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Burn, boil & eat : an intersection analysis of stereotypes in the most influential films of all time

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BURN, BOIL & EAT:
AN INTERSECTIONAL ANALYSIS OF STEREOTYPES IN THE
MOST INFLUENTIAL FILMS OF ALL TIME

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Manship School of Mass Communication

by
Roslyn M. Satchel
B.A. Howard University, 1995
M.Div. Emory University, 2000
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August 2013

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I dedicate this dissertation to my son, parents, sister, and above all, the Divine Sources that are our sustenance—for, faith in God through Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, and my forebears enlivens everything I do.

To my son, Satchel Augustine, I give my all as a legacy on which he can build. He inspired me to complete this dissertation. Satchel is a blessing who brings hope and life, and I aim to provide the best for him. Writing with him on lap, in office playpen, or under desk proved both immensely challenging and rewarding. I hope one day he will read my work and see himself as a part of it—a collaborator, furthering peace and justice.

Irrespective of their own struggles, my parents, Rev. Dr. Frank R. Satchel, Sr. and Dr. Dorethea Browning Satchel, always supported me and my son in all regards. What blessings they are! Without them, none of this would be possible. They instilled in me a commitment to excellence and integrity. Pursuing these aspirations led me to academe and my dream of “conscientization” one student at a time, rather than settling for the unfulfilling trappings of success in my prior career. From my parents, I learned that contributing to society is more important than money and power. I thank them for all of this—and so much more.

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“I am because we are” is an African proverb that undergirds my worldview. The message it conveys is that an individual derives her being, accomplishments, and even her growing edges in relation to the community from which she emerges. Indeed, I am a reflection of those who taught, challenged, and inspired me. Completing this dissertation and earning my Ph.D. mark the apex of my educational journey—an achievement that is possible thanks to the prayers, help, guidance, and support of many very important people who never gave up on me and never let me give up. I will always remember what they did for me, and as a tribute to them, I will give others the same considerations and assistance that my mentors, educators, colleagues, friends, and family afforded me.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
Statement of Purpose	1
Nature of the Problem.....	2
Why Entertainment Media and Film?.....	5
Background of the Study	8
Significance of the Study	10
CHAPTER 2: FRAMING THEORY.....	11
Framing & the Social Construction of Reality	13
Framing Bias.....	18
Framing in Entertainment Media	22
CHAPTER 3: STEREOTYPES.....	29
Stereotypes and Ideology	29
What Is a Stereotype?	29
How Do Stereotypes Function?	32
How Do Stereotypes Relate to One Another?	34
Laudatory Stereotypes of Dominant Racial Groups	38
Derogatory Stereotypes of Subordinated Racial Groups	41
System Justification and Relationships between Dominant and Non-Dominant Stereotypes..	47
CHAPTER 4: PILOT STUDIES	56
Background.....	57
Racial Stereotypes in Oscar-Winning Films.....	60
Religious Imagery in Top Grossing Films.....	70
Conclusions.....	78
Implications for the Dissertation.....	79
CHAPTER 5: POLITICAL ECONOMY OF FILMMAKING	81
The Context of the Study	81
Distributors	81
Filmmakers	83
Corporate Conglomerates	85
CHAPTER 6: RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHOD	88
Research Questions.....	88
Significance of the Sample	89
Qualitative Content Analysis of Stereotypes in Films.....	91

Analytical Procedures	93
Units of Analysis.....	99
Data Collection	102
Coding Process.....	106
Limitations	109
CHAPTER 7: RESULTS & ANALYSIS	111
Overview.....	111
Stereotypes of Dominant Racial Group Members	117
Themes	128
Words	130
Images	131
Actions	131
Themes	132
Words	133
Images	133
Actions	134
Themes	135
Words	136
Images	136
Actions	137
Stereotypes of Non-Dominant Racial Group Members.....	138
Themes	142
Words	142
Images	143
Actions	144
Themes	145
Words	145
Images	146
Themes	148
Words	149
Images	149
Actions	150
Relations between Group Members.....	151
Lucas' Films.....	157
Non-Racial Stereotypes	160
Links between Stereotypes and Ideologies, Myths or Legends	164
CHAPTER 8: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS AND IMPLICATIONS	176
Discussion of Results.....	177
Stereotypes of Whites	179

Stereotypes of Non-Whites	183
Relations between Whites and Non-Whites	187
Connections to History, Ideology, or Mythology	191
Value of Findings.....	193
Implications for Future Research.....	197
REFERENCES	212
APPENDIX.....	222
Table A.1. Film Sample listed by Filmmaker	222
Table A.2. 10 Sample Films Ranked among the 20 Most Influential Films of All Time.....	223
Table A.3. Coding Sheets	225
VITA.....	228

LIST OF TABLES

4.1 African American Oscar Winners in the 20 th Century.....	62
6.1 Intercoder Reliability	104
6.2 Intra-class Correlation Coefficient (ICC) by Unit and Film.....	106
7.1 Images of Non-Dominant and Dominant Racial Groups across Sample.....	123
7.2 Actions of Non-Dominant and Dominant Racial Groups across Sample.....	124
7.3 Images of Non-Dominant and Dominant Racial Groups by Filmmaker	125
7.4 Actions of Non-Dominant and Dominant Racial Groups by Filmmaker	125
7.5 Non-Dominant versus Dominant Images by Filmmaker	126
7.6 Non-Dominant versus Dominant Actions by Filmmaker	127
7.7 James Cameron’s Top Themes	128
7.8 James Cameron’s Word Choices: Dominant Group Members.....	130
7.9 James Cameron’s Top 10 Images: Dominant Group Members.....	131
7.10 James Cameron’s Average Frequency of Actions by Dominants	132
7.11 George Lucas’ Top 10 Themes.....	133
7.12 George Lucas’ Top 10 Words: Dominant Racial Group Members	133
7.13 George Lucas’ Top 10 Images: Dominant Racial Group Members	134
7.14 George Lucas’ Average Frequency of Actions for Dominant Group Members.....	135
7.15 Steven Spielberg’s Top 10 Themes	136
7.16 Steven Spielberg’s Top 10 Words: Dominant	136
7.17 Steven Spielberg’s Top 10 Images: Dominant	137
7.18 Steven Spielberg’s Top 10 Actions: Dominant	138
7.19 James Cameron’s Word Choices: Non-Dominant Racial Group Members	142

7.20 James Cameron's Top 10 Images: Non-Dominant.....	143
7.21 James Cameron's Top 10 Actions: Non-Dominant.....	144
7.22 George Lucas' Top 10 Words: Non-Dominant	146
7.23 George Lucas' Top 10 Images: Non-Dominant.....	147
7.24 George Lucas' Top 10 Actions: Non-Dominant.....	148
7.25 Steven Spielberg's Top 10 Words: Non-Dominant.....	149
7.26 Steven Spielberg's Top 10 Images: Non-Dominant	150
7.27 Steven Spielberg's Top 10 Actions: Non-Dominant	151
8.1 Film Sample	177

LIST OF FIGURES

1. Most Common Themes.....	113
2. Most Common Words Related to Stereotypes.....	114
3. Top Ten Stereotypical Images	115
4. Top Ten Actions Relating to Stereotypes	116
5. Average Frequency of Themes by Filmmaker.....	118
6. Average Frequency of Words by Filmmaker.....	119
7. Average Frequency of Images for Dominant Group by Filmmakers	120
8. Average Frequency of Actions for Dominant Group by Filmmaker	121
9. Average Frequency of Images for Non-Dominant Group by Filmmakers	140
10. Average Frequency of Actions for Non-Dominant Group by Filmmaker.....	141

ABSTRACT

This research builds upon the work of Entman & Rojecki (2001) in examining the ways the most influential movies use racial stereotypes in media frames. The results of this study contribute to the rather limited mass media research and body of knowledge regarding the media content that attracts the largest and most enduring audiences in the new media landscape. As ten of the films that have generated the most revenue, the movies in this sample constitute a genre of movies that are also a prime feature of on-going publishing, cable, internet, digital gaming, DVD, and movie sequel franchises.

If, as Entman & Rojecki contend, movie studios invest more resources into marketing and distributing films that adhere to a formula of using racial stereotypes, then the findings of this research documents the content of the formula. The sampled movie content is distinct from that found in the traditional literature on stereotypes because it captures not only derogatory themes, words, images, and actions of non-dominant racial groups, but also laudatory themes, words, images, and actions of both dominant and non-dominant racial groups. Additionally, and perhaps more importantly, is the scrutiny of the relationships among these groups that is necessary to beginning to understand the relationship between movie stereotypes and historical ideologies.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine the ways entertainment media construct and perpetuate images, concepts, and premises that provide the frameworks through which we understand so-called minority groups and dominant traditions. To analyze the most influential filmmakers' practices of framing stories, this researcher used established techniques for evaluating the ways in which filmmakers select and make salient certain stereotypes and ideologies in ten of the most influential films since the medium's inception. Though not suggesting causal relations, this dissertation also raises questions about profit incentives, media ownership, institutional dominance, and the influence of media institutions within the context of the free flow of information in a democracy. In this manner, this study also informs our understanding of the relationships between media content and political economy of American filmmaking.

This study, then, contributes to mass communication scholarship in general, and to framing research in particular, by focusing attention on the stereotypes reinforced in the most influential films. This research identifies the diversity of images and information in the public domain through popular film content in a way that addresses the concerns raised by existing mass communication research. To that end, this dissertation also compares the discovered frames and stereotypes to ascertain any changes over the three decades spanned by the sample. In so doing, this study is an effort to examine the storytelling function of framing in entertainment media. Chapters 2 and 3 are discussions of framing and stereotypes as the theoretical frameworks on which this dissertation builds, as well as the pilot studies detailed in Chapter 4. Each of these cornerstones suggest that this dissertation also may raise questions

about profit incentives, media ownership, institutional dominance, and the influence of media institutions within the context of the free flow of information in a democracy, and therefore Chapter 5 explores the political economy of filmmaking. In this way, this study also informs our understanding of the relationship between media content and political economy of American filmmaking.

The study is conducted using qualitative content analysis as called for in framing and stereotype research conducted by Entman (1993) and Entman & Rojecki (2001). Critical cultural perspectives animate my approach. Chapter 6 details the method employed following Entman & Rojecki's movie content analytic framework. Chapter 7 provides the findings of the study and record what was found in the material—often describing and interpreting the data in the content according to conventional inductive reasoning. Finally, Chapter 8 entails a discussion of the results and their theoretical implications.

Nature of the Problem

Prior research on stereotypes in mass media commonly demonstrated racism, sexism, and biases against members of subordinate classes, social groups, or alternative lifestyles (Hall, 1981, in presenting a typology of racist ideologies in media; Seiter, 1986, in providing a multidisciplinary review of the literatures on stereotypes; van Dijk, 1991, 2000, in identifying racist discourses in media and in constructing a model of discourse analysis for media content; Dates & Barlow, 1993, in assessing the stereotypes of African Americans in the twentieth century; Entman & Rojecki, 2001, in studying racial stereotypes in media frames from 1990-1999; Entman, 2007, in describing how framing bias functions in news media content). What is consistent among these studies is that media frames and stereotypes become evaluations that seek to justify social differences (Seiter, 1986). Media culture articulates the dominant values,

political ideologies, and social developments and novelties of an era. Among the institutions that generate messages and interpretations about the merits and advantages of contemporary American society, none plays a more prominent role than the mass media in fostering people's approval and acceptance of the existing system of capitalism and its undergirding cultural inequalities (Kellner, 2003, p. 10).

Media produce representations of the social world via images and portrayals that act as a chain of meaning—a network of understanding that teaches “how the world is and why it works as it is said and shown to work” (Hall, 1981, p. 161). Moreover, ideology makes sense of social reality and people's positions within it, which become naturalized under the guise of common sense. In turn, politically constructed representations and allocations of place—such as that identified with race—are ahistorically systematized as “given by nature” and grounded in a series of alleged “essential” characteristics that reinforce the naturalization of such representations further (p. 161). As a result, the dominant ideology renders itself invisible, yet remains a pervasive controlling force. Like Entman (2004, 2007), many mass communication scholars identify this phenomenon as a framing problem.

The power of framing comes from a frame's capacity to define the terms of a debate without the audience realizing it is taking place. Media framing is akin to “the magician's sleight of hand—attention is directed to one point so that people do not notice the manipulation that is going on at another point” (Tankard, 2001, p. 97). In like manner, Reese (2001) encourages scholars to recognize framing as an active and conscious process that compels researchers to “ask how much ‘framing’ is going on” (pp. 7, 13). Research on news media outlets, such as Chang & Izard (2009), is replete with examples of the use of words, phrases, images, and themes to influence public opinion. Entman (2003, 2004), likewise, provides a

coherent framework for analyzing media frames by demonstrating how interpretive frames of foreign news activate and spread from the top level of a stratified system (which in his study is the White House) to the network of non-administration elites, and on to news organizations, their texts, and the public—and how interpretations feed back from lower to higher levels. By extension, this dissertation applies Entman’s concept of framing along with his methods for analyzing the same in the context of entertainment media (Entman & Rojecki, 2001). In turn, provocative questions arise about the historical, political and economic hierarchies that may also influence the framing of media content.

This becomes especially significant when considering that only three men wrote and/or directed ten of the twenty most influential films of all time. Several industry, governmental, and independent agencies rank and track American movies according to revenue and viewership based on numbers of tickets sold at distributors’ box offices. Insiders and outsiders use the listings to compare the influence, popularity, and success of newer movies with that of older movies dating back to the inception of American filmmaking. Currently, the most reliable rankings of the twenty most popular films include two movies by James Cameron, four movies by George Lucas, three movies by Steven Spielberg, and one movie by Lucas and Spielberg. Mass media research, in turn, must interrogate the nature of the images these filmmakers are presenting and their overwhelming appeal among viewers. Without making assertions about intent or effects, this dissertation investigates the media content—the messages—the views of the world that Cameron, Lucas, and Spielberg are conveying in ten of the most influential movies of all time.

The problem addressed in this study is whether these filmmakers “encode relations of power and domination” in the sample films, as cultural texts (Kellner, p. 12). Pilot projects that

inform this dissertation research suggest that movies contain hidden meanings, social criticisms, and moments of resistance that artists historically use to promote the development of more critical consciousness—particularly, regarding issues of race. The goal of this research, therefore, is to interpret critically the range of racial messages, images, and relationships present without prior prejudices toward one cultural text, institution, or practice. This dissertation does so by focusing on the media texts that have the greatest number of viewers globally. Such research opens the way toward more differentiated political, rather than aesthetic, valuations of cultural artifacts in which one attempts to distinguish critical and oppositional from conformist and conservative moments in a cultural artifact (p. 11).

Why Entertainment Media and Film?

An assumption guiding my inquiry is that the most influential films of all time are media products that influence democracy and public opinion. Unlike a few decades ago when newspapers, radio, and television were the veritable sources of public information and avenues for popular expression, the reality today is that younger people are relying on different sources of political information such as bloggers, social networking, prime-time television dramas, late night shows, comedies, and movies—which often is seen by elites in the old model of political communication as blurring the lines between news and entertainment and online news sources (Ofori-Parku, 2012, p. 311). Newer research identifies movies as significant components of the converging multiplatform media environment (Pavlik, 2011). As such, they play an expanded role in the shaping and functioning of public opinion (DeFleur, 1998, p. 63).

Williams & Delli Carpini (2011) refer to this phenomenon as “the precipitous decline in the power of journalists to control, for better or worse, the media narrative and an increase, again for better or worse, in the importance of other forms of communication, some new, and some

old, to influence and/or dictate media coverage of politics” (p. 6). In *After Broadcast News*, they show historically and theoretically the association between different “media regimes” and somewhat distinctive notions of free press, democratic engagement, responsibility participation, and free speech among others (pp. 16-50). In so doing, Williams & Delli Carpini bring cultural producers such as filmmakers into the debate about the role of professional journalists and citizen journalists in the shaping of public discourse in a democratic society.

The news-entertainment dichotomy is problematic and increasingly arbitrary in the new media environment (Williams & Delli Carpini, 2011). If politically relevant information means information that “provides opportunities for understanding, deliberating and acting on the conditions of one’s everyday life, the life of fellow community members, and the norms and structures of power that shape these relationships” (p. 122), then the democratic utility, or potential to enhance democratic citizenship, of media forms or communication should be the most important indices, and not from whom or where those information come (Ofori-Parku, p. 312). This does not imply a return to arguments about movies’ direct or powerful effects (Charters, 1933), but rather a progressive move toward acknowledging the reinforcing function of film on public opinion.

Well-established is the reinforcing function of individual predispositions and exchanges with friends, family, or other acquaintances (see DeFleur (1998), p. 75, for more on the reinforcing function; see also Bryce (1888), Kinders & Sears (1985)). Nonetheless, film often found itself on the less relevant side of the news-entertainment dichotomy. The dissertation, however, recognizes political discourse in movies and other popular media through the use of framing and stereotypes in accord with Entman & Rojecki (2001). As such, entertainment media

are understood to impact public opinion, policy, and society—including the attitudes, affects, behaviors, and cognitive dispositions of citizens in American democracy.

This study acknowledges film and entertainment media as essential components of the new media environment instead of the archetypal hegemonic role of news media as the only shapers and suppliers of public opinion. Movies, television, music, novels, and newspapers are media texts that also are influential popular culture commodities—objects of commercial desire—for which large, ever-conglomerating corporations calculate efforts to appeal to the largest part of the target audience (Kolker, 2006, p.173). Coherence, system, and order in read entertainment produce and reflect a meaning-making process that affirms or denies beliefs born of class, gender, race, education, acculturation, and ideology (p. 172-173). Culture, therefore, in this research, can be understood as the text of our lives, the ultimately coherent pattern of beliefs, acts, responses, and artifacts that we produce and comprehend every day. As such, Kolker argues, filmmaking is a cultural practice that generates, reinforces, reproduces, challenges, and transforms understandings of subcultures and individuals in the society (p. 174).

What makes this study unique is the linking of framing and stereotypes in movies to social functions such as reinforcing social hierarchies, rejecting oppressive ideologies, or threatening democracy. Using Entman & Rojecki (2001) as a foundation while being informed by Hall (1981, 1993), Seiter (1986), and Dates & Barlow (1993), among others, this study not only builds upon Entman & Rojecki (2001) but also extrapolates applicable elements from Entman's framing theory to movies. In turn, this intersectional analysis of movies critically examines frames and stereotypes in movies as mechanisms for cueing political beliefs and schemas in audiences through the intertwining of race, gender, religion, ability, and other forms of social classification.

Moreover, a critical cultural lens animates the purpose of this dissertation. In turn, Hall's (1981) media ideology theory is central to understanding the problematic reinforcing relationships among media frames, stereotypes, and systemic justifications of inequality. In like manner, the purpose of this examination of media frames and stereotypes is significant to understanding the changing dynamics between media and society—media producers and media audiences (Kellner, 2003, 1995). As a result, this qualitative content analysis, guided by framing theory, provides insight into the encoding and decoding processes in entertainment media, as distinct and similar to that which occurs in conventional news environments.

Background of the Study

Since 1922, Walter Lippmann's theory of unintended consequences and other mass communication research has pointed to the role of stereotypes in media, specifically in news programming. Lippmann highlighted journalists' and media elites' manipulation of "the pictures in our heads" in influencing public opinion. In more recent years, scholars extrapolated this concept to entertainment media, and specifically movie audiences (Hall, 1981; Dates & Barlow, 2000; Entman & Rojecki, 2001; Williams & Delli Carpini, 2012). While this dissertation relies on aspects of each of these works, what makes this study unique is that it scrutinizes and defines the concept of stereotype in a manner distinct from most research on stereotypes (Seiter, 1986). Here, the analysis focuses on framing patterns in investigating whether filmmakers couple derogatory images of minorities with laudable stereotypes that denote the superiority of the dominant group.

Framing is a technique that media professionals use to tell stories. Gamson & Modigliani (1987) define a frame as "a central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events, weaving a connection among them" (p. 143). It is a two-step process

that involves media frames and individual frames; that is, people use their schemas when processing information to create individual frames of events, issues, or individuals while media, on the other hand, organize and present events, issues, and individuals in stories in a way that produces media frames (Scheufele, 1999). Media frames possess a great deal of power and can assign blame for a social problem, take another issue out of public focus, or intimate a person's guilt.

Filmmakers, like journalists, frame stories and people according to conventions and norms that attract audiences. Profit incentives make the maximization of viewership their priority. The larger the audience, the more advertisers are willing to pay to solicit business. To ensure broad appeal, writers and directors often adhere to formulaic approaches to storytelling. Familiar myths, legends, and stereotypes that characterize groups become social representations used in the production and comprehension of media texts to appeal to larger audiences (van Dijk, 1991, pp. 118-119). This study aims to identify stereotypical frames and describe the relationships between those stereotypes and ideologies in ten of the most influential films.

According to Hall (1993), movie directors and writers "encode" cues, messages, and stereotypes through media frames that audiences then "decode" with varying degrees of understanding (p. 93). Entman & Rojecki (2001), likewise, contend that filmmakers and their distributors commonly assume that viewers will be more receptive of stories with familiar codes and characters. Writers and directors, then, play to common stereotypes. In turn, media frames tend to draw upon problematic stereotypes from the past that perpetuate ideologies about the powerful and the powerless, the majority and the minority, men and women, Whites and non-Whites.

Significance of the Study

The results of this study contribute to the rather limited mass media research and body of knowledge regarding the media content that attracts the largest and most enduring audiences in the new media landscape. As ten of the films that have generated the most revenue, the movies in this sample constitute a genre of movies that are also a prime feature of on-going publishing, cable, internet, digital gaming, DVD, and movie sequel franchises. If, as Entman & Rojecki contend, movie studios invest more resources into marketing and distributing films that adhere to a formula of using racial stereotypes, then the findings of this research may document the content of the formula. The sampled movie content is distinct from that found in the traditional literature on stereotypes because it captures not only derogatory themes, words, images, and actions of non-dominant racial groups, but also laudatory themes, words, images, and actions of both dominant and non-dominant racial groups. Additionally, and perhaps more importantly, is the scrutiny of the relationships among these groups that is necessary to beginning to understand the relationship between movie stereotypes and historical ideologies.

CHAPTER 2: FRAMING THEORY

“The process of learning about the physical and social realities of the world in which one lives is a social one, resulting from participating in *communication with others*” (DeFleur & DeFleur, 2003). Today, the primary mode of communication is through media. Perry (2004) identifies four primary functions of the media. First, the media are to provide information and surveillance. The second, which relates to the information function of the first, is to provide an explanation or correlation. Third, the media are to provide the marketplace with entertainment, and the fourth function is to provide a platform for the transmission of culture (Perry, 2004).

In relation to these functions, Gamson (1992) posits that media images teach audiences about values, ideologies, and beliefs. Yet, depending on the context, experiences and social location of each viewer, the interpretation of media images can differ greatly (Gamson, 1992). In essence, media-effects scholars continue to argue that the multilayered bits of information that media offer can confirm, alter, or otherwise impact a viewer’s sense of reality. While this study does not examine effects, it does hone in on what the media content portrays. In the film industry, filmmakers, studio executives, and other media players have the opportunity to interpret stories, settings, characters, and dialogue, and then frame them in a manner suitable for their cinematic works and audiences. Increasingly, selling a new movie to consumers involves a complex multimedia promotional, advertising, and marketing plan that revolves around the framing of images, themes, words, actions, and scenes.

Framing theory represents a long tradition of scholarship that remains active in contemporary mass communication research. Evolving from the broader canon of agenda setting and media effects, to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text (Entman, 1993). Since Goffman (1974) identified frames as

constructs for organizing experience, frame analysis has been used as a way of understanding “what is it that’s going on here” (p. 8, 9) as mass media scholars began investigating news content. Gitlin (1980) elaborated on the nature of frames as “the principles of selection, emphasis, and presentation composed of tacit little theories about what exists, what happens, and what matters” (pp. 6-7).

According to Entman (1993), however, framing is really about highlighting certain aspects of reality while omitting others as a way of manipulating the presentation of information (p. 53). He explains that frames function to define problems, diagnose causes, make moral evaluations or judgments, and suggest remedies (Entman, 1993). The framing process generally occurs in four locations: (1) the communicator who creates individual frames, (2) the text that presents media frames, (3) the receiver who interprets and carries individual frames, and (4) the culture, which informs and serves as a collection of frames (Entman, 1993, 2004, 2007). This dissertation primarily addresses the text and the culture but also involve implications for communicators.

Communicators make conscious or unconscious framing judgments when deciding what to say. Their belief systems organize the frames that guide their decisions. Frames manifest in media texts by the presence or absence of certain key words, stock phrases, stereotypical images, sources of information and sentences, which provide thematically reinforced clusters of facts or judgments. Individual frames, on the other hand, are guided by a receiver’s thinking, and the conclusions drawn from the subject matter may or may not reflect the frames within the text or intentional framing of the communicator. Finally, culture acts as the stock from which frames are commonly invoked (Entman, 1993). Moreover, when properly defined and measured, slant

and bias provide insight into how the media influence the distribution of power: who gets what, when, and how (Entman, 2004, 2007).

Framing & the Social Construction of Reality

DeFleur & DeFleur (2003) highlight theories of the process and effects of mass communication that attempt to describe and explain how it is that the content of the mass media can shape peoples' ideas about what they present. One such theory is framing and frame analysis, particularly in its grappling with the ancient question of whether the mental images that a person constructs in his or her head while attending to some feature of reality (such as media portrayal) is a totally accurate representation of that reality—or some sort of illusion. In 387 B.C., Plato raised this issue in *The Republic's* “Allegory of the Cave.” Upon this question, modern psychologists, media researchers, and other social scientists have built a significant body of insights and knowledge. Specifically, framing theory delves into the role of media content in social constructions of reality.

Plato invites the reader to visualize in his or her imagination a situation wherein people chained to a bench, who always lived deep within a cavernous underground chamber, could see only the wall in front of them (Bloom, 1991). From their vantage point, these people in chains cannot see the people on the opposite side of the wall casting the shadows as they walk by carrying various objects on a walkway several feet below. On the wall, they see nothing more than shadows of figures and shapes illuminated by a brightly burning fire. They hear only echoes off the wall that appear to be the shadows making sounds. Using their sensory experience, they try to interpret the perceived reality by communicating among themselves. The people in chains develop shared rules, identify patterns, and reward each other for constructing knowledge and meanings for their reality. Plato, then, points out that this social construction of

reality, on which they agreed, and shared rules of interpretation, results in a completely unreliable and flawed view of reality. In a final dramatic twist, Plato argues that those who know nothing more than such a false view of reality will cling to it despite evidence to the contrary—even to extreme of killing one attempting to free them from its distortions.

Subsequently, for nearly two thousand years, many Western philosophers and scientists relied upon reasoning alone and Plato's rejection of sensory experience as the sole basis of knowing reality. In the sixteenth and seventeenth century respectively, Sir Francis Bacon's procedure of exhaustive induction and Descartes' deductive method moderated the foundations of modern science by establishing what Ernest Nagel called probabilistic explanations. Clear and discoverable regularities that are reasonably predictable in their action characterize these explanations. These basic components of philosophy and the scientific method contribute greatly to research on the process and effects of mass communication. In fact, these tenets are essential to this dissertation's inquiry into media content as a source of what Walter Lippmann called in the first chapter of *Public Opinion*, "pictures in our heads" of "the world outside" (p. 4).

Charles Cooley (1864-1929) provided an important foundation for the role of communication in the development of our knowledge about the social world. Cooley developed an idea known as "symbolic interaction," in which a person's communication with others creates an internal image (picture in the head) about other individuals with whom she associates (Blumer, 1969, p. 1). Cooley addressed the role of "modern communication," including media, in the processes of image construction regarding others and ourselves. Most significant is his contention that "reality" is constructed through a process of symbolic interaction involving language and mediated exchanges with others—and, specifically, that media are critical influences in these communication processes.

In 1966, Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann's *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise on the Sociology of Knowledge* outlined key concepts concerning the interactions between individuals and society. While their focus is on language use and not specifically the role of media, this dissertation acknowledges the mass media as integral components of people's daily communication activities that inform the construction of views, beliefs, and convictions that constitute an individual's grasp of the realities in which she lives or acts. Most notably, Berger & Luckmann contend that society is a human product even though society acts as if it is an objective reality and the human being is a social product. Social constructions of reality occur through externalization, objectivation, and internalization. Externalization is the perpetual outpouring of the individual self into the world, and the products of this activity produce objectivation in both physical and mental activities. As a result, the reality of its original producers becomes institutionalized. Internalization, then, occurs when receivers reappropriate the producers' reality as their own. This socially shared meaning transforms structures of the objective world into structures of the subjective consciousness producing socialization (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Ultimately, social reality derives meaning within and through systems of communication.

Within the mass communication discipline, most social construction of reality studies focus on news content as it pertains to an event or issue, how the media perceive it and how they construe it in their production process (Vhang, Wang & Chen, 1998). For this reason, framing literature generally delves into the manner in which mass communication constructs reality. Framing's subtle though pervasive force is "a central power in the democratic process" (Entman, 1993, p. 57). The freedom of expression of individual perspectives and beliefs is the driving factor behind the fundamental concept of a marketplace of ideas. A diverse range of ideas,

information, and opinions is of paramount importance in a democratic society. Democracy encourages media to amplify an abundance of voices with the assumption that each will have an equal opportunity to compete and the strongest views will win adherents.

The framing of a message is important to the way in which audiences receive it. The presence or absence of certain images, themes, words, actions, or scenes “convey thematically consonant meanings across media and times” (Entman, 1991, p. 7). For example, Iyengar (1991) found that individualistic causal and treatment attributions from episodic news frames irrespective of subject matter resulted in political opinions among viewers despite low levels of knowledge. This resonates with social construction of reality theory and the finding that people consciously help to develop or construct their realities based on their existing values, beliefs, and ideological positions (Adoni & Mane, 1984; Gerbner, 1998; Morgan & Shanahan, 2010). Bandura (1991) stresses that values, beliefs, and ideologies are not individual choices; instead, they are a part of very complex and dynamic social and cultural patterns. In relationship to the individual, these patterns are critical because they help signify and shape personal views about specific situations and events, and as a result, individuals are more likely to ignore or be unaware of some aspects of situations or overemphasize others (Littlejohn, 1992; Lindesmith & Strauss, 1956).

Lindlof & Taylor (2002) note that individuals are located phenomenologically within every interaction. This suggests that people actively occupy and bring meaning to a specific location and time that makes the interaction evocative. Schutz (1967) studied how individuals create, manage, and apply stock knowledge in this process, which includes facts, beliefs, desires, prejudices, and rules learned from personal experience and knowledge available within an individual’s culture. Lindlof & Taylor (2002) notes that knowledge gained by personal

experience and developed by face-to-face interaction, and cultural knowledge (myths, frames, scripts and common sense) develop from previously formed typifications of experience accessible to cultural members.

Schutz (1967) defines meaning as “a certain way of directing one’s gaze at an item of one’s own experience... Meaning indicates, therefore, a peculiar attitude on the part of the Ego toward the flow of its own duration” (p. 42). In short, it is only when individuals focus attention upon themselves that experiences becomes meaningful. Social construction of reality theory maintains that human truths are subjective meanings created by individuals, and others respond to these “constructed” realities (Gergen, 1985). Yet, meanings are created only when people engage in exchanges with others, because these interactions allow shared meanings and experiences to occur and become understood (Schutz, 1970). Social reality is a product of interactions between the objective reality and a society’s own practical and social needs (Cohen, Adoni, & Bantz, 1990).

Likewise, individuals create, share, and receive meaning through media content whether movies, music, news, or digital platforms. In so doing, each one communicates socially constructed knowledge by adding, evoking, or omitting certain ideas to frame messages in ways that intended audiences will receive. Mass media scholars and other social scientists refer to this practice as framing. Entman (1993) posits that framing takes place when communicators decide what to say and how to say it; through text, which may contain certain words or stereotypes; and through receivers of media messages, who draw conclusions based on frame content and their own personal reflections. In essence, by highlighting certain elements of a communication text, other elements are omitted. For media audiences, the exclusion of information leaves them with

the inaccurate impression that they have the important facts of a media text when the contrary is true (Entman, 1993).

In turn, the concept of the social construction of reality serves as a foundation to this research study because it helps ground the idea that societies are based on socially shared cultural and personal experiences and communications. Individuals not only live their realities, but also express them to others. As Tyree (2007) argues, filmmakers spend millions of dollars attempting to construct realities to sell to audiences, and media representatives observe social realities and frame the world based on what they deem to be relevant. Ultimately, the realities of media producers help develop social knowledge and shape what become cultural norms and values.

Framing Bias

This line of research relates to Entman's cascading activation model. Entman (2004) developed the cascading activation model based on framing research on news media practices of framing stories using techniques that select and make salient certain stereotypes and ideologies. Uniquely, however, Entman (2007) raises the role of institutional power and bias in framing media content. In sum, the model asserts a coherent conception of framing within a new model of the relationship between government and the media in foreign policy making. The model supplements hegemony or indexing approaches by demonstrating how interpretive frames activate and spread from the top level of a stratified system (the White House) to the network of non-administration elites, and on to news organizations, their texts, and the public—and how interpretations feed back from lower to higher levels (Entman, 2004).

In effect, Entman analyzes what Bhayroo (2008) calls the political economy of foreign policy news. Entman selected the metaphor of the cascade to emphasize that the ability to

promote the spread of frames is stratified; “some actors have more power than others to push ideas along to the news and then to the public” (p.9). By explaining how thoroughly the thoughts and feelings that support a frame extend down from the White House through the rest of the system, Entman demonstrates how those with the greatest influence over the press (the government) tend to win framing contests and gain the upper-hand politically. By focusing on media content, Entman illustrates a cascading flow of influence linking each level of the system: the administration, other elites, news organizations, the texts they produce, and the public. The spreading activation of certain thoughts or “nodes on a knowledge network within an individual’s mind (whether a Congress member, a reporter, or a citizen) has parallels in the way ideas travel along interpersonal networks and in the spread of framing words and images across different media” (p. 9).

Analyzing media content, therefore, is at least as important to framing research as is examining media effects. Often, frame analysis focuses on a viewer’s subjective interpretation of reality. To do so, however, is only one part of a broader paradigm as Entman illustrates. Investigating media content actually is more consistent with the original meaning within the film industry of the term, to frame. Framing referred to the view seen through the lens of the motion picture camera. Whether a close-up or a distance shot, the content that the camera sees can include a variety of physical objects and background features that add meaning to what is recorded. In an early study, Lang & Lang (1953) found that television viewers experienced extremely different “realities” from in-person parade watchers because of the framing of images and words by camera crews and commentators. They found that selecting shots, structuring dialog, and staging talent not only present a depiction of reality, but also “leaves the unseen part of the subject open to suggestion and inference” (p. 10). Although scholars in the early days of

television did not use the term framing, the Langs' study reflects a long-standing acknowledgement that the manner in which a director frames media content reflects a bias—a construction of reality—that often arouses what Lippmann referred to as a “pseudo environment” that may produce inaccurate and distorted “pictures in our heads” of “the world outside” (pp. 4, 12).

Scholars are beginning to understand the importance of media frames, including those that exist in news frames and fictional television and film frames, and how they work to form constructions of reality and shape of social perceptions (Gandy, 1998). Brown (2002) demonstrates how people utilize the stories viewed in the news and entertainment media as reference points concerning what is important, and they compare what they already know, or think they know, about what is negative and positive as well as what should be done about problems that exist. In this decision-making process, Iyengar (1991) states that viewers often reinforce stereotypes and alter definitions of what is appropriate and inappropriate behavior in the culture.

Both quantitative and qualitative approaches to assessing representation identify a set of common stereotypes or idealizations that are anticipated to be repeatedly present in movies, television programs, or examples of different media forms (Gandy, 1998). Further, Gandy highlights that critical scholars identify the dominance of particular frames as direct reflections of unequal resources, variations in communicative competence and inability to overcome the burden of competing against the ideological system that maintains oppositional frames in their subordinate positions (Gandy, 1982). Moreover, Gandy (1998) also suggests that framing connections between stereotypical images often are clearly present. These findings are

particularly significant to the evaluation of relationships between dominant and non-dominant stereotypes in the present research.

To further put into perspective the way framing biases and stereotypes work collaboratively, it is important to discuss the concept of hegemony because it is within this ideology that one can situate the power dynamics that occur between the media and society. Gramsci (1971) refers to hegemony as those processes whereby a fundamental social group achieves control of the economic nucleus and expands that influence through social, political, cultural, and authoritative leadership throughout society. This upper-hand not only brings about unison of economic and political agendas, but it also envelopes intellectual, cultural and moral unity in ways that create the hegemony of a dominant group over a series of subordinate groups (Hall, Hobson, Lowe & Willis, 1980). For Gramsci, hegemony is never a permanent state and never without contention. It is a pattern of challenge and response, action and reaction, problem and solution, and threat and containment. In short, it is a pattern of struggle (Hall, 1980). With an understanding of hegemony, Tyree (2007) contends that the concept of framing helps to explain how members of the dominant culture portray non-dominant groups in the media.

Applying framing theory to media content can expose ways in which framing bias functions to cue stereotypes and bias the interpretation and use of information. Measures and conclusions of media bias are evident when research is informed by explicit theory linking patterns of framing in the media text to predictable priming and agenda-setting effects on audiences (Entman, 2007). Although framing theory typically focuses on news media, extrapolating its concepts to entertainment media is a logical next step. Entman & Rojecki (2001) provide a baseline for such an extension in *Black Image in the White Mind*, wherein they illustrate methods for analyzing framing bias, and specifically, the use of stereotypes in media

frames, along with their effects. Moreover, their studies indicate that social and political environments influence media content and audiences' racial sentiments.

Specifically, Entman & Rojecki found that racial coding in news, advertising, and entertainment media impact race relations. Building upon studies that reveal that racially distinctive images pervade news of Blacks and other minority groups, and that these images can influence Whites' opinions, and political preferences and votes, Entman & Rojecki examined ostensibly nonracial decisions by audiences and media executives for their indirect consequences for intergroup relations in democratic society. What they found was White privilege exemplified through numerous policies and practices in relation to each media venue.

They found no research demonstrating that portrayals of Blacks changed dramatically for the better by the end of the twentieth century. Similarly, in neither entertainment nor advertising did they find much movement toward treating Blacks and Whites equivalently. Further, market considerations and professional norms that give more attention to crime without context, poverty without explanation, and less attention to the complicated histories and institutional practices that privilege Whites and burden Blacks drive the use of racial stereotypes, schematizing and invidious comparisons in media content. These media failures, according to Entman & Rojecki, impose enormous costs on all members of society.

Framing in Entertainment Media

In 1947, the Commission on Freedom of the Press reported,

People make decisions in large part in terms of favorable or unfavorable images. They relate fact and opinion to stereotypes. Today the motion picture, the radio, the book, the magazine, the newspaper, and the comic strip are principal agents in creating and perpetuating these conventional conceptions. When the images they portray fail to present the social group truly, they tend to pervert judgment (p. 42).

Further on, the commission cautioned media producers that people seldom want to hear or read information in the mass media that does not please them, and they seldom want others to be exposed to information that is in contrast to their convictions or presents an unfavorable picture of the group to which they belong (p. 72). More than a half century later, this statement is as relevant as it was in the mid-1900s.

In movies, Black males remain highly visible but usually subordinate to the White hero and Black females persist in their relegation to fewer and more stereotyped roles. Entman & Rojecki's studies suggest that these practices continue because media producers attempt to ensure films are appealing enough to draw audiences and reap profits. They do so by providing audiences with familiar content that they are willing to "purchase" or invest their time in viewing (Gandy, 1998)—even if doing so means playing to stereotypes.

Entman & Rojecki's multiple determinant theory offers a multifactor model of the forces that produce messages shaping racial comity. Racial comity, according to their definition, is a reorientation in the professional thinking and practices of media personnel to a normative ideal that urges the reexamination of market incentives in favor of mutual social interests in racial healing, civility, courtesy, and "a more effective and harmonious society" (pp.11-12).

Undergirding their studies is the assumption that the flow of influence between media content and audience sentiments is reciprocal. "Media producers constantly probe and respond to their [target audience's] thinking, even as media products help shape that thinking" (p. 15). They, therefore, analyze media content rather than conventional media effects, arguing, "researchers have provided strong evidence for media influence at a more general level of analysis of media content and audience thinking" (p. 14). This body of work guides their and this project's

assumption that the patterns found in media content do at least have the potential to affect audiences' sentiments.

Multiple determinant theory relies on the following argument in analyzing specific elements of media texts and their potential political significance. First, the vast empirical literature on information processing shows "people use mental shortcuts (such as stereotypes) to interpret communications, even as mediated communications influence development and use of the shortcuts" (p. 14). Second, the large body of research on Whites' racial attitudes avers "significant portions of White Americans, probably a majority, hold negative sentiments toward [Black Americans] often summarized and encoded in shorthand appraisals and stereotypes" (p. 14). Third, an "understanding of information processing, public opinion, and media influence can guide analysis of media content to reveal patterns likely to resonate, either consciously or unconsciously, and thus to affect White thinking about race" (p. 14). Finally, Entman & Rojecki avoid strong claims about media effects in light of previous scholarship's cautions against inferring media effects, but they contend, "a combination of empirical data and logic strongly suggests that [media] may stimulate similar (not identical) responses among large blocks of audience members, and that the content patterns found are therefore at least potentially significant for race relations" (p. 14).

With regard to media content, therefore, Entman & Rojecki found a multifactor model of the forces that produce media messages through a complicated interaction between market pressures and the mass culture that affects the thinking of producers and consumers of media content. At the same time, they argue, "political pressures from elites seeking political gain operate on this industry" and "the economy connects to trends and themes in Hollywood films as to political discourse" (pp. 187-188). Unstable economic times seem to produce different types

of films than those from prosperous epochs. “Mainstream Hollywood films—the ones produced and marketed in hopes of earning tens or hundreds of millions of dollars in profit—are expensive, high-risk investments in which the force of the market is obvious if not overwhelming” (p. 188). Low projected revenues from a limited audience dictates lower spending on production and marketing, which yields lower audience appeal—and lower revenues. This vicious cycle occurs among additional market and political pressures such as film reviews, casting decisions, distribution limitations, and the framing of media content.

Media establish criteria for constructing, debating and resolving social issues through the framing of news and opinion (Gamson, 1992; Shah, Domke, & Wackman, 1996). Media frames are part of media texts and public discourse; as such, they have the ability to erode and build racial harmony (Entman & Rojecki, 2001). Overgeneralizations about behaviors and characteristics of racial groups that are inappropriately applied to all members of the group create prejudices and racial biases (Sage, 1990). The elite status Whites retain in America and their ownership of the media system coupled with the limited social interactions between Whites and Blacks lead Whites to depend on cultural material, such as media images, to understand Blacks (Entman, 2000).

