

Audience Reactions to Black Marxist films as seen on Letterboxd and IMDb

Student Name: Kamau Hawthorne

Student Number: 740707

Supervisor: Dr. Annet Toornstra

Master Media Studies – Media & Business

Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication

Erasmus University Rotterdam

Master's Thesis

June 2025

Word Count: 16660

ABSTRACT

This study explores how general audiences, and professional critics engage with Black Marxist films on Letterboxd and IMDb. Letterboxd and IMDb are review platforms that anyone can join, where many different people are going to be contribute their thoughts, reviews, and interpretations to certain films. A qualitative thematic analysis was executed on 160 general audience and professional reviews of the films *The Spook Who Sat by the Door* (1973), *Babylon* (1980), *Bamboozled* (2000), and *Sorry to Bother You* (2018). These films were chosen because of their depiction and criticism of race under capitalist systems. They highlight systemic racial issues and portray forms of resistance. This analysis examined how labor, class, race, and political resistance are received. Thematic analysis is important in this scenario because it requires recognizing key words shown in all the reviews, generating codes, seeing common themes and messages in the reviews from the coding, reviewing the themes and their significance to views on Black Marxism. The analysis gives a comprehensive method in reporting accurate data in people's views on Black Marxist films. The theoretical frameworks of Media Effects Theory, Conflict Theory, Marxist Conflict Theory, Communication Theory, and Black Marxist Theory were used in this study. Through these frameworks, the key themes of Identity and Representation, Media and Cultural Critique, Historical and Social Context, Political Agency and Resistance, Labor and Capitalism, Film Form and Aesthetics, and Emotional and Personal Impact emerge.

The results show that both professional critics and general audiences engaged with these films on a deep emotional and intellectual level. The professional critics often reference the historical significance of the films and the political context they are in. The general audiences tended to note how emotionally and personally significant it was for them. This study also explores how neoliberal ideologies seen in mainstream media can possibly influence audience reception. The results find that the reviewers on Letterboxd and IMDb view these films as forms of cultural resistance that resonate with them on a personal and intellectual level.

KEYWORDS: *Black Marxist, Audience reception, Letterboxd, IMDb, Neoliberal ideology, Labor and class struggle, Qualitative thematic analysis*

Table of Contents

1 Introduction	1
1.1 The Black Marxist Films in this Study.....	3
2 Theoretical Framework	9
2.1 Media Effects Theory	9
2.2 Conflict Theory	10
2.3 Communication Theory	11
2.4 Black Marxist Theory.....	11
2.5 Paradigms	12
3 Research Design and Methods	13
3.1 Choice of Method	13
3.2 Sampling and data collection.....	14
3.3 Sensitizing concepts	16
3.4 Method of analysis	18
3.5 Credibility and ethical considerations.....	20
4 Results and discussion	22
Table 4.1	22
4.1 Identity and Representation.....	24
4.2 Media and Culture Critique	26
4.3 Historical and Social Context	28
4.4 Political Agency and Resistance	30
4.5 Labor and Capitalism.....	33
4.6 Film Form and Aesthetics	35
4.7 Emotional and Personal Impact	37
5 Conclusion	40
5.1 Social and Academic Implications	41
5.2 Limitations and Future Research	41
5.3 Answering the Sub-Questions.....	42
References	45
Appendix:	54
Table 6.1	54
Table 6.2 <i>Babylon</i> Codes	56

