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Running head: Mario Van Peebles's *Panther*

Mario Van Peebles's *Panther* and Popular Memories of the Black Panther Party

Kristen Hoerl

Mario Van Peebles' *Panther* and Popular Memories of the Black Panther Party

Abstract

The 1995 movie *Panther* depicted the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense as a vibrant but ultimately doomed social movement for racial and economic justice during the late 1960s. *Panther's* narrative indicted the white-operated police for perpetuating violence against African-Americans and for undermining movements for black empowerment. As such, this film represented a rare source of filmic counter-memory that challenged hegemonic memories of U.S. race relations. Newspaper reports and reviews of *Panther*, however, questioned this film's veracity as a source of historical information. An analysis of these reviews and reports indicates the challenges counter-memories confront in popular culture.

Mario Van Peebles' *Panther* and Popular Memories of the Black Panther Party

The Black Panther Party for Self-Defense emerged in 1966 as a response to ongoing brutality against blacks that took place in the wake of the civil rights movement. Party members took up arms to defend themselves against police brutality, created programs that cared for impoverished African-Americans in their communities, and challenged racism and economic exploitation in the U.S. By 1969, the Black Panther Party had established chapters in almost every state and several foreign countries.

Despite the remarkable history of the Panther's emergence, mainstream popular media have paid scant attention to the movement (Umoja, 2001; Bush, 2002~~,~~3. The most prominent references to the Panthers in popular culture, including a small scene in the1994 film *Forrest Gump* (Berlant, 1997) and news coverage of Huey Newton's death (Lule, 1993), framed the Panthers as violent and abusive.[1] Recognizing the dearth of public knowledge about the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense (BPP), film director Mario Van Peebles made the 1995 movie *Panther*. Van Peebles explained that he wanted the film to inspire, empower, and instruct the current generation of young blacks living in urban ghettos. He told reporters that "kids today knew the negative stuff" about the Panthers and "thought Huey Newton was a cookie" (Schaefer, 1995, p. O17). He added, "Few people know how they empowered their neighborhood" (Graham, 1995, p. 3NC). Van Peebles directed *Panther* in order to tell a story about the Black Panther Party that would give a voice to the experiences of African-Americans active in the movement.

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Van Peebles' statements indicate that he believed filmic images of blacks who struggled against prevailing power structures would empower audiences to see themselves as agents capable of social change. His belief highlights the rhetorical potential of entertainment films. It

also foregrounds the ways that filmmakers have constructed films for instrumental political purposes. *Panther* met a surge of negative attention that questioned the veracity of its portrayals. An analysis of both Van Peebles's film and its news reviews sheds light on the possibilities and limitations of films that challenge mainstream popular media. This paper suggests that films about controversial historical events open themselves to criticism when they blend fictional and factual accounts; however, criticisms of historical narratives that appeal to the merits of impartiality and the virtues of balanced depictions may also advanced a partial understanding of the past.

Panther is one of few Hollywood films that dared to feature only African-American characters to depict racism in the United States. Madison (1999) persuasively argues that Hollywood films about civil rights struggles predominantly forefront white characters and background black characters. Lee's film *Malcolm X* (1992) is the only other Hollywood entertainment film about historic black struggles with African-Americans in leading roles. According to Van Peebles, Hollywood studio executives told him, "No matter what the story is, it doesn't matter to mainstream America without a white star" (Schaefer, 1995, p. O017). Mario Van Peebles directed and produced *Panther* based on a novel loosely based on BPP history written by Mario's father, Melvin Van Peebles. To maintain control over the film, Van Peebles kept the film's budget under $10 million and received support from British film company Working Title, Gramercy Pictures, and from Robert De Niro's Tribeca company (Turner, 1995, p. 11). Van Peebles explained why he wasn't willing to compromise the film's message to receive a larger budget: "I thought about what my dad said, which is that history goes back to the winner, and you're surely not winning if you're not telling your own history. So we held off until we could make the film our way" (Kim, 1995, p. 3). Van Peebles posed a defiant challenge to

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Hollywood's penchant for creating movies amenable to the interests of white and affluent audiences who make films profitable. The film showed in theatres for a few weeks and earned approximately $7 million at the box office, even less than the film's small budget; it received little positive critical attention, although the U.S. Political Film Society nominated *Panther* for its annual award in 1996 (www.imdb.com/title/tt0114084/awards). The film's lackluster reception and commercial returns indicate that this text had more limited success reaching audiences than earlier films about racial struggle.[2]

Film and Popular Memory

Panther provides an important text for understanding the relationship between media texts, popular memory, and political hegemony. Popular media create figurative spaces for different groups to negotiate the meaning and value of past events. As Biesecker (2002) notes, "well received reconstructions of the past function rhetorically as civics lessons" (p 394). Scholars often refer to the representations of the past with social and rhetorical significance as "public" or "collective" memories.[3] However, McChesney (1999) argues that messages challenging corporate life and capitalist ideals are unlikely to receive widespread distribution or support from the media industry. In order to avoid the implication that commercially mediated representations of the past comprise the memories of publics, I refer to well-received depictions of the past in commercial media as *popular memories*, as memories that are *popularized* by mainstream media.

Commercial media are preeminent sources of popular memory because they are widely available to audiences with few other resources for understanding the past. Romanowski (1993) posits that motion pictures in particular can be powerful transmitters of "knowledge, history, and culture" (p.63). Indeed, when films make claims about historical truth, they imbue these

reconstructions of the past with social significance. Although texts in popular culture provide resources for understanding the past, not all reconstructions of the past are sources of popular memory. Mainstream media texts become sources of popular memory though their widespread circulation and through the legitimacy conferred upon them as historical resources elsewhere in popular culture. For example, Alan Parker's 1988 film *Mississippi Burning* stands out as a popular memory source. While the film's commercial box office success and Academy Awards attests to this film's positive reception, its ongoing presence in journalistic media during the 2005 trial of Edgar Ray Killen attests to this film's role as a source of information about the past (The Internet Movie Database; Curry, 1988).[4] Reporters referred to Killen's trial for his role in the murders of civil rights activists James Chaney, Andrew Schwerner, and Michael Goodwin as "the *Mississippi Burning* trial." Accentuating the comparison between the film and the murders of Chaney, Schwerner and Goodwin, these reports used footage from the movie in news reports of Killen's conviction (Cooper et al., 2005; Gibson, 2005; McLaughlin, 2005; and Sawyer, 2005).