Although Entman & Rojecki’s study includes observations and candid interviews of White Americans that make clear how these images of racial difference insinuate themselves into Whites’ thinking, the present dissertation focuses on their critique of media frames that use stereotypes in investigating box office movies, television sitcoms, and news media. They found that living in a segregated society, White Americans learn about African Americans not through personal relationships but through the images that the media show them. In relation to affirmative action policies, for example, one of their studies demonstrates the ways racial

stereotypes were used in selective news reporting to justify systemic discrimination. They contend that media frame stories using stereotypes and essentialistic expectations and in doing so shape perceptions and attitudes of Whites toward Blacks. They do not argue the media intentionally promote racism, but they “reveal instead a subtle pattern of images that, while making room for Blacks, implies a racial hierarchy with Whites on top and promotes a sense of difference and conflict.”

Entman & Rojecki evaluate White and Black stereotypes in Hollywood films, as well as in separate studies of news reporting and television sitcoms. In their study of movies, they found that the political economy of mainstream movie production, built around the star system, affects the ideological messages of character and dialogue (p. 185). Guided by frame analysis, they explore “the implicit and explicit meanings and images transmitted by the media that reflect and reinforce the attitudes, assumptions, anxieties and hopes Whites have about themselves and African Americans” (p. 4).

White perceptions and sentiments are significant because, as a group, White people hold “by far the dominant share of cultural, social, economic, and political power in the U.S. When [they] exhibit racism, hostility, or misunderstanding toward other groups, they are uniquely able to act on their negative views in ways that harm those groups and their own interests in a just, efficient, and effective national community” (p. 4). Entman & Rojecki, therefore, incisively uncover messages sent about race by the mainstream film and television industry, helping to substantiate arguments that stereotypes constitute intricate racial patterns as visual rhetoric in the mass media—and, particularly, how they shape perceptions and attitudes of Whites toward Blacks.

Further, Entman & Rojecki found that their sampled movies sacrificed realism to connect with stereotypes. They highlight the poor diction, profane language, and “iconography of racism” in *Jerry Maguire*, *A Time to Kill*, and *Independence Day*. In *Jerry Maguire*, for example, viewers saw a college-educated “Black man repeatedly cavorting around in uncomfortable resemblance to the cake-walking, dancing ‘coon’ stereotype of old as he chanted phrases like ‘I love Black people’” and “Show me the money” (p. 190). The studies also point to the use of children in movies in ways that recall the pickaninny stereotype by using the Black child as comic relief.

In addition to evaluating stereotypes, Entman & Rojecki’s study also entailed a cast analysis, occupation and role analysis, and an analysis of the behavior of non-White and White characters in movies. They used both qualitative and quantitative methods in analyzing movies between 1991 and 2001. Their findings suggest that few Blacks star in the serious vehicles that generate Oscar buzz, and even fewer win. With only two exceptions (*Remember the Titans* and *Save the Last Dance*), the trends they found in major Hollywood movies construct three basic identities for Black males that separate and subordinate Blacks. They refer to the three stereotypes as magic negroes (examples: *Legend of Bagger Vance*, *The Green Mile*, *Unbreakable*, and *The Family Man*), Black men who get help from White men because they cannot handle the world of intellect and power (e.g., *Jerry Maguire*, *Men of Honor*, *Rules of Engagement*, and *Finding Forrester*), and asexual Black men assisting White women who are victims of crime (e.g., *Kiss the Girls*, *Along Came a Spider*, and *Nurse Betty*). Unfortunately, the paucity of roles for Black females yielded virtually no distinctive identity. Of the few in the sample, most were profane, belligerent, and hypersexual.

A complicated interaction arises between market pressures and the mass culture that affects the thinking of producers and consumers of media messages. According to Entman & Rojecki, filmmakers argue that stereotypes attract viewers and marketing buzz. They also suggest that political pressure from elites seeking political gain influence movie content—as does the economy. “Mainstream Hollywood films—the ones produced and marketed in hopes of earning tens or hundreds of millions of dollars in profit—are expensive, high-risk investments in which the force of the market is obvious if not overwhelming” (p. 188). When movies earn more, studios tend to invest more in advertising and ensure distribution to more theaters. Film companies, therefore, spend lavishly to influence reviewers and create “buzz” with special screenings, receptions, access to star interviews, press materials, and junkets. In turn, reviewers pay little attention to racial images in movies, or they believe them to be inappropriate material for commentary. As a result, it is incumbent upon mass communication scholars to question and challenge practices in the movie industry as a part of the contemporary media milieu.

CHAPTER 3: STEREOTYPES

Stereotypes and Ideology

“The subtlest and most pervasive of all influences,” Lippmann (1922) avers, “are those which create and maintain the repertory of stereotypes” (p. 49). These shortcuts—defining first and then seeing—come from art, literature, moral codes, social philosophies, political agitations, and popular culture, such as movies. Further on, however, Lippmann clarifies by stating that a stereotype is more than “merely a short cut” and moreover that “a pattern of stereotypes is not neutral” (p. 96). For, those preconceptions govern deeply the whole process of perception. Hall (1980) uses this as a starting point and advances Lippmann’s thesis by arguing that stereotypes are encoded and decoded in these locations to communicate messages about certain groups in a society.

What Is a Stereotype?

Ellen Seibert (1986) challenges researchers to scrutinize their use of the term stereotype. She highlights the distinctions between the concept in mass communication research as opposed to social psychology and the humanities. The definition of stereotype most often used by social psychologists and humanities scholars includes only a part of the meaning originally invested in the term by its coiner, Walter Lippmann. Stereotypes are “the fortress of our tradition” behind which groups can safeguard their positions of privilege (Lippmann, p. 96). Seiter develops this aspect of Lippmann’s definition in ideological terms by suggesting that stereotypes primarily function to create false causalities that explain and justify inequalities as natural despite their glaring contradictions with the official national ideology of equality. For this reason, the use of stereotypes in media requires heightened scrutiny.

In psychology, on the other hand, schema theory is a common framework for explaining the function of stereotypes. Cognitive psychologists first developed this theory to explain how people process, store, and retrieve information as “ideologically constrained belief systems,” “prototypes,” and “constructs” (Wilcox, 1990; Graber, 1984, p. 22). Schema (plural, schemata or schemas), they argue, are pre-existing assumptions about the way the world is organized (Axelrod, 1973, p. 1248). Because people do not remember every detail about all situations, expectations develop from fragments collected over time. When new information arises, people try to fit it into patterns previously used or encountered (Axelrod, 1973). When information does not fit into an individual’s schema, he or she can discard the new knowledge, leaving the schema intact, or update the schema if the source is credible (Axelrod, 1973). While social psychologists commonly retain such understandings of stereotypes as cognitive shortcuts in individuals’ “economy of effort,” focusing on the universality of basic cognitive processes can obscure the ideological nature of many stereotypes (Seiter, p. 16).

Similarly, high culture criticism in the humanities misses the mark by emphasizing truth and falsity as the demarcation between stereotypes and “well-rounded, individuated characters.” Such research introduced the “kernel of truth” hypothesis to account for the persistence of stereotypes (Seiter, p. 17). In other words, the descriptive aspect of stereotypes undermines its evaluation as ideology because of some indications of validity. Conflating the descriptive and evaluative dimensions of stereotypes fails to analyze the social origins and ideological motivations behind stereotypes. Such preoccupation with interior motivation reinforces a model of history and social process rooted in individual conscience and capacity rather than collective and structural aspects of social life (Dyer, 1979, p. 108).

On the other hand, a critique of mass communications research on stereotypes is that the term has been limited to mean representations of reality that are false and, by implication, immoral, and have proceeded without further clarification to document their frequent appearance in television and film. Breaking that trend, and following Lippmann's tradition that emphasizes the capacity of the "pictures in our heads" to legitimize the status quo, this study examines positive and negative stereotypes, describes the differences and evaluates the relationships between them. For Lippmann, a stereotype operates as a component of ideology within a society as a determinant of intergroup relations. In like manner, this study operationalizes a definition of stereotypes that incorporates elements from Lippmann, Hall, Seibert, and Jost & Hamilton.

The concept of stereotypes operationalized in this dissertation is that stereotypes are socially-shared codes conveyed and learned through media that reflect cognitive biases shaped and exacerbated by actual inequalities of opportunity in society that prevent group memberships and achieved outcomes from varying freely (Lippmann, 1922; Hall, 1980, 1981, 1997; Seiter, 1984; Jost & Hamilton, 2005). Hall (1980) argues that these "codes may be so widely distributed in a specific language community or culture, and be learned at so early an age, that they appear not to be constructed...but to be naturally given" (p. 95). Further, Lippmann emphasized in his seminal studies on media that stereotypes operate as ideology, originate in social divisions, and contain evaluations that justify social differences within a society. He contends:

A pattern of stereotypes...is not merely a way of substituting order for the great blooming, buzzing confusion of reality. It is not merely a short cut. It is all these things and more. It is the guarantee of our self-respect; it is the projection upon the world of our own sense of our own value, our own position and our own rights. The stereotypes are, therefore, highly charged with feelings

that are attached to them. They are the fortress of our tradition, and behind its defenses we can continue to feel ourselves safe in the position we occupy (p. 96).

From Lippmann, Hall, and feminist scholars, this dissertation draws on the contention that stereotype analyses must be grounded in the social structure (Seiter, p. 18). To do so unmasks issues of power and inequality by focusing attention more on historic, economic, and political questions of social strata than individual socialization. In this way, Seiter posits that Lippmann's description makes apparent the "hegemonic potential" of stereotypes as an operation of ideology that legitimizes the status quo (p. 16).

How Do Stereotypes Function?

Stereotypes are not static. Stereotypes function as categories providing intuitive theories that, while aiding in understanding and navigating the complexities of intergroup life, bias the interpretation and use of information (Jost & Hamilton, p. 213). A stereotyping effect exists when a subject underestimates certain groups and overestimates the differences between contrasting groups (Axelrod, p. 1255). Socially shared "cognitive structures contain units of information" and link the units to each other (Fiske & Dyer, 1985, p. 839). If one link of the chain is activated, then other parts with strong relationships to the primary link are activated as well. In fact, when details are vague or unclear, people use schemata as a limited repertoire of prototypical examples to fill in the gaps (Graber, 1984, p. 23). An illustration from Grimes & Drechsel (1996) indicates that most people had a hard time remembering photos showing African-Americans as victims of White perpetrators because people create race schemas from prior experiences, news stories, and other media content. So, if news, movies, or sitcoms portray African-Americans as criminals, then people view them as criminals, not victims.

Hall (1980) describes the communication of racist ideologies in media as a process of invoking and deciphering stereotypes through frames and schemas. He identifies a practice of encoding and decoding in his four-stage theory of communication. Akin to schema theory, Hall's theory isolates stages of production, circulation, consumption, and reproduction as "relatively autonomous" steps in a complex mediated communication process wherein messages are constructed by producers to be recognized and received at particular stages as "appropriate" or familiar (p. 81). A subsequent transformation into social practice is necessary for the communication circuit to be complete and effective. This occurs only if meaning is derived from the media content and action on the part of the viewer. That action can entail accepting the dominant-hegemonic code, negotiating the code, or opposing the code (pp. 101-103). This theory often finds application in media effects research, but this research finds value in focusing on the first two stages of production and circulation in evaluating and describing the stereotypes in this study's sample.

Drawing from G. W. Allport's *The Nature of Prejudice* (1954), Jost & Hamilton identify essentializing as the key to deciphering a stereotyping code or function. Essentializing, they argue, is not a benign process. Essentialism ascribes an inner essence to a stereotyped group that conveys something about group members' basic nature (Jost & Hamilton, 2005, p. 213). It creates the perception that a group's essence is relatively immutable—and, more importantly, that a group's immutable characteristics explain or rationalize why groups differ in resources and opportunities (p. 214). Hence, "the rationalizing and justifying function of a stereotype exceeds its function as a reflector of group attributes" (Jost & Hamilton, p. 214, citing Allport, p. 196). Stereotype rationalizations, in effect, contribute to system justification processes, and those processes likewise mold the specific contents of stereotypes (Jost & Hamilton, p. 214, 219-220).

The contents of stereotypes are culturally-shared forms of justification that often turn out to be false and yet grow in defiance of all evidence (Jost & Hamilton, p. 214; Allport, p. 189). Categorization yields stereotyping and prejudice as by-products. Each comes from social and cultural contexts that are crucial to their understanding, for stereotypes operate in relation to societal and ideological systems. Because of their reification of the status quo, stereotypes concerning the essence of racial, ethnic, religious, and gender groups are particularly nefarious in part because it is difficult to disabuse people of them (Jost & Hamilton, p. 219; Allport, p. 169, 191). As a result, the significance of evaluating the relationships among stereotypes becomes as important as examining the content of stereotypes.

Seiter contends that mass communication research rarely examines the relationships between stereotypes beyond sex-role stereotype research. Analyzing their history and content as well as their frequency is integral to conceptualizing race, class, gender, and other differences among social categorizations. “Behind each stereotype lies a history that relates both to commonsense understandings of society and to economic determinants” (Seiter, p. 24). To assess whether and how stereotypes function to justify systems, reinforce inequalities, and maintain the status quo, researchers must both describe and evaluate media stereotypes for their content and relationships. Using an intersectional approach in this study enables not only an investigation of stereotypes but also of the relationships underlying and among the identified stereotypes. This study, therefore, begins filling a gap in mass media research on stereotypes.

How Do Stereotypes Relate to One Another?

Intersectionality addresses the common critique of research on stereotypes that studies fail to recognize between-group commonalities and to acknowledge intra-group variation, complexity and diversity (Crenshaw, 1995). Intersectionality is a particular way of

understanding social location in terms of crisscrossing systems of oppression. Intersectionality literature, in turn, highlights between-group similarities and ways in which ignoring difference within groups contributes to tension among groups. It offers a framework for delineating the ways in which markers of difference and forms of discrimination function collaboratively (“intersectionally”) to distinguish marginalized or minority individuals and groups from the rights, privileges, and protections afforded the majority group or members of the dominant culture(s) (Crenshaw, 1995).

The move toward intersectionality makes media studies research more complex, more realistic, and more sensitive to cultural contexts (Aldoory & Parry-Giles, 2005, p. 337). Interrogating the media as a complex system of gender, race and economics, which allows violence and inequities to continue, is an integral component of the meaning-making process. An intersectional analysis delves into the creation, negotiation, and change of such meanings over time. The literature, therefore, takes a cultural studies approach to feminism and the media, and it notes that media production, representation, and reception disrupt and/or perpetuate structures of domination (p. 337). Theories of intersectionality are elevating the complexity of feminist media research, furthering commitments to understanding difference, and calling for additional feminist media research that further interrogates existing forces and constraints of dominant ideologies—attending to the intersectional complexities of gender, race, class, sexuality, nationalism, and (post)colonialism (p. 350).

Generally, intersectionality analysis is an outgrowth of feminist research that critically examines power relations and uses feminist theories as analytical frameworks. Specifically, it is an “analysis claiming that systems of race, social class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, and age form mutually constructing features of social organization, which shape Black women’s

experiences and, in turn, are shaped by Black women” (Collins, 2000, p. 299). In other words, an intersectional analysis resists individuation and objectification. Instead, intersectionality enables the so-called minority to define distinct experiences of interlocking, multidimensional socially constructed classifications. Crenshaw (1995) explains as follows:

This process of recognizing as social and systemic what was formerly perceived as isolated and individual has also characterized the identity politics of African-Americans, other people of color, and gays and lesbians, among others. For all these groups, identity-based politics has been a source of strength, community, and intellectual development. (p. 357)

Yet, identity politics subscribe to essentializing in a way that intersectionality scholars and the present study reject. Intersectionality distinguishes itself in this way from identity politics with a “liberatory objective” of emptying identity categories of any social significance to eliminate them “as vestiges of bias or domination—that is, as intrinsically negative frameworks in which social power works to exclude or marginalize those who are different” (Crenshaw, p. 357). As racism and sexism intersect in the lives of real people, for example, intersectionality examines “the various ways in which race and gender intersect in shaping structural, political, and representational aspects” of individual and group experiences (p. 358). So, rather than focusing on Asian womanhood as an identity, an intersectional approach examines ways in which people experience structural, political, or representational marginalization or exclusion on the basis of race and gender. An overly-simplified illustration of representational exclusion occurs when an Indian girl grows up watching cartoons that never feature Indian girls. Her identity is not the problem; the media content or system is the problem.

Intersectionality gained currency in the late 1980s and early 1990s when feminists and women of color began to use the term to articulate their experiences in society and within movements for social change and equality (Mason, 2010). They argue that systems of race,

class, gender, ethnicity, and other markers of difference were intersecting, interlocking and often interacting with institutions and structures in society to limit access to resources and information, to privilege some groups over others, and to maintain power. One such system is the mass media (Aldoory & Parry-Giles, 2005). The present study asks how the content and relationships among stereotypes in movies may contribute to limiting access, privileging certain groups, and maintaining power relations.

The considerable literature developed over the past two decades also recognizes that multiple and intersecting identities shape individuals and groups—often informing worldview, perspective, and relationship to others in society (Collins, 2000; Meyers, 2004; Cropper and Shames, 2008; Alexander-Floyd, 2009). This growing literature uses intersectionality theory to analyze ways that race, class, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, ability, and status influence systemic outcomes in media, political science, ethics, sociology, religion, and public policy. This dissertation, therefore, contributes to intersectionality literature by documenting the content and functions of stereotypes in ten of the most influential movies of all time.

The overwhelming effect of stereotypes is that existing forms of inequality tend to be reinforced and perpetuated (Jost & Hamilton, p. 208). People do not let go of their stereotypical beliefs easily. “Any disturbance of stereotypes seems like an attack upon the foundations...of our universe, and...we do not readily admit that there is any distinction between our universe and the universe” (Lippmann, p. 63). If true, then stereotypes in the most influential films of all time are likely to communicate deeply entrenched messages about people in American culture and relationships between the groups they represent.

Laudatory Stereotypes of Dominant Racial Groups

Many scholars hold that mass media reproduce stereotyping and racial ideology in our society (Abraham & Appiah, 2006). Whether in film or television, Tyree (2007, 2011) and Darling (2004) contend, entertainment media rely on easily recognizable types of characters to help propel storylines. These recognizable characters often act with stereotypical behavior because, according to Wilson & Gutierrez (1995), stereotyping is a shortcut to character development that forms the basis for mass media entertainment. In like manner, Devine & Elliot (1995) argue that racial stereotypes are still present in media because they are deeply entrenched within the cultural fabric of the United States. Browne, Mickiewicz, and Firestone (1994) also assert that mass media are suitable to pass along stereotypes “because they extend throughout society, and frequently serve as trend-setters, taste-makers, labelers, and the raw material for daily conversation” (p. 8).

Seiter, uniquely, identifies blindness to dominant group stereotypes as a pitfall common to social psychological, popular cultural criticism, and mass communication research. This dissertation aims to fill this void by including dominant group stereotypes in its frame analysis. Some cultural scholars distinguish themselves from high culture critics by arguing that all forms of fiction employ rules and conventions—stereotypes among them—and that such use does not necessarily reduce the work’s value. They, therefore, resist scrutinizing the content of those stereotypes because of “the shame associated with holding stereotypes, as well as the incentives in a liberal, academic environment” to disprove allegations of stereotyping (Seiter, p. 24). Rather, denial and silence work to reinforce the perceived neutrality of White males and universality of their experiences.

Alternatively, Hall (1980, 1981, and 1997) provides perspectives and paradigms for evaluating the relationships between stereotypes and their role in the legitimation of social power. For example, Hall (1981) identifies three characteristics that provide the discursive and power coordinates of the ideological discourses in which race relations were historically constructed and portrayed in media: (1) Their imagery and themes were polarized around fixed relations of subordination and domination, (2) Their stereotypes were grouped around the poles of superior and inferior natural species, and (3) Both were displaced from the language of history into the language of nature, in which physical signs and racial characteristics became the unalterable signifiers of inferiority.

From observations and candid interviews of White Americans regarding media stereotypes, correspondingly, Entman & Rojecki evince the ways these stereotypical images of difference insinuate themselves into Whites' thinking by way of a social hierarchy of judgment that descends from ideal to normal to liminal to abnormal to counter-ideal (p. 52). Most White people fall into the normal category and exhibit most of the idealized traits. The converse is true for most Black people who exist in opposition to the ideal traits. Proving Hall's typology to be true, Entman & Rojecki's findings demonstrate the way stereotypes in media contribute to viewers' essentializing traits of racial groups in ways that lend credibility to the dominance of Whites and the subordination of Blacks; the superiority of Whites, and the inferiority of Blacks; and makes natural and unalterable characteristics that are more likely reflections of history and socialization. The most provocative, and arguably the most damaging, product of this type of stereotyping is that its system justification impact affects members of the advantaged and disadvantaged groups—even at the expense of personal and collective interests and esteem (Jost & Hamilton, p. 216).

In this way, stereotypes—particularly, dominant culture stereotypes—commonly function as consensual or internalized stereotypes used not only to describe but also justify and rationalize existing hierarchical structures in society. This principle operates in racial stereotyping as well as other forms of discrimination, such as gender, religion, and class. In system justification, members of disadvantaged groups internalize attitudes about themselves and members of advantaged groups that are more similar than dissimilar to the attitudes held by members of advantaged groups (Jost & Hamilton, p. 216-221, in relation to gender). In other words, Whites and Blacks internalize stereotypes in ways that reinforce inequalities. As a result, rather than considering historical or economic factors, both Blacks and Whites may follow a faulty logic that suggests that there are more Whites in four-year colleges because White people are smarter, harder-workers, and more ambitious than Black people.

Perkins (1979) argues, “Positive stereotypes are an important part of ideology and are important in the socialization of both dominant and oppressed groups” (p. 144). Failing to examine the evaluative as well as the descriptive components of stereotypes leaves the mistaken impression that the presence of white, bourgeois values denotes the absence of stereotypes and, therefore, implies more true or realistic representations (Seiter, p. 20). Seiter identifies professional achievement, ambition, puritanism, and individualism as attributes of laudatory stereotypes that warrant analysis as economically biased social divisions to which there is also a shared experience of oppression (p. 20). In like manner, this study uses Seiter’s and Entman & Rojecki’s terms in the coding scheme detailed in Chapter 5 and the Appendix to evaluate stereotypes of socially powerful groups that scholars tend to study less frequently in relation to race and other intersectional identities. According to Seiter, to do otherwise is to suggest that positive, “majority” stereotypes are somehow more realistic and do not warrant the kind of

evaluation “minority” stereotypes deserve (p. 19). To focus attention on the ideological nature of stereotypes, likewise, this study adopts Perkins adherence to the terms pejorative and laudatory stereotypes rather than positive and negative.

Derogatory Stereotypes of Subordinated Racial Groups

Unlike dominant groups, an abundance of research is available on stereotypes of so-called racial minorities. Regarding African Americans, entertainment media play significant roles in the perpetuation of negatives stereotypes, which impact the majority of societal views of them (Martin, 2008). Even if portrayals of African Americans do not conform to blatantly demeaning stereotypes, similar to those in television shows such as *Amos N’ Andy*, less overt forms of anti-Black imagery persist (Entman, 1994), and these stereotypes can impact the racial identity development of African Americans as well as the manner that others perceive and treat African Americans (Tyree, 2011; Martin, 2008; Reynolds-Dobbs, Thomas, & Harrison, 2008).

Stereotypes do not simply appear in America’s media system. Stereotypes “develop over time through repetitious portrayals of specific types of individuals, which eventually contribute to the formation and sustainability of stereotypes about African Americans” (Tyree, 2011, p. 398; Devine, 1989; Hamilton & Gifford, 1976). Stereotypes are problematic, as stated above, because they essentialize differences within individuals and groups, reinforce imbalances of power, and help maintain both the social and symbolic order (Hall, 1997, p. 258).

Media stereotyping literature commonly acknowledges Black images in film as a reflection of race relations in America (Tyree & Jacobs, 2013; Meynard, 2000; Dates & Barlow, 1993). Any history of racial stereotypes in films must start with 1915’s *The Clansman* (later retitled *Birth of Nation*). This seminal film showed Black men as violent, brutal primitives driven by a savage-like desire for sex with White women (Reid, p. 78), Black women as

entranced whirling dervishes with bulging eyes, and Black reconstruction-era law-makers as barefooted watermelon-and-fried-chicken-eating buffoons. For several subsequent decades, American media popularized minstrelsy, racial stereotypes, and negative portrayals of African-Americans in mass media—from *The Ghost Talks* (1929) to *The Color Purple* (1985), and arguably, through today's television and films.

Donald Bogle (1989, 2001) is one of the foremost authorities on African Americans in films and identifying longstanding stereotypical representations of Blacks in film. To list and describe each of the male and female African American stereotypes that occur in American media culture is impossible to accomplish in this work. Bogle and several other scholars dedicate numerous books to this topic. It is necessary, nonetheless, to address some of the stereotypes to place this study and its findings into proper perspective.

Myriad African American female stereotypes exist. The oldest, and perhaps the most notable, Black mother stereotype, is the mammy (Adams & Fuller, 2006). She is an obese, independent, cantankerous, overweight, asexual female servant, who is nurturing toward a White family (Bogle, 2001). While at times she seems to have no family of her own, this matriarch otherwise appears as an emasculating, controlling, and contemptuous woman who berates her male loved one (Bond & Perry, 1970; Ransby & Matthews, 1995; Wallace, 1978). Additionally, the negative jezebel stereotype has a long history in American culture. She is usually a young, exotic, promiscuous, oversexed woman who uses sexuality to get attention, love, and material goods (Hill Collins, 2000; Morton, 1991). Tyree (2011) identifies the freak, the chicken-head, and the hood-rat as new iterations of the jezebel in contemporary media, specifically reality television. She is a woman with sexual hang-ups and no inhibitions (Stephens & Phillips, 2003,

p. 18). Her sexual behaviors are dangerous, high-risk, and test the limits of what is morally acceptable (Cleage, 1993).

Tyree (2011) describes additional modern-day stereotypes of Black women, including, the welfare mother who is lazy, collects government assistance, and ensures poverty continues by passing on her condition to her many children (Sklar, 1995); the aggressive, self-sufficient gangsta female who lives in the same environments as many men in urban America (Hampton, 2000; Mitchell, 1999); and the angry Black woman, who Tasker & Negra (2007) identify as reflective of the “mouthy harpy” (p. 258). The gold digger—hoochie mama or pigeon—often appears as uneducated, possessing low social status, and using sex as her primary commodity (Stephens & Phillips, 2003).

African American male stereotypes also have a long history in American media. Bogle (2001) found the Black male stereotypes to be the generous, selfless, and kind Tom; unreliable, crazy, and lazy Coon; and the big, oversexed, savage, and frenzied Buck. The Sambo stereotype has two representations: the fun-loving buffoon and the foolish ladies’ man who has exaggerated speech and walk (Nachbar & Lause, 1992). Tyree (2011) contends, however, that old stereotypes change over time and others evolve into new characters that represent ideas, beliefs, and misconceptions present in society. The new popular African American male stereotypes include the clown, brute, pimp, dunce, absentee father (White & Cones, 1999). Then, there is the pretty boy, which Guy Fernald described in 1912 as one with a “clear complexion, good color, regular, well-balanced features, an engaging smile and ingratiating manner and speech.” The description holds true today, except that the stereotypical African American man has a light brown complexion with a cocky or arrogant attitude (Tyree, 2011).

Two newer stereotypes, the homo thug and the oreo, are unisex stereotypes (Tyree, 2011). Based on the popular cookie, the oreo stereotype has a black exterior with a white filling. In this stereotype, one does “not act Black . . . support ‘Black’ issues, and, more importantly, really wants to be White” (Norwood, 2004, p. 148). Homo thugs, conversely, are tough and engage in gangster behavior (Tyree, 2011; Keyes, 2002; Thomas, 1996). They typically dress in urban attire and associate themselves with hip hop culture and male crews (Tyree, 2011; Mays, Cochran, & Zamudio, 2004).

Tyree & Jacobs (2013), however, stress that these are not the only African American stereotypes to exist in mass media. As noted by Tyree, Byerly and Hamilton (2011), with time, old stereotypes change and other stereotypes evolve into new characters that represent ideas, beliefs and misconceptions present in society. While it is impossible to document all evolutions and milestones in the film industry as they relate to African Americans, the Blaxploitation era of film illustrates how filmmakers and studios can work collaboratively to perpetuate or transform stereotypes. Released between 1969 and 1974, these action-adventure films featured Black characters and narratives situated in the “ghetto” (Guerrero, 1993, p. 69). Bogle and Guerrero highlight these movies as studio responses to U.S. politics of the 1960s and increasing dissatisfaction with the negative portrayals of Blacks in films. Occasionally, the films jettisoned older stereotypes and representations of subordinate Blacks for more assertive, multidimensional Black characters. As the period developed and ended, however, Hollywood found ways to develop more “subtle and masked forms of devaluing African Americans on the screen. And when Hollywood no longer needed its cheap, Black product line for its economic survival, it reverted to traditional and openly stereotypical modes of representation” (Guerrero, p. 70).

If present in this study's sample of the most influential movies of all time, the aforementioned stereotypes of African Americans can impact both African Americans and others. Movie audiences still tend to believe what they watch is a true representation of their culture and the people within it, especially if these individuals "have no other frame of reference or experience in their own lives with which to compare or conflict with what they have seen" (Martin, 2008, p. 338). Fujioka (1999) supported this assertion and argued that mediated information may influence how people perceive a stereotyped group when direct contact is limited or nonexistent. White Americans with limited access to African Americans might make judgments about minority groups based on stereotypical images (Tyree, 2011; Bell & Nkomo, 2001). Individuals have knowledge of cultural stereotypes, and voluntary or involuntary activation of their preconceived notions of the stereotyped group can cause them to pass judgments (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000).

Stereotypes in media of subordinated racial groups can function in various ways. Davies, Spencer, Quinn, and Gerhardstein (2002, p. 1616) assert, "Negative stereotypes are so pervasive in our mass media culture that those who are stigmatized have detailed knowledge of the accusations targeted at their group." As discussed above, some African Americans internalize this knowledge, and it influences their behavior or view of themselves. Looking Glass Theory of Media Influences, for instance, adapts Cooley's symbolic interactionism to help explain how a person's self-image can develop by viewing mass communication content (Grable, 2005). Grable maintains that people in audiences learn about themselves and society's expectations of them when they see others who are like themselves in dramas or other depictions of human beings in the media. For example, African Americans see other Black people portrayed in entertainment media and ask "How are the portrayed people treated by others in the content?"

Are they treated as inferior? Are they rejected? Under what circumstances are they accepted?" Media depictions send not-so-subtle messages to viewers with information about themselves and how other people regard them. Movies, television, or other media, therefore, offer a kind of "social mirror" through which similarly situated people gather clear indications about their status in society (Grable, 2005).

Recognition of the problems presented by racial stereotypes is not new. In the 1897 *Atlantic* magazine essay entitled "The Strivings of the Negro People," W. E. B. Du Bois referred to African Americans' dilemmas in dealing with dominant culture stereotypes of Blacks that he termed double consciousness. Du Bois republished in 1903 with revisions in *The Souls of Black Folk*, which remains a staple of American literature and African American Studies. Applying the Emersonian and Transcendentalist concept of an internal schism that occurs as one struggles between the illuminations of the soul, Nature and Beauty, and the downward pull of cold rationality, human materialism, and commercial life, Du Bois addresses the "two-ness" of what it means to be "African" and "American" amid racism's exclusion of Blacks from the mainstream of society and the "real power of white stereotypes in black life and thought" (Bruce, 1992, p. 301). While Du Bois focused heavily on spirituality, folklore, faith, and suffering among African Americans, what is most relevant to the current research is his reference to a sort of schizophrenia or duality of identity that racial stereotypes create in subordinated groups.

This study acknowledges Tyree (2011), Martin (2008), and other research on stereotypes as expansions on Du Bois' argument. Respectively, they contend that members of stereotyped racial groups can "fear of living up to the stereotypes," which leads to a situational predicament called "stereotype threat." It occurs when one feels "at risk of confirming, as self-characteristic, a negative stereotype about one's group" (Steele & Aronson, 1995, p. 797). Pejorative

stereotypes can be dangerous for African American children and adolescents who are attempting to develop their racial identities (Martin, 2008). These stereotypes can also be problematic to individuals who are invested, skilled, or care about the social consequences of how their performance is judged in a specific domain (Tyree, 2011; Aronson, Quinn, & Spencer, 1998; Steele, 1997). Stereotype threat is damaging because it causes emotional distress and can undermine how an individual performs socially or relationally—whether at work or in academics or athletics (Tyree, 2011; Martin, 2008). For these reasons, the current dissertation investigates not only the content of stereotypes but also the relationships between stereotypes for any ideological import.

System Justification and Relationships between Dominant and Non-Dominant Stereotypes

Studies evaluating the ideological relationships between the stereotypes of dominant and non-dominant social groups occur primarily in the context of gender relations. Implicit in research describing and documenting racial stereotypes is an understanding of subjugation of one group by another group, but this dissertation aims to fill a gap in the literature by evaluating the relations between laudatory and pejorative stereotypes in media for the tendency to advance an ideology, myth, or legend. Studies by Kay & Jost (2003) and Jost & Kay (2005) influence this aspect of the current analysis, in that they demonstrate the cause-and-effect relationship between exposure to specific stereotypes, relationships among complementary stereotypes, and the perpetuation of the status quo. Their work suggests the link can be largely implicit, nonconscious, unexamined, and even favorable in ascribing different but complementary characteristics to members of high-status and low-status groups.

In psychology's literature on stereotypes, Kay & Jost (2003) come close to dealing with relationships among racial stereotypes in their research on stereotypes of economic class or

wealth. Cultural depictions of the rich and poor in various works of literature, religion, and the mass media reflect a leveling tendency that ascribes virtues such as happiness and morality to the underprivileged and, conversely, vices such as misery, loneliness, and dishonesty to those who are blessed with material abundance (Kay & Jost, 2003). Celebrated novels, plays, and films that reinforce such complementary, offsetting stereotypes in which each group possesses its unique benefits and burdens include Dickens' *Great Expectations* and *A Christmas Carol*, Moliere's *The Miser*, Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, Orson Welles's *Citizen Kane*, Herman Hesse's *Siddhartha*, Steve Martin's *The Jerk*, and most recently, Tyler Perry's *Good Deeds*.

While theorists speculated for decades about the social and psychological functions of “poor but happy,” “rich but miserable,” “poor but honest,” and “rich but dishonest” stereotypes (Jost, Burgess, & Mosso, 2001; Lane, 1959; Lerner, 1980), Kay & Jost present an empirical examination of the hypothesis that exposure to complementary “poor but happy” and “poor but honest” stereotype exemplars (as well as “rich but miserable” and “rich but dishonest” exemplars) leads to an increase in the perception that society is fair and inequality is legitimate, insofar as every “class gets its share” (Lane, 1959, p. 39). They found that belief that “no one has it all” makes people feel better about their own position in society and increases the perceived legitimacy of the social system (Kay & Jost, p. 824). Apparently reinforcing inequality is acceptable as long as those with the upper-hand are unhappy.

Jackman (1994), likewise, advanced a parallel argument concerning the role of complementary gender stereotypes of men as agentic (but not communal) and women as communal (but not agentic) as contributing to the maintenance of traditional gender roles. Specifically, believing that women are relatively incompetent but also warm, friendly, caring, nurturing, honest, and morally superior allows people to rationalize the unequal distribution of

social roles and to conceal the exploitative nature of gender relations in a patriarchal society. Glick and Fiske (2001) also found that complementary gender stereotypes are widespread, endorsed by women as well as men, and especially prevalent in highly sexist societies (as measured by objective indicators pertaining to the social and economic advancement of women). While Jost & Kay advance these studies on gender, Kay & Jost, in applying a similar logic to the case of stereotypical representations of the rich and poor, demonstrate that the power of complementary stereotypes goes well beyond the realm of gender and may apply to many other groups that differ with respect to social or economic standing. The current dissertation, therefore, applies this logic to its examination of racial stereotypes in media content.

Only upon describing and evaluating how stereotypes work in tandem to advance dominant culture ideologies can mass communication research fill the wide gap within the literature on stereotypes in media. The research on sex-roles, for instance, may describe the manner in which stereotypes reinforce character traits as inborn in men's and women's natures. This dissertation, however, advocates for the additional step of analyzing the relationships among those stereotypes and then evaluating the characteristics as products of history, socialization, education, or profession. Such findings can extrapolate to the context of race and inform interpretations of racial stereotypes. This dissertation, therefore, analyzes the social origins and ideological motivations underlying stereotypes in the sampled films without conflating their descriptive and evaluative dimensions.

By contributing ideological support for the system, for example, benevolent stereotypes justify roles by maintaining the belief that every group in society has some rewards, and no group has a monopoly on valued characteristics (Jost & Kay, p. 498). As mentioned above, flattering stereotypes of women as helpful, kind, gentle, warm, and empathic, may work to

undercut perceptions of women's competence because perceptions of the warmth and competence of social groups are often inversely related (Fisk, Cuddy & Glick, pp. 77-78; Jost & Kay, p. 498). The warmth label, despite some dispute, tends to denote affective, moral and behavioral attributes, while the competence label includes traits such as creativity, efficiency, intelligence, and knowledge (Fisk et al, p. 77). Benevolent forms of sexism in which women are warm but not competent serve to increase support for the system of gender inequality (Jost & Kay, p. 498).

Race and gender norms function in similar manners. Each ascribes a place to individuals with certain immutable characteristics within the ruling hierarchy (Jost & Hamilton, p. 219). Majority rule, even if merely perceived, functions to justify a societal ranking that places white males at the top—those in power at the time of the country's framing—and all others beneath. Gender and race play significant roles in ordering the remainder of society's hierarchal structure. A purely patriarchal structure would accord the next level of privilege to males of other races in some systemically racial manner. On the other hand, a solely white supremacist structure would accord the next level of privilege to white women and then ranked subjugated races according to the same male-female complementarity. Arguably, race and gender privilege may differ according to context because the U.S. system functions as a mix of these two models.

Ultimately, stereotypes and essentialistic explanations become system justifications for keeping people in their place. "If certain members are inherently agentic, communal, etc., then their current position is not only well-explained but also natural and unlikely to change" (Jost & Hamilton, p. 219). The status quo, as a result, begins to acquire a strong sense of legitimacy and even inevitability. Stereotypic differentiation between men and women along agentic and communal lines, according to several scholars, accomplishes at least three things that are

important for maintaining the system: (1) role-justification: it treats each group as essentially well suited to occupy its socially prescribed positions and roles, (2) cooptation: it prevents women from withdrawing completely from the system of gender relations in a societal context in which men's competence is assumed and women's is not, and (3) complementarity: communal and benevolent gender stereotypes serve system-justifying ends by counterbalancing men's presumed advantages in terms of agency and status (Jost & Kay, p. 499, 506; Lorber, 277).

The results, as demonstrated in Jost and Kay's 2005 study, punctuate the system justification argument as follows:

...(S)tereotypes rationalize the status quo in general in addition to specific features of the intergroup relations context... [demonstrating] that stereotype activation through incidental exposure was just as effective in increasing diffuse system justification...as it was when stereotype activation occurred through the opportunity for personal endorsement.... Activation of communal and benevolent stereotypes was sufficient to increase system justification... [by] conferring unique benefits We propose...complementary stereotypes justify the social system through their potential to counteract or offset the hegemonic advantage of some groups over others (pp. 504-505).

Stereotypes serve not only to rationalize specific aspects of intergroup relations, but also to bolster the overall sense that the structure as a whole is fair, legitimate, and justifiable (Jost & Kay, p. 500; Jost & Hamilton, pp. 219-220; Omi & Winant, pp. 1-2). Like race, gender is a social construct, and one of the major ways that human beings organize their lives. "To explain why gendering is done from birth, constantly and by everyone, we have to look not only at the way individuals experience gender but also at gender as a social institution" (Lorber, p. 277).

Gendered norms and expectations, as a social institution, create "distinguishable social statuses for the assignment of rights and responsibilities" (p. 280). These ranked statuses structure inequality and stratify families, organizations, and processes such that "what men do is

usually valued more highly than what women do because men do it” (p. 281). The “devalued genders have less power, prestige, and economic rewards than the valued genders” (p. 281). This gender inequality – “the devaluation of ‘women’ and the social domination of ‘men’” – has social functions and a social history “produced and maintained by identifiable social processes and built into the general social structure and individual identities deliberately and purposefully” (p. 282).

Complementary gender stereotypes and benevolent forms of sexism function to stratify intergroup relations and rationalize social structures of privilege in the same manner as racialization functions in its contexts (Lorber, p. 280; see also, Jost & Kay). Each relies upon notions of ascribed membership and allocated responsibilities supposedly required for the structure’s continuance. The coexistence of these individual, intergroup, and societal elements denotes the permeation throughout society of an entire system of values, attitudes, beliefs and morality that has the effect of supporting the status quo as the natural order of things. This, in fact, is the textbook definition of hegemony (Severin & Tankard, pp. 254-255).

The social order in Western societies is “organized around racial ethnic, class, and gender inequality” (Lorber, p. 282). In U.S. history, for instance, the racial category of “black” evolved with the consolidation of racial slavery as a replacement for non-racialized indentured servitude. Controlling forces systematically erased cultural and ethnic labels through prohibitions and practices that denied African Americans the right to speak native languages, practice native religions, or identify tribal groups (Omi & Winant, p. 1). The system of slavery rendered each person and group “black” by an ideology of exploitation based on racial logic and the establishment and maintenance of a “color-line” (p. 2). Racial meanings and race generally came to reflect a fundamental organizing principle of social relationships (p. 3).

The social construction of race served the same function as the social hierarchy of gender: system justification and hegemony. Hegemony is a system in which one ruling social group or state rearranges a system in such a way that its subjects view the ruling group's dominance as justifiable. In other words, the ruling class (white males) gains consent of dominance by transforming external domination into an abstraction, because power is in the status quo (the way things are) not in any leader(s). Social constructs, such as race and gender, and social cognition devices, such as stereotypes, work together to establish the consensual control of individuals voluntarily assimilating the worldview of the dominant group (Laclau & Mouffe, pp.40-59, 125-144).

A social construct, in the words of Emanuel Lusca, “is ontologically subjective, but epistemologically objective” (p. 2). “It is ontologically subjective in that the construction and continued existence of social constructs are contingent on social groups and their collective agreement, imposition, and acceptance of such constructs” (Lusca, p. 2). Understanding race and gender as social constructs, as well as essentialism and stereotypes as devices of social cognition, may expose a hegemonic function that occurs through the ideological relationships between stereotypes based on social constructs.

