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## Keeping it Reel?: A Mixed Methods Content Analysis of the Representation of Black Male Students and Black Masculinity in College Films

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KEEPING IT REEL?: A MIXED METHODS CONTENT ANALYSIS OF THE  
REPRESENTATION OF BLACK MALE STUDENTS AND BLACK MASCULINITY IN  
COLLEGE FILMS

A Dissertation

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

in

The School of Education

by

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May 2015

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother Carol Massey and to the memory of my grandparents Walter and Mary Lou Massey, David Joseph, and Lucille Townsend Joseph Tarver.

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*“Speak over yourself, encourage yourself in the Lord”* – Donald Lawrence & The Tri-City Singers, “Encourage Yourself” (2008)

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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this convergent parallel mixed methods study was to explore the representations of Black male students and Black masculinity in college films and identify what differences in representations exist when accounting for various characteristics of the films. In the qualitative component, a qualitative content analysis was utilized to analyze the representations in a sample of 18 theatrically released college films. In the quantitative component, a quantitative content analysis was performed to identify any existing differences in Black male student representations when accounting for the films' genre, decade of release, and depicted institution type.

Qualitative analyses revealed that, overall, the analyzed films primarily depicted behaviors, expressions of emotions, interactions, and experiences associated with the empty space in representation—non-stereotypical depictions or rarely seen representations of Black men in film (Guerrero, 1995). Quantitative analyses revealed significant relationships between Black male student representations and the films' institution type and decade of release. Through the integration of qualitative and quantitative findings, three major themes emerged: Black male students were overwhelmingly represented as athletes and Greek fraternity members, representations in college films largely followed the trends of Black male representations in other films of the same decades, and empty space in representation depictions were more present in films set at HBCUs.

The findings and results of this study offer several implications for university administrators, faculty, and researchers. Through the implementation of workshops, seminars, and open forum dialogues focused on stereotypical representations and perceptions, university administrators demonstrate their institutions' value of underrepresented student populations.

Students feeling valued by their institutions could lead to positive retention gains for colleges and universities. Research related to stereotypical representations aids in engaging faculty and staff in dialogue focused on addressing, changing, and challenging existing stereotypes of Black men on campus. In combination with the findings and results of this study, the analyzed films serve as instructional tools for higher education faculty charged with engaging graduate students in topics related to campus diversity, student populations, and stereotypes on campus. Finally, this study provides researchers with another way of merging mixed methods and content analysis in future research studies.

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Growing up, I always knew I wanted to attend a historically Black college or university (HBCU). When I reflect back on my high school experience, HBCU attendance was not something that was heavily encouraged by my school's guidance counselors. Instead, guidance counselors frequently relayed information pertaining to Georgia's predominately White state universities (i.e. the University of Georgia, Valdosta State University, Columbus State University, Georgia State University, etc.). While there is certainly nothing wrong with attending any of those institutions, I just knew that none of these universities would provide the college experience I desired.

Fortunately, there were a number of other factors outside of my high school that encouraged my HBCU aspirations. My mother and father both attended an HBCU for graduate school, numerous relatives and family friends were HBCU alum, and throughout my childhood my mother exposed me to various Black college events (i.e. Battle of the Bands, homecomings, Black Greek step shows, Black College Classic football games, etc.). Although these factors provided me with first-hand exposure of HBCU related events and activities, one of the biggest factors shaping my perception of the HBCU collegiate experience came via popular culture—specifically the long-running television series *A Different World* (Carsey & Werner, 1987) and the classic Spike Lee film *School Daze* (Lee & Lee, 1988). Though I was only five years old when the film was released, I remember always having access to VHS and, eventually, DVD copies of the film—leading to it being one of my all-time favorite films.

When I was younger, I was immediately drawn to, both, *A Different World* and *School Daze* due to the prevalence of images of college students that looked like me. In viewing these works, I was exposed to Black males engaging in classroom dialogue, participating in campus

events and activities, stepping in Black Greek step shows, and partaking in the occasional college party. As I grew older, these images took on a deeper meaning. For example, beyond the entertainment aspects of these features, these students were politically involved and socially conscious. There was also a sense of diversity—with heterogeneous representations of Black male college students. More importantly, these images, though fictitious, countered the negative representations of Black males that often flooded television and movie screens during this era. These images shaped my understanding of what it meant to be a student at an HBCU.

In August 2001, I began my freshmen year at Florida A&M University—an HBCU in Tallahassee, Florida. Throughout my time at the institution, I was actively involved on campus, pledged a fraternity, assumed student leadership positions, attended my fair share of college parties, and eventually graduated with honors. My peers were diverse—hailing from different cities, states and, in some instances, countries; pursuing degrees in a number of academic disciplines; and possessing various interests. Additionally, faculty and college personnel were primarily people of color. In many ways my time and experiences at Florida A&M resembled many of those I witnessed via *A Different World*'s fictitious Hillman College.

In the years since *School Daze* showed its final theater screening and *A Different World* aired its final episode, representations of Black male students' collegiate experiences persist in, both, film and television. In fact, the TVOne television network regularly airs episodes of *A Different World*—some twenty years after the series ended. Further, *School Daze*, in its entirety, is available for viewing online via the Internet video-sharing site YouTube. These depictions continue to expose audiences to what is a rarity among the vast majority of Black male media representations—the Black male college student. Recognizing the influence that such depictions have had on my own collegiate experiences, my hope is that these images are inspiring a new

generation of Black males to attend college. It should be noted, however, that even though television shows and films featuring Black males in academic settings present rare representations of Black males, these images must still be critically analyzed. There still exists the possibility that Black male student characters are depicted much like all other Black male film representations—in stereotypical ways. Therefore, the current research study emerged out of my own interest in exploring the ways Black male students are represented in college films.

### **Problem Statement**

Over the years, student retention has emerged as a matter of significant importance for the country's institutions of higher education. As a result, the issue of student retention has generated interest among scholars and administrators in the field. When retention was initially studied, students were believed to be the cause of their own departure from the institution (Tinto, 1975, 2005). Tinto (2005) notes that, initially, students were viewed as less able and less motivated to complete their college education. Today, research suggests that many students leave institutions due to factors including a lack of academic preparedness upon entering the college or university, finances, and family background (Bean, 2005). In addition, Bean (2005) also mentions campus climate, institutional fit, and social factors as influences on students' decisions to remain at their institution.

The aforementioned factors have contributed to less than stellar educational attainment rates in the United States. In 2013, only 33.6% of those individuals 25 years and older possessed a bachelor's degree or higher (National Center for Education Statistics, 2014). While this percentage may seem relatively low, the rate for Blacks, specifically, is even more alarming—20.5% (National Center for Education Statistics, 2014). Further, in relation to the current study, only 17.4% of Black males 25 years and older possessed a bachelor's degree or higher (National

Center for Education Statistics, 2014). In addressing the educational attainment disparities of Blacks, numerous scholars have placed special attention on the experiences of Black male college students (Brown, 2006; Harper, 2006a, 2006b, 2009; Kimbrough & Harper, 2006; Palmer, Davis, & Maramba, 2010; Palmer & Maramba, 2010; Dancy, 2012). With a disproportionate number of Black male students currently enrolled in the nation's colleges and universities (Kimbrough & Harper, 2006), administrators must understand and address those factors either encouraging or hindering members of this specific student group in developing connections with their campus environments. Referring back to the previously mentioned institutional fit and social factors impacting student retention, the current study operates under the assumption that popular culture's representation of Black men influence campus community members' perceptions of Black men on campus. Additionally, Black male students feel pressured to either conform to or counter widespread media depictions—threatening their ability to develop an authentic self (Dancy, 2012). In either case, the images of Black men presented via popular culture outlets such as television and film—potentially—impact the collegiate experiences of Black male students.

Criticism of the manner in which Black men are portrayed in film is nothing new. Following the release of one of Hollywood's first major films, *The Birth of a Nation* (Griffith, Aitken, & Griffith, 1915), numerous protests were launched in response to the film's negative representation of Black men. In the film, Black men were portrayed as unintelligent, animalistic, and sexually aggressive towards White women (Hawkins, 1998a, 1998b; Guerrero, 1995). These negative images were significant, due to films' ability to influence public perception. As hooks (2009) argues, movies provide opportunities for audiences to enter a world that is different from the one they know or are comfortable with. Exploring this concept further, she goes on to state



that White audiences' "wanting to see and 'enjoy' images of Black folks on the screen is often in no way related to their desire to know real Black people" (p. 96). Therefore, White audiences viewing *The Birth of a Nation* tended to believe that all Black men possessed the ability to act as "monsters"—based on, both, their limited interaction with "real" Black men and the images presented in the film.

Today, though the types of movie roles available to Black male actors have improved since the early 1900s, in many ways these actors are often limited to stereotypical roles. As Guerrero (1995) points out the standard roles for Black men in Hollywood include: criminals, pimps, comics, slaves and butlers. To this list, I would also include athletes and entertainers/performers. Due to these roles representing how movie-going audiences view and understand Blackness and Black men (hooks, 2009), such representations are dangerous as their depictions are typically inaccurate or narrowly describe most Black men. However, Black male characters not easily identifiable with such stereotypical representations have the tendency to be viewed as "dangerous" by mainstream (i.e. White) audiences (hooks, 2009). Dangerous in the sense that images depicting Black men as "positive" or "educated" challenge what dominant audiences have come to accept as the norm. As a result, movies featuring Black male characters falling outside of this norm are rarely made or fail to gain recognition with White audiences (Guerrero, 1995).

Films that focus on Black male college students could certainly fall into the category of being "dangerous." Due to the belief that educated Blacks posed a threat to society they were not allowed to participate in the early days of higher education (Anderson, 1988; Lovett, 2011). Therefore, the "fear" of an educated, Black man is certainly not a new concept. Despite running the risk of limited commercial success, a number of films focused on the collegiate experiences

of Black males have been released over the years. These films range from the aforementioned *School Daze* to historical dramas *Glory Road* (Bruckheimer & Gartner, 2006) and *The Great Debaters* (Winfrey et al., 2007) to the commercially successful *Drumline* (Austin et al., 2002) and *Stomp the Yard* (Packer, Hardy, & White, 2007). While previous studies have taken a scholarly look at college films featuring Black actors and actresses (Cousins, 2005; Hughey, 2010; Leonard, 2006; Lubiano, 1991), there is a scarcity of research comparing the images of Black male students across the films (Dancy, 2009). Research addressing the representation of Black male students is needed, due to the impact that popular culture images have on the collegiate experiences of Black male viewers. For example, in their empirical study, Matabane and Merritt (2013) found that strong male leads in, both, *The Great Debaters* and *Drumline* positively influenced Black male college students' decision to attend an HBCU. However, other research notes that Black male college students often feel pressured to either counteract or fulfill the media-influenced expectations that college personnel and other students hold of Black males on their campuses (Dancy, 2009, 2012). With films being easily accessible (i.e. DVDs, Internet, Netflix, etc.) and Black audiences consuming more media than any other ethnic group (Matabane & Merritt, 2013; Ward, 2004), analysis of films' portrayals or representations represents a warranted area of study.

### **Purpose of Study**

The intent of this study was to identify whether the Black male students depicted in college films perpetuate stereotypes associated with the representation of Black men and Black masculinity in film or provide audiences with new or rarely seen representations. Therefore, utilizing a convergent parallel mixed methods research design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011), the purpose of this study was to explore the representations of Black male students and Black

masculinity in college films and identify what differences in representations exist when accounting for various characteristics of the films.

### **Research Questions**

In order to provide insight into the way that Black male students and Black masculinity are represented in college films, this study was guided by the following two research questions:

(RQ1): How are Black male students and Black masculinity represented in college films?

- 1a. What depictions of Black male students are represented most often in college films?
- 1b. What depictions of Black male students are represented least often in college films?
- 1c. What non-stereotypical depictions or rarely seen representations of Black masculinity are found in college films?

(RQ2): What differences in Black male student representations exist when accounting for various characteristics of college films?

- 2a. Is there a difference in how Black male students are represented based on the films' genre (i.e. comedy, drama)?
- 2b. Is there a difference in how Black male students are represented based on the films' decade of release?
- 2c. Is there a difference in how Black male students are represented based on the films' institution type (HBCU or PWI)?

### **Significance of Study**

While the findings of this study contribute to the literature on the cinematic representations of Black men and Black masculinity, they could also assist university faculty and administrators in several ways. First, the findings of this study could potentially serve as a valuable resource for universities seeking to address campus climate issues on their campuses. By establishing a campus climate that appreciates and values all student populations, universities could experience positive gains in their retention efforts—specifically those targeted towards

their Black male student population. Tinto's (1975) theory on student retention and departure stresses that a student's integration with an institution—academically and socially—is key in determining whether or not a student will continue to persist. Although the theory accounts for various factors that may hinder a student's success, in the context of this study, the campus community's perceptions of Black male students on campus—as perpetuated by stereotypical media representations—could serve as another hindrance. In order to support minority students on campus, Tierney (1999) suggests colleges and universities utilize the concept of cultural integrity. Institutions demonstrating cultural integrity, establish programs and learning activities that encourage and support varying cultural identities in an effort to foster academic success among all students. Therefore, the findings from this study may generate potential topics, related to stereotypes and cultural identity, staff could incorporate into programs and activities (i.e. workshops, seminars, open dialogue forums, etc.) geared towards fostering a sense of belonging among all members of the campus community.

Next, research related to stereotypical representations is important in changing and challenging existing stereotypes of Black men on campus. As a result, the findings in this study could assist in engaging administrators—both Black and non-Black—in unlearning stereotypical perspectives which may lead to their discounting or minimizing the struggles and successes of the Black men on their campuses. Further, the findings in this study may inspire administrators to examine their own biases and consider the multidimensionality of Black men. Thus, the findings of this study could encourage administrators to expand their thinking and understanding of Black men—not only on campus, but also in society.

Similar to university administrators, the findings of this study could also challenge faculty and educators to expand their perspectives of Black men. As Dancy (2012) argues, with

an understanding of the stereotypical ways Black men are perceived in society, faculty can “(1) avoid perpetuating these in their thinking and language and (2) shape environments that clarify, tease out, and eradicate the presence of these stereotypes where they reside in-class and out-of-class” (p. 154). Further, this knowledge could encourage faculty to exhibit communication patterns, teaching practices, and projects that are culturally sensitive to their Black male students (Dancy, 2012).

Finally, the findings of this study could also increase administrators’ awareness of the visual images made public by their institutions. Knowledge of stereotypical representations could lead to increases in administrators’ cognizance of the Black male images depicted in university marketing materials. Continuing with this emphasis on university images released to the public, television commercial spots are intended to inform viewers of individual colleges and universities—bringing awareness of the institution to potential students. As a result, visual representations, as depicted in commercial spots, aid in the recruitment efforts of institutions. Therefore, the findings of this study could assist university administrators responsible for the creation and development of television commercial spots. With knowledge of stereotypical representations, administrators charged with this task could avoid perpetuating such representations in future television commercial spots.

In summary, while colleges and universities “have little control over the portrayal of Black males in popular culture and media that reinforce longstanding labels, they are able to pay attention to sociocultural influences within the institution that reinforce such labels” (Baber, 2012, p. 102). Therefore, a better understanding of stereotypical representations, will better equip institutions in their efforts to support the needs of current and prospective Black male students.

## **Definitions of Terms**

1. Black – individuals or groups in the African diaspora—inclusive of African Americans (Dancy, 2012)
2. Masculinity – a set of widely accepted practices and characteristics viewed as “masculine” that, ultimately, subordinate women (Jackson & Dangerfield, 2003; Schippers, 2007; Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009; Mutua, 2006b).
3. College films – a film in which the central storyline revolves around some facet of campus or collegiate life (researcher defined).
4. Plot-functional character – a character that plays an important role in the narrative of the film (Manganello, Franzini, & Jordan, 2008).
5. Representation – “the social process of making images, sounds, signs, stand for something – in film and television” (Turner, 2006, p. 59).
6. Stereotypes – negative generalizations “used by an in-group (Us) about an out-group (Them)” (Berg, 2002, p. 15).
7. Undergraduate student – any college student working towards the completion of a bachelor’s degree (researcher defined).

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, an introduction to the current research study was provided. As part of this introduction, insight into how personal ties to media representations of Black men led to the execution of this study was explained. Identifying the importance of student retention in the field of higher education, the problem statement revealed that campus community members’ perceptions of Black men—as influenced by media representations—serve as a possible hindrance to retention efforts targeted towards Black male students. The introduction also

introduced the study's purpose, research questions, and significance. As noted, the findings from this study offer university administrators and faculty with a resource for addressing campus climate, diversity and retention concerns. Further, the findings could encourage university administrators and faculty to challenge any biases and assumptions and perceptions held of Black male college students on their campuses. Finally, the findings could also increase administrators' awareness of the visual images made public by their institutions

In the coming chapters, further insight into the representation of Black male students and Black masculinity in college films is provided. Chapter Two introduces and synthesizes literature relevant to Black masculinity, the overall representation of Black men in film, the influence of visual images on viewing audiences' perceptions, and the representation of college in film. This chapter also introduces the conceptual framework guiding this study. Chapter Three presents an overview of the methodological approach, sampling strategy, and data analysis procedures utilized in carrying out this study. Chapter Four provides a discussion of the qualitative and quantitative findings and results, as well as the themes identified from the integration of both sets of findings and results. Finally, Chapter Five provides concluding thoughts, implications, limitations, and future research recommendations generated from the study.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

### Introduction

Before proceeding with an analysis of the representation of Black male students and Black masculinity in college films, Chapter Two provides a review of relevant literature. The literature review begins with a discussion on the overall concept of masculinity—which includes literature related to, both, hegemonic and Black masculinities. Next, I address the role that popular culture plays in perpetuating stereotypical representations of Black masculinity. This section includes literature addressing the influence such representations have on society's perceptions and Black males constructing their identity. In the next section, the concept of cinematic representation and its relationship to Hollywood power is discussed. This section leads into an analysis of the images of Black men throughout film history. This analysis addresses the images of Black men presented in *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) and continues to those presented in more recent films. Next, a discussion regarding the representation of colleges in film is provided. Within this section, I address the differences in portrayals of Black and White students and highlight the limited amount of research analyzing the portrayal of higher education in film. Next, I discuss two commonly utilized media effects theories used in studies related to television and film—cultivation theory and social cognitive theory. The central argument of the current study suggests that stereotypical representations found in popular culture impact the academic and social experiences of undergraduate Black male students, as well as an institutions' campus climate. Therefore, a discussion of related academic and social experience theories and studies are addressed. Finally, the theories and concepts that comprise the study's conceptual framework are discussed.



## **Masculinities: Hegemonic, Black, & College**

One of the primary objectives of this study centers on identifying how Black masculinity is represented in the analyzed college films. Therefore, an understanding of Black masculinity is necessary. However, before proceeding with a review of the Black masculinity literature, I discuss the overall concept of masculinity. This discussion of masculinity continues by addressing three more recent conclusions of masculinity—multiple masculinities, hierarchical relationships among masculinities, and the masculine ideal (hegemonic masculinity). Based on the masculine ideal being raced as White, even if Black men exhibit the traits or practices consistent with hegemonic masculinity they are still viewed as subordinate (Mutua, 2006b). As a result, a number of scholars have developed constructions of Black masculinity that take into account the history of Black men's oppression (Mutua, 2006a, 2006b; Brown, 2005, 2006; Cooper, 2005; hooks, 2004; Neal, 2005; McClure, 2006; Boyd, 1997; Gause, 2005; Majors, 1998; Majors & Billson, 1993; Dancy, 2012; Harper, 2004). These Black masculinity constructions are also discussed. Finally, I address media and popular culture's role in constructing and maintaining images of Black masculinity provided to mass audiences.

### **Masculinity**

Initial research concerning, both, masculinity and femininity largely focused on the sex roles of males and females (Shrock & Schwalbe, 2009; Connell, 1996). Shrock and Schwalbe (2009) note that sex roles were treated:

as complementary and necessary—not as stemming from unequal power relations between women and men. Masculinity and femininity were likewise seen as sex-specific and sex-appropriate personality traits that were expressed behaviorally, rather than as attributions elicited by acts of domination and subordination. (p. 278)

By the time the study of men and masculinity entered the mainstream in the 1980s, however, scholars recognized that the practice of masculinity was rooted in the domination of, not only,

women, but also men practicing subordinate forms of masculinity—those attributed to ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and/or sexual orientation (Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009; Connell, 1996; Mutua, 2006b). Mutua (2006b) notes “Domination over others is one of the central understandings and practices of masculinity. Stated differently, normative masculinity is predicated on the domination of others” (p. 17).

Although the domination of others is central to masculinity, defining what actually constitutes masculinity is somewhat problematic (Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009). This challenge is largely attributed to masculinity being socially constructed and dependent upon time and place (Jackson & Dangerfield, 2003; Mutua, 2006b; Connell, 1996). As a result, the practices and behaviors believed to represent masculinity are continuously changing based on context. Despite this continuous change, scholars have made attempts to define the concept. Several scholars define masculinity as a set of widely accepted practices and characteristics viewed as “masculine” that, ultimately, subordinate women (Jackson & Dangerfield, 2003; Schippers, 2007; Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009; Mutua, 2006b). However, “It is not clear for instance, precisely which of men’s practices constitute masculinity” (Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009, p. 279). Schippers (2007) notes that masculinity is comprised of three components. In addition to accepted practices and characteristics, she states that masculinity is a social location that individuals can move into through practice and “when these practices are embodied especially by men, but also by women, they have widespread cultural and social effects” (p. 86).

**Multiple masculinities.** Since the initial study of masculinity, additional conclusions regarding the concept have emerged. The first conclusion acknowledges that multiple forms of masculinity exist (Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009; Connell, 1996). Connell (1996) argues “there is no one pattern of masculinity that is found everywhere. Different cultures, and different periods

of history, construct masculinity differently” (p. 208). In other words, different cultural groups perform different practices and exhibit different characteristics—leading to multiple representations of masculine qualities in society. This has led to additional categories of masculinity, such as Black masculinity, Latino masculinity, and Jewish masculinity (Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009). It should be noted, however, that even within each of these cultural groups multiple definitions of masculinity are present (Connell, 1996). Therefore, in the context of the current study, all Black men will not perform the same practices and traits as they construct their own masculine identity.

While, Schrock and Schwalbe (2009) acknowledge that “Current thinking in the field treats masculinity not as singular but as plural,” they are critical of the resulting additional categories of masculinity (p. 280). The researchers argue that the concept of multiple masculinities already reflects diversity. Therefore, the existence of additional masculinity categories is unnecessary. Further, they argue that the additional categories ignore the underlying similarities that exist which allow the categories to be grouped as masculinities. They state:

To invoke, for example, the existence of Black masculinity, Latino masculinity, gay masculinity, Jewish masculinity, working-class masculinity, and so on is to imply that there is no overriding similarity in the gender enactments of males who are Black, Latino, gay, Jewish, or working class. The implicit claim is that all members of the category practice an identifiably unique form of masculinity. This strategy of using conventional categories of race, ethnicity, sexuality, religion, or class to define masculinities into existence is dubious. It can cause us to lose sight of what these allegedly diverse gender-signifying practices have in common (again, other than enactment by male bodies) that makes them masculinity. (pp. 280 – 281)

While the researchers may be accurate in acknowledging that similar masculine practices exist across cultural groups, I agree with the idea of multiple masculinities. It is my belief that, overall, one’s culture influences the masculine practices exhibited by that culture. It is also important to note that both researchers—Schrock and Schwalbe—are White males. Therefore, the

identification of multiple forms of masculinity serves as no benefit to their own personal masculinity constructions.

**Hierarchical relationships.** The hierarchical nature of masculinities represents the second more recent conclusion of masculinities. Mutua (2006b) argues that masculinity subscribes to “binary and dichotomous thinking that is endemic to Western thought” (p. 12). She continues:

It is evidenced by common dualities such as white-black, good-evil, male-female, heterosexual-homosexual, and mind-matter. These dualities are not equal but are hierarchical, with the first category representing the positive and preferred positionality and the second the undesirable and corrupted position. (p. 12)

Returning to the concept of multiple masculinities, Connell (1996) argues there are hierarchical relationships among all masculinities in existence. He notes that varying masculinities are not viewed as equal—rather some masculinities are more honored than others. Therefore, those masculinities identified with the first category in the binary represent what is preferred or accepted as culturally dominant (Connell, 1996). This idea of preferred masculinities leads into the final conclusion of masculinities—hegemonic masculinity.

**Hegemonic Masculinity.** Coles (2009) notes: “Much of the theoretical work currently circulating in the study of men and masculinities revolves around the concept of hegemonic masculinity” (p. 31). Like the study of masculinities overall, the concept of hegemonic masculinity also emerged in the 1980s (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) define hegemonic masculinity “as the pattern of practice (i.e., things done, not just a set of role expectations or an identity) that allowed men’s dominance over women to continue” (p. 832). Similarly, Collins (2006) argues that hegemonic masculinity was introduced:

to refer to the dominant form of masculinity in any given society, as well as marginalized and subordinated masculinities that characterize the experiences of men whose race,

class, religion, ethnicity, age, sexuality, or citizenship category placed them within subordinated groups. (p. 78)

This latter definition indicates that hegemonic masculinity not only concerns the dominance of women, but also other men grouped in subordinate categories of masculinity. McClure (2006) notes that hegemonic masculinity emphasizes being as unlike a woman as possible—avoiding emotional attachment, desiring and working for success and status, relying solely on self, and reflecting an aura of aggressiveness and violence. In short, hegemonic masculinity represents society's dominant masculine model and establishes an ideal or standard by which all other masculinities are measured (Mutua, 2006a, 2006b; Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009; Coles, 2009; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Collins, 2006).

Collins (2006) identifies four key features of hegemonic masculinity in the United States. The first feature, as already mentioned, concerns the concept's emphasis on the subordination of women and other marginalized masculinities—those grouped by race, class, sexuality, etc. Next, hegemonic masculinity does not reference a personality type or an actual person. Instead, it identifies features or characteristics representative of the norm in American culture. This norm has been identified as White, heterosexual, successful, and competitive (Collins, 2006; McClure, 2006; Mutua, 2006b; Kimmel, 2006). In fact, Collins explicitly states that because only White men have been able to exercise domination over others, “hegemonic masculinity is defined in terms of White masculinity” (p. 74). The third feature of hegemonic masculinity recognizes the acceptance of the ideas and social practices believed to represent hegemonic masculinity by men from diverse social groups—including those belonging to marginalized groups. Coles (2009) attributes this wide acceptance of hegemonic masculine practices to the benefits awarded to men from the overall subordination of women. These benefits include honor, prestige, right to command, material wealth, and state power (Coles, 2009). Therefore, “men as an interest group

are inclined to support hegemonic masculinity as a means to defend patriarchy and their dominant position over women” (Coles, 2009, p. 31). The reflected power relations comprise the final key feature of hegemonic masculinity. Collins states that because hegemonic masculinity is, ultimately, tied to power, the characteristics of American masculinity “operate as unquestioned truths” (p. 79). Therefore, those individuals with access to such power, again, represent the standard of what is ideal in this country. As a result, the characteristics and practices associated with the construction of masculine ideal can be described with no mention of gender, race, class, or sexuality because the standard has already been established (e.g., White heterosexual successful male).

The concept of hegemonic masculinity has garnered its fair share of criticism. Coles (2009) recognizes three primary limitations of hegemonic masculinity. First, he explains: “It is possible to be subordinated by hegemonic masculinity yet still draw on dominant masculinities and assume a dominant position in relation to other men” (p. 33). For example, a Black heterosexual man assumes a subordinate position in comparison to a White heterosexual man but assumes a dominant position in relation to a Black homosexual man. Therefore, the study of hegemonic masculinities must be contextualized both culturally and historically (Coles, 2009). Next, Coles argues that hegemony’s assumption that groups act at a structural level to either achieve or maintain their dominant position over others is another limitation. In other words, the concept places too much emphasis on patriarchy and the dominance of men. Finally, Coles feels “there is a distinct need to take masculinity away from the structural and consider masculinities as collective human projects that are individually lived out” (p. 33). This final limitation is reminiscent of the previously mentioned idea of multiple masculinities. Masculinity

is reflected differently among men. However, hegemonic masculinity rejects varying representations of masculinity and reduces masculine practices to a limited model.

Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) also identify five principle criticisms of hegemonic masculinity. First, they argue that the underlying concept of masculinity is flawed. Again, this points out the fluidity of masculinity—indicating that what it means to be masculine is uncertain. Second, the concept is somewhat ambiguous, as identifying who actually represents hegemonic masculinity remains unclear. They continue by explaining that this uncertainty has led to inconsistent applications of hegemonic masculinity. A third criticism of hegemonic masculinity is its exclusion of “positive” male behavior—behavior that serves the interests of women—as it accepts aggressive or toxic behaviors as intrinsic to ideal masculinity. In other words, as the researchers note, hegemonic masculinity makes males power, over females, real and justified.

The masculine subject itself is a fourth criticism. Connell and Messerschmidt explain:

Men can dodge among multiple meanings according to their interactional needs. Men can adopt hegemonic masculinity when it is desirable; but the same men can distance themselves strategically from hegemonic masculinity at other moments. Consequently, “masculinity” represents not a certain type of man but, rather, a way that men position themselves through discursive practices. (p. 841)

Finally, Connell and Messerschmidt indicate that explaining gender relations through the concept of functionalism is the subject of criticism. Functionalism sees “gender relations as a self-contained, self-reproducing system” (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 844). They argue: “The dominance of men and the subordination of women constitute a historical process, not a self-reproducing system. ‘Masculine domination is open to challenge and requires considerable effort to maintain’ (p. 844).

Instead of simply providing the principle criticisms of hegemonic masculinity, Connell and Messerschmidt also suggest four areas of the concept needing reformulation. First, they

argue that hegemonic masculinity needs to incorporate a more complex model of gender hierarchy that recognizes the agency of subordinated groups. Next, they call for an analytical framework that recognizes the geography of masculinities—accounting for differences in local, regional, and global masculinities. Connell and Messerschmidt also argue that the pattern of social embodiment needs to be theorized—recognizing the power and privilege allotted to the social scientific reading of men’s bodies. Finally, they argue that more emphasis on the dynamics of masculinities is needed. “Masculinities are configurations of practice that are constructed, unfold, and change through time” (Conner & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 852). Therefore, hegemonic masculinity must account for the contradictory desires or emotions present within practices that construct masculinities.

Despite the mentioned criticisms, the concept of hegemonic masculinity remains widely used as a framework for research concerning men and masculinities (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Additionally, the concept has been applied in studies addressing men and masculinities in various cultural groups (Conner & Messerschmidt, 2005; Collins, 2006). Collins (2006) acknowledges that all masculinities possess hegemonic ideas—which leads to “White men encountering a hegemonic White masculinity that dictates what a White man should be and do, and, likewise, Black men encountering equally hegemonic ideas about what a Black man should be and do” (p. 79). However, the masculine ideal remains based on the White norm (Collins, 2006; McClure, 2006; Mutua, 2006b; Kimmel, 2006). As Collins (2006) explains:

Masculinity becomes organized as a three-tiered structure: those closest to hegemonic masculinity, predominantly wealthy White men—but not exclusively so—retain the most power on the top; those men who are situated just below have greater access to White male power yet remain marginalized; and those males who are subordinated by both of these groups occupy the bottom. (p. 81)



Therefore, even if subordinated masculinities exhibit hegemonic practices they are still viewed as subordinate in American culture.

### **Historical Constructions of Black Masculinity**

The continued discrimination and subordination experienced by Black men, today, are rooted in historical constructions of Black men stemming from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Ferber, 2007; Cooper, 2005; Brown, 2005). The beginnings of these constructions are evident in the associations given to the colors of White and Black during this era. “In a colonial context, Whiteness became associated with positive meanings such as life, superiority, safety, and cleanness, and Blackness became associated with negative meanings such as death, inferiority, danger, and dirtiness” (Brown, 2005, p. 67). Additionally, Cooper (2005) notes: “Early European observers linked Blackness to criminality. During United States chattel bondage, states criminalized the very property of being Black. That resulted in an association of Blackness with a criminal propensity” (p. 878). Negative associations, such as the ones provided above, resulted in stereotypical depictions of Black men. Berg (2002) defines stereotypes as negative generalizations “used by an in-group (Us) about an out-group (Them)” (p. 15). Historically, stereotypical depictions have, primarily, represented Black men as animalistic, sexual, and violent/hyperaggressive (Cooper, 2005; Ferber, 2007; Brown, 2005; Jackson & Dangerfield, 2004).

**Animalistic.** Cooper (2005) states that during “the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Europeans alleged Blacks were both part of the animal kingdom—they interbred with apes—and animal-like—they had tails” (p. 877). Upon their arrival in the United States, Blacks were, again, reduced to animal-like creatures or property when they were forced into enslavement by White elites (Ferber, 2007; Cooper, 2005; Dancy, 2012). Slavery in the United States served as a means

for White enslavers to control and tame these perceived animal-like beasts (Cooper, 2005; Dancy, 2012). Rhoden (2006) writes:

American slavery was founded on the principle of benevolent authority—the notion that the White man knows what’s best for the Black man. The primary aim of slaveholders was to indoctrinate slaves with a deep sense of fear and inferiority; to make them accept the notion of White supremacy in all things. (p. 46)

Rhoden’s statement reveals that slavery was about more than just physical control of the enslaved, but also psychological control on the way in which they viewed themselves (Dancy, 2012). Dancy (2012) argues that the “harsh and dehumanizing treatment” enslaved men endured was attributed to White men’s desire to instill traits of weakness and ignorance into them (p. 35). He states: “The institution of slavery denied enslaved the natural right to construct their own identities” (p. 35). As a result, Black men were forced to perform physical labor, denied characteristics such as authority and property ownership, and experienced little to no legal protection (Dancy, 2012). If Black men were found noncompliant with established slave codes or policies they were viewed as a threat to White supremacy and experienced cruel punishment (Dancy, 2012). Dancy writes: “Whipping, branding, imprisonment, and hanging were commonly used penalties to ensure adherence to slave codes as well as to condition enslaved men and women to perceive themselves as psychologically, intellectually, spiritually, and emotionally inferior” (p. 35).

**Sexual.** Brown (2005) argues that “one of the most prominent stereotypes about Black masculinity involves the hyper-sexuality of Black men” (p. 75). Cooper (2005) notes that beginning in the middle ages, Blackness was associated with unrestrained sexuality. As a result, Black men were perceived as rapist or men who could not control themselves in the presence of women— more specifically White women (Cooper, 2005). Cooper explains that following the abolition of slavery, “Black men’s presumed unrestrained sexuality became associated with a

presumed predilection for sexual predation upon White women. Thus, heterosexual Black men were a threat to White women, requiring White men to control and repress those men” (p. 879). He argues that the celebration of the Ku Klux Klan is related to the justification for restraining Black men and protecting White women from their sexual attacks.

Ferber (2007) explains that the bodies and physical stature of Black men were largely responsible for the way Whites defined their sexual nature. Through the manual labor enslaved Black men were required to perform, their bodies became big, strong, and muscular (Ferber, 2007; Jackson & Dangerfield, 2004). As a result, the Black male body was viewed as threatening to elite White men—as the Black male body attracted White women (Ferber, 2007; Jackson & Dangerfield, 2004). Ferber notes that the reduction of Black men to their bodies led to increased emphasis on their muscles and their penises. This emphasis was used to justify lynchings and other forms of punishment inflicted upon enslaved Black men (Ferber, 2007).

Jackson and Dangerfield (2004) discuss the ways White men sought to punish and control the sexuality of enslaved Black men. They write:

Notwithstanding the myths of Black sexual prowess and phallus size, there is historical significance to the “Black Masculine Body as Sexual” stereotype. Historically, when White slave owners wanted to penalize the Black male for acts of aggression or disobedience, they would perform one of two activities: emasculation or a picnic. Emasculation refers to cutting off the penis. This removal of the phallus symbolized the denial of Black masculinity. Essentially, this would prevent the Black male’s body from performing its normal sexual reproductive function and eliminate the threat of miscegenation. This was only one form of lynching. Another form was the picnic. The social etymology of the term *picnic* is “pick a nigger.” Picnics were festivals and family gatherings of a Black slave who was deemed disobedient. (p. 124)

Jackson and Dangerfield continue by noting that these acts of aggression, against Black men, were used to signify prohibition and assimilation when they did not comply.

**Violent/Hyperaggressive.** The animalistic and hypersexual constructions of Black masculinity have already provided some insight into the violent/hyperaggressive stereotypical

construction of Black men. Again, the perceived violent and angry nature of Black masculinity stems from the physical stature and supposed bestiality of Black men (Cooper, 2005). Therefore, to combat White fear, it was necessary to control and tame these “beasts” through efforts such as slavery (Ferber, 2007). Following the abolition of slavery, Whites feared violent crime waves at the hands of recently freed Blacks (Cooper, 2005). Without the control of White men, Whites felt the—presumed—naturally inherent Black criminals would exhibit destructive and violent behavior against Whites (Cooper, 2005).

Prior to their freedom, Dancy (2012) notes that enslaved men were still viewed as hyperaggressive. He continues by explaining White enslavers’ fear of being murdered or attacked by their enslaved communities. Dancy notes that the image of Nat Turner is representative of this fear. Turner was “an enslaved man who led a revolt against the institution of slavery” (p. 38).

