mind: to employ the scores of excellent black dances in New York who had no performing homes; to create a repertory company that could perform both modern dance classics and new works by Ailey and other young choreographers; and to give artistic voice to African American experience in terms of concert dance. Ailey integrated his company within the first 5 years, adding Asian and White dancers into the multi-toned African American mix. Though the company always featured its African American artists, though integration Ailey sought to subvert the critical eye that cannot see beyond race. According to Ailey (1989),

Some people like to put black people in a box. For example, when we first went to Europe [in 1964], many said: oh look at those black people do this and that. It was as though only black people could move in certain ways, and black people were limited to certain movements. I wanted people to see us as people. Further, I think that having people of all colors and cultures somewhat universalizes the material. It takes color out of the bag, out of the race bag; it makes it easier to see simply as art. (p. 9)

With regard to the black filmmaker it's important to find that same balance in that their films. Independent black filmmakers can also be successful if they use some of the same methods that Alvin Ailey did. More specifically Ailey caused a shift in the minstrel stereotypes that were popular at that time. He did this by drawing from his own experiences as well as that of the dancers. The black filmmaker can do the same by complicating the characters that are presented in their films. Telling the filmmakers own

story is the best way to draw in the audience and generate a sense of relatedness. Rather than constantly presenting the stereotypical characters that have been overdone, the black indie filmmaker can take the opportunity to show characters that resemble a larger faction of what blacks really look like. The strategies that he used to jolt the dance world can be applied within the realm of black indie filmmaking also. More specifically Ailey made a point to be radical, rebellious and interactive with his audiences. The black filmmaker should do the same and aim to make movies that challenge their audiences to ingest images that they may not have seen before. This originality will incite a change in the filmgoer to seek out black indie film projects that subscribe to a formula that is nontraditional and create a wider audience that will continue to support these projects. Ailey's goals to employ black dancers and create a platform/company to stage the modern dance work can be seamlessly translated to black indie film as well. Black indie filmmakers can deliberately cast up and coming black actors who put on quality performances. It is known that celebrities bring in the viewers but it's also important to showcase new and fresh talent in order to keep things original and unique. Employing black filmmakers behind the screen is also important. Studies have shown that when there is a black presence on the filmmaking side, this influences the accuracy and quality of the images that are coming across the screen. Ailey was effective in creating a space for new talent as well as a place for the black voice in the art form. Independent film has the ability to do the same thing by collaborating with other black filmmakers and making the black indie film push a collective effort. Supporting each other's films creates a sense of community among the black indie community and it ensures the success of each project because of the pooling of resources that each filmmaker may possess. Black indie

filmmakers may also consider creating their own distribution firms and/or supporting those that already exist such as Ava DuVernay's AFFRM and its recent launch ARRAY which is a multi-platform distribution label. Incorporating a collectivistic instead of individualistic approach could prove to be a better way to cover more ground with regard to marketing, funding, networking, audience solicitation and much more.

Incorporating non-blacks into the process may be a consideration as well. As previously described, Ailey did in order to be able to permeate the support of other cultures as well as to create new and unique pieces of work. Based on the makeup of the film industry it is often that the majority of filmmakers will be White. Therefore it may be difficult for a black filmmaker to participate in this industry and not have to work with a White constituent at some level of production of the film. As previously discussed in this piece of work, white filmmakers are constantly making black films but from their perspective. Some of the films are a success and others contain several inaccuracies regarding the authenticity of things such as the characters and cultural references. The filmmakers that participated in this study all agreed that it's not necessary for White filmmakers to continue to make black stories. This is a market that black filmmakers should dominate in. However they also stated that it was important for a white filmmaker to do their research and possibly include black crew members, writers, actors etc. into the filmmaking process when creating a black project. This will then act as a safeguard to ensuring that the appropriate and truthful depictions are made in films. However it is undeniable that just as Black filmmakers have, there are some White filmmakers who have made film projects that have had an impact on the black community. Based on the discussion with the filmmakers there is a perception that not all black people have a taste

