CINEMA AND TELEVISION AS A GAUGE FOR RACE POLITICS

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Abstract - The salience of race in American society is a topic of current debate among some scholars of political science. Some research suggests that race is more influential than class in determining the political behavior of African Americans. Other research argues that bridging the racial divide requires a movement from confrontation and blaming to a more positive view of the successes of race relations. In other words, the construct of race is not as important in the U.S. as it was during Reconstruction. This study examines the influence of exposure to black cinema and black television on an individual's sense of linked fate. In summary, exposure to black cinema is related to levels of racial group consciousness for some African Americans. Broader implications from this study call for the inclusion of additional concepts (i.e., cultural concepts like cinema) along with survey data and feeling thermometers to examine issues related to race.

I. Introduction

According to a national survey conducted by A.C. Neilsen Company in 1998, the average American spends an average of three hours and forty-six minutes watching television[1] – the equivalent of thirteen uninterrupted years of life, assuming a life expectancy of seventy-six years.[2] Moreover, according to a study conducted by the National Association of Theatre Owners and the Motion Picture Association of America in 2002 – when admissions to U.S. movie cinemas totaled 1.63 billion[3] – 28% of respondents over the age of twelve characterized themselves as "frequent" movie-goers and 35% of respondents over the age of twelve characterized themselves as "occasional" movie-goers.[4] Such striking evidence demonstrates, unequivocally, that cinema and, more than likely, television are significant components of American media culture.

As U.S. culture becomes increasingly dominated by such mass media, so increases the need to examine and understand the role and influence of cinema and television in U.S. culture. Thus, accepting and expanding upon the

[1] http://fac.okstate.edu/parenting/issues/tv.htm
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] http://www.natoonline.org/statisticsadmissions.htm
[4] Motion Picture Association of America. (2002). Retrieved March 22, 2003, from
http://www.mpaa.org/useconomicreview/2002/2002_US_Attendance_New_files/frame.htm

challenge of Jowett and Linton[5] to conduct multi-disciplinary research regarding the role of cinema in U.S. culture, this study explores the role of cinema and *television* in race politics in the United States and seeks specifically to answer the question "Are black cinema and television a factor in forming a racial belief system?" In the quest to answer this research question, the study focuses on the cultural politics and ideology of black cinema and television. More specifically, the study examines the salience of race in U.S. politics through an individual's exposure to cinema as well as television programming with predominately black content and culture.

Contrary to previous findings regarding the effect of mainstream media on African Americans, this study demonstrates that specific media, namely, black media forms, can serve to counteract disjunction within African American communities and serve as a liberal, unifying force for African Americans. Using the 1993 National Black Politics Study,[6] the study hypothesizes that a black individual's exposure to cinema and television programs with black themes promotes feelings of racial consciousness. A survey of the literature on race and class in African American politics suggests that the relationship between exposure to black cinema/television and racial consciousness to be rather straightforward. However, this study's investigation of the bivariate relationships between black cinema/television exposure and group cohesion -- which takes into account factors such as age, region, gender, and socioeconomic status -- reveals a more complex relationship between the content of cinema and television programs with black themes and the salience of race in American politics today.

II. Theory/Brief Literature Review

Spike Lee, Bill Duke, Julie Dash, Matty Rich, and Charles Lane are just a few of the black film directors credited for framing blackness away from the dominant Hollywood apparatus of dancing jigaboos and accommodating mammies. Arguably, black representation in cinema and television (especially before the Civil Rights era) has been subordinated, marginalized, positioned, and devalued to hold in place the white-dominated symbolic order and racial hierarchy of American society. The ideology of racial domination and difference is not static, however. Racial domination is defined by social struggle, the demands of the historical moment, and the material imperative of an industry that privileges economics and short-term profit. Because the representation of blackness is constantly changing, Hollywood's unceasing efforts to frame blackness are continualy challenged by the cultural and political self-definitions of African Americans who, as a group, are increasingly taking a stand against the limited notions of blackness in Hollywood.[7]

5 Garth Jowett and James M. Linton, *Movies as Mass Communication* 2d ed. (Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1989).

6 The 1993 National Black Politics Study was conducted by Michael Dawson, Ronald Brown, and James S. Jackson. The data are available from the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research data archive at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

7 Edward Guerrero, *Framing Blackness: The African American Image in Film* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993).