Blassingame (as quoted in Dancy, 2012) writes:

Revengeful, bloodthirsty, cunning, treacherous, and savage, Nat was the incorrigible runaway, the poisoner of White men, the ravager of White women who defied all the rules of plantation society. Subdued and punished only when overcome by superior numbers of firepower, Nat retaliated when attacked by Whites, led guerilla activities or maroons against isolated plantations, killed overseers and planters, or burned plantation buildings when he was abused...Nat’s customary obedience often hid his true feelings, self-concept, unquenchable thirst for freedom, hatred of Whites, discontent, and manhood, until he violently demonstrated these traits. (p. 38)

Dancy notes that Turner “came to symbolize White constructions of Black men as beasts” (p. 38).

### **Black Men and Hegemonic Masculinity**

Historical constructions and stereotypes of Black men and Black masculinity make it difficult to compare with White or other masculinities (Jackson & Dangerfield, 2004). Jackson and Dangerfield (2004) write:

Traditionally, the impulse among gender theorists in many disciplines including communication has been to interpret the incendiary nature of masculinity studies in the

specter of the European American experience. The assumption made is that all masculine persons function in homogenous ways. (p. 120)

In other words White, again, represents the norm (Collins, 2006; McClure, 2006; Mutua, 2006b; Kimmel, 2006). Therefore, all masculinities are typically measured and evaluated against this norm (Collins, 2006). However, masculinities are not equal and differ based on their experiences (Jackson & Dangerfield, 2004; Connell, 1996). As it relates to Black masculinity, Jackson and Dangerfield (2004) note that “Black masculinities are first and foremost cultural property communicated in everyday interaction as manifestations of Black identities” (p. 120). This statement, again, highlights the role that context, culture, and history play in constructing masculinities (Jackson & Dangerfield, 2003; Mutua, 2006b; Connell, 1996).

Gause (2005) argues that while Black and White males may share similar values and attitudes towards masculinity the overall configuration of both masculinities differ from each other. He suggests that these differences are partially attributed to the legacy of African culture, but primarily attributed to the institution of Black slavery, its Jim Crow aftermath, and the dynamics of Black urban life in this country (Gause, 2005). Gause argues that scholars attempting to discuss Black masculinity in terms of its shortcomings, in comparison with American society’s definition of ideal masculinity, completely miss the mark. He writes:

Throughout American history, Black males were not, in fact, expected to be able to fulfill the ideal male gender role. Indeed, it was made abundantly clear that severe repercussions would follow if they made serious and persistent efforts to do so. Exercising power, at the economic, political, social, and cultural level, was not only not expected it was fervently opposed. Indeed, this was the source for innumerable violent conflicts, notably lynching, program-like invasions of the African American communities, and lesser forms of repression. (p. 20)

Therefore, throughout history, Black men have been prevented from demonstrating aspects or traits associated with the masculine ideal (Brown, 2006; Collins, 2006; Gause, 2005; Neal, 2005; Majors, 1998; Mutua, 2006b).

Today, despite the factors and the limited access Black men have to achieving the masculine ideal, “the dominant goals of hegemonic masculinity have been sold to Black males” (Majors, 1998, p. 17). Majors (1998) identifies restricted access to education, jobs, and institutional power as the primary factors preventing Black men from attaining society’s masculine ideal. Yet, “Many Black males have accepted the definitions, standards, and norms of dominant social definitions of masculinity (being the breadwinner, having strength, and dominating women)” (p. 16). However, Black men’s acceptance of this masculine is problematic (Mutua, 2006b; Brown, 2005; Collins, 2006; Neal, 2005). Mutua (2006b) argues that, specifically, Black men’s embrace of hegemonic masculinity hurts Black women, Black communities, and Black men themselves. She explains that by engaging in hegemonic masculine practice, Black men are reinforcing the system of domination and oppression they often seek to eliminate. Additionally, Mutua argues that Black men’s embrace of hegemonic masculinity solidifies their secondary status. She writes: “...Black men’s appeals to the masculine ideal strengthen ideal hegemonic masculinity. But ideal masculinity is raced White and understands Black masculinity as secondary. The assertion therefore reconfirms Black men’s secondary status and reinforces Black subordination” (p. 24).

Similarly, Collins (2006) argues that even if Black men exhibit hegemonic masculine practices they “are denied the full entitlements of hegemonic White masculinity because they are Black” (p. 84). She explains: “Hegemonic masculinity reflects a cognitive framework of binary thinking that defines masculinity in terms of its difference from and dominance over multiple others. This dominance is the strength of hegemonic White masculinity” (p. 82). Based on this definition, normal masculinity is defined in opposition to Black men (Collins, 2006). Collins argues that by allowing Black men to participate in hegemonic masculinity decenters “the

assumed Whiteness of those installed in the center of the definition itself” or challenges what has been defined as the normative (p. 85). As a result, Collins notes that Black men find themselves in a struggle—unable to achieve White masculinity, yet unwilling to accept the representations of Black masculinity offered to them by White men.

### **Contemporary Constructions of Black Masculinity**

Historical stereotypes and generalizations of Black men are still present in more contemporary constructions of Black masculinity. Ferber (2007) argues that four themes are found throughout the dominant culture’s continued construction of Black masculinity. First, she notes that Black bodies and essential racial differences are continually emphasized. She explains that based on their bodies—and their lack of control of said bodies—Black men remain defined as aggressive, hypersexual, threatening, and violent. Ferber explains that this emphasis on Black male bodies also helps to portray Black men as inferior to White men. The concern with taming and controlling Black men signifies the second theme. Ferber explains that this need for control is evident in the dominant culture’s need to divide men into “good” and “bad” groups. She writes:

This division between good guys who have been tamed and know their place versus the bad boys who refuse to submit to control reflects the historical and ongoing construction of Black masculinity in White supremacist culture and limits the ways in which Black men are seen in our culture. It reinforces the old presumption, widespread as slavery declined, that Black men are safe and acceptable only when under the control and civilizing influences of Whites. However, they have an inherently violent, aggressive nature lying just beneath the surface, threatening to spring forth at any time. At the same time, the good guy space reinforces color-blind racism. By embracing the successful good guys, Whites can tell themselves they are not racist, and they can blame African Americans for their own failures. (p. 22)

The third theme is the depiction of inequality among Black and White masculinities as a product of a deficient Black culture. In other words, Black men are blamed for their own failures. Ferber argues that negative representations of Black men reinforce their supposedly aggressive nature

and suggest Black men “are not suited for professional careers, are not good fathers, and need to be controlled by White men” (p. 22). The fourth and final theme is reflected in the three other themes mentioned—White supremacy and White male superiority are naturalized. Therefore, contemporary constructions of Black masculinity remain subordinated to White hegemonic masculinity.

While the dominant culture’s constructions of Black masculinity have centered on subordinating or dominating Black men, this differs from the way that Black males construct their own masculinity. Historically, Black men have rejected subordination, exclusion, and marginalization (Gause, 2005). Gause (2005) cites enslaved Black men’s frequent running away from slavery as a demonstration of their opposition to being dominated. Similarly, Black men have opposed the dominant culture constructing their identities (Brown, 2005). Brown (2005) notes that these constructions often result in cultural struggles among Blacks. He writes:

The dominant culture has always pitted the African American culture against itself by pressuring Blacks to embrace one type of Black masculinity, while rejecting another. This has occurred repeatedly throughout history whether it was Washington vs. DuBois, King vs. Malcolm X, or Jackson vs. Farrakhan. For African Americans who were already oppressed politically, socially, and economically, it became problematic to accept Black masculinities that the dominant culture did not accept. (pp. 65 – 66)

In order to survive in an oppressive culture, Black men—and women—have invented identities that either transcended or reinforced the stereotypes associated with the dominant culture’s constructions of Black masculinity (Brown, 2005). These identities have resulted in multiple forms of Black men and masculinities—of which a number of Black scholars have constructed and deconstructed to understand the complexities of Black masculinity (Mutua, 2006a, 2006b; Brown, 2005, 2006; Cooper, 2005; hooks, 2004; Neal, 2005; McClure, 2006; Boyd, 1997; Gause, 2005; Majors, 1998; Majors & Billson, 1993; Dancy, 2012; Harper, 2004).



**The Strong Black Man.** Neal (2005) recognizes “The Strong Black Man” image as the flagship product of the Black male experience in this country. He writes:

“The Strong Black Man” is a defender of Black femininity—one who *publicly* treats Black women in a chivalrous nature like that historically afforded to White women. And yes, “The Strong Black Man” is also a provider—providing the primary financial support for his family as well as stability, honor, and discipline for his children, particularly in a society that has historically deemed Black men as lazy, shiftless, indifferent, and parasitic. (p. 24)

Neal notes “The Strong Black Man” image was conceived as a counter to the negative historical constructions of Black men populating American culture. As a result, “The Strong Black Man” image remains intact (Neal, 2005).

While “The Strong Black Man” image intends to identify the positive attributes or characteristics of Black masculinity, the image is limiting (Neal, 2005). Neal suggests “The Strong Black Man” image embraces a conservative, one-dimensional, and heterosexual vision of Black masculinity. He argues that this representation disregards the complex and diverse Black masculinities that exist in the real world (Neal, 2005). Therefore, any variation from “The Strong Black Man” image is viewed as not quite Black enough or not quite man enough (Neal, 2005).

**Afrocentric Masculinity.** In response to the idea that Black people have suffered from cultural domination, at the hands of Whites, Afrocentricity’s primary goal “is to center Blackness and reclaim Black agency” (Mutua, 2006b, p. 27). Afrocentrics argue that many Blacks are culturally disoriented—they have embraced a society that accepts White supremacy and marginalizes Blacks (Mutua, 2006b). Mutua (2006b) states that Afrocentricity draws on knowledge about African cultures to develop an African cultural system for use in analyzing and critiquing Black behavior from the Black perspective—as opposed to the White lens typically used in such analyses. The African cultural system also stresses values rooted in African

culture—community, harmony, spirituality, family responsibility, and emotional and intuitive ways of knowing (Mutua, 2006b).

In line with the goals of Afrocentricity, Afrocentric masculinity calls for the decentering of hegemonic masculinity and challenges its use as the normative masculinity (McClure, 2006). McClure (2006) indicates that a number of scholars have developed a model of Afrocentric masculinity that challenges hegemonic masculinity and accounts for the experiences of Black Americans and their cultural heritage. He continues by explaining that Afrocentric masculinity moves away from hegemonic masculinity's "competitiveness, individuality, and emotional detachment" (p. 59). Instead, Afrocentric masculinity emphasizes community and encourages cooperative relationships among men and between Black men and women—characteristics found in African cultural traditions (McClure, 2006).

Despite its emphasis on centering Black culture, Mutua (2006b) notes that Afrocentricity, overall, has been criticized for reflecting a traditional patriarchal system. She argues that this "maleness" is reflected largely in Afrocentricity's writings and programs that deal primarily with Black males. By only addressing the cultural domination of Black men, Afrocentricity is contradicting the community value the movement is built upon (Mutua, 2006b). Finally, Mutua states that Afrocentricity adopts a racialized approach and disregards other structures of domination that may be harmful to Black men (i.e. socioeconomic status; sexual orientation, etc.). In other words, Afrocentricity fails to consider differences that exist among Black men based on their positionality in relation to other factors. Mutua questions whether Black male empowerment can truly be achieved without considering such factors.

**Bipolar Black Masculinity.** Cooper (2005) argues that popular representations of Black masculinity are bipolar—as evident through the "Bad Black Man" and "Good Black Man"

images. The “Bad Black Man” image is rooted in historical constructions of Black masculinity and suggests Black men are animalistic, crime-prone, hypersexual, and a threat to the sexual security of White women (Cooper, 2005). Cooper states that in order to avoid the “Bad Black Man” label, Black men assume identities and perform characteristics consistent with the White norm—labeled as the “Good Black Man.” The “Good Black Man” is described as passive, nonassertive, nonaggressive, and desexualized—all in the effort to make Whites comfortable (Cooper, 2005). In short, the “Good Black Man” largely identifies and associates with White culture (Cooper, 2005). Cooper explains the image of the “Good Black Man” “requires that he assimilate into White culture by downplaying his race. In a sense, he must become a Good White Man” (pp. 882 – 883).

Cooper argues that bipolar constructions of Black masculinity still, ultimately, work to the advantage of the dominant culture. Dividing Black men into “bad” and “good” groups clearly identifies those Black men that merit inclusion into the mainstream—those “good” Black men that fit the assimilationist ideal (Cooper, 2005). Cooper cautions, however, that there are four hidden effects of bipolar representations: the “Good Black Man” image encourages Black men to emulate the normative White masculinity; the normative masculinity requires one to prove their worth by subordinating others; emulation of the normative masculinity calls for Black men to subordinate women and homosexuals to compensate for their own oppression; and represents Black men accepting the principle that identities are hierarchical.

In order to combat or disrupt bipolar representations of Black masculinity, Cooper argues that heterosexual Black men “must refuse the right to subordinate others and construct an antihierarchical Black masculinity” (p. 853). He writes: “If heterosexual Black men want to successfully challenge our treatment within the racial hierarchy, we must give up taking pleasure

in exercising dominance over those below us in the gender and sex orientation hierarchies” (Cooper, 2005, p. 860).

**Race Man, New Black Aesthetics, The Nigga.** In *Am I Black Enough for You?: Popular Culture From the 'Hood and Beyond*, Boyd (1997) describes three types of Black masculinities: the race man, the new Black aesthetic, and the nigga. He also identifies time eras and cultural icons he feels embody each of the identified types. Prominent during the mid- to late-1980s, the race man provides positive representations of Black masculinity for, both, individuals and the race (Boyd, 1997). The race man presents images deemed acceptable for the dominant culture and Black culture and serves as a role model (Boyd, 1997; Brown, 2005, 2006). The race man embraces “the assimilation politics of Martin Luther King, Jr.” and sees “integration and a normalized Black upper class as representative of a politics of advancement” (Boyd, 1997, p. 17). Boyd identifies Bill Cosby as representative of the race man.

Represented by film director Spike Lee, Boyd states that the new Black aesthetic ideology emerged in the late 1980s and ended in the early 1990s. From a political perspective, Boyd states the new Black aesthetics is largely informed by the Black nationalist politics of Malcolm X. “The new Black aesthetics represents post-civil rights era individuals who seek individual power and access to the dominant culture. This identity infiltrated the dominant culture while still providing some sense of an African American aesthetic” (Brown, 2005, p. 69). Although individuals associated with the new Black aesthetics were able to achieve individual success, their success fails to translate to group success (Boyd, 1997; Brown, 2005, 2006). This individuality is reminiscent of the individuality and competitiveness emphasized in hegemonic masculinity.

Unlike the race man and the new Black aesthetic, Boyd's final Black masculinity type—the nigga—has no identifiable leader or political agenda (Boyd, 1997; Brown, 2005, 2006). Instead, the nigga adopts speaking for the disadvantage as his political agenda (Boyd, 1997; Brown, 2005, 2006). Boyd (1997) states that the nigga era:

...began receiving marginal attention with the release of NWA's *Straight Outta Compton* in 1988, reached national recognition with the Los Angeles riots following the first Rodney King verdicts, and has currently evolved to the status of a societal threat as several conservative politicians have targeted the themes that it expresses as the fundamental threat to American morality. (p. 18)

The nigga defies aspects of the dominant culture, as well as elements of the status quo Black culture (Boyd, 1997; Brown, 2005, 2006). Therefore, he finds himself in opposition to, both, the race man and the new Black aesthetics (Brown, 2005, 2006).

**Cool Pose.** Cool pose represents another more contemporary construction of Black masculinity. According to Majors and Billson (1993), cool pose refers to the manner in which Black males establish their male identity in response to oppressive conditions and their denied access to mainstream success. In another study, Majors (1998) notes that in order to cope with the frustration and alienation caused by social domination, Black men channel “their creative energies into the construction of unique, expressive, and conspicuous styles of demeanor, speech, gesture, clothing, hairstyle, walk, stance, and handshake” (p. 17). Majors and Billson (1993) write:

Being cool shows both the dominant culture and the Black male himself that he is strong and proud. He is somebody. He is a survivor, in spite of the systematic harm done by the legacy of slavery and the realities of racial oppression, in spite of the centuries of hardship and mistrust. (p. 5)

Thus, by performing these behaviors, Black men are empowered and provided with visibility (Majors & Billson, 1993; Majors 1998).

As mentioned above, cool pose relies heavily on performance. “Cool pose is a carefully crafted persona based on power and control over what the Black male says and does—how he ‘plays’ his role” (Majors & Billson, 1993). Thus, in “playing their role,” Black men utilize numerous masks or facades to manage the impression or image they are portraying to society (Majors & Billson, 1993; Gause, 2005). Majors and Billson (1993) indicate that Black men using cool pose are “chameleon-like”—as they alter their performance to meet the changing expectations of their audience. This alteration of one’s performance highlights the role that social context plays in crafting masculinities, but it also hints at a level of inauthenticity present in cool pose. However, Majors and Billson argue that cool pose performance does not possess dishonest or manipulative motives. Rather the performance of such behaviors is essential for the continued survival of Black men (Majors & Billson, 1993).

Although effective as a coping strategy (Majors & Billson, 1993; Majors, 1998), cool pose has several drawbacks. First, Majors and Billson (1993) suggest that cool pose offers a one-dimensional image of Black masculinity. They explain that if the cool mask falls masculinity fails. Additionally, for those Black men whose masculinity is defined by the cool pose, unmasking is equivalent to a loss of identity—rendering them defenseless in an oppressive society (Majors & Billson, 1993). In some instances, cool pose also requires that Black men prove their toughness or manhood (Majors & Billson, 1993; Majors, 1998; Gause, 2005). As a result, cool pose is used as a façade for Black men resorting to violence, fighting, taking risks, and being sexually promiscuous (Majors & Billson, 1993; Majors, 1998; Gause, 2005)—characteristics and traits associated with the negative historical constructions of Black men and Black masculinity. Cool pose also works against the educational advancement of Black men (Majors, 1998; Majors & Billson, 1993). In order to present cool pose, Black men must distance

themselves from uncool activities (Majors & Billson, 1993). School and its associated activities (i.e. studying, receiving good grades, paying attention in class, relating positively to teachers, etc.) are perceived as uncool (Majors & Billson, 1993). As a result, Black men's talents and abilities are relegated to entertainment and athletics (Majors, 1998). Avoiding educational "pursuits has the potential to stymie enrichment and education" (Majors & Billson, 1993, p. 46). Next, cool pose acknowledges that Black men are socialized to view every White man as an enemy and every system of domination as a threat (Majors & Billson, 1993; Majors, 1998; Gause, 2005). As a result, Black men are reluctant to expose or reveal their innermost feelings—even to those closest to them (i.e., family, friends, significant others, etc.) (Gause, 2005; Majors & Billson, 1993). Finally, cool pose rejects the social domination of Black men resulting from institutionalized racism, yet accepts the ideals of hegemonic masculinity (Majors, 1998). Majors (1998) explains that "cool pose is an attempt to carve out an alternative path to achieve the goals of dominant masculinity" (p. 17). Therefore, the adoption of cool pose's emphasis on domination strains Black men's relationships with women and fails to challenge masculinity hierarchies (Majors, 1998).

**Progressive Black Masculinities.** While many of the aforementioned contemporary constructions of Black masculinity adopt elements of patriarchy or hegemonic masculinity, Mutua's (2006a, 2006b) concept of progressive Black masculinities directly challenges these structures. Mutua (2006b) defines progressive Black masculinities as the performances of the masculine self that:

...on the one hand, personally eschew and actively stand against social structures of domination and, on the other, value, validate, and empower Black humanity in all its variety as part of the diverse and multicultural humanity of others in the global family. More specifically, progressive Black masculinities are, at a minimum, pro-Black and antiracist as well as profeminist and antisexist. (p. 67)

Further, progressive Black masculinities are not dependent on the subordination of others (Mutua, 2006b). Instead they seek to liberate others and themselves from social structures that promote domination (Mutua, 2006a, 2006b). Therefore, progressive Black masculinities reject images currently associated with Black masculinity; confront the use of physical dominance, aggressiveness, and violence in maintaining male power; and rethink sexual dominance in relationships with women—all of which are components of hegemonic masculinity (Mutua, 2006b).

Mutua (2006b) notes that progressive Black masculinities redefining strength face two fundamental challenges. First, Black men must recognize and relinquish the benefits and privileges afforded to them by sexism and heterosexism (Mutua, 2006). Second, Black men must incorporate “an ethic of personal accountability in relation to women, children, parents, siblings, and one another” (p. 92). Mutua (2006b) argues that “Black men must rejoin Black families and communities and reject the dual theses of strong women-weak men and strong men-weak men that currently box them in” (pp. 92 – 93). Mutua (2006b) recognizes that while many Black men already engage in loving and committed relationships with their partners, children, parents, and friends, their behaviors are not celebrated or recognized.

***NewBlackMan***. In *New Black Man*, Neal (2005) discusses his concept of the *NewBlackMan*. In defining the term, Neal writes:

*NewBlackMan* is about resisting being inscribed by a wide range of forces and finding a comfort with a complex and progressive existence as a Black man in America. As such, *NewBlackMan* is not so much about conceiving of a more “positive” version of Black masculinity—“positive” being a word too often used by the traditional Black bourgeoisie to sanitize the more unsightly aspects of Black life and culture (see the NAACP Image Awards)—but rather a concept that acknowledges the many complex aspects, often contradictory, that make up a progressive and meaningful Black masculinity. The words “new,” “Black,” and “man,” are literally scrunched together here to reinforce the idea that myriad identities exist in the same Black male bodies... (pp. 28 – 29)



Therefore, *NewBlackMan* not only challenges the negative stereotypes often associated with Black masculinity, but also the “sanitized” or “positive” images largely created by Blacks to counter racist depictions of Black men (Neal, 2005).

*NewBlackMan* recognizes the complex nature of Black masculinity and accepts that the construction of Black masculinity will continuously be under construction (Neal, 2005). Neal closes his work by stating “that the New Black Man is a metaphor for an imagined life—a way to be ‘strong’ as a Black man in new ways: strong commitment to diversity in our communities, strong support for women and feminism, and strong faith in love and the value of listening” (p. 159). Thus, the New Black Man—in its challenging of hegemonic ideals and encouraging of supportive relationships with women—is an example of a progressive Black masculinity.

**Hip-Hop Black Masculinity.** From its inception in the 1970s, hip-hop music and culture has served as a venue for minority youth in this country to speak on those issues impacting their communities the most—poverty, joblessness, and disempowerment (Joseph, 2013; Chang, 2005; Wright, 2004). Through hip-hop music, Black and Hispanic youth have been able to openly criticize the policies that continue to marginalize minority populations—confining them to specific spaces as determined by the dominant culture (Joseph, 2013). Wright (2004) argues that hip-hop music provides “a discourse of resistance, a set of communicative practices that constitute a text of resistance against White America’s racism, and its Eurocentric cultural dominance” (para. 5).

Much like the cultural element it derives from, hip-hop Black masculinity also finds itself in conflict with the dominant culture (Brown, 2005, 2006). Brown (2005) argues that while the aforementioned race man and new Black aesthetic integrate into the dominant culture, hip-hop Black masculinity stands in opposition to categories created for Blacks by the dominant culture.

Instead the hip-hop Black masculinity adopts “unique stylizing, posing, clothing, and dialect” to demonstrate its oppositional identity (Brown, 2005, p. 78). In short, hip-hop Black masculinity directly challenges the middle-class values the dominant culture has established as the normative (Brown, 2005).

In addition to the dominant culture, hip-hop Black masculinity finds itself in conflict with middle- and upper-class Blacks, as well as older Blacks (Brown, 2005, 2006; Neal, 2005). Neal (2005) notes that hip-hop has long served as the primary site for distinct forms of Black masculinity—“urban, hyper-masculine, hyper-sexual, pseudo-criminalized” (p. 129). As a result, many middle- and upper-class Blacks feel the hip-hop generation threatens to pull all Black men “back into the abyss of Black demonization” (Neal, 2005, p. 7). Furthermore, elite and older Blacks also feel the hip-hop generation threatens the “Talented Tenth”—the term coined by scholar W.E.B. DuBois to describe the formation of an elite and educated group of Black men charged with leading the Black race (Neal, 2005). Neal notes, however, that lost in much of the criticism of the hip-hop generation

...is that the very sexism, homophobia, and misogyny that circulates within hip-hop culture and becomes part of the context in which Black males of the hip-hop generation are demonized within the mainstream are expressions of the very same patriarchy that the so-called “talented tenth” posit as part of a normative and necessary Black masculinity. (pp. 9 – 10)

Therefore, Black males of the hip-hop generation refusing to embrace the tenets of the “Talented Tenth” are being criticized for not embracing acceptable forms of Black patriarchy (Neal, 2005).

Brown (2006) posits that hip-hop Black masculinity offers, both, progressive and regressive Black masculinities. He argues that through its incorporation of Black cultural traditions, hip-hop masculinity represents a progressive Black masculinity. He cites such traditions as embracing the oral tradition, call and response, stylistic expression, and resistance.

However, hip-hop Black masculinity's embrace of patriarchal traditions make the identity regressive and problematic (Brown, 2006). Brown argues that patriarchal traditions that understand masculinity as physical, aggressive, and competitive are found in hip-hop Black masculinity. Adoption of these patriarchal traditions leads to narrowly defined identities for Black males, encourages demonstration of toughness and assertiveness, recreates power structures that subordinate others, and destroys unity to promote individuality (Brown, 2006). Brown summarizes: "...hip-hop Black masculinity embodies a cultural site of struggle between those in power, who are only comfortable with narrowly defined identities for African Americans, and African Americans, who embrace many identities, one of which is associated with hip-hop culture" (p. 207).

**College Black Masculinities.** Throughout this chapter, I have discussed the role that context and environment plays on the construction of masculinity. Thus, in the scope of this study, literature addressing the role that college plays in the construction of Black masculinity is worth reviewing.

In her exploratory study, McClure (2006) uses an exploratory approach to identify the role membership in one historically Black fraternity plays in its members' construction of their masculine identity. McClure argues that much of the research concerning Black masculinity has largely been conducted on Black men not representative of the entire Black male population (i.e. low socioeconomic class, criminal records, etc.). Therefore, McClure's study focusing on Black male college students sheds light on the experiences of Black men not fitting the aforementioned profile. Findings of the study reveal that constructing Black male identity, among undergraduate Black males, is complex. Based on a series of interviews with fraternity members, McClure posits that Black college males' identity construction reveals an element of fluidity as

participants demonstrated an identification with, both hegemonic and Afrocentric identities. She notes that fraternity members articulated a decreased emphasis on hypermasculinity and indicated having respect for women. However, these same participants strive for the middle-class values associated with hegemonic masculinity (McClure, 2006). McClure notes that fraternity membership is indicative of either an upper- to middle-class background or a desire to reach these same socioeconomic levels. Therefore, McClure argues that class or socioeconomic status is a factor in fraternity members' construction of Black masculinity.

In *The Brother Code: Manhood and Masculinity among African American Males in College*, Dancy (2012) explores the way Black men construct their manhood or masculinity while in college. Utilizing a qualitative research approach, Dancy conducts one-on-one interviews with 24 Black male college students at 12 four-year colleges—both historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and predominantly White institutions (PWIs). All participants are members of the same historically Black fraternity (Dancy, 2012). While previous research has addressed the problematic behaviors of White fraternity members (i.e. homophobia and sexism, violence against women, promiscuity, etc.) (Harris & Harper, 2014), Dancy notes that Black male groups are significant to Black men's manhood construction in college and their overall college experience. Through his analysis, Dancy identifies four typologies of manhood: Sexualizer, Transgressor, Misogynist, and Self-Actualizer. Dancy explains that sexualizers demonstrate a hyperheterosexuality—focusing heavily on the sexed body, sexual behavior, heterosexuality, objectification of women, homophobia, or demonstrations of masculine bravado. Transgressors fail to adhere to traditional notions of Black masculinity (Dancy, 2012). Dancy notes that instead of focusing on the conquering of women, transgressors seek to attain a high-achieving self. He states that based on their actions, transgressors are often accused of “acting

White” or “acting gay” (Dancy, 2012). Misogynists demonstrate aspects of patriarchy, misogyny, and homophobia in their construction of masculinity (Dancy, 2012). Dancy argues that instead of viewing women as sexual objects, misogynists focus on dominating and subordinating them. Finally, self-actualizers focus on making the most of their abilities and striving to be the best they can (Dancy, 2012). Dancy notes that self-actualizers embrace the facts and realities about themselves and others, show creativity and interest in shaping experiences for others to strengthen senses of self, and try to understand people and situations objectively. Self-actualizers move beyond displaying stereotypes “to a place where an authentic manhood is one liberated from the oppressive strongholds of the past” (Dancy, 2012, p. 138). Dancy indicates that the four identified typologies are not fixed assignments. Therefore, the participants’ understanding of their masculinity “moves within, between, and beyond these typologies” (Dancy, 2012, p. 125).

Harper (2004) uses a phenomenological approach to explore how high-achieving Black undergraduate males constructed their masculinity. Harper describes high-achieving as those students attaining grade point averages above 3.0, holding campus leadership positions, possessing quality relationships with faculty and administrators, earning the admiration of their peers, participating in enriching educational experiences, and earning collegiate awards and honors. The 32 participants were students at six large research PWI universities in the Midwest—Indiana University, Michigan State University, Purdue University, The Ohio State University, University of Illinois, and University of Michigan (Harper, 2004). Harper indicates that participants noted differences in the ways that they constructed their masculinity in comparison to other less-involved Black male peers on their campuses. Participants explained that their peers would describe dating and sexually pursuing women, participating in any type of

athletic activity, competing in sports and video games, accumulating and showing off material possessions, and participating in fraternities as central to the construction of their masculinity (Harper, 2004). In contrast, although they enjoyed sports and romantic relationships, the high-achieving participants identified participating in activities that secured their futures, serving as campus leaders, contributing to Black community advancement, preparing to take care of families, and striving to emulate older Black leaders as central to the construction of their masculinity (Harper, 2004). While it appears that the high-achievers' construction of masculinity aligns with hegemonic ideals (i.e. provider/breadwinner, male leadership, family man), Harper argues that it differs. He notes that while the high-achievers emphasized individual success and leadership positions, they believed acquiring such positions allowed them to better assist others in the Black community—which is consistent with the aforementioned Afrocentric and progressive Black masculinities. Regardless, Harper's findings reveal differences in the way both groups of undergraduate Black males construct their masculinities. Thus, the construction of Black masculinity in a collegiate context remains complex as multiple interpretations remain present.

### **Popular Culture's Influence on Black Masculinity Construction**

Popular culture and mass media outlets serve as the primary outlets that aid in the continuance of stereotypical constructions of Black masculinity—both historical and contemporary. Referring to the negative meanings historically associated with the color black (i.e. inferiority, danger, dirtiness, etc.) mentioned earlier in this chapter, Brown (2005, 2006) notes that these same associations were eventually adopted and disseminated to mass audiences through newspapers, films, radio, and television. He cites the film *The Birth of A Nation* (Griffith, Aitken, & Griffith, 1915) as one of the earliest examples of popular culture's negative

construction of Black men. “The film re-wrote the history of the Reconstruction period by showing inaccuracies and distortions that appealed to southern sympathizers” (Brown, 2005, p. 67). In the film, Black men were portrayed as animalistic, sexually unrestrained, and unintelligent—justifying the need for Black men to remain under the control of White men (Hawkins, 1998a, 1998b; Guerrero, 1995). From *The Birth of A Nation* to representations presented in modern media outlets, popular culture remains vital in creating, reproducing, and maintaining racial ideologies (Brown, 2005). Brown (2005) writes: “These ideologies contain symbols, concepts, and images that act as a code through which individuals understand, interpret, and represent elements of our racial existence and African American culture” (p. 68).

Historically, Black audiences have demonstrated concern with the ways White-dominated popular culture institutions have constructed Black images for the dominant culture (Brown, 2005). Brown (2005) attributes this concern to two fundamental reasons: 1) Black people have never had control of the images constructed to represent them; and 2) the majority of these images have been negative. The resulting negative and stereotypical images “have impacted the social and individual constructs of Black masculinity” (Brown, 2005, p. 68). At the societal level, Black men function in a society that does not want them to succeed and offers them a limited number of identities deemed acceptable—any deviation from these acceptable identities is viewed as problematic (Brown, 2005). At the individual level, Brown (2005) indicates that the highly perpetuated media images influence how young Black men form their identity.

Jackson and Dangerfield (2004) argue that images of Black men that are married, middle-class, educated, spiritual, goal-driven, and non-criminal are missing from the majority of Black male media representations. Instead, audiences are exposed to images that represent Black men as violent/criminal, sexual, and incompetent/uneducated individuals (Jackson & Dangerfield,

2004). “These descriptors have been used to degrade and stigmatize Black males and are considered projections because of what they imply about insecurities, fears, and anxieties society has about Black males” (Jackson & Dangerfield, 2004, p. 123). Jackson and Dangerfield also address the societal and individual implications resulting from the media’s stereotypical representations of Black men. From a societal perspective, they argue that stereotypical representations of Black men inhibit social relationships and lead to inaccurate and damaging perspectives of Black males in society. In reference to individual implications, they argue that stereotypical representations “influence how Blacks define this perceptual category of masculinity and negotiate their masculinities in light of how they are socially and communicatively perceived” (Jackson & Dangerfield, 2004, p. 125). They continue by stating “Black masculine identity development is impossible without acknowledging and countering the stereotypes that threaten the survival of Black masculinity” (Jackson & Dangerfield, 2004, p. 125).

Ferber (2007) notes that athletics and entertainment are the primary fields in which popular culture represents Black men as successful. She writes: “Black male bodies are increasingly admired and commodified in rap, hip-hop, and certain sports, but at the same time they continue to be used to invoke fear. Black men are both held in contempt and valued as entertainment” (p. 12). While this admiration and fear seems to suggest a conflict in the way Black men are perceived in society, Ferber argues that this “conflict” aligns with the way Black men have been viewed historically. Throughout history, despite being viewed as a threat, Black men willing to assume roles that serve and entertain White people have been accepted by the dominant culture (Ferber, 2007). By adopting subordinate positions, Black men are viewed as nonthreatening and controllable (Ferber, 2007). Ferber notes that the portrayal of Black men as



successful in athletics and entertainment are consistent with the historical stereotypes and reflect limited opportunities for other Black men exposed to these representations (Ferber, 2007).

Gause (2005) also addresses the conflict that exists between those Black men that are valued and commodified and those that are feared. He writes:

Black heterosexual masculinity is figured in the popular imagination as the basis of masculine hero worship in the case of rappers; as naturalized and commodified bodies in the basis of athletes; as symbols of menace and threat in the case of Black gang members; and as noble warriors in the case of Afrocentric nationalists and Fruit of Islam. (p. 23)

He argues that although each of these images is read differently, they are still inflicted upon the same Black male body. Thus, the construction of Black masculinity poses conflicts—which highlights the complex nature of Black masculinity and the various Black masculinities that exist. Gause concludes by calling for the eradication of popular culture’s negative representations of Black males and instead highlight the positive role models and individuals that exist in Black communities across the country.

Popular culture’s construction of masculinity also has implications for men in college. In their phenomenological study, Tatum and Charlton (2008) use in-depth interviews to determine how Black men at an HBCU and White men at a PWI construct their masculinities. Findings identified four factors contributing to participants perception of what masculinity entails: 1) authoritative male influences; 2) sports and competition; 3) media and society; and 4) college male peer influences. As it relates to media and society, participants felt that television and movies perpetuate negative stereotypes of masculinity. Referenced negative stereotypes included “men being tough, wearing expensive clothes, treating women like sex objects, having money, and physical strength” (pp. 117 – 118). In addition, one participant specifically mentioned that, as a child, two movies—*The Terminator* (Hurd & Cameron, 1984) and *Rambo (First Blood)*, Feitshans, Kassar, Vajna, & Kotcheff, 1982)—created a perspective for himself and his peers

that men should be aggressive and muscular (Tatum & Charlton, 2008). The findings of Tatum and Charlton's study reveal the role that popular culture outlets play in constructing audiences' perceptions of others and self.

Specifically addressing popular culture's construction of Black masculinity, Dancy's (2012) aforementioned study identifies implications such images have on Black male college students. Participants felt faculty, university personnel, non-Black students, and other Black students relied on media-produced images or stereotypes of Black men to inform their interactions with Black male students on their campuses (Dancy, 2012). "These stereotypes include but are not limited to former gang member, soft, hard, hypersexual and sexually endowed, nerd, sell-out, dangerous, pimp, athlete, player, stupid, lazy, criminal, thug, or as many interviewees described, collegiate thugs" (Dancy, 2012, p. 151). As a result, Black male college students often participate in campus activities or organizations to counter such stereotypes about Black men (Dancy, 2012). Dancy notes that stereotypical perceptions of Black men persist among, both, Black and White individuals on campus. Participants reported pressure to conform their behavior to meet White expectations of Black men's behavior (Dancy, 2012). Such behaviors included "entertaining others," "making others laugh," "appearing good," or "acting White" (Dancy, 2012). Participants indicated that Black expectations pressured them to conform to common media depictions (i.e. rap artists or entertainers, athletes, criminals, etc.) (Dancy, 2012). Dancy notes that such depictions call for Black men to prove they are "cool," "tough or hard," or "real." In either instance, these pressures threaten Black male students' ability to develop an authentic self—as they are either conforming to or countering widespread stereotypes of Black men (Dancy, 2012). In summary, Dancy writes:

Schools and colleges are settings infected with endorsements of African American men that are patriarchal, hypermasculine, and hyper-heterosexual. Thus, because colleges

were viewed by the participants as gateways to society, colleges also act complicit in the perpetuation of African American men's stereotypical understandings of themselves. (p. 141)

Therefore, research addressing stereotypes and their influence on Black male college students is warranted—as these stereotypes possess the ability to impact these students' academic and social experiences. Thus, based on their possible implications, further study on media-produced images available through television or film is needed.