Dominance of one social group over another makes the ideas of the ruling class come to be seen as the norm; they are seen as universal ideologies, perceived to benefit everyone while only really benefiting the ruling class (Gramsci, 1971). By analyzing the history and content of what he calls base-images in the grammar of race, Hall (1980) scrutinizes systematic exclusions, marginalizations, and vilifications of Blacks in “old movies” while also critiquing the consistent elevating, centralizing, and valorizing of Whites. Subordinate classes and ethnic groups, Hall argues, appear to exhibit qualities of an inferior breed rather than remnants of historical relations

such as the slave trade, European colonization, or the active underdevelopment of the underdeveloped societies. “Relations, secured by economic, social, political and military domination were transformed and ‘naturalised’ into an order of rank, ascribed by Nature” (p. 163). This dissertation, therefore, draws upon Hall’s base images in coding for racial stereotypes, as well as others as applicable:

- (1) The Slave-Figure: dependable and loving in a simple childlike way – the devoted ‘Mammy’ with the rolling eyes, or the faithful field-hand or retainer, attached and devoted to her master. A deep and unconscious ambivalence pervades this stereotype, as the ‘slave’ is also unreliable, unpredictable and undependable—capable of ‘turning nasty,’ or of plotting in a treacherous way, secretive, cunning, cut-throat once the master’s or mistress’s back is turned. He or she is inexplicably given to running away into the bush at the slightest opportunity. The Whites can never be sure that this childish simpleton—‘Sambo’—is not mocking his master’s white manners behind his hand, even when giving an exaggerated caricature of white refinement.
- (2) The Native: Exhibiting primitive nobility and simple dignity, the restless native also is prone to cheating, cunning, savagery and barbarism amid the threatening soundtrack of drumming in the night and the hint of primitive rites and cults. Cannibals, whirling dervishes, Indian or African tribesmen, garishly dressed, are constantly threatening to over-run the screen and appear from the darkness to decapitate the beautiful heroine, kidnap the children, burn the encampment or boil, cook and eat the innocent explorer or colonial administrator and his lady-wife. These ‘natives’ always move as an anonymous collective mass—in tribes or hordes. And against them is always counterpoised the isolated white figure, alone ‘out there,’ confronting his Destiny or shouldering his Burden in the ‘heart of darkness,’ displaying coolness under fire and an unshakeable authority—exerting mastery over the rebellious natives or quelling the threatened uprising with a single glance of his steel-blue eyes.
- (3) The Clown: This captures the ‘innate’ humor, as well as the physical grace, of the licensed entertainer—putting on a show for The Others. It is never quite clear whether we are laughing with or at this figure: admiring the physical and rhythmic grace, the open expressivity and emotionality of the ‘entertainer,’ or put off by the ‘clown’s’ stupidity (p. 164).

Hall's base-images in the grammar of race are important to the present research because he incorporates laudatory and pejorative stereotypes of dominant and non-dominant racial group members. The issue that arises for this study is whether these patterns and relationships can be identified in the history of American filmmaking, and particularly in depictions of racial groups in ten of the most influential films of all time. As the next chapter details, the pilot projects that inform this dissertation demonstrated that the best way to address this issue is by using a research design that makes explicit its orientation to theories of ideology, accounts for changes in stereotypes, and examines the filmmaking context along with its content.

CHAPTER 4: PILOT STUDIES

The media's main sphere of operations is the production and transformation of ideologies (Hall, 1981, p. 160). As with any media content and industry, American movies inevitably interact with the culture of which they are part. Film, specifically, is a cultural and ideological barometer that echoes broader, more disturbing issues in the culture as a whole (Kolker, 2000). "The very structure of film (which creates plot and generates story) is an ideological event, determined by any number of economic and cultural forces," and therefore, mass media research must continue to examine the industry trends that emerge, the content of the films, and the filmmakers that are responsible for them (xiv). With this understanding, two pilot projects inform the current study, and each aims to explore the movies with the greatest influence.

The Whites of Their Eyes: Racist Ideologies and the Media informed the pilot studies discussed below. In this essay, Hall raises several practical questions about ways in which media produce representations of the social world via images and portrayals that act as chains of meaning—a network of understanding that teaches "how the world is and why it works as it is said and shown to work" (Hall, 1981, p. 161). Hall argues that ideology makes sense of social reality and people's positions within it, which become naturalized masking themselves as common sense. In turn, politically constructed representations and allocations of place—such as that identified with race—are ahistorically systematized as "given by nature" and grounded in a series of alleged essential characteristics that further reinforce the naturalization of such representations. As a result, in Western societies, the dominant white ideology renders itself "invisible," yet remains a pervasive controlling force. As Hall reminds us, "The 'white eye' is always outside the frame—but seeing and positioning everything within it" (p. 163).

Compelled by Hall's contention and building upon Entman & Rojecki's findings, one pilot project investigated racial stereotypes in films, while the other study probed religious stereotypes in films. Each scrutinized the frames and stereotypes present in two distinct contexts: (1) stereotypes based on race in seven movies spanning 1939-1999 awarded Oscars for performances by African American actors, and (2) stereotypes based on religion in three top-grossing movies spanning 1956-2009.

These studies produced many implications, including: (1) the role of movie stereotypes in conveying ideological messages; (2) the relationships between positive and negative stereotypes; (3) the correlations between stereotypes and mythology or legend; (4) the relationship between changes in stereotypes over time and changes in U.S. socio-political dynamics over time; (5) the relationship between filmmakers "playing to stereotypes" and profit incentives, media ownership, content influence, institutional dominance, the Motion Picture Association of America, and the U.S. government, and (6) the influence of media institutions within the free flow of information in a democracy. This dissertation focuses on the first three of these implications, and to a lesser extent makes observations that inform future research on the latter issues.

Background

The American movie industry is not what it used to be. With rare exception, the independent studios formerly responsible for assembly line movie production transformed into subsidiaries of large, multinational, conglomerated corporate entities that are busy with many things in addition to movies. Each is global in scope and has interests in numerous media industries, including film production, online media, book publishing, television networks, retail stores, amusement parks, magazines, music, and newspapers (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003).

Movies, in fact, increasingly are considered by many parent corporations as merely source material for interactive computer games and licensing potentials for burgers and clothes (Kolker, 2000). “Every new film comes with a web site and, if it is an action film, may end as a CD-ROM game” (xi).

The new media environment and digital technology are changing filmmaking in profound ways, enabling action and special effects movies to represent the most amazing stunts and in general replacing matte painting, process shots, and all the other tricks of visual economy that the studios formerly used to allow shots to be inexpensively put together (Kolker, 2000). Almost every film made now uses computer graphics in some aspect of its production, and this changes its aesthetics, increases its budgets, and bears on its potential outlets and revenues. The greater the costs of production, the greater are the studio’s expectations for large profits, and, therefore, film production and distribution is becoming a more formulaic process that leaves little room for miscalculations (Kolker, 2000). Studio executives consider themselves experts on what works and what audiences will buy—and, in turn, they influence filmmakers to adhere to certain conventions and standards in storytelling.

“Economies of production are nothing new in filmmaking; incorporation of filmmaking into large corporate structures is” (Kolker, xii). For decades, movie studios resisted the conglomeration tide, but now even the last holdouts are corporate units. Disney, for example, is the world’s largest media conglomerate; it runs a movie studio, television networks, publishing houses, several amusement parks, online holdings, and an entertainment empire. Second only to Disney is Time Warner, which resulted when Warner Brothers Studios merged with Time Inc. and bought out Turner Broadcasting around 1990. Signaling a radical shift in the structure and

delivery systems of the entertainment business, America Online (AOL) bought Time Warner in 2000.

Of the last holdouts, Twentieth Century-Fox now is part of Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation and Universal, which is owned by NBC Universal, which itself is a subsidiary of a joint venture between Comcast and General Electric (Comcast-GE). Paramount, likewise, is part of the cable television enterprise, Viacom; and Sony runs Columbia and Tri-Star Studios. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios (MGM), which merged with United Artists in the eighties, had a perplexing history of sales, bankruptcy, and receivership in Kirk Kerkorian's unsuccessful efforts at avoiding corporatization. A three-way bidding war between Time Warner and General Electric ended in 2004 with a partnership led by Sony Corporation of America, Comcast, Texas Pacific Group (now TPG Capital, L.P.), Providence Equity Partners, and other investors acquiring MGM. This dissertation's sample films are products of Twentieth Century-Fox, Universal, and Paramount, which are subsidiaries of News Corporation, Viacom, and Comcast-GE respectively.

Studio ownership matters because Entman & Rojecki (2001) found that the corporate ownership and economic market within which commercial media operate influence media content. Specifically, they demonstrate "how the political economy of mainstream movie production, built around the star system, affects the ideological messages of character and dialogue" (p. 185). To illustrate this practice, Entman & Rojecki point to ways in which studio executives transform a film's market position by deciding to focus stories through White as opposed to Black characters. Studio executives, for example, traditionally secure blockbuster as opposed to niche-market movie status by expending the bulk of dialog and close-ups on White actors instead of Black actors. As stated in Chapter 2, their multiple determinant theory suggests

“the choice to focus so heavily upon the Whites reflects...the mainstream culture and the market at work on the filmmakers, and therefore on the audience” (p. 186). In this way, they found, movies often sacrifice realism to connect with the stereotypes. “Celebrated Images of Blackness” and “Creating Xenophobia, Threatening Democracy” build on Entman & Rojecki’s work. In each, multiple determinant theory is applied to Hollywood movies that are either blockbusters or recipients of Oscar awards.

Racial Stereotypes in Oscar-Winning Films

Entman & Rojecki found that between 1991 and 2001, fifty-five males and fifty-five females received Academy Award nominations for best actor. Five of them were Black: Denzel Washington (twice), Lawrence Fishbourne, Morgan Freeman, and Angela Bassett. None of them won. As a result, the authors raised the following issue:

[Either] few Blacks star in the serious vehicles that generate Oscar buzz, or...the overwhelmingly White voters of the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences discriminate against Blacks in selecting nominees and winners—or both. In any case, it testifies to the continuing limits on Blacks’ employment opportunities and images in Hollywood film (pp. xvi-xvii).

Six Blacks were nominated for best supporting actor during those years, two of whom won: Whoopi Goldberg in *Ghost* (1991) and Cuba Gooding, Jr. in *Jerry Maguire*. These results raised implications for the images and portrayals that were being celebrated, which resulted in this pilot study.

By broadening the context to the entire 20th century, this project found that a diversity of Black actors, writers, producers, musicians, and engineers received more than 100 Academy Award nominations, but of them, only 7 African American actors received Oscar awards. The Academy awarded the same number of Oscars to Black actors in the first decade of the 21st

Century. Again, this begs the question of why the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences (“the Academy”) celebrates certain images while so many others are disregarded.

Dates & Barlow (1993) begin answering this question in their introductory essay. Like Hall (1981) and Entman & Rojecki (2001), Dates & Barlow indicate that the history of the Hollywood movie industry is replete with examples of roles available to African American actors in the 20th century being limited to a few caricatures and stock images informed by racist ideologies, such as the slave-figure, the native, and the clown. “By the time the film industry developed sound and settled into Hollywood, motion picture roles for African Americans had already become narrowly proscribed...as entertainers or servants...and the old stereotypes never faded away” (Cripps, p. 131). Dates & Barlow, further, argue, the “war between white and black image makers and media practitioners over the African American image is a classic example of group/class power relations, where social class divisions are complicated by the added dimension of race” and “how the dominant cultural group has worked to define, control, and maintain its influence over the subordinate one” (Dates & Barlow, p. 524).

To investigate the existence of these trends in a unique sample, “Celebrated Images of Blackness” entailed a qualitative content analysis along with descriptive quantitative statistics of the roles for which African American actors received Oscar awards. The literature on representations of Black people in film generally is critical, for any discussion of the portrayals of people of color in American entertainment must include the concept of stereotyping (Wilson, Guitierrez & Chao, 2003, p. 65). “Stereotypes are especially effective in conveying ideological messages because they are so laden with ritual and myth, particularly in the case of African Americans; but invariably, these black representations are totally at odds with the reality of African Americans as individual people” (Dates & Barlow, p. 523-524). Media studies and

media history comprise the bulk of the literature on stereotypes, but a gap appeared wherein there were little to no studies on the influence of industry systems on stereotypes in media content. Ultimately, the guiding query became whether patterns of stereotyping were reinforced in the portrayals awarded Oscars by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences.

The project’s sample consisted of the movies for which the Academy awarded six Oscar awards to African Americans in the 20th century. Later, a discrepancy between movie release dates and movie award dates made it necessary to add a seventh film, *Training Day*, because its release date was in 1999. The sample listed below includes similar character descriptions for roles honored by the academy along with the award category, year awarded, actor awarded, and film’s title:

Table 4.1: African American Oscar Award Winners in the 20th Century

Award Category	Year	Actor	Film	Role
Best Supporting Actress	1939	Hattie McDaniel	<i>Gone with the Wind</i>	Mammy
Best Actor (Lead)	1963	Sidney Poitier	<i>Lilies of the Field</i>	Sage Worker
Best Supporting Actor	1982	Louis Gossett, Jr.	<i>An Officer & A Gentleman</i>	Naval Trainer
Best Supporting Actor	1989	Denzel Washington	<i>Glory</i>	Soldier
Best Supporting Actress	1990	Whoopi Goldberg	<i>Ghost</i>	Con-Person
Best Supporting Actor	1996	Cuba Gooding Jr.	<i>Jerry Maguire</i>	Athlete
Best Actor (Lead)	1999	Denzel Washington	<i>Training Day</i>	Bad Cop

This study used grounded theory in open-coding the sample, followed by axial coding, and then applied theory against this backdrop. After inductively analyzing the findings from the open- and axial-coding of the sampled films, the data were categorized deductively according to the stereotypes that Hall (1981) posits are base-images in the grammar of race: the slave-figure,

the native, and the clown. While contributing to mass media research as a framing analysis, this study also incorporated some elements of semiotic methods to bolster the textual readings. Using semiotics in this supplemental and ancillary way is consistent with Entman & Rojecki's examination of "the culture's racial signals" and use of stereotypes as intricate racial patterns (p. 205). As such, "Celebrated Images of Blackness" identifies and describes the images, words, themes, and actions in the sample that evince the existence of each of the base images at least once in each film. Often, however, multiple stereotypes coexisted in the sample films. While these findings are consistent with prior literature on dominant racist ideologies about people of African descent, this pilot study also identified changes in ideology and rhetoric over the century as reflective of historical and socio-political progress.

One illustration from the study involves the clown stereotype. *Training Day*, *An Officer and a Gentleman*, and *Glory* use the clown stereotype to make more palatable their challenging and controversial socio-political content, as did *Lilies of the Field* before them. They criticize the desperate situations in which the other characters find themselves, while laughing, smiling, strutting or dancing around. The Black comic foils are openly expressive, emotional, and exhibit physical or rhythmic grace. In each instance, however, they are put in their place. In *Training Day*, the natives kill a rogue cop, Detective Harris, as rendered by Denzel Washington. In *An Officer and a Gentleman*, the protagonist physically and verbally stands up to Lou Gossett, Jr.'s representation of Sergeant Foley. In *Glory*, the elder statesman, Morgan Freeman's portrayal of Rawlins, chides and corrects the defiant clown, Denzel Washington's depiction of Trip. These often unkempt and dirty sources of comic relief even check those clowns of lower rank, such as Trip does young Private Jupiter Sharts (played by Jihmi Kennedy) in the following dialog from *Glory*:

Sgt. Mulcahy: Left! Right! Left!

Sgt. Mulcahy: [to Sharts]

Sgt. Mulcahy: What the hell are you doing, boy? Don't you know your right from your left?

Sharts: N-n-no, sah.

Sgt. Mulcahy: No? How many here do not know right from left?

Sgt. Mulcahy: [Half a dozen hands are raised. Mutters] Jesus have pity.

Sgt. Mulcahy: [Smacks Sharts in the chest] THIS is your FRONT!

Sgt. Mulcahy: [slaps his back]

Sgt. Mulcahy: THIS is your REAR!

Sgt. Mulcahy: [stomps on his right foot]

Sgt. Mulcahy: THIS is your RIGHT!

Sgt. Mulcahy: [goes to stomp on his left foot]

Sgt. Mulcahy: And THIS...!

Sharts: [Sharts lifts his foot out of the way]

Sgt. Mulcahy: Now you're learnin', boy-o!

...

Sharts: I wonder when they gonna give us the blue suits.

Trip: [laughs] Where you from, boy?

Sharts: South Carolina.

Trip: South Carolina? Well, then you ought to know better than that, boy.

In the end, clowning and foolishness provide an opportunity for disciplining and reprimanding those African Americans who cannot or do not comply with the rules—or those who dare to challenge the system—even if it does lighten the mood.

Most compelling, however, is assessing the movie industry power structure's complicity or culpability in perpetuating and reinforcing certain stereotypical roles as exemplars for the industry and society. Of the various roles played by African Americans throughout the century, the Academy consistently appears to venerate certain stereotypical performances as exemplars for the industry and society. This project found that the dominant ideologies about Black people that are reflected in the Academy's selection of African American Oscar Award winners in the 20th century include the following: (1) African Americans are inferior and one-dimensional, but they can be loyal servants if subjugated and controlled, (2) Whites can quell the primitive nature of African Americans by allowing them to participate in their collective rituals of dancing, drumming, and singing, and (3) African Americans are entertaining, but they can be a problem if they turn nasty. Copious evidence is discovered in the 7 sampled films of the slave figure, the native, and the clown stereotypes in the visual rhetoric that reinforces these dominant ideologies. The images and related visual rhetoric, however, do appear to change over the century according to the socio-political shifts.

There appears to be progress, for example, away from the slave-figure stereotype in Academy Award-winning films at the end of the twentieth century, given that three of the latter four films for which African American actors received Oscar awards do not have dominant themes, images, words, or actions consistent with the slave-figure stereotype. This may indicate that social and political shifts at the close of the century made this stereotype less acceptable and celebrated by the industry and the public. Otherwise, it simply may be that fewer depictions of

slave-figure characters are presented by filmmakers. Either way, any move away from the vestiges of slavery is laudable.

To illustrate this, we can see challenge to, and progress away from, 1939's Jim Crow Segregation Era depictions of African Americans in *Gone with the Wind* as the 1960s' Civil Rights Movements emerged. *Lilies of the Field*, for this reason, was controversial for its day. Similarly, *Glory* told a story in 1989 about 1865 America with a crude honesty that may not have been received well in earlier decades. In some ways, its historically based tale is the other side of the story that *Gone with the Wind* omitted in 1939. Hence, the images, themes, words, and actions of the films may be reflections of the cultural shifts that occur(ed) in society.

Alternatively, we also see a change in stereotypes in *Training Day*, *Jerry Maguire*, and *An Officer and a Gentleman*. These three films are set in the last 20 years of the 20th century, and in them, filmmakers allow Black men to be angry and mean instead of the docile, obedient and non-threatening characters of earlier decades. This may indicate social and political shifts at the close of the century that made the slave-figure stereotype less acceptable and celebrated by the industry and the public. Here, these images resemble most closely the clown stereotype, but literature by Bogle (2001) and Guerrero (1993) would likely classify it as the buck stereotype. This distinction—or similarity—may be a worthy topic for more research. Either way, there is change (even if perhaps not progress) in these character portrayals from those of earlier in the 20th century.

These three films are from different studios, writers, and directors, but there remains a distinguishing trait they have in common that also is worthy of further analysis: gender. Though debatable, the characters in the films that may represent historical progress are men. The changes do not occur equally across genders in the sample. Only in *Gone with the Wind* and

Ghost are the award-winning characters women—and their depictions are more regressive than progressive. If comparing the male roles and female roles in this sample, gender bias—or at least male privilege—exists in that the award-winning depictions of African American men shift to defy stereotypes while the award-winning depictions of African American women tend to reinforce stereotypes. Even in *Glory*, Washington’s Trip experiences a major arc of character development that results in his maturation, leadership, and heroism at the story’s end. No such arc occurs with Mammy or Oda Mae.

While this topic warrants far more research, “Celebrated Images of Blackness” suggests that the performances of, and roles for, African American women receive fewer awards and are far more stereotypical. Whether in 1939 or 1990, Mammy and Oda Mae look remarkably alike. They are comical slaves with poor diction, wide eyes, strange loyalties, and exaggerated emotions. Unlike their White counterparts, they are neither desirable nor intelligent. They have no concerns, families, responsibilities, or lives outside of serving their White folks—for free. If there is a link between the socio-political reality and the Hollywood images/ideologies, this problematic trend suggests that not only racism but sexism stagnates the opportunities for and messages about Black womanhood.

Another finding of this study is that differences in filmmakers, studios, and corporate acquisitions over the years of the sample demonstrate that writing, casting, and directing practices regarding stereotypes of African Americans are industry-wide. Isolating trends in the use of stereotypes to particular companies or individuals is not possible with this sample. Even if this project follows Dates & Barlow’s examination of differences among image-makers engaged in the war over images, the only significant finding is that writers and directors of 6 of the 7 films in this sample are White. *Training Day* is the only exception. The writer is White,

but the director is not. Antoine Fuqua is only Black director of the awarded films, and, therefore, presumably the only non-dominant-culture, counter-hegemonic presentation. This may be the reason that categorizing Denzel Washington's character among the three base-images is difficult. Despite *Glory*'s realism, it is a story told from the perspective of the White commanding officer—derived from his letters to his mother about his experiences. Therefore, *Training Day*'s defiance of easy categorization among the three stereotypes may not be solely about social progress or male privilege. Instead, it may signify the change that occurs when a Black man controls and constructs the portrayal of an African American man in media. Dates & Barlow may argue that this is what happens when Black images are no longer filtered and mass-produced through the racial misconceptions and fantasies of the dominant White culture.

Of all of the films, however, *Glory* is the only one that grapples with historical explanations for the depicted plight of the stereotypically portrayed characters. From the outset, the dialog explains to the viewer that Trip was a field-hand who ran away from the plantation on which he was enslaved—never having known his parents or family. Likewise, Sergeant Major John Rawlins (Morgan Freeman), Corporal Thomas Searles (Andre Braugher) and a few other soldiers' backstories develop the characters so that the audience gains an appreciation of the diversity of human experiences represented. Complicating the roles through the dialog humanizes the figures, instead of reducing them to simple stock images.

While the other films may not be ahistorical fantasies, they do present stories that fail to address the reasons for the characters' current situations. Audiences walk away neither knowing how those persons came to be who they are, nor why they behave as they do. This means the frame merely primes or cues a stereotype—leaving room for viewers to merge under- or un-developed characters into the schemas in their heads. Often, these schemas reflect

dominant-hegemonic messages that function to justify societal systems limiting opportunities or resources for certain historically disadvantaged groups—as argued above by Hall and Jost & Hamilton. As such, the stereotype rationalizes and reinforces existing forms of inequality.

Scholars and audiences should be troubled when contemporary films reinvent stereotypes like the slave-figure in *Ghost*, the native in *Training Day*, or the clown in *Jerry Maguire*. Indeed, these are illustrations that stereotypes concerning the essence of racial, ethnic, religious, and gender groups are particularly nefarious in part because it is difficult to disabuse people of them. If White Americans learn about African Americans not through personal relationships but through the images the media show them, these recycled stereotypes are misleading as barometers of race relations and for knowing African Americans. Entman & Rojecki contend that such discrepancies are neither coincidental nor random, but rather, parts of an ideology systematically communicated by those controlling mass media. This project suggests that powerful entities, such as the Academy, reinforce certain dominant culture ideologies by endorsing the visual rhetoric of demeaning stereotypes through structural devices, such as the industry award for Best Supporting Actress given Goldberg for her role in *Ghost*.

From this study also came the recommendation for future analyses to break down films into scenes and measure the visual elements that make up the composition of the shot (any unbroken, unedited length of film). Audiences are consciously aware of dialogue between characters, their physical settings, and the music or sounds that accompany the scene. The type of analysis recommended here would examine those elements as well as camera movement, placement in the frame, color, spatial relationships among characters and between the viewer and the visual material, special visual effects, visual editing, and so on. Researchers can then use these compositions to ascertain impacts on viewers' likelihood of making connections between

themselves and a character. Mass communications literature is bereft of research that uses such analyses pertaining to stereotypes.

This study's findings point to the need for future research in several areas, but two most significantly influence the present dissertation. First, broad gaps are apparent in existing research pertaining to the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences, the impact of their systems of rating and awards on media content, and the relationship of that to the U.S. government and principles of democracy. Ascertaining the movie industry's experts' patterns of venerating certain roles and performances advances mass communications literature on framing, stereotypes, and media and society. Second, more research is needed on the images, themes, and audience reception of the highest grossing films of all time, which are the ones with the greatest viewership. This research trajectory also adds to the shift toward a cultural studies approach that insists on the need to develop theory within an understanding of how media texts may either contribute to or undermine the inequalities that exist in post-industrialized societies like our own. These linkages of media theory, movies and politics are particularly significant within cultural studies that focus on the lived experiences of socially subordinate groups and the ways in which media industries contribute to the continuation of inequalities.

Religious Imagery in Top Grossing Films

A second paper, "Creating Xenophobia, Threatening Democracy," presents a pilot study examining three films with the highest viewership of all time for framing bias and system justification in use of "the native" stereotype as defined by Stuart Hall (1981). The findings exhibit a pattern of coupling Judeo-Christian religious themes with derogatory stereotypical images of racial minorities. In each of the sampled films, compelling evidence exists that filmmakers depict indigenous and/or non-Judeo-Christian religious adherents as subordinate,

primitive, and often violent savages in juxtaposition to civilized Judeo-Christian counterparts. Such repeated images pose dangers to democracy and implications for inequality reinforcement.

Framing theory, and specifically, Entman & Rojecki's multiple determinant theory, ground this study. Unlike "Celebrated Images of Blackness," the method exclusively followed Entman & Rojecki's qualitative model for the examination of stereotypes in movies. Rather than incorporate semiotics in analyzing movie content as visual rhetoric, "Creating Xenophobia, Threatening Democracy" investigates filmmakers' use of images, words, actions, and themes using traditional qualitative content analysis. In conducting a careful, detailed, systematic examination and interpretation to identify patterns, themes, biases, and meanings, this project analyzes the ways in which religious messaging and the native stereotype appear in images, themes, words, and actions in three of the highest-grossing films of all time in Canada and the United States. The highest-grossing movies are those with the largest audiences, and therefore, the greatest influence since the beginning of filmmaking. Seeking representation from three different eras, the purposive sample included the following films: *The Ten Commandments* (1956, Cecil B. DeMille); *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981, Steven Spielberg & George Lucas); and *Avatar* (2009, James Cameron).

This project's sampling process provided the most compelling finding for the development of the present dissertation. Combing through several domestic and global aggregations of the most popular movies from over a century exposed a glaring improbability: ten of the films ranked among the top twenty (see Tables 1 and 2) were directed by one of only three men: George Lucas, Steven Spielberg, and James Cameron. In turn, for this exploratory sample, one film was selected from each of these writers and directors as well as one outside of their cohort. The outlier, obviously, is Cecil DeMille's 1956 epic, *The Ten Commandments*.

Each of the films also received designation and preservation in the United States National Film Registry by the Library of Congress as being “culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant” (Family Entertainment and Copyright Act of 2005).

The conceptualization of this analysis followed the grounded theory approach developed by Glaser & Strauss (1967). After a round of open-coding and axial coding, allowing categories to emerge from the movie content, the coding process derived—and classified data according to—concepts from relevant mass communication literature on framing, stereotypes, religion, and racist ideologies in media. Using this qualitative, inductive approach, empirical indicators in the data guided the development of coding sheets that offered criteria and instructions for evaluation of the units of analysis. This coding scheme animated analysis of the films as recorded media texts. The results presented descriptions of implicit and explicit depictions of the native stereotype, as well as a comparison of those portrayals to ascertain whether and how the stereotypes presentation changed over the 53 years between the first film’s release in 1956 and the last film’s release in 2009.

The findings indicate clear patterns of coupling Judeo-Christian religious themes with stereotypical images of the native. Although no generalizations may be made in applying the results of this study to movies outside of the sample, each of the three films presents compelling evidence that these filmmakers depict indigenous and/or non-Judeo-Christian religious adherents as subordinate, primitive, and often violent savages.

Cecil B. DeMille's 1956 film *The Ten Commandments* features one of the best known images of the biblical Hebrews, Egyptians, and Ethiopians. Starring Charlton Heston as Moses, with Yul Brynner as his pharaonic antagonist, this film is an epic religious narrative about ethnic heritage, nationalism, providence, and slavery. The themes that dominate the film are of

tribalism, paganism, and human relations of subordination and domination. The director employs stereotypes around superior and inferior species, which relate to both race and religion. Although most of the actors are White, make-up darkens their skin—especially those who play the roles of the enslaved. Only the Ethiopians and unnamed, non-speaking enslaved Africans are Black. Those in power are the Whitest among all characters, and even Moses' skin becomes darker while he is enslaved. Dark skin, therefore, functions as a physical sign of a racial characteristic signifying unalterable subjugation. For, deliverance not only brings the Hebrews freedom; it also lightens their skin.

Though Moses is Hebrew, “the son of slaves,” his privilege and conflicting upbringing allows him to function much like Hall's isolated white figure, alone out there, confronting his Destiny or shouldering his Burden in the heart of darkness. While the native can be argued to be the Egyptian or the Hebrew at different times in the 4-hour film, Moses is always the favored character who displays coolness under fire and an unshakeable authority—exerting mastery over the rebellious natives. He is the one quelling a threatened uprising with a single glance of his steel-blue eyes. DeMille presents the Hebrews as a restless tribal group—perhaps even a religious cult at certain points in the story—that moves as a not-so-anonymous collective mass. Moses proclaims the Ten Commandments in response to the idol worship, whirling dervishes, and wild behavior of the unrepentant Hebrews who wander in the desert.

The Egyptians, on the other hand, are depicted as primitive characters prone to cheating, cunning, savagery, barbarism, drumming, and primeval rites. In the dialog, characters refer to them with terms including slave, infidel, and savage. These scantily dressed dark people float about in garish attire and ethnic prints with elaborate, bejeweled hairstyles. Religious symbols are common on both sides in the form of ankhs, stone tablets, masks, and the like. Matching in

nearly all regards, *The Ten Commandments* is clearly the classic film presentation of Hall's stereotype of the native. Moreover, the words and messages are deliberately supremacist and exclusively from a Judeo-Christian perspective; for the film ends as it begins, emphasizing the divine origins of one ethnic group as God's chosen people.

Similarly, the filmmaking team of Steven Spielberg and George Lucas present the native stereotype in *Raiders of the Lost Ark* in such close consistency with Hall's definition that coding it was eerie. Harrison Ford plays the lead character, Indiana Jones, who is an archaeologist, professor, ladies' man, government contractor, world traveler, and master fighter. He beats all antagonists at everything, and it so happens that all of them are either non-American or non-White males. While *Raiders* presents several tempting gender and post-colonial themes that are ripe for analysis, this study limits itself to scrutinizing religious and related racial images, themes, words, and actions.

Lucas and Spielberg emphasize strong religious themes centered on the Hebrew Scriptures' myth of the lost Ark of the Covenant. This Judeo-Christian legend couples with racial, tribal, and nationalist themes as the lone American cowboy on a white horse beats into submission the Amazonian tribesmen, Nazis, Egyptians, Muslims, and Black characters. Stereotypes center on superior and inferior natural species, and Indiana Jones reigns superior—subjugating natives globally, whether in jungles, caves, deserts, or at sea. Indiana Jones represents America as the dominant power in a world of fixed relations of subordination. His privilege is the result of his nature as smarter, quicker, and better-resourced than anyone.

In the Amazon, Indiana Jones gets his hands on a precious idol irrespective of the dirty, cowardly Spanish-speaker who tricks him out of it and the tribal masses who chase him while shooting poison darts to no avail. In Nepal and Egypt, he beats every turban-wearing dark man

in saloons, marketplaces, and deserts—even the giants and the one wearing an eye-patch. Presumably Muslim, they are allies and pawns of the Nazis—symbolizing treachery and evil intent. Germans commandeer the grumbling natives with swastikas, thick accents, and an intimidating soundtrack.

Indiana Jones is the isolated white figure, alone “out there,” confronting his destiny or shouldering his Burden in the “heart of darkness,” displaying coolness under fire and an unshakeable authority. One example occurs when, alone, Cairo’s dark masses part to reveal a tall dark man in all black with a red belt and a large sword pursuing the protagonist. Without fear, Harrison Ford reaches for his gun and shoots the man in seconds. He exerts mastery over the rebellious natives and quells threatened uprisings with a single glance of his steel-blue eyes. Furthermore, this ahistorical fantasy also presents the natives as monster-humans who capture the beautiful heroine, kidnap the children, burn the encampment, and threaten to kill the innocent. Salvation comes only by Indiana Jones’s superior knowledge and divine intervention.

In this 1981 film, images, themes, and actions are quite similar to those in the prior 1956 film. Religious adherents with dark complexions appear as members of violent cults—some even don black turbans and thobes in same way the bad guy in a western wears a black hat or all black clothing. Restless tribal groups move through jungles and caves as anonymous collective masses with strange languages, masks, statues, attire, and practices of idol worship. In their leather thongs, these unkempt, dirty, primitive tribesmen are prone to violence, savagery, barbarism, drumming, rituals, bones-in-noses, tying innocents to stakes, and threatening stares from dark or wooded/jungle bushes. *Raiders of the Lost Ark* is another classic example of Hall’s stereotype of the native with unquestionable religious overtones even though they may be more subtle than the dialog in *The Ten Commandments*.

Tribalism, pagan beliefs, and race are also dominant themes in James Cameron's *Avatar* (2009). Cameron, however, modifies common stereotypes and presumptions in this ahistorical fantasy. The storyline pits the brutal and greedy humans in glaring contradiction to the enlightened and peaceful aliens. The Na'vi are giant creatures from outer spaces who are Blue people-like extra-terrestrials who can communicate with animals, trees, and dragons. In many respects, their depiction harkens back to early twentieth century cinema's Westerns and their images of Native Americans. In other ways, *Avatar* and the Na'vi appear to be allusions to African tribes in nineteenth century literature such as John Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Like *Avatar*, *Heart of Darkness* explores the so-called darkness potentially inherent in all humanity through themes of colonialism, racism, and savagery versus civilization.

Cameron groups stereotypes around "superior" and "inferior" natural species but adds the new spin that the Americans may be superior in technology and military power, but the Na'vi are superior in civility and compassion. Conforming to stereotype, however, primitive traditions, tribal systems, and pagan beliefs characterize the Na'vi, who the director cast as Black and Latino actors. Cameron casts the humans as White actors; in so doing, he equates Whiteness with humanity, deception, power, and destruction. This may complicate racial stereotypes of the past, but race remains the unalterable physical signifier of inferiority because the Blue people are unable to protect themselves and their land from the Whites.

Jake Sully, the lead character, is a paraplegic Marine dispatched to the moon Pandora on a mission to infiltrate and conquer the Na'vi so that the U.S. can take their land and exploit its natural resources. He remotely controls an avatar that deceives the Na'vi into believing he is one of them. Jake becomes torn between following his military orders and protecting the world among the Na'vi that he comes to identify with as his home. He is the isolated White figure,

alone “out there,” confronting his destiny or shouldering his burden in the “heart of darkness.” He displays coolness under fire and an unshakeable authority—exerting mastery over the rebellious natives, such that he quells a threatened uprising with a single glance of his steel-blue face. As a result, they meet their demise at the hands of real monster-humans who are prone to cheating, cunning, savagery, and barbarism. It is the humans who threaten the beautiful heroine, kidnap the children, burn the encampment, and kill the innocent.

Nonetheless, *Avatar* does not escape or defy the traditional trappings of compliance with the native stereotype. The White Americans even call the inhabitants of the strange land “natives.” Filmmakers enmesh race and religion in this film, as with those of prior eras, to justify fear of the alien, foreigner, or stranger. The magical Na’vi operate as a cult and travel as a restless tribal group that moves as an anonymous collective mass. They participate in primitive rites and rituals that include sitting and chanting around a tree that they believe has mystical powers. Their skins are akin to garish attire, ethnic prints or scantily dressed people. At night, they sleep in the same trees they fly to and from during the day—and their eyes are often seen casting threatening stares from dark or wooded/jungle bushes.

Vestiges of residual xenophobia persist in *Avatar* even though the emergent culture pushes back to show that those who call the indigenous people “savages” are often the most barbaric. The ethic upheld is more secular than religious, which marks a move away from the Judeo-Christian ethnocentrism of the earlier two films. The evils, instead, are greed, wealth and power—not necessarily difference. The lurking danger, however, is that this novelty when intertwined with damaging stereotypes can legitimize those harmful images, themes, words, and actions. If the moral is progressive, then the assumption can be that all of its contents are

acceptable. The critical lens calls for continued growth away from past presumptions about what it is to be non-White, primitive, or pagan.

In sum, this pilot project found that each film in the sample has the stereotypical scantily-clad tribes running and jumping wildly in the bush, traveling en masse, speaking indiscernible languages, and performing odd rites for idols. The images, themes, and actions related to the native stereotype consistently appear with little variations in the sample despite the 53 years traversed. The differences occur in shifts in tone and words about beliefs and religion—but not in terms of race. Cecil B. DeMille's overt messages in 1956 are more subtle when conveyed by Stephen Spielberg in 1981 and then even more so by James Cameron in 2009. In all, however, the “White” man is privileged by nature, intellect, or divinity. His burden is to civilize and save the non-White heathen and savages in strange lands—not to mention the damsels in distress.

Conclusions

Usage of stereotypes in the most influential films of all time may justify or perpetuate systems of discrimination, xenophobia, and global underdevelopment. Mass communication scholarship, therefore, must fill the gap in the literature by investigating media content that has such a broad global and historical reach. For example, each year, particularly at Passover or Easter, networks program *The Ten Commandments* in prime time. This advertising income and dedicated viewership, assuredly, contributes to why it is ranked among the highest grossing films of all time. Program directors bank on families planning their holiday festivities around watching the 4-hour epic. This means the movie's images and messages are introduced at early ages and reiterated over subsequent years. Watching messages and images that retell the supremacy of certain people or beliefs repeatedly may impact people's perceptions of social reality. This is an area ripe for additional research.

Nevertheless, encoding and decoding media messages are complex processes. The methods used in the pilot projects were insufficient for drawing conclusions regarding intent of the filmmakers or effects on audiences. Although these projects may further substantiate Hall's arguments on dominant-hegemonic reproduction and the potential of oppositional- or negotiated-hegemonic reproductions in film, doing so is a far more intricate process than critical discourse analysis literature claims to provide. While intriguing, the transformations of which Hall wrote in 1980 are beyond the scope of these pilot studies.

As exploratory studies, these projects highlight the need for more research on the content and implications of stereotypes in mass media. Each of the pilot projects challenged assumptions about stereotypes in movies and mass media generally. While using hegemony and schema theories contributed to the analyses respectively, framing theory was most appropriate—even fundamental—for the level of analysis of stereotypes necessary for examining movie content. In both studies, the research of Entman & Rojecki and Hall became guideposts for progressing in this research trajectory. As a result, this dissertation builds on their work and asks questions raised by the pilot projects.

Implications for the Dissertation

This dissertation hones in on three primary points of focus: (1) not only describing, but also evaluating, the relationships between laudable and derogatory stereotypes in America's most influential films, (2) connecting stereotypes in movie content to mythology, legend, and ideology, and (3) understanding the relationships between media content and political economy of American filmmaking. As the pilot projects demonstrate, filmmakers, like other storytellers in news and entertainment media, rely on the corpus of images inherited from prior centuries, experiences, cultures, and media. Ascertaining patterns in media content and the creation of

media content is an integral component of scrutinizing mass communication and its effects. Analyzing the most influential mediated messages of the past and present may enable future generations to push back with new concepts rather than merely recycling the old.

Contributing to frame analysis and literature on media stereotypes, this research builds upon the way in which Entman analyzes media frames as elements of a broader historical or systemic discourse. As detailed in Chapter 2, for example, the cascading activation model identifies a frame in White House foreign policy from a particular point in time and then traces the recurrence of that frame in news media and later individual frames in public opinion. Entman & Rojecki apply a similar method in identifying historical tropes from the culture, such as American literature, and linking those tropes to particular stereotypes in media, or specifically movies, and later individual frames in public opinion. In effect, these approaches employ some features of critical discourse analysis as essential components of frame analysis. The present dissertation, therefore, evaluates and describes stereotypes in movie content as they relate to historical ideologies, mythologies, and legends—and as products of a broader economic system of media production and distribution.

CHAPTER 5: POLITICAL ECONOMY OF FILMMAKING

The Context of the Study

Many movies are made as part of a complex economic structure. Studio executives and their corporate backers create most movies with the expectation that individual films and their eventual appearances abroad and on electronic media will spawn not only large financial returns, but offspring that will further those returns even more (Kolker, 2000, p. 5). Today, selling a movie to an audience entails feeding information into several mass media, including television, radio, newspapers, book publishing and the Internet. The political economy of filmmaking refers to the market pressures, profit incentives, business practices, and other economic, legal, political, and cultural forces that influence how and why films are made. Simply, a studio can have a writer or director play up a certain character or storyline because they believe doing so will draw a larger audience and in turn more money.

Film studios rely upon advertisers, investors, and corporate backers for financing million-dollar production budgets. They, likewise, depend upon government agencies for ratings that largely influence a film's marketing and distribution. Unlike most other countries, Hollywood's film industry produces, markets, and distributes movies globally—and the Motion Picture Academy of America, of which the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences is a part, awards both domestic and international films. Awards and investments in production, marketing, and distribution either maximize or limit viewership and box-office revenues.

Distributors

Distributors are important in the Hollywood filmmaking process. In effect, they are responsible for the films in the dissertation's sample. The distributors market movies to the

public, and those who are most successful are those with movies ranked among the most influential—most viewed or most popular—of all time. Stephen Barnes, an entertainment lawyer, notes that those who possess power are the ones who have means to distribute a movie to theaters (Lowery, 2004). Film distributors, according to Goldberg (1991), often act as “third partners” with filmmakers and financiers who need assistance in financing a film’s production, and in exchange, the film distributors distribute the movie and share the profits (p. 2). Among the distributor’s responsibilities are overseeing the “creation of the marketing strategy; the market research activities; the prints and advertising budgets; the creation of the advertising, publicity, and promotional material; and creation of the marketing plan” (Goldberg, 1991, p. 1).

Several types of film distributors exist in the film industry, including the major distributors, “mini-majors” and independents; companies can move into the major category based on quantity, quality and gross sales of their movies (Goldberg, 1991). More specifically, Goldberg notes that “a successful distributor usually has an efficient marketing staff, an intelligent understanding of the product and the markets, the clout to get the best theaters, the best playing times, and the best terms for a particular movie; and the ability to influence the consumer to pay to watch the movie” (1989, pp. 3-4). Examples of major distributors include Columbia Tri-Star, New World, Disney Buena Vista, 20th Century Fox, MGM/Pathé, Paramount Pictures, Universal Pictures, and Warner Brothers.