Popular memory texts such as *Mississippi Burning* are significant not only because they ascribe meaning to the past for audiences, but also because they are usable in the present. "Societies . . . reconstruct their pasts with the needs of contemporary culture clearly in mind 羊 manipulating the past in order to mold the present" (Kammen, 1991, p. 3). Films representing historic events often advance ideologically conservative messages that contribute to dominant hegemony. Earlier civil rights films maintained white hegemony in the face of challenges to racist power structures. Madison (1999) argues that recent films about race including *Mississippi Burning*, *The Long Walk Home*, and *Cry Freedom* reasserted the subordination of blacks by relegating them to the background of stories about their own struggles. Brinson (1995) asserts

that the 1988 film *Mississippi Burning* communicated the myth of white superiority to resolve cultural tensions about the authority of the white power structure in the late 1980s. Winn (2001) credits Spike Lee's (1992) *Malcolm X* as the first film to give a voice to African-Americans in commercial film by challenging racist stereotypes prevalent in films about race produced by white filmmakers. Yet, he notes that Lee's film "parcels Malcolm X as a less volatile, less radical figure" than Malcolm X's political career suggests (p. 463). Winn concludes that Lee's vision of Malcolm was accepted by the Hollywood system because it ultimately reinforced white hegemony.

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Recognizing how depictions of past events carry implications for contemporary social life, several scholars have suggested that popular memories might also be constructed to challenge prevailing hegemony. Cox (1990) theorizes memories of the past as resources for the "invention" of discourses critical of dominant culture (p. 1). Cox cites Marcuse, who believed that the practice of remembering could reveal ideological distortions embedded within dominant narratives and serve as a force for social change. Lipsitz (1990) argues that hidden histories excluded from dominant narratives constitute "counter-memories" that "force revision of existing histories" (p. 213). For Lipsitz, counter-memories exist in popular novels that "address tensions between grand historical narratives and lived experience" (p. 215). These cultural forms "create conditions of possibility; they expand the present by informing it with memories of the past and hopes for the future" (p. 16). Counter-memories may contribute to the process of social change by establishing oppositional consciousness that critically evaluates the efficacy and justice of dominant social institutions. By developing new attitudes and ideas about the social order, counter-memories may also evoke insights and solutions to contemporary social struggles.

Thus, such counter-memories may promulgate and solidify support necessary for movements to create social change (Bowers, Ochs, & Jensen, 1993).

While Lipsitz echoes Marcuse's enthusiasm for the emancipatory potential of memory, he is not utopian regarding the possibilities of counter-memory within popular culture. He concludes that memories perpetuated by commercial media "also engender accommodation with prevailing power realities, separating art from life, and internalizing the dominant culture's norms and values as necessary and inevitable" (p. 16). As Lipsitz suggests, sites of memory contain countervailing tendencies. While they predominantly elicit a memory in keeping with the prevailing social order, they also may elicit an alternate or counter-memory that challenges that order. Thus, commercial media, a predominant site for memory, provide spaces for memory and counter-memory and make available their competing claims about the past (Bodnar, 1992; Sturken, 1997). Few studies have either interpreted films as sources of counter-memory or explained how counter-memories in commercial media may be suppressed and contained. I argue that *Panther* represented a rare source of counter-memory in popular culture. However, my analysis of mainstream media reviews and reports of the film demonstrates that the popular press deflected the film's challenge to dominant hegemony.

The Textual Construction of the Panthers in Popular Media

I interpret *Panther* as a source of counter-memory by explaining how events it depicted evoked events from the history of political repression against the BPP and paralleled contemporary racial struggle. I also look at news coverage and reviews of *Panther* that appeared in the seven months surrounding its release (from March 1995 through October 1995). Nine newspaper articles and twenty newspaper reviews appeared in U.S. newspapers with widespread circulation. Transcripts from the two national broadcast journalism sources, the CBS network

program *This Morning* and NPR's national radio program *Morning Edition* also covered the film.[5] Based on these texts, I describe common patterns of reasoning that journalists engaged to invalidate *Panther's* counter-hegemonic meaning. My analysis is influenced both by scholarship in news media frames (Gitlin, 1980) and by rhetorical scholarship that has attended to *topoi*, or common topics that serve as foundation for the judgment and invention of discourses.[6] Recurring themes featured across journalism reviews of *Panther* functioned as *topoi* in popular discourses about the film that either ignored or dismissed the film's political and social implications.

By describing themes across news reviews in relationship to the film's depiction of the Panthers, I engage popular memory as intertextual phenomena. Intertextual analyses suggest that a multitude of discourses influence how particular texts come to have meaning in a particular cultural milieu (Fiske, 1987; Dow, 1996). Fiske used intertextuality to describe how "audiences unconsciously create meaning by utilizing their vast knowledge of cultural codes learned from other texts to read a particular text" (Ott & Walter, 2000, p. 429). This definition of intertextuality fits within the poststructuralist turn in criticism situating audiences as agents who can decode texts in varying ways and that multiple meanings inhere in any particular text. In contrast to Fiske's approach, my analysis of multiple texts explains how the rhetorical situations in which audiences read texts offer viewers a structured meaning system that limit audiences interpretive agency (Cloud, 1992; Condit, 1989). My approach is aligned with Dow's (1996) study of television programming about women and its implications for the feminist movement. Dow (1996) argues that secondary texts including journalistic criticism and other culturally produced texts "can both enable and constrain interpretation" of television programming (pp. 6-7). Although no single interpretation can stand in for the meaning that every audience member

gleans from a set of texts, patterned messages point to the media landscapes from which audiences glean knowledge about events beyond their immediate experience. I explain how news reviews functioned in patterned ways challenge *Panther's* credibility as a source of information about the Black Panther Party.

Panther as Counter-memory

Panther represented a source of counter-memory in popular culture by presenting a narrative about racial struggle that challenged prevalent myths about the justice of the American political and legal system. A docudrama, *Panther* interspersed representations of actual events from the history of the BPP's founding chapter in Oakland, California, with the fictional main character's narrative about his imaginary activity in the party. According to the film, the BBP grew in size and political power through members' efforts to organize black people to support their communities and defend themselves against the police and white authority structures. When the white police department and Federal Bureau of Investigations recognized the Panthers as a threat to the power structure in the United States, FBI director J. Edgar Hoover orchestrated a concerted campaign to discredit and destroy the Panthers. As a consequence, the Panthers disbanded and disintegrated within a few years.