Table 6.3: The Spook Who Sat by the Door Codes 61

1 Introduction

Hollywood films often peddle the same, familiar tales about heroic men who achieve the American dream through hard work. They imply that anybody with enough determination could follow in their footsteps (Pileggi et al., 2000, p. 208). The general themes according to Pileggi et al., (2000, p. 211) also imply that when the social order is threatened, it can make for a cautionary tale. Therefore, when many films show a defiance of social order, it is made to reinforce it. According to Pileggi et al., (2000, p. 210), majority of box office films tend to portray the American dream rather than the cautionary tale. This explains that box office films usually show a reinforcement of these traditional values rather than show a possible opposition to them, even if they show consequences for defying social order. These messages are at odds with films depicting more fundamental criticisms about the country's underlying systems of power preventing people from achieving prosperity (Ortner, 2013, p. 16). What this means is that traditional films do not seem to critique the system of a country's underlying power structure but instead conform and promote to the structure. Rather than enjoying the box office success and international platforms that are given seemingly freely to this first type of film, critical films are instead misinterpreted, underfunded, and outright banned which not only restricts public access to ideas and information but also limits the power of cinema (Boyd & Bailey, 2009, p. 660). That means critical films are not as likely to be seen by traditional audiences, and if they are then they can be more subjected to unfair criticism. These issues become more glaring when it comes to Black films with Marxist themes. Black films in this case are defined as films that center the Black experience, have a Black protagonist, critiques racism from a Black perspective, or have a Black director. Marxist theory can be defined by focusing on class analysis and critiques of capitalism (Wright 2005, p. 3). In this study Black films that integrate Marxist theory I will name Black Marxist films. This study addresses a gap in the literature as Black Marxist films are within academia (Gates & Gillespie, 2019, p. 13). This is most likely due to the lack of Black Marxist films and the result of Neoliberalism being the dominant idea in mainstream media. Neoliberalism can be described as a form of capitalism that was formed in the late 20th century that holds the principles of free-market principles, privatization, and deregulation (Alexandri & Janoschka, 2019, p. 1; Morningstar, 2020, Meyers p. 4). Therefore, part of a neoliberal ideology requires an idealized version of capitalism. Mainstream media tends to normalize neoliberal ideologies of free market capitalism and limited government, making both seem like common

sense (Meyers, 2019, p. 4). Thus, neoliberal ideologies are framed as normal within the public's point of view. Since mainstream media tends to promote this type of messaging, it also leads to alternative media with different ideas, having diminished potential to be seen (Andersson, 2012, p. 754). What this means is that media alternative to the normalized neoliberal point of view is not seen as frequently. Neoliberalism is also said to have emerged as a part of an alliance between a liberal business class and local segregationists that wanted to preserve white privilege in the civil rights era, which included privatization of neighborhoods, schools, and social welfare (Hohle, 2019, p. 2). According to Hohle (2019, p. 3), neoliberalism is the newest strategy for white elites to maintain political and economic power. This is relevant because with these neoliberal strategies, voices of non-white and non-elites do not take priority within mainstream media because of how it is constructed.

Since black films are already underrepresented within the mainstream as white audiences are less interested in movies with mostly black casts regardless of their racial attitudes (and people's knowledge and appreciation of black films varies mostly by their own racial background (Weaver, 2011, p. 370) it makes sense to come to the conclusion that black films with Marxist themes are not recognized within mainstream media under neoliberalism. Consequently, the Black Marxist films as discussed earlier are not prioritized or given much promotion under the neoliberal structure of Hollywood. The research only takes the structure of the United States of America into account, as Hollywood films more often reinforce stereotypes and social inequalities than other countries (Erigha, 2019, p. 142). That is relevant to note because it highlights that this suppression of Black Marxist films is more explicitly done in the United States, and also because Hollywood serves to reinforce stereotypes and ideas that are the antithesis of Black Marxist ideologies.

Films in Hollywood reinforcing stereotypes and ideas that oppose Black Marxist ideologies is a method of making them the standard. This standard is what is shown in most mainstream films. One huge factor that influences what movies becomes mainstream is audience and professional reviews, which is why knowledge of ideas outside of neoliberalism is so important within this study. Findings from Zhang & Dellarocas (2006, p. 3) show that a one-point increase in online review ratings can increase box office revenues by 4-10%. What this means is that general audiences take online review ratings into account in their decision to watch a film or not. Another study by Niraj & Singh (2015, p. 180) reported that the volume and rating

of films positively correlate with box office success. The quantity of reviews of a certain film means more box office success for that film. This is relevant to the study because of the ongoing neoliberal messaging within Hollywood and the success this messaging has had in the context of reviewers. These films would not have reached their box office heights if not for reviews, meaning professional critics and general audiences must like neoliberal messaging within films. This raises questions on how the same audiences react to Black films, Marxist films, or Black Marxist films.

The discussed mechanisms of suppression of Black Marxist films combined with the box office success of films that contradict them could potentially make the ideas portrayed in Black Marxist films unknown and unengaged with by audiences. The suppression can also cause people and critics alike to reject this film since the ideas are non-conformative to the neoliberal ideologies usually in film. With this fact, the research question formed is: How do professional critics and general audiences on Letterboxd and IMDb engage with Black Marxist films?