There are various models that can be applied to understand African American politics. The most common paradigm is the pluralist model depicting the United States as a society that moves toward a state of equilibrium characterized by countervailing forces that ensure that no one group predominates and all groups get something substantial, especially in the political arena. The colonial model, on the other hand, captures the essence of the economic, cultural, and political dimensions of the subordinate predicament of African Americans. By treating blacks as a separate unit akin to an internal colony, the conceptualization of black exploitation by whites is more apparent. Yet another recent alternative approach, devised by economist Donald Harris, is the product of a critique of the colonial model which argues that instead of treating blacks as a separate unit, blacks must be understood as an integral part of the U.S. economy.

The structure of the laws, racist ideology, and the U.S. economy collectively determine the subordinate position of blacks, however.[8] Thus, an aid in understanding the link between black cinema/television and politics is the dominant-subordinate group model. An extension of power theory, the dominant-subordinate group conceptualizes politics in general as an unending struggle. Black politics and racial struggle, therefore, is a subset of power theory. Black politics is distinguished from the general, more ubiquitous power theory because of the use of the ideology of white supremacy and the notion of black inferiority to justify the dominant position of whites and to preserve the various institutions and practices that maintain white dominance. Conceptualizing black politics as a power struggle between two groups -- one trying to sustain a dominant position and the other struggling for liberation -- is more accurate than perceiving black politics as a movement to a position of equal status in society on the part of blacks.[9] Both the dominant group and subordinate group have methods to remain in a position of power or to seek liberation, respectively.

Dominant groups typically have used political strategies to maintain their position of dominance including: (1) assimilation; (2) legal protection of minority rights; (3) pluralism; (4) population transfer; (5) continued subjugation; and (6) extermination.[10] Subordinate or oppressed groups have typically used: (1) assimilation; (2) legal protection; (3) pluralism; (4) population transfer; and (5) revolutionary activity to overcome their subordinate positions.[11] Note that the first four strategies of both the dominant and subordinate groups are the same. Forces within the dominant (white) community can advocate the use of any one or combination of the six strategies as the preferred method to maintain control. On the other hand, forces within the oppressed group will always advocate the use of one or a combination of the five counter-strategies as the means for remedying their subordinate position.[12] In addition to the use of strategies relative to power, forces within each group must convince members within the group of specific positions to inform policy.

[8] Lucius J. Barker, Mack H. Jones, and Katherine Tate, *African Americans and the American Political System*, 4th ed. (Upper Sadler River: Prentice Hall, 1999).

[9] *Ibid.*

[10] *Ibid.*, 9.

[11] *Ibid.*, 9.

[12] *Ibid.*

According to the dominant-subordinate approach, there are four dimensions to black politics. First, there is a struggle within the white community regarding the optimum strategy for maintaining white control. Second, there is a struggle within the black community over the optimum strategy for liberation. Third, there is conflict and collaboration between black and white factions/groups. Fourth, there is a struggle within formal governmental structures over authoritative policy decision-making.[13] These four struggles in black politics can occur independently and simultaneously. Struggles in black politics, however, often cannot be easily separated from other power struggles going on at the same time in larger society.

In the study of the cross-section of black film and black politics, the dominant-subordinate group model is the preferred model as it contributes to our efforts to further understand and develop black politics. Through the focus on the role of white supremacist ideology to justify the dominant position of whites in American society, the dominant-subordinate group model provides a basis for studying the enduring character of the problem of race in America. The dominant-subordinate approach also provides a basis for an understanding of internal conflicts within both the black and white communities as well as alliances between black and white factions.[14]

Important work conducted by Allen and Hatchett indicates that one can conceptualize and measure racial group closeness or identification as having at least two dimensions.[15] The first dimension includes identification with the masses of black people, and the second is identification with black leaders. The first dimension is the focus of this study. Richard Allen, Michael Dawson, and Ronald Brown (1989) construct a model to demonstrate the influence of the black media on dimensions of racial identification and consciousness. Black media are seen as a filter of information sources for African Americans pertaining to their general status. The researchers predict that black media should play a significant role in determining the content of a black racial belief system. As sources of communication, the black media act as agents of social change. The black media also serve to promote black racial consciousness through positive images of blacks, especially during the antislavery period (Allen et al., 1989). Allen, Dawson, and Brown argue that exposure to television when compared to print media may be more important in the communication and transmission of cultural orientations.[16] The research of Allen and Hatchett[17] as well as Allen, Dawson, and Brown[18] propose that black television is positively related to black racial beliefs; this study transfers this idea to include cinema.