Panther's narrative depicted many of the BPP's goals and endeavors. *Panther* presented the BPP as centrally interested in improving the lives of African-Americans in the Oakland community. Montage sequences in the film depicted the Panthers' free breakfast program for community children, sickle-cell anemia testing for blacks, and community meetings to raise awareness of racism and oppression in the United States (Abron, 1998; Chaifetz, 2005). The film also highlighted the BPP's resistance to state-sanctioned repression. As both *Panther* and political scholars suggest (McCartney, 1992, p. 135; Ogbar, 2004, p. 100), the BPP encouraged

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blacks to arm themselves with guns to defend themselves from assaults by white police officers. In one scene, BPP members, including BPP leaders Huey Newton and Bobby Seale, approached two white police officers who were beating an indigent black man. Bearing long rifles, the Panthers demanded that the police leave the man alone. The police eventually backed down. Other scenes depicting BPP-led activism included the April 1, 1967, protest of the shooting death of Denzel Dowell at a police station in Richmond, California; the May 2, 1967, march into the California state capitol in Sacramento; and the February 17, 1968, rally at the Alameda County Courthouse to free Huey Newton from prison. These events mirrored descriptions of BPP protest recounted by former Black Panthers (Newton, 1973; Seale, 1970) and historians (Foner, 1970; Marable, 1984). Ultimately, these scenes portrayed the BPP as a volatile movement that improved conditions in their communities and sought freedom from racial injustice. According to *Panther*, collective organizing improved people's lives.

This film also presented a source of counter-memory about race relations by demonstrating how law enforcement officials sought to undermine social movements that had widespread community support. The film's critique of U.S. law enforcement appeared most readily in its depiction of FBI and police efforts to suppress the Panthers, such as when Hoover declared, "There's not going to be another black Messiah unless we create him." [This quote echoed an internal agency memo from Hoover instructing agents to prevent "the rise of a Messiah" (Marx, 1974).] The film showed police assaults on BPP offices in cities across the country between 1968 and 1969. In these scenes, police firebombed Panther offices across the country and engaged in shoot-outs with Panther Party members. One pivotal scene presented the April 6, 1968 confrontation between Panthers and Oakland police officers that ended in the shooting death of eighteen-year-old BPP member Bobby Hutton.

These scenes tracked many of the tactics that FBI agents used during the 1960s to infiltrate the Black Panther Party. The FBI's use of repressive tactics to destroy the movement is well documented in activists' accounts (Anthony, 1990; Newton, 1973; Seale, 1970), government memos (Marx, 1974; O'Reilly, 1989), and scholarly texts (Jeffries, 2002; Jones, 1988; O'Reilly, 1989). FBI operatives frequently posed as Panthers to gain knowledge of movement activities and to spread distrust within the movement (Jeffries, 2002). Between 1968 and 1971, the FBI's COINTELPRO (Counter-intelligence Program) resulted in frequent arrests of Black Panther Party members, raids of party offices, and the deaths of at least 29 party members. Many of these arrests were made on dubious charges that could not be substantiated in court (Churchill and Vander Wall, 1990; Foner, 1970; Jones, 1988; Jeffries, 2002; Wilkins & Clark, 1973). Likewise, party office raids were often based on false pretenses. In 1969, Chicago police shot and killed party leader Fred Hampton and his colleague Mark Clark. Although police officers claimed they shot in self-defense, a federal grand jury concluded that charges were false and that Hampton and Clark had been shot in their sleep (Foner, 1970). *Panther* depicted both covert and outwardly violent FBI and police efforts to repress BPP activism. Although a myriad of evidence indicates that law enforcement unjustly attacked the Black Panthers, few popular culture texts have drawn attention to law enforcement agencies as sources of political repression against the BPP. Black studies scholar Dyson (1996) thus noted that *Panther's* focus on FBI repression "faithfully evoked the spirit of police terror" of the 1960s and 1970s (p. 115) and concluded that *Panther* told "neglected truths" about black struggles (p. 115).

Although the film used the names of actual BPP members and depicted many events from BPP history, the film intertwined historical reality and fiction. *Panther* told the history of the BPP's emergence in Oakland, California, through a fictional main character, Judge, played by

Kadeem Harrison. After Judge decided to join the Panthers, Huey Newton (played by Marcus Chong), pulled Judge aside and asked him to mislead the Oakland Police Force by surreptitiously acting as Party infiltrator. Much of the film's drama revolved around Judge's relationship with Detective Baker, who asked Judge to set the Panthers up for robbery, and Judge's relationship with fictional BPP member Tyrone, who suspected Judge was working for the police. This fictional plot gave narrative form to historical documents that prove the FBI infiltrated the Panthers to undermine the movement's activities (Jeffries, 2002); thus, the film's fictional depiction of Judge's relationship with Baker illustrates how fictional forms are rooted in counter-memories of injustices (Lipsitz, 1990, p. xiii). However, the film's climax highlighted illegal and brutal tactics that did not occur as well as those that did. The film suggested that when Hoover concluded the BPP would continue to grow despite his efforts to disable it, he urged FBI agents to collude with the Mafia to bring cheap cocaine and heroin into black urban ghettos. The final scenes of the film depicted fictional main characters Alma, Tyrone, and Judge destroying a warehouse filled with drugs as a last act of defiance against the FBI. In the film's final moments, Judge was heard reading the following words, which also appeared on screen: "In 1970, there were 300,000 addicts in the United States. Yesterday there were 3 million. The way I see it, the struggle continues. This film is dedicated to all of the Black Panthers who gave their lives in the struggle." *Panther* blamed endemic poverty and drug use in black inner-cities on federal and state authorities. According to *Panther*, the rise in drug use among African-Americans was a consequence of the state's efforts to shut down collective activism and community development among the black urban poor.

Panther's conclusion illustrates how films are counter-memories when they depict contemporary social conflicts in the context of past injustices. There is no direct evidence that

the FBI worked with the Mafia to bring narcotics into Oakland; however, the film's suggestion that drug enforcement policies have harmed Black communities does have a factual basis. During the 1990s, when audiences were most likely to have seen *Panther*, African-Americans were four times more likely than whites to face prison terms for using narcotics (Davidson, 1999, p. 42). Mario Van Peebles told an *Essence* magazine interviewer that there is a ring of "truth" to the idea that drug-control policies in the United States are evidence of racial discrimination. Noting the film's "parallel between the then and now of drugs and alcohol being brought into the Black community," Van Peebles added, "These same communities that were insisting on power to the people have been flooded with alcohol and drugs; they've been medicated" (Bates, 1995, p. 58). According to Dyson, (1996) this plot was a "plausible answer to why heroin and then crack cocaine flooded into the ghetto" (p. 117).

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The film's closing scene reinforced *Panther's* counter-hegemonic message by using images of past racial struggle, both real and imaginary, to draw attention to systematic injustices that persist. The Black Panthers' concern with economic injustice in the film resonated with social conditions recently experienced within many black communities. In 1995, the year *Panther* appeared in theatres, African-Americans were three times more likely to live in poverty than whites (Vobejda, 1995, p. A1). The unwarranted arrests and deaths of BPP members at the hands of police also paralleled contemporary police abuses committed against African-Americans. "Although African-Americans represented 12 percent of the population during the 1990s, they were the most frequent victims of police shootings" (Thomas, 1995, p. A01). *Panther* associated drug use with the political disempowerment of black communities, and suggested that repressed groups might wrest political and economic power for themselves through collective organizing. Thus, the film provided a visual analogy to systemic police

violence against blacks, providing a link between the BPP's motives for collective organizing and current problems facing contemporary black communities. By associating more contemporary social problems with the history of BPP repression, *Panther* suggested that current injustices are outcomes of a repressive political system.