### **Visual Images and Representation**

Throughout much of the literature on film studies and theory, the concept of *representation* is often addressed. Turner (2006) defines representation as “the social process of making images, sounds, signs, stand for something—in film and television” (p. 59). While the concept of representation can be applied to other popular culture genres, it is of particular importance to those genres that are accompanied by visual images (Batson-Savage, 2010). These visual images are critical as they often represent what the viewing audience comes to accept as valid and “real” (Batson-Savage, 2010; Bond, 2010; Brooks & Hebert, 2006)—regardless of the accuracy of such images. Exploring this concept further, Brooks and Hebert (2006) argue that these images are central to the way individuals construct their social identities. As a result, visual representation, attributed to genres such as film, is instrumental in the creation of race in society (Bond, 2010; McCarthy et al, 1996).

Adding to the concept of representation, Batson-Savage (2010) states that visual representation is ultimately linked to power. Therefore, those individuals responsible for the images we see in films—filmmakers, producers, studio executives—are key players in the larger conversation about race resulting from such images. It is common knowledge that the majority of those possessing power in Hollywood are typically White—and primarily male. With a lack of

racial diversity behind the camera, images of those unable to identify with or subscribe to “Whiteness” are often confined to stereotypical representations in films. hooks (2009) argues that due to their dominance within the film industry, White filmmakers are able to make films, featuring people of color, without being questioned about their right to do so or the accountability of their portrayal. She continues by stating that the absence of such questioning often leads to careless portrayals of marginalized groups. Therefore, the images and representations presented in films must be critically interrogated (Batson-Savage, 2010; Bond, 2010; hooks, 2009).

### **Images of Black Men Throughout Film History**

As mentioned above, the first images of Black men in film were, both, negative and stereotypical. Unfortunately, many of these same stereotypes have continued throughout film history. Hughey (2009) categorizes the history of Blacks in film into five distinct eras. Beginning with the release of *The Birth of A Nation*, the first era typically portrayed Black men through caricatured images of slaves, brute negroes, coons, and comic negroes (Brown, 2008; Hughey, 2009). Additionally, based on the assumption that dance and rhythm were natural abilities of Blacks, this era also included images of dancers, singers, and entertainers (Hughey, 2009). These images persisted until Hollywood responded to demands for more “positive” Black characters in film—paving the way for the second era of Black film history beginning in the 1950s.

During the late 1950s and 1960s, Black men were commonly portrayed as “ebony saints” or “the Ideal Good Negro”—friendly and nonaggressive (Guerrero, 1995; Hughey, 2009). Actor Sidney Poitier came to epitomize these new characterizations based on his performances in films such as *Lilies of the Field* (Nelson & Nelson, 1963), *To Sir, with Love* (Clavell & Clavell, 1967) and *Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner* (Kramer & Kramer, 1967) (George, 2002; Miller, 1998).

Hughey (2009) describes Poitier's roles as repeated portrayals "of a friendly, desexualized Black man that was little more than a nonthreatening confidant to virginal White women" (p. 545).

Although Hollywood seemed to welcome such portrayals—Poitier became the first Black man to win an Academy Award for Best Actor for his work in *Lilies*—critics, namely those in the Black community, rejected images of subordinate Black men striving to assimilate into the dominate culture (George, 2002; Hughey, 2009). Such criticism led to the emergence of Blaxploitation in the 1970s—the third era of Black film history.

Blaxploitation films such as *Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song* (Van Peebles, Gross, & Van Peebles, 1971), *Shaft* (Freeman & Parks, 1971), *Super Fly* (Shore & Parks, 1972), and *Foxy Brown* (Feitshans & Hill, 1974) were created to appeal to Black audiences possessing a renewed sense of Black identity and wanting to see images of strong Blacks confronting White racism (Brown, 2008; Hughey, 2009; Miller, 1998). Rahner (2004) argues that because Blaxploitation films gave Black audiences their first "heroes", it is the most empowering film genre in Black history. However, the "heroism" within the films was typically overshadowed by the negative depictions of Blacks within these films. Black men were often portrayed as violent, aggressive, corrupt, and hypersexualized—reintroducing many of the preexisting, negative stereotypes of Black men (Brown, 2008). As a result, while films of the Blaxploitation era experienced initial success, Black audiences eventually grew tired of the stereotypical images the films typically displayed—leading to the demise of the genre during the late 1970s.

Following the end of Blaxploitation, Black images went through another transformation during the 1980s. During this fourth era, the dominant image of Black males was largely ultra-positive or comedic due in large part to the emergence of *The Cosby Show* (Carsey & Werner, 1984; Hughey, 2009). *The Cosby Show*, with its positive representation of the Black family,

provided viewers with the image of a Black man that was safe, nonthreatening, and non-violent (Leonard, 2006). Based on its success, film and television studios tried to duplicate the show's format—creating Black male characters afforded with the same opportunities as Whites in a world lacking any issues of race or racism (Hughey, 2009). Within this era, Hollywood also found success with the increasing presence of “buddy films.” Films such as *Stir Crazy* (Weinstein & Poitier, 1980), *Beverly Hills Cop* (Simpson, Bruckheimer, & Brest, 1984), *Brewster's Millions* (Gordon, Levy, Silver, & Hill, 1985), and *Lethal Weapon* (Donner, Silver, & Donner, 1987) “paired Black and White stars to appeal to both Black and White audiences” (Brown, 2008, p. 49). While many were successful, underneath their comedic storylines these films still provided audiences with negative representations of Black men. Brown (2008) argues that these films controlled Black characters by placing them within a White context, desexualizing or over sexualizing their characters, and, in some instances, emasculating them. The latter part of the 1980s witnessed the emergence of a new generation of Black filmmakers seeking to provide audiences with more realistic images. While films in *The Cosby Show* and “buddy film” vein typically avoided issues of race, films helmed by Black filmmakers such as *Hollywood Shuffle* (Townsend & Townsend, 1987), *School Daze* (Lee & Lee, 1988), and *Do the Right Thing* (Lee & Lee, 1989) often made racial issues central to their plots. Although these “real” films expanded the images of Black men previously seen in film, many of the aforementioned negative stereotypes persisted.

The fifth era of film history began in the 1990s and ran into the new millennium. In comparison to the other four eras discussed above, it could be argued that—in terms of its portrayal of Black men—this era underwent a greater transformation than any of the other four. Drawing on elements of Blaxploitation and the race related films of the late 1980s, the early

1990s saw the emergence and domination of “ghettocentric” films (Brown, 2008; George, 2002; Hughey, 2009; Leonard, 2006). Seeking to appeal to America’s love/hate relationship with inner-city communities (Leonard, 2006), films such as *New Jack City* (McHenry, Jackson, & Van Peebles, 1991), *Boyz n the Hood* (Nicolaides & Singleton, 1991), *Juice* (Heyman et al., 1992), and *Menace II Society* (Scott, Hughes, & Hughes, 1993) were produced to provide audiences with an inside look at the experiences of individuals living within those communities. While some of these films brought attention to the critical issues and problems facing these communities, others focused on the individual and cultural failures of the Black community (Leonard, 2006). In addition, Black men were again portrayed negatively, as these films “displayed the capitalistic exploitation, self-hatred, and auto-destruction of Black male identity” (Brown, 2008, p. 49). With the large amount of negativity typically displayed in ghettocentric films, critics eventually demanded more positive representations of Blacks (Leonard, 2006). As a result, films depicting the experiences of the Black middle class began to appear in the mid-1990s. Films such as *Waiting to Exhale* (McMillan, Bass, Schindler, Swerdlow, & Whitaker, 1995), *Love Jones* (Henkels et al., 1997), *The Wood* (Berger et al., 1999), *The Best Man* (Lee, Kitt, Carraro, & Lee, 1999), *Love & Basketball* (Davis et al., 2000), *The Brothers* (McHenry, Cullen, & Hardwick, 2001), and *Drumline* (Austin et al., 2002) duplicated the format that made *The Cosby Show* a success—placing Black characters in professional spaces similar to those of White characters, all with little to no mention of race or racism (Leonard, 2006). Although this new wave of films seemed to offer audiences “positive” or “fresher” images of Blacks, images of Black men were still limited to negative or stereotypical representations. For example, if the viewer was to believe the images in the films mentioned above, Black men are fearful of monogamous relationships, highly sexual, possess strong athletic capabilities, and are often

products of single mother households. This suggests that even among the “positivity,” viewers must still critically analyze the images presented as progressive.

Today, despite increasing numbers of Black professionals and elites, Blacks—male and female—are still visually depicted in stereotypical ways (Bond, 2010). Unfortunately, movies displaying such stereotypical representations are often those that are celebrated and find commercial success. Based on a list of the highest-grossing Black films of all time, the most successful films have represented Black men in four stereotypical ways: (1) comedic (*Coming to America* (Folsey, Wachs, & Landis, 1988), *Boomerang* (Grazer, Hudlin, & Hudlin, 1992), *Little Man* (Wayans et al., 2006), *Are We There Yet?* (Cube, Alvarez, Kolsrud, & Levant, 2005)); (2) emasculated (*Big Momma’s House* (Friendly, Green, & Gosnell, 2000), *Big Momma’s House 2* (Friendly, Green, & Whitesell, 2006)); (3) entertainers or performers (*Dreamgirls* (Mark & Condon, 2006), *Ray* (Hackford, Benjamin, Baldwin, Baldwin, & Hackford, 2004)); and (4) violent or aggressive (*Bad Boys* (Simpson, Bruckheimer, & Bay, 1995), *Bad Boys II* (Bruckheimer & Bay, 2003)) (Black Youth Project, 2011). Furthermore, in the fifty years since Poitier won the Academy Award for Best Actor, only three other Black men have won the film industry’s highest honor, Denzel Washington (*Training Day*, Newmyer, Silver, & Fuqua, 2001), Jamie Foxx (*Ray*), and Forest Whitaker (*The Last King of Scotland*, Steel, Bryer, Calderwood, & MacDonald, 2006). While their achievements should be celebrated, it should be noted that they won for their performances as a corrupt police officer, an entertainer who struggled with drug and relationship issues, and a violent, possessive dictator, respectively. Finally, while filmmaker Tyler Perry has received acclaim for his films depicting the experiences of professional Black men and women, his most successful films have featured Perry himself dressed in drag as the gun-toting, violent grandmother character “Madea.” Besides the obvious emasculation of Perry,



the character's antics possess an element of buffoonery reminiscent of the early portrayals of Blacks in film. The repetition of stereotypical representations of Black men, as the literature suggests, is a recurring theme throughout each of the identified eras of film history. However, based on the recognition and commercial success of many of the discussed films, it is no surprise that Hollywood continues to reproduce stereotypical images.

### **College Films in Black and White**

Hollywood's interest in the world of higher education began in the late 1800s. Conklin (2008) notes that although *The College Widow* (Lubin & O'Neil, 1915) is credited as the first feature-length college movie, the film was actually preceded by two short films—*Harvard Crew* (1897) and *The Professor of Drama* (1903). At the time that these early films were released, few audience members had contact or experience with the collegiate environment (Conklin, 2008; Hess, 2012). Therefore, these films provided audiences with “a glimpse into a lesser known and often exciting world” (Hess, 2012, p. 38). As a result, these films influenced viewing audiences' perceptions of colleges and the students attending them (Conklin, 2008; Hess, 2012). This influence continues to persist, as college films have continued to grow in popularity (Conklin, 2008). Conklin (2008) attributes this growth to the “historically high number of Americans with a college education, or an aspiration to get one, and the large amount of money that high school and college students spend on entertainment” (p. 9). Therefore, much like films in other genres, the images presented in college films have the ability to influence the perceptions of an even wider movie-going audience—even if these movies, at times, sacrifice an accurate or complete depiction of collegiate life in favor of a more appealing storyline (Hess, 2012; Conklin, 2008).

The college film genre has led to many mainstream successes. Films such as *National Lampoon's Animal House* (Reitman, Simmons, & Landis, 1978), *Rudy* (Fried, Woods, &

Anspaugh, 1993), *Good Will Hunting* (Bender & Van Sant, 1997), and *The Social Network* (Rudin, Brunetti, De Luca, Chaffin, & Fincher, 2010) have all generated millions of dollars—while providing movie-going audiences with varying representations of the collegiate experience. These varying representations are appropriate, due to the multiple realities of collegiate life (Conklin, 2008). Therefore, “no single film can present the undergraduate experience in all its complexity” (Conklin, 2008, p. 4). It should be noted, however, that in many of the mainstream college films the presence of Black male characters is often minimal—if not completely absent. This absence helps establish collegiate settings as a normalized environment for White men. Dancy (2009) states

White men in college receive multiple representations in television and movies as White men’s interests still remain standard in American society. One need only visit a neighborhood video store to locate media in which the following models of White men in college are clear: the ‘everyman’ and ‘common-man’ in movies like ‘Animal House’ and ‘Rudy’; the heroic and virtuous men in movies like ‘Good Will Hunting’ and ‘With Honors’; the privileged men of ‘The Skulls’; and the exaggerated intellect of characters in the ‘Revenge of the Nerds’ series, ‘Real Genius’ and even ‘Soul Man’ in which actor C. Thomas Howell portrays a White man who masquerades as a Black man to receive a scholarship earmarked for Black students (para. 3).

He continues by stating that Black male college characters remain absent unless the storyline calls for an aggressor or manipulator of women—stereotypical representations applied to Black men in all genres of film.

Prior to *While Thousands Cheer* (Popkin, Sanforth, Francis, & Popkin, 1940), the presence of Black students—both, male and female—in college films was a rarity (Conklin, 2008). Since that time, there has been an increase in the number of collegiate films incorporating Black characters. These films include *School Daze*, *Higher Learning* (Singleton, Hall, & Singleton, 1995), *How High* (Abdy et al., 2001), *Drumline*, and *The Great Debaters* (Winfrey et al., 2007). Although some of these films have fared better than others at the box office, those that

were successes failed to achieve the same level of success as more mainstream (i.e. White) college films. For example, *How High*, the highest grossing college comedy film starring two Black male characters in lead roles has a reported lifetime gross of over \$31 million (Box Office Mojo, 2013). In contrast, *The Social Network* has a lifetime gross of close to \$97 million (Box Office Mojo, 2013). While an increase in the images of Black students in collegiate environments is welcomed, these images still continue to remain somewhat rare. In addition, these images must also be critically interrogated to identify whether or not these images are truly “positive” or if they simply perpetuate existing stereotypes in the context of a college campus.

Despite the more than 600 films that deal with college in some capacity (Conklin, 2008), there is limited research on the way that films portray higher education (Hess, 2012; Conklin, 2008; Umphlett, 1984). Even less attention has been placed on films depicting the collegiate experiences of Black students (Cousins, 2005; Hughey, 2010; Leonard, 2006). Umphlett’s (1984) *The Movies Go to College* explores the development of the collegiate film from 1920 through 1970. Hinton’s (1994) *Celluloid Ivy: Higher Education in the Movies, 1960 – 1990* examines feature films that received substantial commercial distribution from 1960 through 1990. While both of these works provide insight to an understudied area of research, they are limited in scope as “nearly one-fourth of all college movies were released between 1995 and 2006” (Conklin, 2008, p. 9). Therefore, Conklin’s (2008) *Campus Life in the Movies: A Critical Survey from the Silent Era to the Present* covering films from 1915 through 2006 offers the most comprehensive body of research on the overall genre of college films. While select college films depicting the collegiate experiences of Black male students are included in these works, the primary focus centers on those films highlighting the experiences of White students. This

minimal amount of attention given to the portrayal of Black male students in college films highlights the need for research related to this current study.

### **Media Effects Theories**

Studies addressing media effects are typically carried out in the frameworks of one of two major theories—cultivation theory or social cognitive theory (Johnson & Holmes, 2009; Robinson, Callister, Magoffin, & Moore, 2007). While this study is not necessarily concerned with testing either theory, their inclusion is attributed to highlighting the potential influence visual images have on cultivating the perceptions or behaviors of viewers (Robins, Callister, Magoffin, & Moore, 2007). As a result, brief discussions on each theory are provided below.

#### **Cultivation Theory**

According to cultivation theory, the themes and images conveyed by the media have an influence on viewers' perceptions. Stemming from their research on the effects of television viewing, Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, and Signorielli (1986, 2002) posit that the repetitive pattern of images mass-produced by television programming become symbolic and inform the way viewers perceive reality. Further, Johnson and Holmes (2009) state that “viewers exposed over a prolonged period of time to portrayals of reality as defined by the media may come to develop perceptions that are consistent with these portrayals” (p. 353). In other words, cultivation theory argues that heavy media viewers exposed to recurring images of individuals come to believe that they are accurate and reflective of the individuals the images are believed to represent. Thus, viewers come to cultivate real world beliefs and expectations of these individuals based on their media portrayals (Johnson & Holmes, 2009). Therefore, in the context of the current study, consistent stereotypical media images of Black men influence viewers' perceptions of real Black men—which impacts the way Black men are viewed in society. While cultivation theory stems

from research related to the effects of television images, it has also been used in studies addressing the effects of film viewing (Johnson & Holmes, 2009; Robinson, Callister, Magoffin, & Moore, 2007).

### **Social Cognitive Theory**

While cultivation theory addresses media images' influence on viewers' real world perceptions, social cognitive theory focuses more on viewers' behaviors that result from these images. Bandura's (2002) social cognitive theory posits that media viewers construct their own behaviors based on the behaviors observed in the mass media. The theory suggests that individuals model their behaviors primarily based on the rewards, recognition, or consequences associated with others' behaviors (Bandura, 2002; Johnson & Holmes, 2009; Behm-Morawitz & Mastro, 2008). Therefore, if an observed behavior results in a desired outcome, viewers may demonstrate that same behavior in order to yield the same outcome (Johnson & Holmes, 2009). Thus, if stereotypical images of Black males yield desirable outcomes, other Black males viewing these images may exhibit these same behaviors. With the media's reliance on unrealistic or stereotypical representations of Black men, however, Black male viewers modeling their behavior on those seen in the media may not achieve the observed desired outcomes (Johnson & Holmes, 2009).

### **Campus Climate**

Due to popular culture's ability to construct viewers' perceptions of Black men, it could be argued that images available through film and television impact institutions' campus climate. Research has indicated that an unwelcoming campus climate results in negative implications for Black male college students (Harper, 2009; Brown, 2006; Sutton & Kimbrough, 2001; Harper & Gasman, 2008). Brown (2006) states that campus climate is often considered one of the major

reasons institutions struggle to retain Black male college students. Additionally, Harper (2009) attributes an unwelcoming campus environment as the reason for Black male students' disengagement. At PWIs, Black students—male and female—experience a high degree of isolation and alienation (Brown, 2006; Sutton & Kimbrough, 2001). As a result, these students often view “traditional campus organizations as exclusive and insensitive to their social needs” (Sutton & Kimbrough, 2001, p. 31). As it relates to Black male students at PWIs, specifically, interaction with traditional campus organizations is further complicated due to “their internalization of societal perceptions of them as marginal to the general campus community” (Brown, 2006, p. 50). Therefore, based on viewing themselves as outcasts at PWIs, and these campuses failing to embrace them, Black male students refrain from fully engaging.

Institutions that establish a nurturing and supportive environment are believed to be more effective at retaining minority students (Brown, 2006). Traditionally, HBCUs are often thought to provide this supportive environment for Black students. As it relates to their Black male students, HBCUs, historically, have effectively met the needs of their Black male students (Fleming, 1984; Kimbrough & Harper, 2006). In her pivotal study, Fleming (1984) found that while Black male students at HBCUs may feel dissatisfied with their in-classroom experiences, they often maneuver around this issue by participating in out-of-class activities. Through their involvement in out-of-class activities, Black men on HBCU campuses feel more “potent” and “in charge” (Kimbrough & Harper, 2006). In more recent years, however, HBCUs have also struggled with engaging and retaining their Black male students. Harper and Gasman (2008) attribute this struggle to the ultra-conservative environment found at many HBCUs. HBCUs upholding restrictive policies and demonstrating political conservatism create an unwelcoming campus climate for Black male students (Harper & Gasman, 2008). Harper and Gasman state

that HBCU campuses viewed as too conservative has resulted in Black male students either transferring to other institutions or discontinuing their studies altogether. Therefore, like PWIs, HBCUs must also identify factors impacting the institutional climate on their campuses and make the necessary adjustments.

### **Theories of Academic and Social Integration**

An institution's campus climate could potentially influence how well a student integrates—academically and socially—with the institution. Tinto's (1975) Student Integration Model posits that integration is critical if students are to persist at their institutions. However, Tierney (1999) challenges the concept in its application on minority students. Overviews of, both, Tinto and Tierney's research are discussed below.

#### **Tinto's Student Integration Model**

Much of what is known about student retention and persistence stems from the work of Vincent Tinto. Tinto's (1975) Student Integration Model theorizes that a student's integration with their institution—academically and socially—is key in determining whether or not they will persist at the institution. The more integrated the student is with their institution, the greater their “commitment to the specific institution and to the goal of college completion” (Tinto, 1975, p. 96). Students' academic integration is measureable by grade performance and intellectual development (Tinto, 1975); experiences that support academic development, encourage cognitive development, and enhance academic motivation (Flowers, 2006); positive faculty-student interactions and students' taking advantage of campus academic resource centers (i.e. tutoring, learning centers, etc.) (Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011). Therefore, students' academic integration, ultimately, concerns experiences and activities related to their success with academics and in-class experiences. In contrast, social integration concerns students' out-of-class

experiences. Examples include participating in student organizations and campus activities, establishing friendships with peers, and connecting with campus mentors and faculty (Tinto, 1975; Flowers, 2006; Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011).

### **Tierney's Framework of Cultural Integrity**

While Tinto's (1975) Student Integration Model acknowledges that students come to college with varying attributes that may hinder their success and likelihood of retention, its application on minority students has garnered criticism (Tierney, 1999). Referring back to Tinto's ideas on the importance of academic and social integration, Tierney (1999) argues that this integration calls for minority students to "commit a form of cultural suicide to be academically successful" (p. 85). In other words, by conforming to the dominant culture present within their institutions, minority students are forced to disassociate themselves from their communities and shed their cultural heritage. However, as Tierney points out, "the ability to shed's one cultural heritage is impossible" (1999, p. 84). Further, it should be noted that the mention of "minority" and "culture" in Tierney's argument should not be limited simply to race/ethnicity. Minority can refer to any group that stands in opposition to the culture accepted as the normative within an institution. Thus, Tierney's argument is applicable at, both, predominantly White and minority-serving institutions. To combat the flawed concept of integration, Tierney suggests institutions adopt the concept of cultural integrity (Tierney, 1999). Under this idea of cultural integrity, institutions establish programs and learning activities that encourage and support varying cultural identities in an effort to foster academic success among all students on their campuses. As a result, all students feel that they are valued and apart of their college or university—without having to abandon their cultural heritage.



Despite their conflicting perspectives, Tinto and Tierney recognize the need for action and engagement—on the institution’s part—to fully support all students’ success on their campuses. Whether through the establishment of special programs or taking initiative to foster a positive campus climate, institutions must be aware of the varying needs and experiences of their students, as well as any potential influences or factors that may impede their success.

### **Summary**

In reviewing the relevant literature, several themes emerged:

- Due to hegemonic masculinity or the masculine ideal being raced White, Black men are still viewed as subordinate in society;
- Multiple forms of masculinity exist. Therefore, masculinity is performed and represented differently among individuals of diverse cultural groups. Further, multiple masculinities exist within those cultural groups;
- Historically, Black men have been constructed as animalistic, hypersexual, and aggressive/violent. These stereotypical representations continue to persist in the dominant culture’s more contemporary constructions of Black men and Black masculinity;
- A number of Black scholars have recognized that multiple forms of Black men and masculinities exist—acknowledging the complexity of Black masculinity and leading to their development of multiple Black male identities. Yet, many of these identities struggle between striving to attain hegemonic ideals or those more aligned with Black culture;
- Popular culture and mass media outlets (i.e. film, television, newspapers, etc.) serve as the primary outlets that aid in the continuance of stereotypical constructions of Black masculinity;
- Media-produced images or stereotypes of Black men have been found to influence the interactions those in the university community have with Black male students;
- Throughout film history, Black men have been portrayed in negative and stereotypical ways. While “positive” roles exist and are celebrated, these roles most also be critically interrogated; and
- Despite Hollywood’s long-lasting interest in the collegiate world, the collegiate experiences of Black male students remains limited unless the storyline calls for stereotypical representations.

While previous studies have taken a scholarly look at films addressing the collegiate experiences of Black students (Cousins, 2005; Hughey, 2010; Leonard, 2006; Lubiano, 1991), there is a scarcity of research comparing the images of Black male students across films (Dancy, 2009). Therefore, the results and findings generated from the current study help fill this void in the literature.

### **Conceptual Framework**

In the current study, the analyzed college films were interpreted through three existing frameworks: Black feminist thought's controlling images (Collins, 2000), Hawkins' (1998a, 1998b) White supremacy continuum of images for Black men, and Guerrero's (1995) concept of the empty space in representation. Explanations of each framework are provided below.

#### **Controlling Images**

Controlling images, in relation to the Black feminist movement, refers to the negative, stereotypical ways in which Black women are often portrayed (i.e. mammies, matriarchs, hoochies, etc.) (Collins, 2000). Collins (2000) attributes these portrayals to elite groups, such as White males, exercising their power to define societal values. Those groups possessing such power have the ability to define or control ideas about Black womanhood "by exploiting already existing symbols, or creating new ones" (Collins, 2000, p. 69). However, this is problematic as these stereotypical representations help normalize various forms of social injustice and justify the oppression of Black women in this country (Collins, 2000). Therefore, Collins (2000) argues that analyzing such controlling images is critical due to each image providing "a starting point for examining new forms of control that emerge in a transnational context, one where selling images has increased in importance in the global marketplace" (p. 72).

Within the theme of controlling images, Collins (2000) states that the idea of binary thinking cuts across race, gender, and class oppression. McKoy (2012) states, “binary thinking occurs when two opposing concepts function together by one being submissive to the other. Each term in the binary only gains meaning in relation to its counterpart” (p. 129). Examples of binaries include male/female and White/Black—where society has deemed one group superior to their lesser complement. In addition to providing meaning to terms, binary thinking shapes understandings of human difference and establishes one element as the “other”—an object to be manipulated and controlled (Collins, 2000). Ultimately, the idea of binary thinking supports the ideology of domination and subordination. In relation to White women, Black women have been relegated to the inferior side of the binary—based on their status as racial and gender minorities (Collins, 2000; Reynolds-Dobbs, Thomas, & Harrison, 2008). However, binaries among Black women also exist, as depicted by the media’s repeated use of controlling images in its portrayal of Black women. Although additional controlling images of Black women have been utilized (i.e. sapphire, matriarch, welfare mother, etc.), they all, in some way, are a variation of the mammy and jezebel images (Collins, 2000; Reynolds-Dobbs et al., 2008).

The mammy image was one of the most dominant images to emerge from the Antebellum South during slavery (Reynolds-Dobbs et al., 2008). Due to her acceptance of subordination, the mammy image represented “the normative yardstick used to evaluate all Black women’s behavior” (p. 72). Typically characterized as a faithful, obedient servant, the mammy symbolized the public face that Whites expected Black women to assume (Collins, 2000; Reynolds-Dobbs et al., 2008). The mammy was self-sacrificing and nurturing to the White families she worked for (McKoy, 2012; Reynolds-Dobbs et al., 2008). Physically, the mammy image is one that is highly desexualized—possessing physical features (i.e. overweight, dark skin, etc.) that made her “an

unsuitable sexual partner for White men” (Collins, 2000, p. 84). With an absence of sexuality, the mammy was able to easily establish a motherly presence in her White households (Collins, 2000). Based on all of these characteristics, the mammy image represented the dominant group’s perception of the ideal Black woman (Collins, 2000).

If the desexualized and subordinate mammy image symbolized the dominant culture’s idea of the “model” Black woman, her hypersexualized counterpart—the jezebel—represented the inferior side of the binary. Originating from the sexual exploitation and victimization of Black women by their White slave owners (McKoy, 2012), the jezebel’s excessive sexual appetite provided justification for such attacks (Collins, 2000). In contrast to the mammy, the jezebel—with her fairer skin and shapely figure—was attractive and desirable to her White slave owners (McKoy, 2012; Reynolds-Dobbs et al., 2008). As a result, the jezebel used her body and sexuality to get her way (Reynolds-Dobbs et al., 2008). Ultimately, the jezebel image was used “to relegate all Black women to the category of sexually aggressive women”—an undesirable characteristic of the “ideal” woman (Collins, 2000, p. 81).

While the mammy and jezebel images are often utilized in studies centered on the characterizations of Black women (Brown Givens & Monahan, 2005; Thomas, Witherspoon, & Speight, 2004; Reynolds-Dobbs et al., 2008; Townsend, Thomas, Neilands, & Jackson, 2010; West, 1995), there is a need for a comparable framework addressing the images of Black men. While numerous scholars have focused on various aspects of Black masculinity and stereotypes (Majors & Billson, 1993; hooks, 2004; Ferber, 2007; Richardson, 2010; Mutua, 2006a, 2006b; Brown, 2005, 2006; Cooper, 2005; Neal, 2005; McClure, 2006; Boyd, 1997; Gause, 2005; Majors, 1998; Dancy, 2012; Harper, 2004), there remains an absence of a cohesive body of “anti-patriarchal literature speaking directly to black males about what they can do to educate

themselves for critical consciousness” (hooks, 2004, p. xiv). hooks (2004) argues that this is troublesome, and recommends Black male scholars adopt a research agenda similar to those scholars of the Black feminist movement. She states:

The absence of this work stands as further testimony validating the contention that the plight of black men is not taken seriously. An impressive body of literature arose in the wake of black female resistance struggles aimed at challenging systems of domination that were keeping us exploited and oppressed as a group. That literature has helped black females to empower ourselves. As both writer and reader of this work, I know that it changes lives for the better. (p. xiv)

hooks continues by attributing this absence to Black male scholars adopting an individualized approach to their work, subscribing to patriarchal thinking themselves, or being less-willing to push a radical message for personal benefits, such as greater monetary rewards.

### **The White Supremacy Continuum of Images for Black Men**

Hawkins’ (1998a, 1998b) White supremacy continuum of images for Black men is one example of a Black male scholar willing to challenge dominant images of Black men. He argues that, in its representation of Black men, the media operates on a continuum anchored by two dominant images—the sambo and the brute. These socially constructed images suggest that Black men are “either non-threatening and palatable or threatening and unpalatable to the system of [W]hite supremacy” (Hawkins, 1998a, p. 9). In addition to identifying stereotypical images of Black men that are comparable to those depictions associated with the controlling images identified in Black feminist thought, they also subscribe to the same concept of binary thinking. It should be noted, however, that within this continuum, the representations of Black men can shift between the sambo and brute images based on the needs of the system of White supremacy (Hawkins 1998a, 1998b).

In many ways, the sambo image represents the male equivalent of Black feminist thought’s mammy image. Rooted in the era of slavery, the sambo image has historically been

characterized as childish, a contented slave, dependent upon his master, and a natural entertainer (Hawkins, 1998a, 1998b). Like the mammy, the sambo maintained a subservient demeanor and knew his place within the system of White supremacy (Hawkins, 1998a, 1998b). The sambo willingly assumed roles that served and entertained White people—making Black men appear nonthreatening (Ferber, 2007). Hawkins (1998b) argues that due to the sambo’s contentment with serving his master, the creation and maintenance of this image was an important tool to control against the fear of slave revolts. The sambo’s perceived happiness with being under the control of plantation owners, anti-abolitionists, and segregationists, made slavery seem appropriate for Blacks (Hawkins, 1998b). In short, the tamed and domesticated sambo represented the dominant culture’s perception of the ideal Black man.

In contrast to the sambo, the brute image anchors the opposite end of the continuum. Due to his perceived demonized and violent nature, the brute is viewed as a direct threat to White supremacy (Hawkins, 1998a). The brute, with his superior physical abilities and bestial demeanor, represented Black men as untamed savages (Hawkins, 1998a, 1998b). Hawkins (1998b) states:

The brute nigger image supports the ideology that [B]lacks are natural athletes because they have superior physical abilities. This image also supports the notion that [B]lacks are primates or beast-like in behavior and uncivilized, thus prone to committing violent acts, especially sexual violators of White women (p. 43).

Like the jezebel, the brute was characterized primarily on his hypersexuality and physicality. However, while, the jezebel’s excessive sexual appetite was believed to cause the frequent attacks she experienced at the hands of her White slave owners (McKoy, 2012; Reynolds-Dobbs et al., 2008), the brute was characterized as the attacker against White women. The only way to tame or domesticate this “beast” was by means of lynching or emasculation, either physically or symbolically—transforming him into sambo (Pieterse, 1992; Hawkins, 1998b).

Although the sambo and brute images are rooted in a historical context, they continue to persist in the media's representation of Black men (Hawkins, 1998b). Hawkins (1998b) argues that many Black comedians, athletes, and actors have bought into these images—agreeing to exploitation—for their own personal financial gain. Ultimately, however, the media's depiction of Black men as either a sambo or brute works to keep them in their respective places (Hawkins, 1998b) and dismisses the complexity of “real” Black men (Guerrero, 1995).

### **Empty Space in Representation**

Throughout each of the identified film eras identified earlier in this chapter, it is clear that Black men have typically been represented as either “good/bad” or “positive/negative.” Recognizing these characterizations, scholars have addressed Hollywood's struggle to move away from this binary way of depicting Black men (Guerrero, 1995). In many instances, the “good” and “bad” cinematic representations of Black men are often extremes—lacking the true, lived experiences of “real” Black men (hooks, 2009). Every Black man is not the “ebony saint” Poitier often portrayed or as self-destructive as “Bishop” in *Juice*. So, there is a need for images that represent Black men within these binaries.

Guerrero (1995) refers to this in-between space as the empty space in representation. He states that by repeatedly creating characters falling into either “good” or “bad” categories, Hollywood is ignoring “the intellectual, cultural, and political depth and humanity of Black men, as well as their very significant contribution to the culture and progress of this nation” (p. 397). To address this issue, he does not recommend that Hollywood create films full of compensatory “positive” Black images (i.e. those following *The Cosby Show* format). Instead he states:

What is now needed is an expanded, heterogeneous range of complex portrayals of Black men that transcends the one-dimensional, positive-negative characters usually contained within Hollywood's formulaic narratives and its most common strategy for representing

*blackness*, that is channeling most Black talent and film production into genres of comedy or the ghetto-action-adventure. (p. 397)

Therefore, there is value in the visual representations of the Black male experience in spaces that go beyond the typical settings—such as those highlighting the collegiate experiences of Black men. Returning to Guerrero’s (1995) emphasis on intellectual and cultural representations, it could be argued that films highlighting the collegiate experiences of Black men help to fulfill one aspect of such spaces.



## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

### **Introduction**

The current study sought to explore the representations of Black male students and Black masculinity in college films and identify what differences in representations exist when accounting for various characteristics of the films. In addressing this purpose, this study was guided by the following research questions:

(RQ1): How are Black male students and Black masculinity represented in college films?

- 1a. What depictions of Black male students are represented most often in college films?
- 1b. What depictions of Black male students are represented least often in college films?
- 1c. What non-stereotypical depictions or rarely seen representations of Black masculinity are found in college films?

(RQ2): What differences in Black male student representations exist when accounting for various characteristics of college films?

- 2a. Is there a difference in how Black male students are represented based on the films' genre (i.e. comedy, drama)?
- 2b. Is there a difference in how Black male students are represented based on the films' decade of release?
- 2c. Is there a difference in how Black male students are represented based on the films' institution type (HBCU or PWI)?

In this chapter, a discussion of the methodological approach utilized in addressing the identified research questions is provided.

### **Mixed Methods Content Analysis**

In addressing the identified research questions, a mixed methods content analysis approach was utilized. More specifically, this study incorporated a convergent parallel design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Mixed methods research “recognizes the importance of

traditional quantitative and qualitative research but also offers a powerful third paradigm choice that often will provide the most informative, complete, balanced, and useful research results” (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007, p. 129). Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) state “the convergent design occurs when the researcher collects and analyzes both quantitative and qualitative data during the same phase of the research process and then merges the two sets of results into an overall interpretation” (p. 77). They continue by explaining the design is also utilized when the researcher develops procedures to transform one type of result into the other type of data (i.e. turning qualitative themes into quantitative counts or frequencies)—a point of particular relevance in the current study. In relation to the current study, Figure 3.1 provides a depiction of the convergent parallel mixed methods design.

