A Qualitative Examination of African Self-Consciousness and Time Value Orientation in Lee Daniel's *The Butler*

by

Cassandra Chaney, Ph.D.
cchaney@lsu.edu
Associate Professor,
School of Social Work, Child and Family Studies,
Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge

Abstract

Given the general negative image of Blacks in film, few studies have examined narrative perspectives of films that display Blacks in roles of servitude. To fill this void in the research, a qualitative content analysis was conducted on 70 comments provided by bloggers on *The Griot* in response to African American actor Harry Lennix's declaration that he turned down a role in African American Lee Daniel's (2013) movie *The Butler* because it was nothing more than "historical porn." Kobi Kambon's (1980) African self-consciousness and Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck's (1961) Value Orientation Theory were the theoretical foundations for the study. Qualitative analysis revealed perceptions of the movie to be based on four primary themes: (a) *Acceptance of Black Servitude in Film*; (b) *Rejection of Black Servitude in Film*; (c) *Neutrality of Black Servitude in Film*; (d) *Perspectives of Harry Lennix*. Specifically, 22 comments (31% of bloggers) were neutral and focused on conflict regarding whether to view the movie, highlighting important Africans in history, discussing other movies that featured a Black cast and storyline, as well as the need for African Americans to be the primary agents of promoting their own history by learning and teaching this history to their children, or developing films that feature the accomplishments of Black people; (b) 18 comments (26% of bloggers) were related to their opinion of the African American actor Harry Lennix; (c) 17 comments (25% of bloggers) were negative; and (d) 13 comments (18% of bloggers) were positive. Supporting qualitative data are provided to support each of the aforementioned themes. In addition, a past, future, past and future, or multiple time orientation may influence how African Americans generally view this movie and movies like it.

Keywords: African American; African Self-Consciousness; Black; Black Racial Identity Development Theory; Cinema; Film; History; Servitude; Qualitative; The Butler; Value Orientation Theory.

"I read five pages of this thing and could not go any further. I tried to read more of it, and I'm not a soft spoken guy, but it was such an appalling mis-direction of history in terms of taking an actual guy who worked at the White House," but then he ni**erfies" it. He "ni**ers" it up and he gives people these, stupid, luddite, antediluvian ideas about black people and their roles in the historical span in the White House and it becomes... well... historical porn. I refused."

Although the Black[1] actor Harry Lennix may not have been aware of the consequences of his comments regarding Lee Daniels's movie *The Butler*, his words immediately became a lightning rod for controversy, commentary, and critique. This was after all, one Black man in the entertainment industry making a disparaging comment about the laborious work of another Black man in the *same* industry, publicly, unapologetically, and defiantly before White America. As I read the perspective offered by Lennix, I could not help but wonder whether individuals shared his perspective, how Blacks feel about the servitude role that was the backdrop of the film, as well as how Blacks' generally view the cinematic offerings of Hollywood, particularly as it relates to Black historicity, overall. Therefore, this paper will be built on the following two foundational questions: (1) How do individuals perceive *The Butler* and movies like it in which Black protagonists are featured in roles of servitude? (2) Do individuals perceive *The Butler* as a source of strength or a beacon of contemporary slavery? These foundational questions are important for racial identity which is a fluid process generally based on the type of work in which a person engages, the type of satisfaction an individual receives from said work, as well as how that work is perceived by others (Lee & Ahn, 2013).

In the subsequent sections of this paper, I will provide a brief overview of the primary scholarship related to racial identity, the portrayal of Blacks in various forms of mass media, as well as the impact of such portrayals on the racial identity of African Americans. Next, I will discuss the theoretical frameworks on which this study is based. After this, I will provide the written responses provided by the bloggers on *The Griot*[2] website. Finally, I will highlight the main findings from the study as well as discuss the implications of the responses for Black identity and Black historicity.

Review of Literature

Extant scholarship regarding media representations of Blacks in America is multifaceted. Scholars have examined how Black men construct masculine identities (Brown, 2008), Black male portrayals of Black women in film (Chen, Williams, Hendrickson, & Chen, 2012; Faust, 2014; Wallace, 2015), as well as the construction and maintenance of Black female identities (Gehlawat, 2010). While some research has noted an increase in the number of powerful, rich, and multidimensional storylines portrayed by Black women in homicide television dramas (Mascaro, 2005), others have more frequently noted stereotypically negative images of Blackness.

For example, negative descriptions and stereotypical portrayals of Aunt Jemima (Griffin, 1998), Black soldiers in Vietnam-themed cinema (Woodman, 2001), African-Americans in the films of former movie actor Ronald Reagan (Vaughn, 2002), as well as Whites' enjoyment of stereotypical entertainment of Blacks (Banjo, 2011) are but a few examples of the prevalence of negative imagery of African Americans in film.

While the roles that have been offered to African Americans are generally minimal, those offered to Black women in particular are even more scant. Not surprisingly, the stereotypical images of Blacks offered in film can negatively impact the racial identity, racial pride, and racial history (real or perceived) of members of this group. Several have blamed the prevalence of negative Black imagery on the few, quality Blacks roles that are offered to Blacks in general, and Black women, in particular. In essence, the invisibility of Black women in cinema generally renders them powerless to provide a multitude of experiences that stands as a strong counter narrative to the negative images. For example, one scholar found Leticia Musgrove, the female protagonist played by the Black Hollywood Oscar-winning actress Halle Berry to be the conflation of two negative Black female stereotypes, namely the sexual siren and the welfare queen (Mask, 2004). To illustrate this, one study examined the frequency and correlates of two dimensions of racial socialization—messages about ethnic pride, history, and heritage (Cultural Socialization) and messages about discrimination and racial bias (Preparation for Bias)— among 273 urban African American, Puerto Rican, and Dominican parents. Interestingly, African American parents reported more frequent Preparation for Bias than did Dominican parents who, in turn, reported more frequent messages of this sort than did Puerto Rican parents. Furthermore, ethnic identity was a stronger predictor of Cultural Socialization among Puerto Rican and Dominican parents than among their African American counterparts. In contrast, perceived discrimination experiences were a stronger predictor of Preparation for Bias among African American and Dominican parents than among Puerto Rican parents (Hughes, 2003).

Negative perceptions of media images can have a damaging effect on how individuals perceive their race and gender. In one recent study, Chen et al (2012) conducted in-depth interviews with 36 Black women, ages 18 to 59 to examine whether exaggeratedly overweight depictions of Black women portrayed by men dressed up as women had a strong effect on their identities. The women reported that portrayals, such as Madea in Tyler Perry's films, Rasputia in Eddie Murphy's Norbit, and Martin Lawrence's Big Momma, were "mammy-like" and the fact that these Black men dressed as women to depict these roles heightened the stereotypes these images evoked. Interestingly, the women in this sample believed male mammy portrayals substantially increased the mockery of Black women in the media and greatly contributed to the effeminization of African American men (Chen, et al, 2012). Thus, although it did not specifically examine the effects of media representations on the identity of Blacks, another study found racial discrimination to be psychologically distressful and to be strongly correlated with various aspects of the Black experience, such as racial identity, including immersion-emersion, public regard, encounter, Afrocentricity/racial centrality/private regard, and internalization (Cross, 1991, 1978, 1971; Cross, Parham, & Helms, 1991).

Interestingly, distress significantly correlated with pre-encounter/assimilation, encounter, public regard, immersion-emersion, and Afrocentricity/racial centrality/ private regard. Several of these relationships were significantly moderated by the measure of racial identity or demographic variables (gender or age) (Lee & Ahn, 2013).

Theoretical Frameworks

Two theoretical frameworks were foundational to this scholarly work, namely Black Racial Identity Development and Value Orientation Theory. As will be discussed later in this manuscript, these frameworks are invariably linked to the motivation behind the qualitative statements that will be examined.

Black Racial Identity Development. The development of Black Racial Identity is a complex process that involves internal and external forces that help Blacks develop a sense of what it means to be a Black person in a white-dominated world. William Cross offered a theoretical trajectory of the development of Black racial identity. Essentially, Cross's Black Racial Identity Development model is a linear one with five distinct stages[3] (Cross, 1991, 1978, 1971; Cross, Parham, & Helms, 1991; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). As Black men and women negotiate these stages, they create a Black identity that influences how they see themselves and understand their place in the world.

Although regarded as one of the key models of Black identity development, Cross's Black Racial Identity model has been criticized by several scholars who assert its linear developmental trajectory minimizes the experiential ways in which identity is developed and solidified (Constantine, Richardson, Benjamin, & Wilson, 1998; Kambon, 1992; Parham & Helms, 1981). In particular, Joseph A. Baldwin[4] (1980, 1981, 1984; Kambon, 1992), asserted the Black personality consists of two primary components: the African self-extension orientation and African self-consciousness. The *African self-extension-orientation* component symbolizes the essential organizing principle of the Black personality system, and is an innate, unconscious psychological disposition that provides coherence, continuity, and spirituality to the basic behaviors and psychological functioning of Black people. The second component of the African personality system, *African self-consciousness,* represents the conscious expression of the African self-extension orientation (Baldwin, Brown, & Rackley, 1990). Baldwin (1980, 1981, 1984) indicated that African self-consciousness has an important function in defining normal psychological functioning of the Black personality.

The four basic characteristics of African self-consciousness are as follows: (a) to recognize their African identity and cultural heritage, and sees value in obtaining self-knowledge; (b) to place African survival and' proactive development as one's first priority; (c) to have respect for and actively perpetuates all things African; and (d) to recognize the oppositional and detrimental nature of racial oppression to Black survival and to actively resist it.