To address this, the following sub-questions will be:

1. What are the differences between the reviews of professional critics and general audiences
2. What role does neoliberal ideology in mainstream film play in people's perception of films with Black Marxists ideologies as expressed on these websites.

The academic and societal relevance of the topic of suppression of the research question above relates to a gap in the literature where Black Marxist films are not as recognized as films with traditional ideas within the world of cinema. When looking at mainstream film people do not question the ideas put in front of them, leading to them not knowing about Black Marxist films or other films relating to the black experience or Marxism. Black Marxist films have been purposely unrepresented for 50 years.

1.1 The Black Marxist Films in this Study

The purposeful lack of representation for Black Marxist films has been able to evolve over time. Outright censorship of Black Marxist films was commonplace throughout the twentieth century in the United States, as shown by the deliberate suppression of films like *The Spook that Sat by the Door* (1973) and *Babylon* (1980) (Levy Reid, 1994, p. 1748). What this means is before neoliberalism was the status quo in the film industry, Hollywood would outright

ban films that promoted the philosophy of Black Marxism. After the 1980s, Hollywood, like most major industries during this time, underwent a transformation spurred by new neoliberal market logic (Prince, 2000, p. 5585). One important thing to note about neoliberalism in the film industry is that the ideology has impacted the global production of films, reshaping cultural dynamics such as prioritizing global distinction over uniqueness within cultures (Ganti, 2019, p. 340). This indicates that neoliberal censorship happens through underfunding and misinterpretations in global reviews of films. From this indication, one can analyze this conflict of neoliberalism taking control of what becomes the main idea within cultures through several mechanisms such as bad-faith film reviews or underfunding.

However, neoliberalism does not entail a suppression of every film contradicting the ideology. Films defying the status quo of Hollywood were met with box office success and critical acclaim in the 1970s. Films such as *All the President's Men* (1976), *Chinatown* (1974), and *Three Days of the Condor* (1975) all have similar themes of government agency corruption and defying these government agencies, sometimes violently. This leads to the question, why were these films met with praise from the box office but not *The Spook who Sat by the Door* (1973). The film *The Spook who Sat by the Door* (1973) box office run was removed because of intimidation by the FBI's Counter Intelligence Program due to its portrayal of a black CIA agent organizing urban guerilla warfare (Yaquinto et al., 2009, p. 3). Thus, the FBI made sure the film was not shown due to a portrayal of an uprising through a black protagonist in a prestigious position. The film had disappeared for decades until 2003 after a digital remastering (Yaquinto et al., 2009, p. 3). That is important to note when talking about the idea of Black Marxism. During the 1970s there were other films about political resistance that were met with critical acclaim instead of suppression. Black Marxism plays a role in the suppression of this film due to the ideas presented. The film showed the idea that black people can resist and respond to capitalist oppression (Sheppard, 2013, p. 71). What this indicates is the message was contradictory to everything else with in Hollywood due to its Black Marxist themes. The film used violence as a metaphor for Black opposition and an aggressive control of one's own destiny, which scared white audiences (Sheppard, 2013, p. 74). The message of this film has the ability to raise consciousness of sociopolitical matters within viewers, particularly in the racially subjugated communities (Sheppard, 2013, p. 75). The film was able to create an impact with audiences. The ones that benefitted from the status quo were intimidated by the film, while the ones who did not

benefit potentially learned about defiance of normalized sociopolitical matters. It should be noted that during the early 1970s, the type of film that explored Black people taking control of their own destiny was a subgenre of film called Blaxploitation film (Howell, 2005). This subgenre was able to grow due to rising black consciousness, criticism of depictions of African Americans within Hollywood, and the film industry's financial struggles during that time period (Guererro, 2011, p. 2). During this brief period, this sort of Black film was prominent for its themes. These films were known to exploit themes such as cultural presence and rebellion amongst African Americans, promoting violent retribution against white supremacy (Benshoff, 2019, p. 131).

Blaxploitation films were quite defiant of the standard ideas of mainstream films, where they violent Black retribution. One essential thing to take from this, is that the ideas of a film like the *The Spook Who Sat by the Door* (1973) had the ability to scare audiences. If audiences are scared by certain ideas portrayed within films, would this potentially mean they rate these films unfairly due to their political messaging? Is the reason why there are not many films reflecting the ideas of Black Marxism because the film industry knows it would upset certain audiences or because of the consciousness it can raise within viewers, leading to a potential rejection of the neoliberal status quo? Could it be both of these factors?