The focus of this research is on movies distributed in theaters by 20th Century Fox (News Corp), Paramount (Viacom), and Universal (Comcast-GE). These are three of the major distributors that primarily control the Hollywood movie system and have the financial resources to bring films to the market. Obviously, they enjoy unique success among their corporate peers as owners of ten of the twenty most influential movies of all time. James Cameron (Table A.1a),

George Lucas (Table A.1b), and Steven Spielberg (Table A.1c) made films almost exclusively for one of these three distributors over the past four decades. These directors are among the film industry's elite as the most awarded, highly sought after, and highest paid of filmmakers globally—each having a net worth in excess of \$3 billion (Freeman, 2012).

Filmmakers

Harvard Law School's Labor and Worklife Program reports that James Cameron tops the list of filmmakers' net worth with an annual salary of \$257 million. George Lucas and Steven Spielberg follow, making \$170 and \$130 million per year respectively. So much power and influence in the hands of so few prompts questions about the content and influence of the media they create.

James Cameron is a Canadian-born film director referred to by his biographer as half-artist and half-scientist for his specialization in science fiction movies and environmentalist activism (Keegan, 2009). Cameron's most popular movies are *Titanic* (1997), *Avatar* (2009), *The Terminator* (1984), *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* (1991), *Aliens* (1986), and *True Lies* (1994). Nominated for six Academy Awards overall, Cameron won three Oscars for *Titanic*. Further, among movies not adjusted for inflation, Cameron's *Titanic* and *Avatar* are the two highest-grossing films of all time at \$2.19 billion and \$2.78 billion respectively (IMDb, 2013). After seeing George Lucas' original *Star Wars* film in 1977, Cameron quit his job as a truck driver to enter the film industry (Keegan, 2009).

George Lucas is an American film producer, screenwriter, director, and leader in digital technology and innovation. He founded Lucasfilm Limited and led the company as chairman and chief executive before selling it to Disney in October 2012 for an estimated \$4.05 billion, of which he states, "Disney's reach and experience give Lucasfilm the opportunity to blaze new

trails in film, television, interactive media, theme parks, live entertainment, and consumer products.” (Pomerantz, 2012). George Lucas is best known as the creator of the space opera movie franchise, *Star Wars*, and the archaeology-adventure movie franchise, *Indiana Jones*. He holds the unique position of pioneering much of the cutting-edge entertainment digital technologies now used in film production, animation, visual effects, and audio post production. Yet, Lucas never won a competitive Oscar despite being nominated for four Academy Awards: Best Directing and Writing for *American Graffiti*, and Best Directing and Writing for *Star Wars*. In 1991, however, Lucas received the Thalberg Award, which the Academy presents to “creative producers whose bodies of work reflect a consistently high quality of motion picture production” (AMPAS, 2013). Among his closest friends are filmmaking legends, Francis Ford Coppola, Martin Scorsese, and Steven Spielberg, with whom he worked on *Raiders*.

Steven Spielberg, also an American filmmaker, emerged as a major force in Hollywood movies in the 1980s. At a young age, Spielberg moved into the status of Hollywood financial and creative institution (Kolker, 2000). Having started his filmmaking career in science-fiction like his cohorts above, his films in subsequent years began addressing issues including terrorism, war, the Transatlantic slave trade, and the Holocaust. As co-founder of DreamWorks movie studio, achieved box office records with three films —*Jaws* (1975), *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial* (1982), and *Jurassic Park* (1993). Each became the highest-grossing film made at the time (IMDb, 2012). Additionally, Spielberg won the Academy Award for Best Director for *Schindler's List* (1993) and *Saving Private Ryan* (1998). As demonstrated by his current blockbuster, *Lincoln* (2012), Spielberg continues to probe and experiment, to refine his styles and explore the culture. Of him, Kolker writes:

As studio head, producer, and director, he is a one-person representative of the whole filmmaking apparatus. He is in the forefront of technological advances in the filmmaking process and once in a while attempts films of such enormous intended seriousness—*Schindler's List* (1993), *Amistad* (1997), *Saving Private Ryan* (1998)—that he must still be attended to. Because he is such an avatar of contemporary film, the chapter devoted to him will be used to sum up some themes and predicaments in Hollywood filmmaking during the nineties (xv).

In sum, these three men debatably are the most influential and powerful filmmakers of the current era. Each continues to make films that incite national dialog and stimulate global revenue. Of the films in this study's sample, Fox and Paramount distributed Cameron's two films, but Lucas' and Spielberg's films went almost exclusively to Fox and Universal respectively. The exception, however, for both Lucas and Spielberg is *Raiders*, which Paramount distributed. A comprehensive examination of their imprint on mass media culture must include an assessment of the conglomerates of which they are a part.

Corporate Conglomerates

Fox produced and distributed film and television content for 50 years before Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation purchased the studio in 1985 (News Corporation, 2011a). News Corporation ("News Corp") is the world's second-largest media group as of 2011 in terms of revenue, and the world's third largest in entertainment as of 2009 (News Corporation, 2011a). News Corp also owns myriad film, television, publishing, cable network programming, direct broadcast satellite, and other diversified media holdings in the U.S., Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, India, Taiwan, China, and areas in Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East. A few notable examples are Fox News Channel, Dow Jones/Wall Street Journal, HarperCollins Publishers, Hulu.com, American Idol, and National Geographic (News Corporation, 2011b).

Viacom, in its 2011 Annual Report, states that in addition to Paramount, it owns Nickelodeon, MTV, BET Networks, The Daily Show with Jon Stewart, more than 160 locally programmed and operated TV channels, more than 500 digital media properties, and several additional media holdings (Viacom, 2011a). Viacom also reported to the Securities Exchange Commission in 2011 that its worldwide revenues increased \$1.558 billion, or 12%, to \$14.914 billion in the 2011 fiscal year (ended September 30, 2011) (Viacom, 2011b). Its media networks contributed \$814 million of the increase reflecting higher advertising and affiliate revenues, and filmed entertainment contributed \$770 million of the increase, principally reflecting higher theatrical and ancillary revenues, partially offset by lower home entertainment revenues (Viacom, 2011b).

Universal's long history of movie production dates back to 1912, as it is the oldest movie studio in the U.S. and second oldest in the world that is still in continuous production (the first being Gaumont Pictures; the next oldest is Paramount) (Poor's, 1916, p. 2768). In addition to owning a sizable film library spanning the earliest decades of cinema to more contemporary works, it also owns a sizable collection of digital, print, satellite, television, and other media holdings through its subsidiary NBC Universal Television Distribution (Comcast, 2011). In 2011, NBCU LLC's revenue increased 4% to \$21.1 billion from its cable networks, broadcast television, film entertainment, and theme parks (Comcast, 2011).

Comcast Corporation ("Comcast") and General Electric ("GE") are the parent corporations of NBCU LLC (Comcast, 2011; General Electric, 2011a, 2011b). This is significant because the asset transfers that occurred on January 28, 2011, to create this new entity, and its subsequent deconsolidation are quite complex and would not have been permitted under prior regulations. In sum, GE sold several shares to Comcast for an amount that is difficult to

ascertain because of intricate accounting techniques, but what is clear is that GE retained a significant minority shareholder interest with 49% of available shares while Comcast owns 51% of NBCU LLC (General Electric, 2011a; 2011b). .

It is apparent, therefore, that in addition to film production and distribution subsidiaries, each parent corporation independently owns billions in media holdings, as well as other interests (News Corporation, 2011a, 2011b; Viacom, 2011a, 2011b; General Electric, 2011a, 2011b). Looking at GE's energy infrastructure, aviation, transportation, healthcare, and home and business solutions illustrates this point well (General Electric, 2011b). In its 2011 Annual Report, for example, GE reports \$147.3 billion in consolidated global revenues from its interests in the U.S., Europe, Pacific Basin, Americas, Middle East, Africa, and other geographic regions (General Electric, 2011a). Comcast, on the other hand, reports that its consolidated revenue increased 47% to \$55.8 billion and consolidated operating cash flow increased 26% to \$18.4 billion, reflecting "strong organic growth in our Cable business, as well as consolidating NBCUniversal...and the remaining 50% of Universal Orlando on July 1st" (Comcast, 2011).

CHAPTER 6: RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHOD

Research Questions

Mass media research must interrogate the nature of messages and images filmmakers present and their overwhelming appeal among viewers. Without making assertions about intent or effects, this dissertation investigates the media content—the messages—the views of the world—that James Cameron, George Lucas, and Steven Spielberg are conveying in ten of the most influential movies of all time. The following research questions are designed to guide the data analysis and presentation of this study. Each question builds upon the theories and pilot projects discussed in the prior chapters. The primary aim of these queries as a whole is to describe and evaluate stereotypes in the sampled movies.

RQ1a: What are the stereotypes of dominant racial group members in the movies of James Cameron?

RQ1b: What are the stereotypes of dominant racial group members in the movies of George Lucas?

RQ1c: What are the stereotypes of dominant racial group members in the movies of Steven Spielberg?

RQ2a: What are the stereotypes of non-dominant racial group members in the movies of James Cameron?

RQ2b: What are the stereotypes of non-dominant racial group members in the movies of George Lucas?

RQ2c: What are the stereotypes of non-dominant racial group members in the movies of Steven Spielberg?

RQ3: How do the racially dominant and non-dominant characters relate to one another in each of the respective filmmaker's movies?

RQ4: Are non-racial laudatory or derogatory stereotypes apparent in the sample (i.e., stereotypes on the basis of gender, religion, ability, sexual orientation, nationality, class, etc.)?

RQ5: How are the identified stereotypes linked with historical ideologies, myths, or legends?

To answer these questions, this study examines the ways in which images, themes, words, actions, and scene evoke or frame stereotypes in the ten of the twenty most influential films since the inception of American filmmaking in the early twentieth century (see Table A.1). Currently, the most reliable rankings of the twenty most popular films include two movies by James Cameron: *Titanic*, and *Avatar*; four movies by George Lucas: *Star Wars*, *The Empire Strikes Back*, *Return of the Jedi*, and *Star Wars: Episode I - The Phantom Menace*; three movies by Steven Spielberg: *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial*, *Jaws*, and *Jurassic Park*, and one movie by Lucas and Spielberg: *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. The sample, therefore, includes each of these movies.

Significance of the Sample

If, as the literature states, filmmakers and distributors use familiar conventions to attract large audiences, then mass media research must examine those movies that successfully attracted the largest audiences since the medium's inception. Among the familiar conventions that numerous literatures identify are stereotypical tropes that can include images, themes, words, actions, and scenes. To investigate, therefore, whether and how the most influential movies use familiar stereotypes in appealing to audiences, this dissertation's purposive sampling strategy allows the selection of rich cases within the sample films that can generate in-depth data. A proper and purposeful sampling strategy can help a researcher select what to observe and whom to interview, which helps place individuals in a specific historical or cultural context (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002).

Furthermore, this sample (Table A.1) is not only purposive, but also culturally significant. That is, the sample not only comes from an industry list measuring viewership, but also from the U.S. Library of Congress' National Film Preservation Board's selected films for preservation in the U.S. National Film Registry as being "culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant" (Family Entertainment and Copyright Act of 2005). This ranks the sample among enduring titles such as *Gone with the Wind* (1939), *The Ten Commandments* (1956), and *Ben Hur* (1959).

This dissertation's sample features movies with the broadest reach and greatest influence based on the numbers of viewers. Several agencies—industry, governmental and independent—rank and track American movies according to revenue and viewership. To estimate the number of people who comprise a film's audience, the movie industry measures viewership according to box office receipts and ranks films by their gross income. Insiders and outsiders use the listings to compare the influence, popularity, and success of newer movies with that of older movies. This allows for speculation on impact and reach of the images and messages examined in this study. Although repeat viewers may skew such measurements, repeated viewership of repeated images by certain segments of the population also may have theoretical implications for future research.

The sample is drawn from a listing of the 200 highest-grossing films of all time as compiled from data by Box Office Mojo, an IMDb company (see Table A.2). Box Office Mojo is an online movie publication and box office-reporting service that presents the most comprehensive box office tracking available online (IMDb, 2012). Publications, including the *Los Angeles Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *USA Today*, *Bloomberg*, *Forbes*, trade magazines, and national broadcast outlets, regularly quote its research.

What makes Box Office Mojo's listing unique and reliable is that it ranks films using figures adjusted for ticket-price inflation, based on total box office receipts (IMDb.com, 2012). IMDb.com calculates the estimated number of tickets sold for a given movie by taking its box office gross and dividing it by the average ticket price at the time of its release. To adjust it for inflation (or see what it might have made in the past), the tabulators then multiply the estimated number of tickets sold by the average ticket price of the year to which sales are being converted (IMDb, 2012). Tables A.1a, A.1b, and A.1c display Box Office Mojo's compilations of the actual number of tickets sold for the sampled films, and Table A.2 shows how IMDb.com uses that figure to base its adjustments (apart from its reported gross) in relation to the complete listing of the top twenty films of all time.

Adjusting for ticket price inflation is not an exact science and provides only a general idea of what a movie might have made if released in a different year, assuming it sold the same number of tickets (IMDb, 2012). This ranking, however, does not account for other factors that may affect a movie's overall influence, popularity or success such as increases or decreases in the population, the total number of movies in the marketplace at a given time, economic conditions that may help or hurt the entertainment industry (e.g., war), the relative price of a movie ticket to other commodities in a given year, competition with other related media such as broadcast television, cable, VHS, DVD, the Internet, or social media. Still, this method provides a common metric used by the movie industry to best compare apples-to-apples when examining the history of box office earnings.

Qualitative Content Analysis of Stereotypes in Films

This study utilizes a qualitative content analysis to describe the type of textual frame analysis employed to provide thick, in-depth results. For example, to ascertain the manner in

which a stereotypical image can cue a myth or advance an ideology in a film, the concentration is on the coexistence of visual and verbal media messages, or the lack thereof. This provides an opportunity for evaluating the consistency and perpetuation of messaging over the decades spanned by the sample. Framing literature provides tools for assessing the coupling of the stereotype and the ideology in a manner that suggests intentional messaging.

According to Entman (1993), in reference to news content, the major task of determining textual meaning should be to identify and describe frames. To do so, researchers must measure the salience of elements of the text and gauge the relationships of the most salient clusters of messages—the frames—to the audience’s schemata. Entman warns, “content analysis informed by a theory of framing would avoid treating all negative or positive terms or utterances as equally salient or influential” (p. 57). Otherwise, if unguided by a framing paradigm, content analysis may often yield data that misrepresent the media messages that most audience members are actually picking up.

To avoid such discrepancies in analyzing stereotypes in movie content, Entman & Rojecki (2001) recommend and utilize a combination of qualitative and quantitative content analyses. As with Entman & Rojecki’s study, the quantitative components of this analysis are merely for descriptive purposes due to the small sample size. In turn, this researcher supplements the qualitative analysis with a quantitative frequency distribution of stereotypes by identifying variables within the sample, counting the number of times they occur in the films, and drawing inferences about their coexistence. Here, the only concern is for measuring central tendencies in the sample, so this researcher calculates the frequency and average number of the frames, which entails a discussion of the units of analysis. Exegeting latent meaning in the films, as texts, however, is the primary concern of this study.

Qualitative content analysis is the best method for examining latent meaning in small samples, such as this frame analysis of stereotypes in ten media texts. Such an analysis is a suitable method for analyzing the films in this study because it is a particularly effective investigative strategy in identifying trends over periods of time that entail “a careful, detailed, systematic examination and interpretation of a particular body of material in an effort to identify patterns, themes, biases, and meanings” (Berg, 2007, pp. 303-304).

The type of qualitative content analysis used here can aid in interpreting how the media treat images, montages, and related social and political issues in the particular context of American films (Denzin & Lincoln, p. 7), which is why Entman (2007) recommends content analysis in examining framing bias. To use framing theory to expose ways in which framing bias functions to cue stereotypes and bias the interpretation and use of information, Entman contends that explicit theory linking patterns of framing in the media text to predictable priming and agenda-setting effects on audiences should inform a content analysis (Entman, 2007). By extension, I use this approach in examining filmmaker’s images, themes, words, actions, and scenes for framing bias in relation to racial stereotypes and their intersectional equivalents (i.e., gender, class, sexual orientation, age, ability, nationality, etc.).

Analytical Procedures

To move from frame analysis to unitization, this research draws upon what Tyree (2007) identifies as an important relationship between qualitative analysis of media texts and critical discourse analysis. In her study of stereotypical representations in movies, Tyree contends that examining film content requires also evaluating the “discourse [that is] present within the media texts from a critical perspective” (p. 71). Similarly, Potter (1996) and Tyree suggest that media are primary tools for circulating discourses due to the “repeated use of certain symbols that

viewers habitually interpret in a certain way” (Potter, p. 138). This study followed these and other examples in utilizing critical discourse analysis as a part of the present qualitative content analysis to interpret the data collected.

Discourse analysis, according to Berg (2009), offers the social scientist a method for examining not only what is said or which words are used, but also the social construction and apprehension of meanings created through discourse (p. 353). Using the various analytic schema—including counting terms, words, and themes—provides certain understandings about meanings exchanged, but Berg emphasizes that content analysis that examines a discourse looks for patterns of the language used in the communications exchange, as well as the social and cultural contexts in which these communications occur. The relationship between the exchange and its social context “requires an appreciation of culturally specific ways of speaking and writing and ways of organizing thoughts”—including “how, where, and when the discourse arises in a given social and cultural situation” (Berg, p. 353). Further, Berg argues as follows:

...this sort of content analysis should include examining what a given communication exchange may be intended to do or mean in a given social cultural setting. In effect, the ways in which one says in a given communication exchange are also important in terms of constructing certain views of the social world. Counting terms, words, themes, and so on allow the researcher to ascertain some of the variations and nuances of these *ways* parties in a communication exchange create their social worlds.

Given common perspectives and aims, conceptual and theoretical frameworks such as qualitative content analysis, frame analysis, and critical discourse analysis are closely related. Each provides a complementary set of tools for scrutinizing latent meaning in media texts. Whereas content analyses measure instances, qualitative content analyses also examine the contexts of those instances, and frame analyses investigate the overarching themes that instances and contexts create, adding the supplemental layer of critical discourse analysis interrogates the

deployment of specific discourse structures in reproducing social dominance, irrespective of medium, genre or context. Using these techniques together provides a comprehensive approach to deriving manifest and underlying meaning from media content.

Critical discourse analysis occurs as a type of analytical method that investigates how social power abuse, dominance and inequality are created, reproduced and resisted through text and dialogue within social and political contexts (van Dijk, 2001). Yet, there is no unitary theoretical framework because critical discourse analysis is not a direction, school or specialization, but rather it offers a “mode” or “perspective” of theorizing, analysis and application and is theoretically and analytically varied based on the type of data collected (van Dijk, 2001). In addition to traditional notions, however, this critical analytical approach involves vocabulary and scrutiny of concepts such as “power,” “dominance,” “hegemony,” “race,” “interests,” “institutions” and “social structure,” (van Dijk, 2001) which are also terms that are relevant to the phenomenon presently under study.

Critical discourse analysis explicitly links patterns of framing in media texts to predictable priming and agenda-setting effects, as consistent with Entman (2007). Entman (2004), in fact, exposes linkages between the official discourse, news discourse, and public discourse in the frame analysis presenting in his Cascading Activation Model. Stuart Hall (1993, 1997), similarly but unambiguously endorses discourse analysis in describing and evaluating stereotypes in media texts. Hall (1997) expounds upon Michel Foucault’s original conceptualization of discourse as a system of representation that produces knowledge through language, images, and other symbols. Using this definition of discourse and its constructionist theory of meaning and representation resonates with the frame analysis and relationship between framing theory and the social construction of reality detailed in Chapter 2.

To simplify and make relevant Foucault's concept for its application in this dissertation, a media text cannot be analyzed without examining the entire discursive formation to which that text and its related practices belong (Foucault, 1977; Hall, 1997). In other words, discourse analysis requires this researcher not only to investigate a film or a filmmaker because either is only a subject of the discourse. For Foucault (1982), no individual (filmmaker) or thing (movie) produces knowledge or meaning. Each is only a subject. Rather, a proper assessment must include analysis of the historical context, regulations of conduct, practices, language, and systems of knowledge/power that produce each film's content. As Hall (1997) explains, the subject is produced by and subject to the discourse. Cultural and historic contexts create discourse by attaching sets of meaning to certain symbols (Potter, 1996). Foucault and discourse are difficult to summarize, but it is sufficient for our purposes to focus on the relationship between knowledge and power, and how power operates within an institutional apparatus and its technologies. This study, therefore, recognizes media (and film, in particular) as a technology involved in strategic transmissions of meaning through the film content analyzed herein. The analysis of each movie, therefore, takes into consideration not only the content, but also the medium, filmmakers, studio systems, socio-historical context, and socially-shared cognitive models.

In relation to the production and reception of media content, Hall (1993) explains that frameworks of knowledge, relations of production, and technical infrastructures encode meaning structures into media content as "meaningful discourse" that can be visual and aural (p. 94). Audiences then decode the meaning structures with differing degrees of symmetry into personal frameworks of knowledge that may be reproduced, negotiated or rejected as limits and parameters. While this dissertation is not about reception or effects, applying Hall's (1993)

definition of production as the encoding of meaning as discourse informs this study's content analysis. In addressing each of the research questions, therefore, stereotypes and their relationships to one another are analyzed for whether they constitute socially shared models or constructs that encode "meaningful discourse" into movies as a type of hegemonic code. If so, then the presence and relations of laudatory and derogatory stereotypes in movies with the greatest influence warrant ideological scrutiny.

Ideological analysis requires a complex description not only of the media text, but also of "the intricate cognitive representations and strategies used in the production and comprehension of the text" (van Dijk, 1998, pp. 118-119). van Dijk refers to socially-shared event, mental, and context models as social cognitions that are the interface between a media text and its context:

If social cognitions about different social groups and social events are similar, we say that they are being monitored by the same fundamental interpretation framework, that is, by the same ideology. Such an ideology features the basic norms, values, and other principles which are geared towards the realization of the interests and goals of the group, as well as towards the reproduction and legitimation of its power (p. 118).

Through a detailed account of social cognitions such as laudatory and derogatory stereotypes, critical discourse analysis enabled this researcher to relate discourse and speakers with social structure and culture; that is, through the representations that language users have about social structures. "These social cognitions also allow us to relate the micro-structures of discursive action and communication with the societal macro-structures of groups...and institutions" (p. 119). For example, use of the term or image of "Mammy" in a film enables the researcher to analyze the units of analysis with the myths, ideologies, legends, history, culture, and social structures in which "Mammy" originated.

Again, this dissertation makes no claims regarding effects or intent on the part of the filmmakers. The connection drawn is between the media text and the societal discourse. Critical discourse analysis of social representations (stereotypes) significantly is an established technique for media research on socio-cognitive models that characterize groups. This study, in turn, uses critical discourse analysis to describe and evaluate media frames with the tools provided within critical discourse analysis' analytic approach. Images, themes, words, actions, and scenes not only are identified, but also discussed in relation to each other and the historical contexts, ideologies, myths, and legends that make them discursive.

What makes this dissertation's approach unique is that it addresses critiques of prior qualitative content analyses by following a model for critical discourse analysis espoused by Tyree (2007) and Fairclough (1989, 1995). This model consists of three interrelated processes of analysis that are tied to three interrelated dimensions of discourse. Janks (1997) summarizes the three dimensions as follows: 1) the object of analysis (including verbal, visual or verbal and visual texts); 2) the processes by means of which the object is produced and received (writing/speaking/designing and reading/listening/viewing) by human subjects; and 3) the socio-historical conditions that govern these processes. These three dimensions require the following type of analysis: text analysis (description), processing analysis (interpretation) and social analysis (explanation) (Fairclough, 1989, 1995). Further, Janks (2001) explains how beneficial critical discourse analysis can be to the analysis of texts within a historical context:

What is useful about this approach is that it enables you to focus on the signifiers that make up the text, the specific linguistic selections, their juxtapositioning, their sequencing, their layout and so on. However, it also requires you to recognize that the historical determination of these selections and to understand that these choices are tied to the conditions of possibility of that utterance. This is another way of saying that texts are instantiations of socially regulated discourses and that the processes of production

and reception are socially constrained. Why Fairclough's approach to CDA is so useful is because it provides multiple points of analytic entry. It does not matter which kind of analysis one begins with, as long as in the end they are all included and are shown to be mutually explanatory. It is in the interconnections that the analyst finds the interesting patterns and disjunctions that need to be described, interpreted and explained.

As a result, this researcher accomplished the task of analyzing the collected materials in a manner that was mindful of both the historical and social forces that helped create them.

Units of Analysis

Unitization of media content is a crucial methodological issue in content analysis research and discourse analysis. Yet, the most underdeveloped area of research unitization is visual messages (Choi & Lee, 2010). Unlike print journalism research that measures physical structures such as sentences or paragraphs, scholars have debated about whether units of analysis in visual communication are too short or too long to be meaningfully measured (Krippendorff, 1980, p. 59). Krippendorff suggests for films, however, that one is likely to yield unambiguously codable recording units by describing smaller units, scenes, editing shots or individual frames.

Framing, stereotypes, discourse analysis, cultural criticism, and film studies literature consistently discuss the significance of evaluating themes, words, images, and actions. Whether Hall in discussing ideological hegemony, Entman & Rojecki in examining framing bias, Dates & Barlow in critiquing stereotypes, Chang & Izard (2009) in evaluating print content, or Kolker (2000) in analyzing films and filmmakers, each points to these four elements of media content as essential for analysis. Additionally, Kolker joins with Krippendorff (1980) and Choi & Lee (2010) in elevating the importance of also focusing on the scene.

To examine film content, therefore, I selected (1) images, (2) themes, (3) words, (4) actions, and (5) scenes as the type of content I expect to vary based on a combination of the

above literature and my pilot studies. Riffe, Lacy, and Fico (2005) identify these among two basic types of content units—physical (spaced and time) and symbolic. Under symbolic content units, they listed syntactical (words, sentences, etc.), referential (people, events, objects, etc., referred to in content), propositional (placing content in a consistent structure), and theme (assertion about some subject) units (p. 59). The units of analysis in this dissertation, then, are unitized by discretely defining each element of content according to the following five basic operational definitions, as well as additional coding criteria (see Table 3) for identifying stereotypes and examining frames:

(1) IMAGES – Referential people, roles, characters, events, objects and their attachments (symbols, props, accessories, etc.) used to characterize, describe, or otherwise convey messages about actors, their appearance and their attributes. This variable is devised to create a map of the images relating to main characters and primary roles that appear in sampled films. New labels identified in the film’s content, plot summaries, or promotional materials may be added as supplementary categories. Examples include scantily clad people, people with tribal markings, groups traveling as anonymous, collective masses, drumming, religious symbols, totems, masks, ethnic prints, and fires with caldrons or stakes.

(2) THEMES – Assertions or overarching categories about a subject or, specifically, to describe film content, storyline, and/or characters. This variable is devised to create a map of the allusions to, or descriptions of, each film’s content, storylines, and/or characters. New themes identified in the film’s plot summaries, promotional materials, and the film itself may be added as supplementary categories. Examples include ahistorical fantasy, individualism, ambition, paganism, cannibalism, barbarism, “place” as a result of natural inferiority or superiority, and the isolated White figure mastering rebellious natives.

(3) WORDS – Syntactical units of language, oral or written, that function as principal carriers of meaning when referring to groups/individuals. This variable is devised to create a map of the terminology used in each film’s dialog. New terms identified in the films that relate to stereotypes may be added as supplementary categories. Examples include heathen, savages, chick, broad, squaw, wild, cult, natives, Indians (in’juns), spear chucker, or other stereotypical pejorative or laudable group labels.

(4) ACTIONS – Referential processes or states of behavior that one consciously wills that can be characterized by a physical or mental conduct by or occurring to a character, such as kicking, slapping, punching, kissing, hugging, thinking, etc. This variable is devised to create a map of the activity pertaining to stereotypes in each sampled film. New actions identified in the films that relate to the stereotypes in this study may be added as supplementary categories. Examples include a character chanting, drumming, dancing, entering a trance, kidnaping an innocent, and burning an encampment.

(5) SCENES – Small syntactical units with symbolic meaning implied in its content. A scene is both a series of shots depicting a single action taking place in a single space, and a montage that depicts a single concept, theme, mood, or idea without the limitation of time and space (Choi & Lee, 2010). This variable is devised to create a map of the scenes containing stereotypes or stereotypical frames in each sampled film. New scene types identified in the films that relate to this study may be added as supplementary categories. Examples include a Muslim character performing a religious ritual; a tribal group boiling, killing, cooking, and eating people burned at the stake; or a Christian religious fanatic running through the streets threatening people.

While other aspects of films are central to this study's analysis include, but are not limited to, genres, release dates, and plotlines, the aforementioned operational definitions inform the identification and coding of the units of analysis.

Data Collection

This researcher and two coders conducted a qualitative content analysis that describes and evaluates stereotypes in their respective media contexts. Upon watching each of the ten sample films at least two times, this researcher took notes until there were no new observations. This researcher, then, delineated the observations gathered into categories and variables that were consolidated with those derived from the literature (see Table 3). Next, each film's contents were coded according to the instructions detailed in the coding sheets. Finally, this researcher counted and measured the frequency of occurrences as a complement to my qualitative analysis.

This research acknowledges the long-standing debate on whether intercoder agreement (also known as interrater/intercoder reliability and interjudge/interobserver/interscorer agreement) have a legitimate place in nonpositivistic research—and, if so, in which inquiry contexts is it appropriately used, and how should it be employed for data analysis and interpreted for research results (Harris, 2005). Here, however, this dissertation follows Sykes (1990) and others (e.g., Goodwin & Goodwin, 1984; Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993) who suggest that the qualitative researcher should provide a complete audit trail that documents how data were generated and analyzed, including all notes, documents, analysis materials, and a comprehensive investigator's journal, which chronicles all decisions made, events that occurred, and questions that arose during the research process. Careful examination of this trail reveals

whether the investigator consistently based her interpretations upon the data generated, rather than upon preexisting assumptions or erroneous (informant-absent) interpretation.

In turn, two independent coders, graduate students at Florida Atlantic University, and the researcher were trained and then coded 40% of the movies in the sample so that intercoder reliability could be calculated. “Training of coders is a common preparatory task in content analysis. Not only do individuals have to be acquainted with the peculiarities of the recording task—rarely do procedures and definitions perfectly conform to intuition—but these coders often are instrumental in shaping the process, especially during the preparatory phase of a content analysis” (Krippendorff, 1980, p. 72).

Here, the training included an introduction to coding processes using grounded theory and existing research, as well as the specific instructions on the coding sheets. This researcher provided each coder an introduction to the study, the research questions, and the coding sheets for review prior to the screenings and use during the screenings, as well as paper, writing utensils, and highlighters for marginalia. Each coder received coding instructions and training that operationalized the procedures for coders to connect their observations to the formal terms of the intended analysis. Each coder also received a digital recorder to use during her individual movie screenings. Another digital recorder was used to document the conversations with the researcher about each film after each screening.

For subsample selection, the researcher placed each filmmaker’s movies from the sample into an opaque bag and shook them. Each of the two independent coders then randomly selected two films. For the first three films in the sample, each one came from a different filmmakers’ bag, but the fourth film emerged from a consolidated bag of containing all of the remaining films. Following the instructions on the coding sheets to search for, identify, describe, and

categorize each movie’s laudatory and derogatory stereotypes, the three coders rated the number of instances in which themes, words, images, and actions relating to stereotypes occurred in a small sample of four films. The films in the subsample were *Avatar*, *Phantom*, *Raiders*, and *E.T.*

The subsequent process included on-going category formulation; application to a small sample of data; tests of their reliability on all variables; interviews with coders to access the conceptions that cause disagreements; and reformulation, making the instruction more specific and coder-friendly until the instructions were reliable enough to be applied to the entire sample of 10 movies. Data collection and analysis, however, exposed ambiguity and redundancy in themes and scenes as distinct units of analysis. The two units, therefore, were consolidated as themes of scenes so that the frame could be measured meaningfully and yield unambiguously codable recording units. This change in unitization was designed to comply with Krippendorff’s recommendation that researchers aim for “the empirically most meaningful and productive units that are efficiently and reliably identifiable and that satisfy the requirements of available techniques” (p. 64).

Using this approach, coders had an average overall agreement of 95% (Table 6.1) in coding the subsample, which suggests the coding instructions and process were reliable. The percentage of agreement was 86% for themes, 99% for words, 97% for images, and 98% for actions. Table 6.1 displays these percentages, and Table 6.2 breaks them down further by movie.

Table 6.1: Intercoder Reliability

Main Variables	Percentage of Agreement
Themes	93%
Words	98%
Images	97%
Actions	97%
Average Agreement	96%

Formula used: Intra-class Correlation Coefficient (ICC)

An intraclass correlation was used to assess/measure inter-coder reliability. The intraclass correlation (or the intraclass correlation coefficient, abbreviated ICC) is a descriptive statistic that can be used when quantitative measurements are made on units that are organized into groups. It describes how strongly units in the same group resemble each other. While it is viewed as a type of correlation, unlike most other correlation measures it operates on data structured as groups, rather than data structured as paired observations. In the current analysis, the ICC was computed for the three coders by film and unit of analysis.

Table 6.2 presents the average measures ICC by unit and film for each of the four films in the subsample. Consistent with social science standards, the confidence interval was set at 95%, which means these estimates are reliable if confidence intervals are constructed across many separate data analyses of repeated studies, the proportion of such intervals that contain the true value of the parameter will be within a range of .025 more or less than the mean rating (see Tables 1-30 in Chapter 7 for mean ratings). For *Avatar*, coders agreed at a rate of 91.8% on themes, 99.4% on words, 94.5% on images, and 98.4% on actions. For *Phantom Menace*, coders agreed at a rate of 97.1% on themes, 99.4% words, 97.3% on images, and 98.5% on actions. For *Raiders*, coders agreed at a rate of 100% on themes, 97.8% on words, 99.6% on images, and 99.3% on actions. For *E.T.*, coders agreed at a rate of 82.9% on themes, 97.8% on words, 97.1% on images, and 94.6% on actions.

Table 6.2. Intra-class Correlation Coefficient (ICC) by Unit and Film

	Average Measures ICC	95% Confidence Interval	
		Lower Bound	Upper Bound
<u>Themes</u>			
Avatar	.918	.881	.995
Phantom	.971	.900	.994
Raiders ¹	-	-	-
E.T.	.829	.802	.896
<u>Words</u>			
Avatar	.994	.980	.999
Phantom	.994	.982	.999
Raiders	.978	.925	.995
E.T.	.978	.925	.995
<u>Images</u>			
Avatar	.945	.912	.967
Phantom	.973	.957	.984
Raiders	.996	.994	.998
E.T.	.971	.953	.982
<u>Actions</u>			
Avatar	.984	.968	.992
Phantom	.985	.969	.993
Raiders	.993	.986	.997
E.T.	.946	.894	.975

Model: Two-way mixed; Type: Absolute Agreement; Average Measures ICC chosen

The coded data informed both the qualitative analysis and the frequency distribution analysis. Measuring units and instances in this way buttresses reliability and validity. Additional extraordinary means are unnecessary because there are no arguments of causality or efforts to generalize results to a larger group. In this vein, nonetheless, my method is consistent with Entman & Rojecki's analytical model.

Coding Process

Within a qualitative research design, Merriam (1988) and Marshall and Rossman (1989) posit that data analysis and data collection are simultaneous processes of reviewing information,

¹ ICC not computed. Coders had perfect agreement.

classifying items, persons and events, categorizing the properties that characterize them, and chronicling emerging ideas and relationships. To conceptualize this analysis, I followed the grounded theory approach developed by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (1967) and later expanded by Charmaz (1998). Using this qualitative, inductive approach, conceptual specification occurs by coding conceptual categories and their dimensions from empirical indicators in the data (Song, 2009, p. 141-142).

The coders and researcher followed the basic guidelines to open coding offered by Strauss (1987, pp. 30-32): (1) Ask the data specific and consistent set of questions based on the original objective of the research; (2) Analyze the data minutely understanding that more is better in the beginning; (3) Frequently interrupt the coding to write a theoretical note; and (4) Never assume the analytic relevance of any traditional variable such as age, sex, social class, and so on until the data show it to be relevant. All variables must “earn their way into the grounded theory” (p. 32).

Coding the movie content in this way was essential to the analysis process because it allowed this researcher to critically discover what, if anything, could be surmised from the abundance of data collected. The researcher and coders, therefore, kept to the original objective of the research even when tangents were tempting. The team used coding sheets (Table 3) to help organize and note occurrences of images, themes, words, actions, and scenes that appear in the data. An abundance of marginalia proves that these criteria were merely starting points. The final coding scheme emerged from the data and guided the analysis and findings that resulted.

Interpretations, questions, and speculations occurred during open coding, but Berg (2009) states that such is common and expected at this phase. Each led the study to other issues and further queries concerning various conditions, historical contexts, socially-shared models,

interactions, and consequences of the data. Following guidelines, however, the researcher held those initial thoughts as tentative at best. Contradictions emerged in some cases, which also contributed to a more thorough analysis of the various concepts and categories after all the material was coded. Overall, the process helped open inquiry widely and provided several unanticipated results. The data informed the researcher of additional research related questions and indicated the necessary categories and codes to use. Patterns and conceptual realities formed each time the researcher viewed and re-viewed movies and read or reread notes of hers or the coders.

In the next phase, this researcher used coding frames to sort and organize data collected. As in axial coding, multiple successive sortings of all materials under examination occurred that often involved one category at a time. This procedure separated my sample into two subdivisions among each filmmakers' grouping of movies (dominant group stereotypes and non-dominant group stereotypes). Using the preceding criteria, this researcher then correlated each newly created subgroup into eight distinct categories as recording units to produce a typological scheme for measuring themes and words. For each of these recording units there was an overarching or key linkage that made consolidation possible. Images and actions, however, were more distinctive, and therefore, consolidation was limited to 24 actions and 50 images as recording units.

At this juncture in the analysis, relevant theoretical perspectives were introduced to tie the analysis both to established theory and to the emerging grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Berg emphasizes that this is the time in which researchers should apply variables and concepts derived from the relevant literature. Relying upon literature from framing theory, research on stereotypes, discourse analysis, and critical cultural perspectives, this researcher

sorted and organized the data according to the coding frames. Patterns apparent from the organizational scheme that resulted from the sorted and organized data enabled compelling deductions from and connections with theoretically-informed codes. The following chapters detail the subsequent analysis.

Limitations

This research design attempts to account for common limitations of content analysis, qualitative research, and mass communications research. My extensive theoretical discussion, for example, sought to clearly specify what I mean by stereotype and how it relates to ideology. I also drew distinctions as to the kind of stereotypes analyzed—including their origins, their relationship to the social structure, and their history. Nevertheless, a limitation (and strength) of my dissertation is its primary focus on race stereotypes. Isolating racial stereotypes enables an in-depth analysis of the sample, but it also limits my analysis of non-racial stereotypes. It is with regret that I must group other social classifications and their stereotypes together in a somewhat miscellaneous category that will undoubtedly receive insufficient evaluation. Yet, doing so is a necessary to the boundaries of this research.

Another limitation of this study is that it cannot account for effects on audiences or intentions of filmmakers. This analysis constrains itself only to examining the content of the sample movies. Critical discourse analysis of movie content does take into account the medium, filmmakers, studio systems, socio-historical context, and any socially-shared models (social cognitions) as interfaces between a media text and its context. However, critical discourse analysis stops short of creating causal chains to media effects or creator's intention. Evaluations of effects or intent are not the focus of this study. Any description of filmmakers, studios, and their political economy are merely illustrative contextualization that may have implications for

future research. Instead, critical discourse analysis concerns itself with linking socially shared conventions with their historical, philosophical, or socio-political sources, such as ideologies, myths, and legends. This bears particular significance for answering RQ5 of this study.

Finally, the frequency distribution and measures of central tendency may run the risk of banishing or destroying context in order to isolate units of content that are quantifiable. My preference would be to conduct a solely qualitative content analysis but that would be inconsistent with Entman & Rojecki's research, on which this study builds. Nonetheless, the qualitative analysis will take into account conventions of genre, modes of narration, and visual and thematic codes that inform the ways in which filmmakers frame stories and cue stereotypes.

Chapter 7 present the results of this dissertation that derive from this body of factual evidence assembled qualitatively and quantitatively through use of the scientific method to attest to their reliability and validity.

CHAPTER 7: RESULTS & ANALYSIS

Reflecting qualitative and quantitative analyses of themes, words, images, and actions in the sample, this chapter displays the findings related to each research question. The wealth of data resulting from the coding of themes, words, images, and actions provided more than sufficient content for frame examination. Frequency distributions, for instance, measured the top 50 images and 24 actions identified by coders. While these are presented, only the top 10 were retained for scrutiny in this chapter because of space and time limitations. For each research question below, descriptive statistics and qualitative examinations of stereotype categories are presented. With regard to the first two questions, part “a” of each research question addresses James Cameron’s films; part “b” addresses George Lucas’ films; and part “c” addresses Steven Spielberg’s films.

Overview

Excepting *Titanic*, each of the sampled films falls within the science-fiction genre—and specifically, the blockbuster sci-fi epic. The movies are ahistorical fantasies—and even *Titanic* is a fictional narrative loosely based on verifiable historical facts. Coders rated the movies by the number of instances a unit occurred in the film. The ratings were 0, 1, 2, and 3 or more because most of the average occurrences of themes, images, words, or actions fell within this range. It is the coexistence of these units that makes them significant for evaluating the ways in which the films framed stories using common stereotypes and tropes within thematic scenes.

Consequently, individual ratings were averaged to create a “mean rating” for each movie, each director’s subsample, and the entire sample under each unit of analysis (e.g. themes, words, images, and actions). Figure 1 illustrates, for example, that the most common themes to occur in the sample were avarice, achievement, individualism, imperialism, power, tribalism, race, and

religion². Coders consolidated movie themes to correspond with those categories identified in the literature reviewed in Chapter 3. Only the most frequently occurring themes appear in the analysis.

Figure 1 also presents the frequency with which each theme occurs in all ten of the sample films. Each of the subsequent tables, likewise, reflects the average number of instances that each unit occurred in the entire sample, a director's subsample, and/or a particular movie. Presenting the mean ratings is sufficient for discussing the results because a high percentage of agreement among coders yielded only a small range of variation from the mean score of individual results. This means the average is a reliable estimation for discussing the entire group. Additionally, using mean ratings to discuss media content—as opposed to cast members or numbers of movies—is consistent with Entman & Rojecki's model.