The film's counter-memories represented actual BPP events and depicted imaginary events that analogically resonated with the experiences of many poor Black communities; these memories illustrated ways in which state agencies restrict and threaten collective organizing and activism. *Panther* also portrayed collective activism as the best means for people with few political resources of their own to play a role in the political decision-making processes that impact their lives. By depicting both real and imaginary events, this film represented an oppositional consciousness rarely represented in mainstream media. Mainstream media reviews did not embrace this consciousness though; instead, they questioned the film's reliability as a source of information about the Panthers.

Patterns of Reasoning in Reviews of *Panther*

Reports and reviews predominantly described the film as an untrue fiction. Frequently, reporters covering the film's release quoted ex-Panther Bobby Seale and David Horowitz, leader of the conservative Center for the Study of Popular Culture, as the film's most ardent critics. Now known as the David Horowitz Freedom Center, the Center for Popular Culture was established in 1988 by Horowitz and Peter Collier to discredit favorable depictions of the political left in popular culture. In April, David Horowitz placed full page advertisements in *Variety* and *Hollywood Reporter* that castigated the movie for misrepresenting the BPP (Fine, 1995a, p. 1D; Sherman, 1995, p. 011). Reports of Horowitz' and Seale's complaints against the film appeared during the second week of May, when Van Peebles responded to criticism. In

these reports, Horowitz condemned the film as a "two-hour lie" (Carroll, 1995, p. 31; Charles, 1995, p. 29; Graham, 1995, p. 63; Leiieby, 1995, p. G1; Sherman, 1995, p. O11; Turner, 1995, p. 11; Vincent, 1995, p. E1); Seale denounced the film as "poetic lies" ("Black Panthers," 1995, p. O17; Fine, 1995a, 1D; Leiby, 1995, p. G1; Turner, 1995, p. 11) and "bootleg fiction" ("Black Panthers," 1995, p. O17; Carroll, 1995, p. 31; Graham, 1995, p. 63; Howe, 1995, p. N49; James, 1995, p. 2.1; Lieiby, 1995, p. G1; Sherman, 1995, p. O11; Turner, 1995, p. 11; Vincent, 1995, p. E1). Reporting for NPR's *Morning Edition*, Dowell (1995) explained that Seale described the film as "bootleg" because he did not give Van Peebles permission to tell his story, which Seale says he sold to Warner Brothers (broadcast transcript # 1598-5). One report, *The Boston Herald*, noted Seale's commentary that the Panthers were "part of a young black intelligentsia" that had "studied the whole history of African-Americans" ("Black Panthers," 1995, p. O17). Other reports quoted Horowitz' public statement that the film would "incite inner-city blacks" by portraying "the Panthers as idealists and all the police as Nazis" (Carroll, 1995, p. 31; Charles, 1995, p. 11; Vincent, 1995, p. E1).

Both Mario and Melvin Van Peebles defended their choices by asserting that that the film was not meant to be a documentary, but had a factual basis nonetheless (Fine, 1995a, p. D1; Kim, 1995, p. NC3). Mario Van Peebles told *USA Today* that the film accurately depicted the Panther's main political message, "all power to the people" (Fine, 1995a, p. D1). Van Peebles cited former Panther Earl Anthony's memoir, *Spitting into the Wind*, to explain why he thought the film's depiction of the FBI's collusion with the Mafia was realistic: "[Anthony] says he had drugs from the FBI to distribute. He was an informant. When you're on drugs, you're medicated and you don't vote and you don't join the Panthers" (Schaefer, 1995, p. O17). Mario Van Peebles believed the film's message might inspire more youthful audiences "to seek information about

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the Black Panthers for themselves" (Fine, 1995a, p. D1). He added, "I didn't want to make a three- or four-hour movie where, when you came out, you felt you deserved three college credits, where the kids were wearing the hat but not getting the message," (Fine 1995a, p. D1). For the film's director, *Panther* was credible because it conveyed the BPP's philosophy in a way that might engage young audiences.

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The mainstream press was less compelled by Mario's defense of the film's historical credibility. After Horowitz castigated the film in Hollywood industry journals, several mainstream newspapers reviewed the film. I review the twenty reviews from mainstream national newspapers archived in the LexisNexis news database. These reviews of *Panther* dismissed the film's basis in BPP history using similar patterns of reasoning. Interlocking themes appeared across different articles and reviews of *Panther*. Five themes stood out among reviews condemning the film: *Panther* as biased, *Panther* as unreal, fiction as separate from history, and *Panther* as "agitprop." A competing theme, *Panther* as art, stood out among reviews that defended the film. Below, I describe how these interlocking themes served as the foundation for judging *Panther's* credibility as a source of popular memory.

Condemning *Panther* as Biased

Criteria of balance and accuracy appeared frequently in reviews of *Panther*. When the film was released to theaters on May 3, 1995, a wave of negative reviews appeared in newspapers across the country. Several of these critics denounced *Panther* for characterizing the Panthers as heroes and the FBI as villains. Persall (1995) wrote that the film's characterizations created a "biased" representation of the Black Panther Party (p. 7). Writing for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, Stack (1995) told readers that Van Peebles' movie reflected his "heedless pursuit to define black heroes -- and demonize whites" (p. E1). Other reviews concluded that the

film presented a "simplistic" (Denerstein, 1995, p. 11D, Ebert, 1995, p. 45), "burlesque" (Murray, 1995, p. B7), and "one-note" (Maslin, 1995, p. C18) approach to understanding history. These reviews echoed reporters covering the film's release who described the film's portrayal of the FBI and its Director J. Edgar Hoover as an "outlandish cartoon" (Carroll, 1995, p. 31) and as "one dimensional" (Fine, 1995b, p. 1D).

Panther as unreal

While several reviewers and reports described the film as biased, others described the film's plot as implausible. Both reports and reviews characterized the film's portrayal of the FBI in collusion with the Mafia as "a particularly big leap" (Leiby, 1~~ieby, 1~~995, p. G1), "far-fetched" (Carroll, 1995, p. 31), "wildly irresponsible" (Charles, 1995, p. 31), "wild speculation" (Ross, 1995, p. 16), "deeply paranoid" (Barnes, 1995, p.3E), and "crazily narrow" (James, 1995, p. 2.1). Only the *Houston Chronicle* suggested that the plot was "not so farfetched" (Jones, 1995, p. YO5). Several reviews that described the film as biased also concluded that the entire film was "outrageous" (Persall, 1995, p. 7), "invalid" (Millar, 1995, p. 12), and "untrustworthy" (Maslin, 1995, p. C18). *USA Today* (Fine, 1995b) concluded, "White villains are so one-dimensional and revolutionaries so pure that none of it seems believable" (p. 1D). These latter reviews suggested that the film's partial depiction of the struggle between the BPP and the FBI discredited the film entirely.