13 *Ibid.*, 10
14 *Ibid.*
15 Richard L. Allen and Shirley Hatchett. "The Media and Social Reality Effects: Self and System Orientations of Blacks," *Communication Research* 13 (1986), 97-123.
16 Richard L. Allen, Michael C. Dawson, and Ronald E. Brown, "A Schema-Based Approach to Modeling an African American Racial Belief System," *American Political Science Review* 83, no. 2 (1989), 421–41.
17 Allen and Hatchett, *Op. cit.*
18 Richard L. Allen et al., *Op cit.*

III. Data and Methods

The data used to test the research hypothesis of this study were obtained from the 1993 National Black Politics Study (hereafter referred to as the "Survey"). The Survey data, collected by researchers Michael Dawson, Ronald Brown and James Jackson between December 4, 1993, and February 13, 1994, was designed to provide information about the attitudes and opinions of African Americans regarding various political issues.[19]

The Survey, which was conducted by telephone, queried a total of 1,206 individual respondents, rendering an overall sample size, or "N," of 1,206. Demographic information about Survey respondents, including gender, education, marital status, income, occupation, and industry was provided. Notable characteristics of the survey include 425 male respondents and 781 female respondents. The median age of the sample was forty-two years of age. Educational levels among respondents included 1,040 high school graduates, 164 non-high school graduates, 364 college graduates, and 840 individuals who had some college education but no college degree. The median household income for the sample population was $25,000 to $29,999 per year with the modal household income of $30,000-$39,999 per year.[20]

Topics addressed by the Survey range from perceptions of the performance of former President Bill Clinton, to the economic and social conditions of African-Americans, to the role of African American women in the community. Survey respondents provided information about their political self-identification, their community and political involvement and their views of political leaders, political groups, and national policies.[21]

The sampling procedures of the Survey included multiple frame, random-digit probability of all black households in the United States with telephones. The first frame was composed of a national random-digit-dial sample using an equal probability of selection methodology. The second frame was randomly selected from a list of households in census blocks with fifty percent or more African American households.[22]

This study employed Survey questions that were designed to elicit and/or reveal information regarding the source of respondents' information (e.g., black newspapers, television, film, or radio.

A restatement of this study's hypothesis is that an individual's exposure to black cinema and television affects his or her racial consciousness or awareness. To test the hypothesis of this study, the relationship between the independent variable (X), exposure to black cinema/television, and the dependent variable (Y), racial consciousness, requires statistical analysis. As an initial matter, therefore, this study necessitated a method for concretizing the abstract dependent variable (Y). An examination of the notion of "linked fate"

[19] Michael Dawson, Ronald Brown, and James S. Jackson. *National Black Politics Study*, 1993 [Computer file]. ICPSR version. Chicago: University of Chicago/Detroit: Wayne State University/Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, [producers], 1994. Ann Arbor: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research [distributor], 1998.
[20] *Ibid.*
[21] *Ibid.*
[22] *Ibid.*

highlights the tangible ways in which racial consciousness is manifested and rendered measurable. "Linked fate" is defined as an individual's belief that his or her life chances are tied to the fate of the race. The stronger the concept of linked fate for a person, the more likely that he or she is to advocate or exhibit group solidarity (*i.e.*, to evidence group consciousness). African Americans who perceive that their fate is strongly linked to the fate of the black community demonstrate observable and documented patterns of behavior. For example, persons with such strong perceptions of linked fate: (1) are more likely to participate at the polls; (2) are more likely to be supporters of the Democratic Party rather than the Republican Party or Independent Party; and (3) support more liberal public policies, including affirmative action. Consequently, this study examined these and similar factors as indicators of racial consciousness.

To rule out plausible alternative explanations of the relationship, if any, between exposure to black cinema/television and racial consciousness, additional variables are included in the statistical analysis. Controls for possible spurious relationships in the study include gender, age, economic status, education, and geographical region. As an illustration of why such controls are necessary, three such controls employed by the study are discussed, below, in detail.