for Avant Garde film. Therefore this may suggest that it may take more than a black audience to sustain black independent film. With Ailey's incorporation of non-black dancers into his company he was able to bring in outside audiences while still maintaining the black premise of the art form. Black independent film can do the same by creating films that are relatable on a human level and not necessarily heavy in culture related content. Although the examination of black cultural issues and themes is important and necessary, it's also just as important to be able to finesse a balance that will relay a black message not just for black audiences but also to those that are not apart of or familiar with the dynamics of the culture. By using a model such as this it ensures that blackness is at the forefront of the art form but also makes it easy for consumption by all racial groups including those of African American and African descent.

It's easy to be misled by the research when it speaks to the bright outlook regarding independent films and financing. The reports usually do not take culture into consideration. Therefore the Black independent filmmaker must understand that their approaches to filmmaking and audience receptiveness must be very strategic. Ultimately, the Black filmmaker must prove that their films will sell if given the opportunity. The research suggests that the films that sell include themes that can translate across audiences, and not just Black filmgoers. The Black indie filmmaker that intends to make Black film must consider that if they want to reach a broader audience outside of the Black community, that they must develop a story line that the non-Black moviegoer can relate to. If the filmmaker chooses to target Black audiences it is important to consider the historical references and damage that stereotypical images have had on the Black culture. Therefore it is suggested that the filmmaker be responsible with the images that

they portray. More specifically, characters should be complicated, truthful, and realistic in order to have a positive impact on the Black audience member.

Black independent filmmakers might also consider the presentation black independent films within their own movie houses. More specifically black communities can engage in community building by erecting an art house that only screens black independent films. This will create a space for black independent films that may have had trouble with being placed in other independent film theatres. In addition this will enact exposure and easy access to independent films and may eventually change the palate of the film consumer. In addition this could potentially create a culture that is more critical with regard to the films that they consume. Building a black art house theatre in a high traffic area alongside other businesses that will complement the experience (i.e. coffee shops or black bookstores) will not only build black communities in a positive manner but can also aid in creating a sense of social responsibility and the appreciation of arts and culture in that neighborhood.

The research and interview questions did not specifically examine the dynamics of an independent moviegoer, but that may be considered as future research. This information would be helpful to the independent filmmaker so that they can have a specific profile for their consumer and hopefully learn how to reach them in a more efficient fashion. Future research could further dissect different minority groups within the independent filmmaking realm. More specifically, the groups could include the examination of the motivations of Women, Gay, Latino or Asian filmmakers, and explore the industry driven hurdles that they may experience and their historical involvement in the film industry.

Summary

This section discussed and analyzed the study findings and conclusions that the researcher drew from them. In addition the demographic details regarding the study sample were dissected. The core phenomenon that was identified, *industry driven barriers*, was dissected and presented the four stages that were identified therein. The stages that were identified are as follows: marketing, distribution, financing, and artistic expression. Lastly, the researcher provided recommendations for further research, possible practices and a model for the filmmaker to engage in with regard to making the black indie filmmaking process an optimal one.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Questions

Instructions

This study deals with “Examining the motivations of Black Indie filmmakers regarding depictions and images of persons of African ancestry in the media.” The interviewer will ask you the 18 questions listed below that pertain to the study previously described. You will be asked to provide open ended responses to the questions that you are being presented with. Your responses will be recording digitally or videotaped for transcribing purposes. This interview will take 30-60 minutes to complete. A copy of your interview may be provided upon request after the close of this study. You can choose to stop your participation in this study at any time without consequence. Your name and the titles of the movies you’ve directed will not be shared with any other audiences other than the researcher. This information is just for identification purposes for the researcher.