² The following definitions operationalize the terms used to categorize themes: (1) avarice – insatiable craving or greed for acquiring and hoarding wealth, property, or other gain, (2) achievement – an accomplishment or feat gained through great effort, (3) individualism - practices guided by political/economic independence and the concept that the actions, interests, and initiative of the individual are or ought to be ethically paramount, (4) imperialism - the practice, policy or advocacy of extending the power and dominion of a nation especially by direct territorial acquisitions or by gaining indirect control over the political or economic life of other areas, (5) power - possession of legal right, capacity, control, authority, or influence over others; or a controlling group or establishment with such ability to act or produce an effect, (6) tribalism – a social structure or state of being organized in, or advocating for, a tribe or tribes, wherein a strong cultural or ethnic identity exists that separates one member of a group from the members of another group, (7) race - a social construct produced by the dominant group in society and their power to define the boundaries of group membership in terms of biology, social standing, legal rights, hegemonic control, and skin color; it is conceptually unstable, ontologically subjective and historically developed early in U.S. history to justify the enslavement of a growing free Black population (Lusca, 2008), and (8) religion - a personal, communal or institutionalized system of attitudes, beliefs, and practices to which individuals conform in devotion to a deity, faith, and/or observance.

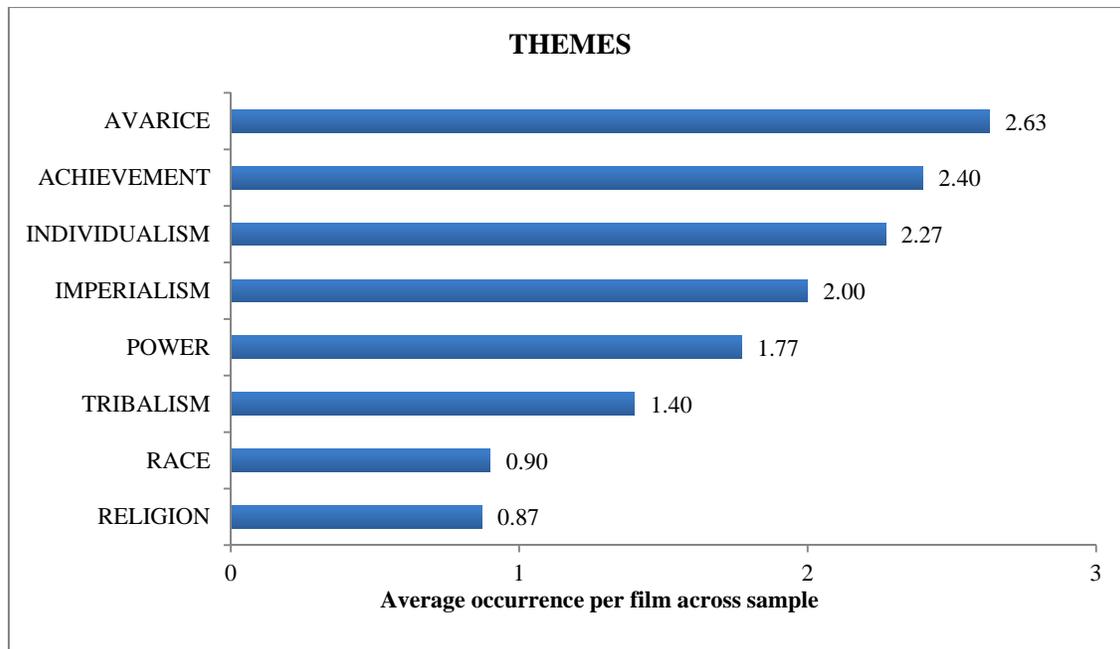


Figure 1. Most Common Themes

Filmmakers use a variety of techniques to create these themes, including words, images, actions, lighting, shots, montages, depth of field, and other artistic mechanisms. Like themes, the words measured in this study are displayed across dominant and non-dominant groups and arranged into the eight categories below. Doing so works for this study because the aim is to identify stereotypes—not parse the dialog placed in the mouths of stereotypical characters. That is an endeavor better left to rhetoricians and cinema studies scholars. Here, as mass media research and framing analysis specifically, the words are only one component of a content analysis that concerns itself with evaluating the ways filmmakers use stereotypes to frame stories. Looking collectively at themes, words, images, and actions enables a comprehensive and consistent technique that works qualitatively and quantitatively for uncovering a media frame.

While the following sections provide in-depth exploration of these practices, for now, it is significant to note the frequency with which words, images, and actions relating to stereotypes occur across the ten films in the sample. As with themes, words appear as consolidated

categories. Figure 2 demonstrates most common words occurring in the ten films sampled for this study as us/them, power/superiority, tribal names, dark, natives, race color labels, pejoratives, and civilized/uncivilized³.

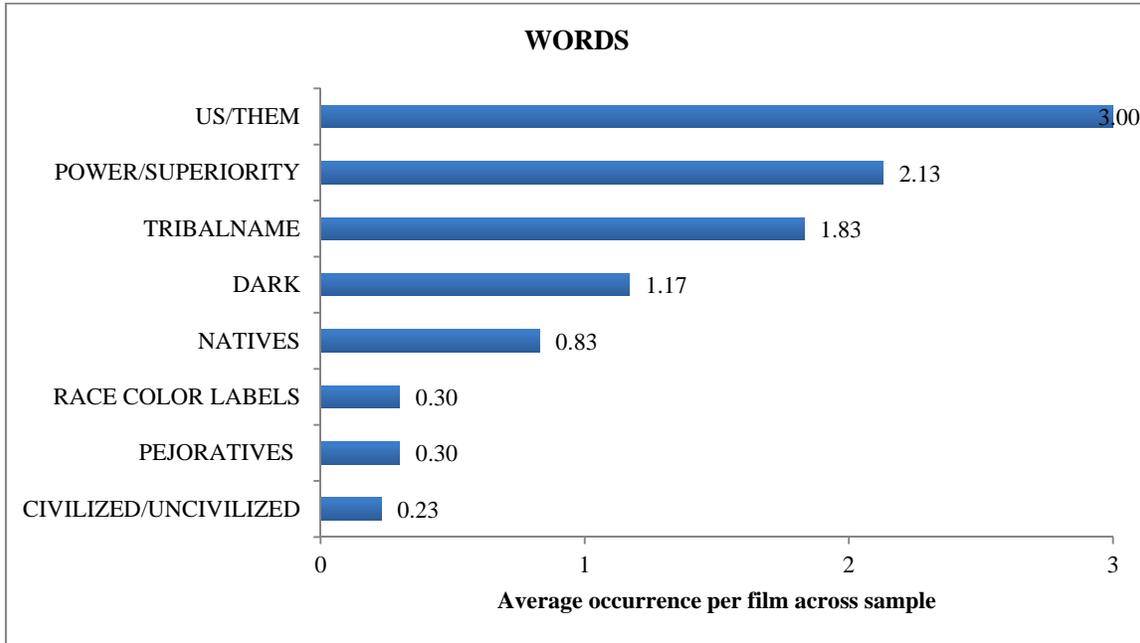


Figure 2. Most Common Words Related to Stereotypes

Unlike themes and words, the data on images measures character portrayals. Images are presented according to the number of characters depicted in a particular manner. Actions, likewise, are displayed by average frequency of instances of an act in a movie. The tables below

³ The following definitions operationalize the terms used to categorize themes: (1) us/them – words denoting insider/outsider status such as we/they and ours/theirs, (2) power/superiority – words ascribing or connoting power, authority, or superior status whether linked or not to words ascribing or connoting powerlessness, subordination, or inferiority, (3) tribal names – words that name an ethnic tribe or group, real or imagined, with which individuals identify in relation to their geography, culture, nationality, language, or religion, (4) dark – words or phrases that intimate the absence of light or color opposites of white, such as darkness, dark side, dark ages, darkened, darkish, blackness or black, (5) natives – words relating to, or being a member of an aboriginal or indigenous people, which in this sample only included “native” and “natives,” (6) race color labels – words such as black, white, brown, yellow, and red that historically have been used to refer to racial groups, (7) pejoratives – words such as savages, heathen, pagans, injuns, squaws, and broads that often are used to denigrate and offend individuals and groups, and (8) civilized/uncivilized – words such as civil, uncivil, civilize, incivility, civility, or civilization that tend to refer to the courtesy, culture, refinement, restraint, or intelligence of a people.

represent the overall findings on most prominent images and actions that emerged from coding the ten films in this study's sample. Figure 3 indicates that the most common stereotypical images in the ten films were the avaricious white male, violent white male, unhappy white male, risk-taking white male, weapon-carrying white male, young white female, defiant white female, pretty white female, handsome white male, and the smart white female. On average, in the sample, there were between 2.7 and 2.07 of these character portrayals in each movie.

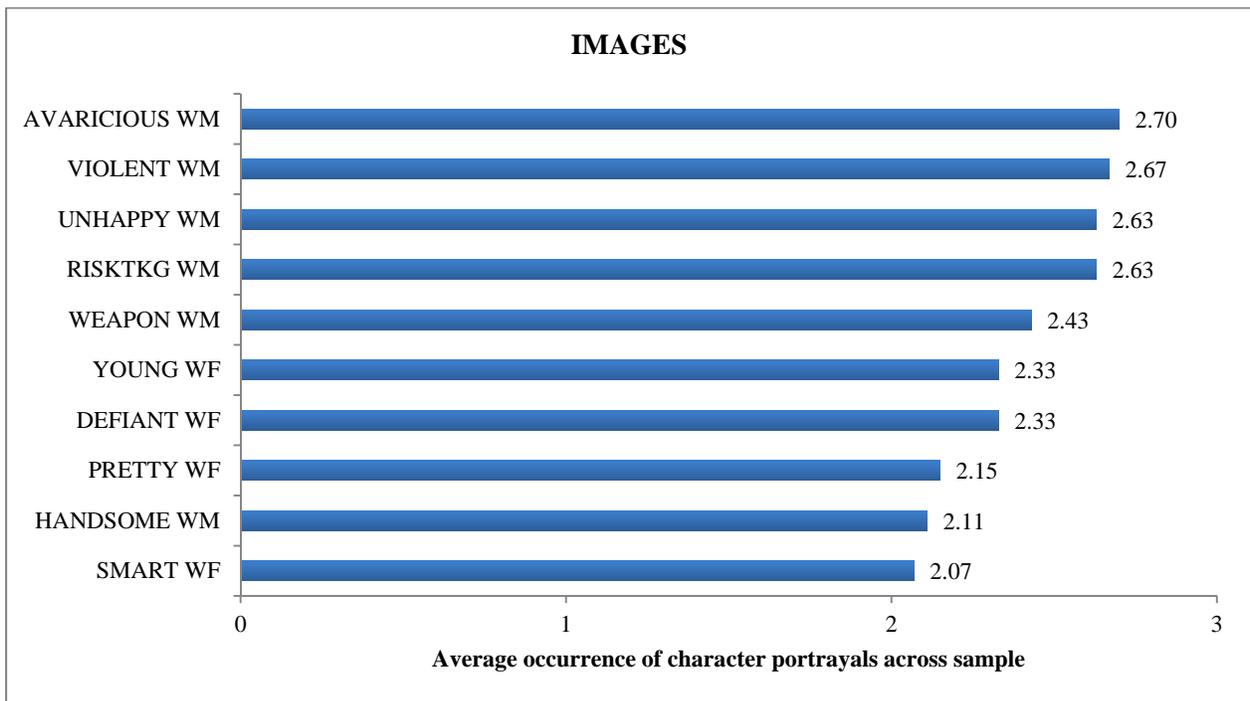


Figure 3. Top Ten Stereotypical Images

Although there is bound to be overlapping between character portrayals and their conduct, Figure 4 isolates actions and displays the most common acts related to stereotypes in the sample. More than any other act, characters in the dominant racial group travel collectively (or, en masse) on nearly three occasions per movie. Next in frequency are the non-dominant groups that also engage in mass movement (2.44/movie), then dominants who threaten (2.2/movie), steal (2.1/movie), and kill (2.1/movie), followed by non-dominants who kill

(2/movie) and dominants who kidnap others (1.5/movie). To a much lesser extent, there were also non-dominants who threaten and non-dominants and dominants who perform rituals, but these occurred, on average, less than once per film.

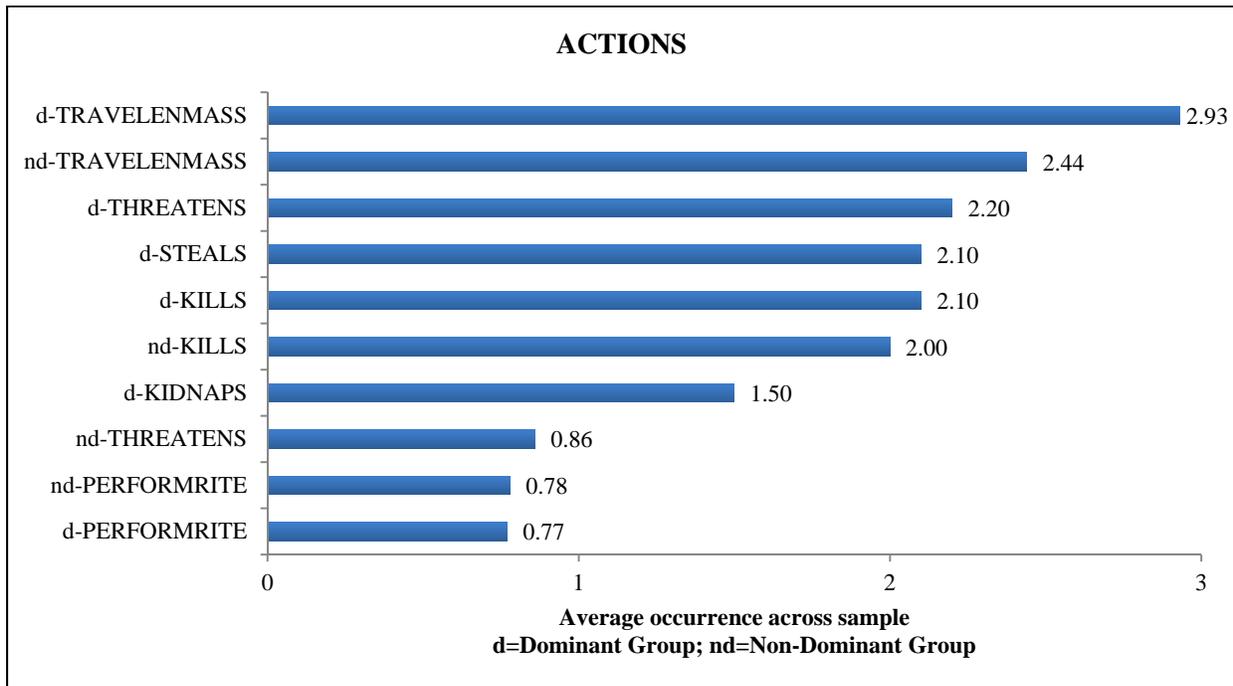


Figure 4. Top Ten Actions Relating to Stereotypes

The next step in examining the stereotypes in the sample is to compare the three subsets of the sample according to filmmaker. Overall, the stereotypes that emerged from coding the raw data before being consolidated into categories appears in the following comparative charts on themes, words, images, and actions in the sampled films. Figure 5 indicates the frequency with which each filmmaker used the themes described in Figure 1. Figure 5, for example, illustrates that, on average, achievement appears 3 or more times in the films of James Cameron and George Lucas, but only half as often in Steven Spielberg’s films. Cameron and Lucas also use ambition and individualism as themes at about the same frequency proportionately, with Spielberg close behind, but Lucas outpaces Cameron in using power and imperialism as themes

in his movies. Figure 5 shows Spielberg's films, on the other hand, only lead Cameron and Lucas in the use of religious themes.

On the other hand, Figure 6 provides the frequency of word usage by filmmaker. Significantly, this chart shows that the only words used three or more times in the films of all three filmmakers were those categorized as "us/them" dialogue. Figure 6 also indicates that none of the subsets use "civilized/uncivilized" much, and Spielberg leads the instances among the films that do use those terms. While Cameron's films are the only ones rated for use of pejoratives and race color labels, Figure 6 also points out that Lucas' films are the only ones using terms associated with darkness and they use tribal names more than the other filmmakers' movies.

Stereotypes of Dominant Racial Group Members

As Tables 1-4 illustrate, the most frequently occurring stereotypes across all ten films in the sample were those of dominant racial group members, which in this context were White people. Whereas Figures 5 and 6 contrast the frequencies of themes and words in each subset, Figure 7 displays a comparison of each filmmaker's subset in terms of an image's average frequency. In this case, the images are of dominant racial group members—White people.

What is most compelling in Figure 7 is noting which images are used 3 or more times on average in each director's movies. Spielberg, for instance, presents images of young White females more than any of the other filmmakers, and those images are only matched in frequency by images of clever White males within his subset. The image of the young White female becomes a stereotype, however, only when coupled with characteristics, actions, or words. Figure 7 also shows that Lucas' movies offer 3 or more character portrayals of pretty White females and unhappy, clever, risk-taking, weapon-toting, and/or violent White males—more in

each respect than the other subsets. None of the images identified occurred 3 or more times in Cameron’s films, but violent White males appeared most frequently with an average of 2.84 instances on average per movie. Figure 7 indicates that the images of White women appearing most often in Cameron’s movies could be young or old but usually defiant.

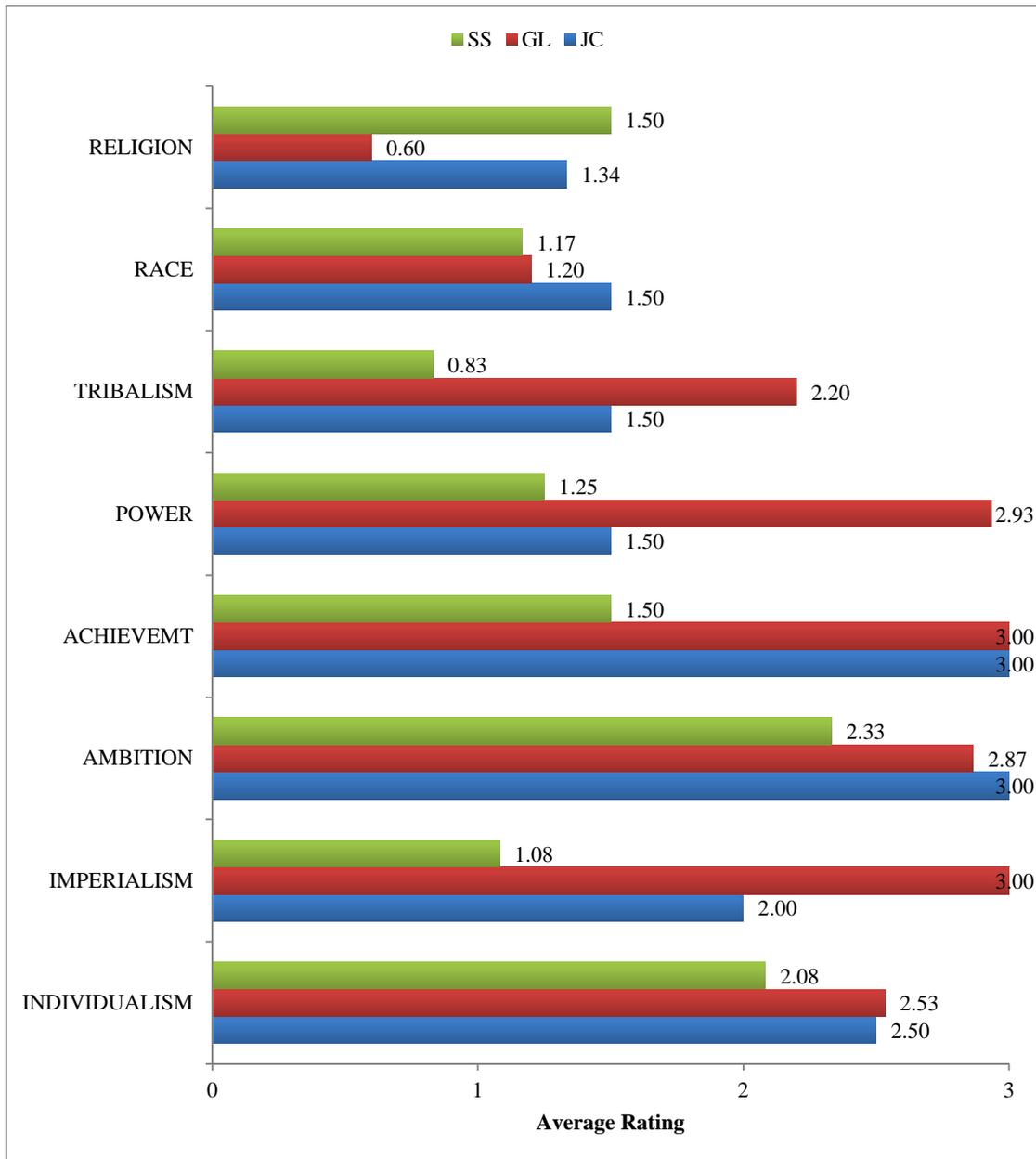


Figure 5. Average Frequency of Themes by Filmmaker
 *JC-James Cameron; GL- George Lucas; SS-Steven Spielberg

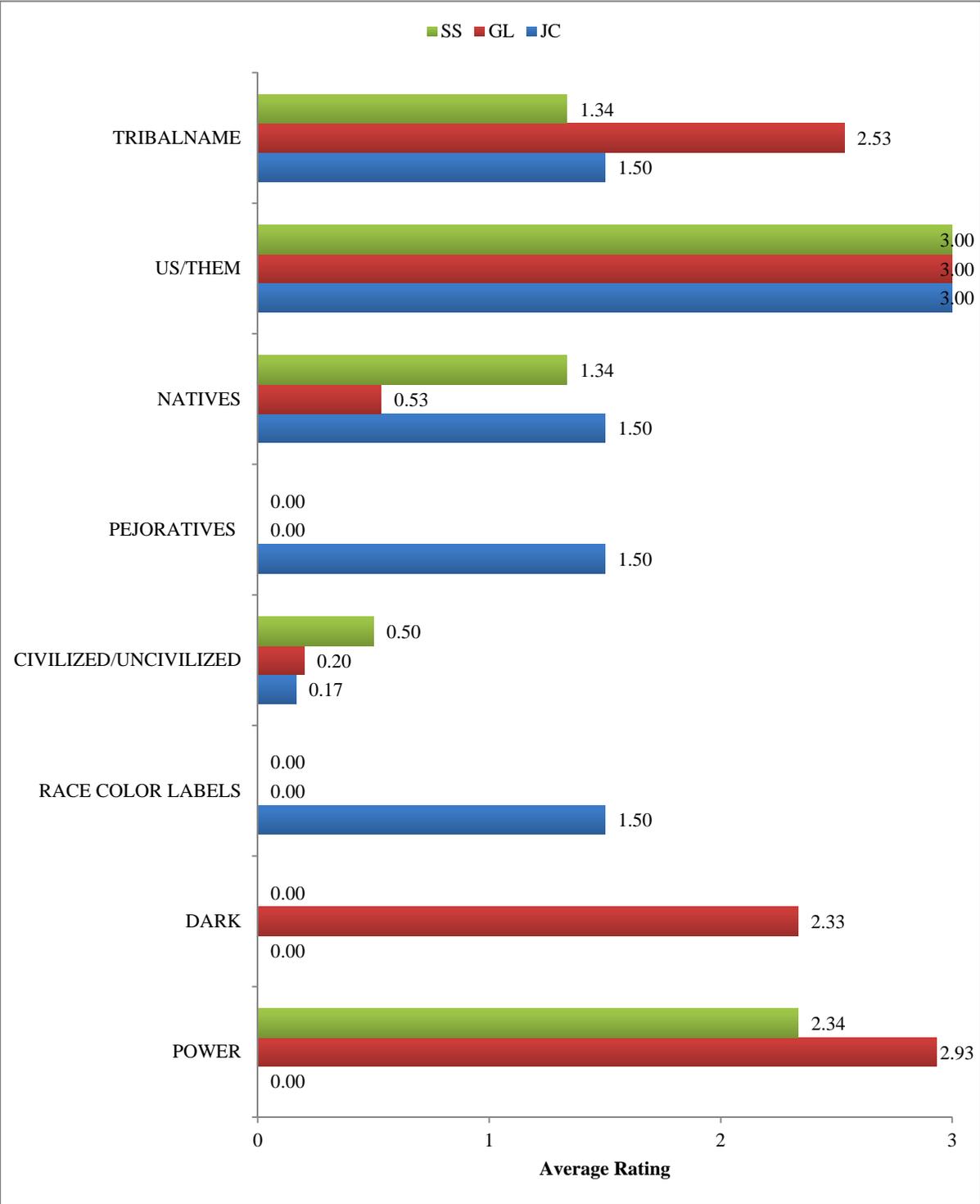


Figure 6. Average Frequency of Words by Filmmaker
 *JC-James Cameron; GL- George Lucas; SS-Steven Spielberg

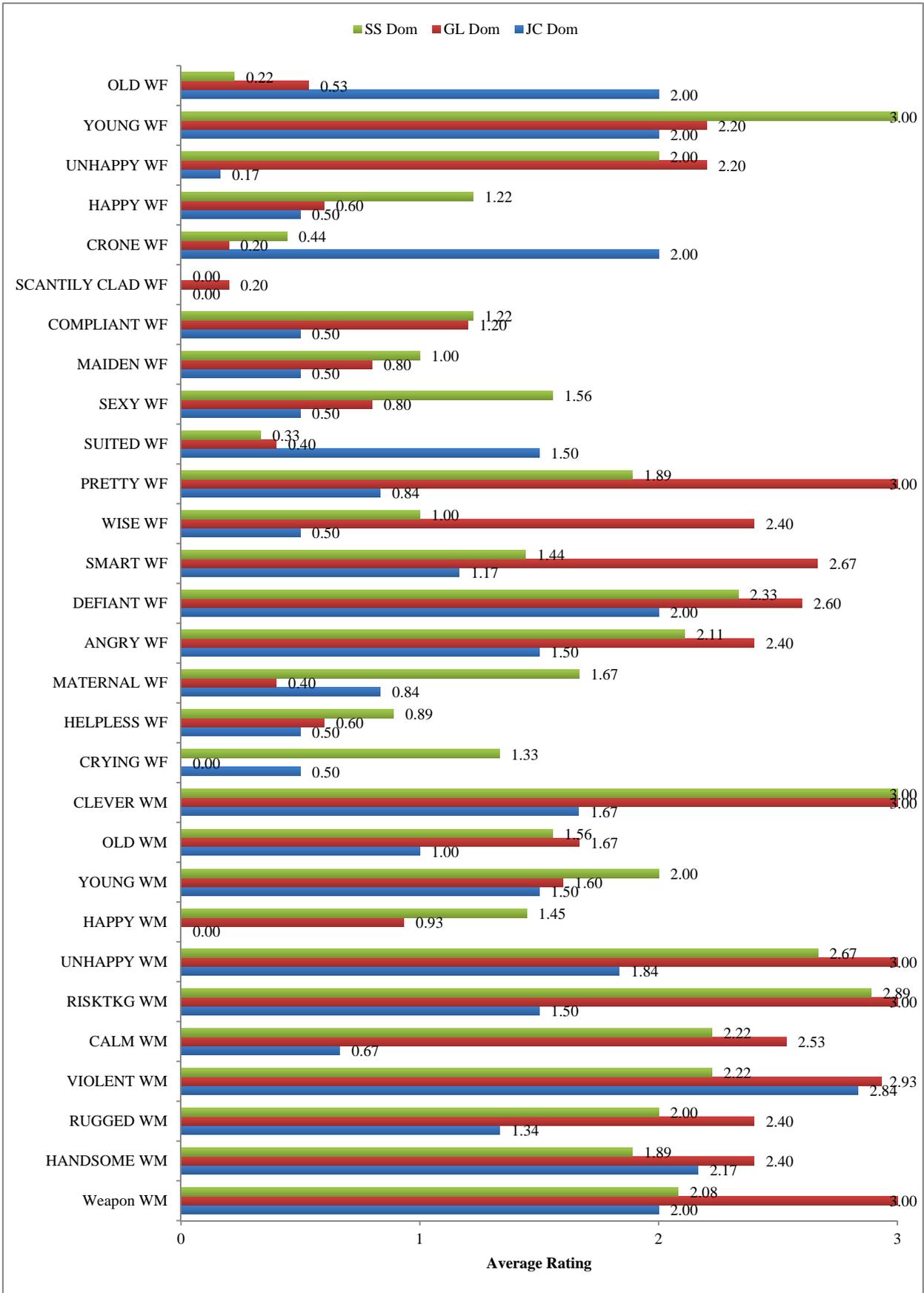


Figure 7. Average Frequency of Images for Dominant Group by Filmmakers

Figure 8 illustrates the average frequency of actions for White characters in the sample according to filmmaker. On average, the most common action, which occurred 2.87 times or more per film, was collective travel. Figure 8 also indicates that the movies of Lucas and Cameron feature White people threatening and killing others in at least 3 instances; and even though Cameron's rating drops to 2.5 for stealing, Lucas maintains 3 or more instances of stealing also. Spielberg's movies rank lower in these actions, but in his films characters enter trances and perform rituals with frequencies that exceed Cameron and Lucas.

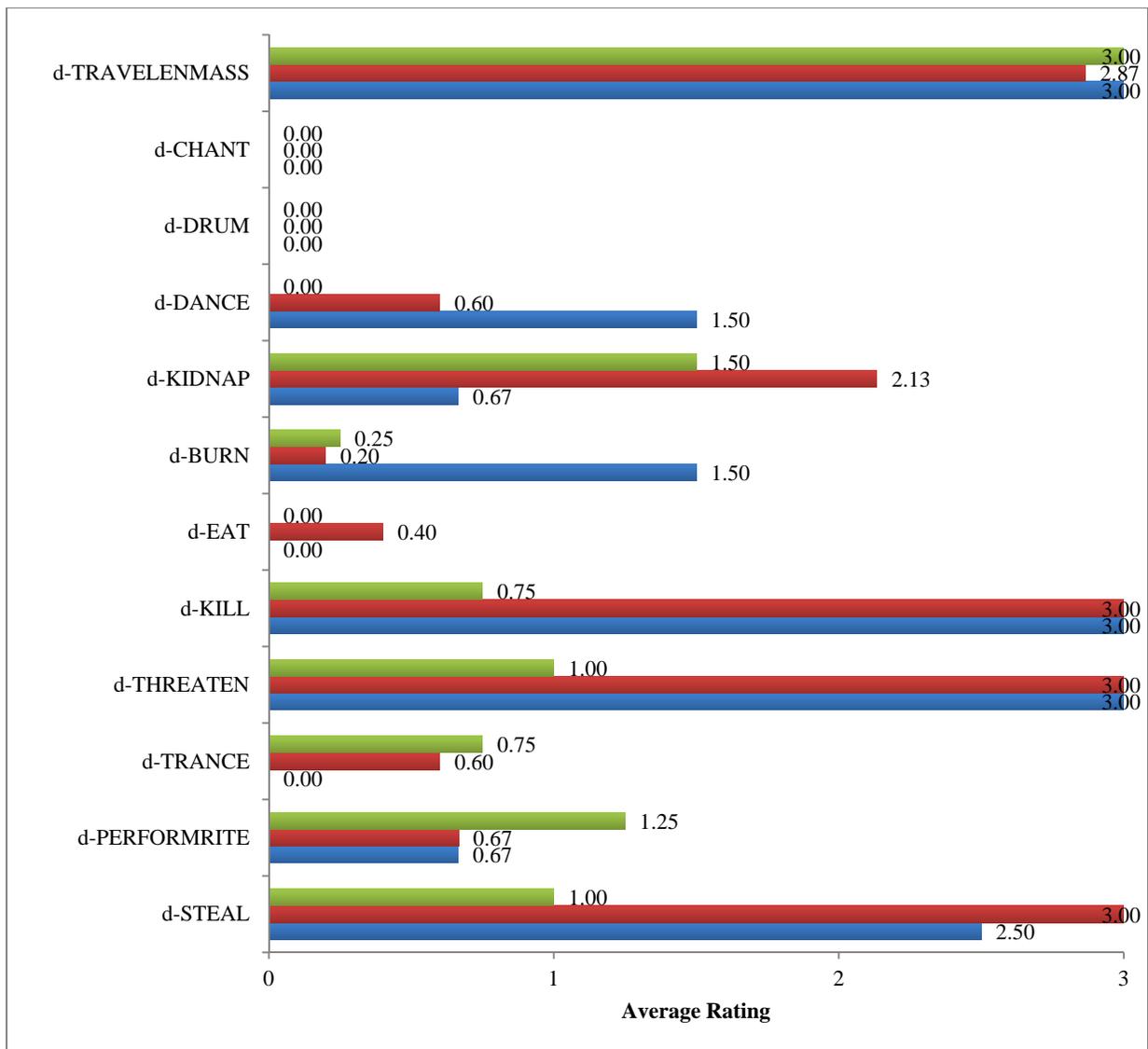


Figure 8. Average Frequency of Actions for Dominant Group by Filmmaker

Additionally, Table 7.1 demonstrates that overall more mean ratings for images based on stereotypes available for the dominant racial group than for the non-dominant racial group. In part, this is because there were far more White characters than non-White characters to analyze. Table 7.1 also shows the standard error given the 95% confidence interval required in most social science research. The standard error reflects the standard deviation of the sampling distribution of the mean.

In short, Table 7.1 indicates that there are 1.5 stereotypes of White people for every 1 stereotype of non-White people in the sample films. This study acknowledges that every sample taken to estimate the mean rating for all 10 movies, which in this case is the unknown population parameter, will overestimate or underestimate the mean by some amount. Yet, the distribution of all these sample means will be normally distributed and, according to the central limit theorem, the mean of the sampling distribution of the mean will be the unknown population mean. This is another reason that mean ratings are helpful in discussing this study's results. In effect, the standard error in the third column in Table 7.1 suggests how much—on average—individual scores of a group vary (or deviate) from the average rating of the group. Table 7.1's final two columns indicate that movies in the group score within a small range of variation from the mean score for the entire group. Ultimately, there are, on average, 71.3% of the images analyzed in this study are images of dominant groups, while only 28.7% of the images analyzed are of non-dominant groups.

Table 7.1. Images of Non-Dominant and Dominant Racial Groups across Sample

Non-Dominant versus Dominant Racial Groups	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Non-Dominant	1.078	.090	.901	1.255
Dominant	1.511	.079	1.355	1.666

Dependent Variable: Mean Rating

This research relies not only on images, but also draws upon a wealth of data about actions, words, and themes in evaluating and describing laudatory and derogatory stereotypes of dominant and non-dominant racial groups in this sample. Table 7.2, for example, shows that of the actions identified as relating to stereotypes, more of such actions occur by dominant groups in the sample. This indicates consistency between the predominance of dominant group images and actions as compared to non-dominant groups.

The standard error, however, is greater for actions but only by a small margin (a difference of .038 ND and .043 D). This suggests that—on average—individual scores of each group vary (or deviate) from the average rating of the group by about .04 more in actions than images, which is minimal. Table 7.2’s final two columns, like Table 7.1, demonstrate that movies in the group score within a small range of variation from the mean score for the entire group. Ultimately, Table 7.2 indicates that, on average, dominant groups perform 67% of the acts analyzed in this study, while only 33% of the acts are conducted by non-dominant groups. Table 7.2 displays this proportion in terms of mean ratings.

Table 7.2. Actions of Non-Dominant and Dominant Racial Groups across Sample

Non-Dominant vs. Dominant	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Non-Dominant	.774	.128	.523	1.025
Dominant	1.161	.122	.921	1.401

Dependent Variable: Mean Rating

These racial disproportions in the sample reflect the racial disparities in the casts of the movies in the sample, and therefore, contribute to an analysis of depictions in the most influential films of all time rather than skew the results. In other words, the stereotypes of dominant and non-dominant racial groups are more significant where there is such a lack of diversity and so few non-White characters. Here, three of the ten films in this sample have all White casts, in terms of speaking roles. One of the remaining films gives a brief line or two to one Black character at the movie's end. The majority of the remaining six films feature only one non-White character in a leading role.

Breaking down these results, in turn, requires an analysis of how heavily the three directors rely on the use of stereotypes in the sampled movies. Table 7.3 compares the filmmakers' mean rating for stereotypical images of non-dominant and dominant racial groups. While George Lucas' films have the highest image mean rating, it is not significantly higher than Steven Spielberg's films. Yet, Table 7.3 also shows, in terms of statistical significance, James Cameron's films use stereotypical images less than Lucas and Spielberg.

Table 7.3. Images of Non-Dominant and Dominant Racial Groups by Filmmaker

Movie categories by Filmmaker	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
James Cameron	1.050	.129	.797	1.302
George Lucas	1.484	.081	1.324	1.644
Steven Spielberg	1.350	.096	1.161	1.539

Dependent Variable: Mean Rating

On the other hand, Table 7.4 indicates that Cameron and Lucas use stereotypical actions more than Spielberg. Yet, the 95% confidence interval means that a statistical comparison is only significant at or above a difference of .05. So, even though Table 7.4 also shows that the movies by George Lucas have the highest number of action mean ratings overall, the actions relating to stereotypes in the movies of Cameron and Lucas do not exceed each other in terms of statistical significance. The actions in their movies appear at nearly the same rate.

Table 7.4. Actions of Non-Dominant and Dominant Racial Groups by Filmmaker

Movies combined by Filmmaker	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
James Cameron	1.139	.188	.769	1.509
George Lucas	1.146	.120	.910	1.382
Steven Spielberg	.618	.143	.336	.900

Dependent Variable: Mean Rating

While Tables 7.3 and 7.4 demonstrate that movies by George Lucas rank highest in number of image and action ratings overall, Tables 7.5 and 7.6 delineate the average image rating by Non-Dominant versus Dominant and by Filmmaker. In other words, images and actions of non-Whites are allocated respectively and compared to images and actions of Whites. For example, Table 7.5 shows that George Lucas has a higher number of image ratings for the

Dominant group than he does for the Non-Dominant group. In other words, the Lucas subset relies more heavily on stereotypes when depicting the dominant racial group. This, however, merely may be the result of a greater number of images of the dominant racial group. Further research could examine the proportionality of image use to yield more data on this issue.

Table 7.5. Non-Dominant versus Dominant Images by Filmmaker

Non-Dominant versus Dominant Groupings	Movies by Filmmaker	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Non-Dominant	James Cameron	.927	.197	.540	1.314
	George Lucas	1.255	.125	1.010	1.500
	Steven Spielberg	1.052	.138	.780	1.324
Dominant	James Cameron	1.172	.165	.847	1.498
	George Lucas	1.713	.105	1.507	1.918
	Steven Spielberg	1.648	.134	1.384	1.912

Dependent Variable: Mean Rating

Alternatively, Table 7.6 contrasts the average action rating by Filmmaker’s presentation of the Non-Dominant Racial Group versus the Dominant Racial Group. For example, it shows that George Lucas has a higher number of action ratings for the Dominant group than he does for the Non-Dominant group. Table 7.6 also indicates that Lucas’ Dominant group action rating is significantly higher than Spielberg’s but only of minimally higher significance than Cameron. Whereas Cameron has the highest action rating for Non-Dominant Racial Groups, it is only significantly higher than Spielberg—not Lucas.

Table 7.6. Non-Dominant versus Dominant Actions by Filmmaker

Non-Dominant vs. Dominant	Movies combined by Filmmaker	Mean	Standard Error	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Non-Dominant	James Cameron	.958	.265	.435	1.481
	George Lucas	.920	.171	.583	1.256
	Steven Spielberg	.444	.217	.018	.871
Dominant	James Cameron	1.319	.265	.797	1.842
	George Lucas	1.372	.168	1.042	1.703
	Steven Spielberg	.792	.188	.422	1.161

Dependent Variable: Mean Rating

These data are further evaluated in relation to the research questions below.

RQ1a: What are the stereotypes of dominant racial group members in the movies of James Cameron?

While *Avatar* is an ahistorical fantasy set in racial conflict, *Titanic* is a fictional tale based on an historic event that neither addresses race nor casts non-Whites. Discussion of *Titanic*, therefore, occurs primarily in response to RQ4 below. In *Avatar*, on the other hand, the dominant group is White Americans. James Cameron presents them as individualistic, ambitious, technologically savvy, greedy, and occasionally well-intentioned. To divide and conquer “the natives,” military and corporate authorities collaborate to infiltrate their ranks and steal their land. Each White character has a selfish objective in Pandora. These dominant racial group members are exploitative, violent, and self-centered. Jake Sully wants legs, Grace Augustine wants research data, Selfridge wants the natural resources, and Colonel Quaritch wants the conquest. Despite differences among the movies, the following analysis identifies and describes laudatory and derogatory frames of the dominant group within the movies by detailing the coexistence of visual and verbal media messages.

Themes

Most frequently, James Cameron's films involve avarice, achievement, and ambition as themes. Coders consolidated achievement and ambition as closely related enough to be categorized together. Individualism and imperialism appear less frequently than avarice and achievement, but in more scenes than power, race, tribalism, and religion. The Table 7.7 details these means.

Table 7.7. James Cameron's Top Themes

Unit	Mean
AVARICE	3.00
ACHIEVEMENT	3.00
INDIVIDUALISM	2.50
IMPERIALISM	2.00
POWER	1.50
RACE	1.50
TRIBALISM	1.50
RELIGION	1.34

Avatar was one of the films coded by all three coders, and each identified *Avatar*'s central themes as imperialist, colonialist, and/or neo-colonialist. Given similarity of definition, the coders agreed that consolidating the three into the single category, imperialism, is sufficient to capture the intended meaning. The following scene illustrates this through the point of view of the dominant group:

INT. COMMISSARY - DAY

It's standing room only as all base personnel are crowded into the dining hall. A portable 3D GRAPHICS PROJECTOR has been set up, and the lights are down. QUARITCH stands in front of the display image -- a classic pre-mission briefing.

QUARITCH

People, you are fighting for survival.
There's an aboriginal horde out there

massing for an attack. First slide.

The display shows an overhead image of the Well of Souls. It looks like Woodstock in the jungle.

QUARITCH

These orbital images show the hostiles' numbers have gone from a couple of hundred to over two thousand in one day, and more are pouring in. By next week it could be twenty thousand. Then they'll be overrunning our perimeter here. We can't wait. Our only security lies in preemptive attack. We will fight terror with terror.

TRACKING ACROSS the grim faces of the miners and troopers. Fear transforming to hatred in their eyes.

QUARITCH

Next slide. This mountain stronghold is supposedly protected by their deity. When we destroy it, we will blast a crater in their racial memory so deep they won't come within a thousand clicks of this place.

In this scene's example, imperialism takes on a uniquely post-9/11 character through expressions of population control fears, the Bush doctrine of preemptive attack, and linkages between terrorism and religious and racial war.