Controls for gender. In the mid-year election of November 1994, U.S. Census figures show that African American women were registered to vote in higher numbers (approximately six percent higher) and were three percent more likely to turn out to the polls than African American men. In the Presidential election of 1995, the numbers of African American men and women at the polls was more or less equal. However, while African American men and women supported Clinton, a larger proportion of African American women voted for Clinton than did African American men.[23] Given observed patterns of African American male and black female political behavior, gender should be included in the equation to determine its influence, if any, on the relationship between black cinema/television exposure and racial consciousness.

Controls for age and economic status. Katherine Tate[24] and Dawson[25] assert that older, more affluent African Americans are more likely to be politically active than younger, less affluent African Americans. Younger, less educated African American tend to support third-party candidates and independent candidates more than older, more educated African Americans. An explanation for the differences in political behavior and age among African Americans lies in the imminence of the Civil Rights Movement. Younger African Americans are more likely to feel that they are affected less by the Civil Rights Movement. A lack of identification with the influence of the Civil Rights Movement also affects an individual's feelings of solidarity with blacks. An individual's age and socioeconomic status can, therefore, independently or in combination, also be a factor that may influence racial consciousness.

23 Paula D. McClain and Joseph Stewart, Jr., *Can We All Get Along? Racial and Ethnic Minorities in American Politics*, 3d ed. (Boulder: Westview Press, 2002), 86.

24 Katherine Tate, *From Protest to Politics: The New Black Voters in American Elections* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994).

25 Dawson, *Behind the Mule: Race and Class in African American Politics.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

Income is the variable used to control for class.[26] Dawson and Wilson document how social science theories of race and class (with the exception of black nationalism), predict that black political diversity will follow black economic diversity.[27] Controlling for economic status does not encapsulate the debate of race and class in African American politics and racial group interests, but it does take into account the fact that this study may suffer from what Evelyn Higginbotham refers to as the "overdeterminancy" of race which has led many researchers to ignore how class divisions within race shape reality differently.[28]

Controls for geographical region. An individual's geographic location may also influence the relationship between exposure to black cinema and racial consciousness. McClain and Stewart report the concentration of African Americans by county in the United States confirming that blacks (as well as other minority groups in the United States, including Latinos, American Indians, and Asian Americans) have different geographic distribution patterns. "The African American population is concentrated in a crescent that runs from Maryland down the Atlantic seaboard across the Deep South to east Texas."[29] The heaviest concentrations of blacks are located in the traditional "Black Belt" where blacks concentrated during slavery. Overwhelmingly majority black counties in the nation are found in rural Alabama and Mississippi.[30] Since blacks are concentrated in the South and typically in more urban areas (with the exception of rural Alabama and Mississippi), the existence of minority group political power may influence racial consciousness. In addition to controlling for region (Northeast, Midwest, West, and South), the study also controls for type of geographical setting such as a rural, urban, or suburban environment.

The variables of the study are defined using questions from the National Black Politics Study (1993). The independent variable (X) is measured using the following questions:

(Exposure to black cinema)

12. Have you ever gone to a movie like "Boyz 'N the Hood," or "Malcolm X" made by a black director such as Spike Lee?

(Exposure to black television)

18. Have you ever watched a black TV program on cable?

19. Have you ever watched a black TV program on a non-cable station? The dependent variable (Y) is measured using the question:

(Linked fate/black racial consciousness)

D1a. Do you think what happens generally to black people in this country will have something to do with what happens in your life?

[26] Income is the principal source used to gauge class. The study does not use an index of socioeconomic status that combines the factors of income, education, homeownership, and occupation. Factors/variables such as occupation and homeownership are purposely omitted. This thought is congruent to the arguments of Michael Dawson (1994) regarding problems with respect to the black community, home ownership, and occupation. (See Dawson for a discussion of the operationalization of socioeconomic status or class).

[27] Michael Dawson and Ernest J. Wilson III, "Paradigms and Paradoxes: Political Science and African American Politics," in *Political Science: Looking to the Future,* ed. William Crotty, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1991), 189-234.

[28] Evelyn B. Higginbotham, "African American Women's History and the Metalanguage of Race," *Signs* 17, 251-74.

[29] Paula D. McClain and Joseph Stewart, Jr., *Op cit,* 32.

[30] *Ibid.,* 34.

The control variables are gender (**A10** - male/female), region (Region2 - Northeast, Midwest, West, South), and place of residence (**J13** - small city, large city, suburban area, rural town or country). The variable "age"[31] (**A14**) was recoded in the data sample to condense categories.[31] Similarly, the variable for "education" was recoded.[32] Family income" in the survey is defined as 1992 total family income before taxes. Missing values also have been accounted for in each of the variables tested.