Please select one of the following options:

I AGREE to be recorded for the purpose of this interview

I DO NOT AGREE to be recorded for the purpose of this interview

Please specify all filmmaking positions that you have held or currently identify as:

Director

Actor

Writer

Producer

Cinematographer

Editor

Other (Please Specify): _____

Age: _____

Gender: Male Female

Ethnicity: _____

**How many years have you been a
filmmaker?** _____

Name of film projects you've completed and/or released:

Please answer the following questions:

1. Do you intentionally avoid stereotypical depictions in your film projects?
2. Are you making an attempt to create new positive stereotypes about African Americans in your films?
3. Do you consider the perceptions that non-Blacks may formulate after watching your film?
4. Do you use your films to educate or just entertain?
5. What barriers impede on the creation of an independent Black film?
6. Why do you think that attendance for independent films isn't as high as commercial releases?
7. Do you think that independent film will ever be as widely received as large box office releases?
8. How important is the commercial success of your films?
9. What obligation, if any, does the Black filmmaker have to the Black community?
10. What, if any, negative stereotypes in film do you think have done the most damage to the Black culture?

11. If you could eliminate one stereotypical character from film history, which one would it be and why?
12. Do you think that it is possible for someone who is not apart of the Black culture to make an accurate depiction that includes a majority Black cast, or deals with the Black culture?
13. How do you feel about the portrayal of Black characters in today's film?
14. How important is it that every facet in the Black community is captured in film?
15. Do you feel that non-Black filmmakers are sympathetic to the realism of Black characters?
16. Is it your intent to change the portrayal of Black characters?
17. How much Black history, if any, do you try to put in your films?
18. Do your films always have a message?

Researcher Use Only: _____

APPENDIX B

Consent for Research Study

“Examining the motivations of Black Indie Filmmakers regarding depictions and images of persons of African ancestry in the media”

I _____, agree to participate in the research study being conducted by Tara R. Jiles, M.A. under the direction of Dr. James R. Dellaneve.

_____ **I agree** to be recorded for the purpose of this study

_____ **I do not agree** to be recorded for the purpose of this study

The purpose of this study is to examine the insight and motivations of independent filmmakers who identify as African or of African descent. There are approximately 20 filmmakers who will be participating in this study who are at least 18 years of age. The questions included in this survey deal with, but are not limited to, the following: the methods of the filmmaker, what types of messages and portrayals the filmmaker incorporates into their films, and how they feel about the images of Blacks in current commercially released films. The duration of this study can take from 30-60 minutes to complete. All of your responses will be digitally recorded or videotaped (with the permission of the participant) during a face to face or phone interview.

The researcher will ask a total of 18 open-ended questions that deal with the subject matter described at the beginning of the procedures section. You will be asked to respond to these questions for any length of time with your own insights, personal experiences, and opinions. Follow up questions may be asked by the researcher for clarification purposes. Due to the length of the interview the participant has the right to

request rest periods or breaks at any time. Once the interview has been completed the participant may request a copy of the transcript of the interview for their own personal records. The researcher will provide the participant with this information after the study has been completed.

Participants will not be offered compensation of any kind for participating in this study. However the possible benefits to society because of this research, may include the discovery of possible methods that can be utilized to change the negative images of African Americans in the media throughout independent film. You will receive a copy of this consent form for your records via fax, email, or through duplicate copies signed during the interview. There is minimal risk with regard to the participation of this study. At most, the participant may experience boredom or mental fatigue due to the length of the interview.

PARTICIPATION is voluntary; refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled. I understand that I may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled.

In the event of physical injury:

I understand that in the EVENT OF PHYSICAL INJURY resulting from the research procedures in which I am to participate, no form of compensation is available. Medical treatment may be provided at my own expense or at the expense of my health care insurer which may or may not provide coverage. If I have questions, I should contact my insurer.

Participant Name (Print): _____

Participant Signature: _____

Date: _____

Researcher:

I have explained and defined in detail the research procedure in which the subject has consented to participate.