So, when these basic characteristics are fully functioning in the Black personality, they produce self-affirming behaviors among people of African descent (Baldwin et al., 1990). According to Baldwin (1980, 1981, 1984), both the African self-extension orientation and the African self-consciousness operate as one unified or undifferentiated process. One of the primary contributions of the African self-consciousness model is that it provides some direction for reconnection with African origins, and underscores the need for Blacks to learn about their African heritage in order to undo the effects of deracination. To provide further validity of the development of the Black personality, Baldwin and Bell (1985) developed the African Self-Consciousness Scale to empirically measure African self-consciousness as delineated in Baldwin's (1980, 1981, 1984) theory.

In particular, the second component of Kambon's (1980) model, *African Self-Consciousness,* is compatible with the goals of this study because it has been explored within a multitude of environmental contexts (Brondolo, Brady ver Halen, Pencille, Beatty, & Contrada, 2009; Reid, 2013; Thomas & Carter, 2013; Way, Hernandez, Rogers, & Hughes, 2013; Wijeyesinghe, 2012). In this study, an examination will be made between responses made by individuals on a public website to aspects of Kambon's (1980) model in which a conscious African identity is a frame of reference for historicity and Black representations in film.

Value Orientation Theory. Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961), anthropologists, developed a model for viewing the underlying "values" structures of different cultural groups. Although not what most people typically conceive as values, these orientations were based on the way different societies approach certain universal dimensions--"solve" certain common problems of existence. In five spheres--Person-Nature, Time, Relational, Action and Human Nature--Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck developed a protocol for inferring the inherent perspective/orientation taken. Since they recognized that approaches were not necessarily pure, the protocol produces "values orderings" for each culture. This model is compatible with the goals of this study as Value Orientation Theory has not only been explored for its theoretical and descriptive properties, but also has been employed in developing methods to understand and to address cultural values differences--and similar differences at other levels of social organization (Bogaert, Boone, & Declerck, 2008; Georgiou, Michaelides, & Stayrinides, 2013; Murphy & Ackerman, 2013; Watkins & Gnoth, 2011). In particular, this study will examine whether the perspectives provided by individuals on a public website are based on a past, present, or future time orientation. Individuals with a *past time orientation* tend to focus on the past (time before now) and value the preservation and maintaining of traditional teachings and beliefs. Individuals with a *present time orientation* primarily concentrate on the present (what is now), and on accommodating changes in beliefs and traditions. Individuals with a *future time orientation* tend to focus on the future (the time to come), planning ahead, and seeking new ways to replace the old (Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961). Therefore, in this study, this theoretical framework will examine whether a past, present, future, or multiple time value orientation will inform the qualitative responses examined on a public website.

Method

Research Design. The methodology utilized a content analysis of 70 comments provided on *The Griot* website. A content analysis, or textual analysis, is a methodological tool in the social sciences that examines the content of various forms of communication. Sociologist Earl Babbie (2010) defined a content analysis as "the study of recorded human communications, such as books, websites, paintings and laws" (p. 530). In addition, this methodology is rooted in several questions which better allow the research to examine the motivation that underlie the communicative exchange. Over six decades ago, Harold Lasswell (1948) formulated the core questions of content analysis: "Who says what, to whom, why, to what extent and with what effect?" Given the increasing attention that has been given to the legal, political, and social impact of bloggers and Internet journalists (Feidler, 2008; Russo, 2006), websites have become viable forms of social community that allows individuals to engage with one another as well as influence how they feel about various topics that are introduced by these websites (Chaney, 2012).

This study involved three steps. The first step involved an extensive word-by-word and line-by-line analysis of the comments that were provided. All comments were obtained on August 16, 2013. The decision was made during this step to maintain the length and "original flavor" of the narratives by not altering the capitalization or grammar used by each blogger. The second step involved determining patterns between the responses. This involved creating a separate Word file in which the primary word or primary phrase was frequently used by respondents. The last step involved establishing reliability (Holsti, 1969; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). After the researcher identified the primary themes that were evident in the narratives, reliability was determined by having two outside coders agree upon and extract the same themes. In order to establish the validity of the themes identified, reliability was determined when the author and each outside coder agreed on at least 80% of the themes. Reliability between the researcher and first coder was 98% and reliability between the researcher and second coder was 97% (yielding a 97.5% reliability between the researcher and both coders). Thus, the high reliability between the researcher and both coders suggests the themes identified by the author were valid, were highly reliable, and that the findings presented in this study were accurate.

Presentation of the Findings

Content analysis of the data revealed the following four emergent themes: (a) *Acceptance of Black Servitude in Film*; (b) *Rejection of Black Servitude in Film*; (c) *Neutrality* of *Black Servitude in Film*; (d) *Perspectives of Harry Lennix*.

The "*Acceptance of Black Servitude in Film*" theme was related to affirming comments regarding *The Butler*. In particular, those that provided positive blog comments regarding the film have supported and/or will support *The Butler* by viewing it, acknowledge the dignity of servitude, recognize the limited options held by many Blacks during the era in which the movie was made, as well as those that truly enjoyed the story, plot, characters, and the overall message of the film. The "*Rejection of Black Servitude in Film*" theme was related to disparaging blog comments regarding *The Butler*. In particular, those that provided disparaging comments regarding the film expressed frustration with Hollywood's propensity to ignore the glorious history of Blacks, present Blacks as servants to Whites, or rely on a one-dimensional portrayal of the Black American experience.

The "*Neutrality of Black Servitude in Film*" theme was related to comments that were neither positive nor negative regarding Black servitude. In particular, those that provided neutral comments drew attention to other mass media forms that did not receive negative attention, compared *The Butler* to other movies that featured African American protagonists in positions of servitude (i.e., *Roots; The Help; D'Jango Unchained*), the need for Blacks in America to segregate from whites, the need for Blacks to not rely on whites to offer an historical representation of Blackness, as well as the need for Black parents to make it their primary responsibility to teach their children their history. The "*Perspectives of Harry Lennix*" theme was related to comments specifically directed at Harry Lennix, the African-American actor who publicly referred to *The Butler* as "historical porn." In particular, those that provided comments agreed with Lennix's assessment of *The Butler*, applauded his courage for making his view known to the public, criticized him for speaking against other Black directors or actors, agreed with his view that Hollywood does not create authentic Black historical movies, or alleged that he was a victim of professional envy.

Theme 1: Acceptance of Black Servitude in Film: *"It is part of our history"*

Thirteen comments (18% of bloggers) were positive regarding *The Butler*. In general, comments were related to a desire to see the film, the dignity of servitude, the positive image of Black men that was presented in the film, as well as honoring the experiences of Black men and women who lived during this time.

Desire to See the Movie. One participant by the name of Michelle Renee Tapscott, who is a Child Care Provider at St. Peter's Episcopal Church shared (August 16, 2003 at 3:39 p.m.), "I would love to see this movie."

The optimistic feeling offered by Ms. Tapscott was shared by a high school student by the name of Sydnie Evans (from East High School in Rochester, New York) who not only planned to see the movie but encouraged others to view it on its weekend opening. She shared the following view on August 15, 2013 at 6:54 p.m.: "Dismissed. I want to see more black actors working on films based on the Black experience, which I am confident Lee Daniels will continue to do, so I am going to see it tonight to help the opening weekend box office #putyourmoneywhereyourmouthis"

While this view was not one expressed by others, one individual (Jamie Wadford) drew attention to the economic stability attained by the Black protagonist during this time in history as well as the ability of an openly gay Black male director to bring this movie to the silver screen. This individual shared this view on August 14, 2013 at 4:53 a.m.:

> "It's just a movie...entertainment...people in this country are so uptight when it comes to the topic of race. Maybe there should be a celebration that a man secured employment and was able to work and perform his job for over 30 years...(Now that is an interesting topic considering today's economy--remember the days in which a person could and did work for 1 company until retirement--those days no longer exist). Just my 2 cents but life is hard enough...let's focus on the positives--an openly gay black man was able to bring an interesting story to the big screen...I'm a straight white man from the south and I say good for him. Take care and God bless."

Historical Pride in the Movie. Several men and women highlighted the historical reality presented in the film. One participant believed it important to listen to the perspectives of these individuals lest we repeat the past. Princess Poetress provided this comment on August 13, 2013 at 5:02 p.m.: "Sorry...but we were in "servitude" and unless we take the time to listen to those (some of which are still alive) that had the job of this type of "servitude" we will be destined to repeat and re-repeat this "servitude." I would love to sit at the feet of the real "Butler" and hear his stories. Since he "approved" the movie this will have to do....."

The historical value of this film was a perspective provided by others. For individuals who believed Hollywood should offer films that highlight the glorious and dignified position of Black Kings and Queens, others saw Blacks in the service industry as no less dignified. Angela Watson provided the following retort to a comment advanced by another poster: "DR-Kelmer Muhammad I don't know of any black Kings and Queens who bled and struggled for our political and social advancement, but I know some maids and butlers who did. In fact, history has shown much of the monarchy to be society's biggest tyrants. Oh but I see, you want to see brothers and sisters draped in gold and lounging in great castles in order for you to feel a sense of pride in yourself. So domestics and sharecroppers are not a part of our "real history," right? Do me a favor; tell me which King and Queen we should do a film about."

19

For some, ignoring the historical reality of this film was personal because it reminded them of the servitude in which older members in their families once engaged. Karen Calmeise (from Chatham University) shared this view on August 15, 2013 at11:27 a.m.:

"My grandmother and great grandmother were house cleaners, maids, and nurse's aides in their lives. They worked hard, long, and for little pay. I would meet my great-grandmother on the corner when she got off the bus from work, carrying bags of cast off clothes and stuff to give to her family members that needed them. I was glad to see the Help, and will probably see *The Butler*. These folks raised us, taught us right from wrong and worked in churches to keep institutions going in the black community. I now have a chance to hear what they may have had to say. Even if it is from a movie screen. They did not say much back then, they just did... I will wait for you to do the movie about our black kings and queens. They have had books written about them. Now let's sit back and try to get to know our dads and grandmothers."