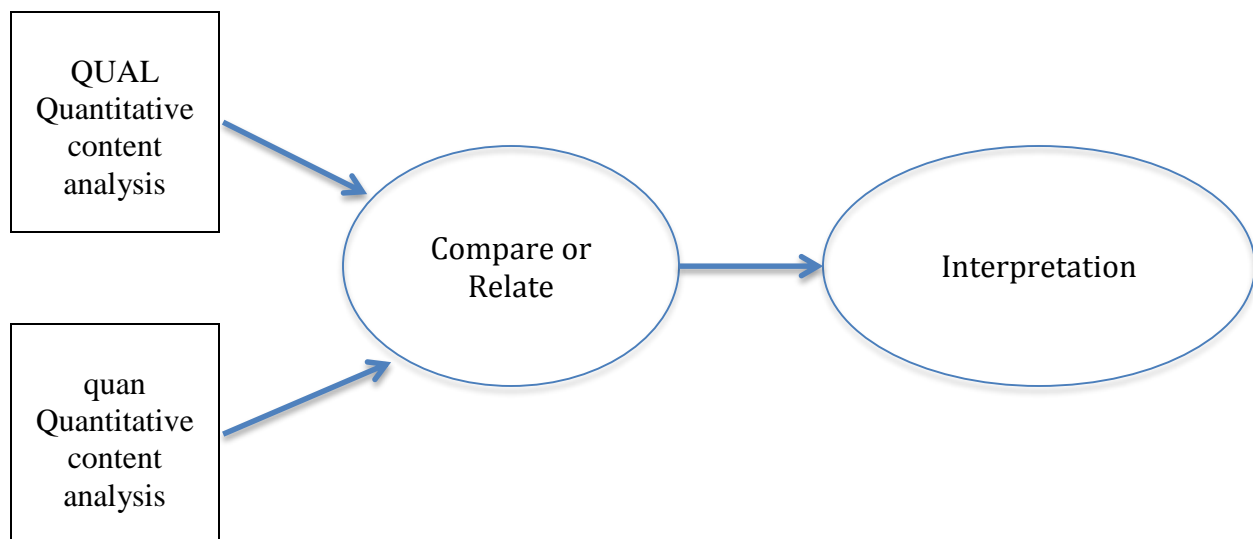


Figure 3.1. Convergent Parallel Mixed Methods Design  
(adapted from Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 69)

Krippendorff (2013) defines content analysis as “a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use” (p. 24). He continues by noting that the inclusion of “other meaningful matter” in this definition indicates content analysis is not limited solely to written material. Thus, images,

sounds, symbols, and signs may also be considered texts (Krippendorff, 2013). While the research method has been viewed as a quantitative method (Nuendorf, 2002), content analysis has also been used qualitatively (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Altheide & Schneider, 2013). In the current study, content analysis was used, both, qualitatively and quantitatively to explore the representation of Black male students in college films.

### **Qualitative Content Analysis**

Qualitative research is exploratory in nature and relies on the collection of qualitative data—data associated with the sensory experience (i.e. sight, feeling, taste, smell, etc.) (Johnson & Christensen, 2012; Rossman & Rallis, 2012). Johnson and Christensen (2012) identify several characteristics of qualitative research. First, qualitative research is commonly utilized when little is known about a topic or phenomenon. As a result, Johnson and Christensen note that qualitative research is commonly used to generate new hypotheses or theories about the chosen topic. Next, they explain that qualitative researchers view human behavior as situational, fluid, contextual, and unpredictable. Thus, qualitative researchers are not interested in generalizing their findings beyond the particular people under study (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Qualitative researchers also apply a wide- and deep-angle lens in examining human behavior—seeking to understand the human experience naturalistically and holistically (Johnson & Christensen, 2012; Rossman & Rallis, 2012). Finally, qualitative research is largely interpretive—with the researcher serving as the primary data-collection instrument.

The qualitative component of this study is rooted in the ethnography tradition. By definition, ethnography is a form of qualitative research focused on describing people and their culture (Altheide & Schneider, 2013; Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Altheide and Schneider (2013) write that ethnography is largely viewed “as a product or report of careful description,

definition, and analysis of aspects of human interaction” (p. 24). Thus, the engagement of human beings in meaningful behavior guides the mode of inquiry and the researcher’s focus (Altheide & Schneider, 2013). As a result, researchers “are interested in documenting things like shared attitudes, values, norms, practices, patterns of interaction, perspectives, and language of a group of people” (Johnson & Christensen, 2012, p. 48). In collecting data, ethnographic fieldwork requires researchers to immerse themselves deeply into the content relevant to their research question(s) and remain open to the discovery of new patterns of human behavior that materialize (Altheide & Schneider, 2013). The current study draws on Altheide and Schneider’s (2013) approach of applying the basic principles of ethnography to qualitative content analysis. Instead of immersing oneself in the culture or environments of human beings, the researcher focuses on products of social interactions (Altheide & Schneider, 2013). Therefore, in the current study, immersion in a sample of college films—serving as products of social interactions—offers a methodological approach leading to discovery of Black male student representations in the films.

Hsieh and Shannon (2005) define qualitative content analysis “as a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (p. 1278). Qualitative content analysis moves beyond simply counting data to classifying large amounts of data into categories that represent similar meanings (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). However, while categories initially guide a qualitative content analysis research study, others are expected to emerge (Altheide & Schneider, 2013). Essentially, qualitative content analysis is concerned with the themes, patterns, and meanings that transpire from textual data (Altheide & Schneider, 2013; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

Hsieh and Shannon (2005) identify three qualitative content analysis approaches—conventional, directed, and summative. In the current study, a directed content analysis approach was utilized to analyze the representation of Black male students and Black masculinity in a sample of college films. “The goal of a directed approach to content analysis is to validate or extend conceptually a theoretical framework or theory” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1281). Hsieh and Shannon identify several steps in conducting a directed content analysis. First, existing theory helps determine the initial coding categories. Next, based on the theory, operational definitions are determined for each category. Finally, all instances of a particular phenomenon in the analyzed text are coded and categorized. Any text not able to be categorized with the initial coding scheme is given a new code (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). In the current study, Hawkins’ (1998a, 1998b) White supremacy continuum of images for Black men and Guerrero’s (1995) concept of the empty space in representation served as the frameworks determining the initial coding categories. Therefore, coded data were organized around the brute, sambo, and empty space in representation categories.

### **Quantitative Content Analysis**

Quantitative research relies on the collection of quantitative or numerical data (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Johnson and Christensen (2012) identify several characteristics of quantitative research. First, quantitative research primarily subscribes to the confirmatory scientific method. Therefore, quantitative researchers emphasize testing theories or hypotheses with numerical data to see if they are supported (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Next, they explain that quantitative researchers believe human behavior is highly predictable and explainable. Thus, quantitative researchers try to identify causes of events “that enable them to make probabilistic predictions and generalizations” (Johnson & Christensen, 2012, p. 33).

Quantitative researchers also utilize a narrow lens in examining human behavior—seeking to only focus on one or more causal factors at the same time (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Finally, operating under the assumption that social phenomena can be measured systematically, quantitative data is collected using structured data-collection instruments (Johnson & Christensen, 2012; Nardi, 2006). Based on data obtained from such instruments, quantitative data is statistically analyzed to identify relationships among variables (Johnson & Christensen, 2012; Nardi, 2006). In the quantitative component of this study, frequencies of the categorized brute, sambo, and empty space in representation coded incidents gathered in the qualitative component were used to perform statistical analyses.

The quantitative component of this study utilizes a nonexperimental research approach (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Johnson and Christensen (2012) note that within nonexperimental research, there is no manipulation of an independent variable or random assignment to groups by the researcher. Within nonexperimental research, one objective is “to describe how the dependent variable varies according to different categories of the independent variable” (Nardi, 2006, p. 153). In the current study, genre, decade of release, and institution type served as the categorical independent variables, while the quantitative dependent variables were comprised of numerical data associated with the analyzed brute, sambo, and empty space in representation characterizations.

While Altheide and Schneider (2013) and Hsieh and Shannon (2005) explore content analysis through a qualitative lens, Nuendorf (2002) views the methodology as systematic and quantitative. In defining the methodology, she writes:

Content analysis is a summarizing, quantitative analysis of messages that relies on the scientific method (including attention to objectivity-intersubjectivity, a prior design, reliability, validity, generalizability, replicability, and hypothesis testing) and is not

limited as to the types of variables that may be measured or the context in which the messages are created or presented. (p. 10)

Nuendorf concludes by explaining that quantitative content analysis' attempt to meet the standards of the scientific method, as outlined in her definition, is the primary characteristic that differentiates it from qualitative content analysis.

## **Sample**

In generating a sample of films for inclusion in this analysis, a criterion purposive sampling strategy was utilized. Purposive sampling is a nonrandom sampling technique in which a researcher specifies characteristics of a population and locates participants or data with those characteristics to comprise a study's sample (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Miles and Huberman (as cited in Creswell, 2013) state that a criterion purposive sample includes all cases that meet some criterion established by the researcher. The sample for this study consisted of theatrically released, college films in which Black male students were plot-functional characters (Manganello, Franzini, & Jordan, 2008). A college film was defined as one in which the central storyline revolved around some facet of campus or collegiate life. For example, *School Daze* (Lee & Lee, 1988) revolves around the varying experiences of students on the campus of a historically Black college during homecoming festivities. In contrast, although characters' experiences at the University of Southern California (USC) are documented in *Love & Basketball* (Davis et al., 2000), this period represents only a small portion of the overall storyline. As a result, this film was not included in the sample. A plot-functional character was defined as a character playing an important role in the narrative of the film (Manganello, Franzini, & Jordan, 2008). Based on independent research, recommendations from peers and friends, and my personal knowledge, 18 college films were identified for inclusion in this study (Table 3.1). Brief summaries of each film are provided in Appendix A.

Table 3.1. Film Title, Year of Release, Genre, and Character Names

Title	Year of Release	Genre	# of Characters ( $N = 37$ )	Character Name(s)
<i>Revenge of the Nerds</i>	1984	Comedy	1	Lamar Latrell
<i>School Daze</i>	1988	Comedy*	3	Vaughn “Dap” Dunlap, Julian Eaves, Darrell (“Half-Pint”)
<i>House Party 2</i>	1991	Comedy	1	Christopher “Kid” Robinson
<i>The Program</i>	1993	Drama	2	Darnell Jefferson, Alvin Mack
<i>Blue Chips</i>	1994	Drama	3	Neon Boudeaux, Butch McRae, Tony
<i>Higher Learning</i>	1995	Drama	2	Malik Williams, Fudge
<i>The 6<sup>th</sup> Man</i>	1997	Comedy	1	Kenny Tyler
<i>Senseless</i>	1998	Comedy	1	Darryl Witherspoon
<i>The Skulls</i>	2000	Drama	1	Will Beckford
<i>How High</i>	2001	Comedy	2	Silas P. Silas, Jamal King
<i>Drumline</i>	2002	Drama*	2	Devon Miles, Sean Taylor
<i>Accepted</i>	2006	Comedy	1	Hands Holloway
<i>Glory Road</i>	2006	Drama	7	Bobby Joe Hill, David Lattin, Orsten Artis, Harry Flournoy, Willie Worsley, Willie Cager, Nevil Shed
<i>We Are Marshall</i>	2006	Drama	1	Nate Ruffin
<i>Stomp the Yard</i>	2007	Drama	4	DJ Williams, Grant, Zeke, Sylvester



Table 3.1 (continued)

Title	Year of Release	Genre	# of Characters ( <i>N</i> = 37)	Character Name(s)
<i>The Great Debaters</i>	2007	Drama	3	Hamilton Burgess, Henry Lowe, James Farmer Jr.
<i>Mooz-lum</i>	2011	Drama	1	Tariq Mahdi
<i>From the Rough</i>	2014	Drama	1	Craig

Note. Genre classification as listed on the Rotten Tomatoes online database (<http://www.rottentomatoes.com>). Those genres with an asterisk (\*) indicate that more than one genre was listed for that film. In those instances, the first genre listed was included in Table 3.1.

### Units of Analysis

Recording/coding units or units of analysis are units distinguished for describing, recording, or coding text data included in a study's sample (Krippendorff, 2013). In the current study, depictions of analyzed Black male student characters' behaviors, expression of emotions, interactions, and experiences served as the units of analysis. Behavior referred to the manner in which that character acts or conducts oneself ("Behavior," n.d.). Expressions of emotions referred to characters' displaying of emotions (researcher defined). Interaction referred to characters' actions involving other characters in the films (researcher defined). Finally, experience referred to events or occurrences the character came into contact with (researcher defined). It should be noted that the units of analysis were often embedded in each other. For example, characters' behaviors and/or emotional expressions often stemmed from their interactions with other characters or encountered experiences.

Where applicable, each film was analyzed by the DVD chapters provided on the film's main menu. Based on a small pilot study, it was determined that the average DVD chapter length of *Glory Road* (Bruckheimer & Gartner, 2006) and *We Are Marshall* (McG, Iwanyk, & McG, 2006) was approximately 5 minutes and 41 seconds. Therefore, in cases where DVD chapters

were not provided on a film's main menu, DVD chapters were established by dividing the film into five-minute segments for analysis. For example, if a film consisted of 22 five-minute segments, for the purpose of this study, it was determined that the film consisted of 22 DVD chapters. Character's depictions could be coded in multiple categories, but not multiple times for the same category in each DVD chapter. For example, a character could be coded as "angry," aggressive," and "threatening" in DVD Chapter 1, but "angry" could not be coded more than once in this same chapter. In other words, the primary focus was on the presence of the depiction—rather than the frequency of said depiction in each DVD chapter.

### **Coding Instrument**

A coding instrument was developed using, both, a priori and emergent coding procedures. Character demographic information was recorded based on a priori variables of interest (i.e. institution type, campus role, year of release). In the development of emergent coding variables, upon viewing the films in their entirety, depiction codes were established to describe characters' behaviors, expressions of emotions, interactions, and experiences. Films were viewed at least once per its number of plot-functional Black male student characters. For example, there were one and three characters, respectively, in *House Party 2* (McHenry et al., 1991) and *The Great Debaters* (Winfrey et al., 2007). Therefore, *House Party 2* was viewed at least once and *The Great Debaters* at least three times. In viewing each DVD chapter, representations of characters' behaviors, expressions of emotions, interactions, and/or experiences were recorded in a notebook. At the conclusion of each DVD chapter, depiction codes—reflecting characters' behaviors, expressions of emotions, interactions, and/or experiences—were added to the coding instrument. Further, an Excel spreadsheet was created for each analyzed character to keep track of depiction codes and their presence in each DVD

chapter. If a depiction code was present in a DVD chapter, a “1” was recorded in the appropriate cell on the spreadsheet. If an observed behavior, expression of emotion, interaction, or experience did not fit with an already established depiction code, a new depiction code was created. In order to identify composite codes, all emergent depiction codes were then organized and grouped together based on similarities. The complete codebook—including definitions for, both, a priori and emergent codes—is provided in Appendix B.

### **Qualitative Data Analysis**

Qualitative data analysis involved several steps. First, an analysis of character demographic data was provided using frequencies and percentages. Character demographic data included information pertaining to characters’ primary campus roles (i.e. Greek fraternity member, athlete, student leader activist, etc.) and student classifications (freshman/first-year or upperclassmen).

Next, an analysis of the characters’ depictions was conducted. Within a directed content analysis approach, “the study design and analysis are unlikely to result in coded data that can be compared meaningfully using statistical tests of difference” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1282). As a result, rank order comparisons of frequency of codes are sometimes used (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Therefore, in order to determine how Black male students and Black masculinity are represented in college films, inferences were made based on the patterns evident in characters’ depictions. Frequencies of depiction codes were obtained for each individual film, as well as across the entire sample. Frequencies were reported in percentages to account for the number of characters in each film being unequal. For example, the seven basketball players in *Glory Road* were analyzed, while only one character from *We Are Marshall* was included. Codes, and their associated overall percentages, were then ranked in descending order. Those

depiction codes with the higher percentages were determined as the depictions found most commonly in the films. In contrast, those codes with lower percentages were determined as those least commonly found in the films.

In detecting what non-stereotypical representations were present in the analyzed films, the identified depiction codes were then organized according to Hawkins' (1998a, 1998b) and Guerrero's (1995) frameworks concerning the stereotypical representation of Black males in the media and the empty space in representation, respectively. If a code was indicative of the brute or sambo characterization it was classified as such. However, if the code failed to fit either of these characterizations and was more aligned with Guerrero's concept, it was categorized as a representation or characterization rarely seen in the media. Based on the themes or patterns that transpired from the categorization of depiction codes, interpretations were then made about those codes occupying the empty space in representation.

Finally, once all incidents of depiction codes were categorized appropriately, frequencies were again computed to determine what characterizations—brute, sambo, or empty space in representation—were more present in the analyzed films.

### **Quantitative Data Analysis**

Quantitative analyses were performed to identify what differences in Black male student representations exist when accounting for college films' genre, decade of release, or institution type. Like the qualitative data analysis, quantitative data analysis also involved several steps. First, for each of the three college film characteristic variables, the films were organized accordingly and frequencies of analyzed characters were computed. Organization of films by genre resulted in seven comedies and 11 dramas. For decade of release, two films were released

in the 1980s, six in the 1990s, eight in the 2000s, and two in the 2010s. Finally, for institution type, five of the films were set at HBCUs and the remaining 13 films were set at PWIs.

Next, character demographic data pertaining to characters' primary campus roles and student classifications—organized by the films' genre, decade of release, and institution type—were again provided using frequencies and percentages.

Utilizing the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), the chi-square test of independence was used to test for significant relationships ( $p < .05$ ) between the analyzed films' representations of Black male students and genre, decade of release, and institution type. Chi-square is a statistical test used to measure the association between two ordinal or nominal variables and “asks whether what you found (observed) is significantly different from what you would have expected to get by chance alone” (Nardi, 2006, p. 157). Nardi (2006) explains if the probability of obtaining a chi-square value by chance is less than .05, the researcher can conclude there is an association between the two variables by rejecting the null hypothesis of no association.

In the current study, the nominal variables of interest were the representations of Black male students—as measured by coded incident frequencies for brute, sambo, and empty space in representation categorizations—and genre, decade of release, and institution type. Guided by the quantitative research questions, the following hypotheses were tested:

2a. Is there a difference in how Black male students are represented based on the films' genre (i.e. comedy, drama)?

H<sub>0</sub>: College films' Black male student representations are independent of the films' genre.

H<sub>1</sub>: College films' Black male student representations are associated with the films' genre.

2b. Is there a difference in how Black male students are represented based on the films' decade of release?

H<sub>0</sub>: College films' Black male student representations are independent of the films' decade of release.

H<sub>1</sub>: College films' Black male student representations are associated with the films' decade of release.

2c. Is there a difference in how Black male students are represented based on the films' institution type (HBCU or PWI)?

H<sub>0</sub>: College films' Black male student representations are independent of the films' institution type.

H<sub>1</sub>: College films' Black male student representations are associated with the films' institution type.

Finally, because the chi-square test of independence only assesses whether or not a relationship exists among variables, the Cramer's V statistic was also generated using SPSS for significant chi-square values. Cramer's V measures the strength of a relationship between two nominal variables (Nardi, 2006). Nardi (2006) notes that, typically, Cramer's V "coefficients below .30 are considered weak, those between .30 and .70 are moderate, and those above .70 are fairly strong" (p. 162). He cautions, however, that defining the strength of the coefficient is relative in comparison to comparable studies and the size of the sample. Therefore, the researcher should use their informed judgment in interpreting generated Cramer's V coefficients.

### **Researcher Bias**

While the current study utilizes a mixed methods approach, its emphasis is on the qualitative component. In qualitative research, researcher bias serves as a threat to validity (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Therefore, it is imperative that qualitative researchers disclose information regarding their background and how their individual experiences may influence their interpretation of the data (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). As mentioned in Chapter One, I have a

personal attachment to the images of Black male students presented in *School Daze* and *A Different World* (Carsey & Werner, 1987). Growing up, as a young Black man, these images provided me with an idea of the Black male collegiate experience. Thus, the images of Black men presented via popular culture have always been of interest to me. This interest has carried over into my own research agenda—as I have completed several unpublished studies exploring media representations of Black men. As a result, my readings of popular culture’s representation of Black men have moved beyond a place of mere entertainment value and into a more critical space. With this in mind, in conducting this study, it was important to recognize that all viewers of media products may not use the same critical lens in interpreting the representations of Black men or Black masculinity. Similarly, they may not possess any attachments to the characters represented in these films. Recognizing my biases, the use of an additional coder, during interrater reliability procedures in the qualitative component of the study, aided in adding credibility to the findings of this study.

### **Conclusion**

Chapter Three outlined the convergent parallel mixed methods design utilized in exploring the representation of Black male students and Black masculinity in a sample of 18 college films. In the qualitative component of the study, qualitative content analysis was used to explore patterns in Black male student characters depictions—providing insight into the primary, least common, and new or rarely seen Black male representations in the films. In the quantitative component of the study, quantitative content analysis was used to identify what differences in Black male student representations exist when accounting for college films’ genre, decade of release, or institution type. In the following chapter, the associated findings and results are provided. The findings generated from this study provide insight into whether college films

perpetuate stereotypes or provide audiences with new or rarely seen representations of Black men in the media.



## **CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND RESULTS**

### **Introduction**

In this chapter, the generated findings and results of the study are presented. This study sought to explore the representations of Black male students and Black masculinity in college films and identify what differences in Black male student representations exist when accounting for college films' genre, decade of release, or institution type. In carrying out this research, a mixed methods content analysis approach was utilized. Specifically, this study incorporated a convergent parallel research design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). In the qualitative phase of the study, a directed content analysis approach (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) was used to determine the overall representation of Black male students in the analyzed films. In the quantitative phase of the study, chi-square tests of independence were performed to determine the relationship between the analyzed films' depictions of Black male students and Black masculinity with the films' genre, decade of release, and institution type.

### **Representation of Black Male Students and Black Masculinity**

The first research question was, "How are Black male students and Black masculinity represented in college films?" This question sought to determine the primary, least common, and non-stereotypical depictions of Black male students in the analyzed films. This was addressed in multiple ways. First, an analysis of the character demographics was conducted. Table 4.1 presents the characters' primary campus roles. This analysis involved determining the characters' campus identity based upon the primary activities they were associated with in the film. As displayed in Table 4.1, analyzed characters ( $N = 37$ ) fit into one of seven categories. It was determined that the majority of characters were classified as "Athlete" ( $n = 18, 48.6\%$ ). This was assessed based on the films' depiction of the characters participating on an intercollegiate sports

team (i.e. football, basketball, track and field, etc.) or possessing an athletic background. The second most commonly depicted campus role was “Greek Fraternity Member” ( $n = 7$ , 18.9%). Characters were categorized as fraternity members based on film depictions of their involvement in Greek pledging processes, step show involvement, etc. Characters categorized as “Just a Student” ( $n = 4$ , 10.8%) were depicted as students not primarily involved with intercollegiate sports teams or campus clubs or organizations. Instead these students were portrayed as attending classes, working, hanging out with friends, spending time with family, etc. The least common identified campus roles were “Student Leader/Activist” ( $n = 1$ , 2.7%), “Band Member” ( $n = 2$ , 5.4%), and “Multiple Campus Roles” ( $n = 2$ , 5.4%). “Multiple Campus Roles” refers to those characters with roles in multiple campus organizations. For example, *Senseless*’ (Weinstein et al., 1998), Darryl Weatherspoon was a member of his institution’s ice hockey team and also a Greek fraternity. Therefore, he could identify as, both, an “Athlete” and “Greek Fraternity Member.”

Table 4.1. Campus Roles of Black Male Students in College Films

Campus Role	Total	Percentage (%)
Athlete	18	48.6
Greek Fraternity Member	7	18.9
Just a Student	4	10.8
Debate Team Member	3	8.1
Multiple Campus Roles	2	5.4
Band Member	2	5.4
Student Leader/Activist	1	2.7

Note.  $N = 37$  total number of analyzed characters

Table 4.2 presents information pertaining to the analyzed characters’ student classification. As displayed, the majority of characters were categorized as “Freshman/First Year” students ( $n = 20$ , 48.8%). “Freshman/First Year” was used in reference to any characters entering college for the first time. The remaining characters were categorized as “Upperclassman” students ( $n = 17$ , 51.2%). “Upperclassman” was used in reference to any

characters beyond their first year at the institution (i.e. sophomore, junior, senior). The “Upperclassman” category also included any characters whose classification may not have been explicitly mentioned, but it was evident they were beyond their first year at the institution.

Table 4.2. Student Classifications of Black Male Students in College Films

Student Classification	Total	Percentage (%)
Freshman/First Year	20	54.1
Upperclassman	17	45.9

Note.  $N = 37$  total number of analyzed characters.

### Primary Depictions

Research Question 1a was, “What depictions of Black male students are represented most often in college films?” In conducting this research, 4,786 total incidents were recorded for 108 emergent depiction codes. After determining the percentage of recorded incidents—overall and in each individual film—the depiction codes were then ranked in descending order by their overall percentages. Figure 4.1 displays the associated percentages for the 15 depiction codes with the highest overall percentages, as well as the associated percentages for each individual film. Appendix C contains the associated percentages for all 108 codes.

As displayed in Figure 4.1, the most common depictions, overall, were “Happy/Content” and “Positive Relationships with Black Male Students” which, both, comprised 7.42% of all coded incidents. “Happy/Content” referred to instances in which the characters demonstrated a genuinely cheerful demeanor, showed pleasure or satisfaction, smiled, or laughed. *Accepted’s* (Shadyac, Bostick, & Pink, 2006) Hands Holloway had the highest percentage of coded incidents for “Happy/Content” (18.18%), as he was primarily portrayed as a student enjoying his time at the fictitious South Harmon Institute of Technology. *Revenge of the Nerds’* (Field, Samuelson, Macgregor-Scott, & Kanew, 1984) Lamar Latrelle also had a high percentage of coded incidents

Films	Happy/Content	Positive Relationships with Black Male Students	Positive Relationships with Non-Black Characters	Disappointment	Campus Club/Organization Involvement	Positive Relationships with Female Student Characters	Competitive	Following Rules/Listening to Authority	Hanging Out	Angry	Negative Relationships with Black Male Students	Breaking Rules/Challenging Authority	Humorous/Comedic	Aggressive	Loving/Caring
<b>Overall</b>	<b>7.42</b>	<b>7.42</b>	<b>5.54</b>	<b>4.87</b>	<b>3.68</b>	<b>3.30</b>	<b>3.11</b>	<b>2.95</b>	<b>2.88</b>	<b>2.78</b>	<b>2.70</b>	<b>2.55</b>	<b>2.44</b>	<b>2.24</b>	<b>2.24</b>
<i>Revenge of the Nerds</i>	13.83	--	18.09	5.32	10.64	--	2.13	1.06	4.26	--	--	1.06	--	--	--
<i>School Daze</i>	7.92	10.26	--	4.69	8.21	4.11	--	1.76	1.76	4.99	5.87	1.76	1.47	3.81	4.99
<i>House Party 2</i>	9.55	0.45	7.27	9.09	--	4.55	0.45	1.36	0.91	4.09	2.27	4.55	2.73	3.18	1.82
<i>The Program</i>	5.05	4.59	7.80	5.05	--	3.21	3.67	1.38	2.75	3.21	2.29	1.38	4.59	2.29	2.75
<i>Blue Chips</i>	7.77	11.17	12.62	2.91	--	--	11.65	8.74	0.49	0.97	--	2.43	2.43	1.46	--
<i>Higher Learning</i>	6.33	6.00	1.67	7.00	--	3.67	0.67	2.33	6.00	5.00	0.67	4.00	2.33	4.00	2.67
<i>The 6th Man</i>	6.10	5.49	5.49	5.49	--	4.27	5.49	4.88	4.27	1.83	1.83	0.61	3.66	1.83	4.88
<i>Senseless</i>	4.44	--	5.00	3.89	2.22	3.33	2.22	0.56	3.89	1.67	0.56	1.11	5.56	1.11	2.78
<i>The Skulls</i>	6.45	--	4.84	1.61	1.61	4.84	1.61	--	4.84	1.61	--	4.84	3.23	1.61	1.61
<i>How High</i>	6.19	6.42	4.82	4.13	0.92	2.75	0.69	2.06	3.90	2.98	0.46	3.21	4.36	2.52	1.83
<i>Drumline</i>	8.06	8.47	5.79	4.96	9.71	4.34	2.69	3.93	1.65	3.31	5.99	3.10	2.07	2.07	2.07
<i>Accepted</i>	18.18	--	21.21	3.03	--	--	--	--	4.55	--	--	9.09	1.52	--	--
<i>Glory Road</i>	8.21	12.45	9.44	4.10	--	1.09	6.02	4.51	2.46	2.46	1.37	3.03	2.74	1.78	0.82
<i>We Are Marshall</i>	7.87	7.87	12.60	7.09	--	--	2.36	3.94	2.36	4.72	0.79	4.72	0.79	2.36	2.36
<i>Stomp the Yard</i>	6.44	9.15	--	4.16	8.73	2.70	4.99	0.62	2.29	1.46	7.07	0.83	1.25	2.49	1.87
<i>The Great Debaters</i>	7.74	8.35	0.41	4.28	7.74	8.15	1.83	3.46	3.05	2.04	1.83	1.63	1.63	1.22	3.87
<i>Mooz-lum</i>	2.78	2.78	4.63	8.33	1.85	4.63	--	--	4.63	4.63	4.63	2.78	--	4.63	2.78
<i>From the Rough</i>	8.00	1.33	10.67	5.33	--	1.33	2.67	10.67	5.33	1.33	4.00	1.33	1.33	1.33	--

Figure 4.1. Highest Depiction Codes Ranked by Percentages. This figure displays data for the 15 highest ranked depiction codes ( $N = 108$ ). Notation of "--" indicates code was not present in associated films.

for “Happy/Content” (13.83%), as he also seemed to enjoy fraternizing with his fellow “nerds” in the Lambda Lambda Lambda fraternity. In contrast, *Mooz-lum’s* (Caruthers et al., 2011) Tariq Mahdi struggled with overcoming a difficult youth—as a result of his religion—which negatively influenced his adjustment to college. Therefore, *Mooz-lum’s* percentage of coded incidents for “Happy/Content” was much lower than the other analyzed films.

“Positive Relationships with Black Male Students” referred to instances in which the analyzed characters demonstrated supportive and encouraging relationships with other Black male students in the films. This code encompassed instances where Black male student characters bonded with one another, worked well together, developed genuine friendships, or supported each other during times of adversity. For this code, *Glory Road* (Bruckheimer & Gartner, 2006) had the highest percentage of coded incidents (12.45%). In the film, in order to reach the 1966 NCAA championship game, the seven players on Texas Western College’s basketball team had to encourage and support each other through hostile and adverse conditions stemming from the racial strife of that time. In *Blue Chips* (Shelton & Friedkin, 1994) (11.17%), the positive relationship among the films’ Black male student characters was most evident in their roles as teammates on Western University’s basketball team. In their quest to be successful on the court, the players had to practice and work well with one another. There were no “Positive Relationships with Black Male Students” coded incidents for *Nerds*, *Accepted*, *Senseless*, or *The Skulls* (Moritz, Pogue, & Cohen, 2000), as the analyzed character’s interaction with other Black male student characters was minimal to nonexistent.

The next most common depiction, overall, was “Positive Relationships with Non-Black Characters” (5.54%). Similar to “Positive Relationships with Black Male Students,” this code was used to signify positive interactions between the analyzed Black male student characters and non-

Black characters in the films. As mentioned above, *Accepted*'s Holloway and *Nerds*' Latrelle solely interacted with non-Black characters. As evident in Table 4, these interactions were primarily positive with coded incidents for *Accepted* and *Nerds* being 18.09% and 21.21%, respectively. There were no "Positive Relationships with Non-Black Characters" coded incidents for *School Daze* (Lee & Lee, 1988) or *Stomp the Yard* (Packer, Hardy, & White, 2007), as interaction with non-Black characters was either nonexistent or negative in these films.

"Disappointment" (4.87%) was used to code instances where analyzed characters demonstrated feelings of nonfulfillment, displeasure, frustration, pain, or discouragement. At approximately 9%, *House Party 2*'s (McHenry et al., 1991) Christopher "Kid" Robinson had the highest percentage of coded incidents for "Disappointment." Much of Robinson's disappointment stemmed from the series of events following the loss of his scholarship check. With his tuition unpaid, Kid loses access to university facilities and his campus job—as a result of not being a fully enrolled student. As a result of the issues he has with his religion, *Mooz-lum*'s Mahdi also often exhibited feelings of frustration and displeasure (8.33%). Mahdi's frustration was most evident when other Muslim students and a professor sought to include him in campus activities and practices aligned with their faith—which countered Mahdi's attempts to disassociate from the religion.

"Campus Club/Organization Involvement" (3.68%) referred to characters' involvement with extracurricular activities on campus. Examples included fraternity activities, band activities, debate team participation, and attending campus or school-related events. With much of *Nerds*' storyline revolving around the activities of Lambda Lambda Lambda Fraternity, Latrelle's coded incidents for "Campus Club/Organization Involvement" were over 10%. Similarly, with their storylines centering on Atlanta A&T University's marching band and the Theta Nu Theta

Fraternity step team at Truth University, *Drumline* (Austin et al., 2002) and *Stomp the Yard*, both, resulted in a high percentage of coded “Campus Club/Organization Involvement” incidents—at 9.71% and 8.73%, respectively.

“Positive Relationships with Female Student Characters” (3.30%) referred to instances in which the analyzed characters engaged in loving, supportive, or encouraging relationships with female student characters. The relationships could be, both, romantic and platonic. Compared with all of the analyzed films, *The Great Debaters* (Winfrey et al., 2007) had a considerably higher percentage of coded incidents (8.15%) for the “Positive Relationships with Female Student Characters” code. In the film, Henry Lowe, Hamilton Burgess, and James Farmer, Jr. all develop genuine friendships with Samantha Boone through their participation on the Wiley College debate team. Lowe and Boone eventually become romantically involved. After *The Great Debaters*, *The Skulls* had the next highest percentage of “Positive Relationships with Female Student Characters” coded incidents (4.84%). Although his presence in the film was limited, *The Skulls*’ Will Beckford had a positive friendship with the lead female student character.

“Competitive” was used to denote instances in which the analyzed characters challenged the skills, talents, or abilities of another character within the film. The competitive nature of the analyzed characters was primarily evident in an athletic context, as the three films with the highest individual “Competitive” coded incident percentages were all sports-related films—*Blue Chips* (11.65%), *Glory Road* (6.02%), and *The 6th Man* (Hoberman & Miller, 1997) (5.49%). Based on their focus on winning a national step competition, the competitive nature of *Stomp the Yard*’s DJ Williams, Grant, Zeke, and Sylvester also led to a substantial percentage of “Competitive” coded incidents (4.99%).

“Following Rules/Listening to Authority” (2.95%) referred to instances in which the analyzed characters willingly followed rules established by a controlling body or conformed to the desires of an authority figure. For this code, *From the Rough* (Bagley, Critelli, Hooks, & Bagley, 2014) had the highest percentage of coded incidents (10.67%). In the film, Craig—a member of Tennessee State University’s golf team—regularly followed the direction and instruction of his head coach. He very rarely challenged her authority. Similarly, the analyzed characters in *Blue Chips* also followed the instruction of their head coach—also leading to a higher percentage of “Following Rules/Listening to Authority” coded incidents (8.74%). No instances of analyzed characters willingly following the rules or listening to authority figures were coded for *The Skulls*, *Accepted*, or *Mooz-lum*.

“Hanging Out” (2.88%) was used to indicate instances in which the analyzed characters spent time with friends, family members, or others discussing non-academic matters. Of the films analyzed, *Higher Learning* (Singleton, Hall, & Singleton, 1995) had the highest percentage of “Hanging Out” coded incidents (6.00%). In the film, Fudge’s apartment was the central hang out spot for many of the Black students attending Columbus University. The film contained several scenes where Fudge’s apartment serves as host to student gatherings or parties, functions as a meeting spot for the students to discuss current situations or events, and provides students with a space to study or complete class assignments. Representations of characters hanging out were less common in, both, *Blue Chips* (0.49%) and *House Party 2* (0.91%).

Whenever a character was depicted as hostile, full of rage, quick-tempered, or yelling, his actions were coded as “Angry” (2.78%). The analyzed characters in *Higher Learning* and *School Daze* exhibited comparable levels of anger—5.00% and 4.99%, respectively. In *Higher Learning*, much of Fudge and Malik’s anger stemmed from race related incidents that pitted



Columbus University's Black students against a group of students belonging to a White supremacist group. Such incidents eventually led to a physical altercation between the groups and a campus shooting. In *School Daze*, much of Dap and Julian's anger stemmed from their personal issues with each other. In the film, Dap often found himself at odds with members of Mission College's Black fraternities and sororities—namely the fictitious Gamma Phi Gamma fraternity. As Gamma Phi Gamma's Dean of Pledges, Julian served as Dap's primary nemesis. The two frequently clashed over Black identity and culture issues. There were no instances in which the analyzed characters in *Nerds* and *Accepted* expressed anger.

“Negative Relationships with Black Male Students” (2.70%) referred to instances in which the analyzed characters experienced negative interactions with other Black male student characters. Examples of negative relationships included strenuous relationships, tension, physical attacks, and heated verbal exchanges. For this code, *Stomp the Yard* had the highest percentage of coded incidents (7.07%). In the film, tension existed between Theta Nu Theta and Mu Gamma Xi—two rival fraternities focused on winning a national step competition. Further, the film's main character—DJ Williams—also initially clashed with members of both fraternities, due to his own arrogance and lack of knowledge of Black Greek-lettered organizations' customs and traditions. *Drumline* also had a high percentage of “Negative Relationships with Black Male Students” coded incidents (5.99%). Similar to *Stomp the Yard*'s Williams, the arrogant attitude of Devon Miles—a new drummer in Atlanta A&T's marching band—led to a strenuous relationship Sean Taylor—the band's percussion section leader. The previously mentioned tension between *School Daze*'s Dap and Julian also led to a high percentage of coded incidents for the film (5.87%). It should be noted, however, that in many instances where relationships

between Black male students began as negative, all issues were typically resolved—leading to positive relationships by then end of the film.

“Breaking Rules/Challenging Authority” (2.55%) referred to instances in which the analyzed characters knowingly challenged the rules or directions of an authority figure. For this code, *Accepted* had the highest percentage of coded incidents (9.09%). This higher percentage was largely attributed to Hands Holloway’s role in establishing the fake South Harmon Institute of Technology. In *The Skulls* (4.84%), Will Beckford broke into an automobile and a private location, all in an attempt to expose The Skulls—a secret society on his campus. Instances in which the analyzed characters either broke established rules or challenged authority figures were less frequent in *The 6<sup>th</sup> Man* (0.61%) and *Stomp the Yard* (0.83%).