The rejection of the neoliberal status quo through Black Marxist films was depicted through *Babylon* (1980). *Babylon* (1980) is a British drama film that portrayed racial tension in British society through its depictions of racial tensions and police brutality. It is said that the censorship of this film through it getting an X rating in the United Kingdom and banned in the United States was because of its radical depiction of young black people and their resistance of racism and police brutality (Nwonka, 2021, p. 16). In other words, police brutality and radical responses to racism were controversial topics when the film was released. This film was successful critically due to its authenticity within the context of British society and the time in which it came out. However, the reason it was banned was because authorities believed these films could create potential threats that could incite violence in black youth (Nwonka, 2021, p. 17). Consequently, the publicity of this movie was suppressed due to the implications of a black uprising. This film's critique of racism and brutality reflected Black Marxist ideas and happened to be censored and underpublicized just like *The Spook who Sat by the Door* (1973).

Censorship of *Babylon* (1980) was an early method in the suppression of Black Marxist films. The emergence of neoliberalism within the film industry after the 1980s shifted the

method in which Black Marxist films were being less exposed to the average viewer. Instead of outright banning Black Marxist media, media that reflect neoliberal ideology are exposed much more explicitly to the public (Meyers, 2019, p. 6). Therefore, the neoliberal shift in Hollywood caused films of Black Marxism not to be banned, but instead not be promoted as much as other films. Neoliberalism is able to shape narratives about race and class that do not necessarily reflect reality (Hudis, 2018, p. 199). What neoliberalism does not account for is ingrained aspects of social, political, racial, or economic inequalities within society. In terms of racial inequalities, these are reinforced under neoliberalism in many different fashions. According to Hohle (2015, p. 17) one of the reinforcements happened through privatization of white neighborhoods and schools as well as the markets created around black poverty. This also happened through the overseeing of mass incarceration and systemic police brutality of black people, which was normalized within society (Hohle, 2015, p. 10) From this we see that the assemblage of a white private and black public reinforced an idea of white superiority when it comes to resources and quality of life. With these racial inequalities being ingrained in society, it effects how African Americans are seen through stereotypes (Hadžić, 2022, p. 106-108). This clarifies that racial inequalities and stereotypes are normalized within society, making it difficult to see past them, interact with them, or form unbiased opinions on racial matters. These factors resulted among others, in less exposure of films such as *Bamboozled* (2000) and *Sorry to Bother You* (2018).

Black Marxist films have methods of contradicting stereotypes and criticize them, with a prime example being *Bamboozled* (2000). *Bamboozled* (2000) is a film by Spike Lee that forces viewers to challenge the idea that racist representations of black people are relics of the past through showing that racist stereotypes from minstrelsy still influence current media (Laski, 2011, p. 1095). Thus, the film was trying to show that these racist stereotypes from minstrelsy were never completely gone, but instead repurposed and ingrained within current media. Minstrelsy is a form of entertainment that originated in the 19th century that involved white people using blackface to perform stereotypical caricatures of African Americans (Womack, 2012, p. 1). This means the use of minstrelsy in *Bamboozled* (2000) exemplifies how racist practices of the past influences and reinvents itself in current entertainment. One of the concepts created with neoliberalism is the idea of a post-racial world, which undermines how racism is reconstructed under this system (Kundnani, 2021, p. 12). Therefore, a key part of neoliberalism is ignoring how racism is reconstructed and repurposed under it. One example of this is within

urban development, where color-blind mandates are able to dictate the uneven urban development of poor and minority cities (Mele, 2013, p. 599). From this we see that ignoring race within urban development leads to a worse outcome for minority and poor cities. However, neoliberalism proposes that race does not matter. The message of *Bamboozled* (2000) and the current neoliberal ideas are contradictory, which may give rise to the reason why it not only received mixed or average reviews by critics after its release, but also only made \$2.5 million at the box office on a \$10 million budget. The film's critique of neoliberal ideas and while having a black director and actors makes this a Black Marxist film.