For others, ignoring the historicity of servitude was tantamount to disrespecting one's biological and genetic heritage. This was the opinion shared by Delores Ealy who hailed from Meritte College: "Curtis, if it was not for the Butlers, maids and field hands "we" as people would not be where we are! Until we 'support" the small movies....how will they spend millions on EPIC movies....all we do is complaint about "what we do!" Stop complaining and put your money on "Opening Day" where it counts! Go and look at the people who are millionaires. They will tell you about the BUTLERS & THE HELP! Stop slapping your grandmother in the face!" The view offered by Ms. Ealy was supported by another female respondent. Gennia P. Varnado (who works at Works at Self Employed and Loving It!) expressed this view: "This is historical film and it told exactly how things really were then. Yes, we came from royalty to slavery and God has brought us out of it. Let's glorify where he brought us from. I remember the days of "The Butler," they are real. This movie will inspire the youth of today not to allow politicians to take us back to slavery tactics especially in voter rights. If you are not 50 and older you really do not have an appreciation of the truth of this film."

Others voiced the historical reality of servitude and the need to be proud of these individuals from the past. Angela Watson provided this perspective on August 14, 2013 at 10:34 a.m.: "Well, not like I didn't see this coming. There is always a brother who takes it upon himself to step up and be disgusted by a black film project. Not that it isn't sometimes warranted but our history isn't polished and sophisticated. Many of the heroes of our past didn't have a lot of education but they had vision, dignity and determination and they brought us forward into greatness. Shame on you if you cower from being proud of them." Another poster believed the movie should be seen as those who once worked in servitude opened the door for those who currently have more prominent positions in society. LaTrina Burden (from North Carolina Central University) provided this view on August 14, 2013 at 7:12 p.m.:

"Do some of you know that this film is based off a real life person who was a butler as well as a civil rights participant...Why are we ashamed of some of the people who made it possible for us to be educated and leaders……Some of you need to do the research of the person who this film is based off of. If there were no butlers and maids then there would not be black doctors and lawyers. The maids made it possible for the next generation to be so why are we ashamed of what they went through? They have stories too, whether you like it or not. So many are concerned with what white America thinks but don't care about the people who actually lived this unpleasant part of history. You want them to hide and be ashamed...Where is the criticism of the rappers and athletes that constantly shuck and jive."

Several individuals expressed disappointment in the negative commentary regarding this movie and drew attention to the positive image of Black men that it offered. A female (Jasmine Scott) from the University of Illinois provided this extensive perspective:

"I must say I'm somewhat disappointed by some of the comments posted. Of course everyone is entitled to their opinion of the movie but from the previews I've seen, I see the main character as a man, while his job was based in the servitude industry, took pride in his work as well as doing what he had to do for his family. That's definitely a positive image that our black families need to see today. Too many black men walk away from their responsibilities of taking care of their children, killing each other in the street, disrespecting each other, etc. Why not make a statement about that? Why not call out the injustices on the way we as blacks cut each other down? But I guess it's easier for Lennix to just do what he did. I plan to see the movie and find the positive elements that will inspire me to be a better person and continue to be thankful for those who didn't have the opportunities I did to go to college, graduate school and work in my field of choice and live in the place I want to."

Another female appreciated the historical authenticity of the film and associated the servitude role featured with a role that her mother once assumed. Debra B. Rambo (from Austin, Texas) provided this comment on August 14, 2013 at 3:59 p.m.:

"Jasmine, you are an intelligent, young woman. Continue to think and do as an individual. I agree with your comments regarding Mr. Lennix. BTW, I saw the movie when it came out on Friday. It's a good movie, sad, but interesting as seen through the eyes of a butler in the White House. Too bad some cannot see the positives and the underlying messages of a movie like 'The Butler.' Seems like some still haven't learned from the past...my mom was a domestic for wealthy Jews and whites in the Midwest. My college costs was supported by her hard work and sweat. It is part of our history...thanks again for your comments."

21

A male poster viewed the film as an opportunity for African Americans to realize how far they have come. Lang Settled (from American Military University) shared this view on August 15, 2013 at 4:10 p.m.:

"We always have bad reviews with our own people I think this film tells the story of the beginning of slavery to this date. Whether you like it or not these things happen and are another piece of our history we never knew just like the Amistad. In school I never knew anything about the Amistad until I saw it and I feel the same way about *The Butler*. We need to appreciate our history and not run from it. There is a good thing that came out of our history. We are still a thriving race of people despite the struggles we go through and past and present, the Lord has taken care of us. Look at us now. Racist people are intimidated about our people moving up the ladder and people like the butler who came before us are still here fighting for our rights. God is good."

Theme 2: Rejection of Black Servitude in Film: *"Where are our epic movies?"*

Seventeen comments (25% of bloggers) were negative regarding *The Butler*. For the most part, these comments castigated the director of the film and those associated with its release, lamented the lack of positive images of Blacks in film, the obliteration of Blacks' epic history, as well as made negative parallels between this film and others that featured Black people.

Negative View of the Movie, Director, and Oprah Winfrey. One person expressed a negative opinion of Blacks associated with films in which Blacks are featured in subservient roles. Lagrant Anthony of Atlanta Georgia shared how he felt on August 16, 2013 at 6:46 p,m. when he said: "Niggars only get rewarded by white people for acting like slaves and stupid niggars.....when will they make a black Jesus movie and give Denzel Washington an Oscar for playing the role? Scared niggars like Spike Lee are too scared to make such a movie as well as other entertainment boys owned by white Jewish masters."

Some individuals expressed a negative opinion of the director, Lee Daniels. For example, Michael Swanson of Lake Clifton Sr. High said: "Lee Daniels. Didn't he direct 'Monster's Ball'? Well, no wonder, that was porn also. He had Halle Berry put herself out on screen like some porn star to win an Oscar, so why would or should I be surprised with this latest one?" One female believed Daniels possessed deep psychological issues and would benefit from therapy. Wenona Wynn provided this view on August 13, 2013 at 5:32 p.m.: "I think Lennix is talking about movies like "The Help". I read most of the script for *The Butler* and besides being awful and factually lazy (call me crazy but I like a semblance of accuracy in my biopics) it made me wonder if Lee Daniels wouldn't benefit from some therapy. I mean we've all got issues, but goodness..."

In addition to speaking against Lee Daniels, a few criticized Oprah Winfrey. For example, Keith J. Bledsoe provided this comment on August 14, 2013 t 3:03 p.m.: "I find it interesting that Oprah, the richest woman in the world always seems interested in acting only in slave mentality and oppressive roles. Too bad she won't challenge herself to be cast in a role of power and prominence." Others had stronger words for Winfrey. Shea-Lawrence from Dobbins/Randolph AVTS said this: "I don't watch these "Servitude Movies "Oprah is the reigning Queen of this BS. They love nothing more than always, Glorifying this crap. I saw an article yesterday of a woman who should play "Michelle Obama." It was as bad as "Picking Zoe Saldana" to play Nina Simone. All the woman were "Black" but at least don't throw in someone who don't even match the woman's physical features." Another male criticized Winfrey. Hank Wilson from Lincoln High School provided this view on August 16, 2013 at 6:38 p.m.: Sorry Oprah, but I will never, ever allow my eyes to glance any screen which this useless adaptation of *The Butler* occupies any part of anywhere. I support you brother one hundred percent and Ms. Oprah Winfrey, I love you a little bit less today, just like having a bad cold I will get over it sooner or later-homeboy from Mississippi."

One individual recognized that "Hollyhood" [Hollywood] typically does not create positive Black imagery but called for Black actors and directors to take up this charge. Steven Butler, a member of Same Level Possee (SLP) of Harlem NYC shared: "I get it that Hollyhood doesn't promote anything positive and black, however there are so many black actors directors, etc. surely they could put some positive black images together to teach the children." Like Steven Butler, another male saw the negative consequences of movies that feature Black characters as servants. Nicholas Brown, an employee at Research Analysis & Maintenance, Inc. offered this extended commentary:

"This is Racial Divide at its Best. You see, there is an instilled view in America from some individuals, that if you are" Black" you must adhere to the way this American society was set up for you to be. Or the way they only see you through American History portraits of the past and through many negative stereotypes of today. Which depicts us as an ignorant and unlearned people with but one purpose and no other proposed future but to serve as a Slave and to end up with no value as a human being. That's why many of our fore-fathers were taken from Africa and different parts, that we may fit into a molded controlled structured way of life only to serve the needs of White America forever, but thank God for the civil rights movement. There were no intended benefits to slavery none other than to Rape, Murder, Pillage and Divide a ...Race of people through whatever means necessary so that they serve without opposition with great fear to fulfill whatever was expected of them. The saddest part about it all, is the desensitizing & dehumanizing of the Black race, because it has cost us much of our sense of pride even in today's times of our unexpected future accomplishment of having a black man in office as our Nation's Leader / President."

Obliteration of Blacks' Epic History. Curtis Penn said this: "MY whole problem is: WHERE ARE OUR EPIC MOVIES LIKE TROY AND 300? Where are the Kamose, Ahmose, Queen Makare, Thutmoses, The Queen that STOPPED Alexander the so called Great, DEAD in his tracks, Mansa Musa, Etc Etc, Etc The money is there, but noooo, we loves to beat a DEAD Horse in the ground by ALWAYS telling the same ole 'I'se powerful glad to be serving MASSA type of flicks, and we wonder why our children are so buck wild in the streets, THEY DON'T KNOW THEIR HISTORY!" Dr. Kelmer Muhammad, Owner-Operator at Self Employed (Business) also wants to see movies that depict Black people in roles of dignity. On August 13, 2013 at 6:20 p.m. he wrote this extended view: "We are now living in the Millennium where we still have black youth being killed; when are we going to start promoting movies that bring in positive roles... I refuse to see this movie; I have enough of them at home such as, Roots, Tuskegee Airmen, and The Eyes on the Prize... Why are we still making movies about Butlers and maids...Give me a break; I pray that all young black men and women boycott this Sambo movie....No one said we were not proud of our ancestors but it is time to tell the real history of our true ancestors and it does not begin with butlers and maids.... Why can't we make movies that showed us as Kings and Queens....Ask Oprah and other Famous Black actors to play the roles...The tragedy is it [the movie] will not get released."