“Humorous/Comedic” (2.44%) was used to denote instances in which the analyzed characters either told jokes or caused laughter or amusement. Of the films analyzed, *Senseless* had the highest percentage of “Humorous/Comedic” coded incidents (5.56%). In the film, Darryl Witherspoon took part in an experiment paying participants to test a drug enhancing the five senses. Recognizing the advantage the drug gives him in an internship competition, he decided to take an extra dosage—which causes an adverse effect and leads to a series of comedic episodes during the duration of the film. There were no “Humorous/Comedic” coded incidents for either *Nerds* or *Mooz-lum*.

Whenever a character was depicted as confrontational, violent, or ready to fight or argue, his actions were coded as “Aggressive” (2.24%). Of all the characters included in this analysis, *Mooz-lum*’s Mahdi had the highest percentage of “Aggressive” coded incidents (4.63%). As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Mahdi was combative with other characters forcing him to perform practices aligned with the Muslim religion. Primarily due to Fudge and Malik’s

eagerness to confront race-related incidents on their campus, *Higher Learning* also had a substantial percentage of “Aggressive” coded incidents (4.00%). There were no instances in which *Nerds*’ Latrelle and *Accepted*’s Holloway exhibited any aggressive behaviors.

“Loving/Caring” (2.24%) referred to instances in which the analyzed characters were affectionate, displayed kindness, and supported or encouraged another character.

“Loving/Caring” behavior could be in either a romantic or platonic context. Thus, this behavior also included depictions of supportive or encouraging relationships among male characters. The analyzed characters in *School Daze* and *The 6<sup>th</sup> Man* generated a substantial amount of “Loving/Caring” coded incidents—4.99% and 4.88%, respectively. While tension existed between *School Daze*’s Dap and Julian, within their respective circles of friends, they were surrounded with other Black male students that encouraged and supported each other. The two were also primarily affectionate towards their romantic interests in the film. In *The 6<sup>th</sup> Man*, Kenny Tyler was affectionate and loving towards, both, his romantic interest and the ghost of his deceased brother. There were no depictions of loving or caring behaviors in *Nerds*, *Blue Chips*, *Accepted*, or *From the Rough*.

### **Least Common Depictions**

Research Question 1b was, “What depictions of Black male students are represented least often in college films?” In addressing this question, the 108 depiction codes were ranked in ascending order by their overall percentages. Figure 4.2 displays the associated percentages for the 15 depiction codes with the lowest overall percentages, as well as the associated percentages for each individual film. Again, Appendix C contains the associated percentages for all 108 codes.

Films	History of Course Withdrawals/Incompletes	Remedial Courses	Pre-College Academic Struggles	Identity Document Forgery	College as Alternative	Sexual Experience Admiration	Leaving College for Professional Sports	Extended Time in School	Academic Probation	Difficulty Completing Assignments	Loss of Access to Campus Facilities	Overcompensation	Activism Admiration	Music Knowledge/Abilities Admiration	Seeking Accreditation for College
Overall	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.04
<i>Revenge of the Nerds</i>	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
<i>School Daze</i>	--	--	--	--	--	0.29	--	--	--	--	--	--	0.59	--	--
<i>House Party 2</i>	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0.91	--	--	--	--
<i>The Program</i>	0.46	0.46	0.46	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0.92	--	--	--
<i>Blue Chips</i>	--	--	--	--	--	--	0.97	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
<i>Higher Learning</i>	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0.33	--	0.67	--	--	--	--	--
<i>The 6<sup>th</sup> Man</i>	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
<i>Senseless</i>	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
<i>The Skulls</i>	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
<i>How High</i>	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0.23	0.46	--	--	--	--	--	--
<i>Drumline</i>	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0.41	--
<i>Accepted</i>	--	--	--	1.52	1.52	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	3.03
<i>Glory Road</i>	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
<i>We Are Marshall</i>	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
<i>Stomp the Yard</i>	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
<i>The Great Debaters</i>	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
<i>Mooz-lum</i>	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
<i>From the Rough</i>	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Figure 4.2. Lowest Depiction Codes Ranked by Percentages. This figure displays data for the 15 lowest ranked depiction codes ( $N = 108$ ). Notation of "--" indicates code was not present in associated films.

As displayed in Figure 4.2, six codes recorded the smallest percentage of coded incidents (0.02%). Three of the codes—“History of Course Withdrawals/Incompletes,” “Remedial Courses,” and “Pre-College Academic Struggles”—emerged from *The Program* (Rothman, Henderson, Goldwyn, & Ward, 1993). “History of Course Withdrawals/Incompletes” (0.46%) referred to instances in which a trend of withdrawing from college courses due to poor performance was mentioned. In the film, during a disciplinary hearing for another player, it was mentioned that Alvin Mack repeatedly withdrew from courses in which he consistently received poor grades. “Remedial Courses” (0.46%) referred to instances in which characters were required to take courses designed to assist students with basic skills. As a result of failing his college entrance exams, an academic counselor at the institution informed Darnell Jefferson that he would need to enroll in offered remedial courses and find a tutor. “Pre-College Academic Struggles” (0.46%) referred to any academic challenges the character may have faced prior to arriving at college. In a scene with his romantic interest, Jefferson informed her: “I’m not as young as you think I am, they held me back a year.” As a freshman student, it was evident that Jefferson had to repeat a grade prior to arriving at Eastern State University.

Two of the six codes—“Identity Document Forgery” and “College as Alternative”—emerged from *Accepted*. “Identity Document Forgery” (1.52%) referred to the modification of government issued documents with the purpose of deceiving others. In the film, Hands Holloway assisted his friend Bartleby Gaines with creating fake IDs for other underage students. “College as Alternative” (1.52%) referred to the mentioning of college attendance as an alternative to an undesirable job opportunity. In a scene in which Holloway is hanging out with two of his friends, Holloway mentioned that, due to his athletic scholarship being taken away by an existing university, his dad expected him to get his own bus route. Therefore, he needed Gaines to

provide him with a college acceptance letter—even if it originated from a non-existent university—to avoid a job working as a bus driver.

“Sexual Experience Admiration”—the final of the lowest codes—referred to instances in which the analyzed characters were admired or respected based on a sexual experience. In *School Daze* (0.29%), Julian was adamant about “not pledging any virgins.” Although the statement applied to all pledgees on the Gamma Phi Gamma pledge line, it was primarily directed at Half-Pint. Despite remaining a virgin, Half-Pint was initiated into the fraternity. Following his formal initiation into the fraternity, however, Julian orchestrated an opportunity for Half-Pint to lose his virginity to Jane Touissant—Julian’s current girlfriend. As Half-Pint and Jane walked into the bedroom, one of Half-Pint’s pledge brothers stated: “[This is the] First time I ever wished I was Half-Pint.”

As displayed in Table 5, nine codes recorded the second smallest percentage of coded incidents (0.04%). “Leaving College for Professional Sports” referred to instances in which the analyzed characters left college early to pursue a career in professional sports. At the end of *Blue Chips* (0.97%), it was revealed that, both, Butch McRae and Neon Boudeaux left Western University after their freshman year to pursue careers in the National Basketball Association (NBA).

“Extended Time in School” referred to the mentioning of analyzed characters being enrolled in college for an extensive number of years. In *Higher Learning* (0.33%), Fudge was referred to as a “super-duper senior”—having been enrolled at Columbus University six years and not graduating within that time. In *How High* (Abdy et al., 2001) (0.23%), Jamal’s mother chastised him for attending community college for six years without receiving a diploma. Later

in the film, Jamal mentioned that if he could pull off six years at a community college he knew he could pull off 12 years while at Harvard University.

In addition to “Extended Time in School,” “Academic Probation” also emerged from *How High* (0.46%). “Academic Probation” referred to instances in which the analyzed characters were placed on academic probation due to poor grades or violating some other academic policy or rule. In *How High*, Jamal and Silas were both placed on academic probation after failing their midterm examinations.

“Difficulty Completing Assignments” was used to denote instances in which the analyzed characters struggled with writing papers or completing homework assignments. In *Higher Learning* (0.67%), Malik struggled with completing an assigned paper. In one scene, Malik approached his professor about a low grade received on an assignment. The professor informed him the deductions on his assignment were attributed to his poor paper structure, grammatical errors, and misspellings. In another scene, Malik’s girlfriend pointed out his errors in writing an essay and helped him refine his writing approach.

“Loss of Access to Facilities” emerged from *House Party 2* (0.91%). The code referred to instances in which the analyzed characters lost access to campus facilities (i.e. library, cafeteria, etc.). As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Christopher Robinson experienced several academic challenges following the loss of his tuition check. Due to non-payment of his tuition, Robinson was unable to utilize the library and cafeteria. As a result, Robinson’s roommate snuck checked out books and food to him.

“Overcompensation” was used to refer to instances in which the analyzed characters took excessive or drastic measures to overcome feelings of academic inferiority or inadequacy. In *The Program* (0.92%), Jefferson took it upon himself to learn a “big” word everyday. While the

effort was commendable, he repeatedly used the words incorrectly. Growing tired of his misuse of the words, Jefferson's romantic interest eventually called him out on his improper language. Further, she informed him that using the words incorrectly made him appear "stupid."

"Activism Admiration" referred to instances in which the analyzed characters were admired for their social consciousness and/or speaking out in support of/against a cause or issue. In *School Daze* (0.59%), members of the Mission College student body admired Dap for his political consciousness, ability to lead anti-apartheid demonstrations, and position on students and administrators divesting from South Africa in protest of apartheid. Students' admiration for Dap was evident in the number of individuals participating in his demonstrations and was even verbalized by female students in one of the film's scenes.

"Music Knowledge/Abilities Admiration" emerged from the analyzed characters in *Drumline* (0.41%). The code referred to instances in which the characters were admired or respected for their musical skills or abilities. Despite their initial tension, *Drumline*'s Sean Taylor and Devon Miles grew to admire and respect each other's musical talents. After working together on a drum cadence for the band's upcoming band competition, the two were vocal in commending the value they both brought to putting the cadence together. Taylor admired Miles for coming up with the concept and the degree of difficulty he added to the cadence, while Miles was appreciative of the structure and musicality Taylor added.

"Seeking Accreditation for College"—the final of the second lowest codes—emerged from *Accepted* (3.03%). The code referred to instances in which the analyzed characters engaged in activities geared towards gaining accreditation for an institution of higher education. After it was revealed that they were operating a fake college, Hands Holloway and his friends had to



appear before a governing board seeking accreditation for their South Harmon Institute of Technology.

### Non-Stereotypical Representations

Research Question 1c was, “What non-stereotypical depictions or rarely seen representations of Black males are depicted in college films?” In order to assess the identified representations, the 108 depiction codes were organized and categorized based upon my understanding of the brute and sambo characterizations. All codes not meeting either of these characterizations were categorized as those fulfilling the empty space in representation—comprised of non-stereotypical or rarely seen representations. Overall, the majority of depiction codes were categorized as either brute ( $n = 53$ ) or empty space in representation ( $n = 40$ ). The remaining 15 codes comprised the sambo characterization.

Table 4.3 displays the brute depiction codes. Of the codes, “Disappointment” (4.87%) was the brute depiction found most often across films. Five codes comprised the least common brute depictions (0.02%): “History of Course Withdrawals/Incompletes,” “Remedial Courses,” “Pre-College Academic Struggles,” “Identity Document Forgery,” and “Sexual Experience Admiration.”

Table 4.3. Brute Depiction Codes

Brute Codes ( $n = 53$ )		
• Disappointment	• Athletic Admiration	• Mention of Alternatives to College Attendance
• Competitive	• Shirtless	• Undergarments
• Angry	• Discussing Romantic/Sexual Pursuit	• Assault
• Negative Relationships with Black Male Students	• Trespassing/Burglary	• Arrested/Police Interaction
• Breaking Rules/Challenging Authority	• Sexual Activity/Implied Sexual Activity	• Illiterate

Table 4.3 (continued)

Brute Codes ( <i>n</i> =53)		
• Aggressive	• Receiving Poor Grades/Low Scores	• Death
• Negative Relationships with Non-Black Characters	• Performing Other Tasks During Class	• Falsifying Documents
• Arrogant	• Theft	• Loss of Access to Campus Facilities
• Non-Intercollegiate Sports Participation	• No Interest in Class/Subjects	• Difficulty Completing Assignments
• Partying	• Groping	• Academic Probation
• Flirting	• Cheating	• Extended Time in School
• Punished for Breaking Rules/Challenging Authority	• Test Taking Struggles	• Leaving College for Professional Sports
• Threatening	• Falling Asleep/Sleeping During Class	• Sexual Experience Admiration
• Negative Relationships with Female Student Characters	• Partial Nudity/Nudity-Non-Sexual	• Identity Document Forgery
• Discussing Sexual Experiences	• Partial Nudity/Nudity-Sexual	• Pre-College Academic Struggles
• Drug Use	• Sports Violations	• Remedial Courses
• Conniving	• Criminal Record	• History of Course Withdrawals/Incompletes
• Sexual Innuendo	• Loss of Scholarship/Tuition/Financial Aid	

Note. *N* = 108 overall depiction codes.

Table 4.4 displays the empty space in representation depiction codes. “Happy/Content” (7.42%) and “Positive Relationships with Non-Black Characters” (7.42%) were the empty space in representation depictions found most often across films. “College as Alternative” (0.02%) was the least common empty space in representation depiction.

Table 4.4. Empty Space in Representation Depiction Codes

Empty Space in Representation Codes ( <i>n</i> = 40)		
• Happy/Content	• Kissing	• Courage Admiration
• Positive Relationships with Black Male Students	• Hugging	• Performing Well to Make Someone Proud
• Positive Relationships with Non-Black Characters	• Studying	• Academic Success Admiration
• Campus Club/Organization Involvement	• Dating	• Family Admiration
• Positive Relationships with Female Student Characters	• Curious/Inquisitive	• Taking Tests/Exams
• Hanging Out	• Making Sacrifices to Attend College	• Creative
• Loving/Caring	• Paying Attention in Class	• Graduating
• Leader	• Spiritual/Religious	• Incorrectly Answering Questions
• Passionate	• Correctly Answering Questions	• Mention of How College Will Benefit Future
• Reflective	• Receiving Good Grades/High Scores	• Seeking Accreditation for College
• Intelligent/Intellectual	• Holding Hands	• Activism Admiration
• Professor Interaction	• Lonely	• College as Alternative
• Sad	• Verbal Expression of College Appreciation	
• Courageous	• Provider	

Note. *N* = 108 overall depiction codes.

Table 4.5 displays the sambo depiction codes. “Following Rules/Listening to Authority” (2.95%) was the sambo depiction found most often across films. “Overcompensation” (0.04%) was the least common sambo depiction.

After organizing the 108 codes into the appropriate characterization categories (i.e. brute, sambo, empty space in representation), frequencies of coded incidents for each category’s associated depictions were computed (Table 4.6). Findings revealed that the majority of coded

incidents were associated with the empty space in representation category ( $n = 2,314$ , 48.35%). Findings revealed that the majority of coded incidents were associated with the empty space in representation category ( $n = 2,314$ , 48.35%). The brute category comprised the next largest group ( $n = 1,703$ , 35.58%).

Table 4.5. Sambo Depiction Codes

Sambo Codes ( $n = 15$ )		
• Following Rules/Listening to Authority	• Entertaining- Sports	• Entertaining- Singing
• Humorous/Comedic	• Entertaining- Dancing	• Rewarded for Following Rules
• Friendly	• Emasculated	• Dance Knowledge/Abilities Admiration
• Guarded/Cautious	• Entertaining- Music	• Music Knowledge/Abilities Admiration
• Fearful	• Childlike	• Overcompensation

Note.  $N = 108$  overall depiction codes.

Table 4.6. Frequency of Characterization Code Categorizations

	Brute	Empty Space in Representation	Sambo	Total
Number	1,703	2,314	769	4,786
Percentage	35.58%	48.35%	16.07%	100.00%

Note.  $N = 4,786$  total depiction code incidents.

Closer examination of the codes occupying the empty space in representation category, as displayed in Table 4.4, revealed seven non-stereotypical depictions or rarely seen representations of Black men in film: Interpersonal, Emotional, Loving, Academically Engaged, Leader and Role Model, Thoughtful, and Spiritual.

**Interpersonal.** Based on the large number of incidents coded for, both, “Positive Relationships with Black Male Students” ( $n = 355$ ) and “Positive Relationships with Non-Black Characters” ( $n = 265$ ), it was apparent the analyzed characters valued relationships with others and demonstrated effective interpersonal or social skills—regardless of the race of those they

interacted with. As described earlier in this chapter, both codes referred to instances in which Black male student characters engaged in positive interactions and/or supportive relationships with other characters. Even in instances where the Black male student characters exhibited tense or negative interactions with other characters, all lingering issues were generally resolved by the conclusion of the film. For example, *Glory Road*'s Bobby Joe Hill initially clashed with his White coach, White teammates, as well as David Lattin—another Black player on Texas Western's basketball team. By the conclusion of the film, however, Hill was able to find common ground with the other characters and lead his team to the 1966 NCAA men's basketball tournament. Similarly, *Stomp the Yard*'s DJ Williams was also able to work through personal issues and successfully lead Theta Nu Theta's step team to victory. Both examples highlight how analyzed characters' positive interactions with other characters led to desirable outcomes—a common theme across films.

Further, characters' interpersonal skills were shown in, both, structured and less-structured contexts. From a structured perspective, characters' interpersonal skills were apparent through their campus involvement. For example, depictions of characters' involvement with sports teams (i.e. *Blue Chips*, *From the Rough*, *Glory Road*, *The 6<sup>th</sup> Man*, etc.), Greek fraternities (i.e. *Revenge of the Nerds*, *Stomp the Yard*, etc.), university marching band (*Drumline*), and a debate team (*The Great Debaters*) all emphasized the analyzed characters' abilities to effectively work with others towards a common goal—victory in some form of a competitive field. From a less-structured perspective, characters' interpersonal skills were evident in depictions of time spent hanging out with their friends and peers. In nearly all of the analyzed films, Black male student characters regularly spent time with their peers discussing non-academic related issues. In many instances, the Black male students' relationships with their peers served as a source of

support and encouragement. This further highlights the critical role Black male student characters' relationships with others played in their overall experiences.

**Emotional.** While emotions and behaviors consistent with stereotypical representations of Black men (i.e. “angry,” “aggressive,” “threatening,” etc.) persisted in the analyzed films, Black male student characters also expressed emotions that countered such representations. For the most part, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, analyzed characters were represented as genuinely happy. Characters expressed their happiness by exhibiting a cheerful demeanor, showing pleasure or satisfaction in current events or situations, and smiling or laughing. Even in the midst of hostile or undesirable situations—such as the racial unrest and discrimination present in both *Glory Road* and *The Great Debaters*—the characters were still able to find moments of joy and pleasure.

Characters were also represented as being passionate about something relevant to their situation or experience. Whenever a character displayed strong feelings or beliefs about or exhibited dedication towards something, their actions were regarded as passionate. Passion was expressed differently across films. For example, some characters were passionate about their extracurricular activities (i.e. athletics, music, dance, etc.). Other characters displayed their passion for educating their peers on varying political or societal issues. For example, *School Daze*'s Dap was dedicated to informing students and administrators on political issues in South Africa, as well as the importance of maintaining their Black identity. In *Higher Learning*, Fudge also took it upon himself to educate other Black students about Black history and racial dynamics prevalent on the Columbus University campus.

Analyzed characters also expressed emotions that exposed or revealed their innermost feelings. In several films, characters were depicted as experiencing situations resulting in sadness

(i.e. crying, sorrow, grief, etc.). For example, in *Stomp the Yard*, *The 6<sup>th</sup> Man*, *We Are Marshall* (McG, Iwanyk, & McG, 2006), and *Higher Learning*, Black male student characters all cried following the sudden and tragic deaths of loved ones. The sorrow depicted in *The Great Debaters* and *Glory Road*, again, primarily stemmed from racial incidents characters encountered in the film. The heaviness and sadness *Mooz-lum*'s Tariq Mahdi carried throughout most of the film resulted from the physical and mental abuse inflicted upon him by Muslim leaders during his childhood.

In addition to expressions of sadness, characters also exhibited characteristics of loneliness. Loneliness referred to instances in which the characters were either depicted as outcasts or impacted by feelings of isolation or abandonment. In *Stomp the Yard* and *Drumline*, the loneliness experienced by DJ Williams and Devon Miles, respectively, was largely attributed to their arrogance. Due to Williams and Miles' self-absorbed behaviors, their peers, at various points in the films, disregarded both characters. Depictions of loneliness in, both, *We Are Marshall* and *The 6<sup>th</sup> Man* stemmed from characters grieving the loss of their loved ones.

**Loving.** In twelve of the eighteen films, analyzed Black male student characters were romantically involved with female student characters. With these relationships being primarily positive, Black male students were often shown displaying their affection for their love interests—with frequent depictions of the characters hugging, kissing, and holding hands with the films' female leads. While the female leads often served as sources of support and encouragement for their male counterparts, there were instances in which Black male student characters returned the same level of support. For example, in *The Program*, Darnell Jefferson insisted that Autumn leave her cheating boyfriend and pursue a relationship with him—a request to which she eventually complied. In another instance, *Drumline*'s Devon Miles encouraged his

girlfriend Laila to follow her passion and change her major from philosophy to dance. Many of the shown romantic relationships were new or in their early stages. As a result, representations often depicted the beginning phases of relationships—initial interest, first dates, minor conflicts, and the steps taken to resolve any conflicts and rekindle their relationships.

The loving and caring nature of the analyzed characters also extended to their relationships with their male peers. Characters across the films were often depicted demonstrating their concern, showing support, and looking out for those close to them. In *The Great Debaters*, Henry Lowe and James Farmer, Jr. supported and encouraged each other in times of adversity while on the debate competition circuit. In *School Daze*, Dap was genuinely concerned with and invested in the well being of his cousin Half Pint—while the latter was taking part in the Gamma Phi Gamma Fraternity pledge process. Finally, the seven basketball players in *Glory Road*—Bobby Joe Hill, David Lattin, Henry Flourney, Nevil Shed, Willie Cager, Willie Worsley, and Orsten Artis—all supported each other in dealing with race related incidents they frequently encountered.

**Academically Engaged.** With the analyzed films set in collegiate environments, characters' academic experiences were also represented. As a result, characters were depicted as educated and academically inclined. Depictions included characters interacting with professors and university administrators, studying, participating in class, taking tests and exams, and receiving good grades or high test scores. Several of these academic experiences provided very rarely seen representations of Black males. First, *How High*'s Silas P. Silas conducted scientific experiments at Harvard University and devised ways to utilize marijuana to treat common ailments. In *Accepted*, Hands Holloway and friends appeared before a governing board seeking accreditation for the college they established. Finally, and most importantly, in *Higher Learning*,



*Senseless*, *Blue Chips*, and *We Are Marshall* it was either depicted or mentioned that select Black male student characters graduated from their institution.

Characters also demonstrated a genuine appreciation of a college education. In some instances, this appreciation was evident in characters' desires to make someone else proud (i.e. *House Party 2*, *The Program*, etc.), acknowledgement of how a college education would benefit their future (i.e. *Higher Learning*, *How High*, etc.), or college serving as an alternative to a less desirable employment track (*Accepted*). Further, characters in *Glory Road*, *Stomp the Yard*, *The Program*, *House Party 2*, *How High*, and *The Great Debaters* all verbally expressed their appreciation of college. In conversation with his professor, *The Great Debaters*' Henry Lowe was asked why he continued to return to Wiley College after personal leaves of absence. Lowe replied: "School's the only place you can read all day...except prison." Black male student characters' appreciation was also evident in the sacrifices made to continue their college attendance, such as *Senseless*' Darryl Weatherspoon working various odd jobs to, not only, cover his college expenses, but also provide financial support to his single mother and younger siblings. In short, analyzed Black male student characters valued their college education and the opportunities their education provided for themselves and those closest to them.

**Leader and Role Model.** Based on some of their actions and abilities to inspire others, a number of the analyzed characters were also portrayed as leaders who garnered the admiration of others and, in some instances, served as role models. Characters' depictions of leadership were reflected differently across films. For example, characters' leadership was reflected in a sporting context in *We Are Marshall*, *The Skulls*, and *The Program*, while Devon Miles and Sean Taylor's musical skills and abilities placed them in leadership roles in *Drumline*. Similarly, *Stomp the Yard*'s DJ Williams garnered the respect of his fraternity brothers based on his dance knowledge

and abilities. Characters' college attendance gained admiration from family members in *The Program* and *Senseless*. Collectively, the seven basketball players depicted in *Glory Road* served as an inspiration to others based on their athletic success, but more significantly for the courage they displayed in times of racial unrest. Comparably, *The Great Debaters*' Henry Lowe, James Farmer, Jr., and Hamilton Burgess were admired and celebrated for their debate team victories—in the midst of racial discrimination. Finally, *School Daze*'s Dap was respected by his peers for his willingness to step up and speak out against causes he found detrimental to the Black race.

**Thoughtful.** Characters were also depicted as deep in thought, reflective, inquisitive, and creative. In *Higher Learning*, both, Fudge and Malik Williams were often shown reflecting on race-related issues and the campus climate at their institution. Much of the reflection portrayed in *We Are Marshall*, *The Sixth Man*, and *Stomp the Yard* stemmed from grief, following the loss of loved ones. In some instances, characters also channeled their thoughts into outlets that reflected their creativity. For example, in *How High*, Silas P. Silas conducted a scientific experiment producing a truth serum largely comprised of marijuana, while *Accepted*'s Hands Holloway conveyed his creativity through woodcarving and sculpting.

Characters' thoughtfulness was also reflected in their consideration of others—which also ties back to their value of personal relationships. Specifically, characters' thoughtfulness was reflected in their desire to serve as providers for their single mother helmed families. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, *Senseless*' Darryl Weatherspoon worked countless jobs to provide financial support to his mother. Similarly, in a conversation with Coach Don Haskins, *Glory Road*'s Willie Cager mentioned having to work to support his mother and younger siblings. Finally, *The Program*'s Alvin Mack was determined to make it to the National Football League (NFL) to provide a better way of life for his mother and younger sisters.

**Spiritual.** In several of the analyzed films, characters' spirituality was also represented. In the films, characters acknowledged a higher being, prayed, or attended religious services or gatherings. Primarily focusing on his negative experiences with the religion, *Mooz-lum* largely centered on Tariq Mahdi's relationship with his Muslim faith. In, both, *Glory Road* and *Stomp the Yard*, characters collectively prayed before competitive events—a basketball game and Greek step competition, respectively. Finally, *The Great Debaters*' James Farmer, Jr. and *House Party 2*'s Christopher Robinson, both, attended church services in the films.

### **Reliability**

In order to establish interrater reliability, an approach employed in a similar study analyzing romantic comedy films was utilized (Johnson & Holmes, 2009). First, a coding manual was developed from the 108 depiction codes presented in Appendix B (Appendix D). In the coding manual, each of the depiction codes was organized into 20 composite codes. A second coder—a Black male doctoral student—was then trained on the coding manual. Training consisted of providing and explaining coding instructions, discussing composite codes and their associated definitions, revising and clarifying any confusing codes or definitions, and collaborating on the coding of characters not included in the final reliability sample (Johnson & Holmes, 2009). Once agreement was established with the second coder on the training reliability sample, the second coder independently coded two films (approximately 10% of the 18 included films in the current study)—*How High* and *Higher Learning*. These specific films were chosen because they included a total of four analyzed characters (approximately 10% of the 37 characters included in the overall current study), represented both comedy and drama genres, and were released in two separate decades (1990s and 2000s).

Similar to Johnson and Holmes' (2009) approach, coding judgments consisted of composite codes being present or absent within each DVD chapter. In justifying this approach, the researchers explained:

This approach was chosen because the focus of this study was to identify relationship behaviors and actions. By focusing coding judgments on the presence and absence and therefore on recognition, a high interrater reliability rating suggests that others can recognize and interpret these behaviors and actions in the same way. (p. 366)

Therefore, focusing on the presence or absence of composite codes, in the current study, a high interrater reliability suggested that others interpreted analyzed characters' depictions in the same way.

Interrater reliability was measured for each composite code using, both, simple agreement and Cohen's kappa. For simple agreement, values ranged from 80% to 100%—with an average of 90.8%. For Cohen's kappa, "Scores between .41 and .60 are considered moderate interrater reliability, .61 and .80 as substantial, and .81 and above as almost perfect" (Johnson & Holmes, 2009, p. 366). Three of the 20 composite codes reached the "almost perfect" threshold, while 12 of the composite codes reached the substantial level. The remaining five composite codes all had moderate Cohen's kappa scores. The average Cohen's kappa score was 0.69.

Interrater reliability results are presented in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7. Composite Code Interrater Reliability Values

Composite Code	Simple Agreement*	Cohen's Kappa Score**
Academic Involvement	90.0%	0.73
Personality Traits	80.0%	0.60
Demonstrated Behaviors	80.0%	0.61
Emotional Expression	91.1%	0.80
Role Model/Admiration	97.8%	0.49
Appreciation/Value of College Education	90.0%	0.47
Relationship with Rules/Authority	86.7%	0.72
Relationships with Black Male Students	93.3%	0.87
Entertaining/Performing	94.4%	0.42
Lack of Interest in College/Academics	96.7%	0.78

Table 4.7 (continued)

Composite Code	Simple Agreement*	Cohen's Kappa Score**
Relationships with Non-Black Characters	91.1%	0.82
Relationships with Female Student Characters	90.0%	0.75
Romantic/Sexual Actions	88.9%	0.60
Sexual Talk/Discussion	90.0%	0.65
Partial Nudity/Nudity	98.9%	0.66
Social Experiences	83.3%	0.67
Criminal/Illegal Activity	84.4%	0.66
Academic Dishonesty	97.8%	0.79
Academic Struggles	92.2%	0.62
Leaving School	100.0%	1.00
Overall Average	90.8%	0.69

Note. “\*” Simple agreement rounded to one decimal place. “\*\*” Cohen's kappa score rounded to two decimal places.

### Validity

In conducting this research, several aspects of validity were represented. First, based on the films analyzed being set in a collegiate context and featuring Black male students as plot-functional characters, face validity was met. Although the findings and results and categories of this study may interest scholars, they also address a larger social issue—the representation of Black men in film and media. Thus, social validity was also represented in this study. Based on the identified interrater reliability rates, semantic validity was also represented in this study. As mentioned, all 20 composite codes' Cohen's kappa scores reached the moderate to almost perfect threshold. This suggests that the individual codes comprising the composite codes accurately described the overall meaning of the composite code. Finally, based on the use of justifiable analytical constructs, functional validity was also represented. This study was concerned with: 1) the patterns of Black male student depictions in the films; and 2) how these patterns related to either stereotypical or non-stereotypical representations of Black men in film. Therefore, the use of the brute, sambo, and empty space in representation characterizations warrant appropriate

analytical constructs for generating inferences about the Black male students represented in the films.

### **Black Male Student Representations and College Film Characteristics**

The second research question was, “What differences in Black male student representations exist when accounting for various characteristics of college films?” This question sought to identify differences in brute, sambo, and empty space in representation characterizations when accounting for varying characteristics of the analyzed sample of college films. Specifically, the films’ genre, decade of release, or portrayed institution type were of interest.

#### **Genre**

Research Question 2a asked, “Is there a difference in how Black male students are represented based on the films’ genre (i.e. comedy, drama)?” Table 4.8 presents the analyzed films organized by genre. As displayed, there were a total of seven comedy films with a total of 10 Black male student characters. The remaining 11 films were classified as dramas and included a total of 27 Black male student characters.

Similar to Research Question 1, Research Question 2a was addressed in multiple ways. An analysis of the character demographics was, first, conducted. Organized by genre, Table 4.9 presents the characters’ primary campus roles. As displayed, the majority of characters in “Comedy” films were classified as Greek fraternity members ( $n = 3$ , 30.0%). The genre’s next most common campus roles were “Athlete” ( $n = 2$ , 20.0%), “Just a Student” ( $n = 2$ , 20.0%), and “Multiple Campus Roles” ( $n = 2$ , 20.0%). The overwhelming majority of characters in “Drama” films comprised the “Athlete” classification ( $n = 16$ , 59.3%). “Greek Fraternity Member” ( $n = 4$ , 14.8%) was the second most common campus role of the drama genre.

Table 4.8. College Films and Number of Characters by Genre

Comedy		Drama	
Film Title	Characters ( <i>n</i> = 10)	Film Title	Characters ( <i>n</i> = 27)
<i>Revenge of the Nerds</i> (1984)	1	<i>The Program</i> (1993)	2
<i>School Daze</i> (1988)	3	<i>Blue Chips</i> (1994)	3
<i>House Party 2</i> (1991)	1	<i>Higher Learning</i> (1995)	2
<i>The 6<sup>th</sup> Man</i> (1997)	1	<i>The Skulls</i> (2000)	1
<i>Senseless</i> (1998)	1	<i>Drumline</i> (2002)	2
<i>How High</i> (2001)	2	<i>Glory Road</i> (2006)	7
<i>Accepted</i> (2006)	1	<i>We Are Marshall</i> (2006)	1
		<i>Stomp the Yard</i> (2007)	4
		<i>The Great Debaters</i> (2007)	3
		<i>Mooz-lum</i> (2011)	1
		<i>From the Rough</i> (2014)	1

Note. *N* = 37 total number of analyzed characters. Genre classification as listed on the Rotten Tomatoes online database (<http://www.rottentomatoes.com>).

Table 4.9. Campus Roles of Black Male Students in College Films by Genre

Campus Role	Comedy		Drama	
	Total	%	Total	%
Athlete	2	20.0	16	59.3
Greek Fraternity Member	3	30.0	4	14.8
Just a Student	2	20.0	2	7.4
Debate Team Member	--	--	3	11.1
Multiple Campus Roles	2	20.0	--	--
Band Member	--	--	2	7.4
Student Leader/Activist	1	10.0	--	--
Total	10	100.0	27	100.0

Note. *N* = 37 total number of analyzed characters. Notation of "--" indicates campus role was not present in films of associated genre.

Organized by genre, Table 4.10 presents information pertaining to the analyzed characters' student classification. As displayed, there was an even representation of "Freshman/First Year" and "Upperclassman" students (*n* = 5, 50.0%) in comedies. The majority of characters represented in dramas were "Freshman/First Year" students (*n* = 55.6%). The remaining characters were categorized as "Upperclassman" students (*n* = 12, 44.4%).

Table 4.10. Student Classifications of Black Male Students in College Films by Genre

Student Classification	Comedy		Drama	
	Total	%	Total	%
Freshman/First Year	5	50.0	15	55.6
Upperclassman	5	50.0	12	44.4
Total	10	100.0	27	100.0

Note.  $N = 37$  total number of analyzed characters.

Table 4.11 displays the cross-tabulation of genre and the Black male characterization—brute, sambo, and empty space in representation—coded incidents generated in Research Question 1. In order to determine if there was a statistically significant relationship between the Black male characterizations and the films' genre, a chi-square test of independence was conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) to test the following hypothesis:

$H_0$ : College films' Black male student representations are independent of the films' genre.

$H_1$ : College films' Black male student representations are associated with the films' genre.

The relationship between genre and Black male characterizations was not significant,  $X^2(2, N = 4,786) = 5.281, p = .071$ ). Therefore, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) was not rejected. Although the results of the chi-square test of independence indicated there was no difference in how the comedy and drama films represented Black male students, it should be noted, however, that the resulting  $p$  value (.071) was approaching significance—indicating that some differences existed. As displayed in Table 4.11, the brute characterization was overrepresented in comedy films and underrepresented in dramas. In contrast, both, the empty space in representation and sambo characterizations were overrepresented in dramas and underrepresented in comedies.



Table 4.11. Cross-tabulation of Genre and Black Male Characterizations

	Count/Expected	Comedy	Drama	Total
Brute	Count	570	1,133	1,703
	Expected	534.8	1,168.2	1,703
Empty Space in Representation	Count	698	1,616	2,314
	Expected	726.7	1,587.3	2,314
Sambo	Count	235	534	769
	Expected	241.5	527.5	769
Total	Count	1,503	3,283	4,786
	Expected	1,503	3,283	4,786

Pearson Chi-Square Value = 5.281  $df = 2$  Asymp. Sig (2-sided) = .071

0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 241.50

### Decade of Release

Research Question 2b asked, “Is there a difference in how Black male students are represented based on the films’ decade of release?” Table 4.12 presents the analyzed films organized by decade of release. As displayed, the majority of the analyzed characters were in films released in the 1990s and 2000s ( $n = 31$ , 83.8%). In the 1990s, there were a total of six films with a total of 10 Black male student characters. There were a total of eight films with a total of 21 Black male student characters, in films released in the 2000s. There were two films each in, both, the 1980s and the 2010s—with four and two Black male student characters, respectively.