Black Marxist films are able to expose how the idea of a post racial world that neoliberalism presents are not accurate. The film *Sorry to Bother You* (2018) by Boots Riley is a film that addresses the same problem that Spike Lee addresses in *Bamboozled* (2000) which is the idea of a post racial world under neoliberalism (Dunning, 2020, p. 44). Hence, Spike Lee and Boots Riley address similar topics within their films, even though Boots Riley's was released 18 years after Lee's. The fact that these topics are similar in relevance shows how much the neoliberal ideas of a post-racial world continue to dominate media. Dunning (2020 p. 45) addresses this phenomenon as a neoliberal progress narrative, where there is a narrative that racism is obsolete. This means under neoliberalism, a narrative of racism being non-existent will always be prevalent. Riley's film is able to reveal the covert nature of racism and rejects that racism is a function of time but instead an ontological crisis within white people (Dunning, 2020, p. 47). Therefore, the film critiques the idea that racism is outdated but is alive in new forms. This is why the racism is described as uncanny, showing up in unique and unexpected ways. He also reveals it as a part of a fundamental understanding of the world by white people that needs to be challenged. The fundamental understanding of the world by white people is explained in a study by Morgan (2021, p. 2-10), where she states that the division of races that was made for the economic and political purpose of justifying slavery and colonialism is a deeply entrenched social structure which is able to create and promote white privilege. This privilege is ingrained within how most white people approach their understanding of the world (Morgan, 2021, p. 3). With this, Boots Riley is trying to show why white people's general understanding of the world is flawed when it comes to racial relations. For example, white perception of racial relations is influenced by media, segregation, stereotypes, and perceived group threats (Gallagher, 2003 p. 383). This film also serves as a metaphor for class relations, capitalist power over workers, and

the revolutionary capabilities of hybridization under capitalism (Myszka, 2021, p. 264). This film is a critique of the capitalist system, where there is a power imbalance between workers and the elite, how employers have a lot of control over the lives of workers, and how people on the other side are able to fight back this capitalist system. The critiques of capitalism and neoliberalism in this film while having a black director and actors make this a Black Marxist film. Riley's film was met with success with favorable views and being able to have success at the box office. This may contradict the point of suppression of Black Marxist films. However, many anti-capitalist films are popular because they are able to reveal inequities and provide a platform to critique capital dominance (Zhang, 2024, p. 262). Thus, anti-capitalist films have gained traction in the past due to how they resonate with audiences through revealing the problems in the system and being a rare voice in the system that critiques functions of capitalism. The popularity of these films are able to make profit for capitalist corporations in Hollywood even though they serve to critique them. In this sense, they only boost the prevalence of neoliberalism through their profitability (Rosen, 2022, p. 91). From this we see that anti-capitalist films ironically serve a capitalist function through providing the system profit in its success.

With the discussion of contradicting and resisting neoliberal ideas seen within Black Marxist films, this study looks to examine professional and audience perceptions of these films and also investigate why they are not seen as commonly in Hollywood.

2 Theoretical Framework

Outright censorship of Black Marxist films was commonplace throughout the twentieth century in the United States, as shown by the deliberate suppression of films like *The Spook that Sat by the Door* (1973) and *Strange Victory* (1948) (Levy & Reid, 1994, p. 1748). These films were taken out of theatres after they were released due to them being seen as controversial in their messaging or how their messages are presented. After the 1980s, Hollywood, like most major industries during this time, underwent a transformation spurred by new neoliberal market logic (Wayne, 2003, p. 82). One important thing to note about neoliberalism in the film industry is that the ideology has impacted the global production of films, reshaping cultural dynamics such as prioritizing global distinction over uniqueness within cultures (Ganti, 2019, p. 340). This indicates that neoliberal censorship happens through underfunding and misinterpretations in global reviews of films. From this indication, one can be able to analyze this conflict of neoliberalism taking control of what becomes the main idea within cultures. Many different theories will be incorporated into this study. Black Marxist theory, conflict theory, and media effects theory will be the essential theories.

One of the key ideas of neoliberalism is the system of self-regulation. It is the notion that a competitive market is a natural and obvious tool for resource allocation (White, 2008, p. 333). This researcher proposed that part of the neoliberal ideology is a framing that a competitive market is the preferred way of living for people's livelihoods. According to Aksakal (2024, p. 198), this is the way of mainstream economics, even though it ignores structural inequalities and depoliticizes economic decisions. This essentially means that this belief does not account for existing inequalities when it comes to race, gender, or economic status.