One male believed these films should have the dual purpose of highlighting positive imagery of Blackness as well as be commercially successful. Curtis Penn provided this comment on August 16, 2013 at 8:08 a.m.: "Leon…..Other cultures and races do it all the time, EDUCATE and make money, 300 AND TROY didn't make money? Although some movies were based on lies like the Ten Commandments it still MADE LOTS of money and told stories of other cultures. But I guess that's what it means to be Black in America always settling for second best in the servitude roles. If OTHERS have done it and are STILL doing it WHY CAN'T WE??? Smh" [shaking my head].

Others expressed they would not see the movie and believed other Blacks should do the same. Marilyn Jones from Houston Texas offered this historical perspective as well as a scathing criticism of the movie when she wrote:

"The history of the United States is red, white and black - experiences of domination, struggle, liberation and return to domination in other forms, then struggle and liberate again. The story is unfinished and the struggle continues. The main truth is that it has always been the youth with guts that do the work while spokespersons get the glory. If we were committed to truth, we wouldn't place all our expectations in one film or book, but we would research print and teach the children on the corner, not wait for the school then criticize the curriculum. Our lack of sophistication is self-destructive that we ALL killed Trayvon Martin. I didn't even know the "Three Musketeers" was written by a black man. So much of our history has been whitewashed and boils down to slavery as if that was our whole history.

A white dude on yahoo comments wrote "There are no black chemists or CEOs" The ignorance of whites is unbelievable, however, we allow this ignorance to continue. I know we have to support our black actors but we have to start refusing to see movies with these steppin fetchin characters."

Others lamented the lack of epic films regarding Black people. Jeff Young-Sterling of Max the Mutt College of Animation, Art & Design provided this remark on August 14, 2013 at 10:59 a.m.: "I have been saying this for years!!!!! Where are our GIGANTIC EPIC TALES!! We come from thousands of years of royalty, scholars, warriors, fables, legends, and everything you can think of. But the slavery movies keep getting made." The perspectives offered by Curtis Penn and Jeff Young-Sterling was shared by others. Ackerline P. Smith of Jacksonville, Florida, for example, expressed herself in this way:

"Yes, absolutely Curtis. Also to further your list, how about Tariq ibn Ziyad the moorish general who led the Islamic conquest of Spain in 711AD and Hamilcar Barca and his son Hannibal of Carthage for whom the city of Barcelona in Spain is named after. As part of the whitewashing of our history, we were taught these people were either white or Arab. Not true and it's time for the story to be told using actors of African descent to play the roles. The book by JA Rodgers Worlds Great Men of Color tell us about many more of our great ancestors who were portrayed as persons of a different color when they are in fact our own."

Another person believed Black people should not rely on White media outlets to tell their stories. This opinion was offered by Zzingha Shabaka from Southern University:

"Hey you brothers, I agree 100%. I critique the movie and had not read anything about it. This is not to take anything from Eugene Allen, but hey, enough of these in service of white people type movies. Come on people, when are we going to get serious? Let us keep our eyes on the prize, keep in mind we had/have blacks who could have played way bigger roles, but we were not allowed to. Racism. At the same time, we can create movies that show that we are not just about in service of whites or just down right stepin' fetchen type movies. Black people have so much glorious history, there is no end, and I am sure we have some writers out there to bring us some….that gets away from the same old, same old. This kind of stuff that messes with our children minds. Another problem, is that, we have to rely on white outlets to really get it out there, and if they don't like it, it probably will not go anywhere, but we really do not need them to advertise our movies. We do it ourselves. We can do this."

In contrast to the previous opinions presented, other individuals believed Blacks should not rely on the media to tell their stories, but should rather, do research for themselves, learn their own history, and teach this history to their children. This was the perspective offered by Robert P. Robertson on August 14, 2013 at 12:14 p.m.:

> "Imagery and symbolism plays an important part in the cultural pride of a people. Historically, white supremacy view all, I mean all, Africans in terms of our past holocaust, and they perpetuate that image and glorify in it because it affirms their illusion of superiority in their own culture. That is the main reason for the destruction of our 50,000 year history in the world. If we knew our history and understood that Africans are the primary architects of civilization, art, science, and culture, it would instill us with such pride, we would unite to demand our rightful place in the world. Yet, all we've received from white supremacy in the last 700 years are the negative imagery and symbolisms of our persecution, of our holocaust, and many of us has taken on the defeatism of our own disparagement. Africans in America has received nothing but negative imagery particularly for the last 35 years. That is why we were so hyped about "Django Unchained," another disparaging and historically inaccurate movie. But, it was a "feel good" to see one of us standing up and fighting back. Afterwards, we get movies like maids and butlers, negative imagery to remind us what we were in our American past. We have a long glorious past in world history, ancestors that we can be proud of and feel pride from, and we should all turn away from the minstrel/samboism of Daniels, Perry, Oprah, and Lee, and research our own history in the world."

A Form of Mental Enslavement. Several individuals believed movies like *The Butler* foster the psychological enslavement of Black people. This view was expressed by Khai Kem-Mdjai on August 14, 2013 at 3:22 p.m.: "Really, this movie shows the beginning of your history, so you will be able to move on as perpetual slave in the future. It makes sense...that's why we're in the situation we are in, and we know now why it will continue in our children. Wow! The slave mind does exist today. Every other race of people knows it is an image issue, except for the black race." Another individual believed *The Butler* furthers the goals of White racism and White supremacy. Jevyn Nelms, a Freelance Costume Designer at Freelance Costume Designer offered this poignant view on August 15, 2013 at 4:22 a.m.

> "To throw my two cents in. I think the overarching point is that there needs to be a BALANCE. *Driving Miss Daisy*, *The Help*, *The Butler*, *Precious*, *Monsters Ball*, *Django Unchained* - these need to be balanced by movies that depict black people in other strata of society other than the downtrodden. Like all the other people on this planet, we are diverse, we have diverse experiences. There are millionaire and billionaire blacks. We are inventors, scientists, bankers, CEO's. In the mainstream, movies about any and all subjects are made; fishing, baking, vacationing, cheating, royalty, etc. I think everyone can agree that we need MORE THEMATIC DIVERSITY in black films and films featuring black people.

26

Where is the movie called the 'White Enslaver' that portrays the barbarity of white enslavers and the white culture that so tortured and brutalized Africans for hundreds of years here in this part of the world. Where is the movie that shows the inhumanity of White people from a Black perspective....I saw previews of this crap - *The Butler* - just last night as I said to myself "What BS"…To hear Oprah say to another Black person "Everything you have is cause of that butler".... Really? Rather than "every denigration and lowly state you are experiencing is because of these white barbarians." This so-called movie is an in-service on behalf of white-racism and the negro-agenda - i.e. to bask in the dominance of white people. Where is the Nat Turner Revolt movies showing the heart of Black people up in arms against white barbarism?"

Theme 3: Neutral Commentary: *"The movie u want 2 c is the one u have to make."*

Twenty-two comments (31% of bloggers) were not necessarily focused on *The Butler*. In particular, comments regarded as neutral focused on conflict regarding whether to view the movie, highlighting important Africans in history, discussing other movies that featured a Black cast and storyline, as well as the need for African Americans to be the primary agents of promoting their own history by learning and teaching this history to their children, or developing films that feature the accomplishments of Black people.

Conflict Regarding Whether to View the Movie. Some were conflicted regarding whether to see the movie. Some wondered whether attacking the movie was not simply a 'divide and conquer' strategy that minimizes the humanity of the actual man on which *The Butler* was based. This perspective was offered by Dale Jimison on August 13, 2013 at 4:53 p.m.: "I can agree with some of this, but I think that you lose when you take the divide and conquer approach. As a human you should focus on the human story and then the rest will fall into place. I am all for accurate history and agree that there are plenty of amazing human experiences to share that don't involve service, just focus on the human aspect and leave the so called 'race' at the door and you might just get somewhere."

Some heralded the dignity of Eugene Allen's life. On August 13, 2013, at 4:51 p.m. Diane Nieman Senffner provided this comment: http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2008-11-07/politics/36906532_1_white-house-black-man-history If you want to read the real story as written by Pulitzer nominee Wil Haygood. Or Will Haygood book, The Butler: A Witness to History. The REAL man, Eugene Allen, lived an unpretentious life and was all but two years from dying when Haygood stumbled upon him. The harsh words about the movie may be true, but no one can take away from this amazing man or what he had lived." On the other hand, some individuals were critical of those who had negative things to say about the movie. Marilyn Jones from Houston Texas provided this comment on August 15, 2013 at 8:50 p.m.: "It is so easy to criticize others who are doing the best they can with what they have as we lack attention ourselves.

Otherwise, the salvation-for-all-by- movie notion is ludicrous. It is based with liberties on a true story to engage the masses of the clueless. Where's his/anybody else's artistic masterpiece rendition of anything that empowers?" In spite of positive commentary regarding the movie, some were clearly struggling regarding whether or not to see it. Dan Lee provided this comment on August 16, 2013 at 6:28 a.m.: "I'm struggling with whether or not to see this movie. I've always had trouble with romanticizing and minstrelizing our history and current race relations. Perhaps that's why I haven't seen Driving Miss Daisy or watched Scandal yet!"