The statistical technique of crosstabulation was employed to test the null hypothesis that exposure to black cinema/television and racial consciousness are independent. Crosstabulation is appropriate since the independent and dependent variables are categorical variables and have a limited number of values. To determine the strength of the association of exposure to black cinema/television and linked fate, the study uses the Cramér's V, a modification of the chi-square statistic. It is important to establish that Cramér's V significance level results were determined at the level of .05 or less (i.e., at the confidence interval significance level of at least 95%).

IV. Results

Table I provides the output of the bivariate crosstabulation of exposure to black cinema, black television on a cable network and black television on a non-cable station to an individual's racial consciousness. The Cramér's V calculations show that, notwithstanding the control variables, only an African American's exposure to black cinema is statistically significant in relation to the individual's racial consciousness. In other words, exposure to black film and racial awareness are not independent phenomena. The independent variables measuring black television consumption (*i.e.*, variables related to whether an individual watches black television programming via cable or non-cable stations) show nonsignificant values in relation to racial consciousness. The next step in the data analysis was the inclusion of the various control variables.

Table II shows the output for the relationship between an African American's exposure to black cinema and racial consciousness while controlling for the sex of an individual. The Cramér's V results show significance for males and nonsignificant results for females.

Table III displays the output for the relationship between an African American's exposure to black film and racial consciousness while controlling for geographical region. Crosstabulation Cramér's V values show significant results for the Northeast, the Midwest, and the West. Conversely, nonsignificant results were revealed for the Southern region. The "South," as defined by the survey, includes the East, South Central, West South Central, and South Atlantic regions of the United States. The "South" in the data not only encompasses a large territory, but it also includes the "Black Belt" or the cluster of the majority of the African American population noted by McClain and Stewart.[33] The

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31 The recoded variable "age" includes the following categories and corresponding years of age: **A14**. What was your age at your last birthday? Young (18-29); Adult (30-47); Middle Adult 48-62); and Senior (63-99).

32 The recode of the "education" variable includes: **I3**. Did you get a high school diploma or pass a high school equivalency test? **J4**. Do you have a college degree? (0=Yes, 1=No).

33 Paula D. McClain and Joseph Stewart, Jr., *Op cit.*

nonsignificant result for the South regarding an African American's exposure to black cinema/television and her or his racial consciousness is important inasmuch as it suggests significant differences for a region that has a large concentration of African Americans. The "Black Belt," especially for purposes of relating cultural notions to linked fate, is worthy of further exploration, therefore.

In addition to an African American's location in terms of physical/polar geography, the study also controls for an individual's place of residence. Table IV displays the output for the relationship between an African American's exposure to black cinema and racial consciousness while controlling for whether the respondent resides in a rural or country area, a small town, a small city, a suburb, or a large city. The crosstabulation results show significant values for African Americans living in small cities and large cities with the most significant place of residence being small cities. Nonsignificant results were observed for African American residents living in rural areas, small towns, and suburbs. These findings are not surprising, however, since larger populations of African Americans are typically found in urban areas. With further reference to the nonsignificant results reflected for the "Black Belt" in the South, places of residence that may warrant further examination are black populations in the rural areas of Mississippi and Alabama.[34]

Table V illustrates that age also has an impact on the relationship between an African American's exposure to black cinema and racial consciousness. Cramér's V significance tests for the control variable "age" reveal that "senior adults" (defined in the study as respondents that were sixty-three years of age to ninety-nine years of age) who are exposed to black cinema are more likely to exhibit racial awareness. A justification for this finding is the proximity of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s for persons within this age group. Dawson, among other scholars, reports findings that younger, less well-educated African Americans tend to perceive that the Civil Rights Movement has not directly affected their lives.[35]

Table VI displays the output for the relationship between an African American's exposure to black film and black racial consciousness while controlling for class. There are significant results for respondents who classify their family income between $25,001 and $75,000 per year (middle class and middle class 2 in the study). The most significant results were found for the "middle class 2" category for persons reporting a household income between $40,001 and 75,000 per year. It appears, therefore, that the middle class rather than the poor, working class, or affluent are most affected by exposure to black cinema in the way that leads to heightened racial awareness. The results set forth in Table VI also suggest that notwithstanding extant research that concludes that political behavior is influenced more by race than class, within the African American community, income (a variable commonly used to determine an individual's class) still is key to predicting racial consciousness and, consequently, black political behavior. In other words, the economic make-up of the African American population under study at a particular juncture is key to predicting the political behavior of that group at that particular juncture.