Distinguishing Fiction and History

A presumed distinction between fiction and history was central to many reviewers' condemnations of the film. *The Washington Post* reporter Leiby (1995) suggested that *Panther* should not be sold as "a historically inspired work" (p. G1). Several other reporters agreed that the presence of fictional narrative in *Panther* negated its messages about BPP history. Gilbert

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(1995) warned readers that *Panther*'s "oversimplified, fiction-drenched account" was "definitely not a documentary" (p. 33). Strickler (1995) charged that *Panther* was "more intent on building a conspiracy theory than in presenting history" (p. 3E). Howe (1995) described *Panther* as a "fictionalized account" that is "more emotional than dispassionately dogged about the facts" (p. N49); however, Howe conceded that the film was not without merit: "If historical accuracy is ignored, the movie is absorbing stuff, a rousing blend of drama, creative interpretation and likable performances" (p. N49).

According to many critics, *Panther* illegitimately portrayed BPP history because it combined fact and fiction. The *New York Times* (Maslin, 1995) characterized the film as a "fact-warping history lesson" (p. C18). Denerstein (1995) wrote that Van Peebles' "choice" of a fictional character as the film's major protagonist was a "major problem" (p. 11D). Kehr (1995) described the movie as a "confounding jumble of accepted fact, fictional invention and wild speculation" (p. 37). Ignoring the film's accurate representations of FBI repression against the Panthers, these critics suggested that *Panther's* fictional narrative of the FBI's collusion with the Mafia discredited the film's portrayal of racial discord in the 1960s.

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Ostensibly, audiences would not learn the real history of the BPP by watching the film. Millar wondered, "How valid is the film as a historical document?" (p. 12) and Gilbert (1995) concluded that *Panther* "does not succeed at moving us any closer to the truth" (p. 33). Only two reviewers challenged the assumption that the film was an illegitimate representation of the BPP. Despite an overall criticism of the film, Persall (1995), suggested that truth is itself was subjective: "Nothing is more elusive or subjective than truth, but *Panther*, like *JFK*, has the blindside courage to ask: Whose truth is it, anyway?" (p. 7). Gilliam(1995) congratulated *Panther* for representing African-Americans' perspectives.

Defining *Panther* as "Agitprop"

A notion that *Panther* constituted "agitprop," or agitational propaganda, was a third theme in reviews of the film. Several critics who decried the film as a fiction suggested that young audiences were likely to be manipulated by the film. *The Washington Post* film critic Kempley (1995) wrote that "the trouble" with the film was that "the movie itself comes with no disclaimer" that it is "not a documentary but a dramatization" (p. C1). Ross (1995) expressed particular concern for young audiences who might be easily manipulated by the film: "The sad part, of course, is that modern young moviegoers – most of whom weren't born when the Panthers arose – will not know how much of this yarn is pure invention" (p. 16).

For other reviewers, the film was particularly damaging for its potential to influence African-Americans who might identify with the film's protagonists. Working from the presumption that the film misrepresented the FBI's investigation of the BPP, several critics lambasted the film as propaganda or "agitprop" for radical black activists. *The Washington Post* reviewer Howe (1995) said the movie made "absorbing, agitprop entertainment" (p. N49), and Ross (1995) stated that the movie was "wrapped in rhetoric, agitprop, and outlandish accusations" (p. 16). Such agitational propaganda, some reviewers suggested, might threaten American democracy. Carroll (1995) likened scenes in the movie to the "propagandizing and sloganeering . . . that once characterized Soviet socialist realism" (p. 31). *The Washington Post* film critic Gilliam concluded (1995), the movie was reminiscent of "nothing so much as a World War II propaganda film" (p. B1). Reviews that compared the film to propaganda for presumably non-democratic nationalist interests suggest that the film might provoke a new generation of radical black activists. Carroll (1995) asked ominously, "Could a Black Panther Party arise again?" (p. 31). These reviews echoed Horowitz's complaint that the film was "an incitement to

inner-city blacks" (Vincent, 1995, p. E1). Reviewers who anticipated that the film would agitate inner-city blacks concluded that black audiences might be encouraged to identify with the African-Americans in the film and challenge white hegemony. These critics simultaneously condemned the film's fictional elements and warned readers that the movie might provoke African-Americans to protest poverty where they lived. Collectively, these themes imply that fiction disguised as history would mislead African-Americans into becoming activists against economic and racial subordination.

Celebrating *Panther* as Art

Only two reviewers wrote favorable reviews of the film. These critics did not disagree that the film was a dramatic fiction; they suggested that the film should be valued for its artistic merits. Kempley (1995) noted that Van Peebles was as "entitled to his vision -- no matter how selective or factually skewed -- as any other artist" (p. C1). James (1995) wrote, that controversial films such as *Panther* "can prod viewers to think about movies, to challenge the film makers' theories, to judge them the way they would judge any serious work of art that blends fact and imagination" (p. 2.1). To protest the film on the basis of historical inaccuracy, she wrote, is to ask filmmakers "to exercise a scary self-censorship and to create less daring art" (p. 2.1). Reviewers who focused on the inherent value of artistic creation suggested that history and art may be separate, but both have an important social function.

Millar (1995) and Howe (1995) who primarily criticized the film also suggested that the film was worth viewing as an artistic creation. After these critics discouraged audiences from considering the film's representation of the BPP as a legitimate portrayal and political analysis of racial injustice in the United States, they suggested that no film should be considered as a source of historical information. Reports about the film also indicated that the film should not be

evaluated as a reconstruction of past events. Millar (1995) argued that the film succeeded, despite its biased perspective of the Panthers, because "the Van Peebleses are neither journalists nor historians" (p. 12). Howe (1995) suggested that the film's misrepresentations should be overlooked: "Sorting fact from fiction is a thorny thing -- unless you're something of a social historian" (p. N49). *The Boston Globe's* (Graham, 1995) report about the controversy surrounding *Panther* emphasized that filmmakers "have neither the desire nor the aptitude to portray the truth" (p. 63). *The Boston Globe* reporter Graham extensively quoted former Panther and scholar Kathleen Cleaver, who told him, "I'm not convinced that dramatic films are the place for historical accuracy…. A movie is a movie; a movie is not history….. History is presented by scholars**,** and I don't think anyone will say Hollywood is a hotbed of scholars" (p. 63). Thus, in framing the debate about the film's merits around the role of art and freedom of expression, reviewers who defended the film as a work of art neutralized *Panther's* political critique. They further insisted that individual films have little, if any, consequence for audiences who watch them. After all, they suggested, *Panther* was just a movie. Movies should be "outlandish," Stack (1995) asserted. This *San Francisco Chronicle* reviewer concluded, "If the old phrase 'it's only a movie' weren't so widely accepted, folks would have torn down the big screen long ago" (p. E1).