Research Question 2b was also addressed in multiple ways. Table 4.13 displays the characters’ primary campus roles organized by decade of release. As displayed, across decades, Black male student characters were primarily represented as athletes or Greek fraternity members. In the 1980s, the majority of characters were classified as “Greek Fraternity Member” students

Table 4.12. College Films and Number of Characters by Decade of Release

1980s		1990s		2000s		2010s	
Film Title	Characters ( <i>n</i> = 4)	Film Title	Characters ( <i>n</i> = 10)	Film Title	Characters ( <i>n</i> = 21)	Film Title	Characters ( <i>n</i> = 2)
<i>Revenge of the Nerds</i> (1984)	1	<i>House Party 2</i> (1991)	1	<i>The Skulls</i> (2000)	1	<i>Mooz-lum</i> (2011)	1
<i>School Daze</i> (1988)	3	<i>The Program</i> (1993)	2	<i>How High</i> (2001)	2	<i>From the Rough</i> (2014)	1
		<i>Blue Chips</i> (1994)	3	<i>Drumline</i> (2002)	2		
		<i>Higher Learning</i> (1995)	2	<i>Accepted</i> (2006)	1		
		<i>The Sixth Man</i> (1997)	1	<i>Glory Road</i> (2006)	7		
		<i>Senseless</i> (1998)	1	<i>We Are Marshall</i> (2006)	1		
				<i>Stomp the Yard</i> (2007)	4		
				<i>The Great Debaters</i> (2007)	3		

Note. *N* = 37 total number of analyzed characters.

( $n = 3$ , 75.0%). Characters in the 1990s were primarily represented as athletes ( $n = 7$ , 70.0%).

With representations of Black male students as athletes, Greek fraternity members, just students, debate team members, band members, and those with multiple campus roles, of all the decades, the 2000s offered the most diverse representation of students' campus roles. Still more than half of the analyzed characters in films released in the 2000s were classified as "Athlete" ( $n = 10$ , 47.6%). For the 2010s, "Athlete" and "Just a Student" representations were equal ( $n = 1$ , 50.0%).

Table 4.13. Campus Roles of Black Male Students in College Films by Decade of Release

Campus Role	1980s		1990s		2000s		2010s	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Athlete	--	--	7	70.0	10	47.6	1	50.0
Greek Fraternity Member	3	75.0	--	--	4	19.0	--	--
Just a Student	--	--	2	20.0	1	4.8	1	50.0
Debate Team Member	--	--	--	--	3	14.3	--	--
Multiple Campus Roles	--	--	1	10.0	1	4.8	--	--
Band Member	--	--	--	--	2	9.5	--	--
Student	1	25.0	--	--	--	--	--	--
Leader/Activist	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Total	4	100.0	10	100.0	21	100.0	2	100.0

Note.  $N = 37$  total number of analyzed characters. Notation of "--" indicates campus role was not present in films of associated decade.

Organized by decade of release, Table 4.14 presents information pertaining to the analyzed characters' student classification. In the 1980s, the majority of Black male student characters were categorized as "Upperclassman" students ( $n = 3$ , 75.0%). As displayed in Table 4.14, there was an even representation of "Freshman/First Year" and "Upperclassman" students in both the 1990s and 2010s—five and one, respectively. The majority of Black male students in films released in the 2000s were categorized as "Freshman/First Year" ( $n = 13$ , 61.9%).

Table 4.14. Student Classifications of Black Male Students in College Films by Decade of Release

Student Classification	1980s		1990s		2000s		2010s	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Freshman/First Year	1	25.0	5	50.0	13	61.9	1	50.0
Upperclassman	3	75.0	5	50.0	8	38.1	1	50.0
Total	4	100.0	10	100.0	21	100.0	2	100.0

Note.  $N = 37$  total number of analyzed characters.

Table 4.15 displays the cross-tabulation of the analyzed films' decade of release and the Black male characterization coded incidents. In order to determine if there was a statistically significant relationship between the Black male characterizations and the films' decade of release, a chi-square test of independence was performed using SPSS to test the following hypothesis:

$H_0$ : College films' Black male student representations are independent of the films' decade of release.

$H_1$ : College films' Black male student representations are associated with the films' decade of release.

The relationship between decade of release and Black male characterizations was significant,  $X^2(2, N = 4,786) = 32.727, p \leq .000$ ). Therefore, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) was rejected. This finding indicated that there was a relationship between the films' decade of release and the representation of Black male students in college films. As displayed in Table 4.15, the brute characterization was more prevalent in the 1990s and underrepresented in all other decades. Representations aligned with the empty space in representation were more prevalent in, both, the 1980s and 2000s. These same representations, however, were less prevalent in the 1990s and 2010s. Further, the sambo characterization was overrepresented in the 2010s, but underrepresented in all other decades. While the chi-square test of independence revealed a significant relationship between decade of release and Black male characterizations in the

analyzed films, the effect size for this finding, Cramer's V, was .058—indicating the relationship is weak— but still statistically significant ( $p < .001$ ) (Nardi, 2006).

Table 4.15. Cross-tabulation of Decade of Release and Black Male Characterizations

	Count/Expected	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010s	Total
Brute	Count	143	492	1,006	62	1,703
	Expected	154.8	458.3	1,024.8	65.1	1,703
Empty Space in Representation	Count	234	590	1,421	69	2,314
	Expected	210.3	622.7	1,392.5	88.5	2,314
Sambo	Count	58	206	453	52	769
	Expected	69.9	207.0	462.7	29.4	769
Total	Count	435	1,288	2,880	183	4,786
	Expected	435	1,288	2,880	183	4,786

Pearson Chi-Square Value = 32.727  $df = 6$  Asymp. Sig (2-sided) = .000

0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 29.40

### Institution Type

Research Question 2c asked, “Is there a difference in how Black male students are represented based on the films’ institution type (HBCU or PWI)?” This particular research question sought to determine if the institution being a historically Black college or university (HBCU) or predominantly White institution (PWI) was associated with how Black male students were represented in the analyzed films. Table 4.16 presents the analyzed films organized by institution type. As displayed, the majority of the analyzed characters were in films set at PWIs ( $n = 24$ , 64.9%). In films set at HBCUs, there were a total of five films with a total of 13 Black male student characters.

Table 4.16. College Films and Number of Characters by Institution Type

HBCUs		PWIs	
Film Title	Characters ( <i>n</i> = 13)	Film Title	Characters ( <i>n</i> = 24)
<i>School Daze</i> (1988)	3	<i>Revenge of the Nerds</i> (1984)	1
<i>Drumline</i> (2002)	2	<i>House Party 2</i> (1991)	1
<i>Stomp the Yard</i> (2007)	4	<i>The Program</i> (1993)	2
<i>The Great Debaters</i> (2007)	3	<i>Blue Chips</i> (1994)	3
<i>From the Rough</i> (2014)	1	<i>Higher Learning</i> (1995)	2
		<i>The 6<sup>th</sup> Man</i> (1997)	1
		<i>Senseless</i> (1998)	1
		<i>The Skulls</i> (2000)	1
		<i>How High</i> (2001)	2
		<i>Accepted</i> (2006)	1
		<i>Glory Road</i> (2006)	7
		<i>We Are Marshall</i> (2006)	1
		<i>Mooz-lum</i> (2011)	1

Note. *N* = 37 total number of analyzed characters.

Similar to the other research questions in this study, Research Question 2c was also addressed in multiple ways. As displayed in Table 4.17, even accounting for institution type, representations of Black male students as athletes or Greek fraternity members persist. In films set at HBCUs, Black male students were primarily represented as “Greek Fraternity Member” students (*n* = 6, 46.2%). HBCUs’ next most common campus role was “Debate Team Member” (*n* = 3, 23.0%). Interestingly, however, “Athlete” was one of the least common representations at HBCUs (*n* = 1, 7.7%). In contrast, Black male students were overwhelmingly represented as athletes at PWIs (*n* = 17, 70.8%). Representations of students as “Just a Student” were the next most common depictions at PWIs (*n* = 4, 16.7%).

Organized by institution type, Table 4.18 presents information pertaining to the analyzed characters’ student classification. As displayed, the majority of Black male student characters in films set at HBCUs were upperclassmen (*n* = 10, 76.9%). In contrast, the majority of Black male student characters in films set at PWIs were categorized as “Freshman/First Year” (*n* = 17, 70.8%).

Table 4.17. Campus Roles of Black Male Students in College Films by Institution Type

Campus Role	HBCU		PWI	
	#	%	#	%
Athlete	1	7.7	17	70.8
Greek Fraternity Member	6	46.2	1	4.2
Just a Student	--	--	4	16.7
Debate Team Member	3	23.0	--	--
Multiple Campus Roles	--	--	2	8.3
Band Member	2	15.4	--	--
Student Leader/Activist	1	7.7	--	--
Total	13	100.0	24	100.0

Note.  $N = 37$  total number of analyzed characters. Notation of "--" indicates campus role was not present in films of associated institution type.

Table 4.18. Student Classifications of Black Male Students in College Films by Institution Type

Student Classification	HBCUs		PWIs	
	#	%	#	%
Freshman/First Year	3	23.1	17	70.8
Upperclassman	10	76.9	7	29.1
Total	13	100.0	24	100.0

Note.  $N = 37$  total number of analyzed characters.

Table 4.19 displays the cross-tabulation of institution type and the Black male characterization coded incidents. In order to determine if there was a statistically significant relationship between the Black male characterizations and the films' institution type, a chi-square test of independence was performed using SPSS to test the following hypothesis:

$H_0$ : College films' Black male student representations are independent of the films' institution type.

$H_1$ : College films' Black male student representations are associated with the films' institution type.

The relationship between institution type and Black male characterizations was significant,  $X^2 (2, N = 4,786) = 37.944, p \leq .000$ ). Therefore, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) was rejected. This finding indicated that there was a relationship between the films' institution type and the representation of Black male students in college films. As displayed in Table 4.19, the brute and sambo characterizations were more prevalent in films set at PWIs and underrepresented at those set at

HBCUs. In contrast, representations aligned with the empty space in representation were more prevalent in films set at HBCUs and underrepresented in those set at PWIs. While the chi-square test of independence revealed a significant relationship between institution type and Black male characterizations in the analyzed films, the effect size for this finding, Cramer's V, was .089—indicating the relationship is weak— but also statistically significant ( $p < .001$ ) (Nardi, 2006).

Table 4.19. Cross-tabulation of Institution Type and Black Male Characterizations

	Count/Expected	HBCUs	PWIs	Total
Brute	Count	596	1,107	1,703
	Expected	666.1	1,036.9	1,703
Empty Space in Representation	Count	1,009	1,305	2,314
	Expected	905.1	1,408.9	2,314
Sambo	Count	267	502	769
	Expected	300.8	468.2	769
Total	Count	1,872	2,914	4,786
	Expected	1,872	2,914	4,786

Pearson Chi-Square Value = 37.944  $df = 2$  Asymp. Sig (2-sided) = .000

0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 300.79

### Conclusion

In this chapter, the findings and results to the research questions guiding this study were provided. Utilizing a convergent parallel mixed methods content analysis approach, this study incorporated, both, qualitative and quantitative content analyses. The qualitative component of the study identified the overall representations and depictions of Black male students in the analyzed college films. Generated findings revealed that Black male students were primarily represented as athletes and freshman or first-year students. In addition, the qualitative findings



identified that depictions of Black male students' behaviors, expressions of emotions, interactions, and experiences were, overall, primarily associated with Guerrero's (1995) concept of the empty space in representation. The most common depictions of Black male students were "Happy/Content" and "Positive Relationships with Black Male Students." Six depictions were identified as the least common representations in the films: "History of Course Withdrawals/Incompletes," "Remedial Courses," "Pre-College Academic Struggles," "Identity Document Forgery," "College as Alternative," and "Sexual Experience Admiration." Finally, the qualitative component yielded seven representations of Black men that are either never or rarely seen in mass media's representation of Black men: Interpersonal, Emotional, Loving, Academically Engaged, Leader and Role Model, Thoughtful, and Spiritual.

Utilizing demographic information and the chi-square test of independence, the quantitative component of this study identified what, if any, relationships existed between the films' genre, decade of release, and institution type and the representations of Black male students in the analyzed films. Organizing demographic information around each of the variables revealed that, regardless of the films' genre, decade of release, or institution type, Black male student characters were overwhelmingly represented as athletes or Greek fraternity members. In contrast, the variables led to variations in Black male students' classifications. Finally, the chi-square test of independence revealed significant relationships between the representations of Black male students in college films and the films' decade of release and institution type.

The results and findings generated from both components of the study are further discussed in the final chapter. In addition, the final chapter includes discussion regarding the study's implications, limitations, and future research recommendations

## **CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

### **Introduction**

The intent of this study was to identify whether the Black male students depicted in college films perpetuate stereotypes associated with the representation of Black men and Black masculinity in film or provide audiences with new or rarely seen representations. The purpose of this convergent parallel mixed methods study was to explore the representations of Black male students and Black masculinity in college films and identify what differences in representations exist when accounting for various characteristics of the films. In the qualitative component, a qualitative content analysis was utilized to analyze the representations in a sample of 18 theatrically released college films. In the quantitative component, a quantitative content analysis was performed to identify what, if any, relationships existed between the films' genre, decade of release, and institution type and the representations of Black male students in the analyzed films. The study was guided by the following two research questions:

(RQ1): How are Black male students and Black masculinity represented in college films?

- 1a. What depictions of Black male students are represented most often in college films?
- 1b. What depictions of Black male students are represented least often in college films?
- 1c. What non-stereotypical depictions or rarely seen representations of Black masculinity are found in college films?

(RQ2): What differences in Black male student representations exist when accounting for various characteristics of college films?

- 2a. Is there a difference in how Black male students are represented based on the films' genre (i.e. comedy, drama)?
- 2b. Is there a difference in how Black male students are represented based on the films' decade of release?

2c. Is there a difference in how Black male students are represented based on the films' institution type (HBCU or PWI)?

This chapter provides a discussion of the study's findings and results, limitations, implications for practice, and future research recommendations.

### **Discussion of Findings and Results**

Qualitative and quantitative content analyses, both, were used to provide a more complete and rich understanding of the way Black male students and Black masculinity were represented in college films. Discussions regarding the key findings for, both, qualitative and quantitative content analyses are provided below.

#### **Summary of Qualitative Findings and Results**

Qualitative findings and results provided insight into the overall representation of Black male students and Black masculinity in college films. With limited research on the topic available (Dancy, 2009), scholarship regarding the general representation of Black male students in college films sheds light on an under-researched issue.

From a demographic perspective, the qualitative results indicated that Black male students were primarily portrayed as athletes. Athletes were identified as characters participating on an intercollegiate sports team (i.e. football, basketball, track and field, etc.) or possessing an athletic background. So, ultimately the athletic or physical abilities of the Black male students were central to the storylines of a number of the analyzed films. Athletic representations link directly back to the stereotypical characterizations of, both, the brute and sambo. Physical abilities are of importance to the brute characterization (Hawkins, 1998a, 1998b). Therefore, the athletic skills depicted in films, such as *Blue Chips* (Shelton & Friedkin, 1994), *Glory Road* (Bruckheimer & Gartner, 2006), *We Are Marshall* (McG, Iwanyk, & McG, 2006), or *The*

*Program* (Rothman, Henderson, Goldwyn, & Ward, 1993) highlight the perceived physicality of Black men and Black masculinity (Cooper, 2005; Dancy, 2012). The sambo characterization assumes roles that often provide entertainment (Hawkins, 1998a, 1998b). Athletes represented in the analyzed films were primarily members of competitive teams. Thus, the Black male student characters were entertaining or performing for spectators in attendance at athletic competitions. Therefore, based on the analyzed characters' primary campus roles, the characters represented in the analyzed films appeared to reflect common stereotypes of Black men in film. Further analysis, however, revealed that the analyzed films did in fact provide audiences with new or rarely seen representations.

Qualitative results revealed that the films primarily depicted Black male students as happy and engaged in positive relationships with other Black male students. Characters' happiness was evident in their displaying of a genuinely cheerful demeanor, showing pleasure or satisfaction, smiling, or laughing. Positive relationships with Black male students were represented by instances in which the analyzed characters engaged in encouraging or supportive interactions with other Black male students in the films. Even in those instances where relationships began as somewhat "tense," all issues were resolved and cohesive by the end of the film. For example, in *Stomp the Yard* (Packer, Hardy, & White, 2007), DJ Williams' initial interactions with Black male fraternity members were negative. However, at the film's conclusion he seemed to truly embody the brotherhood associated with fraternity membership. Similarly, *Glory Road*'s Bobby Joe Hill and David Lattin were initially at odds—primarily due to both characters' arrogance. Midway through the film, however, the two basketball players grew to respect each other and a friendship was established. In addition to the films' depictions of characters' happy demeanor and positive relationships among Black male students, many of

the characters also engaged in positive relationships with non-Black characters—such as coaches, teammates, and other students. Combined, these primary representations counter the angry, aggressive, and violent attributes commonly associated with the “brute” characterization (Hawkins, 1998a, 1998b).

In terms of the least common representations, a select number of films provided depictions of Black male students aligned with Jackson and Dangerfield’s (2004) argument that audiences are generally exposed to mass media representations of Black men as incompetent/uneducated, violent/criminal, and sexual. In *The Program*, both, Darnell Jefferson and Alvin Mack encountered negative academic experiences. Jefferson was held back a grade level prior to college and had to enroll in remedial courses after failing his college entrance exam, while Mack repeatedly withdrew from college courses he was failing. *Accepted’s* (Shadyac, Bostick, & Pink, 2006) Hands Holloway assisted his friend Bartleby Gaines in creating fake IDs for other underage students. Finally, *School Daze’s* (Lee & Lee, 1988) Half-Pint was admired by one of his fraternity brothers for losing his virginity to Jane Touissant—a popular female student at Mission College. While the described representations are negative, their limited presence suggests the analyzed college films intended to provide audiences with representations of Black males countering those typically presented in mass media.

Overall, qualitative results revealed that the analyzed films primarily depicted behaviors, expressions of emotions, interactions, and experiences associated with the empty space in representation—non-stereotypical depictions or rarely seen representations of Black men in film (Guerrero, 1995). Guerrero (1995) writes that representations of Black men within the empty space in representation provide audiences with images depicting the complexity and depth of Black men and Black masculinity. In the current study, qualitative analysis yielded seven non-

stereotypical or rarely seen representations of Black men: Interpersonal, Emotional, Loving, Academically Engaged, Leader and Role Model, Thoughtful, and Spiritual. Interpersonal refers to the characters' demonstrated value of relationships and positive social skills. Emotional representations were evident when characters expressed emotions beyond stereotypical representations of emotional expression (i.e. anger, aggression, etc.). Examples include happiness, passion, and sadness. Characters displayed their loving demeanor through their affection for love interests and concern and support for their male peers. With the analyzed films set in collegiate environments, characters were portrayed as academically engaged through depictions of their interacting with professors, studying, participating in class, and receiving good grades. Characters' ability to inspire and garner the admiration of others resulted in representations of leaders and role models. Thoughtful refers to representations of characters deep in thought, reflective, inquisitive, and creative. Finally, depictions of characters acknowledging a higher being, praying, or attending religious services or gatherings resulted in spiritual representations.

Although the films analyzed provided audiences with new or rarely seen representations, one aspect of the Black male students' collegiate experience was minimal—their academic experiences. While the majority of the films largely focused on the students' involvement in campus-related organizations and/or athletic teams, it was very rare that students were depicted performing tasks or activities related to academics. The most common activity featured in the films was professor interaction—as depicted in *The Great Debaters* (Winfrey et al., 2007), *Mooz-lum* (Caruthers et al., 2011), *Senseless* (Weinstein et al., 1998), *Higher Learning* (Singleton, Hall, & Singleton, 1995), *House Party 2* (McHenry et al., 1991), and *How High* (Abdy et al., 2001). Further, the majority of characters in the analyzed films were classified as

freshman students—leading to representations that primarily emphasized the students’ entry into college and rarely depicted their matriculation to graduation. In fact, of all the analyzed films, *We Are Marshall*, *Blue Chips*, *Senseless*, and *Higher Learning* were the only films that indicated characters graduated—with *Higher Learning*’s Fudge being the only Black male student character visually represented in a cap and gown. Granted none of the films’ storylines revolved around the collegiate academic experience. However, the inclusion of more scenes representing the academic aspect of college would have also added to the depictions occupying the empty space in representation.

In summary, the qualitative findings and results revealed that the analyzed college films, overall, offer audiences new or rarely seen representations of Black men in film. Although there were instances in which stereotypical representations were present, the Black male student characters were all depicted in ways that countered the brute and sambo characterizations. It should be noted, however, that many of these non-stereotypical representations were still presented through stereotypical roles—such as athletes. Still the qualitative findings and results suggested that college films represent a film genre willing to challenge dominant representations of Black men and Black masculinity.

### **Summary of Quantitative Findings and Results**

While the qualitative component of this study provided insight into the overall representation of Black male students and Black masculinity in college films, the quantitative component examined these same representations through targeted filters. Specifically, the quantitative findings and results identified what, if any, relationships existed between the films’ genre, decade of release, and institution type and the representations of Black male students in the analyzed films.

Regardless of the films' genre, decade of release, or institutional type, quantitative results indicated that Black male students were primarily portrayed as athletes or Greek fraternity members. As stated earlier in this chapter, athletes possessed an athletic background or belonged to one of their institution's intercollegiate sports teams. Greek fraternity members engaged in fraternity activities such as fraternity meetings, pledge processes and step shows. The majority of characters in comedies were Greek fraternity members, while the majority of characters in dramas were athletes. In terms of decade of release, outside of the 1980s—in which the majority of characters were Greek fraternity members—representations of Black male students as athletes remained dominant. It should be noted, however, during the 2010s, representations of Black males as athletes and just students—those not involved with intercollegiate sports teams or campus clubs or organizations—were equal. With regards to institutional type, the majority of characters at historically Black colleges or universities (HBCUs) were Greek fraternity members, while those at predominantly White institutions (PWIs) were athletes. The relationship between athletic abilities and the brute and sambo characterizations was previously discussed in this chapter. Similarly, representations of Greek fraternity membership in the films also exhibited brute and sambo characteristics. In addition to demonstrating physical dominance and abilities, the brute is also unruly, sexual, aggressive, and violent (Hawkins, 1998a, 1998b). Again, the sambo is characterized as a natural entertainer (Hawkins, 1998s, 1998b). A closer examination of Greek fraternity membership, in the analyzed films, reveals that while brotherhood was certainly represented, Greek life primarily encompassed challenging rules and authority (*Revenge of the Nerds*, Field, Samuelson, Macgregor-Scott, & Kanew, 1984), exhibiting hypersexual and physical behaviors (*School Daze*), and stepping or dancing (*Stomp the Yard*). Therefore, the quantitative findings and results—like those in the qualitative component of this study—suggest



the analyzed films, overall, present representations of Black male students largely in stereotypical roles.

While the qualitative findings and results indicated the majority of characters in the films were freshman, the quantitative findings indicated representations of students' classifications were dependent upon other factors. With regards to genre, there was an equal representation of freshman and upperclassman in comedies and the majority of characters in dramas were upperclassmen. As for decade of release, the 2000s was the only decade in which freshman students were the clear majority. In all other decades, there was either an equal representation of freshmen and upperclassmen students (1990s and 2010s) or a greater number of upperclassmen (1980s). Finally, the majority of students at HBCUs were upperclassman and those at PWIs were freshmen. Combined these findings indicate that films classified as dramas, released in the 1980s, and set at HBCUs provide representations of Black male students matriculating towards graduation.

Quantitative analyses revealed the relationship between the films' genre and Black male student characterizations was not significant, but rather approaching significance. This indicates that some differences were present in Black male students' representations in comedy and drama films, they just failed to reach the significant threshold. Findings revealed that the brute and sambo characterizations were more present in comedy and drama films, respectively. Characterizations associated with the empty space in representation were more present in dramas. Thus, the quantitative findings revealed dramas offer more representations of the depth and complexity of Black masculinity in their depictions of Black male students. As displayed in Table 4.8, there were a greater number of dramas present in the analyzed sample of films—with comedies tapering off after 2006. Therefore, the quantitative findings reveal that, based on the

greater number of films classified as dramas in recent years, the representations of Black male students in college films have offered more images of the true, lived experiences of Black men (hooks, 2009; Guerrero, 1995).

Quantitative analyses revealed a significant relationship—albeit a weak relationship—between the films’ decade of release and Black male student characterizations. As displayed in Table 4.12, the majority of characters included in this analysis were in films released in the 1990s and 2000s. Therefore, the Black male student representations of these two decades are of particular importance. Findings revealed that the brute characterization was more present in films released in the 1990s. This finding aligns with research noting the aggressive and angry depictions of Black males in mass media representations in the 1990s—particularly those in the decade’s earlier years (Brown, 2008; George, 2002; Hughey, 2009; Leonard, 2006; Boyd, 1997). Findings revealed that empty space in representation characterizations were more present in the 1980s and 2000s. With both decades characterized as providing audiences with representations of Black men that were nonthreatening, non-violent, and middle-class (Leonard, 2006; Hughey, 2009), the findings of the current study indicated that the college films of the 1980s and 2000s largely subscribed to the same formula as other mass media outlets of the era. Finally, findings revealed the sambo characterization was only more present in college films released in the 2010s. This finding suggests that Black male students in the most recent college films are still represented as entertainers, emasculated or timid, and “safe” (Hawkins, 1998a, 1998b). This finding supports Bond’s (2010) notion that despite the advances Blacks have made in today’s society, Black people are still visually depicted in stereotypical ways. As described, in terms of Black male representations, the analyzed college films largely subscribe to the same representations of Black men in other films released in the same decades.

Finally, quantitative analyses revealed a significant relationship between the films' institution type and Black male student characterizations. Although the relationship between the variable was weak, it was slightly stronger than the relationship between the films' decade of release and Black male student characterizations—suggesting that institution type has a greater influence on characterizations than decade of release. Findings revealed that the brute and sambo characterizations were more present in films set at PWIs. In contrast, characterizations associated with the empty space in representation were more present in films set at HBCUs. Therefore, films set at HBCUs provide audiences with more non-stereotypical representations of Black males than films set at PWIs. Further, the films' representations of Black male students at HBCUs coincide with research noting the value Black male students at HBCUs place on campus involvement and their out-of-class experiences (Fleming, 1984; Kimbrough & Harper, 2006). As displayed in Table 4.17, although the majority of analyzed HBCU characters were members of Greek fraternities, films set at HBCUs also featured debate team members (*The Great Debaters*), marching band members (*Drumline*, Austin et al., 2002), student leaders/activists (*School Daze*), and athletes (*From the Rough*, Bagley, Critelli, Hooks, & Bagley, 2014)—with athletes being one of the least common campus roles. In contrast, Black male characters at PWIs were overwhelmingly represented as athletes in films set at PWIs. Therefore, the quantitative findings and results indicate that films set at HBCUs offer more complete representations of Black male students and Black masculinity. While this finding is certainly relevant and important, it should be noted that films set at HBCUs were greatly outnumbered by those set at PWIs (see Table 4.16). Consequently, stereotypical representations—as presented by those films set at PWIs—have a wider reach than non-stereotypical representations.

In summary, while the qualitative findings revealed that the analyzed films largely offer audiences new or rarely seen representations of Black men and masculinity, the quantitative findings and results revealed that such representations are contingent upon the films' institution type and decade of release. Specifically, films set at HBCUs and those released in the 1980s and 2000s provided depictions associated with the empty space in representation (Guerrero, 1995). Although not significant, quantitative findings also revealed that films classified as dramas also provided more representations of the depth and complexity of Black masculinity in their depictions of Black male students. While stereotypical representations remained present in all of the analyzed films, the quantitative findings and results, again, confirmed that there are a number of college films challenging dominant representations of Black men and Black masculinity.

### **Integrated Findings and Results**

As discussed above, both, qualitative and quantitative content analyses identified key findings and results. The integration of the findings from both methods, however, provided the most complete understanding of the issue. A visual depiction of the integration of both methods' findings is provided in Appendix E. Through the process of integration, three major themes emerged: primary representations as athletes and Greek fraternity members, empty space in representation trends, and value in HBCU representations. Further discussion of each theme is provided below.

**Athletes and Greek fraternity members.** The qualitative findings and results revealed that, in the analyzed college films, Black male students were primarily represented as athletes. Quantitative findings and results, however, revealed that, in addition to athletes, Black male students were also largely represented as Greek fraternity members. Specifically, Black male student characters in comedies, films released in the 1980s, and those set at HBCUs were

primarily members of Greek fraternities. As explained earlier in this chapter, athletes and Greek fraternity membership, both, exhibit characteristics associated with the brute and sambo characterizations (Hawkins, 1998a, 1998b). In addition, both representations support research indicating that popular culture only represents Black men as successful when in an athletic or entertainment capacity (Ferber, 2007; Majors, 1998). Therefore, based on their ties to and perpetuation of stereotypical representations of Black men and Black masculinity, representations of Black male students as athletes and Greek fraternity members are problematic. Further, the potential influence these representations have on viewing audiences is also troubling. Cultivation theory argues that viewers exposed to repetitive images of individuals come to cultivate real world beliefs and expectations of these individuals based on their media portrayals (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1986, 2002; Johnson & Holmes, 2009). Social cognitive theory argues that media viewers construct their own behaviors based on the behaviors observed in mass media (Bandura, 2002). Therefore, the repetition of Black male students in roles highlighting their physical abilities and capabilities, serving in an entertainment capacity, and emphasizing sexuality helps to normalize such behaviors—influencing the perceptions held of Black male students on college and university campuses. Further, such images could potentially influence the aspirations and expectations of Black males considering college attendance—reinforcing the notion that college attendance and success is based on physical or athletic abilities, rather than academic merit.

**Empty space in representation trends.** Findings from the qualitative content analysis revealed that, overall, the analyzed college films predominantly provided audiences with images of Black men associated with the empty space in representation (Guerrero, 1995). The quantitative content analysis, however, provided some context to the qualitative findings and

results. Quantitative findings revealed that the representations of Black men in college films largely followed the trends of Black men in other films of the same decade. As a result, like other films of the same decades, empty space in representation depictions in the college films were more present in the 1980s and 2000s. While brute, sambo, and empty space in representation characterizations were present in all decades, college films released in the 1980s and 2000s provided images reflecting the depth and complexity of Black men. The 2000s, in particular, represent a sort of “golden era” of Black male representations in college films. Within this decade, in comparison to others, there were a greater number of, both, films featuring Black male students and Black male student characters; comedy and drama films; and films set at, both, HBCUs and PWIs. Further, Black male student characters’ campus roles were the most diverse—with representations of athletes, Greek fraternity members, debate team members, band members, just students, and students adopting multiple campus roles. However, similar to what happened with the emergence of college films released in the 1990s, characterizations associated with the empty space in representation have experienced minimization in the current decade—leading to representations more associated with the sambo characterization.

**Value in HBCU representations.** Finally, as it relates to the association between institution type and Black male student representations, the quantitative findings and results also helped contextualize qualitative findings. Again, while the qualitative findings revealed that, overall, the analyzed college films provided audiences with empty space in representation depictions, quantitative findings revealed that such depictions were more present in films set at HBCUs. In contrast, representations associated with the brute and sambo characterizations were more present in college films set at PWIs. This finding reveals the value in the representations of Black male students in college films set at HBCUs. However, the challenge of this finding lies in

the fact that college films set at HBCUs are minimal in number and released infrequently. For example, *From the Rough*, the most recent college film set at an HBCU, was released seven years after the last films set at HBCUs—*Stomp the Yard* and *The Great Debaters*. Additionally, due to financial challenges, it took nearly four years for the film to release in theaters (Obenson, 2014). Films set at PWIs, however, were theatrically released in every decade analyzed in the current study. Perhaps, Hollywood recognizes HBCU college films' efforts to challenge stereotypical images of Black men and Black masculinity and creates challenges that hinder their mass distribution.

In summary, qualitative and quantitative results and findings, both, yielded key findings. While the qualitative content analysis provide insight into the overall representation of Black men and Black masculinity, the quantitative content analysis helped to contextualize the findings. Therefore, the integration of findings from both components of the study provided the most insight into the phenomenon under study.

### **Implications of Study**

Although the findings and results of this study represent the beginning of a continued research agenda, they still provide valuable information for administrators, faculty, and researchers. In an effort to foster a sense of inclusion among all members of the campus community, Tierney (1999) recommends colleges and universities utilize the concept of cultural integrity. Under this concept, institutions establish programs and learning activities that encourage and support varying cultural identities and address campus diversity issues. The findings from this study may generate potential topics for workshops or seminars geared towards informing all members of the campus community about stereotypical representations of Black men. Further the findings may encourage open forum dialogues for Black male students to

discuss media representations and their influence on, not only their collegiate experiences, but also self-perceptions and the perceptions of others. Addressing the campus community's perceptions of others through learning activities, demonstrates institutions' value of all campus populations. Within the context of this study, campus programming addressing factors—such as stereotypical media representations—hindering the success of Black male students reflects the institutions' commitment to supporting and encouraging this segment of the student population—potentially aiding university retention efforts targeted towards Black male students.

In addition to educating student populations on stereotypical representations, the findings of this study also present topics for university administrator and faculty diversity education. Providing research related to stereotypical representations aids in beginning dialogue focused on changing and challenging existing stereotypes of Black men on campus. Through targeted diversity workshops or seminars, the findings of this study aid in educating staff and faculty about stereotypical representations, identifying the ways these representations are perpetuated on campuses, and their role in eliminating or minimizing these representations. In addition, the findings will assist faculty in exhibiting communication patterns, teaching practices, and projects that are culturally sensitive to their Black male students (Dancy, 2012). Further, the findings of this study aid in encouraging administrators and faculty in unlearning stereotypical perceptions, examining their own biases, and expanding their understanding of Black men—not only on campus, but also in society.

The findings of this study also increase administrators' awareness of the visual images presented by their institutions. With knowledge of stereotypical representations, administrators can be more cognizant of the Black male images depicted in university marketing materials. Continuing with this emphasis on university images released to the public, television commercial



spots have the ability to inform viewers of individual colleges and universities—bringing awareness of the institution to potential students. As a result, visual representations, as depicted in these commercial spots, aid in the recruitment efforts of institutions. Thus, the findings of this study could also assist university administrators responsible for the creation and development of television commercials. The incorporation of Black male students in television commercials could potentially influence potential Black male students' decision to attend an institution. Therefore, administrators must develop an understanding of stereotypical representations and avoid their continued perpetuation in images released by their institutions.

Findings of this study also have implications for curriculum in higher education master's and doctoral programs. Based on the analyzed characters assuming various campus roles and encountering different college experiences, the findings of this study can assist higher education faculty in educating students about this particular population of college students. The included films and the resulting findings also have potential to guide faculty in instructing students on diversity related issues. For example, films such as *Higher Learning*, and their resulting analysis, could serve as valuable tools in facilitating lectures on perceptions of underrepresented populations on college campuses. As reiterated throughout this study, however, faculty opting to utilize the films as instructional tools must remain critical of the representations in the films and open to students' alternate readings of the films. With knowledge and training on stereotypes and their presence on college and university campuses, future leaders in the field will be better equipped to address related issues on their campuses.

Finally, the findings of this study also have implications for research methods. As Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) explain, mixed methods research has gained tremendous interest in recent years. Within this timeframe, few studies have utilized a mixed methods

content analysis design (Creamer & Ghoston, 2012; Schram, 2014)—none of which explicitly indicated the use of a convergent parallel or concurrent research design. Therefore, this study provides researchers with another way of merging mixed methods and content analysis in designing their future research studies.

### **Limitations & Future Research**

Although the findings and results of this study provide new insight into the representations of Black male students and Black masculinity in college films, there were several limitations to this research. First, this research, overall, was largely based on my interpretation and understanding of, both, stereotypical characterizations and the films' representations of Black male students. Audience interpretation of these films was not incorporated into this study. As a result, the results and findings are essentially subjective. Further, the generated data did not provide insight into the influence the images and representations may have on viewing audiences. Specifically, this study did not identify current Black male college students' readings and interpretations of the films. In order to provide university administrators and faculty with more information about popular culture's influence on Black male students' collegiate experiences, future research should explore this particular population's readings of the analyzed films. Further, as a Black man, my readings of the films may differ from the readings of a White female viewing the same films. Even further, as a Black man in my 30s, my readings of the films may differ from the readings of another Black man in his late teens or early 20s. Therefore, to a greater extent, the current study failed to account for interpretations of Black male representations by audiences of varying demographics. Future research on the topic should compare and contrast the film interpretations of students, faculty, and staff of varying demographic variables (i.e. race, gender, age, socioeconomic status, institutional affiliation, etc.).

Next, due to the sample of films not representing an exhaustive list of college films featuring Black male students, generalizing the results of this study to all college films also proves difficult. As mentioned in Chapter Two, the presence of Black students in college films dates back to the 1940s (Conklin, 2008). Yet, the sample of films included in this study only included theatrically released films released between 1984 and 2014. Additionally, while this study was underway, another film—*Dear White People* (Brown et al., 2014)—was released in theaters. The film was not included in the study sample, however, because of its unavailability on DVD. Further, with the availability of video streaming sites (i.e. Netflix, Hulu, etc.) and direct-to-DVD films, audiences have alternate ways of viewing films depicting collegiate life. As a result, while the films analyzed in this study represented a substantial amount of films comprising the college film genre, they did not encompass every college film featuring Black male students. Future research should study the representations of Black male students in a wider spectrum of films in the college film genre.

Another limitation of this study stemmed from the variables utilized in the quantitative component—genre, decade of release, and institution type. While these variables indicated significant relationships between Black male student representations and decade of release and institution type, follow up measures of association indicated the relationships were weak. This suggests that other variables could have a greater relationship with the films' featured representations. Future research should identify other variables of interest and determine their relationship with Black male student representations in college films. With film directors and producers' recognized influence on the representations in films overall (Batson-Savage, 2010; hooks, 2009), the race of the filmmakers responsible for the college films is one possible

variable. Further, future research should also determine the relationship between the films' representations and its commercial success.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the analyzed films offered minimal depictions of the characters' academic experiences. As a result, this study offered limited in-depth discussion on representations of academic activities and events. Therefore, future research studies should qualitatively explore the films' academic representations and identify what patterns or themes transpire from these depictions.