While avarice is a dominant theme in both movies, *Titanic* deals more with individualism in grappling with the sinking of White Star Line ship, Titanic. Its crew and 2,227 passengers set sail in March-April of 1912 with only enough room for half of them on lifeboats. On the upper levels, the first-class passengers reside in extravagant boudoirs with brocade fabrics and hand-carved mahogany, and they dine or worship in ornate ballrooms and grand halls featuring crystal chandeliers, antique china, gold fixtures, and silver utensils. Whether the scenes featuring Rose and Cal's premarital dysfunctions, Rose's tensions about marrying Cal versus escaping with

Jack, or the women at lunch training their daughters in cultured behavior, the wealthy rarely smile and always appear to be constrained by social expectations. Ultimately, however, the dialog in both films constructs the dominant themes as powerfully as their images and actions do.

Words

Both *Avatar* and *Titanic* play up the dynamics of the insiders and the outsiders in ways that vilify the “Other.” The language of “us” and “them” (or, “we” and “they”) frames both the racial and class conflicts. For this question, however, we focus only on the dominant racial group. Yet, the words characterizing the White Americans are few given that the focus of the movie is on the spectacle of the non-dominant group. The Whites talk about others, but no one to talks about them. Nonetheless, what the dialog clearly reiterates throughout *Avatar* is that “we” are the White Americans—and, to a lesser extent, the question that emerges is whether “they” or “we” are the “civilized.”

Table 7.8. James Cameron’s Word Choices: Dominant Group Members

Unit	Mean
US/THEM	3.00
CIVILIZED/UNCIVILIZED	0.17

Given that *Avatar*’s storyline is told from the perspective of the Americans, the majority of the dialog is by them and about the objectified Other – the Omaticayans – the Na’vi. Conversely, the filmmakers juxtapose these alien objects against an abundance of images of the Americans as the film’s subjects.

Images

Table 7.9 indicates that Cameron primarily depicts dominant group members as White men who are violent, good-looking, and armed, and White women who are defiant, intelligent and of diverse ages. In less than two instances per movie, on average, the male characters also appear to be unhappy and greedy risk-takers.

Table 7.9. James Cameron's Top 10 Images: Dominant Group Members

Unit	Mean
VIOLENT WM	2.84
HANDSOME WM	2.17
WEAPON WM	2.00
DEFIANT WF	2.00
CRONE WF	2.00
YOUNG WF	2.00
OLD WF	2.00
UNHAPPY WM	1.84
AVARICIOUS WM	1.67
RISKTKG WM	1.50

These images of White people couple with the previously discussed words and the following actions to portray discrete stereotypes of dominant group members.

Actions

Dominant group members in James Cameron's films are White men and women who kill, threaten, travel in groups, and steal. In half or less of their depictions, they also dance and burn people or places. To a lesser extent, they also kidnap others and perform rituals. Table 7.10 presents measurements related to dominant racial group members' actions in the sample:

Table 7.10. James Cameron’s Average Frequency of Actions by Dominants

Unit	Mean
d-KILL	3.00
d-THREATEN	3.00
d-TRAVELENMASS	3.00
d-STEAL	2.50
d-DANCE	1.50
d-BURN	1.50
d-KIDNAP	0.67
d-PERFORMRITE	0.67

RQ1b: What are the stereotypes of dominant racial group members in the movies of George Lucas?

Themes

The most common themes in George Lucas’ films are achievement/ambition, imperialism, power/superiority, avarice, and individualism. Tribalism, race, and religion also appear but to a lesser extent. Table 7.11 presents the frequency with which these themes occur in Lucas’ five films in this study’s sample:

Table 7.11. George Lucas’ Top 10 Themes

Unit	Mean
ACHIEVEMENT	3.00
IMPERIALISM	3.00
POWER/SUPERIORITY	2.93
AVARICE	2.87
INDIVIDUALISM	2.53
TRIBALISM	2.20
RACE	1.20
RELIGION	0.60

Words

The most frequently used words pertaining to dominant groups in Lucas' films are "us" and "we" as those who are "powerful" and "superior." Table 7.12 suggests that us/them (we/they) language occurs in three or more instances in the each of the sampled films. Similarly, words denoting power and superiority are present in nearly three instances in the each film.

Table 7.12. George Lucas' Top 10 Words: Dominant Racial Group Members

Unit	Mean
US/THEM	3.00
POWER/SUPERIORITY	2.93

Images

In *Raiders* and the four installments of the *Star Wars* series examined here, dominant racial group members most frequently are avaricious, unhappy, and violent risk-taking White men with weapons. At times, the White men also are calm and handsome. The White women are most often pretty, smart, and defiant. Table 7.13 represents the average frequency of these images.

Table 7.13. George Lucas' Top 10 Images: Dominant Racial Group Members

Unit	Mean
AVARICIOUS WM	3.00
RISKTKG WM	3.00
UNHAPPY WM	3.00
WEAPON WM	3.00
PRETTY WF	3.00
VIOLENT WM	2.93
SMART WF	2.67
DEFIANT WF	2.60
CALM WM	2.53
HANDSOME WM	2.40

Actions

Dominant racial group members in Lucas' movies tend to kill, steal, and threaten in three or more instances. On nearly three occasions per film, these leading characters traveled in groups and, on average, kidnapped others more than twice in each movie. They do not chant or drum, but they do perform rituals, enter trances, dance, and burn places or people. Table 7.14 demonstrates the average frequencies for these actions.

Table 7.14. George Lucas' Average Frequency of Actions for Dominant Group Members

Unit	Mean
d-KILL	3.00
d-STEAL	3.00
d-THREATEN	3.00
d-TRAVELENMASS	2.87
d-KIDNAP	2.13
d-PERFORMRITE	0.67
d-TRANCE	0.60
d-DANCE	0.60
d-BURN	0.20

RQ1c: What are the stereotypes of dominant racial group members in the movies of Steven Spielberg?

Themes

Avarice was the most common theme in the sampled Steven Spielberg movies. Other popular themes were individualism, achievement, and religion. Each of these themes characterized 1.5 or more scenes in each film. Power and superiority follow with 1.25 occurrences. Only in 1 or fewer scenes per movie was race, imperialism, or tribalism a theme. Table 7.15 displays the average frequencies for each of these themes.

Table 7.15. Steven Spielberg's Top 10 Themes

Unit	Mean
AVARICE	2.33
INDIVIDUALISM	2.08
ACHIEVEMENT	1.50
RELIGION	1.50
POWER/SUPERIORITY	1.25
RACE	1.17
IMPERIALISM	1.08
TRIBALISM	0.83

Words

The dialog in the films of Steven Spielberg facilitates relationships between characters and viewers. In effect, dominant racial group members are the “civilized” “us” whose “power” comes from superior intellect. Table 7.16 presents the average frequencies for Spielberg’s word choices.

Table 7.16. Steven Spielberg's Top 10 Words: Dominant

Unit	Mean
US/THEM	3.00
POWER/SUPERIORITY	2.34
CIVILIZED/UNCIVILIZED	0.50

Images

Images of dominant racial group members in Spielberg’s movies include most prominently avaricious men in three or more leading roles. The White males in the films are often unhappy risk-takers who are violent, calm, armed, and rugged. The White women are young, defiant, and angry. Table 7.17 displays the average frequencies of the images of dominant racial group members.

Table 7.17. Steven Spielberg's Top 10 Images: Dominant

Unit	Mean
AVARICIOUS WM	3.00
YOUNG WF	3.00
RISKTKG WM	2.89
UNHAPPY WM	2.67
DEFIANT WF	2.33
VIOLENT WM	2.22
CALM WM	2.22
ANGRY WF	2.11
WEAPON WM	2.08
RUGGED WM	2.00

Actions

Dominant race characters travel in groups more than any other single action in this subsample. Other actions that frequently occur in Spielberg's films among dominant racial groups include kidnapping, performing rites, stealing, and threatening. To a lesser extent, these characters also kill, enter trances, and burn places or people. Table 7.18 below presents the mean frequencies for these acts in the sampled movies.

Table 7.18. Steven Spielberg’s Top 10 Actions: Dominant

Unit	Mean
d-TRAVELENMASS	3.00
d-KIDNAP	1.50
d-PERFORMRITE	1.25
d-STEAL	1.00
d-THREATEN	1.00
d-KILL	0.75
d-TRANCE	0.75
d-BURN	0.25
d-CHANT	0.00
d-DRUM	0.00
d-DANCE	0.00

Stereotypes of Non-Dominant Racial Group Members

As Tables 7.1-7.18 illustrate, the most frequently occurring stereotypes across all ten films in the sample were those of dominant racial group members, which in this context were White people. This section contrasts those findings with the stereotypes of non-dominant racial group members in the sample. Figures 9 and 10 introduce this section by displaying a comparison of each filmmaker’s subsets in terms of an image’s and action’s average frequency in much the same way as did Figures 7 and 8 in the prior section. In this case, however, the images are of non-dominant racial group members—non-White people. Non-Whites in this sample were most often Black people but also included in this analysis are aboriginal/indigenous, Asian, and Latino people—and the Blue Na’vi, who appear to represent stereotypes of all four of the prior groups.

Specifically, Figure 9 indicates that, unlike with images of dominant groups, there is little parity between filmmaker's subsets regarding images of non-dominant groups. With the exception of infrequent clusters of brave, cunning, and unkempt images, the filmmakers are presenting quite distinct portrayals of non-Whites. What is most compelling in Figure 9, as was the case with Figure 7, is noting which images are used 3 or more times on average in each director's movies.

For Cameron, the images are of the primitive and violent combatants who are scantily clad with tribal markings, ethnic attire, and wild hair who stare from dark jungles and travel en masse in cults. For Spielberg, the only image that occurs 3 or more times on average in his movies is that of the calm non-White person, but the smart non-White person is close behind with nearly 3 instances and the brave non-White person with an average of 2 appearances per film. For Lucas, there is no image of non-dominants that occurs 3 times per film, but the ones that appear around 2 times per film are brave, calm, smart, primitive, or cultic.

Figure 10 presents the average frequency of actions by non-Whites. More frequently than any other action, for example, Figure 10 shows that Lucas, Cameron, and Spielberg depict non-Whites traveling collectively. Spielberg's instances, however, are less than half those of Lucas and Cameron. This, in part, may be because Spielberg casts much fewer non-Whites in his films in the sample. Figure 10 also indicates that rarely, if ever, are non-Whites drumming, burning, and eating people in the sample, which is a refreshing departure from certain tribal stereotypes.

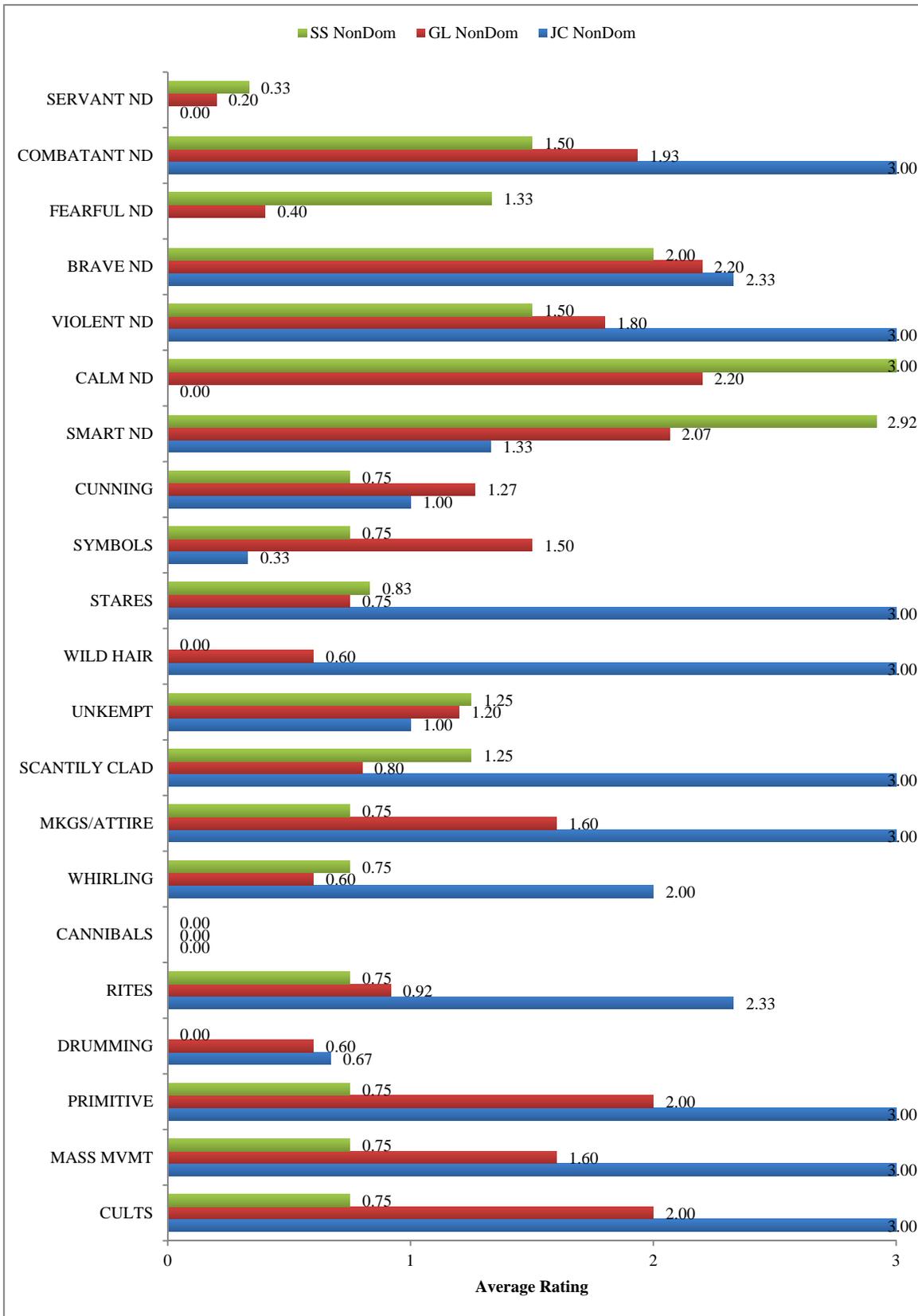


Figure 9. Average Frequency of Images for Non-Dominant Group by Filmmakers

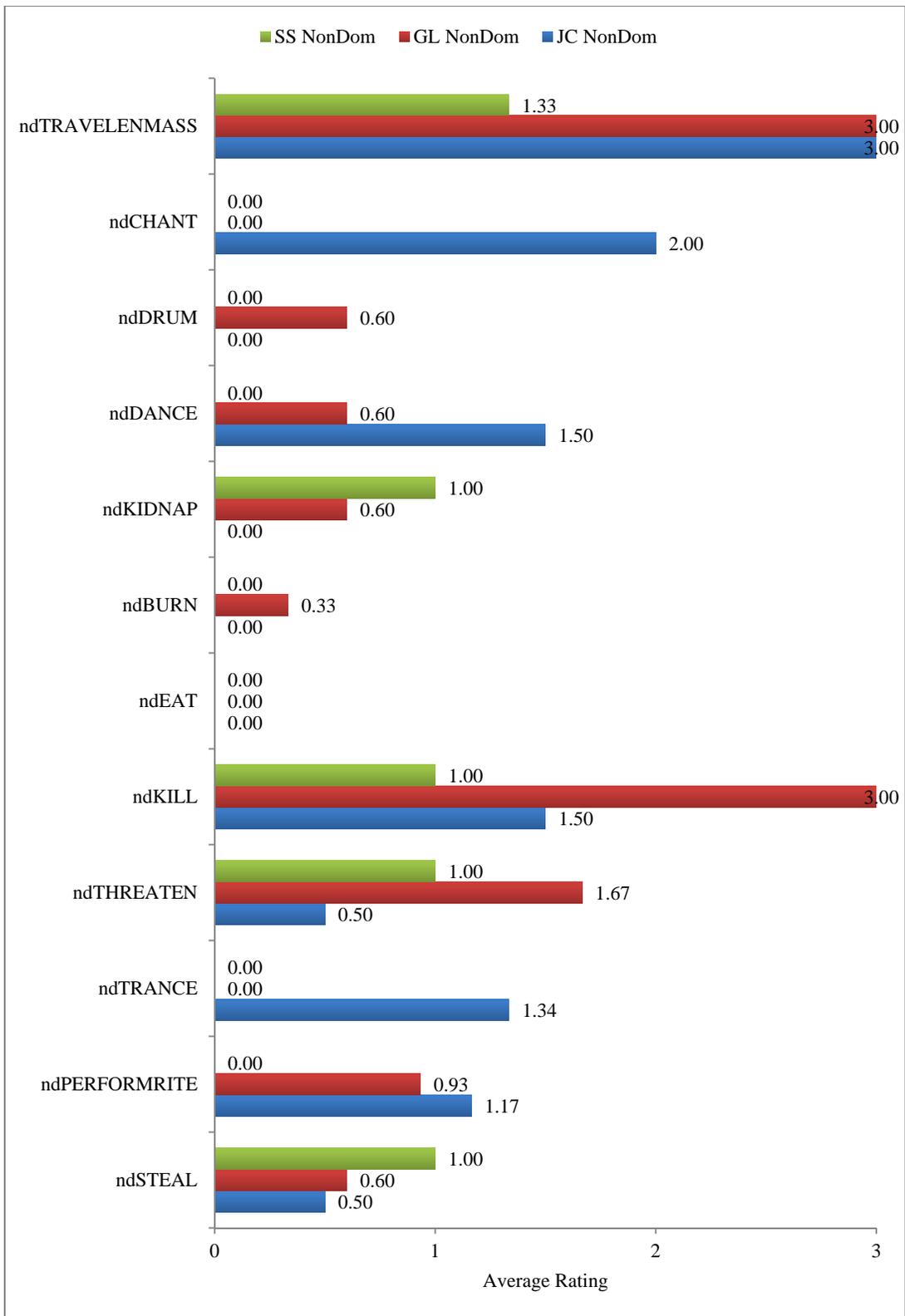


Figure 10. Average Frequency of Actions for Non-Dominant Group by Filmmakers

RQ2a: What are the stereotypes of non-dominant racial group members in the movies of James Cameron?

Themes

As discussed above in RQ1a, the most common themes for Cameron’s films are avarice and achievement. Next in order of frequency are individualism and imperialism. In many regards, the themes of scenes involving the non-dominant racial group present the converse of the dominant groups’ theme. While the Americans, for example, are greedy and ambitious, the Na’vi are generous and content. They are fulfilled and unassuming—valuing the collective over the individual and sovereignty/self-determination over expansionism. Scenes throughout *Avatar* play on these themes according to this dialectic.

Table 7.19. James Cameron’s Word Choices: Non-Dominant Racial Group Members

Unit	Mean
US/THEM	3.00
NATIVES	1.50
PEJORATIVES	1.50
RACE COLOR LABELS	1.50
TRIBALNAME	1.50
CIVILIZED/UNCIVILIZED	0.17
DARK	0.00
POWER/SUPERIORITY	0.00

Words

Most frequently, dominant racial group members refer to non-dominant racial group members as “them” or “they.” Additional words used in describing or referring to non-dominants include “natives,” pejoratives such as “savages,” race color labels, and tribal group

labels. While darkness and power/superiority do not occur in the dialog, minor references to “them” as “uncivilized” are included. Figure 10 represents the average frequencies of words used to describe or refer to non-dominant racial group members.

Images

Unlike the other films in the sample, *Avatar* has women of color cast not only in speaking roles, but also leading roles. Uniquely, one Black Latina, one African American, and one White Latina are cast in leading roles. These women are uncommonly smart, defiant, and pretty warriors. Their characters are strong heroes who fight alongside the men and children in ways that are exceptional. Several additional women of color are in the cast even though most of them are merely in the blue masses without dialog. These depictions warrant additional scrutiny in future research.

Table 7.20. James Cameron’s Top 10 Images: Non-Dominant

Unit	Mean
COMBATANT	3.00
CULTS	3.00
MASS MVMT	3.00
MKGS/ATTIRE	3.00
PRIMITIVE	3.00
SCANTILY CLAD	3.00
STARES	3.00
WILD HAIR	3.00
VIOLENT	3.00
PERFORM RITES	2.33

Cameron's films' mean images of non-dominant racial group members appear as primitive and violent combatants with tribal markings, wild hair, and scant attire who are in cults, travel collectively, and cast stares from the darkness. This occurs far more than three times in *Avatar*, which is the only one of the two sampled movies with non-White racial group members. *Titanic* contains an all-White cast. Table 7.20 displays the average frequencies for images of non-dominant racial group members.

Actions

While subordinate groups do not drum, kidnap, burn, boil, or eat anyone in Cameron's movies, they commonly do travel in groups, chant, dance, and kill others. Infrequently, they also enter trances, perform rites, threaten, and steal. Table 7.21 displays the means of actions by non-dominant racial groups in Cameron's subsample of movies.

Table 7.21. James Cameron's Top 10 Actions: Non-Dominant

Unit	Mean
ndTRAVELENMASS	3.00
ndCHANT	2.00
ndDANCE	1.50
ndKILL	1.50
ndTRANCE	1.34
ndPERFORMRITE	1.17
ndTHREATEN	0.50
ndSTEAL	0.50

RQ2b: What are the stereotypes of non-dominant racial group members in the movies of George Lucas?

Themes

As stated in response to RQ1b, the primary themes in George Lucas' movies are achievement/ambition, imperialism, power, and avarice. As with Cameron, films in the Lucas group present each theme's dialectic from both the dominant and subordinate points of view. For Lucas, however, the perspectives are not necessarily antithetical. Instead, Lucas presents both dominant and non-dominant group members as wrestling with inner tensions related to the movie themes.

For example, ambition and achievement inwardly pull characters in opposite directions until a decision is made. In like manner, "the Empire" operates as "the dark side of the Force" that lures individuals with promises of superiority to covet power. The dilemma that arises is whether avarice, individualism, and imperialism will defeat or be defeated by altruism, collectivism, and self-determination. The entire *Star Wars* franchise—the six movies, video games, books, and so on—is about these pressures, conflicts, and choices.

In part, this is why tribalism is a more prominent theme than race or religion for this set of films. The tribes most frequently consist of beings that are alike racially—but not always. Often, the bands of rebels or nationals are quite diverse; they not only consist of varying races, but also different species.

Words

Although race is somewhat ambiguous in the *Star Wars* movies for reasons discussed below, the non-dominant groups in Lucas' movies are referred to as "them" and in terms of being inferior and possessing less power. Often tribal names indicate ethnic or racial difference. While the words "dark" and specifically "dark side" frequently occur in the movies, they generally do not refer to race or ethnicity but rather evil and malevolent forces. "Natives" and

“civilized/uncivilized” rarely occur in this subgroup of the sample. Table 7.22 presents these means.

Table 7.22. George Lucas’ Top 10 Words: Non-Dominant

Unit	Mean
US/THEM	3.00
POWER/SUPERIORITY	2.93
TRIBALNAME	2.53
DARK	2.33
NATIVES	0.53
CIVILIZED/UNCIVILIZED	0.20
PEJORATIVES	0.00
RACE COLOR LABELS	0.00

Images

Three racially Black actors are cast in three of the *Star Wars* films. No women of color have speaking roles. Each is an exemplary, undeveloped, and inconsequential middle-aged and upper class Black man. Billy Dee Williams, Samuel L. Jackson, and Hugh Quarshie appear brave, calm, and smart in their respective roles. Each has limited screen time, minor dialog, and no significant character development. Whether in *Return*, *Empire*, or *Phantom*, the characters are loyal comrades who fight in defense of the White lead characters. As sidekicks, Han Solo (Harrison Ford) has Lando Calrissian (Billy Dee Williams); Queen Amidala (Natalie Portman) has Captain Panaka (Hugh Quarshie); and, Yoda (Frank Oz) has Mace Windu (Samuel L. Jackson). RQ3 below explores these relationships further.

Less frequently, though not significantly less, George Lucas also presents non-dominant racial group members in cults as primitive and violent combatants as in *Raiders*. As story creator and executive producer, Lucas partnered with Spielberg who directs the film, but this

means that he retained some creative control over the film’s development. As such, both filmmakers receive credit and critique for its depictions. Whether in Latin America, Nepal, or Egypt, the non-Whites in *Raiders* are portrayed in loincloths, tribal attire, or religious garb while shooting poison darts from bows-and-arrows, brandishing swords, or working slavishly. They also are occasionally associated with mass movements, tribal markings, ethnic attire, and various pagan symbols. Table 7.23 presents the average frequencies for these images.

Table 7.23. George Lucas’ Top 10 Images: Non-Dominant

Unit	Mean
CALM	2.20
BRAVE	2.20
SMART	2.07
CULTS	2.00
PRIMITIVE	2.00
COMBATANT	1.93
VIOLENT	1.80
MASS MVMT	1.60
MKGS/ATTIRE	1.60
SYMBOLS	1.50

https://etd.lsu.edu/ETD-db/ETD-review/view_etd?URN=etd-06272013-205033 In Lucas’

films, non-dominant racial group members may not chant or enter trances, but more than anything else they travel collectively and kill people – occasionally threatening them.

Additionally, at times, they perform rites, steal, drum, dance, kidnap, and burn people/places.

The mean frequencies for these actions are listed in Table 7.24.

Table 7.24. George Lucas' Top 10 Actions: Non-Dominant

Unit	Mean
ndKILL	3.00
ndTRAVELENMASS	3.00
ndTHREATEN	1.67
ndPERFORMRITE	0.93
ndKIDNAP	0.60
ndSTEAL	0.60
ndDRUM	0.60
ndDANCE	0.60
ndBURN	0.33

RQ2c: What are the stereotypes of non-dominant racial group members in the movies of Steven Spielberg?

Themes

As discussed in response to RQ1c, avarice was the most frequently occurring theme in the sampled Steven Spielberg movies. Other popular themes were individualism, achievement, and religion. Unlike Cameron and Lucas, however, Spielberg's movies largely fail to explore the perspectives or experiences of non-dominant racial groups in relation to the movies' central themes. In *E.T.* and *Jaws*, no non-White human characters have dialog. In *Jurassic*, the Black guy (Samuel Jackson's character) advises against the old White guy's self-centered greed and ambition, but no one listens. After only a few lines in a couple scenes, he disappears and no one misses him until a dinosaur discards his arm as leftovers.

In *Raiders*, on the other hand, racial subordinates make limited appearances in scenes advancing the movie's central themes. The non-White characters, however, are either agents of the White avaricious males who are competing with each other, or they are inconsequential foils.

As foils, their individualistic greed negligibly succumbs to the nationalistic ambitions and achievements of the Whites in approximately one scene per ethnic group. Egyptians are the exception but only because Indiana Jones spends more time in Africa than in Asia or South America. That is the limit of non-dominant racial groups' engagement with the movie's central themes in Spielberg's subsample.

Words

While the sample exhibits no use of pejorative terms, race color labels, or dark/light binaries in Steven Spielberg's films, the words used to identify non-dominant racial group members—on the rare occasion they appear in a Spielberg movie—are “them,” “they,” “natives,” and tribal names. A European character in *Raiders* even makes reference to the Africans condescendingly as having “some civilized among them.” Table 7.25 presents the average frequencies for each of these units.

Table 7.25. Steven Spielberg's Top 10 Words: Non-Dominant

Unit	Mean
US/THEM	3.00
POWER/SUPERIORITY	2.34
NATIVES	1.34
TRIBALNAME	1.34
CIVILIZED/UNCIVILIZED	0.50

Images

Though small in number, characters who are members of non-dominant racial groups appear most frequently as both calm and smart in the sampled Spielberg's movies. For example, both the African American and Asian American characters with speaking roles in *Jurassic Park* are scientists. On average, images of these individuals as violent though brave combatants occur 1.5 to 2 times per film. Even less common are depictions of them as fearful, unkempt, and

scantily clad. Here, rarely, are non-Whites represented as cultic religious extremists or eye-bulging watchers who stare from dark jungles. No women of color are cast in speaking roles in

Table 7.26. Steven Spielberg's Top 10 Images: Non-Dominant

Unit	Mean
CALM	3.00
SMART	2.92
BRAVE	2.00
VIOLENT	1.50
COMBATANT	1.50
FEARFUL	1.33
SCANTILY CLAD	1.25
UNKEMPT	1.25
STARES	0.83
CULTS	0.75

these films, and little to no diversity based on age, nationality, class, and ability among any groups other than Whites is included. Table 7.26 shows these findings according to their means.

Actions

Non-Whites do not chant, dance, enter trances, perform rites, or burn, boil and eat people in the Spielberg subsample. They, however, do travel en masse, steal, kidnap, threaten, and kill. The frequencies are far less than other subsamples, but this may be because so few non-White characters are included in Spielberg's movies. Table 7.27 lists these actions by mean instances for each action.

Table 7.27. Steven Spielberg’s Top 10 Actions: Non-Dominant

Unit	Mean
ndTRAVELENMASS	1.33
ndKIDNAP	1.00
ndKILL	1.00
ndTHREATEN	1.00
ndSTEAL	1.00

Relations between Group Members

RQ3: How do the racially dominant and non-dominant characters relate to one another in each of the respective filmmaker’s movies?

Excluding *Jaws*, *Star Wars IV*, and *Titanic*, all of which do not have non-White characters, the sample movies tend to avoid the slave-to-master stereotypes that were popular in the early to middle twentieth century. In fact, these findings suggest that non-dominant racial group members are most often cast in the sampled films as brave, calm, or smart persons. Thwarting this progress, however, is the tendency to cast so few—often only one—African, Asian, or Latino descendants in speaking roles. Of the roles that do exist, the majority still cast non-Whites as outsiders in undeveloped character roles of subordinate primitives, traitors, and violent combatants while Whites in lead roles are morally, socially, politically, and/or professionally. The themes, words, images, and actions often perpetuate earlier stereotypes, but the stereotypes and relations that evolve from them are changing as new images and actions are introduced.

Cameron’s Films

No non-Whites appear in *Titanic*, so no data are available from that film to inform this question. The concern that arises is whether eliminating stereotypes of people of color as slaves and clowns means the elimination of people of color in movies. Can no new cast opportunities be

imagined? For Cameron, based on this subsample, it appears that it is one extreme or the other. In *Avatar*, for example, the stereotypes of non-dominant racial groups are glaring and disturbing.

“The natives,” as the Whites call them, are primitive people of color who have tails, wear loincloths, and leap from tree-to-tree on what the script identifies as “the legs of an antelope.” They cast threatening stares from dark jungles, and they are prone to strange rituals, exhibit tribal markings or animal printed skins. Themes of tribalism and paganism orient the audience to receive images of cultic, restless tribal groups that move as anonymous collective masses and drum in the night while sitting around a tree—“Hometree.” The spiritual leader of the Omaticayan clan behaves as the ascetic whirling dervish of their order who engages in devotional exercises involving ecstatic bodily movements.

Jake, while powerless to master or quell actions of the Na’vi, however, does serve as the counterpoised isolated white figure, alone “out there,” confronting his Destiny or shouldering his Burden in the “heart of darkness,” displaying coolness under fire. In the words of one coder, *Avatar* is a classic example of Toni Morrison’s “‘everyone wants a Black man’s life’ as long as they can leave when the check comes” [paraphrasing *Song of Solomon*]. In many ways, that statement captures *Avatar*’s essence: the conversion story of a White guy who becomes a son of the Omaticayan clan. White people become Blue Na’vi and suddenly speak differently, wear braided hair, grow taller and shapely, and become athletic. In the scene that introduces the viewer to Pandora and the *Avatar* Compound, the first line spoken by the White female actor playing basketball is, “Aw, come on. You ain’t got no skills.”

Selfridge calls them “blue monkeys” with an intonation of contempt that is reminiscent of racial slurs such as coons, kikes, or japs. The following exchange exemplifies the relationship between the Americans and the Omaticayans:

GRACE

This is bad, Parker. Those trees were sacred to the Omaticaya in a way you can't imagine.

SELFRIDGE

You know what? You throw a stick in the air around here it falls on some sacred fern.

GRACE

I'm not talking about pagan voodoo here -- I'm talking about something real and measurable in the biology of the forest.

SELFRIDGE

(frustrated)

Which is what exactly?

Grace's nerve fails. A rush of conflicting emotions -- the need to act, to do something, colliding with her scientific rigor.

GRACE

(to Jake)

I can't do this. How am I supposed to reduce years of work to a sound bite for the illiterate?

JAKE

Just tell him what you know in your heart.

She turns to Parker, steeling herself.

GRACE

Alright, look -- I don't have the answers yet, I'm just now starting to even frame the questions. What we think we know -- is that there's some kind of electrochemical communication between the roots of the trees. Like the synapses between neurons. Each tree has ten to the fourth connections to the trees around it, and there are ten to the twelfth trees on Pandora --

SELFRIDGE

That's a lot I'm guessing.

GRACE

That's more connections than the human brain. You get it? It's a network -- a global network. And the Na'vi can access it -- they can upload and download data -- memories -- at sites like the one you destroyed.

SELFRIDGE

What the hell have you people been smoking out there? They're just.

Goddamn. Trees.

GRACE

You need to wake up, Parker. The wealth of this world isn't in the ground -- it's all around us. The Na'vi know that, and they're fighting to defend it. If you want to share this world with them, you need to understand them....

[two scenes later]

GRACE

(to Selfridge)

Parker, wait. Stop. These are people you're about to...

[interrupted by soldiers trying to physically remove her]

SELFRIDGE

No! No...they're fly-bitten savages that live in a tree.

Look around. I don't know about you but I see a lot of trees. They can move. [waves off soldiers who exit]

GRACE

They're families in there. There are children...babies!

Are you gonna kill children?

JAKE

You don't want that kind of blood on your hands.

Believe me. Let me try to talk them out.

They trust me. ...

Indeed, Cameron depicts the relations between groups as one negotiated by diplomats Jake and Grace, but after “mating” with Neytiri, however, Jake “becomes” one of the Omaticayan. Quaritch calls him “a traitor to [his] race” and repeatedly tries to kill him and

Grace. Upon realizing his new outsider status, Jake seeks group membership with the Omaticayan, although they do not fully accept him until after he returns carrying a dying Grace for them to save. At that moment, the following scene illustrates the anti-colonial and anti-imperialistic posture that the protagonist, Jake, now assumes in calling the Omaticayan to battle while standing with their leader, Tsu'tey:

JAKE TURNS to face TSU'TEY and the CROWD.

JAKE

With your permission, I will Speak now.

You would honor me by translating.

Tsu'tey gestures assent, and they face the clan together.

JAKE SPEAKS, the pain of Grace's death in the passion and fury of his voice. Tsu'tey TRANSLATES beside him.

JAKE

The Sky People have sent a message that they can take whatever they want, and no one can stop them. But we will send them a message. Ride out, as fast as the wind can carry you, tell the other clans to come. Tell them Toruk Macto calls to them. Fly now with me brothers and sisters! Fly! And we will show the Sky People that they cannot take whatever they want and that this...this is our land!

TSU'TEY finishes with a bloodcurdling war-cry, and the entire CLAN responds, their shouts echoing across the forest.

JAKE takes Neytiri's hand and runs to the leonopteryx. He vaults onto its back and pulls her up behind him.

THE HUNTERS run to their banshees, mounting quickly. Jake's leonopteryx rises on mighty wings into the night sky. With a thunder of wings, the banshees take off after it.

LONG LENS -- POLYPHEMUS. Across its face, the banshees rise like a swarm of bats. Groups of riders peel off in different directions.

CUT TO:

EXT. CLAN GATHERING - NIGHT

JAKE and NEYTIRI stand before the gathered members of ANOTHER

CLAN. Jake speaks as she translates. We don't hear the words.

TRACK ACROSS the faces of the clan, a sea of eyes in flickering fire-light.

JAKE (V.O.)

We rode out to the four winds. To the horse clans of the plain, to the Ikran people of the mountains. When Toruk Macto called them, they came.

VARIOUS ANGLES -- SLOW MOTION as riders vault onto their armored direhorses. Banshee riders raise spears and bows, spurring their mounts to leap skyward.

CUT TO:

EXT. WELL OF SOULS - DAWN

With a WHOOSH and the crack of mighty wings, JAKE RETURNS.

Jake and Neytiri alight from his legendary mount.

Around them HUNDREDS OF BANSHEES are landing. A gathering of eagles.

FROM ABOVE we can see hundreds of Na'vi streaming down into the Well of Souls and many hundreds more camped in the forest above it.

DIREHORSE RIDERS are arriving along many trails.

BANSHEE RIDERS circle and swoop, darkening the sky above the grotto.

JAKE, standing next to the Leonopteryx, watches his army gathering.

Following this scene, the sole Latina character in the sample makes a game changing decision to disobey Commander Quaritch and break with the American military forces. As Jake's ally, this soldier uses her helicopter and firepower to fight for the Omaticayans and strike against her former comrades. She is angry, passionate and relentless—to the death. In the words of one coder, “[Trudy Chacon] is beautiful, fiery and zesty—sacrificing her life while screaming expletives at the White man—calling up every Latina stereotype in Western culture. I'm surprised she did not break out in Spanish.”

Stereotypes of non-dominant racial groups may be more diverse in *Avatar* than in any other film in the sample. Even though there are no human African American characters, there are descendants of Africa, Asian, and Latin America in lead roles among the cast. While no Native Americans were identified among the cast, there are also copious stereotypes that allude to indigenous people and their historical suffering under European colonialism. Nonetheless, use of such stereotypes does not amount to racial diversity or inclusion.

Lucas' Films

No non-White actors appear in *Star Wars IV: A New Hope*. Despite popular assumptions, Lucas, in the entire *Star Wars* series, uses only the voice of James Earl Jones as audio laid-over the visuals of the antagonist Darth Vader, who a white actor portrays. Although a Black actor appears in a leading role in each subsequent installment of the franchise, movies like *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, *E.T.: The Extra Terrestrial*, *Empire Strikes Back*, *Return of the Jedi*, and *Phantom Menace* represent the trend of casting only one Black actor in a speaking role. In *Raiders*, he is the traitor. In *E.T.*, he is the chief of police—the bad guys—with two short lines and approximately 20 seconds of cumulative screen time. In *Empire Strikes Back* and *Return of the Jedi*, he is the sidekick who is also a traitor in *Empire* and a hero in *Return*.

Literally, in *Empire*, Lando Calrissian, played by Billy Dee Williams, is “the scoundrel” who deceitfully turns over the rebels to “the Darkside” (the Empire) and then redeems himself as “the general” who saves the galaxy by destroying the Darkside’s mightiest weapon, the Death Star battle station, in *Return*. Whether in *Return*, *Empire*, or *Phantom*, the characters are loyal comrades who fight in the defense of the White lead characters. As sidekicks, Han Solo (Harrison Ford) has Lando Calrissian (Billy Dee Williams); Queen Amidala (Natalie Portman)

has Captain Panaka (Hugh Quarshie); and, Yoda (Frank Oz) has Mace Windu (Samuel L. Jackson).

Although *Phantom Menace* uniquely offers a Jedi Council leader in Mace Windu portrayed by Samuel L. Jackson that does not conform to traditional stereotypes, he remains a sidekick to Yoda in the traditional stereotype of helper, advisor, and loyal subject. In like manner, Queen Amidala's head of security, Captain Panaka, seems far more like her valet than a military officer. Furthermore, his character receives far more screen time for his stereotypical portrayal of the loyal servant in keeping with Hall's description of the slave-figure image. It is not until subsequent and less successful *Star Wars* installments, II and III, that Mace Windu gains any character development at all.

The problem with discussing non-dominant racial group members in George Lucas' movies is that, at most, he employs only one or two African American actors in each of his films. Yet, Lucas creates animated, animal-like, or otherwise non-human characters that exhibit behavior, speech patterns, or other tendencies (such as styles of dance, attire, walking, rhythmic movement, symbolism, or musicianship) that conform to minstrelsy, Blaxploitation, or other stereotypes of African Americans discussed in Chapter 3. Set in deserts, auctions, or jazz clubs, several black, brown, or bronze droids, ewoks, sand people, and wookiees exemplify this practice. Chapter 8 entails further discussion on this topic.

Spielberg's Films

No non-Whites appear in *Jaws*. Only one minor role with three briefly spoken lines at the end of *E.T.* – and he is the leader of the bad guys as the chief of police, leading the pursuit of E.T., Elliott, and their friends. In *Jurassic Park*, the first person killed is the unlucky guard who in addition to being the only Black guard is the only guard devoured by the dinosaur. The other

two non-Whites are African American and Asian American characters. One is the master control operator, Ray Arnold (Samuel L. Jackson), while the other is the chief geneticist, Henry Wu (B.D. Wong). Wu is cast as the model minority who educates the Whites with his expansive knowledge about breeding genetically modified dinosaurs, and then he disappears for the remainder of the film. Likewise, Arnold is the master control operator who loyally advises the cast of Whites while chain-smoking until dinosaurs devour all but his arm. He never considers running for his life amid the danger. The viewers learn nothing beyond these details about any of these non-White characters.

This image stands in great contradiction to the Black traitor, Katanga, in *Indiana Jones*. This character is so duplicitous that it is difficult to ascertain whether he is deceiving Indiana, the Germans, the Egyptians, or them all. He kidnaps the girl, extorts the Europeans, and tries to kill Indiana. His lack of allegiance to anyone shows him to be the worst type of criminal, for he does not even appear to be in solidarity with the other Blacks who tote barges and perform menial tasks as a part of his ship's crew—images that clearly allude to slavery.

In *Raiders*, White Europeans and Americans raid several countries in South America, Asia and Africa as part of their global search for the lost ark of the Hebrew covenant. Along the way, they beat or kill characters named in the cast list as the Ratty Nepalese, the Mean Mongolian, and Barranca the Monkey Man. The Westerners compete with each other in stealing and storing these powerful items such that one coder asked, “By taking the symbols, are they trying to take away the power of the people? By warehousing the symbols, are they trying to reduce indigenous religion to mere magic or to establish their position as the global superpower?” Indiana allies himself with the Natives in the Amazon, Nepal, and Cairo to gain

access to their ancient treasures. They seemingly welcome him to steal their resources and raid their countries.

Non-Racial Stereotypes

RQ4: Are non-racial laudatory or derogatory stereotypes apparent in the sample (i.e., stereotypes on the basis of gender, religion, ability, sexual orientation, nationality, class, etc.)?

This question could be the sole inquiry of a dissertation—or several dissertations. The simple answer is “Yes, numerous additional non-racial laudatory and derogatory stereotypes are apparent in the sample.” The results that inform this response raise myriad implications for future research, many of which time and space do not allow this dissertation to address. This study, therefore, limits its response to this question to a few examples that admittedly neither do justice to the stereotypes nor the ideologies that inform them.