Date

Principal Investigator

For answers to pertinent questions about the research and your rights you may contact the following persons:

Dr. Doug Leigh (GPS IRB Chair): Dleigh@pepperdine.edu

Tara R. Jiles, M.A. (Researcher): Tara.Jiles@pepperdine.edu Phone: XXX.XXX.XXXX

Dr. James R. Dellaneve (Dissertation Chair): James.Dellaneve@pepperdine.edu

APPENDIX C

Email Template to Solicit Participation in the Study

I am currently a Doctoral candidate in the Organizational Leadership program within Pepperdine University's Graduate School of Education and Psychology. I am currently in the dissertation phase of the program. My dissertation focus is on changing the negative images of African Americans in the media through independent film. The title of the research is: *Examining the Motivations of Black Indie Filmmakers Regarding Depictions and Images of Personsof African Ancestry in the Media.*

I will be seeking male and female independent filmmakers who identify as Black, or of African descent and who have created at least one film or are in the process of creating a film for future release. The participant must be at least 18 years of age. The goals of this research are as follows:

- Identify whether the filmmaker is consciously motivated to make films that speak to alternate and/or provide more realistic depictions of Black characters and culture
- Identify possible patterns that may exist withinBlack independent filmmaking that can be used to possibly change larger or commercially released film projects
- Create an awareness to the effects the exposure of constant negative imagery in the media on the Black psyche
- Create a sense of social responsibility in the consumer to be more selective and/or open-minded when supporting certain Black filmprojects

The interviews will not take place until early or mid-March 2013, pending approval from the Internal Review Board (IRB). However, I was hoping to engender your interest and support. Specifically, if you are interested in participating, or know of someone who meets the criteria, please let me know by responding to this email or calling me directly.

It is important to note that participation is voluntary and offers no compensation. However, participation in this study will be extremely valuable to the exploration of alternative film consumption in the Black community as well as creating a dialogue regarding the impact and social responsibility of Black filmmakers.

I look forward to hearing from you!

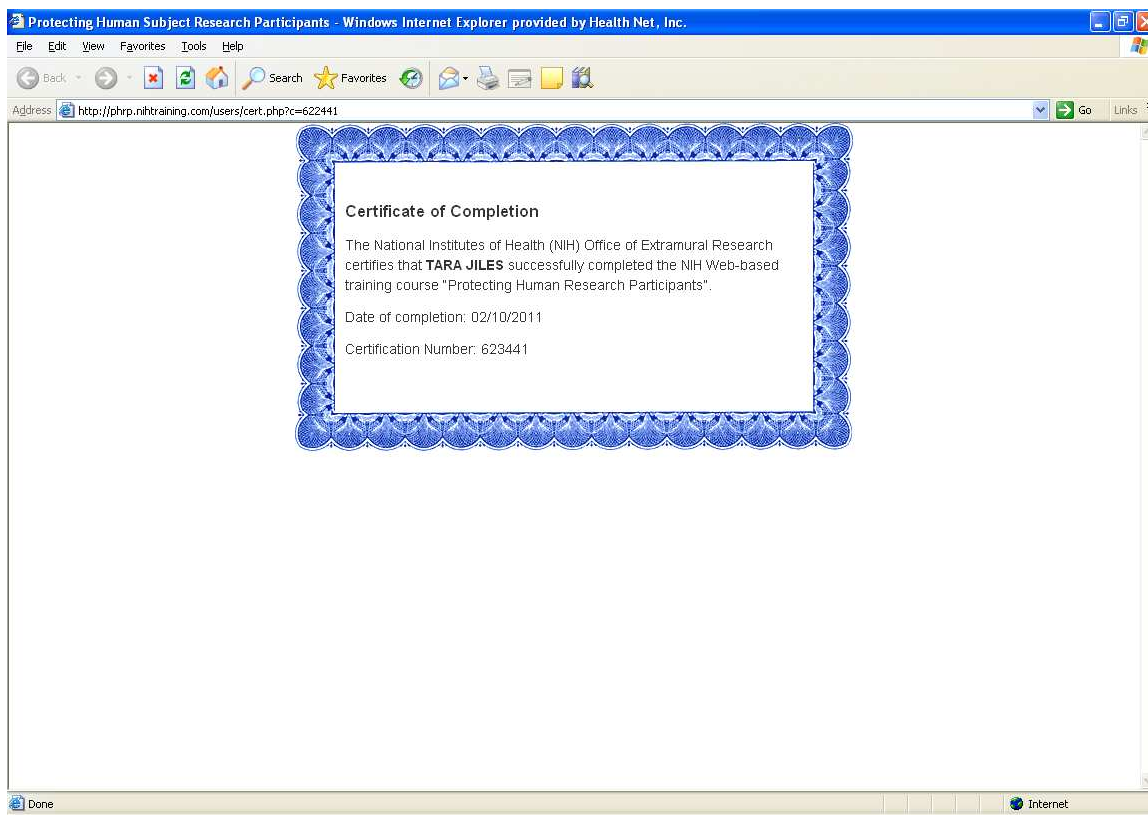
Tara R. Jiles, M.A.