Important Africans in History. Several individuals drew attention to African men and women that made a tremendous historical impact. Kofi Opantiri provided this comment on August 14, 2013 at 4:30 p.m.: "Queen Nzinga who fought off Portuguese encroachment in Angola for 60 years. Yaa Asantewa, Queen Mother of Ejisu in Ashanti land. Led a war against British colonialism." Curtis Penn reminded others that he was an historian who was very knowledgeable regarding the accomplishments of African people. He wrote the following to Donna on August 14, 2013 at 9:00 p.m.: "@Donna Sister I've studied for 25yrs and YES AFRICANS built the pyramids. That's just a HISTORICAL fact. The Sphinx itself has African Features. Take a good look at it next time."

While one blogger had a very positive view of some Black films (Cameron Turner from Altadena, California wrote: "I haven't seen *The Butler* so I will reserve comment on this film. But recent movies that most of us agree are positive: "42" and "Red Tails" Will and Jaden Smith's movie "After Earth" etc.), others wanted to see prominent Blacks featured in film. Altie Jenkins added to the discussion when she wrote the following on August 15, 2013 at 4:26 p.m.: "To sum it all up, I just think the brother, along with others in this post, want to see more movies that show us in a different light than servitude. Yes, this is our past and we should know it and walk proud that we came out of it…but there is a lot more that defines us also. Our children seeing us depicted in our other fashions of history could help. Roots did it and it said enough! Let's speak about Thutmoses and Queen Makare...Tariq ibn Ziyad, Toussant....Just saying."

Another blogger wanted to see more movies that featured Blacks throughout history in positions of leadership. Paul Hurdlow of Granada High provided this comment on August 16, 2013 at 6:19 p.m.: "Really interesting discussions below. I would LOVE to see movies about black leaders in history; I think there'd be a huge market among whites and blacks for compelling movies about black civilization that challenge our accepted view of history. Reading the comments, I can also see why *The Butler* would seem pretty tired subject matter."

Agents of Our Own History. Some bloggers lamented the lack of quality (powerful) roles written for Blacks while others were skeptical of movie accounts of history and therefore believed reading was the only way to receive the truth. Regarding the former, Samuel Caldwell, Jr. of CRS (Creative Retirement Solutions) provided the following retort to Keith J. Bledsoe, a fellow blogger who wrote Oprah Winfrey was "the richest woman in the world."

Caldwell shared the following on August 14, 2013 at 3:30 p.m.: "Keith J. Bledsoe Oprah is not the "richest woman in the world" nor is she the richest black woman in the world (see Forbes Magazine or Wikipedia). Oprah has said repeatedly that she turned down many possible roles over the years since The Color Purple because of being typed-cased into demeaning roles. She probably would say "YES!" at the drop of a hat if she were offered a role of "power and prominence." Studying the history of Hollywood would show you the lack of roles that black women are offered and the few acting jobs they are given. If you look at the roles of black women in film over the last two decades, no one seems to be casting major films for black women.

Desmond Walker (Operations Officer at USS Carney) provided this view on August 14, 2013 at 5:59 p.m.: "It's a movie…..if you want true history, how about just READING a nice piece of non-fiction. Unless it's a documentary, using the people that was actually in the moment recalling the events as they happen, it's ALL loosely based on someone's interpretation of reality." Another blogger by the name of Ben R. Johnson (Transitional Coach at State of Connecticut) promoted technology as a way to receive historical truth. He provided the following comment on August 14, 2013 at 12:51 p.m.:

"This is exactly why we (Black, Brown, Yellow, Red and in between) people must take advantage of the age of the internet. We have the technology right at our finger tips to affect change in what ALL of our children are exposed to on the big screen. If the BIG film industry refuses to shed any light on EVERYONE's true history in and around this great nation then we (independent film, video and music makers) must use the internet along with the available software that's been out there for years now to give our children healthy alternatives. It's a matter of us pooling our talent and resources and producing material that is far more accurate than Hollywood's version or representation of how they say our role in history was and is. Whether it be "Direct to DVD" or streamed/downloaded on the internet. It's the same as changing the channel on our television sets. We non-whites should simply get the facts from our own historians (and there are many) and start writing from there. As well discovered archives of all ancestry that are now accessible in print and on the internet. F*#! Hollywood!"

The perspective offered by Ben R. Johnson was almost identical to the one provided by a female blogger by the name of Carolyn Johnson (Cal State LA) on August 14, 2013 at 2:59 p.m.:

"It took George Lucas 20 years and his own money to make "Red Tails." It is a new day thanks to the internet, social media, and digital media. Hollywood is nothing more than a global propaganda machine for social engineering and mind control of the masses. "Birth of a Nation" gave birth to 26 million KKK members after its release.

Hitler was financed by Henry Ford, and other famous American industrialists and capitalists of that time. Google that! Thanks to Hollywood and mass media, black people have become the perennial scapegoat for exploitation, demonization, and mass distraction. They know who we really are! They've stolen our history, culture, music, dance, art, food, slang, and even our identity.

White is the NEW black! But we have aided and abetted them for fame, fortune, favors, status, security, approval, sex, etc. (oops did I say sex?). Why was there no backlash, organized protest, and petitions, against Love & Hip Hop, Basketball Wives, 106th & Park, New Jack City, BET, VH1, and so many others, that denigrate and diminish our noble heritage, and extraordinary history and culture, more than being a hard working maid or butler, with limited options, opportunities, and human rights. "My people are in captivity for lack of knowledge. Without vision the people perish." Both apply. Hollywood is no longer the only game in town! It's time to leave the plantation."

In addition to seeking various avenues by which to receive historically accurate information, some individuals are currently creating Black cinema. One female was developing a film project in which a Black male was the lead. Shereen Collington (a Theatre Dance Teacher at Tempe Edna Vihel Center for the Arts) provided this comment on August 14 at 6:24 p.m." "I'm a filmmaker with an epic sci-fi film featuring a positive black male lead. If you want to know more, check out the teaser trailer http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iB8hBoa9y_s. Also, contact me on Facebook. I am a cartoonist with my own comic creation that features positive black images. https://www.facebook.com/JoppaByShereenCollington?fref=ts That is our reality. Cheers." Other bloggers believed that Black people have the power to create accurate movies that represent their history. Delores Ealy from Meritte College said this on August 15, 2013 at 2:25 p.m.: "We as "people" don't need white people to write our history.... have YOU wrote an EPIC script....we have to teach our history to our own children in our "own" homes first!"

Ms. Ealy's comment was reiterated by Trey Fannin's (Personal Trainer at New York Health and Racquet Club) lengthy comment:

"To rely ultimately on Social Media, the film industry, or professors of history at our colleges, for your knowledge of history is folly. To learn about your history, your family's history, your race's history, read your history books, research the most accurate details you can find, then cross reference with other sources. This will allow you to come to your own conclusions about history in general. Remember the saying" History is written by the victors"? Even this has been credited to Winston Churchill, however some say it's just a general truism, and not specifically spoken by Winston Churchill.

This is just an example of something that should not be taken for granted as being uttered by WC. However, if we accept this truism to be true, therein lies the answer to the question, 'What do I believe to be true?' You must learn for ...yourself and not rely on a movie to teach you with total authority and absolutism that 'something I saw on tv/movies is the truth'.

Mr. Fannin continued….

The very fact that there are victors and the defeated informs you that history, if we take this truism to heart, will be skewed to support the victors need to justify their actions to their society! Also there is something else here that I believe should be noted. It's a Hollywood Production people. The very source of ANY material coming out of there should be viewed with the UTMOST skepticism by its very existence! ITS FREAKIN MAKE BELIEVE! Now I enjoy historical based shows and programs, but I sure as heck don't believe everything coming out of TINSELTOWN! WHY SHOULD YOU?! Teach your kids to read! Turn off the Idiotbox and give them a book! WAKE UP! Your children sure as heck are not going to learn to study by studying how many fingers a Smurf has on its hand every Saturday morning! I believe kids can learn to study, reading one source then reading from another source on the same subject and comparing the data. Something that a kid would like to read about isn't always easy but kid-related material that is interesting to them individually could get them on this train of thought or action."

In support of the aforementioned comments, others strongly believed Black people ultimately have the responsibility to create their own cinematic renderings. Otis Mills Jr. (Manchester Community College) provided this comment on August 16, 2013 at 8:13 a.m.: "Well, what's it going to be Black People? Y'all complain about the slave, or historical movies that comes out, but then again, y'all complain about the Gangster hood movies that comes out also, & where are all the black independent directors that should be doing good movies? If you don't want to see the movie, then don't complain about it. We should be doing our own movies & stop worrying about what Hollywood have for us. Hollywood only limits us as the people to do certain films!" Others strongly supported this pro-active stance. Marsha Woso (EMT at Abu Dhabi Education Council) provided this comment on August 16, 2013 at 2:15 p.m. "The movie u want 2 c is the one u have to make. R u actually waiting 4 "them" 2 tell our story? B the change." Jaz Favored Churrubbs provided this perspective on August 16, 2013 at 12:00 p.m.: "OK! If u can make all sort of movies. Well stop talking about it and make what u want to happen. #2muchcontroveryoveradarnmove" A few hours later, Renee Thomas (Montgomery County Community College) provided this view on August 16, 2013 at 6:22 p.m.: "I agree with you Curtis Penn...It is up to the parents to teach your children where we came from...Kings and Queens of Africa! I refuse to say we started in slavery....to know your past...is to know your future!"