While the current study identified positive and negative relationships between Black male student characters and other characters in the films, future research should provide further in-depth exploration of these relationships. For example, a qualitative exploration of Black male student characters' interactions and experiences with other Black male students, female student characters, professors, coaches, university administrators, etc. In-depth analysis would identify patterns or themes evident in these relationships across films.

Finally, the current study did not account for differences in fictional films and those based on true stories. Four of the films analyzed in this study were based on true stories—*We Are Marshall*, *Glory Road*, *The Great Debaters*, and *From the Rough*. With characters' behaviors, expressions of emotions, interactions, and experiences based on actual events, the argument could be made that Black male students' representations in these films were either handled with a certain amount of care by the films' directors and producers or exaggerated to align with the actual characterizations of the real-life individuals the characters were based on. As a result, such depictions could have influenced the generated codes and coded incidents—positively or negatively—in this study. Future studies should compare the representations of Black male student characters based on real-life individuals and fictional characters.

## Conclusion

Criticism of media representations of Black men dates back to the 1900s. Following the release of *The Birth of a Nation* (Griffith, Aitken, & Griffith, 1915), numerous protests were launched in response to the film's negative representations of Black men. Although the types of movie roles available to Black men have improved since this time, in many ways the representations remain largely stereotypical—with frequent depictions of Black men as pimps, criminals, entertainers, and slaves. Due to the potential of these images influencing audiences' perceptions of Blackness and Black men (hooks, 2009), repetitive stereotypical representations are problematic as they establish what dominant audiences accept as the norm. As a result, films containing images of Black men that challenge stereotypical representations are rarely made or fail to gain recognition with mainstream audiences (Guerrero, 1995). Despite running the risk of limited commercial success, a number of college films featuring Black male student characters have been released over the years. While previous studies have analyzed college films depicting Black students (Cousins, 2005; Hughey, 2010; Leonard, 2006; Lubiano, 1991), research comparing the representations of Black male students across films remains scarce (Dancy, 2009). Research addressing Black male representations in college films is warranted, based on popular culture images' proven ability to influence Black male students' collegiate experiences—both, positively and negatively (Matabane & Merritt, 2013; Dancy, 2009, 2012). Further, with films being easily accessible through video streaming sites and Black audiences consuming more media than any other ethnic group (Matabane & Merritt, 2013; Ward, 2004), analysis of the representations included in college films warrants a valuable area of study.

The purpose of this convergent parallel mixed methods study was to explore the representations of Black male students and Black masculinity in college films and identify what

differences in representations exist when accounting for various characteristics of the films. In the qualitative component, a qualitative content analysis was utilized to analyze the representations in a sample of 18 theatrically released college films. In the quantitative component, a quantitative content analysis was performed to identify what differences in Black male student representations exist when accounting for college films' genre, decade of release, or institution type. Qualitative analyses revealed that, overall, the analyzed films primarily depicted behaviors, expressions of emotions, interactions, and experiences associated with the empty space in representation—non-stereotypical depictions or rarely seen representations of Black men in film (Guerrero, 1995). Quantitative analyses revealed significant relationships between Black male student representations and the films' institution type and decade of release. Through the integration of qualitative and quantitative findings, three major themes emerged: Black male students were overwhelmingly represented as athletes and Greek fraternity members, representations in college films largely followed the trends of Black male representations in other films of the same decade, and empty space in representation depictions were more present in films set at HBCUs.

The findings and results of this study offered several implications for university administrators, faculty, and researchers. Through the implementation of workshops, seminars, and open forum dialogues focused on stereotypical representations and perceptions, university administrators demonstrate their institutions' value of underrepresented student populations. Students feeling valued by their institutions could lead to positive retention gains for colleges and universities. Research related to stereotypical representations aids in engaging faculty and staff in dialogue focused on addressing, changing, and challenging existing stereotypes of Black men on campus. In combination with the findings and results of this study, the analyzed films

serve as instructional tools for higher education faculty charged with engaging graduate students in topics related to campus diversity, student populations, and stereotypes on campus. Finally, this study provides researchers with another way of merging mixed methods and content analysis in future research studies.

Although this study provided new insight into the representation of Black male students in college films, there were several limitations to this research. First, the current study did not account for interpretations of Black male representations by audiences of varying demographics (i.e. race, gender, age, socioeconomic status, institutional affiliation, etc.). Next, the sample of films only accounted for theatrically released films released between 1984 and 2014. Therefore, the sample was not indicative of an exhaustive list of college films featuring Black male students. While significant relationships were found between Black male student representations and decade of release and institution type, follow up measures of association indicated the relationships were weak—suggesting that other variables potentially have a greater association or relationship with the films’ representations. Further, in-depth analyses of characters’ academic experiences and relationships with other characters were not explored in this study. Finally, the current study did not account for differences in fictional films and those based on true stories. Future research on the representation of Black male students in college films should keep these limitations in mind.

Overall, the results and findings of this study revealed that the analyzed college films largely provide audiences with new or rarely seen representations of Black men in film. Although there were instances in which stereotypical representations were present, the Black male student characters in the films were all depicted in ways that countered the brute and sambo characterizations. With exposure to characters such as those depicted in college films, audiences

could potentially walk away with a positive perspective of Black men, Black masculinity, and the Black male collegiate experience. Additionally, the films' characters may influence the aspirations of future Black male college students. Therefore, due to the positive attributes associated with these films, Hollywood should take note and put forth the effort to produce more films depicting the Black male collegiate experience.



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## APPENDIX A: FILM SUMMARIES

*Revenge of the Nerds (1984).* *Revenge of the Nerds* focuses on the taunting experienced by a group of “nerds” at fictitious Adams College. Following the burning down of their fraternity house, the Alpha Betas—a fraternity largely comprised of the college’s football team—force freshmen students out of the freshmen dorm. While most students are able to identify other housing options, the nerds are without a home until they come across a rental house. After the Alpha Betas vandalize the rental house, the nerds take their complaint to the Greek Council. However, because the nerds are unaffiliated with a fraternity their complaint is rejected. Through a series of events, the nerds establish a chapter of the fictitious traditionally Black fraternity Lambda Lambda Lambda and compete in the annual Greek Games—all with the goal of winning control of the Greek Council. One of the nerds prominently featured in the film was Lamar Latrelle—a Black, openly gay male student.

*School Daze (1988).* Spike Lee’s *School Daze* highlights events surrounding homecoming weekend at the fictitious historically Black institution Mission College. Throughout the film, viewers are exposed to numerous homecoming activities—football game, a step show, coronation, and the homecoming parade. Beyond the homecoming festivities, the film addresses topics such as the South African anti-apartheid movement, classism and privilege, and the issue of colorism within the Black community. While numerous Black male student characters appear in *School Daze*, three characters are significant to the film’s plot: Vaughn “Dap” Dunlap, Julian Eaves (also referred to as Dean Big Brother Almighty), and Dap’s younger cousin Darrell (primarily referred to as “Half-Pint”). Dap is a student activist that frequently leads demonstrations and often finds himself at odds with Mission administration and members of Black fraternities and sororities—namely the fictitious Gamma Phi Gamma fraternity. Julian,

Gamma Phi Gamma's Dean of Pledges, serves as Dap's primary nemesis. The two are frequently at odds over identity and Black culture issues. The tension between the two is further intensified when "Half Pint" decides to pledge Gamma Phi Gamma under Julian's leadership.

***House Party 2 (1991).*** In the sequel to *House Party* (1991), Christopher "Kid" Robinson is an entering freshman at fictitious Harris University. After Peter "Play" Martin loses Kid's scholarship check to a fraudulent music executive, Kid finds himself broke and unable to pay his tuition. In order to raise money for his tuition, Kid begins working at Harris' faculty dining hall. However, Kid is soon fired from his job, once his supervisor realizes that Kid is not a registered student—the result of his tuition remaining unpaid. Faced with no other choice, Kid agrees to go along with Play's idea of throwing a secret pajama party—complete with music performances—to raise his tuition money. The late night pajama party is held in the faculty dining room, after Kid steals the keys from his job. True to its comedic premise, a series of events occur during the party that, ultimately, lead to chaos.

***The Program (1993).*** *The Program* focuses on the football program at fictional Eastern State University (ESU). Following a series of losing seasons, ESU's president informs the head football coach, Sam Winters, that his job is in jeopardy if the team's upcoming season continues the trend. Darnell Jefferson, a highly recruited freshman running back, is believed to represent one of the keys to help the team win. When Jefferson arrives at ESU, he initially struggles and serves as a backup to starting back Ray Griffen. Besides Griffen being Jefferson's primary competition on the field, the tension between the two carries off the field when Jefferson begins to develop a relationship with Griffen's on-again/off-again girlfriend Autumn. Alvin Mack, a highly aggressive and competitive linebacker, also plays a significant role on ESU's football team. While Mack possesses high football acumen, he struggles academically. Over the course of

the film, audiences' are exposed to the ways the football players handle, both, on- and off-field issues, during the football season.

***Blue Chips (1994).*** Similar to *The Program*, in *Blue Chips*, the fictional Western University men's basketball team is coming off a losing season. As a result, the team's coach, Pete Bell, feels pressured to identify and attract more athletic players to his team. However, Bell realizes that many of the top prospects are considering schools that are secretly paying them—which is not only forbidden, but also illegal. While he initially refrains from participating in such practices, Bell—along with school booster “Happy”—eventually provides additional benefits to encourage prospective players to attend Western. Neon Boudeaux and Butch McRae are two of the players Bell is able to recruit. Bell arranges for Boudeaux to receive additional tutoring and presents the student with a brand new car. Meanwhile, McRae's mother receives a job and a new house. “Happy” also informs Bell that Tony—a senior player that happens to be one of Bell's favorites—shaved points in a previous game to beat a gambling point spread. Plagued with disgust and guilt about the nature of his basketball program, Bell eventually comes clean at a press conference and resigns as head coach.

***Higher Learning (1995).*** *Higher Learning* largely centers on the experiences of three incoming freshmen at the fictional Columbus University—one being Malik Williams. Williams is an athlete on Columbus' track team. Despite being talented, Williams, initially, fails to appropriately train and work cohesively with his teammates. He also faces some academic struggles. Under the assumption that his athletic scholarship was a full scholarship, Williams soon realizes that the scholarship only partially covers his expenses. His coach agrees to help him out as long as he improves his grades and applies himself on the field. Following a racist incident with a White student, Williams decides that he would feel more comfortable living with



a Black roommate and moves out of the dorm room he shares with a White student. Williams moves in with Fudge—a six-year senior that frequently addresses issues of racism, social injustice, and societal issues. The film provides a dramatic presentation of the way students address experiences involving racism, prejudice, violence, and sexual assault on Columbus' predominantly White campus.

***The 6<sup>th</sup> Man (1997).*** *The Sixth Man* focuses on the relationship between brothers Antoine and Kenny Tyler. The Tyler brothers are standout players on the basketball team at the University of Washington. Older brother Antoine is highly competitive, and comfortable leading, both, on and off the court. In contrast, while also highly competitive, Kenny is content with taking the backseat to his older brother. During one of the team's games, Antoine suffers a heart attack on the court. Despite being alert while being carried off the court, Antoine eventually dies en route to the hospital. Following Antoine's death, Kenny and his teammates begin to fall apart. Antoine eventually reappears in the form of a supernatural ghost or spirit and assists the team during games. With his assistance, the University of Washington reaches the NCAA tournament for the first time in years. However, even in death, Antoine's competitive nature persists—leading to Kenny and the rest of the team demanding he leaves before the championship game. Without Antoine's assistance, the team struggles during the first half of the game. However, at halftime, Kenny finally steps up and motivates his team with an inspiring speech and leads the team to a championship win.

***Senseless (1998).*** In *Senseless*, Darryl Witherspoon is a financially struggling college student who often takes it upon himself to provide for his single mother and younger siblings. In order to make ends meet, Witherspoon regularly seeks opportunities that provide him with fast cash—such as donating blood and sperm. Witherspoon believes he has the opportunity to change

his financial situation by entering a competition conducted by Smythe-Bates—a large financial firm. The winner of the competition receives a lucrative job opportunity on Wall Street. Around the same time Witherspoon enters the competition, he is made aware of an experiment paying participants to test a drug that enhances the five senses. Initially, Witherspoon uses the experimental drug to his advantage in the competition. Recognizing the advantage the drug gives him, he decides to take an extra dose. The extra dosage results in an adverse effect—until the drug leaves his body, only four of his senses will work at a time. Naturally, the sense he needs the most at any given moment is the sense he needs the most—leading to a series of comedic episodes during the duration of the film.

***The Skulls (2000).*** *The Skulls* largely follows, main character, Luke McNamara's experiences with The Skulls—a secret society on his campus. Based on their power and affiliations, The Skulls are able to alter situations or circumstances to the benefit of its members. Following his invitation to join the secret society, McNamara's relationship with his best friend, Will Beckford, is threatened. In addition to being McNamara's best friend, Beckford is also his roommate and teammate on their college's rowing team. Due to his knowledge about The Skulls, Beckford is less than thrilled that his friend develops an affiliation with the organization. Beckford's interest in The Skulls, ultimately, leads to his tragic demise—at the hands of The Skulls. However, due to their influence, The Skulls are able to cover up Beckford's death. As the film continues, McNamara learns about the hidden nature of The Skulls and makes it his mission to reveal the truth about his friend's death.

***How High (2001).*** The comedic film focuses on heavy weed smokers Silas P. Silas and Jamal King. Although his friend Ivory sees potential in him, Silas is content growing and smoking marijuana. Following Ivory's sudden death, Silas decides to use his ashes as fertilizer

for a new strand of marijuana. Additionally, he decides to pursue a higher education. In order to gain entrance into a college or university, Silas must take the “THC”—a college entrance examination whose name alludes to the drug found in the cannabis plant. Before walking into take the exam, Silas meets King—another underachiever also preparing to take the exam—and the two smoke the marijuana he grew using Ivory’s ashes. While smoking, Ivory’s ghost appears to Silas and King and he agrees to help the two with the examination. With his assistance, Silas and King receive perfect scores on the exam. The pairs’ scores lead to numerous colleges seeking to recruit them, but they ultimately decide to attend Harvard University. Upon their arrival at Harvard, Silas and King meet a cast of characters that lead to comedic antics. With Ivory’s continued assistance, the pair pass every test during the first half of their semester. However, once the Ivory marijuana plant is stolen, Silas and King must learn to navigate Harvard on their own.

***Drumline (2002).*** In *Drumline*, Devon Miles is a talented drummer from New York. Based on his musical abilities, Miles is awarded a full marching band scholarship to attend Atlanta A&T University—a fictional historically Black institution. Confident in his talent, Miles enters A&T with a cocky attitude. Miles’ arrogance leads to tension with Sean Taylor—the band’s percussion section leader. Dr. Lee, Atlanta A&T’s band director, takes great pride in his program and requires that all members of the band are able to read music. While things start out well, Miles’ attitude and actions result in tension with, not only Taylor, but also with Lee and other band members. When Taylor realizes that Miles is unable to read music, he makes it his point to embarrass him. Further, following his role in a fight with another band, Miles is kicked out of A&T’s band. Miles then decides to speak with the band director at Morris Brown College—A&T’s rival—about opportunities. The band director agrees to help Miles if he is

willing to inform him about A&T's plans for an upcoming marching band competition.

Disagreeing with this approach, Miles rejects the offer and returns back to A&T. Upon his return, Miles changes his attitude and collaborates with Taylor and Lee in the planning and coordination of A&T's performance for the competition.

***Accepted (2006).*** When high school senior Bartleby Gaines receives rejection letters from every college he applies to, he takes drastic measures to please his father. Along with several of his friends that have also been rejected from the colleges of their choice, Gaines establishes a fake college—the South Harmon Institute of Technology (S.H.I.T.). One of these friends is Hands Holloway—a talented athlete that loses his athletic scholarship following an injury. In order to legitimate the college, Gaines convinces one of his friends to create a website for the institution. However, due to the website automatically accepting any student that applies, hundreds of students arrive to enroll at the college. Seeing no other solution, Gaines and friends agree to operate the school like an actual college—establishing a campus newspaper, creating a mascot, and allowing students to create their own curriculum. However, the college's success is threatened by challenges by students from nearby Harmon College.

***Glory Road (2006).*** Based on a true story, *Glory Road* details Texas Western College's journey to the 1966 NCAA Men's Division I Basketball Championship. Due to limited funding and scholarships, newly hired coach Don Haskins faces challenges in recruiting top tier talent to the small college. As a result, Haskins focuses on those basketball players other schools had no interest in—Black basketball players. Haskins' recruitment efforts led to Texas Western's team being comprised of seven Black males—Bobby Joe Hill, David Lattin, Orsten Artis, Harry Flournoy, Willie Worsley, Willie Cager, and Nevil Shed. Throughout the duration of the film,

audiences are exposed to the discrimination, internal conflicts, and attacks the players endure on their way to the championship game.

*We Are Marshall (2006)*. Also based on a true story, *We Are Marshall* documents the events following a tragic incident impacting the Marshall University community. In 1970, following an away football game, a plane carrying Marshall football players, athletic staff and personnel, sports journalists, and boosters crashed shortly after takeoff—claiming the lives of all passengers on-board. As a result of the crash and the subsequent loss of key athletic personnel, Marshall’s president—Donald Dedmon—moves to suspend the football program. However, based on the efforts and desires of Marshall students and several football players not on the flight, the president changes his mind. Nate Ruffin, a defensive back on the football team, was one of the students spearheading the efforts to continue the football program. Due to injury, Ruffin was unable to travel with the team—which, ultimately, led to his life being spared. Dedmon eventually hires Jack Lengyel as the team’s new head coach. Gradually, Lengyel develops a coaching staff and establishes a new team of walk-on athletes lacking football experience and/or knowledge. Ruffin serves as captain of the newly created team.

*Stomp the Yard (2007)*. *Stomp the Yard* focuses on the rivalry between two fictitious fraternity step teams—Theta Nu Theta and Mu Gamma Xi. Following the violent death of his brother, DJ Williams, a battle dancer, moves from Los Angeles to Atlanta to attend Truth University—a fictitious historically Black university. Based on several encounters, Williams seems to immediately clash with Grant—a member of Mu Gamma Xi. The tension between the two characters only intensifies as Williams actively pursues Grant’s girlfriend. However, after Williams’ dance skills are revealed, Grant puts his animosity aside and—along with Mu Gamma Xi chapter president Zeke—extends an offer of membership in the fraternity to enhance the

chapter's chances as continuing their reign as step team champions. Williams declines. Sylvester, Theta Nu Theta's chapter president, also extends an offer membership. Williams initially declines this invitation as well. However, after learning about the purpose and significance of Black Greek-letter organizations, Williams eventually decides to pledge Theta Nu Theta. Through his membership in the fraternity, Williams learns the value of teamwork, experiences personal growth and development, and eventually leads Theta Nu Theta in a national step team competition.

*The Great Debaters (2007).* Based on a true story, *The Great Debaters* tells the story of the debate team at Wiley College—a historically Black college in Texas—that competes against the Harvard University debate team in the 1930s. Following tryouts, professor Melvin Tolson selects four individuals for the debate team—three males and one female. Based on his prior experience, Hamilton Burgess is extremely confident in his skills and feels that he is the premiere debater. Burgess is caught somewhat off guard by the debate talents of fellow debate team member Henry Lowe. Confident and arrogant, Lowe enjoys the nightlife, drinking, and women. He also has a habit of challenging dominant figures. Finally, Tolson selects James Farmer, Jr. as an alternate on the debate team. A gifted 14-year-old college student, Farmer is the son of a well-respected preacher and professor at Wiley. Despite his academic success, Farmer still seeks the approval of his father and feels that membership on the debate team may be the solution. In addition to their preparation for the national debate championship against Harvard, members of the debate team also encounter the daily challenges of being Black in 1930s Texas (i.e. Jim Crow laws, lynching, etc.).

*Mooz-lum (2011).* Set in 2001, *Mooz-lum* focuses on the internal struggles of entering college freshman Tariq Mahdi. Until college, Mahdi has primarily been educated in a traditional

Muslim school. Additionally, his strict Muslim father is insistent upon his family upholding Muslim traditions. Therefore, Mahdi's arrival at college places him in a new, unfamiliar world. In order to make a smoother transition into this world, Mahdi disassociates himself from his religion. Mahdi's denial of his religion largely stems from abuse he received at his Muslim school, but is also influenced by his fellow students' negative opinions of Muslims. Despite the encouragement of other Muslim students and his world religions professor, Mahdi continues to deny his Muslim faith. However, when the 9/11 attacks occur during the school year, Mahdi struggles with maintaining his distance from his religion or standing in opposition to the threats or criticisms Muslims faced following the attacks.

***From the Rough (2014).*** Based on a true story, *From the Rough* documents Catana Starks' development of Tennessee State University's first men's golf team. As the first woman to coach a college men's golf team, Starks encounters discrimination based on her gender and experiences resistance from the institutions' newly hired director of athletics. Faced with a limited scholarship budget, Starks takes an untraditional approach and recruits golfers from around the world. The only member of the team from the United States was Craig—a talented, yet timid golfer from Atlanta. Under Starks' tutelage, Craig eventually gains confidence in his skills and plays a key role in his teams' success during an intercollegiate golf tournament.

## **APPENDIX B: CODEBOOK**

1. Film:
2. Character Name:
3. Type of Institution: description of institution type dependent on student composition
  1. Historically Black College or University (HBCU)
  2. Predominantly White Institution (PWI)
4. Deterritorialized: character is placed in an environment much different than what they are used to. Includes any representations of character being cautious, fearful or hesitant of their new environment due to differences.
  1. Race Differences: removed from a predominantly Black environment to an environment in which the majority of students are of a different race
  2. Class Differences: removed from a low-income/urban environment to one in which the majority of student's hail from a middle/upper class environment
  3. Both Race & Class: both race and class differences are mentioned or inferred in the film
  4. No mention/indication of Differences: no indication that student has been placed in an environment different from what they know.
5. Character Classification: character's student classification
  1. Freshman/First Year
  2. Sophomore/Second Year
  3. Junior/Third Year
  4. Senior/Fourth Year
  5. Cannot Tell/Not Specified
6. Character's Campus Role: character's primary campus involvement role
  1. Activist: proponent for social change, leads demonstrations/marches
  2. Athlete: participates in one or more intercollegiate sports (i.e. football, basketball, track & field, etc.); athletic background; holds an athletic title/position on campus
  3. Band Member: participates in institution's marching band
  4. Debate Team Member: participates on institution's debate team
  5. Greek Fraternity Member: member of Greek fraternity
  6. Just a Student: solely depicted as a typical college student
  7. Student Leader: serves as campus leader (i.e. Student Government President, student organization leader)
7. Family Composition: record character's family composition
  1. Two Parent Household: specifically references mother and father, representation of both parents in the film
  2. Single Parent Mother: character's mother is referenced as primary parent
  3. Single Parent Father: character's father is referenced as primary parent



4. Surrogate Parents: character supported by another family member besides parents (i.e. aunt, uncle, grandparents, etc.); includes foster or adoptive parents
5. Cannot tell/No mention of parents: character's parents are not mentioned or identifiable
8. Relationship with Mother: record character's overall relationship with his mother
  0. Cannot Tell/Not Applicable: relationship not mentioned or discussed, no relationship, not applicable
  1. Positive: mother is encouraging and supportive of character, loving, caring, serves as a positive influence on character
  2. Negative: character has tense or strained relationship with mother, serves as a negative influence on character, no relationship
9. Mother's Presence: character's mother appears in the film
  0. Not Applicable
  1. Yes
  2. No
10. Relationship with Father: record character's overall relationship with his father
  0. Cannot Tell/Not Applicable: relationship not mentioned or discussed, no relationship, not applicable
  1. Positive: father is encouraging and supportive of character, loving, caring
  2. Negative: character has tense or strained relationship with father, serves as a negative influence on character, no relationship
11. Father's Presence: character's father appears in the film
  0. Not Applicable
  1. Yes
  2. No
12. Relationship with Surrogate(s): record character's overall relationship with surrogate(s)
  0. Cannot Tell/Not Applicable: relationship not mentioned or discussed, no relationship, not applicable
  1. Positive: surrogate(s) is encouraging and supportive of character, loving, caring
  2. Negative: character has tense or strained relationship with surrogate(s), serves as a negative influence on character, no relationship
13. Surrogate's Presence
  0. Not Applicable
  1. Yes
  2. No
14. Academic Involvement: record the character's involvement in academic and classroom activities
  1. Correctly answering questions: provides accurate responses to professor's questions.
  2. Incorrectly answering questions: provides inaccurate responses to professor's questions.

3. Paying attention in class: engages in professor's lectures or instructions (i.e. listens, takes notes, etc.), listens to class discussion.
  4. Professor interaction: interacts with professor outside of typical classroom lectures
  5. Studying: engages in activities geared towards gaining knowledge or preparing for a test/quiz/exam, completing homework, reading textbooks, tutoring activities
  6. Takes tests/quizzes/exams: completes tests or exams
  7. Receiving good grades/high scores: mentioning of any high or passing grades received on character's schoolwork, tests or exams.
  8. Seeking accreditation for college: participating in activities geared towards gaining accreditation for institution (i.e. speaking before an accrediting board, etc.)
15. Personality Traits: record the characteristics/qualities that best describe the character's nature.
1. Arrogant: overconfident, bragging about superiority, flashy
  2. Childlike: having qualities of a child, playful; includes being treated like a child by adults (i.e. dismissed from conversation to play with kids)
  3. Courageous: demonstration of bravery in the midst of adversity or hostile conditions; standing up for what the character believes in
  4. Creative: having or showing an ability to make new things; innovative thinking; using imagination; creating/producing artistic work
  5. Curious/Inquisitive: seeking knowledge, asking questions
  6. Emasculate/Effeminate: referred to as "soft," weakened by another character, victim of attack, feminine behavior, submissive, dressed in female attire or accessories
  7. Guarded/Cautious: careful, possible reservations, protecting emotion, confusion, shame
  8. Intelligent/Intellectual: acquire and apply knowledge, ability to reason and understand
  9. Leader: guiding or directing other characters, inspiring others, stepping up to take action
  10. Provider: significant contributor to family household; desiring or making plans to be primary contributor to family household; includes character serving as a father-figure for underclassmen (i.e. allowing other characters to use his apartment to study and complete assignments, etc.)
  11. Reflective: deep-thoughts about past experiences, future opportunities, or current events
  12. Spiritual/Religious: acknowledging a higher being, praying, attending religious gathering
15. Demonstrated Behaviors: record the ways the character acts towards other characters
1. Aggressive: confrontational, provoking an altercation, ready to fight or argue, violent
  2. Competitive: challenging the skills/talents/abilities of another character
  3. Conniving: plotting or scheming to something wrong, illegal, or harmful to another character; plotting to deceive or mislead someone
  4. Friendly: outgoing, cordial, kind
  5. Humorous/Comedic: causing laughter or amusement, witty, telling jokes
  6. Loving/Caring: affectionate, devoted, displaying kindness, supporting or encouraging another character, looking out for another character
  7. Threatening: bullying, promising to cause harm, warning
16. Emotional Expression: record the emotions displayed by the character
1. Angry: rage, yelling, hostility, quick temper
  2. Disappointment: nonfulfillment, displeasure, frustration, upset, pain, discouraged

3. Fearful: afraid, demonstrating anxiety, nervous
  4. Happy/Content: showing pleasure, carefree, cheerful, satisfied, laughing
  5. Lonely: isolated, outcast, abandoned
  6. Passionate: strong feelings or beliefs about something, dedication
  7. Sad: sorrow, misery, unhappy, grieving, crying
17. Looked to as a Role Model/Admiration: record instances in which the character is looked to by others as an example
1. Academic Success: admired for academic achievements (i.e. college attendance, high test scores, etc.) or success in academic related activity (i.e. debate team competitions)
  2. Athletic Abilities: admired for athletic skills and talents
  3. Courage: admired for character's demonstration of bravery
  4. Family: admired by family members
  5. Music Knowledge/Abilities: admired for musical skills and talents
  6. Dance Knowledge/Abilities: admired for dance skills and talents
  7. Activism: admired for social consciousness, taking a political, speaking out in support of/against a cause or issue
  8. Sexual Experience: admired for sexual experiences
18. Demonstrated Appreciation/Value of College Education: record the character's appreciation of their college education
1. Acknowledgement of how education will benefit future: career advancement, how degree will assist with navigation of world, mentioning how experience will allow character to explore interests (i.e. conduct lab experiments), acknowledging the opportunities college attendance will provide
  2. Making sacrifices to attend: working, raising/saving money, limiting social life, passing on record deal/professional music career; includes performing a task or obligation to gain scholarship
  3. Verbal expression of appreciation: specifically mentioning happiness with being at institution or indicating that he will put in the effort to do well; includes mention of desire to attend for some reason (i.e. social class of people, female students, etc.).
  4. Performing well to make someone proud: striving to make good grades or complete college to please someone else (i.e. family members, surrogate parents/family, mentors, etc.)
  5. Alternative to something less desirable: mentioning college attendance as an alternative to an undesirable job or jail/prison
19. Relationship with Rules/Authority: record the character's relationship with or reaction to rules and/or authority.
1. Breaking rules/Challenging authority: knowingly challenging the rules of an authority figure, opposition to being controlled, refusing to follow rules, deliberately going against the standard
  2. Following rules/Listening to authority: willingly follows the rules of an authority figure without challenge, conforming to the desires of an authority figure

3. Punished for breaking rules: penalized for breaking rules put in place by an authority figure, additional responsibilities, verbal abuse from authority figure, elimination of privileges, physical abuse
  4. Rewarded for following rules: recognized for following rules put in place by an authority figure, additional privileges or opportunities, compensation
20. Relationships with Other Black Male Student Characters: record the character's relationship with other Black male student characters.
1. Positive: bonding with other Black student characters, encouraging and supporting each other during times of challenge/adversity, joking with each other, working well together, and developing genuine friendships
  2. Negative: strenuous relationships, tension, physical attacks, heated verbal exchanges, and traits
21. Entertaining/Performing: record the character's performing of any activities associated with entertainment.
1. Dancing: moving body rhythmically or following coordinated steps; includes Black Greek stepping movements.
  2. Singing: using voice to make music or accompany background music. Includes representations with or without music and rapping.
  3. Sports: competing in any intercollegiate athletic sport (i.e. football, basketball, baseball, etc.) in front of spectators.
  4. Music: using instruments to make music. Includes performing in a band.
22. Lack of Interest in College/Academics: record the character's lack of interest in class and/or college.
1. No Interest in Class/Subjects: verbalizing a lack of interest in what is being taught or attending college; intentionally providing wrong answers; making jokes about academic lessons or subjects, applicable to tutoring sessions as well; character mentioning that he already knows the information; failing to study.
  2. Falling asleep/Sleeping during class: nodding off, head down on desk, sleep during lecture
  3. Mentioning of alternatives: mentioning of other options besides attending college (i.e. working, professional sports, etc.); includes preferring to hangout with friends or doing nothing instead of attending college
  4. Other: performing some other activity or task during class (i.e. flirting, interrupting lecture, talking to other students, etc.)
23. Relationships with Non-Black Characters: record the character's relationship with non-Black characters.
1. Positive: bonding with non-Black characters, encouraging and supporting each other during times of challenge/adversity, and developing genuine friendships
  2. Negative: strenuous relationships, tension, physical attacks, heated verbal exchanges, and traits

24. Relationships with Female Student Characters: record the character's relationship with female student characters.
1. Positive: loving and supportive relationships, innocent flirting/courting, females serving as confidants and supporters of Black male student characters. Representations can be, both, romantic and platonic.
  2. Negative: strenuous relationships, tension, physical attacks, calling females out of their names, arguments; forcing a female character to do something she does not want to do; strictly sexual relationships.
25. Romantic/Sexual Actions: record any romantic or sexual actions of character
1. Flirting: acting as if attracted to another character, attempting to attract or get the attention of another character
  2. Groping: feeling or fondling of another character for sexual pleasure or desires
  3. Hugging: holding of someone in character's arms, cuddling, embracing
  4. Kissing: touching of lips in a romantic or sexual manner
  5. Sexual activity/Implied sexual activity: explicit depiction of sexual intercourse, physical activity of sex, inclusion of scenes that indicate sex is going to or has occurred, also includes fantasy or dream sequence scenes
  6. Holding hands: interlocking hands with another character of romantic interest
26. Sexual Talk or Discussion: record any discussion of the sexual nature
1. Discussing sexual experiences: describing sexual experiences to other characters, discussing female interactions with other characters, boasting about the number of sexual partners, discussing pregnancy scares, discussing need for condoms, discussing body parts or physical anatomy
  2. Discussing Pursuit: discussing desires to attract a romantic/sexual partner with other male characters
  3. Sexual Innuendo: implicit discussing of sex or sex-related topics; using alternative terminology to convey meaning of sex-related topic; sexual interpretation of an otherwise innocent statement; double entendre
27. Partial Nudity/Nudity: record any instances in which the character wears little to no clothing
1. Partial nudity/Nudity—non-sexual: little to no clothing in a non-sexual manner
  2. Partial nudity/Nudity—sexual: little to no clothing in a sexual manner
  3. Shirtless: not wearing a shirt
  4. Undergarments: underwear, boxers
28. Social Experiences: record character's experiences that occur outside of the classroom.
1. Campus Club/Organization Involvement: fraternity activities, band activities, debate team participation, student government, protests/demonstrations, attending campus or school-related events, campus leader (i.e. tour guide).
  2. Dating: spending one-on-one time with another character in a romantic context
  3. Hanging out: spending time with friends, family, co-worker and/or others discussing non-academic matters

4. Non-intercollegiate sports participation: pick-up basketball games, running, high school games, athletic competitions. Includes depiction of practicing for athletic competitions.
  5. Partying: dancing or socializing at college functions, nightclubs, bars, etc. Includes any representations of character consuming alcoholic beverages or possessing hangovers the next day
29. Criminal/Illegal Activity: record any instance in which the character breaks/violates a law; the violation could/does result in jail, prison, and/or fines; also includes the use of illegal drugs.
1. Assault: a violent physical attack
  2. Sports Violations: accepting money from boosters, NCAA violations
  3. Criminal Record: mentioning of character possessing a criminal record or history of criminal activity/involvement
  4. Arrested/Police Interaction: taken into police custody, placed in handcuffs, placed in jail, questioned by police
  5. Identity Document Forgery: modification of government issued documents for the purpose of deceiving others (i.e. fake IDs, modified passports, etc.)
  6. Trespassing/Burglary: entering another person's land or property without permission; illegally entering a building with intent to commit a crime
  7. Drug Use: illegal consumption of drugs (i.e. marijuana, prescription pills, etc.); includes the selling of illegal drugs
  8. Theft: stealing property not belonging to the character
  9. Illegal gambling: betting money on underground activities (i.e. dance competitions)
30. Academic Dishonesty: record any form of cheating or misconduct in relation to an academic-related activity.
1. Cheating: giving or receiving assistance during academic assignments/exams/activities without appropriate permission or authorization; using tactics to provide character with an edge over other characters
  2. Falsifying documents: providing false information on university documents or paperwork (i.e. admission applications, scholarship applications, etc.), includes another character mentioning character falsifying documents
31. Academic Struggles: record any instance in which the character experiences any challenges or setbacks related to their academic experience.
1. History of struggles before college: any academic challenges occurring before arrival at college or university (i.e. being held back to repeat a grade level)
  2. Test taking struggles: difficulty taking tests; pattern of low test scores
  3. Illiterate: unable to read or write; includes being unable to read music in music courses or activities
  4. Overcompensating: taking excessive or drastic measures to overcome feelings of academic inferiority or inadequacy (i.e. using big words to appear smart; displaying arrogant demeanor, etc.)
  5. Remedial courses: being recommended to participate or participating in courses designed to assist students with basic skills; developmental education courses

6. Pattern of incompletes/course withdrawals: trend of withdrawing from classes due to level of difficulty or consistently poor grades
  7. Receiving poor grades: mentioning of any low or failing grades received on character's schoolwork, tests or exams. Includes character's frustration with grades received.
  8. Loss of scholarship/tuition/financial: loss of primary financial source for college expenses; includes loss of work-study/campus job
  9. Loss of access to facilities: loss of access to campus facilities (i.e. library, cafeteria, etc.)
  10. Difficulty completing assignments: challenges writing papers, homework struggles
  11. Placed on academic probation: character is placed on academic probation due to poor grades or violating some other academic policy or rule
  12. Extended time in school: mentioning of character being enrolled in school beyond the standard number of years and not receiving a degree (i.e. 6 years at a community college, "super senior")
32. Leaving School: record any instance in which the character departs the college or university.
1. Graduating: participating in a commencement ceremony; character in cap and gown; any text on screen that indicates the character graduated
  2. Due to Death/Injury: character loses life, includes any scenes depicting character's funeral; character leaves institution due to sports injury
  3. Leaving for a job opportunity: leaving to pursue a job or other form of employment before graduating; includes leaving institution for a career in professional sports