Ed.D. Candidate

Graduate School of Education and Psychology

APPENDIX D

Completion of IRB Training Certificate



APPENDIX E

IRB Approval Letter

PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY

Graduate & Professional Schools Institutional Review Board

March 19, 2013

Tara R. Jiles

Protocol #: E0113D18**Project Title: Examining the motivations of black indie filmmakers regarding the depictions and images of persons of African ancestry in the media**

Dear Ms. Jiles,

Thank you for submitting the revisions requested by Pepperdine University's Graduate and Professional Schools IRB (GPS IRB) for your study, *Examining the motivations of black indie filmmakers regarding the depictions and images of persons of African ancestry in the media*. The IRB has reviewed your revisions and found them acceptable. You may proceed with your study. The IRB has determined that the above entitled project meets the requirements for exemption under the federal regulations 45 CFR 46 - <http://www.nihtraining.com/ohsrsite/guidelines/45cfr46.html> that govern the protections of human subjects. Specifically, section 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) states:

(b) Unless otherwise required by Department or Agency heads, research activities in which the only involvement of human subjects will be in one or more of the following categories are exempt from this policy:

Category (2) of 45 CFR 46.101, research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: a) Information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and b) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Your research must be conducted according to the proposal that was submitted to the IRB. If changes to the approved protocol occur, a revised protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before implementation. For any proposed changes in your research protocol, please submit a **Request for Modification Form** to the GPS IRB. Because your study falls under exemption, there is no requirement for continuing IRB review of your project. Please be aware that changes to your protocol may prevent the research from qualifying for exemption from 45 CFR 46.101 and require submission of a new IRB application or other materials to the GPS IRB.

A goal of the IRB is to prevent negative occurrences during any research study. However, despite our best intent, unforeseen circumstances or events may arise during the research. If an unexpected situation or adverse event happens during your investigation, please notify the GPS IRB as soon as possible. We will ask for a complete explanation of the event and your response. Other actions also may be required depending on the nature of the event. Details regarding the timeframe in which adverse events must be reported to the GPS IRB and the appropriate form to be used to report this information can be found in the *Pepperdine University Protection of Human Participants in Research: Policies and Procedures Manual* (see link to "policy material" at <http://www.pepperdine.edu/irb/graduate/>).

Please refer to the protocol number denoted above in all further communication or correspondence related to this approval. Should you have additional questions, please contact me. On behalf of the GPS IRB, I wish you success in this scholarly pursuit.

Sincerely,



Doug Leigh, Ph.D.
Chair, Graduate and Professional Schools IRB
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cc: Dr. Lee Kats, Vice Provost for Research and Strategic Initiatives
Ms. Alexandra Roosa, Director Research and Sponsored Programs
Dr. James DellaNeve, Graduate School of Education and Psychology