Comparisons to D'Jango Unchained. Several individuals provided comments related to D'Jango Unchained, a movie released during 2012 that featured a Black cast and a Black male (Jamie Foxx) as a bounty hunter. Some found the movie unrealistic. Hazel Russell from Fort Worth, Texas simply said this on August 15, 2013 at 7:26 p.m. "I wonder if he would have had a different opinion about the movie, had he starred in the movie. I'm going to watch the movie and I will reserve judgment until I do so. To be honest, I didn't care for Django. It was a bit unrealistic." Another blogger agreed. Tamara Nicole Payne wrote the following on August 14, 2013 at 9:01 a.m.: "Aunt Hazel, I Hated Django. It Had No Story Plot At All... And For The Producer Or Writer To Say It Was Better Then Roots Is Just Ridiculous …The Movie Was Garbage…I Never Heard Of Slaves Going Out And Killing On Bounty Hunts ... Even Nat Turner Couldn't Necessarily Reflect In That Movie..." Others disagree with the views provided by these women. For example, Joyce Ford from Arlington, Texas said this on August 14, 2013 at 10:03 a.m.: "I enjoyed Django unrealistic or realistic, and I plan to see *The Butler* also." Some found the Django account generally demonstrated historical accuracy in spite of one very important caveat. A blogger who identified himself as Hamilton BlackNationalism House (Lyndon B. Johnson High School) wrote the following on August 13, 2013 at 8:12 p.m., "Django WAS realistic. Have you ever heard of Harriet Tubman, Dutty Bookman, Nat Turner, Toussant Overture or Desaline along with countless other revolutionaries during slave rebellions?? The only thing unrealistic about it is that he had to get permission from a white man to do what he did in the movie. Back in those days, the slaves that revolted didn't need or get any permission from whites when they rebelled."

Another individual offered both positive and negative commentary regarding this film. TJ Hill, provided this extended narrative on August 16, 2013 at 4:58 a.m.

"Thing is, if you are trying to keep black people docile (against other races) and make sure they never revolt no matter how they are treated, this works. The system set up against black people, is very refined, sanitized and even makes some black folks believe this is how it is naturally. This type of film reinforces the idea that black people are their best in positions of servitude, under oppression or huge burdens. I know for a fact that's not true because I did my homework. I know that black cultural appropriation is second nature to whites, because it has been occurring since the beginning of civilization. Early Sumeria, China, Greece and Rome have their religion, science, and art founded on the Ancient Egyptian model. The culture we ran, in Spain, right before America was discovered, was the envy of all Europe. It led to its intellectual and economic rise. I'd like to see those stories on the screen, because when you tell an average brother or sister about it, they look at you with this expression, like a child when you explain to them how brain surgery works... then it's back to something that don't mean nothin'.

Any other group in the world succeeds because of unity, even if their reasoning doesn't make sense, but we have been stripped of that vital aspect of humanity. I got much respect for Oprah, and Lee Daniel's and the Color Purple is me and my Grandma's favorite film. That was from her generation though. She actually lived though some of that stuff when she was young. This is a different generation and the dynamic of race operates in an entirely different manner.

I'm trying to get something started, talking about something other than the great white hope for a hero, but it's difficult. http://igg.me/at/FireWithFire/x/4295958"

Theme 4: Perspectives of Harry Lennix

Eighteen comments (26% of bloggers) were related to their opinion of the African American actor Harry Lennix. While some individuals dismissed his view, or perceived his comments to be rooted in professional jealousy, others thanked him for publicly sharing his perspective and admired his courage and conviction. Michelle DeVore of Algiers, Louisiana (August 16, 2013 at 11:12 a.m.) was dismissive of the actor: "Like what he thinks matter." Said Walter McCullough (August 14, 2013 at 9:19 a.m.): "He's got a problem."

Some individuals were critical of the roles in which Lennix starred. Delores Ealy of Meritte College said: "Who is Harry Lennix....I remember *The Butler*....but not HIS movies! Stop complaining!" Others were more critical. Jeffrey Allen of Atlanta Georgia offered this: "Crazy...but you will star in a movie about a white superhero...Mr Lennix you need help." Still another was not impressed with the work of this actor. Leon Gray, Legislative Specialist at Shelby County of Commissioners provided this view on August 15, 2013 at 10:25 a.m.: "The brother does have a boundless vocabulary; however, since his role in "RAY," I developed a less than positive opinion of Mr. Lennix then though it was just his character in that film I didn't care for... But after reading this article he and that character are the same."

Several individuals believed professional jealousy was the motivation for Lennix's public disdain for the movie. A female by the name of Tara Walter-Peterson of Columbus Ohio (August 14, 2013 at 1:57 p.m.) was also critical of this actor. She said: "Is it porn because he's not in it? Stop putting our people down please!" Michelle Barber Hutcherson of Mount Vernon, New York replied: "And the last BIG movie Harry Lennix STARRED IN was…..Don't worry I'll wait….." A male poster by the name of Harry M. Howard (Howard University) offered this comment: "…..folk always critical of another man's work...stop hating & come up with a way to tell the story you want told..."

Others perceived Lennix as simply bitter. Brian J. Johnson of Rutgers Newark commented: "In the words of Paula Dean, Negro please......Another bitter comment from someone who thinks that reality should bend towards their perception....."Another female by the name of Jacqueline Tinsley of West Philadelphia High School said this on August 14, 2013 (at 3:23 a.m.): "Who are you anyway? I will support the movie. You're just mad that you're not in it. What's up with this? We have enough other people to bring us down, don't you think? Have you seen the movie? Hank. Jealousy will get you nowhere." Tammy Robinson-Jones of Bamberg, South Carolina said: "HE IS UPSET BECAUSE HE IS NOT A PART OF THIS WORK! GET SOME OF HIS OWN AND LET SOMEONE BASH HIS WORKS I DO NOT THINK HE WOULD APPRECEATE IT ESPECIALLY WHEN IT IS NOT TRUE." This comment was followed by the one provided by Sonya Shesaidwhat McIntyre from Charlotte, North Carolina on August 14, 2013 at 9:44 p.m.: "He has the nerve to throw stones when he uses words like niggerfied? He sounds sour and I do not agree with him not even 10%. Amongst black folks we will always have critics who are sour such as Henry. Those who were a part of the struggle during that time in history were not stuffy, they loved as everyone else and made mistakes as everyone else. They were regular people just trying to make a living."

While several men and women did not support the viewpoint offered by Lennix, others agreed with his perspective, applauded his courage, and in one case, thanked him for providing personal commentary on the movie. Chris Lett of Georgia State University said: "This brother knows that all this crap is niggerdom!" Dennis Alford (of Coppin State University) provided this comment on August 14, 2013 at 11:18 a.m.: "Powerful! My brother, if I have ever heard the truth; that's the truth!" Another individual by the name of Shea-Lawrence S. Evans of Dobbins/Randolph AVTS said this on August 13, 2013 at 8:19 a.m.: "I agree 5000%! Tell it like it is Brother! I concur!!! BROTHER I COULD NOT HAVE SAID IT BETTER MYSELF!" Others expressed a high opinion of the actor and vehemently defended his perspective and character. Ben R. Johnson f (Transitional Coach at State of Connecticut) offered this view in response to another commenter on August 14, 2013 at 2:53 p.m.: "I've been a serious fan of his art ever since "The Five Heart Beats". Another fellowman (ON my bucket list) of whom I would enjoy kicking back and shooting the breeze with." A more personal note was articulated by another male. Scott W. Gordon (Northeastern University) provided this view on August 14, 2013 at 2:46 p.m.: "Harry is an awesome guy. I had the pleasure of hanging with him a bit when I lived in Chicago and stayed in touch for many years! He is a true realist!"

Kyle Thoro (Marketing Director at Thoro-Media) provided this perspective on August 14, 2013 at 2:18 a.m.: "I guess you don't know the history of Harry Lennix. He is a revolutionary thinker first- actor second. Sad actors don't talk like him." For another individual, his public disapproval of this movie was the actions of a courageous "warrior." Cenestra Bryson (Fashion Institute of Technology) on August 14, 2013 at 12:38 p.m. said: "If only more of them would stand up like this warrior. Good job King." Another poster (Gail Scott) appreciated the view of this actor: "I suspected this. Thanks for letting us know, Harry. I guess I'll watch it, but I won't have high expectations. Thanks again."

Discussion

The purpose of this paper was to qualitatively examine the content of 70 comments provided by bloggers on *The Griot* in response to the public comment provided by African-American actor Harry Lennix regarding the Lee Daniel's movie *The Butler*. This study builds upon the burgeoning scholarship related to media representations of Blacks in America, but more importantly, explored how bloggers on a public website perceive *The Butler* and movies like it in which Black protagonists are featured in roles of servitude. In addition, this scholarly work examined whether individuals regarded the *characteristics of the protagonist* or the *role of the protagonist* as the most salient characteristic of the film, as well as whether *The Butler* is a source of strength or a beacon of contemporary slavery. The theoretical frameworks on which this study was built, namely Kobi Kambon's (1980) African self-consciousness and Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck's (1961) Value Orientation Theory will help explain the findings.

How do individuals perceive *The Butler* and movies like it in which Black protagonists are featured in roles of servitude?

The 13 positive comments (18% of bloggers) regarding *The Butler* may have been associated with the proclivity of these individuals to focus on a past time orientation. These men and women may believe this movie preserves and maintains traditional teachings and beliefs, namely that hard and honest work, even if in a low-status profession, is honorable and worth emulating (Kluckhohn & Strodbeck, 1961). While Blacks that lived during the era of Jim Crow were forced in accept positions of servitude because they were prohibited from engaging in other forms of employment, servitude was an historical reality for many people of African descent. Instead of disregarding the reality of servitude, men and women that have a positive perception of the movie may embrace this part of their historical heritage because it allows them to appreciate the dignity of servitude, honor Black men and women who lived during this time and may still be living (and in some cases, create a dialogue with elder members of their family regarding their experiences in servitude), help them create a strong African identity (based on pride in doing honest work and doing that job well), and appreciate how far they (individually and collectively) have come as African people (Kambon, 1980).