2.1 Media Effects Theory

Media effects theory suggests that mass media has a massive impact on individuals and society (Perse, 2001, p. 1). Research by Perse (2001, p. 1) suggests that mass media has the ability to impact what people learn, the socialization of children and adolescents, and public opinion formation. These researchers propose that anything produced within the American mass media sphere has a large influence on the culture and norms as a whole. This relates to neoliberal ideology seen in Hollywood films, because it is the dominant ideology framed within them. This may cause American audiences to internalize the beliefs of the ideology whether it is intentional

or unintentional, and in turn causes them to reject anything that goes against it. However, when using this theory, the evolution of media should be taken into account. Neuman & Guggenheim (2011, p. 174) created a six stage model of the evolution of media within media effects theory based on citation pattern analysis. Citation pattern analysis is a method that examines the frequency and patterns of citations in scholarly works (Ellegaard & Wallin, 2015, p. 1810). Within this six stage analysis, there is persuasion theories, active audience theories, social context theories, media and society theories, explanatory theories, and new media theories. During this study, only four of the six stages will be used. The first one will be persuasion theories which is focused on how media directly influences attitudes and behaviors, the second will be active audience theories which frame audiences as active participants in the media they consume, the third is media and society theories which focuses on societal impacts of media, and the last will be explanatory theories which use cognitive and psychological processes to understand how influences of media varies in different people (Neuman & Guggenheim, 2011, p. 174). Using these five stages will assist in analyzing Black Marxist films impact on modern audiences and society.

2.2 Conflict Theory

Conflict theory is a paradigm that examines how different groups in society compete for scarce resources, creating a society based on inequality (Simon, 2016, p. 2). From this we see that the competition for scarce resources creates an unequal society, resulting in suffering for the people within it. This theory examines different systems of oppression and how they interact with each other when it comes to race, health, class, and criminal justice. Conflict theory is essential to this research because of the analysis of Black Marxism and neoliberalism. Conflict theory relates to neoliberalism because neoliberal ideologies are able to create narratives of individual prosperity while hiding the exploitative aspects of it. Since the neoliberal idea of individual prosperity is common within films, analyzing films and audience reactions using conflict theory is important to this study.

Marxist conflict theory is of important significance within this study. Marxist conflict theory is within the study of conflict theory, however this topic in specific is characterized by conflicts between groups of opposite interests that are rooted in economic inequalities. This theory is focused on the conflicts and interactions between people of vastly different economic statuses, such as how owners of companies treat their workers. Marxist conflict theory is

important in analyzing film suppression and media power dynamics because it is able to analyze class struggles, the commodification of knowledge in cinema, and ideological arguments (Abbas, 2023, p. 13). This theory aids in analyzing why certain films are suppressed and seeing what ideas dominate media. Films are seen as representations of existing power structures, such as capitalism, inherently reinforcing it as an ideal system (McMahon, 2015, p. 2). When films are made to maintain usual ideas instead of challenge them, the other ideas may not be seen within film.

2.3 Communication Theory

Communication theory will also be implemented due to the study being centered on what people posted about the media they have consumed. Communication theory is a study that focuses on the many variations of complexities of human interaction, encompassing different traditions such as sociocultural, critical, sociopsychological, and several other approaches (Craig, 1999, p. 121). The researcher proposed that the theory analyzes different types of human interaction, which will be useful in analyzing how people interact on platforms such as Letterboxd and IMDb through seeing if these traditions are reflected in the reviews. It leads to exploring how people express their ideas about the films they watched.

Communication theory will be integrated for its insights into audience reception. There are complexities in how audiences interpret films, especially for audiences with varying backgrounds and experiences (Xie et al., 2022, p. 190). This correlates with the research question because since Letterboxd and IMDb are review platforms that anyone can join, many different people are going to be contributing their thoughts, reviews, and interpretations to certain films.

2.4 Black Marxist Theory

Black Marxism has the idea that western Marxism fails to account for the racial component of capitalism, which is essential when looking at power dynamics within the western world for the reason that so much of it was built through colonialism (Robinson, 1983, p. 313). This idea means that when studying Marxism which is a theory that views history as a class struggle and aims to deconstruct analyze capitalist dynamics and advocate a classless socialist society (Birchall, 1977, p.), it sometimes fails to see the racial aspects of capitalism that keeps certain groups less fortunate. With this idea being presented, Black Marxist theory integrates Marxism and decolonialization to analyze capitalism, colonialism, and racism as intertwined

modern problems of an oppressive system (Ndlovu Gatsheni & Ndlovu, 2022, p. 99). This relates to the study because the movies presented approach their stories and characters with this theory. Since these movies are able to do this, and this theory is not common within Hollywood, how audiences interact with it deserves to be studied.