Reviews describing *Panther* as art also indicated that the film's critics were unreasonable; *Panther*, they argued, was unlikely to inspire disaffected youth to engage in political critique and activism. As The *New York Times* stated in the title of its review of *Panther*, controversial films are "not schoolbooks" (James, 1995, p. 2.1). Favorable reviews of *Panther* suggested that whether *Panther* was agitprop or edutainment was irrelevant. It deserved to be treated as art, thus enjoying freedom of expression. The film's role as a legitimate source

for understanding the BPP's struggle for racial justice and empowerment was never fully considered. Appeals to the criteria of balance, accuracy, and the distinction between fiction and fact reinforced repeatedly across multiple journalism reviews and news reports positioned *Panther* as outside of mainstream common sense understandings about political and economic equality in the United States.

Challenges for Counter-Memory in Popular Culture

Panther's depiction of the BPP suggests that not all films about black struggle reinforce prevailing hegemony in popular culture. Alternatively, mainstream press reports and reviews of *Panther* illustrate how commercial media challenged the film's counter-hegemonic role. Critics' descriptions of *Panther* as biased and inaccurate suggest that the movie's ability to incorporate its counter-memories into popular memory was limited, at least in part, because it was not accorded credibility as a legitimate depiction of the past. Thus, these critics suggest that media texts that purport to depict the past do not automatically attain status as popular memory but must also be widely recognized as sources of historical information.

While critics evaluated *Panther* according to its correspondence to historical events, they also advanced an ideologically conservative understanding of the BPP. Although critics correctly noted that not all of the events depicted in the film were based on BPP history, *Panther's* critics unevenly addressed the film's correspondence to actual events. None of the film's defenders mentioned the film's accurate representation of FBI attacks on the BPP, nor did they mention that the state police and FBI agents represented in the film had real-life counterparts who infiltrated the BPP to spread distrust and encourage violence from within the party (Churchill, 2001, pp. 89-98; Grady-Willis, 1998; O'Reilly, 1989). Consequently, characterizations of the film as "untrue" obscured the film's accurate representations of BPP

activities and FBI efforts to repress them. Based on these reviews, audiences with little prior knowledge of BPP history may have been led to believe that none of the film had a basis in BPP history.

Positive mainstream media reviews of an earlier civil rights film suggests that reviewer's criterion of accuracy to judge *Panther* might also have been influenced by the film's counter-hegemonic message. Popular media frequently characterized *Mississippi Burning* as a truthful depiction of racial violence (Barnes,1989; Canby, 1988; Carter, 1988; Kaufman, 1989, p. B1; King, 1989, p. 2.15; Lipper, 1989, p. 1F).[7] Despite these positive reviews, the film's depiction of FBI agents as dedicated to the cause of finding justice for slain activists contradicted historical accounts of the FBI's amicable relationship with the local police implicated in the activists' disappearance (Cagin and Dray, 1988; Gitlin, 1980). According to Cagin and Dray (1988), FBI agents were slow to respond to the case of the murdered activists until other civil rights protesters brought evidence to their attention (p. 324). The contradictions between negative reviews of *Panther*, a film that magnified political abuses by the FBI, and *Mississippi Burning*, a film that minimized the FBI's history of racial discrimination, suggests that reviews may be more likely to support films that reflect dominant ideology. Because mainstream institutions have particular power and authority to establish cultural meanings of the past, depictions that affirm dominant ideology, even those that contradict the historic record, may be more likely to attain status as true than counter-narratives based on historic or imagined events. This observation reflects Fiske's (1987) concern that appeals to truth and realism often blunt social critiques presented by popular media; when texts present a critical, or left-leaning view of social life, they are often condemned by the mainstream press as unrealistic.

Reviews that critiqued the film's "biased" depiction of the Panthers also carry implications for hegemony. These reviews suggested that reconstructions of the past can provide impartial depictions of past events; however, all historical narratives are partial and limited by the scope of individuals who construct them (Sturken, 1997, p. 7; Zelizer, 1995, p. 224-225). Although there are more or less accurate representations of the past, no film, nor any representation of the past for that matter, can provide an impartial or complete depiction of a past event. Indeed, news framing scholarship has questioned the journalism's ability to meet this standard. As Gitlin (1980), Reese and Buckalew (1995), and Watkins (2001) argue, news media have consistently failed to provide neutral portrayals of political activism.

Appeals to balance in reviews of *Panther* not only ignored the partiality of all texts but discouraged readers from attending to the film's counter-hegemonic narrative about a group rarely depicted in popular culture. Cultural texts frequently depict extol the virtues of the United States political and economic systems by featuring narratives of individuals who successfully triumph over economic adversity. (For examples see Cloud, 1996; McMullen and Solomon, 1994; and Winn, 2000). As McMullen and Solomon (1994) conclude in their analysis of Steven Spielberg's adaptation of Alice Walker's novel, *The Color Purple*, depictions of individual success in the face of adversity result in the "restoration and reaffirmation of the social order" (p. 163). By deflecting *Panther's* attention to state agencies that have repressed minorities and activists, these reviews implicitly challenged the legitimacy to counter-hegemonic messages about the drawbacks of the United States political system.

Critics' distinction of fact from fiction also obscured the political and social implications of *Panther's* narrative for contemporary social conflicts. *Panther* represented the narrative equivalent to the Black Power Movement's political critique of the social, economic, and

political order. Thus, it gave narrative form to experiences of African Americans – both from the 1960s and from the 1990s – who have struggled to overcome impoverished conditions and the coercive powers of state agencies that have repressed minorities and activists. While the movie's critics expressed dismay over the film's fictional portrayal of race relations, they ignored the film's resonance to contemporary conditions of inequality and racial injustice in the United States. Thus, newspaper reviews obscured the realities of social injustice depicted by the film that prompted the Black Panther Party to organize for social justice. By relegating the memory of the BPP to the world of fiction and deflecting attention from the film's historical and political relevance, reviewers resisted the political challenge posed by the film.

Perhaps the popular press delimited *Panther's* ability incorporate counter-hegemonic ideas into popular memory. To the extent that mainstream film reviews influence readers to make judgments about a film's quality, these reviews might have discouraged potential audiences from watching the film. If it is true that news media help film distributors anticipate a film's commercial success, reviews and reports about the film's detractors might also have dissuaded distributors from circulating the film. *Panther* showed in theaters for only a few weeks; most video stores do not currently carry copies of the film, nor does Netflix, the online DVD service.