### APPENDIX C: COMPLETE RANKED DEPICTION CODE PERCENTAGES

Films	Happy/Content	Positive Relationship with Black Male Students	Positive Relationship with Non-Black Characters	Disappointment	Campus Club/Organization Involvement	Positive Relationship with Female Student Characters	Competitive	Following Rules/Listening to Authority	Hanging Out	Angry	Negative Relationship with Black Male Students	Breaking Rules/Challenging Authority	Humorous/Comedic	Aggressive	Loving/Caring
<b>Overall</b>	<b>7.42</b>	<b>7.42</b>	<b>5.54</b>	<b>4.87</b>	<b>3.68</b>	<b>3.30</b>	<b>3.11</b>	<b>2.95</b>	<b>2.88</b>	<b>2.78</b>	<b>2.70</b>	<b>2.55</b>	<b>2.44</b>	<b>2.24</b>	<b>2.24</b>
<i>Revenge of the Nerds</i>	13.83	--	18.09	5.32	10.64	--	2.13	1.06	4.26	--	--	1.06	--	--	--
<i>School Daze</i>	7.92	10.26	--	4.69	8.21	4.11	--	1.76	1.76	4.99	5.87	1.76	1.47	3.81	4.99
<i>House Party 2</i>	9.55	0.45	7.27	9.09	--	4.55	0.45	1.36	0.91	4.09	2.27	4.55	2.73	3.18	1.82
<i>The Program</i>	5.05	4.59	7.80	5.05	--	3.21	3.67	1.38	2.75	3.21	2.29	1.38	4.59	2.29	2.75
<i>Blue Chips</i>	7.77	11.17	12.62	2.91	--	--	11.65	8.74	0.49	0.97	--	2.43	2.43	1.46	--
<i>Higher Learning</i>	6.33	6.00	1.67	7.00	--	3.67	0.67	2.33	6.00	5.00	0.67	4.00	2.33	4.00	2.67
<i>The 6<sup>th</sup> Man</i>	6.10	5.49	5.49	5.49	--	4.27	5.49	4.88	4.27	1.83	1.83	0.61	3.66	1.83	4.88
<i>Senseless</i>	4.44	--	5.00	3.89	2.22	3.33	2.22	0.56	3.89	1.67	0.56	1.11	5.56	1.11	2.78
<i>The Skulls</i>	6.45	--	4.84	1.61	1.61	4.84	1.61	--	4.84	1.61	--	4.84	3.23	1.61	1.61
<i>How High</i>	6.19	6.42	4.82	4.13	0.92	2.75	0.69	2.06	3.90	2.98	0.46	3.21	4.36	2.52	1.83
<i>Drumline</i>	8.06	8.47	5.79	4.96	9.71	4.34	2.69	3.93	1.65	3.31	5.99	3.10	2.07	2.07	2.07
<i>Accepted</i>	18.18	--	21.21	3.03	--	--	--	--	4.55	--	--	9.09	1.52	--	--
<i>Glory Road</i>	8.21	12.45	9.44	4.10	--	1.09	6.02	4.51	2.46	2.46	1.37	3.03	2.74	1.78	0.82
<i>We Are Marshall</i>	7.87	7.87	12.60	7.09	--	--	2.36	3.94	2.36	4.72	0.79	4.72	0.79	2.36	2.36
<i>Stomp the Yard</i>	6.44	9.15	--	4.16	8.73	2.70	4.99	0.62	2.29	1.46	7.07	0.83	1.25	2.49	1.87
<i>The Great Debaters</i>	7.74	8.35	0.41	4.28	7.74	8.15	1.83	3.46	3.05	2.04	1.83	1.63	1.63	1.22	3.87
<i>Mooz-lum</i>	2.78	2.78	4.63	8.33	1.85	4.63	--	--	4.63	4.63	4.63	2.78	--	4.63	2.78
<i>From the Rough</i>	8.00	1.33	10.67	5.33	--	1.33	2.67	10.67	5.33	1.33	4.00	1.33	1.33	1.33	--



Films	Leader	Friendly	Negative Relationship with Non-Black Characters	Passionate	Arrogant	Guarded/Cautious	Fearful	Entertaining- Sports	Non-Intercollegiate Sports Participation	Partying	Entertaining- Dancing	Flirting	Reflective	Intelligent/Intellectual	Professor Interaction	Punished for Breaking Rules
<b>Overall</b>	<b>2.17</b>	<b>2.13</b>	<b>2.01</b>	<b>1.98</b>	<b>1.90</b>	<b>1.84</b>	<b>1.84</b>	<b>1.59</b>	<b>1.40</b>	<b>1.30</b>	<b>1.21</b>	<b>1.19</b>	<b>1.17</b>	<b>1.11</b>	<b>1.09</b>	<b>1.07</b>
<i>Revenge of the Nerds</i>	--	4.26	1.06	--	--	1.06	6.38	--	2.13	3.19	1.06	--	--	2.13	--	--
<i>School Daze</i>	4.40	0.88	--	3.52	1.47	0.88	1.47	--	--	1.17	0.59	0.29	1.17	0.88	--	0.59
<i>House Party 2</i>	0.45	2.27	1.36	0.45	0.91	2.73	2.73	--	--	2.27	1.82	0.45	1.36	0.91	1.36	0.91
<i>The Program</i>	0.46	2.75	1.83	2.29	4.13	0.46	0.46	2.75	1.83	1.83	--	2.29	0.92	0.92	--	0.46
<i>Blue Chips</i>	0.49	2.43	1.46	0.49	0.97	1.46	0.49	6.31	6.80	--	--	0.97	0.49	0.97	--	0.49
<i>Higher Learning</i>	2.67	0.67	4.67	3.00	2.00	1.33	1.00	0.33	0.67	0.67	--	0.33	4.33	3.33	2.00	1.67
<i>The 6<sup>th</sup> Man</i>	2.44	2.44	1.22	1.83	1.22	1.83	3.05	5.49	1.83	0.61	--	1.83	3.05	--	--	--
<i>Senseless</i>	0.56	4.44	4.44	2.22	1.11	0.56	1.11	1.11	1.11	0.56	--	3.33	1.11	2.78	2.22	1.11
<i>The Skulls</i>	1.61	1.61	6.45	--	--	--	4.84	1.61	--	1.61	--	--	1.61	1.61	--	4.84
<i>How High</i>	0.46	2.98	3.21	1.15	0.92	1.83	1.61	0.23	0.46	1.38	0.46	1.83	0.46	1.83	0.69	2.06
<i>Drumline</i>	4.96	1.86	0.41	2.69	3.93	1.03	--	--	--	0.62	--	0.83	0.21	0.21	--	2.27
<i>Accepted</i>	--	3.03	--	--	--	--	7.58	--	--	1.52	--	--	--	1.52	--	--
<i>Glory Road</i>	0.96	1.64	2.87	0.96	1.23	2.19	1.23	5.06	3.83	1.64	1.09	0.68	0.96	0.14	--	1.23
<i>We Are Marshall</i>	4.72	1.57	4.72	7.09	0.79	0.79	1.57	1.57	4.72	--	--	--	1.57	--	--	0.79
<i>Stomp the Yard</i>	5.41	1.87	0.42	2.49	4.37	1.04	1.04	--	--	1.87	7.48	1.66	1.66	0.21	--	0.62
<i>The Great Debaters</i>	1.22	2.44	0.81	2.44	1.83	2.85	2.85	--	--	1.43	0.41	2.04	0.61	2.85	6.72	0.41
<i>Mooz-lum</i>	0.93	1.85	5.56	0.93	--	9.26	6.48	--	--	1.85	0.93	1.85	1.85	--	2.78	--
<i>From the Rough</i>	--	4.00	2.67	1.33	--	9.33	9.33	5.33	5.33	1.33	--	1.33	--	--	--	--

Films	Threatening	Negative Relationship with Female Student Characters	Sad	Emasculated	Courageous	Kissing	Hugging	Discussing Sexual Experiences	Studying	Dating	Drug Use	Curious/Inquisitive	Conniving	Sexual Innuendo	Athletic Admiration	Shirtless
<b>Overall</b>	<b>0.98</b>	<b>0.96</b>	<b>0.94</b>	<b>0.90</b>	<b>0.86</b>	<b>0.77</b>	<b>0.75</b>	<b>0.69</b>	<b>0.61</b>	<b>0.52</b>	<b>0.50</b>	<b>0.48</b>	<b>0.46</b>	<b>0.44</b>	<b>0.42</b>	<b>0.42</b>
<i>Revenge of the Nerds</i>	--	--	--	18.09	--	--	--	--	--	--	1.06	--	1.06	--	--	--
<i>School Daze</i>	2.35	2.05	--	0.29	0.59	2.35	2.05	2.93	--	1.47	--	--	0.59	0.29	--	--
<i>House Party 2</i>	--	2.73	0.91	1.36	--	1.36	1.36	0.45	0.45	0.45	--	--	--	1.36	--	--
<i>The Program</i>	1.83	2.29	1.83	--	0.46	1.38	1.38	--	2.29	0.46	--	0.92	--	--	--	--
<i>Blue Chips</i>	--	--	0.49	--	--	--	--	0.49	0.49	--	--	0.97	--	--	--	0.97
<i>Higher Learning</i>	1.33	1.00	1.33	0.67	3.00	0.67	1.67	--	0.67	--	0.33	0.67	--	0.33	--	--
<i>The 6<sup>th</sup> Man</i>	0.61	1.22	1.83	2.44	1.22	1.83	0.61	1.22	--	1.22	--	--	--	0.61	--	0.61
<i>Senseless</i>	2.22	1.67	0.56	1.67	0.56	1.67	1.11	0.56	0.56	1.11	--	--	--	2.78	--	0.56
<i>The Skulls</i>	--	1.61	1.61	4.84	--	--	--	--	1.61	--	--	3.23	3.23	--	--	--
<i>How High</i>	1.83	--	0.23	0.23	0.46	0.46	0.23	2.75	0.92	0.69	5.05	0.23	1.61	1.83	--	--
<i>Drumline</i>	1.03	1.24	0.62	0.21	0.21	0.41	0.41	0.41	0.62	0.62	--	0.21	0.62	--	--	--
<i>Accepted</i>	--	--	--	--	1.52	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	6.06	3.03	--	1.52
<i>Glory Road</i>	0.68	--	0.68	0.41	1.78	0.27	0.41	0.14	--	0.27	--	0.41	--	--	2.74	1.37
<i>We Are Marshall</i>	--	--	3.15	--	1.57	--	--	--	--	--	--	1.57	--	--	--	0.79
<i>Stomp the Yard</i>	1.46	1.46	0.62	0.21	0.42	1.04	1.04	0.21	1.25	0.62	--	0.42	0.62	--	--	0.62
<i>The Great Debaters</i>	0.20	0.61	1.83	0.41	0.61	0.61	0.61	--	1.02	0.41	--	0.81	--	--	--	0.20
<i>Mooz-lum</i>	--	1.85	2.78	0.93	1.85	0.93	0.93	1.85	--	0.93	--	0.93	--	--	--	--
<i>From the Rough</i>	--	1.33	1.33	1.33	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1.33	--	--	--	--

Films	Making Sacrifices to Attend College	Paying Attention in Class	Spiritual/Religious	Entertaining- Music	Correctly Answering Questions	Discussing Romantic/Sexual Pursuit	Childlike	Entertaining- Singing	Trespassing/Burglary	Receiving Good Grades/High Scores	Sexual Activity/Implied Sexual Activity	Receiving Poor Grades/Low Scores	Holding Hands	Performing Other Task During Class	Theft	Lonely
<b>Overall</b>	<b>0.40</b>	<b>0.36</b>	<b>0.33</b>	<b>0.31</b>	<b>0.29</b>	<b>0.29</b>	<b>0.27</b>	<b>0.27</b>	<b>0.27</b>	<b>0.25</b>	<b>0.25</b>	<b>0.25</b>	<b>0.23</b>	<b>0.21</b>	<b>0.21</b>	<b>0.19</b>
<i>Revenge of the Nerds</i>	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1.06	1.06	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
<i>School Daze</i>	--	--	--	--	--	0.88	--	0.59	--	--	1.17	--	0.88	--	--	--
<i>House Party 2</i>	4.09	--	0.91	--	--	--	--	0.91	3.18	0.45	--	--	0.45	0.91	0.91	--
<i>The Program</i>	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0.46	--	0.92	1.38	0.46	--	0.46
<i>Blue Chips</i>	--	0.49	--	--	--	--	0.97	--	--	1.46	--	1.46	--	--	--	--
<i>Higher Learning</i>	0.33	0.67	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0.33	0.33	0.33	0.33	--	--	--
<i>The 6<sup>th</sup> Man</i>	--	--	--	--	--	1.22	0.61	--	--	--	--	--	0.61	--	--	0.61
<i>Senseless</i>	2.22	0.56	--	--	1.11	--	--	--	--	--	1.11	0.56	1.11	--	--	--
<i>The Skulls</i>	--	--	--	--	--	1.61	3.23	--	4.84	--	--	--	--	--	4.84	--
<i>How High</i>	--	0.69	--	--	0.23	0.92	0.92	--	0.23	1.38	0.92	0.92	--	0.92	1.15	--
<i>Drumline</i>	--	0.41	--	3.10	--	0.21	--	0.21	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0.21
<i>Accepted</i>	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1.52	1.52	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
<i>Glory Road</i>	--	0.41	0.96	--	0.14	0.27	--	0.82	--	--	--	0.14	--	0.27	--	0.14
<i>We Are Marshall</i>	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1.57
<i>Stomp the Yard</i>	1.04	0.21	0.42	--	--	0.21	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0.21	--	0.42
<i>The Great Debaters</i>	--	0.61	0.41	--	2.04	--	0.81	--	--	--	0.20	--	--	--	--	0.20
<i>Mooz-lum</i>	--	0.93	2.78	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
<i>From the Rough</i>	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Films	Verbal Expression of College Appreciation	No Interest in Class/Subjects	Provider	Groping	Courage Admiration	Performing Well to Make Someone Proud	Cheating	Academic Success Admiration	Family Admiration	Rewarded for Following Rules	Test Taking Struggles	Dance Knowledge/Abilities Admiration	Falling Asleep/Sleeping During Class	Partial Nudity/Nudity- Non-Sexual	Partial Nudity/Nudity- Sexual	Sports Violations
<b>Overall</b>	<b>0.19</b>	<b>0.19</b>	<b>0.17</b>	<b>0.17</b>	<b>0.15</b>	<b>0.15</b>	<b>0.15</b>	<b>0.13</b>	<b>0.13</b>	<b>0.13</b>	<b>0.13</b>	<b>0.10</b>	<b>0.10</b>	<b>0.10</b>	<b>0.10</b>	<b>0.10</b>
<i>Revenge of the Nerds</i>	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
<i>School Daze</i>	--	--	--	0.59	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0.29	0.88	--
<i>House Party 2</i>	0.91	--	--	--	--	0.91	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
<i>The Program</i>	0.46	0.46	0.46	--	--	0.46	0.46	--	0.46	--	0.92	--	0.92	--	--	0.92
<i>Blue Chips</i>	--	0.97	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0.49	0.97	--	0.49	--	--	1.46
<i>Higher Learning</i>	--	0.33	0.67	--	--	--	--	--	--	0.33	--	--	--	--	0.33	--
<i>The 6<sup>th</sup> Man</i>	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0.61	--	--
<i>Senseless</i>	--	--	2.22	0.56	--	1.67	1.11	--	2.78	--	--	--	--	1.67	--	--
<i>The Skulls</i>	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
<i>How High</i>	0.69	0.92	--	0.46	--	0.23	0.92	0.46	--	--	0.46	--	--	--	--	--
<i>Drumline</i>	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0.83	--	--	--	--	--	--
<i>Accepted</i>	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
<i>Glory Road</i>	0.14	0.14	0.14	--	0.82	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0.14	--	--	--
<i>We Are Marshall</i>	--	--	--	--	0.79	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
<i>Stomp the Yard</i>	0.21	--	--	0.21	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1.04	0.21	--	--	--
<i>The Great Debaters</i>	0.20	--	--	0.41	--	--	--	0.81	--	--	--	--	--	--	0.20	--
<i>Mooz-lum</i>	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
<i>From the Rough</i>	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Films	Criminal Record	Loss of Scholarship/Tuition/ Financial Aid	Taking Tests/Exams	Creative	Mention of Alternatives to College Attendance	Undergarments	Assault	Arrested/Police Interaction	Illiterate	Graduating	Due to Death/Injury	Incorrectly Answering Questions	Mention of How College Will Benefit Future	Falsifying Documents	Seeking Accreditation for College	Music Knowledge/Abilities Admiration
<b>Overall</b>	<b>0.10</b>	<b>0.10</b>	<b>0.08</b>	<b>0.08</b>	<b>0.08</b>	<b>0.08</b>	<b>0.08</b>	<b>0.08</b>	<b>0.08</b>	<b>0.08</b>	<b>0.08</b>	<b>0.06</b>	<b>0.06</b>	<b>0.06</b>	<b>0.04</b>	<b>0.04</b>
<i>Revenge of the Nerds</i>	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
<i>School Daze</i>	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
<i>House Party 2</i>	--	1.36	--	--	--	--	--	0.45	--	--	--	0.91	--	--	--	--
<i>The Program</i>	--	--	0.46	--	0.46	--	--	--	0.92	--	0.46	--	--	--	--	--
<i>Blue Chips</i>	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0.49	--	--	--	--	--	--
<i>Higher Learning</i>	--	--	--	--	--	--	1.00	0.67	--	0.33	--	--	0.33	--	--	--
<i>The 6<sup>th</sup> Man</i>	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
<i>Senseless</i>	--	--	0.56	--	--	1.11	--	--	--	0.56	--	--	--	--	--	--
<i>The Skulls</i>	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	4.84	--	--	--	--	--
<i>How High</i>	0.46	--	0.46	0.46	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0.23	--	--	--
<i>Drumline</i>	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0.41	--	--	--	0.21	0.21	--	0.41
<i>Accepted</i>	--	3.03	--	3.03	1.52	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	3.03	--
<i>Glory Road</i>	--	--	--	--	0.14	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
<i>We Are Marshall</i>	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0.79	--	--	--	--	--	--
<i>Stomp the Yard</i>	0.62	--	--	--	0.21	--	0.21	0.21	--	--	--	--	--	0.42	--	--
<i>The Great Debaters</i>	--	--	--	--	--	0.41	--	--	--	--	--	0.20	--	--	--	--
<i>Mooz-lum</i>	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
<i>From the Rough</i>	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Films	Activism Admiration	Overcompensation	Loss of Access to Campus Facilities	Difficulty Completing Assignments	Academic Probation	Extended Time in School	Leaving College for Professional Sports	Sexual Experience Admiration	College as Alternative	Identity Document Forgery	Pre-College Academic Struggles	Remedial Courses	History of Course Withdrawals/Incompletes
<b>Overall</b>	<b>0.04</b>	<b>0.04</b>	<b>0.04</b>	<b>0.04</b>	<b>0.04</b>	<b>0.04</b>	<b>0.04</b>	<b>0.02</b>	<b>0.02</b>	<b>0.02</b>	<b>0.02</b>	<b>0.02</b>	<b>0.02</b>
<i>Revenge of the Nerds</i>	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
<i>School Daze</i>	0.59	--	--	--	--	--	--	0.29	--	--	--	--	--
<i>House Party 2</i>	--	--	0.91	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
<i>The Program</i>	--	0.92	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0.46	0.46	0.46
<i>Blue Chips</i>	--	--	--	--	--	--	0.97	--	--	--	--	--	--
<i>Higher Learning</i>	--	--	--	0.67	--	0.33	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
<i>The 6<sup>th</sup> Man</i>	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
<i>Senseless</i>	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
<i>The Skulls</i>	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
<i>How High</i>	--	--	--	--	0.46	0.23	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
<i>Drumline</i>	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
<i>Accepted</i>	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1.52	1.52	--	--	--
<i>Glory Road</i>	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
<i>We Are Marshall</i>	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
<i>Stomp the Yard</i>	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
<i>The Great Debaters</i>	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
<i>Mooz-lum</i>	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
<i>From the Rough</i>	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

## APPENDIX D: CODING MANUAL

**Research Topic:** Analysis of the representation of Black male students and Black masculinity in college films

**Central Idea/Goal:** This study will analyze the representation of Black male students and Black masculinity in a total of 18 college films. Utilizing a convergent parallel mixed methods content analysis approach, this analysis will highlight any stereotypical images presented and emergent similarities or differences across films.

The goal of the study is to identify whether the students depicted in college films perpetuate stereotypes commonly associated with the representation of Black men in film or provide audiences with new or rarely seen representations. Additionally, this study seeks to identify what, if any, relationships exist between the films' genre, decade of release, and institution type and the representations of Black male students in the analyzed films.

**Research Questions:** This study will be guided by the following two (2) research questions:

(RQ1): How are Black male students and Black masculinity represented in college films?

- 1a. What depictions of Black male students are represented most often in college films?
- 1b. What depictions of Black male students are represented least often in college films?
- 1c. What non-stereotypical depictions or rarely seen representations of Black masculinity are found in college films?

(RQ2): What differences in Black male student representations exist when accounting for various characteristics of college films?

- 2a. Is there a difference in how Black male students are represented based on the films' genre (i.e. comedy, drama)?
- 2b. Is there a difference in how Black male students are represented based on the films' decade of release?
- 2c. Is there a difference in how Black male students are represented based on the films' institution type (HBCU or PWI)?

**Media:** Hollywood produced films released theatrically and available on DVD

**Recording Unit:** DVD Chapters/Scene Selections

**Units of Analyses:** Depictions of Black male student characters' behaviors, expressions of emotions, interactions, and experiences in college films.

Films should be analyzed by the DVD chapters provided on its main menu. In order to establish interrater reliability, a second coder will code the composite depiction codes—rather than each individual depiction code. Multiple composite depiction codes can be coded for each DVD chapter. However, the same composite depiction code cannot be coded multiple times in the same DVD chapter. For example, “Academic Involvement,” “Personality Traits,” “Emotional Expression,” and “Social Experiences,” can all be coded for DVD Chapter 1, but “Academic Involvement” cannot be coded more than once in this same chapter. In other words, the coder should be more concerned with the presence of the coding variable rather than the frequency of the variable in each chapter.



## Code Book

Code Sheet should be filled out/completed per plot-functional character (Manganello, Franzini, & Jordan, 2008).

1. Film: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Character Name: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Academic Involvement: record the character's involvement in academic and classroom activities
  - Correctly answering questions: provides accurate responses to professor's questions.
  - Incorrectly answering questions: provides inaccurate responses to professor's questions.
  - Paying attention in class: engages in professor's lectures or instructions (i.e. listens, takes notes, etc.), listens to class discussion.
  - Professor interaction: interacts with professor outside of typical classroom lectures
  - Studying: engages in activities geared towards gaining knowledge or preparing for a test/quiz/exam, completing homework, reading textbooks, tutoring activities
  - Takes tests/quizzes/exams: completes tests or exams
  - Receiving good grades/high scores: mentioning of any high or passing grades received on character's schoolwork, tests or exams.
  - Seeking accreditation for college: participating in activities geared towards gaining accreditation for institution (i.e. speaking before an accrediting board, etc.)
4. Personality Traits: record the characteristics/qualities that best describe the character's nature.
  - Arrogant: overconfident, bragging about superiority, flashy
  - Childlike: having qualities of a child, playful; includes being treated like a child by adults (i.e. dismissed from conversation to play with kids)
  - Courageous: demonstration of bravery in the midst of adversity or hostile conditions; standing up for what the character believes in
  - Creative: having or showing an ability to make new things; innovative thinking; using imagination; creating/producing artistic work
  - Curious/Inquisitive: seeking knowledge, asking questions
  - Emasculate: referred to as "soft," weakened by another character, victim of attack, feminine behavior, submissive, dressed in female attire or accessories
  - Guarded/Cautious: careful, possible reservations, protecting emotion, confusion, shame
  - Intelligent/Intellectual: acquire and apply knowledge, ability to reason and understand
  - Leader: guiding or directing other characters, inspiring others, stepping up to take action
  - Provider: significant contributor to family household; desiring or making plans to be primary contributor to family household; includes character serving as a father-figure

- for underclassmen (i.e. allowing other characters to use his apartment to study and complete assignments, etc.)
  - Reflective: deep-thoughts about past experiences, future opportunities, or current events
  - Spiritual/Religious: acknowledging a higher being, praying, attending religious gathering
5. Demonstrated Behaviors: record the ways the character acts towards other characters
- Aggressive: confrontational, provoking an altercation, ready to fight or argue, violent
  - Competitive: challenging the skills/talents/abilities of another character
  - Conniving: plotting or scheming to something wrong, illegal, or harmful to another character; plotting to deceive or mislead someone
  - Friendly: outgoing, cordial, kind
  - Humorous/Comedic: causing laughter or amusement, witty, telling jokes
  - Loving/Caring: affectionate, devoted, displaying kindness, supporting or encouraging another character, looking out for another character
  - Threatening: bullying, promising to cause harm, warning
6. Emotional Expression: record the emotions displayed by the character
- Angry: rage, yelling, hostility, quick temper
  - Disappointment: nonfulfillment, displeasure, frustration, upset, pain, discouraged
  - Fearful: afraid, demonstrating anxiety, nervous
  - Happy/Content: showing pleasure, carefree, cheerful, satisfied, laughing
  - Lonely: isolated, outcast, abandoned
  - Passionate: strong feelings or beliefs about something, dedication
  - Sad: sorrow, misery, unhappy, grieving, crying
7. Looked to as a Role Model/Admiration: record instances in which the character is looked to by others as an example
- Academic Success: admired for academic achievements (i.e. college attendance, high test scores, etc.) or success in academic related activity (i.e. debate team competitions)
  - Athletic Abilities: admired for athletic skills and talents
  - Courage: admired for character's demonstration of bravery
  - Family: admired by family members
  - Music Knowledge/Abilities: admired for musical skills and talents
  - Dance Knowledge/Abilities: admired for dance skills and talents
  - Activism: admired for social consciousness, taking a political, speaking out in support of/against a cause or issue
  - Sexual Experience: admired for sexual experiences
8. Demonstrated Appreciation/Value of College Education: record the character's appreciation of their college education
- Acknowledgement of how education will benefit future: career advancement, how degree will assist with navigation of world, mentioning how experience will allow

- character to explore interests (i.e. conduct lab experiments), acknowledging the opportunities college attendance will provide
- Making sacrifices to attend: working, raising/saving money, limiting social life, passing on record deal/professional music career; includes performing a task or obligation to gain scholarship
  - Verbal expression of appreciation: specifically mentioning happiness with being at institution or indicating that he will put in the effort to do well; includes mention of desire to attend for some reason (i.e. social class of people, female students, etc.).
  - Performing well to make someone proud: striving to make good grades or complete college to please someone else (i.e. family members, surrogate parents/family, mentors, etc.)
  - Alternative to something less desirable: mentioning college attendance as an alternative to an undesirable job or jail/prison
9. Relationship with Rules/Authority: record the character's relationship with or reaction to rules and/or authority.
- Breaking rules/Challenging authority: knowingly challenging the rules of an authority figure, opposition to being controlled, refusing to follow rules, deliberately going against the standard
  - Following rules/Listening to authority: willingly follows the rules of an authority figure without challenge, conforming to the desires of an authority figure
  - Punished for breaking rules: penalized for breaking rules put in place by an authority figure, additional responsibilities, verbal abuse from authority figure, elimination of privileges, physical abuse
  - Rewarded for following rules: recognized for following rules put in place by an authority figure, additional privileges or opportunities, compensation
10. Relationships with Other Black Male Student Characters: record the character's relationship with other Black male student characters.
- Positive: bonding with other Black student characters, encouraging and supporting each other during times of challenge/adversity, joking with each other, working well together, and developing genuine friendships
  - Negative: strenuous relationships, tension, physical attacks, heated verbal exchanges, and traits
11. Entertaining/Performing: record the character's performing of any activities associated with entertainment.
- Dancing: moving body rhythmically or following coordinated steps; includes Black Greek stepping movements.
  - Singing: using voice to make music or accompany background music. Includes representations with or without music and rapping.
  - Sports: competing in any intercollegiate athletic sport (i.e. football, basketball, baseball, etc.) in front of spectators.
  - Music: using instruments to make music. Includes performing in a band.

12. Lack of Interest in College/Academics: record the character's lack of interest in class and/or college.
- No Interest in Class/Subjects: verbalizing a lack of interest in what is being taught or attending college; intentionally providing wrong answers; making jokes about academic lessons or subjects, applicable to tutoring sessions as well; character mentioning that he already knows the information; failing to study.
  - Falling asleep/Sleeping during class: nodding off, head down on desk, sleep during lecture
  - Mentioning of alternatives: mentioning of other options besides attending college (i.e. working, professional sports, etc.); includes preferring to hangout with friends or doing nothing instead of attending college
  - Other: performing some other activity or task during class (i.e. flirting, interrupting lecture, talking to other students, etc.)
13. Relationships with Non-Black characters: record the character's relationship with non-Black characters.
- Positive: bonding with non-Black characters, encouraging and supporting each other during times of challenge/adversity, and developing genuine friendships
  - Negative: strenuous relationships, tension, physical attacks, heated verbal exchanges, and traits
14. Relationships with Female Student Characters: record the character's relationship with female student characters.
- Positive: loving and supportive relationships, innocent flirting/courting, females serving as confidants and supporters of Black male student characters. Representations can be, both, romantic and platonic.
  - Negative: strenuous relationships, tension, physical attacks, calling females out of their names, arguments; forcing a female character to do something she does not want to do; strictly sexual relationships.
15. Romantic/Sexual Actions: record any romantic or sexual actions of character
- Flirting: acting as if attracted to another character, attempting to attract or get the attention of another character
  - Groping: feeling or fondling of another character for sexual pleasure or desires
  - Hugging: holding of someone in character's arms, cuddling, embracing
  - Kissing: touching of lips in a romantic or sexual manner
  - Sexual activity/Implied sexual activity: explicit depiction of sexual intercourse, physical activity of sex, inclusion of scenes that indicate sex is going to or has occurred, also includes fantasy or dream sequence scenes
  - Holding hands: interlocking hands with another character of romantic interest
16. Sexual Talk or Discussion: record any discussion of the sexual nature
- Discussing sexual experiences: describing sexual experiences to other characters, discussing female interactions with other characters, boasting about the number of sexual partners, discussing pregnancy scares, discussing need for condoms, discussing body parts or physical anatomy

- Discussing Pursuit: discussing desires to attract a romantic/sexual partner with other male characters
  - Sexual Innuendo: implicit discussing of sex or sex-related topics; using alternative terminology to convey meaning of sex-related topic; sexual interpretation of an otherwise innocent statement; double entendre
17. Partial Nudity/Nudity: record any instances in which the character wears little to no clothing
- Partial nudity/Nudity—non-sexual: little to no clothing in a non-sexual manner
  - Partial nudity/Nudity—sexual: little to no clothing in a sexual manner
  - Shirtless: not wearing a shirt
  - Undergarments: underwear, boxers
18. Social Experiences: record character's experiences that occur outside of the classroom.
- Campus Club/Organization Involvement: fraternity activities, band activities, debate team participation, student government, protests/demonstrations, attending campus or school-related events, campus leader (i.e. tour guide).
  - Dating: spending one-on-one time with another character in a romantic context
  - Hanging out: spending time with friends, family, co-worker and/or others discussing non-academic matters
  - Non-intercollegiate sports participation: pick-up basketball games, running, high school games, athletic competitions. Includes depiction of practicing for athletic competitions.
  - Partying: dancing or socializing at college functions, nightclubs, bars, etc. Includes any representations of character consuming alcoholic beverages or possessing hangovers the next day
19. Criminal/Illegal Activity: record any instance in which the character breaks/violates a law; the violation could/does result in jail, prison, and/or fines; also includes the use of illegal drugs.
- Assault: a violent physical attack
  - Sports Violations: accepting money from boosters, NCAA violations
  - Criminal Record: mentioning of character possessing a criminal record or history of criminal activity/involvement
  - Arrested/Police Interaction: taken into police custody, placed in handcuffs, placed in jail, questioned by police
  - Identity Document Forgery: modification of government issued documents for the purpose of deceiving others (i.e. fake IDs, modified passports, etc.)
  - Trespassing/Burglary: entering another person's land or property without permission; illegally entering a building with intent to commit a crime
  - Drug Use: illegal consumption of drugs (i.e. marijuana, prescription pills, etc.); includes the selling of illegal drugs
  - Theft: stealing property not belonging to the character
  - Illegal gambling: betting money on underground activities (i.e. dance competitions)

20. Academic Dishonesty: record any form of cheating or misconduct in relation to an academic-related activity.
- Cheating: giving or receiving assistance during academic assignments/exams/activities without appropriate permission or authorization; using tactics to provide character with an edge over other characters
  - Falsifying documents: providing false information on university documents or paperwork (i.e. admission applications, scholarship applications, etc.), includes another character mentioning character falsifying documents
21. Academic Struggles: record any instance in which the character experiences any challenges or setbacks related to their academic experience.
- History of struggles before college: any academic challenges occurring before arrival at college or university (i.e. being held back to repeat a grade level)
  - Test taking struggles: difficulty taking tests; pattern of low test scores
  - Illiterate: unable to read or write; includes being unable to read music in music courses or activities
  - Overcompensating: taking excessive or drastic measures to overcome feelings of academic inferiority or inadequacy (i.e. using big words to appear smart; displaying arrogant demeanor, etc.)
  - Remedial courses: being recommended to participate or participating in courses designed to assist students with basic skills; developmental education courses
  - Pattern of incompletes/course withdrawals: trend of withdrawing from classes due to level of difficulty or consistently poor grades
  - Receiving poor grades: mentioning of any low or failing grades received on character's schoolwork, tests or exams. Includes character's frustration with grades received.
  - Loss of scholarship/tuition/financial: loss of primary financial source for college expenses; includes loss of work-study/campus job
  - Loss of access to facilities: loss of access to campus facilities (i.e. library, cafeteria, etc.)
  - Difficulty completing assignments: challenges writing papers, homework struggles
  - Placed on academic probation: character is placed on academic probation due to poor grades or violating some other academic policy or rule
  - Extended time in school: mentioning of character being enrolled in school beyond the standard number of years and not receiving a degree (i.e. 6 years at a community college, "super senior")
22. Leaving School: record any instance in which the character departs the college or university.
- Graduating: participating in a commencement ceremony; character in cap and gown; any text on screen that indicates the character graduated
  - Due to Death/Injury: character loses life, includes any scenes depicting character's funeral; character leaves institution due to sports injury
  - Leaving for a job opportunity: leaving to pursue a job or other form of employment before graduating; includes leaving institution for a career in professional sports

Codes	DVD Chapters															
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Academic Involvement																
Personality Traits																
Demonstrated Behaviors																
Emotional Expression																
Role Model/Admiration																
Appreciation/Value of College Education																
Relationship with Rules/Authority																
Relationships with Black Male Students																
Entertaining/Performing																
Lack of Interest in College/Academics																
Relationships with Non-Black Characters																
Relationships with Female Student Characters																
Romantic/Sexual Actions																
Sexual Talk/Discussion																
Partial Nudity/Nudity																
Social Experiences																
Criminal/Illegal Activity																
Academic Dishonesty																
Academic Struggles																
Leaving School																

Codes	DVD Chapters															
	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32
Academic Involvement																
Personality Traits																
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## APPENDIX E: MIXED METHODS INTEGRATION VISUAL

Theme	QUAL results	quan results
	Qualitative Content Analysis	Quantitative Content Analysis
1. Athletes and Greek fraternity Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Overall, Black male student characters primarily represented as athletes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regardless of the film's genre, decade of release, or institution type, Black male student characters primarily portrayed as athletes or Greek fraternity members.</li> </ul>
2. Empty Space in Representation Trends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Overall, analyzed films provided depictions associated with the empty space in representation.</li> <li>Primary Depictions: "Happy/Content" and "Positive Relationships with Black Male Students" (7.42%)</li> <li>Least Common Depictions: "History of Course Withdrawals/Incompletes," "Remedial Courses," "Pre-College Academic Struggles," "Identity Document Forgery," "College as Alternative," and "Sexual Experience Admiration" (0.02%)</li> <li>Seven (7) Non-Stereotypical Representations: Interpersonal, Emotional, Loving, Academically Engaged, Leader and Role Model, Thoughtful, and Spiritual.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Significant relationship between decade of release and films' Black male student characterizations.</li> <li>Representations of Black men in college films largely followed the trends of Black men in other films of the same decade.</li> <li>Empty space in representation depictions were more present in college films released in the 1980s and 2000s.</li> </ul>
3. Value in HBCU Representations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Overall, analyzed films provided depictions associated with the empty space in representation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Significant relationship between institution type and films' Black male student characterizations.</li> <li>Empty space in representation depictions were more present in college films set at HBCUs.</li> <li>Brute and sambo depictions were more present in college films set at PWIs.</li> </ul>

Note. Adapted from Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011.

## **VITA**

Kevin Walter Joseph, the son of Carol Massey and Anthony Joseph, was born in Oakland, California and raised in the Atlanta, Georgia metropolitan area. Kevin graduated from Riverdale High School located in Riverdale, Georgia in 2001. In 2008, he earned a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration and a Master of Business Administration from Florida Agricultural & Mechanical University located in Tallahassee, Florida.

Prior to beginning his doctoral studies, Kevin acquired positions with the Florida Department of Corrections, The Walt Disney Company, and MGT of America, Inc. While at MGT of America, Inc., Kevin worked as a Higher Education Analyst where he led project teams, collaborated with high-level university leaders at institutions across the country, advised clients on best practices and strategic solutions to problems, and cultivated effective working relationships with individuals from diverse backgrounds.

While completing his doctorate, Kevin served as the Graduate Assistant for Assessment in the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Life and Enrollment at Louisiana State University (LSU). In this role, he conducted research on student issues and trends, assisted with the development and implementation of division-wide initiatives, and served on committees focused on student retention and success.

Kevin will receive his doctorate in Educational Leadership and Research with a concentration in Higher Education Administration from Louisiana State University in May of 2015.