The seventeen (25%) negative comments regarding *The Butler* may be linked to two realities. First, these individuals may be more apt to focus on the present (what is now) or the future, which would allow them to plan ahead and/or seek new ways to replace previous ones (Kluckhohn & Strodbeck, 1961). Those that strongly objected to the movie's release (and did not plan to see the movie) may believe Lee Daniels (and those associated with the movie) lack the courage to produce a cinematic work that showcases the historical grandeur of African kings and queens. Furthermore, these individuals may perceive this movie as a painful reminder of what Black life in America is really about, namely servitude and submission to White people.

Second, the men and women that expressed negative views of this movie may see *The Butler* as merely the most recent addition to a growing long list of movies (i.e., *The Color Purple*, *Driving Miss Daisy*, *The Help, D'Jango Unchained*) that distorts African American history, portrays African Americans in a less than positive light, or places them in a cultural milieu in which they are systematically oppressed but do very little to actively resist their oppression (Kambon, 1980).

The twenty-two (31%) neutral comments that were not necessarily focused on *The Butler* may be explained in two ways. For one, individuals in this camp may have a multiple time orientation. In other words, these men and women may be psychologically conflicted regarding whether to see the movie because they wonder whether the overall perception of the African race (among group and non-group members) will be positive or negative. In essence, will seeing an historical movie (past), currently help Blacks (present) and help Africans as a people better understand the direction in which they want to go (Kluckhohn & Strodbeck, 1961)? Perhaps. In regards to African self-consciousness, because they possess a time orientation that respects the past, present, and future realities and/or accomplishments of Black people, these individuals may more readily compare *The Butler* with other movies that feature African Americans. So, it seems that the motivation for making this movie is less important than the need for African people to be the beacons of their own history, to accurately learn and respect their heritage, to make it their personal responsibility to teach this history to their children, and create films that speak to the ways that African people actively resisted oppression in various contexts (Kambon, 1980).

The eighteen (26%) comments that focused on the African American actor Harry Lennix, may have to some extent, been rooted in both a past *and* present time orientation (Kluckhohn & Strodbeck, 1961). To make this point clear, men and women that focused on this Black actor may have compared his former body of work (past) with his current cinematic offerings (present), and detected a contradiction between the racial pride that he verbally (and publicly) proclaims yet actually demonstrates onscreen. For the African self-conscience respondent, Lennix's castigation of *The Butler* may have been ultimately spurred by self-interest (his personal survival in the cinematic industry), his lack of respect for a fellow Black man in the cinematic industry (and need to speak negatively of a movie featuring a Black cast in front of a worldwide audience), as well as a dismissal of past historical realities of which many Black men and women were a part (Kambon, 1980). Thus, for several individuals, Lennix's words were a catalyst for racial divide, not racial solidarity.

Do individuals perceive *The Butler* as a source of strength or a beacon of contemporary slavery?

Source of Strength. While 13 bloggers (18% of bloggers) saw *The Butler* as a source of strength, the overwhelming majority of participants [including those that held negative (25%), neutral (31%), and provided comments regarding Harry Lennix (26%)] regarded *The Butler* as a beacon of contemporary slavery. Individuals that perceived *The Butler* as a source of strength were particularly aligned with the "recognizing one's African identity and cultural heritage, and sees value in obtaining self-knowledge" aspect of Kambon's (1980) African self-consciousness. Although the Jim Crow-era was difficult for many African Americans, Blacks who *viewed The Butler* as a beacon of strength had a strong desire to learn from Eugene Allen [the Black man on which the movie was based], to focus on the ability of this man to have secure employment for 30 years (which one individual saw as a rarity in today's economy), respected the key role of Black men and women during this time to advance Black's political and social standing, acknowledged the historical books that have been written about Blacks in servitude, as well as having a strong affinity toward individuals who were at one time in a position of servitude (butlers, maids) as their struggles helped paved the way for Blacks to enjoy higher status positions in America. In essence, these individuals believe that strength comes from accepting past struggles and honoring (through film or face-to-face knowledge) those that personally experienced these struggles.

Beacon of Contemporary Slavery. Contrastingly, the overwhelming majority of bloggers believed *The Butler* is a beacon of contemporary slavery. And it appears that individuals that endorsed this view had a strong present (what is now) and future orientation (the need for Blacks to be the agents of historical change by teaching their children their history and creating films that provide a strong counter narrative to those that are already offered) (Kluckhohn & Strodbeck, 1961) and objected to cinematic narratives that have purposefully highlighted this oppressive aspect of African American's past history. Further analysis of these comments revealed these individuals expressed varying degrees of emotion (confusion, anger, and disgust) that most Black films do not highlight the strong and glorious cultural heritage of Africans (who were once kings and queens of great power and prominence) or how Africans opposed the detrimental nature of racial oppression to Black survival and actively resisted it (Kambon, 1980). To make this point clear, some individuals compared the historical backdrop of *The Butler* to other films like Lee Daniel's *Monster's Ball* (in which an African American actress became the first Black woman to secure an Academy Award)*, Driving Miss Daisy, The Help, Precious, Monsters Ball*, and *D'Jango Unchained*, in which Blacks are featured in roles that strip them of their power and prevent them from actively resisting oppression in various contexts (Kambon, 1980).

Even individuals that were conflicted regarding whether to see the movie were operating from a present time orientation as they were currently wondering whether or not to view the movie. These men and women even provided the names of Black films (i.e., *42*; *Red Tails*; Will and Jaden Smith's movie *After Earth*) that they believed created a strong African self-consciousness (Kambon, 1980). Perhaps the most prominent aspect of Kambon's (1980) African self-consciousness was the belief that African Americans not patiently (or impatiently) wait for Hollywood to produce movies that reflect Black history. This view was beautifully articulated by Marsha Woso (EMT at Abu Dhabi Education Council) who provided the following grammatically fragmented remark: *"The movie u want 2 c is the one u have to make. R u actually waiting 4 "them" 2 tell our story? B the change."* Further objection of *The Butler* was based on the recognition that lack of accurate historical knowledge could individually and collectively make it difficult or impossible for African Americans to create a strong racial pride and racial identity. Thus, for these individuals, it is ultimately the responsibility of Black parents, and not Hollywood, to first understand their racial and cultural heritage and to then consistently present an accurate history of Black's cultural heritage to their children (Kambon, 1980).

While some individuals believed African American Harry Lennix's public perspective of *The Butler* was hypocritical (when compared with less-than-honorable characters he portrayed in other films) or was based on professional envy, others with a strong present time orientation applauded his courage and conviction, and in several instances shared personal aspects of the actor's character such as his strong portrayal of positive Black male identity and his true commitment to the uplift of Black people (i.e., "*a revolutionary thinker first- actor second*"). Thus, like-minded revolutionaries that support Lennix may be frustrated with the release of *The Butler* because they regard this movie as an addition to the "steppin fetchin characters" that are the hallmarks of Hollywood portrayals of Black life which are damaging to the healthy development of the African self-consciousness (Kambon, 1980).

Limitations of the Current Study

There were two limitations of this study that should be noted. For one, since a public website does not elucidate the gender, race, or socioeconomic characteristics of individuals, it is not possible to generalize the findings in this study to one particular segment of the population. An additional limitation is that a website does not allow the researcher to secure participant responses. In other words, since the possibility exists for individuals to provide multiple responses using various names from various email accounts, it is possible that the "data" that was examined in this study may have been affected in this way.

In spite of these limitations, however, there are four advantages of securing participant responses from a public website. First, this website allowed the participants to express their perspective on a topic that was important to them.

While traditional research methods dictate that research topics be generated from the scholar, this method allowed the researcher to examine perspectives on a topic that is salient to those who chose to engage in it. In essence, a website creates a specific community of individuals who are primarily interested in that topic. Second, the anonymity of a website provided a "safe space" by which individuals could share their honest perspective. Thus, I assert the anonymity of a public website may in some instances facilitate greater candid among some individuals (especially those who are introverted) than other methodologies (e.g., face-to-face interviews, focus groups) that may somewhat be influenced by social desirability (Chaney, 2012). Third, this website made it possible for individuals to engage in synchronous and asynchronous communication. Thus, a website allows individuals to communicate in "real time" and creates a community of individuals who actively engage one another by affirming one another, disagreeing with one another, and educating one another. Lastly, a public website allows participants to teach one another, correct one another, learn from one another, and be motivated to learn more regarding a specific topic. For instance, when examining the many comments provided by the individuals on this website, I noted several instances where an individual shared a certain view and was corrected by another respondent. On other occasions, an individual would express an opinion that was not historically accurate and was corrected by one or more individuals on the website (who, were in several instances self-proclaimed professors of African American History or African American Studies), and in many cases, provided readings or citations to support their view or make their point clear. In still other instances, the recipient of new information would express their ignorance on a certain topic and their desire to learn more. All in all, these experiences allowed individuals on the website to simultaneously teach and be taught by one another in an anonymous and safe space, and greatly facilitated the likelihood for subjective candor to occur.

Directions for Future Research

There are three ways that future scholarship can build on the findings presented in this study. First, future scholars can explore via face-to-face interviews and focus groups, how Black men and women, during different stages of the life cycle, feel about films in which a Black actor is the protagonist of the film as well as the historical accuracy of the film. Future work in this area may reveal African Americans different perceptions regarding past (i.e., *Roots*), present (i.e., *The Butler; Twelve Years a Slave*), and future movie representations of Black life. Second, future scholars can more closely examine the specific modes by which Black parents teach their children their history. Future work in this area may highlight the optimal modes that these parents use to impart historical knowledge to their offspring. Finally, future scholars can examine how historical films regarding Black life helped members of the current generation build stronger bonds between themselves and their elderly family members. Future work in this area would pinpoint how intergenerational information is transferred as well as how such knowledge helps build African self-consciousness or the psychological benefit that such dialogue provides members within and across generations.