2.5 Paradigms

The main paradigm Black Marxism overlaps in this study are conflict theory and media effects theory. The way conflict theory is a factor in this study is through groups not getting access to certain ideas. In this case, it is the general public that watches cinema, including those on Letterboxd and IMDb. Audiences do not have a lot of access to Black Marxist films, as they are not told in the mainstream due to neoliberal idea dominance. Mainstream media is complicit and knowledgeable of this dominance and is not interested in changing this status quo (Meyers, 2019, p. 3). From this, we see that mainstream media is knowledgeable of neoliberal dominance but will not change the status quo since it earns profit.

The role that media effects theory plays within this paradigm is its position that media influences public perception and social behaviors through agenda setting, framing, and manipulation (Chernov & McCombs, 2019, p. 63; Moy et al., p. 2). These researchers propose that media has the ability to influence society as a whole through how it presents its ideas. These processes are used within film, where neoliberal logic is the dominating idea. Media effects theory can aid in understanding why certain reviews are negative by analyzing them in the context of an industry that promotes mostly neoliberal logics.

My hypothesis is that reviews that are less than favorable do not like these ideas portrayed in the movie rather than the movie itself, while more favorable reviews like the movie and the ideas portrayed. This would be the same amongst professional critics. I believe this because people tend to look more favorably at media that affirms their point of view which leads to polarization and dislike of media with a different view (Gvirsman, 2014, p. 74). Thus, if media is able to display a certain message, and someone agrees with it, they are more likely to look at it more favorably. To frame this within the context of the research question, if reviewers agree with the messages of the films, they will write more positive reviews.

3 Research Design and Methods

This research aims to understand how people on Letterboxd and IMDb view Black Marxist films. Qualitative research will be used through a thematic analysis of online content on website. The analysis is guided through looking at which narratives about the themes are present on Letterboxd and IMDb. This chapter explains the sampling strategy that is used to collect the data. The method of analysis and the credibility of it are also discussed.

3.1 Choice of Method

The reason why it is essential to use a qualitative method is going to be used to conduct the analysis because it can offer insights into how people experience and shape their reality (Mistry, 2012, p. 521). It is emphasized that qualitative analysis shows how people shape or view the reality around them. This approach allows researchers to find new themes beyond the predetermined research codes found in quantitative research (Williams & Moser, 2019, p. 45). This means qualitative analysis is able to delve into unexplored themes that are not seen in typical quantitative research. Since this study looks to see how audiences react to Black Marxist films, it makes the most sense to approach the subject in a manner that gives possibility for new concepts from the data.

Qualitative content analysis in specific is a method for interpreting qualitative data that includes cultural texts and documents to get insights into social worlds and ideologies (Wright, 2017, p. 2). It requires rule-oriented analysis and the use of categories while integrating qualitative and quantitative steps (Mayring, 2015, p. 365). This splitting of categories in cultural texts to gain insight into social worlds is essential to the study of how audiences view of Black Marxist films.

The data in this study consists of (general audiences) and professional reviews on Letterboxd and IMDb. The importance of using these reviews was multifaceted. Movie reviews have the ability to be a source of data to understand audience perceptions on movies (Xia, 2024, p. 113). Observing this impact when it comes to Black Marxist films creates the ability to see if there is a negative or positive consensus on the ideas within them. Film reviews are also used as evidence of the interactive and interpretive film viewing process (Gee et al., 2012, p. 19). Therefore, it is established film reviews are able to reveal certain relationships between films, the characters within them, and the reviewers. Observing film reviews of Black Marxist films gives a method of seeing the relationship between them.

The dataset is analyzed using qualitative content analysis guided by Vaismoradi et al's., (2016, p. 100) conceptual clarification and step-by-step method. This method helps in developing themes in qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis (Vaismoradi et al., 2016, p. 101). The principles of this analysis include category development and theme development (Özden, 2024, p. 66). The benefits of this type of analysis is the adaptability to many variations of research contexts while also providing critical appreciation of content (White & Marsh, 2006, p. 23). This means this analysis will be able to apply to this unique study without many biases.