Perhaps even more than race, gender stereotypes and stereotypical relationships between their laudatory and derogatory representations, consistently appear in the sample films. Although this study identified some stereotypes based on religious beliefs, ability, sexual orientation, nationality, and class, Cameron, Lucas, and Spielberg unfailingly cast women as victims, overly-emotional irrationals, and love/sex interests. Even when in non-stereotypical roles such as head-of-household or research scholar, the stories objectify women in scenes or situations that make them appear to be childlike, hysterical, flighty, and in need of rescue. They are smart, but women. They exist to justify the men’s heroism or explain the boy’s problems.

The sample films suggest that James Cameron disguises misogynist narratives with seemingly strong female characters that ultimately become abject to men and machines. In *Titanic*, he takes a conventional teenage romance narrative about snotty upper-class snobs versus plucky lower-class boys, and pits against them a disaster in which heavy machinery turns on the hero and heroine. Exemplifying the rich, but miserable stereotype, Rose seeks escape through

suicide only to be saved by Jack and his popular line, “They’ve got you trapped.” Additional dialogue that illustrates the misery of the wealthy is delivered by Rose’s mother as she tightens Rose’s corset, “Your father left us with nothing except a good name...the only card we have to play...” and further on, “Of course it’s unfair. We are women. Our choices are never easy.”

In *Avatar*, likewise, Cameron takes a conventional romance between a privileged White man and a subjugated foreign woman of color, and sets them in a galactic fantasy wherein the powerful and their huge machines threaten to annihilate her civilization. Using this convention, he excites “accessible emotions with large, violent, often surreal spectacle, and heroics whose physicality transcends the capabilities of any human bodies” (Kolker, 2000, p. 255). In turn, the female characters become nothing more than damsels in distress, impotent to change their circumstances or save themselves.

Additionally, class conflict and stereotypes are common in the sample. In *Titanic*, for instance, the characters are White women, men, and children who speak with varying accents that imply American, Irish, British, and other European nationalities. These passengers’ images coexist with socio-economic class segregation and subjugation of women such as was common in the early twentieth century. This co-occurrence presents a hierarchy in which wealthy White males are first, wealthy White females are second, poor White males are third, then poor White females and so on.

In *Titanic*, the wealthy Whites are greedy, ambitious, and mean-spirited, while the poor Whites are gregarious, adventurous, and rebellious. The working class—the servants, musicians, and other workers—are compliant and industrious keepers of the status quo. On the lower levels, the poor squeeze into tiny, dark, and meager rooms that lack detail wherein viewers only see crowded dancing, hear loud laughing, or imagine the stench among sweaty, drunken

gamblers. Although the movie tells the story of a woman and man who defy socio-economic expectations to be together, the focus of the movie is on the wealthy rather than the poor—after all, they are the only ones who survive.

Similarly, in *Avatar*, Cameron plays on ability, religious, and class stereotypes of the poor but happy and wealthy but miserable ideologies. The Omaticayan are impotent against the human's technology and ammunition, but they are superior in peacefulness and connectedness with nature. Their ability to communicate with the animals, trees, and dragons suggest a level of heightened awareness that the humans are unable to attain. They are poor but happy, while the humans are miserable, angry and never satisfied—struggling to their death to steal what they can never comprehend. Additionally, *Avatar* plays on religious stereotypes of the pagan or spiritual traditionalist as discussed at length in Chapter 4, as well as stereotypes of the paralytic. Ability stereotypes connote a relentless pursuit of mobility akin to Jake Sully's willingness to jeopardize his life and the Omaticayan civilization for the "real legs" promised him by the Colonel.

In Lucas' movies, gender stereotypes such as the male hero, the female temptress, and the damsel in distress are both challenged and perpetuated. Conforming to the laudatory stereotypes of male characters, Luke Skywalker, Han Solo, and other men in leading roles are brave saviors, tenacious fighters, and handsome romantic interests. At points, the director leaves ambiguity regarding whether Luke or Han will win Princess Leia's affections. In *IV*, *V*, and *VI*, Leia courageously stands up and speaks out for what is right and against what is wrong, but her banter often revolves around waiting for one of the male lead actors to save them or her romantic interest (or lack thereof) for them. Yet, the fact that the sole female character in *IV* and *V* is not scantily clad or running in heels makes the image progressive for its time. Limiting female

characters to one among so many men, however, makes any change in stereotype merely peripheral.

Furthermore, any progress Leia made for women in this regard succumbs to the temptress stereotype as she casts seductive eyes from a lounging position wearing a revealing bikini while chained as Jabba the Hut's slave. Other female characters in The Max Rebo Band in *VI*, likewise, wear tight and revealing clothing while gyrating, dancing, or singing in Jabba's palace. Then, to the contrary in *Phantom*, Lucas depicts Queen Amidala and the women in her court in conservative royal or monk-like attire. What is strange is that once again, however, Lucas goes to great lengths to play up Asian references about a character who he then casts as a White person. Queen Amidala, played by Natalie Portman, wears uniquely Japanese kimonos and Geisha style make-up and hair. This practice warrants additional scrutiny in future research.

Two coders also identified stereotypes based on sexual orientation in Lucas' movies. Upon watching *V*, each of them refer to C3-PO's gestures and inflections as stereotypically effeminate for a character that otherwise appears to be male. Also, in *Raiders*, one coder identified an Englishman in an opening scene as indicative of the gay Englishman stereotype. Citing Russo (1987), she explains the stereotype as a complex, ambiguous figure whose effeminacy contradicts American heterosexual masculinity. American cinema from its inception has differentiated American masculinity, associated with "the rugged virtues" of the land, from the more refined, cultivated, "effete dandies of Europe" (Russo, p. 16). "The sissies and camp homosexuals of the silver screen originate in the aristocratic, affluent, apolitical, and effeminate Englishmen of nineteenth-century literature and culture" (Sedgwick, 1985, pp. 174-75, 217). In turn, arguably, this study could find a few examples of this stereotypical depiction in *Raiders*, *Jurassic*, *Titanic*, and *Phantom*. On the other hand, if there are religious stereotypes in Lucas'

films, they revolve around contrasts of the Light and the Darkness, in keeping with some Western religious traditions as discussed above and in response to RQ5.

Links between Stereotypes and Ideologies, Myths or Legends

RQ5: How are the identified stereotypes linked with historical ideologies, myths, or legends?

The sample films share stories containing the classic literary myths of man versus man/society, man versus nature, and man versus self. The casting of the films with exclusively male lead characters makes the gendered label, man, a reminder of this exclusion of women rather than an acceptance of the term's universality. The epic films in this study contextualize these legendary conflicts in faraway galaxies and natural spectacles, but even in so doing, stereotypes and the socio-historical implications thereof animate their storytelling with the following ten themes that regularly co-occurred in the sample (Table 1): avarice, achievement, individualism, imperialism, power, tribalism, race, and religion.

The filmmakers in this study address these themes in scenes that advance storylines about Defeating "Darkness" (Evil), National Sovereignty, Democracy, Capitalism/Globalization, American Exceptionalism, Salvation, Neo-Colonialism, Exploiting Nature/the Native, Maiden-Whore Metaphor, and Traitors/Sidekicks. James Cameron's films, for example, most commonly tell cautionary tales about avarice in contexts of neo-colonialism in which individualism, capitalism/globalization, and American Exceptionalism lead the greedy to exploit Nature/the Native; only for Nature to fight back and win. Similarly, the coders identified in Steven Spielberg's film stories about the impotence of individuals in controlling or exploiting Nature, and the salvation of the underdog through the encounter with Nature. Likewise, dominant themes in the four films from the *Star Wars* series included ambition/achievement, avarice, and imperialism. To illustrate this one need consider only Lucas' premise of the Evil Empire, which

seeks to conquer and control “with an iron fist” all civilizations in the galaxy. For this reason, the order of analysis below will begin with Lucas’ subsample.

Lucas’ Films

The six films which compose Lucas’ story of *Star Wars* tell of the endeavors of a small group of rebels who fight back against the Empire, led by “a simple farm boy” named Luke Skywalker. It is the classic mythology of man versus man—and, at times, man versus society—which is common in myths, fairy tales, and traditional literature. The conflict may be a direct opposition, as in a fight, or a more subtle conflict between the desires of two or more characters. Like Dorothy’s struggles with the Wicked Witch of the West in *The Wizard of Oz* and Tom Sawyer’s confrontation with Injun Joe in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, in *Star Wars*, the conflict is between the protagonist, Luke, and the antagonist, Darth Vader—or their progenitors, Anakin and Darth Maul. The myth shades into man-against-society as Anakin or Luke struggle against the forces of darkness in making moral choices in *Phantom* or *Empire Strikes Back* and *Return of the Jedi*, respectively.

In addition to Lando, who made appearances in two of the movies as discussed above, Luke’s sidekicks include his sister, Leia, who is the damsel in distress; his mentors, Obi-Wan Kenobi, and Yoda, who are the trickster wise men; his pilot, Han Solo, who is the greedy individualist; Han Solo’s loyal, large, brown-and-black gorilla-type pet, Chewbacca; and the droids R2-D2 and C-3PO, as comic foils. *Star Wars* frames the Empire as men who represent the evil force that the Rebellion must overthrow through fierce light-saber duels between noble avengers and dark conspirators. The symbolism of the Darkness versus the Light harkens back to Aristotle’s *Pythagorean Table of Opposites* and its outgrowths into religion, Romanticism and Transcendentalism, and eventually the social construction of race, as discussed in the next chapter.

Although three *Star Wars* movies in this sample have only one Black actor in the lead cast (the fourth has none), these films contain some of the most disturbing stereotypes of African Americans in their depictions of the aliens and droids encountered. From the Jabba the Hut to Jar-Jar Binks, the four movies are replete with head-bobbing, pimp-walking, garbled-speaking, jazz-playing-singing-and-dancing stereotypical images. Often included are tribal names and references that resemble African customs and phonetic sounds, such as the people of Naboo, the planet of Tatooine, and Otoh Gunga and the Gungans. Even the most notable of villains, Darth Vader, fills the screen with blackness in his mechanized deep voice, superhuman strength, ominous costume, evil intentions, and the recognizably resonant voice of James Earl Jones. The director juxtaposes these dark characters with the good guys – the Jedi Knights – who seek to save the galaxy from the forces of darkness.

Although most of those who are human are White, the Jedi Knights have names such as Qui-Gon, Obi-Wan Kenobi, and Yoda. The coders agreed that the names influenced them to consider possible East Asian or Native American connections, especially given their characters' sage-like wisdom and the model minority stereotype. The model minority stereotype is one that occurs in media in which Asian Americans are associated with affluence, mathematical intellect, and professional status. It may be the most influential and pervasive stereotype for Asian Americans today. Kawai (2006) argues that this seemingly positive stereotype, the model minority, is inseparable from the yellow peril, a negative stereotype, when Asian Americans are stereotypically represented in mainstream media texts. The model minority–yellow peril dialectic involves several historical, local and global implications in relation to racial triangulation and discrediting the protests and demands for social justice of other minority groups (Suzuki, 2002; Uyematsu, 1971; Wake, 1970). Two of the three coders alluded to the possibility that

juxtaposing characters with phonetically Asian names with those with phonetically African names may connote such historical ideologies in the minds of movie consumers.

Even if interpreted conservatively, however, the ideologies and mythologies that Lucas calls up through the use of stereotypes in his films draw viewers into a battle between the darkness and the light. Beyond the *Star Wars* franchise, even a brief look at *Raiders*, a film Lucas wrote but Spielberg directed, also displays a global competition between the forces of good and evil that is discussed at length below. Lucas, as a result, uses myth, legend, and ideology to challenge the audience to struggle internally and externally with powers and structures that exploit people. His films sampled in this study represent a renewal of Transcendentalist and Romantic literary traditions that made Emerson's work classic, but Lucas adds the spectacle of late 20th century computer-generated special effects.

Spielberg's Films

Steven Spielberg's films offer stories about the impotence of individuals in controlling or exploiting Nature, and the salvation of the underdog through the encounter with Nature. It is the classic literary myth of man versus nature (Simpson, 2001). *Jaws*, *Raiders*, *E.T.*, and *Jurassic Park* explore this theme. In *Jaws*, for example, the mayor and the shark hunter are the impotent individuals who fail in their efforts to exploit or control the man-eating shark. Conversely, Spielberg uses opening scenes to pit the good intentions of the underdog police chief against the avarice of the politician. These images become synchronized with the good intentions of the underdog researcher who is placed in contradiction to the money-hungry bounty hunter. The director teams together the police chief and researcher as heroes who save themselves and the community while the controversy consumes the powerless politician and the shark devours the parasitic predator.

Although non-Whites do not exist in *Jaws*, the dominance of ethnocentrism in *Raiders* demonstrates how the man versus nature myth conflates with the man versus man myth in the context of White man versus the Native. While framing various ethnic conflicts within Judeo-Christian biblical legend, Spielberg presents American Exceptionalism in the person of Indiana Jones—one who is intellectually, romantically, and physically superior to his South American, Asian, European, and African counterparts. Indiana embodies what Alexis de Tocqueville—the first writer to describe the United States as “exceptional” in 1831 and 1840—called a uniquely American ideology based on liberty, individualism, populism and laissez-faire economics (de Tocqueville, 1840, p. 36). Indiana is the underdog because he does not have workers, armies and tanks like the French and Germans, and he does not have the cunning, deception and geographic familiarity of the Natives.

The Natives are not merely the locals in *Raiders*. The Natives are the believers who ascribe mystical power to the artifacts Indiana seeks to collect. In effect, Nature consolidates these idols and their believers in a way that causes earthquakes, sandstorms, and cave entrances to open and close. Nature—in terms of the supernatural forces of the Ark, for example, consumes the Hebrew, the French, the German, and all others, but Indiana becomes the hero by getting the girl and the Ark as results of his inherently superior skill and intelligence. The Americans then store the Ark among other items in crates at the National Archives.

This theme also arises in *E.T.* and *Jurassic Park*. In *E.T.*, the natural artifact is the alien. The pursuit is to possess the extra-terrestrial whether by Elliott, the police, or the other government officials. From the opening scene, White men with thick belts run with flashlights to track down and capture the *thing* that they do not understand—to no avail. Similarly, in *Jurassic Park*, men think they have captured and cloned things, which in this case are dinosaurs,

only to find that they neither control nor can they exploit their possessions for capitalist gains.

Amid escalating societal fears and debates about cloning and stem cell research in the late nineties, the following exchange occurs among the characters:

[Ian Malcolm, who was been watching the screens with outright contempt, snorts, as if he's finally had enough.]

MALCOLM

The lack of humility before nature that's been displayed here staggers me.

They all turn and look at him.

GENNARO

Thank you, Dr. Malcolm, but I think things are a little different than you and I feared.

MALCOLM

Yes, I know. They're a lot worse.

GENNARO

Now, wait a second, we haven't even seen the park yet.

Let's just hold our concerns until - -

(or alt. version)

Wait - we were invited to this island to evaluate the safety conditions of the park, physical containment.

The theories that all simple systems have complex behavior, that animals in a zoo environment will eventually begin to behave in an unpredictable fashion have nothing to do with that evaluation. This is not some existential furlough, this is an on-site inspection. You are a doctor. Do your job. You are invalidating your own assessment. I'm sorry, John - -

HAMMOND

Alright Donald, alright, but just let him talk. I want to hear all viewpoints. I truly do.

MALCOLM

Don't you see the danger, John, inherent in what you're doing here? Genetic power is the most awesome force ever seen on this planet. But you wield it like a kid who's found his dad's gun.

MALCOLM GENNARO

If I may.... It is hardly appropriate to start hurling

Excuse me, excuse me - - generalizations before - - I'll tell you.

MALCOLM (cont'd)

The problem with scientific power you've used is it didn't require any discipline to attain it. You read what others had done and you took the next step. You didn't earn the knowledge yourselves, so you don't take the responsibility for it. You stood on the shoulders of geniuses to accomplish something as fast as you could, and before you knew what you had, you patented it, packaged it, slapped in on a plastic lunch box, and now you want to sell it.

HAMMOND

You don't give us our due credit. Our scientists have done things no one could ever do before.

MALCOLM

Your scientists were so preoccupied with whether or not they could that they didn't stop to think if they should. Science can create pesticides, but it can't tell us not to use them. Science can make a nuclear reactor, but it can't tell us not to build it!

HAMMOND

But this is nature! Why not give an extinct species a second chance?! I mean, Condors. Condors are on the

verge of extinction - - if I'd created a flock of them
on the island, you wouldn't be saying any of this!

(or)

have anything to say at all!

MALCOLM

Hold on - - this is no species that was obliterated by
deforestation or the building of a dam. Dinosaurs had
their shot. Nature selected them for extinction.

HAMMOND

I don't understand this Luddite attitude, especially
from a scientist. How could we stand in the light of
discovery and not act?

MALCOLM

What's so great about discovery? It's a violent,
penetrative act that scars what it explores. What you
call discovery I call the rape of the natural world!

Placing such ideological messages in the mouths of lead characters is a common practice of Spielberg, which Kolker argues provides comfort to his conservative audiences.

Spielberg connects his narratives and use of laudable and derogatory stereotypes to the man against nature mythology in ways that arouse audiences. By positioning the hero in an external struggle against an animal or a force of nature, such as a cloned dinosaur or even an alien, the man against nature myth creates resonance with viewers while tapping into their fears about the unknown or the Other. Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* in which the protagonist contends against a marlin, or other popular adventure stories like *Robinson Crusoe*, introduce Americans at formative stages to the man versus nature myth. Spielberg then uses that familiar form and its devices, such as stereotypes, in his movies to explore contemporary dilemmas with technological effects that deeply draw in audiences. The content of Spielberg's

work, according to Kolker (2000), is attractive only to the degree that its formal ideological structure gives it shape and meaning and manipulates viewer assent to it; he continues:

The form and structure of the films produce images and narratives that respond or give shape to contemporary ideological needs, offering a safe and secure ideological haven. The images and narrative take viewers to a place and a way of being in the world that viewers find more than just comfortable, but desirable and—within the films—*available* (Kolker, pp. 256-257).

At this point, form and content become inextricable. The movies transcend the function of responding or giving shape to ideology and instead become ideology, the very shape and form of the relationships we desire for our world. The ideological structures of Spielberg's film hail the spectator into a world of the obvious that affirms the viewer's presence, affirms that what the viewer has always believed or hoped is true and accessible, and assures the viewer excitement and comfort in the process (Kolker, 2000). In this regard, the Spielberg films in this sample manifest conservative ideology in the sense that they do not challenge the audience to confront new ideas or change anything internally or externally. Families are peaceful, reproductive units, keeping complementary gender roles in order; and communities are segregated, nationalistic places that maintain hierarchically structured racial divisions. Those who respect these conventions are allowed to live happily ever after.

Cameron's Films

While influenced by Lucas, James Cameron takes ideological challenge a step further in his movies to ideological change. Cameron transforms the male-action character type—and specifically, the White male action hero—into, on one hand, a more realistic version that acknowledges his destructive tendencies and, on the other hand, a more collectivist variety whose compassion enlarges his redemptive possibilities. In his early films, Cameron began modifying the White male action hero stereotype in *The Terminator* (1984) and *Terminator 2*

(1991). There, a heavy-metal cyborg akin to a mechanized Oedipus is redeemed by his relationship with a woman and her child who teach him emotions, humility, and self-effacing humor. Cameron uses this model in his later films as well.

In *Titanic* and *Avatar*, for example, the White characters in both *Titanic* and *Avatar* tend to conform to what Kay & Jost refer to as the “rich, but miserable” and “poor, but happy” stereotypes of the White dominant racial group members. The White male lead character begins as destructive, irresponsible, and self-serving, but, inspired by the love of a woman, he experiences an arc of character development that elevates him to heroic status. This is not necessarily a novel storyline, but it is a change from the individualistic hero stereotype which gained its power from cleverness, brute strength and racial superiority—as demonstrated in the films of Lucas and Spielberg. For Jack, his connection with Rose motivates him to abandon drunkenness, gambling, and boyhood pals. Instead, Jack gives his life to save Rose from drowning, suicide, a violent fiancé, a manipulative mother, and early 20th century gender and class constraints.

Similarly, for Jake, his love for Neytiri and his connection with the Omaticayan people inspire him to defy military rank and fight for their salvation. What is even more unique in *Avatar*, however, is that the white male hero is far less individualistic than in all the other films sampled. Here, Jake fights with the people rather than merely for the people. The Na’vi are fierce combatants in their own right. The Omaticayan are indigenous warriors who teach Jake their customs, which exceeds his military training from the U.S. Marine Corps. Their tactics, in fact, enable the defeat of large machines and firepower. Cameron not only transforms the stereotype, but also destroys it. Jake dies. The Omaticayan people then collectively become the hero’s champion by resurrecting him but as Na’vi—not human.

The stereotypes to which the Omaticayan conform, however, remain troubling to the coders. Two of the three coders identified the imagery and themes of *Avatar* with Robert Conrad's 19th century classic, *Heart of Darkness*, which has borne more than a century of cultural criticism for being rife with racially derogatory stereotypes and a noteworthy source of historical racism, colonialist rationalization, and contemporary ethnocentrism. The coders also agreed that Cameron also pushes gender stereotypes and ideologies in the sample films.

Conclusion

This study's sample defines for mass media research a genre of movies that play an important role in the new media landscape. If, as Entman & Rojecki contend, movie studios invest more resources into marketing and distributing films that adhere to a formula of using racial stereotypes, then the findings of this research document the content of the formula. The sampled movie content is distinct from that found in the traditional literature on stereotypes because it captures not only derogatory themes, words, images, and actions of non-dominant racial groups, but also laudatory themes, words, images, and actions of both dominant and non-dominant racial groups. More importantly, here, is the scrutiny of the relationships among these groups that is necessary to beginning to understand the relationship between movie stereotypes and historical ideologies.

From these findings, a typology emerges of the ways in which media produce content using devices such as stereotypes to either challenge, confirm, or change ideology, mythology or legend. Themes, words, images, and actions in films can challenge or maintain the status quo depending upon how they conform or fail to conform to stereotypes. This sample heralds avarice, achievement, imperialism, individualism, and power most consistently as themes in these films in association with stereotypes of White men who stay on top by being weapon-

carrying, handsome, rugged, and violent. The non-dominant racial groups, on the other hand, are most often primitive, cultic, violent and collectivist travelers. The images common to the films include large and technologically complex instrumentalities that White characters created as symbols of their heightened intellect and skill. Despite some changes, therefore, the movies continue to extrapolate upon fixed relations of domination and subordination between groups—even in ahistorical sci-fi fantasies that earn the highest revenues and draw the largest viewership of all time. This study suggests that remains the formula of using stereotypes to draw large audiences.

CHAPTER 8: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS AND IMPLICATIONS

The primary purpose of this study is to examine how movies construct and perpetuate frames, concepts, and premises through themes, images, words, and actions, thus providing paradigms that contribute to our understanding of so-called minority groups and dominant traditions. To analyze the most influential filmmakers' practices of framing stories, this research uses established techniques for evaluating the ways in which filmmakers select and make salient stereotypes and ideologies in ten of the most influential films since the medium's inception. Additionally, this discussion compares those frames and stereotypes to ascertain changes over the three decades spanned by the sample as well as relationships with historical myths and ideologies.

With this stated, the following specific objectives were formulated to guide this research:

1. To describe and evaluate the laudatory and derogatory stereotypes of dominant racial group members in terms of themes, words, images, and actions,
2. To describe and evaluate the laudatory and derogatory stereotypes of non-dominant racial group members in terms of themes, words, images, and actions,
3. To describe and evaluate the relationships between dominant and non-dominant racial group members,
4. To describe other non-racial stereotypes in the sample, and
5. To address relationships between the stereotypes identified in the sample and historical ideologies, myths, or legends.

In each regard, the following sample offered a wealth of data for analysis:

Table 8.1: Film Sample

Movie Title	Year	Studio	Filmmaker
Titanic	1997	Paramount	James Cameron
Avatar	2009	Fox	James Cameron
Star Wars	1977	Fox	George Lucas
Empire Strikes Back	1980	Fox	George Lucas
Return of the Jedi	1983	Fox	George Lucas
Phantom Menace	1999	Fox	George Lucas
Raiders of the Lost Ark	1981	Paramount	Lucas & Spielberg
E.T.: The Extra Terrestrial	1982	Universal	Steven Spielberg
Jaws	1975	Universal	Steven Spielberg
Jurassic Park	1993	Universal	Steven Spielberg

Discussion of Results

Media frames, and the stereotypes they employ, are the focus of this study. Consistent with Entman & Rojecki (2001), this study found that examining movies, as media texts, for co-occurrences of themes, words, images, and actions can reveal a media frame. The media frames in the sample movies include racial stereotypes. Singularly, three instances of a theme, word, image or action in an average 120-minute film may not be significant, but analyzing collectively the themes, words, images and actions that occur most frequently in a film or a collection of films does yield significant results. In fact, the findings of this study suggest that the sample films have several common features and frames worthy of further evaluation in this and future research.

Among the sample's similarities are the filmmakers and corporations that back the sample films. Yet, surmising that the movies that generate the most revenue and largest audiences are merely those marketed and distributed by the largest studios may be short-sighted. Films given more money do tend to make more money, but among the additional factors that complicate the dynamic is why studios give certain films bigger budgets. This research suggests that media content may play a role because, when examined collectively, the results indicate the sample employs specific frames consistently irrespective of studio, director, story, or cast differences.

If profit incentives require safe bets for large investors, then this study finds that the blockbuster epics that get multiple hundreds of millions in investments and yield far more revenue in returns adhere to a formula that modernizes old stereotypes and updates old legends. Evaluating, for instance, which themes, words, images, and actions appear most frequently in the entire sample yields a compelling media frame wherein avaricious and violent White male characters use words like us/them connoting their power/superiority while threatening others and advancing individualistic avarice or achievement as a theme. The findings also suggest that indeed this media frame exists in each of the sample films.

The paucity of non-White characters, however, precludes such a finding about media frames of non-dominant racial groups. What the sampled movies with characters of African, Asian, or Latino descent do reflect is a repeated media frame of the brave and smart non-White character that is most often an African American man who travels in groups and, on occasion, kills people. Given that only one or two non-Whites appear in each film, and none is the lead actor, people who are White compose the groups' leadership and the majority of the groups' membership (except some of Lucas' films in which group members vary in species). These non-

Whites, therefore, are non-threatening because they typically signify their identification with the White lead character by using us/them phrases and acting to advance the protagonist's themes and goals.

The White male hero who teams up with a non-threatening Black male sidekick is a formula repeated not only in this sample, but throughout the Hollywood movie industry. But the formula is incomplete without a pretty and smart White woman as a love interest—or, more important, as an acquisition, or trophy awarded to the hero for some other achievement. Both the White woman and the Black man are helpers—accomplices, and at times, foils, whose jobs are to make the White male protagonist look good. The findings suggest investors consider these media frames as safe investments. This chapter delves into the ideologies these frames communicate and the reasons their influence on public opinion matters.

Stereotypes of Whites

The data analyses indicate that White racial group members are dominant in amount of cast, dialog, violent acts, laudatory traits, and character development. Actually, in four of the ten films, Whites are not just dominant, but the only existing racial group. There is a segregated world where non-Whites do not exist—and, on the rare occasion they do show up, they do not speak or otherwise are inconsequential. *Titanic*, *Star Wars IV*, *Jaws*, and, for the most part, *E.T.*, reflect nostalgic memories of simpler times or imagined places where White people could (or can) avoid difference in good ole' films about the good ole' days.

Loosely based on a 1920s historical event, *Titanic* offers a deliberate return to the Jim Crow era on board a ship in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean where the lack of people of color eliminates the need to acknowledge race at all. Even the servants, custodians, and workers below the waterline in the boiler, engine and turbine rooms were White—in the movie. The

remaining three Whites-only films of the 1970s and early 1980s tell stories that comfort racial isolationists and condone racial alienation in socio-historical contexts of extreme racial tensions amid the first decades of racial integration in the U.S.

The men and women are good looking, highly intelligent, and courageous warriors. Often, plots even valorize their character flaws. If Whites have derogatory traits at all in the sample, they relate to violence, power, or dominance. These characteristics or actions, however, occur in relation to valiant efforts to save a person, capture an object, or achieve a greater goal. In fact, this sample casts White men as heroic lead characters who advance themes of avarice, achievement, individualism, and imperialism through ostracizing dialog and group violence. Justified as heroism, or within a frame of right or superiority, traits and actions that otherwise may be perceived as negative suddenly become redeemable and laudatory.

To illustrate this point, consider what would be national outrage and penalties due foreign marauders who would dare raid American museums in comparison to the acceptability of this premise in *Raiders* when White men from Europe and America compete for global superiority by looting the ancient ruins of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. While *Raiders* condones such conduct as adventure in a context of Cold War politics, storylines in films such as *Avatar*, *Jurassic Park*, *Titanic*, *E.T.*, and the *Star Wars* films challenge and question such practices. In these later movies, avarice and imperialism become contexts for White men to slap other White men on the wrist in moments of self-examination and conversion.

Then, as seen most prominently in *Jaws*, avarice is not abandoned but allied with power or moral superiority such that salutatory achievement becomes its product. Saving the innocents, in turn, justifies capturing, killing, or otherwise defeating “evil” through the use of force, weapons, and acts of mob violence—when conducted by Whites against Others. Consequently,

even risk-taking and violent acts can be acceptable and laudatory as symbolic of bravery and honor but only when done by dominant racial group members. Further discussion of this point occurs in the Implications section below.

While these clever characters are diverse in gender, age, experience, and personality, stereotypes that occur include the brave White male hero, who is as rugged as he is risk-taking, and also as armed and handsome as he is intelligent and isolated. This protagonist appears in each of the sample films. In *Titanic*, he is Jack, the good-looking young idealist who rescues Rose from a miserable life of wealth and piety. In *Avatar*, he is Jake, the good-looking young idealist who rescues the Omaticayan from the avaricious Americans. In the *Star Wars* films, he is Anakin, Luke, and Han Solo. In *Raiders*, he is Indiana Jones. In *Jaws*, he is Chief Brody, Matt the researcher, and Quint the shark hunter. In *E.T.*, he is unarmed, but still courageous and cute as the young Elliot. Finally, in *Jurassic Park*, he is the renowned archaeologist, Dr. Grant, and to a lesser extent, the self-proclaimed “chaotician,” Dr. Malcolm.

White women are peripheral and decorative in the sample. They are trophies for their male lead actors. Some are happy, while others are miserable. Many are defiant, but there are those who are compliant also. Whether young or old, the White women are not only pretty and thin, but smart. The prominence of their images and dialog are secondary only to the White men. Yet, their characters remain underdeveloped and subjected to stereotypically subordinate relationships with White men.

No matter the brilliance of Drs. Grace Augustine (Sigourney Weaver) in *Avatar* and Ellie Sattler (Laura Dern) in *Jurassic Park*, and despite the royalty of Queen Amadalo (Natalie Portman) and Princess Leia (Carrie Fischer) in the *Star Wars* films, these powerful women still rely on men to rescue them. Even the scrappy Marion Ravenwood (Karen Allen) in *Raiders*,

who owned a bar in Nepal, outdrank men across continents, and outsmarted great intellects, repeatedly succumbs to men who kidnap her, tie her up, and throw her around. In each sampled movie, the aforementioned male hero rushes in to save the damsel in distress by the story's end.

Yes, these movies update the damsel in distress stereotype. Now, she can and will fight. She is good with a gun, a knife, or a bow-and-arrow. She does not mind getting dirty or messing up her hair. As in *Titanic*, *Jurassic Park*, *Raiders*, and the *Star Wars* movies, the damsel in distress is strong and resilient. Yet, there is always at least one man who overpowers, violates, or kills her. And there is also a guy nearby to rescue her—or try to. These movies suggest that a woman cannot stand and survive without assistance from a man. The ideologies advanced by these stereotypes reach back to a history of women's subjugation to put powerful women in their place—reinforcing systems of gender inequality.

If not the defeated defiant damsel in distress stereotype, female characters in the sample conform to maternal and/or childlike stereotypes of oblivion, irrationality, and over-emotionality. Although most of the movies depart from the dumb blonde and compliant mother stereotypes, the self-sacrificing wives and mothers scream, cry, and act hysterically while the men reason and hunt down the predator, as in *Jaws* and *E.T.* In *Titanic*, likewise, the maternal crone badgers and coerces the free-spirited daughter, Rose, into staying in a violent relationship for money and power. She is mean, ugly, miserable and wrinkled—conforming entirely to stereotype. Whether young and pretty or old and mean, though, the White women in these movies are smart and defiant. They may be vulnerable to romantic influence, but they anger easily and never do what they are told. The tenacity of certain media frames overpower even female characters forced to comply with old stereotypes. The misogyny implicit in these depictions counteracts women's equality and advances sexist notions that justify male supremacy.

Stereotypes of Non-Whites

Based on the findings in this study, it can be concluded that stereotypes of non-Whites in the sample perpetuate the inferiority of people descending from Africa, Asia, Latin American, and other indigenous groups. In the rare instances that non-White characters appear, they are cast as outsiders in underdeveloped roles as non-threatening sidekicks, model minorities, subordinate primitives, subversive traitors, and/or violent combatants. When they are cast as traitors or enemy combatants, however, the White protagonist quickly defeats, outsmarts, converts, or kills them. Any threat posed is eradicated. Any violence or subjugation is justified.

Unlike White characters, stereotypes of non-Whites stand out because so few non-White characters are cast with speaking roles in the sample. The dearth of roles featuring actors of color in the most influential films works to affirm the concept that people of color are marginal and outnumbered. Moreover, among this movie minority, only negligible diversity is included in gender, age, experience or personality. Even the slight racial diversity appears in stereotypical patterns of one Black, one Asian, or one Latino—and stereotypes allude only to Native American or other indigenous individuals in a few films, but that hardly amounts to inclusion. Such traditional derogatory stereotypes and pejoratives appear infrequently in this sample of sci-fi fantasy epics but it is unclear whether this lack is the product of White-only casts and worldviews, or whether eliminating derogatory stereotypes also jettisons casting opportunities for non-Whites.

To move away from traditional myths and legends is risky for filmmakers. Merely modernizing old stereotypes and updating old legends is safe. In pitch meetings with studio executives, writers and directors often capture attention by talking about their movies as contemporary versions of prior generation's classics or blockbusters. Rarely do they consider

racial (or other) implications of such remakes. White men are always the subjects, and all others merely exist as objects of their affection, possession, or conquest.

Women of color, conversely, very seldom exist in fantasy sci-fi epics. The rare exceptions reflect derogatory stereotypes of the exotic, angry, and/or animalistic woman of African, Asian, indigenous, or Latino descent. Unfortunately, the big blue women of *Avatar*, one Asian woman and one Latina are the extent of women of color represented in the sample. Great debates arose among the coders about the inclusion of *Avatar*'s Neytiri and the Na'vi as non-dominant racial group members, and therefore, the topic warrants special attention at this point.

The Na'vi are not human. They are giant hybrid aliens with features that resemble combinations of animals and humans. For this reason, this study initially disqualified the Na'vi from classification as a non-White racial group. Further research, however, indicated that the director intended to address race among other issues, and specifically, noted how an indigenous group in the Amazon inspired *Avatar*'s storyline (Cameron, 2009). In an interview on the movie's DVD release, Cameron discusses the inspiration he found for the screenplay from the plight of that ethnic group struggling to survive amid deforestation by corporate global interests. Additionally, this research considered the casting decisions for actors who would depict the Na'vi—the majority of whom are African, Asian, Latino, or indigenous descendants. It is hard to find another blockbuster film that hired more people of color as cast members. Therefore, *Avatar* offered something unique to the sample, an intentional commentary on racial differences and interactions.

Zoe Saldana is the only actor cast in a lead role in the sample who is a Latina of African descent. Saldana actually receives top billing among female cast members—listing higher than Sigourney Weaver and second only to Sam Worthington who portrays the lead character, Jake

Sully. Saldana's depiction of Neytiri is significant also because she emerges as the movie's hero, even though she is not originally presented in that light. Throughout the film, Neytiri is emotional, angry, and dexterous. With great agility, she scales trees, hunts animals, rides beasts bareback, and communicates with nature. Jake relentlessly pursues her but she resists—until her clan assigns her to train him in the Omaticayan traditions. Then, predictably, he eventually wins her over.

Neytiri is a powerful character, unlike any seen before. The tiger-striped Blue female Na'vi with fangs, leopard-eyes, and antelope legs growls and hisses as she leaps from tree-to-tree and fastidiously shoots killing arrows from her bow. Yet, her heroic stature in the final scene seems more like an afterthought—as if a set up for the sequel. Literally dwarfing the protagonist, Jake, a weeping Neytiri cradles the fallen human in her arms and nurses him back to life in a way that is reminiscent of the mammy stereotype. It is an awkward moment that does not seem to fit because it is difficult (or impossible) to reframe as laudatory stereotypes that are derogatory and embedded with histories and ideologies such as the mammy, hottentot, or jungle bunny. Further discussion on this occurs under the following section heading.

Moreover, the depiction of the Omaticayan in *Avatar* differs from the Native stereotype only in that they are blue and they do not cheat, cannibalize, decapitate the beautiful heroine, kidnap the children, burn the encampment or boil, cook and eat the innocent explorer or colonial administrator and his lady-wife (Hall, 1981). Otherwise, the coders unanimously agreed that the portrayals in *Avatar* conform to what Hall identifies as Robert Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* stereotypes in (1) exhibiting primitive nobility and simple dignity, (2) being prone to cunning, savagery, and barbarism, (3) appearing to the soundtrack of drumming in the night, (4) engaging in primitive rites and cults, (5) moving in spiritual trances similar to whirling dervishes, Indian or

African tribesmen, (6) dressing garishly—or, at least, scantily with blue tiger striped skins, (7) threatening to over-run the screen and appearing from the darkness, and (8) moving as an anonymous collective mass—in tribes or hordes.

Additional frames, stereotypes, and ideologies cued in *Avatar* merit evaluation. For example, as a consequence of “mating” with Neytiri, Jake loses his identity, position, and privilege. The Americans ridicule him, no longer trust him, and subsequently reject him entirely, which leads to his seeking membership with the Omaticayans. This is reminiscent of anti-miscegenation laws, the cultural climate they created, and the magnitude of their social penalties. The moment signals a shift in the story, historically and ideologically, as the dialog and frames shift into virulent race bating and escalating racial tension. As presented in Chapter 7, Quaritch calls Jake a race traitor and Selfridge calls the Na’vi savages and blue monkeys with tails. These concepts derive from America’s reconstruction era and colonialist writings from the enslavement period. While race traitor and savage are obvious, “monkeys with tails” warrants additional scrutiny.

Older African Americans still tell stories of Whites checking for their tails. The folklore suggests Whites were taught slavery and segregation were necessary because Blacks were like monkeys—they just hide their tails during the day. One African American grandmother speaks of asking her mother where her tail was after being convinced by classmates that as a Black person she had to have one. She doubted her knowledge of her own anatomy, wondering when her tail would grow as with all other Blacks. These are stories that largely are unknown by young people and often unspoken by older people, but they are relevant when people of color act in roles depicting a non-dominant racial group who have tails and to whom the White American

characters refers with pejorative terms and derogatory stereotypes rooted in a history of American slavery and segregation.

Even so, contrasting these media frames of non-dominant racial groups with Whites as the beautiful, clever and powerful leaders who use violence with immunity is problematic. Like gender stereotypes discussed above, these racial stereotypes harken back to histories and ideologies of subjugation, dehumanization, and enslavement. The themes, words, images, and actions associated with the media frames that employ these stereotypes conjure Other-ing in either unrealistically exceptional or demeaning terms. They bring with them ideologies of racial supremacy and inferiority that polarize groups and, therefore, impact democracy.

Relations between Whites and Non-Whites

As foundations of social groups' self-images, ideologies organize group identity, actions, aims, norms, values, and resources as well as relations to other social groups. Stereotypes are significant because, like a totem, each tells a story. A totem is a being, object, or symbol that serves as an emblem of a group of people, such as a family, clan, group, lineage, or tribe. Often indigenous groups use an animal or plant to illustrate or recall their ancestry or mythic past. Totems, like stereotypes, are about how individuals and groups relate to one another. All stereotypes perpetuate socially constructed and socially shared messages about power dynamics between the One and the Other—insiders and outsiders, in-groups and out-groups, us and them.

In this sample, the stereotypes, like totems, indicate that Whites are the in-groups and non-Whites are the out-groups. They remind viewers of times when only the traditions, aspirations, and experiences of Whites mattered. They relate to other groups in these films in ways that prioritize only their beliefs and needs and disregard the value of others' beliefs and needs. The socially constructed and socially shared messages demonstrate the superior intellect,

morals, ambition, and brute strength of White Americans over all other cultures of the world. Moreover, the people of other cultures not only fail to oppose or resist White Americans' efforts, but also conspire and work with them as accomplices in achieving their goals. Such an ideology sounds absurd when stated explicitly, but the point is that the messages implicit in the media frames and stereotypes locate themselves in an historical period when policy, opportunity, or geography silenced the voices of other groups. Times have changed, but the frames have not.

Admittedly, even framing this dissertation in the language of the White/non-White binary has been challenging because doing so is not only outdated but also reinforces a false dichotomy created by the phenomena under investigation. Nonetheless, the decision to use this dualism was deliberate given the philological reality constructed by the frames and stereotypes in the sample. The hope is that seeing race and media frames through this lens highlights its inadequacy for describing the multicultural world that defies the social construction of race and its prescription of place based on Whiteness.

The movies evaluated in this study, likewise, present grand, colorful and diverse ecospheres but the human relations pivot on outmoded interactions with violent White men that fail to take into account the experiences and perspectives of Others. The White men are handsome, rugged, intelligent, and at times even calm and compassionate, but they are avaricious and armed. Their storylines tell tales of the lion from the perspective of the hunter rather than the hunted, and in turn, imperialism is perceived as progress rather than exploitation. Raiding is not pillaging and looting, but collecting and conserving. The White male stereotypes in this study's sample suggest their superiority, power, and right to be in control.

Stereotypes of non-dominant racial groups continue to perpetuate ideologies of the dominant racial group's supremacy. While there is progress away from the traditional slave-

figure, native, and clown stereotypes in the sample, vestiges remain of these troubling stereotypes mingled with contemporary images. The clown may no longer shuck and jive as a minstrel, but he remains the comic foil who is outsmarted or outpaced by the White hero. Even when placed in high positions of authority, like the chief of police in *E.T.*, this lone African American in a speaking role has only three briefly spoken lines at the end of the movie. “Hey! Who are you?” he says while taking a second look in confusion at a teenager posing as a police van driver. Banging on the window, he runs on foot chasing the vehicle as it speeds off. Here, the modernized clown is the leader of the bad guys, the police who are in pursuit of E.T., Elliott, and their friends. Predictably, the good guys, the White kids, outrun the bad guys and their police chief, who stands befuddled and amazed.