34 *Ibid.*
35 Dawson, *Op cit*, 83-4.

The control for education in Table VII illustrates the significant results for individuals with a high school or college education. Significant results are obtained from respondents who have completed high school but who do not have a college degree. Recent literature on linked fate in the African American community asserts that college-educated individuals are typically more racially conscious than less well-educated people. While the findings in Table VII do not refute those assertions, this study posits that African Americans who have not completed college may still evidence racial consciousness similar to that of highly educated African Americans if they (African Americans who have not completed college) have been exposed to black cinema.

Previous studies, including the work of Allen *et al.*, have examined the effects of religiosity on exposure to black television.[36] Table VIII shows the crosstabulation results for the relationship between an African American's exposure to black cinema and racial consciousness while controlling for self-reported religious denomination. Crosstabulation reveals that an individual's association with the Baptist denomination plays a role in the relationship between exposure to black cinema and linked fate. The only other denominational affiliation that showed significant results was the non-denominational affiliation which is a collection of various congregations identified by respondents as having no denominational affiliation. A look at the frequencies of the survey regarding the denomination question reveals that 623 respondents of 853 valid responses[37] are Baptist. Consequently, Table VIII is a slight modification of Table VII as it controls for the denomination "Baptist," grouping all non-Baptist denominations collectively. In the crosstabulation of "Baptist" and all other denominations, significant results were found only for the Baptist denomination.

V. Discussion

The data analysis confirms earlier research that the existence of an African American racial belief system helps structure information about political and social reality. More specifically, the data analysis confirms that there is a relationship between an African American's exposure to cinema and racial consciousness. After controlling for variables that might plausibly affect the relationship between the independent and dependent variables, it appears that the relationship between exposure to black film and racial awareness is specified by significant results. The original relationship between an African American's exposure to black cinema and that individual's perceived linked fate does not disappear when controlling for other variables. Some but not all of the original relationship between exposure to black cinema and linked fate may be accounted for by the control variables. The significance of the control variables does expose the fact that the relationship between X and Y is not a direct or perfect relationship. More importantly, further testing shows that the relationship between X and Y differs significantly for different categories of variables. The specified relationship between X and Y based on the control variables is one of the most critical findings of the study.

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36 Allen *et al.*, *Op cit.*
37 The "valid" number of respondents excludes individuals who did not respond to this question or who did not know the answer to question.

In basic terms, the study finds that the racial consciousness of an African American man, sixty-four years of age living in Highland Park, Illinois, with a family household income of $51,000 per year, with a high school education but no college degree, who identifies his religious denomination as Baptist will be more affected by his exposure to black cinema than an African American woman, thirty-three years of age, with a total household income of $24,000 per year, with a college degree, living in Atlanta, Georgia, who identifies her religious denomination as Episcopalian.

Michael Dawson devises a model for racial group interests as a function of integration into black organizations such as the black church, exposure to black information networks, degree of reliance on messages from black elites, and socioeconomic class using the 1984 National Black Election Panel Study (NBES).[38] Similarly, using the 1993 National Black Politics Study to capture the relationship between exposure to black cinema and black linked fate, this study finds that the relationship of the two variables is a function of gender, region, place of residence, age, income, education, and religious denomination). Arguably, an index to measure socioeconomic class should have been included in the study but was omitted because of the operationalization of socioeconomic class which is only measured by income in the study. In short, a source of black information resources that has been overlooked is the influence of black cinema, a cultural aspect, in the literature.

VI. Conclusion

There is a relationship between an African American individual's exposure to black cinema and racial awareness. The relationship is best classified as a specified relationship as values of the different control variables affect the relationship between exposure to black cinema and race consciousness. The findings in this study are not contrary to prior research with respect to black television and "closeness to the [black] masses" found in the research of Allen et al.[39] For example, one's gender, age, income, region, place in social structure, and centrality of religious activity have powerful and theoretically researched effects on the racial belief system. In contrast to the research of Allen et al.,[40] however, the data from the 1993 National Black Politics Study do not confirm significant findings for television. This study continues the research by including black cinema as a viable resource for racial consciousness and advocates the inclusion of exposure to black cinema in models of African American racial belief systems. The notion and formation of race consciousness is complex, without doubt. Previous studies demonstrate that the media (print and television mainly) play an intermediate and important role in shaping African American belief systems. As evidenced by this research, cinema (*i.e.*, movies and film) must not be omitted from the media category.