Conclusion

As the number of cinematic representations of Black life increase, it would be wise for scholars to be mindful of how African self-consciousness and time orientation shapes how viewers perceive and internalize the images set forth. As a Black scholar that supports multi-dimensional Black experiences in films, it is my desire that filmmakers who are committed to develop Black projects receive the financial support that they need to help bring their unique interpretation of Black life to the silver screen and that all people support these projects. Perhaps by valuing and preserving traditional teachings and beliefs (*past*), and concentrating on what is occurring now (*present*), the Black community will be a stronger collective position to focus on the time to come, plan ahead, and seek innovative ways to replace old modes of thought and behavior that may be individually and collectively destructive (*future*). Ultimately, when cinematic images of Black life honor the past, present, and future, members within and outside of this group can absorb and truly experience the depth, width, and breadth of Black family life.

References

Actor Harry Lennix Calls 'The Butler' 'historical porn' (August 13, 2013). The Grio. Retrieved from: Retrieved from: http://thegrio.com/2013/08/13/actor-harry-lennix-calls-the-butler-historical-porn/?fb_comment_id=fbc_492964177446985_3411407_493233470753389#f2f99476a26fd4a

Babbie, E. R. (2010). *The practice of social research* (12th ed.). Wadsworth: Cengage Learning.

Baldwin, J. A. (1980). The psychology of oppression. In M. K. Assante & A. Vandi (Eds.), *Contemporary Black thought (pp. 97-109).* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Baldwin, J. A. (1981). Notes on an Africentric theory of Black personality. *Western Journal of Black Studies, 5,* 172-179.

Baldwin, J. A. (1984). African self-consciousness and the mental health of African-Americans. *Journal of Black Studies, 15,* 177-194.

Baldwin, J. A., Brown, R., & Rackley, R. (1990). Some sociobehavioral correlates of African self-consciousness in African-American college students. *Journal of Black Psychology, 17,* 1-17.

Banjo, O. (2011). What are you laughing at? Examining White identity and enjoyment of Black entertainment. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, *55*(2), 137-159. doi:10.1080/08838151.2011.570822

Bogaert S., Boone C., & Declerck C. (2008). Social value orientation and cooperation in social dilemmas: a review and conceptual model. *Behavioral Journal of Social Psychology, 47*(3), 453-480.

Brondolo, E., Brady ver Halen, N., Pencille, M., Beatty, D., & Contrada, R. J. (2009). Coping with racism: A selective review of the literature and a theoretical and methodological critique. *Journal of Behavioral Medicine, 31*(1), 64-88.

Brown, T. J. (2008). "I am who I am": Black masculinity and the interpretation of individualism in the film Barbershop. *Qualitative Research Reports in Communication*, *9*(1), 46-61. doi:10.1080/17459430802400357

Chaney, C. (2012). Who Is David and Who Is Goliath? The Eddie Long scandal and the Black mega-church. *Religion, Mental Health & Society,* 1-21. DOI: 10.1080/13674676.2011.645224

Chen, G., Williams, S., Hendrickson, N., & Chen, L. (2012). Male mammies: A social-Comparison perspective on how exaggeratedly overweight media portrayals of Madea, Rasputia, and Big Momma affect how Black women feel about themselves. *Mass Communication & Society*, *15*(1), 115-135. doi:10.1080/15205436.2011.569682

Constantine, M. G., Richardson, T. Q., Benjamin, E. M., & Wilson, J. W. (1998). An overview of Black racial identity theories: Limitations and considerations for future theoretical conceptualizations. *Applied & Preventive Psychology, 7,* 95-99.

Cross, W. (1991). *Shades of Black: Diversity in African American identity*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Cross, W. (1978). The Thomas and Cross models of psychological Nigrescence: A review. The *Journal of Black Psychology, 5*, 13-31.

Cross, W. (1971). Toward a psychology of Black liberation: The negro-to-black convergence experience. *Black World, 20*(9), 13-27.

Cross, W., & Parham, T., & Helms, J. (1991). The stages of Black identity development: Nigrescence models. In Jones, R. (eds.), *Black Psychology* (pp. 319-338). Berkeley, Ca. Cobb & Henry.

Faust, M. R. (2014). *" Are you getting angry Doctor?": Madea, strategy and the fictional rejection of black female containment* (Doctoral dissertation). The University of Texas at Austin.

Fiedler, T. (2008). Bloggers push past the old media's gatekeepers. *Nieman Reports*, *62*(2), 38-42.

Gehlawat, A. (2010). The strange case of the princess and the frog: Passing and elision of race. *Journal of African American Studies*, *14*(4), 417-431. doi:10.1007/s12111-010-9126-1

Georgiou, S. N., Michaelides, M., & Stayrinides, P. (2013). Cultural value orientation and authoritarian parenting as parameters of bullying and victimization at school. *International Journal of Psychology, 48*(1), 69-78.

Griffin, J. (1998). Aunt Jemima: Another image, another viewpoint. *Journal of Religious Thought*, *54/55*(2/1), 75-77.

Holsti, O. R. (1969). *Content analysis for the social sciences and humanities*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Hughes, D. (2003). Correlates of African American and Latino parents' messages to children about ethnicity and race: A comparative study of racial socialization. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, *31*(1/2), 15.

Kambon, K. (1992). *The African personality in America: An African-centered framework.* Tallahassee: NUBIAN Nation.

King, G., Keohane, R. O., & Verba, S. (1994). *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Kluckhohn, F. R., & Strodbeck, F. L. (1961). *Variations in value orientations*. Oxford, England: Row, Peterson.

Lasswell, H. S. (1948). *Power and personality*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Co.

Lee, D. L., & Ahn, S. (2013). The relation of racial identity, ethnic identity, and racial socialization to discrimination-distress: A meta-analysis of Black Americans. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, *60*(1), 1-14. doi:10.1037/a0031275

Mascaro, T. A. (2005). Shades of Black on homicide: Life on the street advances and retreats in portrayals of African American women. *Journal of Popular Film & Television*, *33*(2), 56-67.

Mask, M. (2004). Monster's ball. *Film Quarterly*, *58*(1), 44-55.

Murphy, R. O., & Ackerman, K. A. (2011). Social value orientation: Theoretical and measurement issues in the study of social preferences. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, doi:10.1177/1088868313501745

Parham, T. A. & Helms, J. E. (1981). The influence of Black students' racial identity attitudes on preference for counselor's race. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 28,* 250-256.

Pascarella, E. & Terenzini, P. (2005). *How college affects students: A third decade of research*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Reid, K. W. (2013). Understanding the relationships among Racial identity, self-efficacy, institutional integration and academic achievement of Black males attending research universities. *The Journal of Negro Education*, *82*(1), 75-93.

Russo, M. (2006). Are bloggers representatives of the news media under the Freedom of Information Act? *Columbia Journal of Law & Social Problems*, *40*(2), 225-266.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. M. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory, procedures, and techniques*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

The Griot. Retrieved from: http://www.nbcumv.com/mediavillage/networks/nbcnews/thegriocom/

Thompson, C. E., & Carter, R. T. (2013). *Racial identity theory: Applications to individual, group, and organizational interventions*. New York: Routledge.

Vaughn, S. (2002). Ronald Reagan and the struggle for Black dignity in cinema, 1937-1953. *Journal of African American History*, *87,* 83-97.

Wallace, S. (2015). Womanist and Black Feminist Responses to Tyler Perry's Productions. *The Journal of Pan African Studies (Online)*, *7*(8), 187.

42

Watkins, L., & Gnoth, J. (2011). The value orientation approach to understanding culture. *Annuals of Tourism Research, 38*(4), 1274-1299.

Way, B., Hernandez, M. G., Rogers, L. O., & Hughes, D. L. (2013). "I'm not going to become no rapper" Stereotypes as a context of ethnic and racial identity development. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 28*(4), 407-430.

Wijeyesinghe, C. (2012). *New perspectives on racial identity development: Integrating emerging frameworks*. New York: NYU Press.

Woodman, B. J. (2001). Represented in the margins Images of African American soldiers in Vietnam war combat films. *Journal of Film & Video*, *53*(2/3), 38-60.

---

[1] Throughout this text, I will use the term Black to refer to people of the African Diaspora, and to such populations that reside within the United States. To some, African Americans are a subgroup within a larger Black community. Since this discussion purposely includes those who may not identify as African American, I employ the term "Black." Furthermore, I capitalize the term Black to distinguish this racial category and related identity from the color. Similarly, I capitalize the word White when referring to race.

[2] The Grio is an American website with news and video content geared particularly toward African Americans. Originally launched in June 2009 as a division of NBC News, it became a division of the progressive-leaning MSNBC cable channel in 2013. It was founded by the team who created the documentary film Meeting David Wilson. The Grio's editorial mandate is to "focus on news and events that have a unique interest and/or pronounced impact within the national African Americans audience," offering what co-founder, and Executive Editor David Wilson feels "are underrepresented in existing national news outlets". The site's debut sponsor was Ford. It features both original video content, as well as material collected from sources like msnbc.com, and compete with Slate's TheRoot.com, AOL's BlackVoices. The website's name is derived from word *griot*, the term for a West African oral historian and storyteller (http://www.nbcumv.com/mediavillage/networks/nbcnews/thegriocom/)

[3] The first stage is the Pre-encounter stage, or the stage in which the individual's worldview is still largely Eurocentric. In this stage, many Blacks believe they are inferior to whites and tend to internalize Eurocentric values, definitions, and concepts. The second stage, Encounter, signifies some crisis or event that causes the person to question the "place of Blacks in the world" (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005, p. 26). The third stage, Immersion-Emersion, is an in-between stage where individuals are searching for a new understanding of what it means to be Black. Furthermore, individuals in this stage tend to be involved in activities or organizations that improve the present condition of Black people. The fourth stage, Internalization, is the stage in which a new worldview emerges. The fifth and final stage is, Internalization-Commitment, where the person reaches a self-actualization of Blackness and sees their racial identity as positive.

[4] Also known as Kobi Kambon.

43