Another illustration is the revamping of the slave-figure in *Jurassic Park*. Loyal to the end, the African American and Asian American characters serve their White counterparts with zeal and selflessness. They have no families and no commitments beyond those to their employers. They do not experience guilt, fear, or other emotions, and, as with Arnold, they are put in their place abruptly when they question or challenge the White lead character’s decisions. The dinosaurs kill the Black guys, and the Asian guy breeds more dinosaurs, while the Whites save themselves without regard to anyone else. Even when cast as model minorities, African Americans and Asian Americans are expendable after completing their service to the Whites. They are so inconsequential that no one even asks what happened to them.

Use of the slave-figure and the native stereotypes invoke genocidal histories and ideologies that condoned those mass atrocities. *Raiders* provides an overt illustration. Indiana Jones’ most used weapon in *Raiders* is a whip. He wears the whip on his hip at all times and uses it with amazing precision and force whether on snakes, animals, or people—but only certain

people. The Europeans or other Whites are not whipped. Not even the non-White Sidekicks are whipped. They may experience some other heinous fate, but the lash of the whip is reserved for subordinates—the primitives. Perhaps that type of control entreats good memories for some people, but the ideological underpinnings are ones of inhumane cruelty of the harshest magnitude by one group against another under the guises of supremacy, right, and impunity.

Rather than abandon and destroy the slave-figure stereotype, other films in the sample modernize the stereotype and merge it with other stereotypes, such as the native, in creating the sidekick stereotype. The sidekick is unlike the slave because he is more friend than servant—he is more collaborator than employee. The sidekick can make decisions for himself and even contradict the protagonist without fearing reprisal—there may be consequences for betrayal but he will not necessarily experience the lash of the whip, as in *Raiders*.

The sidekick, for example, is the primary stereotype of non-Whites in the *Star Wars* movies. If there is a Black character, he is a sidekick. As stated in Chapter 7, any of the Black characters—whether Mace Windu (Samuel L. Jackson), Captain Panaka (Huge Quarshie), or Lando Calrissian (Billy Dee Williams)—are the loyal advisers to the White characters they support. They run alongside and fight for their White counterparts with fierce determination despite frequent disregard. The problem is that the ideological message remains one in which non-White people are accomplices to Whites in achieving their goals—and no more. The sidekick has no interests, family, or life beyond the protagonist.

Although women of color rarely appear in the sample, *Avatar* offers the only glimpses of Asian, Latina, and African American women—presenting additional stereotypes for examination. The women of color are primal, scantily-clad, sexualized, supersized, animalistic, human-like aliens with the exception of one Latina, Trudy Chacon (Michelle Rodriguez), and a

nameless Asian American computer tech (Sonia Yee). There are two leading female actresses. One is Sigourney Weaver, a White woman who plays Dr. Grace Augustine, the lead scientist. The other is Zoe Saldana, who is discussed above and below. Each stands alongside the movie's main character, Jake—one as the asexual, maternal teacher and the other as the promiscuous jungle bunny. The remaining discussion is one better encapsulated within the following section on linkages between history, ideology, and the stereotypes explored in this sample.

Connections to History, Ideology, or Mythology

Juxtaposing the White and Black female characters in the fashion discussed above is problematic, not only on its face, but also because of a long history of pitting Blacks and Whites—and particularly, Black and White women—against each other in like manner. Historical and political schisms often pit groups against each other as polarities of the highest possible contrast using categorizations of whiteness and blackness, male and female, good and evil. In Western cultures, white and black traditionally symbolize the dichotomy of good and evil, metaphorically related to light and darkness and day and night. The four *Star Wars* films in the sample, for example, use these metaphors heavily, as discussed in Chapter 7.

Such dualisms predate modernity, with examples of coupling whiteness with goodness and darkness with evil in Aristotle's Pythagorean Table of Opposites and ancient Hebraic texts (e.g., the Torah, Nevi'im, and Ketuvim). Whether heaven and hell, the sacred and the secular, the orthodox and the heretic, the holy and the heathen, these contrasts function historically, culturally, and linguistically as prescriptive frameworks that attribute positive qualities to one category and negative characteristics to the other. In this study, there are contemporary vestiges of these practices—specifically, the smart, asexual and fully-clothed White woman contrasted with the angry, sexualized and nearly naked Black woman in Blue face.

The stereotype of the jungle bunny, described above in relation to Neytiri in *Avatar*, is an ancient one rooted in European colonial writings that disparagingly referred to the Khoikhoi women of southern Africa as hottentots. As early as 1668, Dutch men wrote about attributes of these women's anatomies in ways that sexualized their distinctiveness (Holmes, 2007). Saartjie “Sarah” Baartman was the most famous of the Khoikhoi women whom Europeans exhibited as freak-show attractions in 19th-century London under the name Hottentot Venus (Elkins, 2007). From those times until now, feminist scholars and other women of African descent have resisted being stereotyped as animal-like, hypersexual creatures from the jungles of Africa who reproduce like bunnies.

Such stereotypes must be abandoned and destroyed. This also is true for the slave, the native, and the clown. Yes, even the clown. Connecting the dots between the Trans-Atlantic enslavement trade and the history of the slave-figure stereotype is established in various literatures. Linking the native stereotype to European colonization and genocidal efforts against the indigenous people of the Americas, likewise, transcends dispute. The harm implicit in awakening either of these histories is apparent, but the clown is equally damaging.

The clown stereotype, in the context of American race relations, emerged from a time when African Americans had to feign humor to stay alive. Often, entertaining enslavers with singing, dancing, wrestling, and other performances was a survival strategy for assuaging otherwise barbaric or murderous conduct against entire communities (Thomas, 1997). Whether in fear of harm against self, family, or race, these tacticians regularly functioned as underground diplomats and negotiators—calming unstable dictators and delaying attacks on the enslaved. Subsequent generations continue to recoil at the reappearance of this shucking and jiving—or, “cooning” as the overseers termed it by making a pejorative term into a verb.

Stereotypes carry with them their histories. These histories may present fond memories for some people, but for others, the memories are painful with the depth of ancestral negation. The dehumanization implicit in enslavement is revisited upon descendants of people indigenous to Africa, Asia, and the Americas each time storytellers reawaken these stereotypes. Those who underestimate this venomous sting embedded in the stereotypes may allege hyperbole, but if it is imagined in the context of the Holocaust or Japanese Internment Camps, perhaps its veracity may resonate.

Value of Findings

This dissertation contributes to multiple literatures. The most significant contributions, however, are to media framing research and the long-standing literature on stereotypes. The results indicate that movies impacting the largest audiences appeal to polarizing racial stereotypes, history, mythology, and legends in framing and telling stories. As Lippmann (1922) and many others since him did in examining print media content, this research follows in its analysis of entertainment media content. Rather than merely describe stereotypes identified in media content, this dissertation also evaluated the stereotypes for their laudatory and derogatory properties to address a deficiency in the literature on stereotypes identified by Seiter (1983). Filling an additional gap in the literature, this study also found that the relationships between characters adhering to stereotypes also invoke ideologies about relationships between laudable and derogatory racial groups.

Moreover, these results suggest that the most influential movies contain media frames that draw on historical and ideological sources, such as racial stereotypes in media frames that spread from institutional sources, through media, to the public. These findings are consistent with Entman & Rojecki (2001), on which this study builds. In that study, they contended that

filmmakers and their distributors commonly assume that viewers will be more receptive of stories with familiar codes and characters. Consequently, they argued, writers and directors play to common stereotypes as a part of formulae that movie backers consider predictive of blockbuster success.

This research supports their argument that media frames in blockbuster movies tend to draw upon problematic stereotypes from the past that perpetuate ideologies about the powerful and the powerless, the majority and the minority, men and women, Whites and non-Whites. This study's sample movies contain or cue stereotypes in media frames. Entman & Rojecki's findings suggest that audiences receive these messages with varying degrees of understanding.

As a result, the findings of this study also contribute to political economy research in particular, by focusing attention on the relationship between media content and media ownership in the context of movie making. Furthermore, this research identifies and evaluates the relationships between laudable and derogatory stereotypes in America's most influential films, as a part of connecting movie content to history, mythology, legend, and ideology. For decades, scholars and pop culture critics have speculated about movie viewers seeking escape and security in times of uncertainty and the commercial imperatives of Hollywood's owners, distributors, and filmmakers. What has been missing from the discussion is empirical documentation of the media content that studios systematically select to receive the largest budgets. Understanding media content within a broader socio-historical context and the political economy of American filmmaking may provide opportunities for analysis of why certain movies receive more marketing and distribution resources.

This study also contributes to critical discourse analysis scholarship. Though limited, discourse analysis informed the content analysis conducted in this research. Following the

example of Entman (2004), this dissertation's research design deliberately targeted racial discourses rather than only counting words. By adding an evaluation of themes, images, actions, and relationships between groups and historical periods, this study aimed to identify broad discourses about race, power, and ideology.

Ideologies, within a multidisciplinary framework, combine a social, cognitive, and discursive component. As systems of ideas, ideologies are shared representations of social groups, and more specifically as the axiomatic principles of such representations (van Dijk, 2006). Groups express and reproduce ideologies in the social practices of their members, and, more particularly, individuals acquire, confirm, change, or perpetuate those ideologies through discourse. Ultimately, these concepts and their relationship to mass media framing research informed the interpretation of the results of this dissertation.

In turn, the contributions are the connections made between frame analysis and discourse analysis in ways that strengthen both disciplines. Here, the results demonstrate how themes, words, images, and actions coalesce to invoke stereotypes through media frames.

Systematically, this study described and evaluated each stereotype and its import to media frames created. Then, in connecting these stereotypes and frames to their historical sources, this research indicates that underlying ideologies function within the media frames and sample movies. Connecting content analysis and discourse analysis as done in this dissertation provides opportunities to study not only media content, but also the structures and functions of underlying ideologies in media.

The filmmakers in this sample use familiar stereotypes and myths to adhere to a formula of ideological comfort or challenge, but never change. The stereotypes and myths maintain race and gender hierarchies that keep white males and females at the top and all other racial groups

beneath. By analyzing how members of in-groups typically emphasize their own good deeds and properties and the bad deeds of the out-group, and how they mitigate or deny their own bad deeds and the good deeds of the out-group, mass communication research can do more than describe derogatory stereotypes. Research on media and public affairs can evaluate laudatory and derogatory stereotypes of groups to better understand the ideological polarization between in-groups and out-groups—a prominent feature of the structure of ideologies.

A problem addressed in this study is whether filmmakers “encode relations of power and domination” in the sample films as cultural texts (Kellner, p. 12). “Encoding” may be an overstatement, for it implies intent in a way that this research does not measure. Like its pilot projects, however, this dissertation reveals within the sample certain hidden meanings, social criticisms, and moments of resistance. According to Kolker (2000), artists historically use such devices to promote the development of more critical consciousness—particularly regarding issues of race. In interpreting critically the range of racial messages, images, and relationships present in entertainment media texts that have the greatest influence globally, this research opens the way toward more differentiated political, rather than aesthetic, valuations of cultural artifacts that distinguish critical and oppositional from conformist and conservative moments in a cultural artifact.

This study is the starting point of a research trajectory that examines media content and systems that are most influential in societies. Examining what makes certain phenomena work for broad and diverse consumers globally is not merely a question of audience reception, but also an inquiry about media production, marketing, and distribution. Film studios allocate significant personnel and financial resources for story development, which involves acquiring and developing narratives that will attract investors. By ascertaining whether and how the most

influential films of all time use stereotypes of racial groups, these results provide a basis for additional research on the relationships between media content, audience reception, media effects, and the political economy of filmmaking in a converging media environment.

Considering the foregoing, the contributions these results offer to mass communications research are significant, unique, and timely. This study sought to bridge the gaps left by bifurcations of previous eras that are converging in the new media environment, such as news versus entertainment media, film versus broadcast/cable television, and DVD/print publishing versus online/internet media markets. Movies in this sample maintain a vital presence in all of these media environments. In fact, sequels are scheduled for *Star Wars*, *Jurassic Park*, and *Avatar* in 2014 and 2015. Even this year, 2013, featured a special theatrical release of *Jurassic Park* in 3-D, and a 25th anniversary DVD release of *E.T.: The Extra Terrestrial*. Many of these films, if not all of them at one time or another, have books, video games, product lines, and other endorsements that run the gamut of media interests. And as Williams & Delli Carpini contend, each of these converging media impacts public opinion—as did news media frames of prior eras.

Implications for Future Research

The implications for future research are many, but this discussion constrains itself to outgrowths that branch in the following three types of mass communication scholarship: (1) framing; (2) political economy; and (3) democracy and public opinion. In these literatures, needs exist for research on the content of converging media streams that traditionally received less attention than news, such as movies. While media effects and audience reception studies may be exceptions, research on media content—intersectional studies, in particular—are especially sparse in examining entertainment media for public affairs concerns in relation to issues of race, gender, class, religion, ability, nationality, age, sexual orientation, and other social stratifications.

Framing scholarship has faced harsh criticism for frame analysis' vague structure, disputed definitions, and inconsistent applications. Entman (2004), however, offers a model for frame analysis in cascading network activation that may resolve some aspects of the debate. Entman's model specifically addresses foreign news, but it can and should be applied in other venues, such as entertainment media. It may offer a more systematic way to trace a media frame from its source—whether historical or contemporary—through studios, directors, movies, and audiences. At present, the most that this study could do was identify frames and point out their similarities with historical sources. Entman & Rojecki (2001), likewise, faced such limitations. But frame analysis of entertainment media is ripe for more in-depth examination given a more definitive structure and the tools of critical discourse analysis that are implicit (though unnamed) in Entman's cascade model.

This study also raises implications for political economy research because it deals with the production and distribution of culture that occur within a specific economic system, constituted by relations between state and economy. Kellner (2003) and Kellner (1990) also highlight such contexts as requiring additional evaluation from a critical cultural perspective. To do so requires analysis of films as cultural texts within the Hollywood film industry system of production, distribution, and reception in a manner that avoids the one-sidedness of textual analysis or audience-reception studies. Like Kellner (2003), this research proposes a multiperspectival approach in future analyses of films in mass communication research that (a) discusses production and political economy, (b) engages in textual analysis, and (c) studies the reception and use of cultural texts. Evaluating depictions by filmmakers, portrayals by actors, reception of viewers, effects on audiences, and relationships to ideology is what distinguishes

analyses of entertainment media from the perspective of mass communication scholarship from other disciplines.

Most important, scholarship on media and public affairs must grapple with the implications of these results on democracy and public opinion. Debates on media's proper function in a modern democracy extend back centuries, but American mass media have moral obligations to prioritize development and stability of democratic society in producing content that serves the greatest good (Hutchins, 1947). Therefore, the following discussion is more extensive because it includes implications for framing and political economy scholarship.

Racial tensions between groups jeopardize democracy. Media exacerbate racial tensions with biased framing and stereotypical images in movies, online digital content, television programming, news coverage, and even documentaries. Globally, human rights treaties and advocates challenge profit-incentivized media conglomerates' use of race, gender, religion, and other differences as political mechanisms for creating xenophobia and inciting hate between segments of societies. A notable example is media coverage of controversial allegations about President Barack Obama's religion, race, and birthplace over the first four years of his presidency.

If the media's main sphere of operations is the production and transformation of ideologies, as Stuart Hall (1981) contends, then the question that emerges is whether intergroup incivility, even if unintentional, is the political agenda of multinational media corporations that distribute polarizing content. The films with the highest viewership of all time, and their elite filmmakers, play a role in establishing public opinion. This dissertation finds that these influential movies present disturbing and polarizing messages about racial groups through verbal and visual communication. Their domestic and global prominence—as well as their kinship with

news media outlets owned by common parent corporations—make their content significant for democracy and intergroup relations.

Hegemony theory suggests that the dominant groups that control political, social, and economic institutions also construct cultural systems to reinforce their power and control in societies. By maintaining a certain degree of control over societal institutions, the dominant class can deflect oppositional forces that could result in broad structural changes (Gramsci, 1971). In part, Robinson (2005) describes how transnational social forces and institutions grounded in a global system rather than an interstate system are transcending nation-states and national economies in discussing hegemony in the current globalized political economy. Consensual domination -- or ideological hegemony, to use his terminology -- involves the dominant class instituting and legitimizing its controlling power as “rule by consent, or the cultural and intellectual leadership achieved by a particular class, class faction, stratum or social group, as part of a larger project of class rule or domination” (p. 2).

Focusing on hegemony as consensual domination, or ideological hegemony, enables an analysis of hegemony in the context of globalization, in which powerful forces beyond traditional nation-states operate (Robinson, 2005). Globalization is the fusing of regional and national economies into the broader global capitalistic systems’ means of production and finance according to global capitalism theory (Robinson, 2004). This theory contends that a new group of powerful individuals deemed the “transnational capitalist class, or TCC” emerged from the interconnected international system (Robinson, 2005, p. 5). The TCC achieves globalized production, marketing, finance, and circuits of accumulation that render the class spatially and politically above local territories and polities (p. 6). In so doing, the TCC enjoys increasing autonomy from traditional nation-states, forming a global class that presents the possibility of a

transnationalization of hegemony (Robinson, 2004, 2005). TCC members run the parent companies of the corporations distributing and producing the sample films.

Ideological hegemony requires the perpetuation of favorable ideological images and messages to the broader population. Media conglomerates, the majority of which are owned by a small group of major international corporations, are obliterating geographic boundaries amid globalization and corporate digitization of commerce and communication (Kellner, 2004). The media are instrumental in creating and dispersing messages and images which inform and shape public discourse (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Media maintain this control by utilizing imagery and language that tap into attitudes, stereotypes, and preconceived notions people hold—to reinforce ideological messages. For elites and ordinary citizens, “media discourse is the main source of people’s knowledge, attitudes and ideologies” (van Dijk, 2000, p. 36).

As a result, media elites operate with a privileged legal, technological, and global influence that is unlike any other segment of society. In the United States, according to Cook (2005), there are three branches of government and the media which function as integral, favored parts of government as its constitutionally protected fourth branch. The world’s largest corporations own American media’s top companies. For example, in 2012, General Electric ranked sixth on Fortune 500’s List of America’s Largest Corporations with \$148 million in revenue, and its partner in ownership of one the sample’s distributors, Comcast, follows with \$56 million in annual revenue last year. News Corporation and Viacom own the other two distributors, and among American media conglomerates specifically, The Walt Disney Company, News Corporation, Time Warner, Viacom, and CBS rank subsequently (Fortune, 2012).

Media owners and their empires voluntarily play a key role in fostering the approval and acceptance of the existing systems of capitalism because it is an effective way to protect their power and profits. Likewise, government protects media corporations. Historically, the U.S. Supreme Court affirmed the privileged status of media companies with press freedoms under the constitution's First Amendment. It is important to note, however, that the framers of the Bill of Rights believed that they were recognizing rights of individuals that were already part of their English constitutional heritage and implicit in natural law (Cottrol & Diamond, 1991). Today, however, corporations experience the majority of these protections in ever-expanding ways.

In 2010, for example, the Court extended to corporations a protection previously reserved for individuals' free speech by striking down a 62-year-old federal statute that prohibited corporations from making direct expenditures to support or oppose candidates in federal elections (*Citizens United*, 2010). Furthermore, cases like *Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios Inc. v. Gorkster Ltd.*, 545 U.S. 913 (2005), in the context of copyright law, used similar reasoning to extend to corporations intellectual property protections originally intended for individuals. Media corporations, therefore, possess expanding power as societal censors via copyright law, as political actors via free speech law, and as media via free press law. With such increasing deregulation in courts and legislatures, media research must examine the ways in which consolidated media ownership influences public opinion and public policy—domestically and globally.

Regulation of the media, the fourth estate, has become a relic of antiquity (Satchel Augustine & Augustine, 2012). Chronicling the past forty years of judicial interpretation, at least one legal scholar states, “[t]he Court’s turn against substantive media regulation reflects a free speech orthodoxy that crystallized in the 1970s and still prevails today, under which the First

Amendment simply protects whatever distribution of expressive opportunities the economic market happens to produce” (Magarian, 2008, p. 846). Dominant transnational media corporations, operating with unregulated discretion and influence, present the problem of the informer (the media) becoming the controller and government becoming the controlled (Satchel Augustine & Augustine, 2012, p. 50). This, in effect, flips on its head mass communication theory’s long-held premise that mass media must adapt to the sociopolitical form and structure in which they operate (Siebert et al, 1963).

Oligarchy threatens democracy when power effectively rests with a small elite segment of society distinguished by wealth, family, military, religion, or other privileged status (Michaels, 1962). The media’s privileged status becomes a concern when considering the ways in which concentrated media ownership and advertising may bias messaging, manipulate public opinion, and increase the political influence of unaccountable actors. Corporate media may not be a bad idea, for they can foster healthy competition and provide a check against government power. Unfettered corporate power, however, is a threat to democracy.

Through on-going mergers and acquisitions, multinational corporations continue to concentrate their control over what publics see, hear, and read. By vertically integrating, a few companies retain control over media from initial production to final distribution. Consequently, analyzing the processes, content, structures, institutions, and influences of mass communication requires also interrogation of potential threats to global democracy by media oligarchy.

Limitations of the Study

Ideally, this study would have been performed with professional coders actually watching the sampled movies in screening rooms with large displays, surround sound, and tablet computers with coding software that simplifies the process of counting units. To do so, however,

was cost prohibitive. Instead, volunteer student coders were assigned films to watch and code manually on their own. Assessing media texts through positivist-empirical methodologies that require counting bits of mediated content leaves room for misinterpretations, decontextualizations, and other errors even when coupled with safeguards and qualitative techniques.

Alternatively, the qualitative content analysis became unwieldy at times. Focusing on creating a picture of a phenomenon that always is embedded within a particular context led to time-consuming debate among coders about which reading of the movies had more “truth value” than others; that is, “confidence in the ‘truth’ of the findings of a particular inquiry” (Guba & Lincoln, 1981, p. 246). To streamline the copious descriptions and evaluations, the coders used the following quote to settle disputes: “categorize only if [insert the disputed theme, word, image, or action] informs how groups use films as media products and cultural artifacts ‘to assert or sustain a version of reality, articulate and celebrate a sense of identity, or disguise or flaunt styles of domination or control?’” (Pauly, p. 3). For example, certain stereotypes were excluded from the sample that could have been interpreted as racial, but their truth value was outweighed by their ambiguity.

This issue raises an additional limitation of this study: These results do not address every stereotype in the sample films. This research does not ignore the wearisome practice of using some animated, animal-human hybrids, or otherwise non-human characters to exhibit disturbing styles of behavior, speech patterns, dance, attire, walking, rhythmic movement, symbolism, or musicianship. *Star Wars* receives most attention in this regard for its black, brown, or bronze droids, ewoks, sand people, and wookiees who are set in deserts, auctions, or jazz clubs.

These stories, roles, and casting decisions exemplify an unsettling device used for comic relief. At times, ethnic, regional, or foreign accents are unmistakably identifiable. Specific characters including Jabba the Hut, Chewbacca, and Jar-Jar Biggs are especially disconcerting. Yet, they are ambiguous, cartoonish, undeveloped, and devoid of racial milieu and political import. Interpreting them as non-White human racial groups, especially given that the actors in such roles are almost always White, is not prudent. As such, this study discarded and disqualified them from consideration as irrelevant here, but perhaps worthy of future research.

Conversely, the decision to include *Avatar*'s Na'vi as a racial group centers on *Avatar*'s wealth of racial content, as exemplified in the lengthy discussions above. *Avatar* is an allegory on race. It is so polemical that had the people been Black rather than blue, the racial uproar would have been deafening. Yet, the historical race and power discourse is what led to its inclusion in the sample as a source of media frames about non-White racial groups. What distinguishes it from *Star Wars*, which also includes alien creatures with human and animal features that recapitulate troublesome racial stereotypes of non-Whites, is that *Avatar* employs themes, words, images, and actions inextricably connected with race politics and history. *Star Wars* does not.

There also is the question of external validity of this study: Can these results be generalized? Making meaning of different sites, scripts, characters, sets, props, and casting decisions is generalizable only to the extent that some community of readers considers a particular study representative of a wider set of concerns (Pauly, 1991). Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research does not guarantee the probable validity of its results by choosing a sample that adequately stands for some larger population. Instead, "representativeness" is itself a discourse in what constitutes a "sign of the times"; that is, the qualitative researcher studies the

typologies that groups invent as discourses in their own right (p. 12). The films in this study and the stereotypes contained therein are among the most viewed and most influential movies ever made, and in that regard, they are representative of contemporary American culture.

A distinctive trait of this dissertation is that the three coders were women. As in many research projects, all of the coders were university students who volunteered. Uniquely, though, this researcher intentionally sought out racially diverse coders to differentiate perspectives on the racial subject matter of the study. Although recruited coders included men, none of them showed up for the training or followed up afterward. No volunteers were rejected. In turn, two of the volunteer coders self-identified as women of color, one as Latina and one as African American. The remaining coder self-identified as White with Native American ancestry.

Some may consider a majority of women of color or gender homogeneity as a limitation that may precipitate this dissertation's higher percentages of intercoder reliability. Rather than uniformity, however, this research found that it was the diversity among the coders that offered a spread in perspectives that varied tremendously according to discipline, religion, socio-economic status, and sexual orientation. The coders' examination proved invaluable because their intersecting identities colored the lenses through which they interrogated the sample. As a result, this anomalous constellation among researchers is in fact desirable for it affords this study a particularity and richness that may not otherwise exist. In effect, the dissimilarity in coder identity enhanced the intersectional nature of this research.

Recommendations

The results of this study show that media content merits systematic study not only because of its real or assumed role as an antecedent to effects on audiences, but also because mass communication messages also provide valuable evidence about the conditions of their

production and distribution. While using familiar tropes may be industry convention, doing so provides incentives for filmmakers to use race and polarizing racial stereotypes in framing the content of the most influential movies of all time—even if only to justify the imbalance of power that favors White men. Even so, proving intent on the part of a filmmaker or studio may not only be impossible or imprudent, it may also be unnecessary.

A long-standing doctrine in U.S. constitutional law is that each citizen has a right to equal protection under the law irrespective of race, color, gender, or nationality (*Yick Wo*, 1886). The Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution provides that “no state shall ... deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws” (U.S. Constitution, Amendment 14). Although applying only to state governments, the Supreme Court reads the equal protection requirement to apply to the federal government also as a component of Fifth Amendment due process. Private actors such as corporations who act without state sanction, however, usually are not bound by this law (*Plessy*, 1896).

Nevertheless, assuming *arguendo* that state sanction exists and this theory could apply to movie companies, or a filmmaker, one could argue that African Americans or non-Whites generally experience the discriminatory effects of racial stereotyping in media by scrutinizing the most influential movies of all time for a pattern of harm. For, under the equal protection doctrine, the Court can decide unconstitutionality based upon disparate impact even when discriminate intent cannot be proven. By establishing the historical trends, one can project what the future will entail but for an intervention—whether that is an intervention by the Court or by a change in industry practices.

Relations between contemporary movie stereotypes and racist (and otherwise oppressive) ideological regimes represent vestiges of interlocking systems of exclusion. Tracing the lineage

of the discourse and images identified in this study may be beyond the scope of this dissertation but doing so is a necessary next step in this research trajectory. Further investigation is necessary into the sources of troubling stereotypes. Perhaps in identifying a causal chain of relationship storytellers may appreciate the necessity of stepping away from antiquated imagery. For example, the heritage of the violent primitive and the tailed jungle bunny points to early justifications for colonialism, enslavement, and segregation through literature and eugenics of the nineteenth century. Establishing the linkages between stereotypical tropes common to the sample and America's histories of slavery and group subjugation may open the eyes of filmmakers and the industry to the need for change.

Maybe it is naïve to believe that people will do better when they know better. Yet, one of the filmmakers in this study's sample may exemplify the hope undergirding this study's recommendations. George Lucas often acknowledges his oblivion to the lack of non-Whites in his first Star Wars movie release in 1977. He just used his imagination and casted without regard to people who were different from him. It never dawned on him that his films depicted a future in which the only humans are White. Only upon reviewers' critiques and public outcry did he reevaluate his approach and broaden his casting practices for subsequent films. Many, of course, could argue that he did not go far enough but the fact remains that Lucas' subsequent films cast more African Americans and Asians than his first blockbuster, at least in part because he was challenged. Mass media scholarship should be leading the way in helping media practitioners act more responsibly and change problematic industry practices that harm people of color.

Scholars such as Daniel Boorstin (1962), Neil Postman (1985), and William Leach (1994) warned against visual media's power to anesthetize public discourse through what Boorstin called "the thicket of unreality which stands between [them] and the facts of life" (p. 3).

Creating the illusion, Boorstin contends, satisfies people's extravagant expectations of what the world holds and of their power to shape the world (pp. 4-5). Considering this premise in relation to the present results is especially troubling. Specifically, this sample illustrates that non-Whites do not exist in futuristic fantasies that most viewers watch, or if they do, then they are primitive savages incapable of equality. Under the tutelage of a White man, on the other hand, they can be controlled as a sidekick or defeated as an unworthy adversary. Such symbolism reflects a public discourse rooted in a global history that entrenched fixed relations of racial group supremacy and inferiority—false premises rejected in public policy that media can no longer reinforce.

Consumers see ideology, nature, intelligence, or human motivation through media content—accepting media's stereotypes—preferring the fabricated image (the illusion) presented in movies because it is “more interesting than its original” (p. 204). Boorstin's fear arises even in the present context for nature and specifically human relationships come to imitate the media stereotypes. Collateral media instruction occurs internally for individuals, socially influencing intergroup relations and globally shaping international audience's perceptions of Americans. To illustrate this, consider Black children who grow up believing they are not as smart as their White counterparts may never see themselves as anything other than a subordinate, never an owner, always an employee; never a hero, always a sidekick. Moreover, consider children in another region or country who never met an Indigenous American but incidentally learned about them through exclusively watching mid-20th century American Westerns. Upon meeting, the unexposed children fear the Indigenous American will scalp them. The power of the media stereotypes is that they greatly influence what people believe can be expected from members of other groups—domestically and internationally.

In fact, Postman (1985) argued that every medium imposes itself on our consciousness and social institutions in myriad forms. Definitions of truth derive from the media's character and biases in communicating information (p. 17); for, languages are media, media are metaphors, and metaphors create the content of culture. Perhaps media content plays a significant role in the resistance to racial equality and equal protection under the law. If policies change but media similes and metaphors stay the same, then movies such as those in this sample can directly undermine public policy.

This study contends that movies present and inform public discourse through illustrative images, similes, and symbols. If, as Postman argues, media form regulates and dictates content, then movies impact cultural development by making possible a unique mode of discourse and by providing an orientation for thought, expression, and sensibility. And if, as he argues, the weight assigned to any form of truth-telling is a function of the media's influence, then the messages conveyed by most influential movies of all time must be interrogated and challenged regularly within the industry and from the academy.

Voices of resistance and critique from several traditions, according Leach, play an important role in opposing corporations and their pushes toward consumptionism. The challenge is to be independent in a world constantly trying to make conformist consumers—to take opportunities to demand change and seek new directions in the economic, ethical, and social dilemmas facing Americans. Even the United Nations recognizes xenophobia in the media one such problem. The International Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Racial Discrimination (“the Convention”), monitored by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (“CERD”), mentions concerns and recommendations regarding racism, xenophobia, and intolerance against minority groups evident in media. As a human rights instrument, the

Convention commits its members to the elimination of racial discrimination and the promotion of understanding among different races. In 2002, CERD urged the Convention's signatories and parties to adopt a media code of ethics as member states raised concerns regarding increased xenophobia and racial discrimination in media (Satchel Augustine, 2012).

While a good start, CERD does not go far enough. Calling for nation-states to adopt a media code of ethics will mean nothing to multinational conglomerates. Revenues matter most to media corporations, and nothing will change unless there are profit incentives for doing so. Arguments for government intervention under equal protection, antitrust, or other doctrines may provide an avenue for getting their attention, but will likely fail given First Amendment protections. Yet, scholarship can provide cost-benefit, content, and other analyses that may be far more persuasive to industry executives who are far more interested in appealing to audiences than doing good.

Edward Said (1997, 1998) referred to xenophobia in the media as a form of American corporatist globalization attempting cultural imperialism with no regard for differing beliefs. If this is true, studying media content is central to understanding both the antecedents and the consequences of the content itself. For, establishing or justifying the supremacy of one race, gender, or tradition over all others as natural and common sense reinforces systems of inequality. The use of racial stereotypes, and the histories and ideologies they invoke, jeopardizes democracy when the immense power of the media is concentrated in the hands of a few.

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APPENDIX

Table A.1. Film Sample listed by Filmmaker

Table A.1a. James Cameron Films

Rank	Movie Title	Year	Studio	Tickets	Gross
5	Titanic	1997	Paramount	135,654,500	\$658,672,302
14	Avatar	2009	Fox	97,255,300	\$760,507,625

Table A.1b. George Lucas Films

Rank	Movie Title	Year	Studio	Tickets	Gross
2	Star Wars	1977	Fox	178,119,600	\$460,998,007
12	The Empire Strikes Back	1980	Fox	98,180,600	\$290,475,067
15	Return of the Jedi	1983	Fox	94,059,400	\$309,306,177
16	Star Wars: Episode I - The Phantom Menace	1999	Fox	90,312,700	\$474,544,677
19	Raiders of the Lost Ark*	1981	Paramount	88,141,900	\$242,374,454

* George Lucas is the producer and a writer for Raiders of the Lost Ark. Steven Spielberg is the director.

Table A.1c. Steven Spielberg Films

4	E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial	1982	Universal	141,854,300	\$435,110,554
7	Jaws	1975	Universal	128,078,800	\$260,000,000
19	Raiders of the Lost Ark*	1981	Paramount	88,141,900	\$242,374,454
20	Jurassic Park	1993	Universal	86,205,800	\$357,067,947

* Steven Spielberg is the director. George Lucas is the producer and a writer.

Table A.2. 10 Sample Films Ranked among the 20 Most Influential Films of All Time

Rank	Title	Studio	Est. Tickets	Unadjusted Gross	Year^
1	Gone with the Wind	MGM	202,044,600	\$198,676,459	1939^
2	Star Wars	Fox	178,119,600	\$460,998,007	1977^
3	The Sound of Music	Fox	142,415,400	\$158,671,368	1965
4	E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial	Uni.	141,854,300	\$435,110,554	1982^
5	~Titanic	Par.	135,654,500	\$658,672,302	1997^
6	The Ten Commandments	Par.	131,000,000	\$65,500,000	1956
7	Jaws	Uni.	128,078,800	\$260,000,000	1975
8	Doctor Zhivago	MGM	124,135,500	\$111,721,910	1965
9	The Exorcist	WB	110,599,200	\$232,906,145	1973^
10	Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs	Dis.	109,000,000	\$184,925,486	1937^
11	101 Dalmatians	Dis.	99,917,300	\$144,880,014	1961^
12	The Empire Strikes Back	Fox	98,180,600	\$290,475,067	1980^
13	Ben-Hur	MGM	98,000,000	\$74,000,000	1959
14	Avatar	Fox	97,255,300	\$760,507,625	2009^
15	Return of the Jedi	Fox	94,059,400	\$309,306,177	1983^
16	Star Wars: Episode I - The Phantom Menace	Fox	90,312,700	\$474,544,677	1999^
17	The Sting	Uni.	89,142,900	\$156,000,000	1973
18	The Lion King	BV	89,101,100	\$422,783,777	1994^

19	Raiders of the Lost Ark	Par.	88,141,900	\$242,374,454	1981^
20	Jurassic Park	Uni.	86,205,800	\$357,067,947	1993^

* This listing reflects the ranking of the 20 Highest-Grossing Films of All Time Adjusted for Inflation (IMDb.com, 2012). IMDb.com adjusts the gross revenue to estimated number of tickets sold. Inflation-adjustment is mostly done by multiplying estimated admissions by the latest average ticket price. Where admissions are unavailable, adjustment is based on the average ticket price for when each movie was released (taking in to account re-releases where applicable).

^ Indicates documented multiple theatrical releases. Most of the pre-1980 movies listed on this chart had multiple undocumented releases over the years. The year shown is the first year of release.

~Yellow highlight for *Titanic* indicates the film's increase in box office receipts and viewership over the course of this research. On March 12, 2012, for example, *Titanic*, ranked sixth among the listed films. On August 13, 2012, *Titanic* ranked fifth, which bumped *The Ten Commandments* to sixth in the ranking.

Table A.3. Coding Sheets

The coding sheets provide the following criteria and instructions for evaluation of the units of analysis as V1, V2, V3, V4, and V5:

V1. Images used to depict characters/roles and their descriptive appearance.

This variable is devised to create a map of the images relating to main characters and primary roles, and their descriptive attachments (symbols) that appear in sampled films and materials about each film. It is important to add new labels identified in the film's content, plot summaries, or promotional materials as additional categories. Whenever a new label is detected, translate and add the respective new label into one of the blank cells on the spreadsheet, and code accordingly. The following are starting point criteria for identifying stereotypical images in a film:

- 1) Cults
- 2) Restless tribal groups
- 3) Groups that move as an anonymous collective mass
- 4) Primitive characters prone to...
 - a. cheating,
 - b. cunning,
 - c. savagery and/or
 - d. barbarism
- 5) Drumming
- 6) Drumming in the night
- 7) Primitive rites/rituals
- 8) Cannibalism
- 9) Whirling dervishes
- 10) African or Asian people with tribal markings or cultural attire
- 11) Garish attire, ethnic prints and/or scantily dressed people
- 12) Unkempt, dirty people
- 13) People with wild hair, bones in noses, or other eccentricities
- 14) Threatening stares from dark or wooded/jungle bushes
- 15) Religious symbols (e.g., crosses, ankhs, masks, totems, idols, etc.)

V2. Themes: Overarching categories describing the film's storyline

This variable is devised to create a map of the themes to describe a film's content and/or characters. It is important to add new themes identified in the film's plot summaries, promotional materials, and the film itself as additional categories. Whenever a new label is detected, translate and add the respective new label into one of the blank cells on the spreadsheet, and code accordingly.

- 1) Religion/Belief
- 2) Race/Ethnicity/Nationality
- 3) Tribalism

- 4) Paganism
- 5) Professional achievement
- 6) Ambition
- 7) Puritanism
- 8) Individualism
- 9) Fixed relations of subordination and domination
- 10) Stereotypes grouped around “superior” and “inferior” natural species
- 11) “Place” as result of Nature
- 12) Physical signs or racial characteristics as unalterable signifiers of inferiority
- 13) The isolated white figure, alone “out there,” confronting his Destiny or shouldering his Burden in the “heart of darkness”
- 14) The white character displaying coolness under fire and an unshakeable authority—exerting mastery over the rebellious natives
- 15) The white character quelling a threatened uprising with a single glance of his steel-blue eyes
- 16) Monster-humans who decapitate the beautiful heroine, kidnap the children, burn the encampment or threaten to boil, cook and eat the innocent
- 17) Ahistorical fantasies

V3. Words: Terms used when referring to groups/individuals

This variable is devised to create a map of the words used in a film’s dialog. It is important to add new terms identified in the films that frame or cue racial stereotypes as additional categories. Translate and add the respective new terms into one of the blank cells on the coding sheet, and code accordingly.

- 1) Blackness
- 2) Native
- 3) Indians
- 4) Tribal designations
- 5) Pejorative terms, such as
 - a. spear chucker
 - b. squaw
 - c. infidels
 - d. savages
 - e. chick
 - f. the “n” word
- 6) Pocahontas or other stereotypical terms
- 7) Religious group labels
- 8) Professional achievement
- 9) Ambition
- 10) Puritanism

- 11) Individualism
- 12) Whiteness

V4. Actions: Conduct by or occurring to a character

This variable is devised to create a map of the actions and conduct pertaining to racial stereotypes in each film sampled. It is important to add new actions identified in the films that relate to the stereotypes in this study as additional categories. Translate and add a description of the new conduct into one of the blank cells on the coding sheet, and code accordingly.

- 1) Characters traveling as a tribe, cult, or anonymous mass
- 2) Character chants, drums or dances
- 3) Character chants, drums or dances around a fire
- 4) Character kidnaps an innocent, or threatens to
- 5) Character burns the encampment, or threatens to
- 6) Character boils, cooks, or eats the innocent, or threatens to
- 7) Character performs religious/tribal ritual
- 8) Character sacrifices, kills, or threatens to kill an innocent
- 9) Character enters a trance

V5. Scenes: Series of shots or montages communicating a single idea

This variable is devised to create a map of the scenes including racial stereotypes in each film sampled. It is important to add new scenes identified in the films that relate to the stereotypes in this study as categories below. Translate and add a description of each scene into one of the blank cells below on the coding sheet, and code accordingly. Add additional pages as needed.

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____
- 6. _____

This coding scheme animates the analysis and findings that appear this study.

VITA

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For nearly ten years prior to entering the PhD program at LSU, Roslyn worked in the human rights community domestically and internationally as a policy advocate and non-profit executive. She served as Research Director at Howard University's Center on Child Health Disparities; Executive Director at the National Center for Human Rights Education; Soros Justice Fellow at the Southern Center for Human Rights; Founding Board Member of the Interfaith Children's Movement; and Founder of DESIST, an advocacy organization for girls in juvenile courts. Her work took her to Ghana, Thailand, India, Kenya, South Africa, and Italy as a grantee of organizations including the Ford Foundation, the Open Society Institute/Soros Foundation, and the Institute for International Education. During and since that time, as clergy in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, Roslyn also pastored and volunteered with several social justice initiatives in underserved communities in Baton Rouge, Atlanta, and Kingston, Jamaica.

Among Roslyn's many honors are those from Emory University's Law & Religion Program, Spelman College's WISDOM Center, the National Association of Black Social Workers, and EBONY Magazine named her among its "30 Young Leaders of the Future."

Media outlets such as CNN, C-SPAN, NEWSWEEK, and ESSENCE Magazine featured Roslyn's work—as well as national and international publications including the National Crime Prevention Council's *50 Strategies for Faith and Justice Collaboration*, CREA's *Global Dialog Series: Building Alliances Globally to End Violence Against Women*, and the Institute for Women's Policy Research's *Called to Speak: Women, Religion & Advocacy* and also *The Ties That Bind: Women's Public Vision for Politics, Religion & Civil Society*. Her policy briefs address issues such as child sexual exploitation, conditions of incarceration, indigent defense, and charging and imprisoning children as adults.

Through these professional experiences, what Roslyn discovered was her passion for teaching, scholarship, and the academy. Invited lectures at numerous universities and producing research emerged as her most fulfilling duties. Devoting four years to the PhD program was a worthwhile sacrifice that was necessary for eventually gaining a tenured professorship at the University of her choice. Her courage in stepping away from the fast-track on which she was previously exemplifies her commitment to taking her career to the next level in academe.

Coupling the PhD in Media & Public Affairs with her JD and MDiv enables Roslyn to lead examinations of the most influential texts in society through her scholarship. For Roslyn, studying media, religious and legal texts for their cultural and historical influences and effects is not only related but also complementary.