The data contained in the appended tables suggest that African Americans of different strata (*e.g.*, age, social, and location) have different psychological

38 Dawson, Op cit., 64.
39 Allen et al., Op cit.
40 Ibid.

orientations toward race consciousness and identity. It is very difficult to assess with any degree of certainty what type of content is involved in the overall exposure to black cinema. The ability to measure precisely the nature and content of films that reached and affected individual respondents would provide useful information. The analysis can be expanded through more complex statistical procedures which may speak more to the model of African American racial belief systems and the placement of black cinema within this model.

Another expansion of the study would be to employ multiple measures of black cinema categories. Not all black films show blacks in a positive light or depict some of the social ills of the black community. Other films cast blacks in more positive roles or in roles of hero or martyr which may also influence the individual moviegoer. Since the racial belief system is closely related to political participation, a logical step for further study would be a complex study of cinema, its relationship to racial awareness, and political participation. Of course, the effect of cinema is not just an issue for African Americans. Future research should incorporate whites and ethnic minority groups other than African Americans. The effect of exposure to black film on these groups may also provide insights into the affect of this particular medium on other racial and ethnic groups.

This study not only highlights the power of the medium of film in society, but also serves to inform Hollywood, filmmakers, policy makers, and the public about the influence of black cinema. Additional survey collections may benefit from the inclusion of a broader base of films. For instance, some contemporary films have sub-themes, principle antagonists, and minor characters who are black, but the films themselves are not described or marketed as black films. In "The Green Mile," for example, the protagonist, John Coffey, is a black male with special powers. Even though the film is not marketed or described as a "black movie," the content of such a movie (which focuses on a helpless black male prisoner held by white prison guards, some of whom are racist), may influence the black viewer as indicated by this study. Additional recent films that can be placed in this category are "The Cider House Rules" (whose title originates from a set of written rules tacked up within the sleeping quarters of the black, seasonal migrant workers) and "Rules of Engagement" (in which a high-ranking black military officer defends his actions in combat to defend himself against accusations of murder or even heroism).

The content of films such as "Rules of Engagement," which do not have as their primary subject black humor or issues within black society as do films like "The Klumps" or "Boyz in the Hood," still contain messages that contain subtle racial signals that can be interpreted by an individual in various ways. How a person interprets such messages in a film (i.e., psychological effects) is significant for the study of exposure to black cinema and racial group consciousness.

William Julius Wilson asserts that race has become less salient for African Americans and will become increasingly less salient as the gap between the black elite and the black underclass widens. Other scholars such as Michael Dawson, [41] Katherine Tate,[42] and Donald Kinder and Lynn Sanders[43] find that

[41] Dawson, *Op cit.*
[42] Tate, *Op cit.*
[43] Donald Kinder and Lynn M. Sanders, *Divided By Color: Racial Politics and Democratic Ideals* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

there is little evidence that class surpasses race as a principal factor in black political behavior. In light of the on-going debate, this study examines black film in a political context to bring attention to yet another measure of racial group consciousness that has not been given broad attention in social and political science research. The important revelation of this study and data analysis is that there is a significant specified relationship between exposure to black cinema and racial consciousness based on the 1993 National Black Politics Study. Moreover, the study reveals the need for the inclusion of film as an information resource. A broader exploration of films in general, and the inclusion of other ethnic and minority groups to study the affect of black cinema on racial group awareness, will enlighten the analysis of the intersection of cinema studies and black politics.