An analysis of mainstream news reviews and reports of *Panther* provides insights for understanding the factors contributing to counter-memories' struggle to become sources of popular memory. One insight is that critics' criteria of accuracy and impartiality in mainstream news reviews of films also reflect ideological biases. Thus, criticisms of historical narratives that appeal to the merits of impartiality and the virtues of balanced depictions of the past may also advance partial understandings of the past. Scholars interested in the relationship between social

justice and popular memory might interrogate claims about the partiality of particular depictions of the past further to determine whose interests are ignored and whose interests are advanced by criticisms of films as partial or unbalanced. By interrogating claims about a film's bias, we might then develop a deeper understanding of the ways that criticism about popular memory texts contribute to hegemonic popular memories.

In addition to pointing to the potential biases of news reviews of historically based films, mainstream press attention to *Panther* suggests that depictions of the past that hold close fidelity to the historic record may provide more useful resources for understanding past events than those that do not. Reviewers' criticisms of *Panther's* historical inaccuracies suggest that controversial accounts of the past may be more likely to attain legitimacy in popular culture if they are closely based on historical evidence. By incorporating a sensational narrative in the midst of a film that purported to educate audiences about the BPP, *Panther* may have lost credibility among credulous audience members who had little prior knowledge about the BPP's history or other instances of political repression in the U.S. Although reviewers' characterizations of *Panther* as biased and as a fiction suggests that accuracy may not be sufficient for counter-hegemonic films to become part of popular memory, reviewers might have given *Panther* a more positive reception had it attended more faithfully to the historic record.

A popular memory's fidelity to historic reality also provides a foundation for making judgments about social injustices depicted in representations of past events. An accumulation of evidence from sources that bear a direct relation to the past, including government documents, personal testimony, and photographic recordings, indicates how events have transpired and whether or not particular individuals have wielded excessive force to oppress others. As Lipsitz (1990) writes,

> Only by recognizing the collective legacy of accumulated human actions and ideas can we judge the claims to truth and justice of any one story. We may never succeed in finding out all that has happened in history, but events matter and describing them as accurately as possible (although never with certain finality) can, at the very least, show us whose foot has been on whose neck. (p. 214)

The weight of evidence from FBI documents (Blackstock, 1988; Churchill & Vanderwall, 1990), US Senate committee reports ("FBI's Efforts," 1976), court cases concerning the FBI's role in the deaths of BPP activists (O'Reilly, 1989; Wilkins & Clark, 1973), and former BPP accounts (Anthony, 1990, Grady-Willis, 1998) demonstrate that the FBI shot and killed unarmed Panther party members and used undercover agents to gain illegal access to the Panthers' homes. Narratives based on these materials would have provided a more powerful indictment of the FBI than images of the FBI colluding with the Mafia, a narrative that has no corroborating evidence.

There is much that can be learned from the history of the Panthers. The emergence of the BPP demonstrates how social movement organizations blossom in the midst of trenchant opposition. Explorations of BPP history also illuminate the factors that disrupt or destroy activists' efforts to achieve social change and greater social equality. State repression against the Panthers should be central to that history. The FBI's orchestrated assault on the BPP attests to the illusory nature of free expression and open dissent in this nation. *Panther's* depictions of political repression against black activists provided an opening, albeit a small one, for popular film audiences to question prevailing ideological discourses about the role of activism and state repression of political dissent in the U.S. Additional popular accounts –accounts based on historic evidence- are needed to attain a fuller and more accurate understanding of the BPP: what led to its growth, what the movement contributed to, and what led to its demise. These counter-

hegemonic texts may open new insights about possibilities for challenging more contemporary forms of exploitation and political repression. As Malcolm X (1971) reminds us, it is only when we are "armed with the knowledge of the past [that] we can with confidence charter a course for the future" (pp. 419-420).

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Comment [GRC21]: 2002 in the text.

Comment [GRC22]: Needs DAI volume and page numbers after this (and University Microfilm number if obtained on university microfilm).

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Comment [KH24]: I'm not sure what to do here. These were the names Lexis-Nexis provides. The CNN website doesn't highlight any producers for its programming. So I might either delete all names but Cooper's and give him the title of the host, or I could list Jonathan Klein (President), since he is the president of CNN/US and oversaw production of the show. However, if I listed Klein, this wouldn't correspond to the citation found in the Lexis-Nexis database.

Comment [KH25]: Since Anderson is based in New York, I would assume the program is out of New York.

Comment [GRC26]: There should be a city and a colon before this, for example, "New York and Washington, DC: Cable News Network." I'm not sure what the city is, though.

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Comment [GRC27]: With a broadcast, Dowell's title would usually be required in parentheses after the name. I.e. "Dowell, P. (Executive Producer)."

Comment [KH28]: Dowell is the NPR Arts Reporter. I can't find any information about the executive producer on Morning Edition or NPR's website, and Dowell is the only name on the Lexis-Nexis transcript .

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"*Mississippi Burning*." (1988, Nov. 30). *Variety*, p. 12.

Murray, S. (1995, May 3). *Panther* [Review of the motion picture *Panther*]. *The Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, p. B7.

Newton, H. (1973). *Revolutionary suicide*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

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Comment [GRC32]: Never cited in text.

Ogbar, J. (2004). *Black power: Radical politics and African American identity*. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

O'Reilly, K. (1989). *"Racial matters": The FBI's secret file on black America, 1960-1972*. New York: The Free Press.

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Persall, S. (1995, May 5). *Panther* shades the facts but is compelling [Review of the motion picture *Panther*]. *St. Petersburg Times*, p. 7.

Reese, S. & Buckalew, B. (1995). The militarism of local television: The routine framing of the Persian Gulf War. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication, 12*, 40-59.

Romanowski, W. D. (1993, Summer). Oliver Stone's JFK: Commercial filmmaking, cultural history, and conflict. *Journal of Popular Film and Television, 21*, 63-71.

Ross, B. (1995, May 5). *Panther* prowls past truth; There's more action than history in this propaganda piece from director Mario Van Peebles [Review of the motion picture *Panther*]. *Tampa Tribune*, p. 16.

Sawyer, D. (Host). (2005, June 13). Mississippi Burning trial begins in 40 year-old crime. *Good Morning America*. New York: American Broadcasting Companies, Inc. Retrieved June 28, 2005, from Lexis-Nexis News database.

Schaefer, S. (1995, May 6). *Panther* director is pleased with his statement. *The Boston Herald*, p. 017. Retrieved Dec. 15, 2003, from Lexis-Nexis news database.

Comment [GRC33]: I'm not sure how to handle this: Orion Pictures no longer exists – it's been folded into MGM. The movie was originally released by Orion Pictures, but I hesitate before putting "Available from Orion Pictures" in parentheses here as APA says to do in H.66. The OWL at Purdue's APA website says to handle this by typing "Country: Studio or distributor." Which would make this "United States: Orion Pictures." That website also says to put "[Motion picture]" at the end of the title rather than "[Film]" as the APA manual does, so I'm not sure which to go with. I've been handling the rest as directed in the manual (with "[Film]" and "(Available from…)." Let me know which format you prefer me to use.