Table 1
Linked Fate * Sumblktv

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.061	.505
	Cramer's V	.043	.505
N of Valid Cases		884	

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.
b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

Linked Fate * Black Film

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.120	.002
	Cramer's V	.120	.002
N of Valid Cases		891	

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.
b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

Table 2
Linked Fate * Black Film * Sex

Sex			Value	Approx. Sig.
Male	Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.166	.008
		Cramer's V	.166	.008
	N of Valid Cases		347	
Female	Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.101	.064
		Cramer's V	.101	.064
	N of Valid Cases		544	

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.
b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

Table 3
Linked Fate * Black Film * Region
Symmetric Measures

Region			Value	Approx. Sig.
Northeast (N Eng Mid Atlantic)	Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.230	.010
		Cramer's V	.230	.010
	N of Valid Cases		175	
Midwest (E&W North Centr)	Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.264	.000
		Cramer's V	.264	.000
	N of Valid Cases		227	
West (Mountain and Pacific)	Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.120	.036
		Cramer's V	.120	.036
	N of Valid Cases		459	
South (ES Cent, WS Cent, South Atl)	Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.435	.059
		Cramer's V	.435	.059
	N of Valid Cases		30	

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.
b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

Table 4
Linked Fate * Black Film * Urbanicity
Symmetric Measures

Urbanicity			Value	Approx. Sig.
Rural or country area	Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.172	.388
		Cramer's V	.172	.388
	N of Valid Cases		64	
Small town	Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.200	.247
		Cramer's V	.200	.247
	N of Valid Cases		70	
Small city	Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.311	.004
		Cramer's V	.311	.004
	N of Valid Cases		115	
Suburb	Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.022	.968
		Cramer's V	.022	.968
	N of Valid Cases		136	
Large city	Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.134	.011
		Cramer's V	.134	.011
	N of Valid Cases		503	

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.
b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

Table 5
Linked Fate * Black Film * Age
Symmetric Measures

Age			Value	Approx. Sig.
Young (18 - 29)	Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.115	.235
		Cramer's V	.115	.235
	N of Valid Cases		219	
Adult (30 - 47)	Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.052	.617
		Cramer's V	.052	.617
	N of Valid Cases		354	
Middle adult (48 - 62)	Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.153	.128
		Cramer's V	.153	.128
	N of Valid Cases		176	
Senior (63 - 99)	Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.327	.006
		Cramer's V	.327	.006
	N of Valid Cases		95	

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.
b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

Table 6
Linked Fate * Black Film * Income
Symmetric Measures

Income			Value	Approx. Sig.
Poor (0-15,000)	Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.173	.049
		Cramer's V	.173	.049
	N of Valid Cases		201	
Working class (15,001 - 25,000)	Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.120	.276
		Cramer's V	.120	.276
	N of Valid Cases		180	
Middle class (25,001 - 40,000)	Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.183	.031
		Cramer's V	.183	.031
	N of Valid Cases		208	
Middle class 2 (40,001 - 75,000)	Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.215	.014
		Cramer's V	.215	.014
	N of Valid Cases		183	
Affluent (75,001 and over)	Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.110	.708
		Cramer's V	.110	.708
	N of Valid Cases		57	

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.
b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

Table 7
Linked Fate * Black Film * High School Completion

Symmetric Measures

High School Completion			Value	Approx. Sig.
Yes, completed high school	Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.098	.022
		Cramer's V	.098	.022
	N of Valid Cases		799	
No, did not complete high school	Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.203	.151
		Cramer's V	.203	.151
	N of Valid Cases		92	

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

Linked Fate * Black Film * College Completion

Symmetric Measures

College Completion			Value	Approx. Sig.
Yes, college degree	Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.085	.345
		Cramer's V	.085	.345
	N of Valid Cases		294	
No, no college degree	Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.132	.005
		Cramer's V	.132	.005
	N of Valid Cases		597	

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

Table 8

Linked Fate * Black Film * Religious Denomination

Symmetric Measures

Religious Denomination			Value	Approx. Sig.
Baptist	Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.146	.008
		Cramer's V	.146	.008
		N of Valid Cases	450	
AME/AME-Zion	Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.292	.161
		Cramer's V	.292	.161
		N of Valid Cases	43	
Church of God/ COG in Christ	Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.190	.429
		Cramer's V	.190	.429
		N of Valid Cases	47	
Non- denominational	Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.480	.028
		Cramer's V	.480	.028
		N of Valid Cases	31	
CME	Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.333	.236
		Cramer's V	.333	.236
		N of Valid Cases	26	
White Protestant/ Interdenomina tional	Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.474	.084
		Cramer's V	.474	.084
		N of Valid Cases	22	

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

Table 9

Linked Fate * Black Film * Baptists/Else

Symmetric Measures

Baptists/else			Value	Approx. Sig.
.00	Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.146	.008
		Cramer's V	.146	.008
		N of Valid Cases	450	
1.00	Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.157	.124
		Cramer's V	.157	.124
		N of Valid Cases	170	

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

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