Comment [KH34R33]: I would prefer to use the manual for the sake of consistency unless you think of a better reason to follow Purdue.

Comment [KH35]: Again, I don't know who the executive producer for this is.

Comment [GRC36]: At the end here should have in ()s what she does – for instance "Sawyer, D. (Executive Producer)."

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Schudson, M. (1992). *Watergate in American memory: How we remember, forget, and reconstruct the past.* New York: Basic Books.

Seale, B. (1970). *Seize the time: The story of the Black Panther Party and Huey P. Newton.* New York: Random House.

Sherman, P. (1995, October 15). *JFK* meets *Malcolm X* in erratic *Panther* [Review of the motion picture *Panther*]. *The Boston Herald*, p. O11.

Stack, P. (1995, May 3). *Panther* Goes for the Mythic: Glossed-over look at radical black group [Review of the motion picture *Panther*]. *San Francisco Chronicle*, p. E1.

Strickler, J. (1995, May 3). *Panther* is history with a charge; Film focuses more on theory than on fact [Review of motion picture *Panther*]. *Star Tribune*, p. 3E.

Sturken, M. (1997). *Tangled memories: the Vietnam War, the AIDS epidemic, and the Politics of remembering.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Thomas, P. (1995, Dec. 6). Police brutality: An issue rekindled. *The Washington Post*, p. A1.

Tupac. (2000). Can UC the pride in the Panther? [Recorded by Mos Def]. On *The Rose that Grew from Concrete* [CD]. Los Angeles: Interscope Records.

Turner, M. (1995, May 14). Father, son make film their own way. *Omaha World-Herald*, p. 11.

Umoja, A. (2001). Repression breeds resistance: The Black Liberation Army and the radical legacy of The Black Panther Party. In K. Cleaver & G. Kastiaficas (Eds.), *Liberation, Imagination, and the Black Panther Party: A New Look at the Panthers and their Legacy* (pp. 3-19). New York and London: Routledge.

Comment [GRC37]: There should be a city and a colon before this. I'm guessing Los Angeles, but I'm not sure. Can't tell from their website.

Comment [KH38]: Their phone numbers are based out of LA.

Van Peebles, M. (Director). Panther [Film]. (Available from Gramercy & PolyGram Films)

Vincent, M. (1995, May 6). *Panther* protested, praised. *The Times-Picayune*, p. E1.

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~~Walsh, E. (1995, December 6). A police shot that ripped the fabric of a genteel city. *The Washington Post*, p. A18.~~

West, K. (2004-2005). Crack music. On *Late Registration* [CD]. New York: Roc-A-Fella/Island Def Jam.

Watkins, C. (2001). Framing protest: News media frames of the Million Man March. *Critical Studies in Media Communication, 18*, 83-101.

Wilkins, R. and Clark, R. (1973). *Search and destroy: A report by the commission of inquiry into the Black Panthers and the Police*. New York: Metropolitan Applied Research Center. In C. Carson, D. J. Garrow, G. Gill, V. Harding, & D. C. Hine (Eds.), *The Eyes on the Prize: Civil Rights Reader* (pp. 517-528). (1991). New York: Viking Press.

Winn, E. (2000). Moralizing upward mobility: Investigating the myth of class mobility in *Working Girl*. *The Southern Communication Journal, 66*, 40-52.

Winn, J. (2001). Challenges and compromises in Spike Lee's *Malcolm X*. *Critical Studies in Media Communication, 18*, 452-465.

Zelizer, B. (1995). Reading the past against the grain: The shape of memory studies. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication, 12*, 214-240.

Comment [GRC39]: Never cited in text.

Comment [GRC40]: Need a city and a colon before the label name.

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Zelizer, B. (1998). *Remembering to forget: Holocaust memory through the camera's eye.* Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.

Notes

1. Less mainstream representations of the Black Panther Party have appeared more recently in Spike Lee's (2001) documentary *A Huey P Newton Story*, in several documentaries *A Huey P. Newton Story* (2001); *Eyes on the Prize II* (Bernard et al., 1990); *Conspiracy: The Trial of the Chicago 8* (Kagan, 1987), and in the lyrics of several hip hop artists' songs, including Tupac's, "Can UC the pride in the Panther?," Kanye West's, "Crack Music," Lil Kim's, "The Jump Off," and Dead Prez's, "Enemy Lines".

2. According to The Internet Movie Database, *Malcolm X* (1992) yearned $48 million at the box office, *Mississippi Burning* (1988) earned $34 million at the box office, and *Ghosts of Mississippi* (1996) earned $13 million (www.imdb.com).

3. See Bodnar (1992), Browne (1993), Eberly (2004), Ehrenhaus (2001), Hasian (2001), Kammen (1991), Madison (1999); Schudson (1992), Zelizer (1998).

4. In addition to earning $34 million at the box office, *Mississippi Burning* was nominated for seven Academy Awards, including best picture; the film won an award for cinematography (Curry, 1988, p. 1D).

5. According to the Lexis-Nexis news database, newspapers with the broadest circulation, and, therefore, the ones used here, are: *The Atlanta Journal and Constitution, The Baltimore Sun, The Boston Globe, The Boston Herald, The Buffalo News, The Chicago Sun-Times, The Christian Science Monitor, The Columbus Dispatch, Daily News, The Denver Post, The Hartford Courant, The Houston Chronicle, The Los Angeles Times, The Miami Herald, The New York Times, Newsday, The Omaha World Herald, The Plain Dealer, The San Diego Union-Tribune, The San Francisco Chronicle, The Seattle Times, The St. Louis Post-Dispatch, The St.*

Petersburg Times, *The Star Tribune*, *The Times-Picayune*, *The Tampa Tribune*, *The Times-Picayune*, *USA Today*, and *The Washington Post*.

6. As Gitlin (1980) and Watkins (2001) indicate, news media frames tend to naturalize politically mainstream perspectives by neutralizing political protest as deviant. Eberly (2000) describes *topoi* as the topics or thematics in deliberations about public discourses that serve as both the source and limitation for further discussion and deliberation about the role of fictional texts; such *topoi* enable fictional texts to effect social and political changes.

7. *Variety* magazine (1988) wrote that *Mississippi Burning* "captures much of the truth in its telling of the impact of a 1964 FBI probe into the murders of three civil rights workers" (p. 12); Canby (1988) described the film as "utterly authentic" (p. C12); and Carter (1988) declared that the film was "at its most honest" when it portrayed "the raw brutality of Klan terrorism" (www.wsj.com/archives).