3.2 Sampling and data collection

For this analysis, 20 Letterboxd reviews and 20 IMDb reviews of varying ratings, where 10 on IMDb will be professional (metacritic) ratings will be used. The ratings will have to be 300 words or more in order to get comprehensive data on the opinions of the movie. Since some of these films do not have as much exposure to the public, this balance between Letterboxd and IMDb reviews may vary. This variation could be due to factors such as reviews over 300 words not being available after a certain point. However, it will be made sure that there are still 40 reviews in total that have 300 or more words in each of them. The movies selected at for the review analysis are *Sorry to Bother You*, *The Spook Who Sat by the Door*, *Babylon*, and *Bamboozled*. Since the backgrounds of the people on these websites are unknown unless explicitly stated, this will be noted as one of the limitations in this study. It will be explored if personal politics influence reviews on these websites, or if it is just an opinion of other factors such as actors, stories, or characters. This will be done through seeing what is said in each review and coding their main points about a film. The sampling and data collection also entails looking at the difference between how professional and general audiences vary in their opinion of the films. This will help in analyzing how professional reviews and general audience reviews differ.

The reviews are selected on the basis of purposive sampling. This basis was chosen because they are able to ensure the reviews are relevant and representative throughout the platform (Palinkas et al., 2015, p. 537). In this case, it will be reviewers selected based on the word count of their reviews (300 + words), inclusion of films with Black Marxist films, and the platform (Letterboxd or IMDb). Common sentiments in the reviews of the films will be deducted. After these sentiments are deducted, each one will be labeled in excel. After they are labeled, at each review will be analyzed to see if each of the sentiments are present. If a sentiment is present the review, it will be labeled as the number "1." If a sentiment is not present,

it will be labeled “0.” This would be a method of quantifying qualitative content. When looking through the reviews, I will be looking for terms such as ‘marxist’, ‘black’, ‘capitalist’, ‘anti-capitalist’, ‘racist’, or ‘culture’. because they relate to the ideas of Black Marxism which gives them the ability to relate to the study. I will also look to diversify my review pool, looking at possible reviews in different languages and from different countries to see the sentiments from a perspective outside of the United States. Even though the United States is multicultural in itself, a perspective from outside the country make give insight into what audiences from different parts of the world think of Black Marxism. The IMDb professional reviewers will have their country labeled with their name if they are not from the United States. I will also be choosing based on like count because likes are an indicator of how many people agree with the sentiments of the review. Key quotes from the reviews will be added in order to be representative of the true sentiment of them. The reviews can be from any time period since the film’s release as the study looks at how audiences have interacted with these themes in general rather than a certain period of time.

Screengrabs of the selected reviews were made and compiled into one pdf file because they would be able to show the reviews, the ratings of the films, the date of the reviews, and how many people liked and interacted with the post. The compiled pdf with the reviews was imported into Atlas.ti which is a software used for coding qualitative data.

The unit of analysis in this study will be Letterboxd and IMDb reviews, with each review analyzed requiring 300 words or more. These reviews will be coded and analyze the main points and perspectives from the writers of these reviews will be analyzed. The reason that Letterboxd and IMDb reviews are used is because there are statistics available on them that gives knowledge about how many people on the platform have seen the films, and how many chose to comment on them. The reason that the reviews have to be a minimum of 300 words is so there is a comprehensive idea of the thoughts of the reviewer. 20 reviews on Letterboxd and 20 from IMDb will be used for each movie. This would entail coding 40 reviews for each movie for a total of 120 reviews of 300 words or more. 10 of the reviews on IMDb will be professional reviews as IMDb divides general audience reviews and professional reviews unlike Letterboxd. Since there is a different demographic on Letterboxd and IMDb, this will show a difference between the audiences on the platforms. Letterboxd tends to have a younger audience while IMDb has an older demographic. Since some of these movies are not as popular, there may be

limited reviews of 300 words or more on Letterboxd or IMDb. The method used to compensate for this issue is getting all reviews of 300 or more words on a certain website and making sure the amount of reviews gotten on the other site results in 40 total reviews. Since both websites use a rating system with Letterboxd using a 5 star one while IMDb's is out of ten, using reviews of differing star ratings will be used. Letterboxd and IMDb are within the inclusion criteria because they are both popular review websites for films. IMDb also includes professional reviews and general audience reviews. For the exclusion criteria, regular reviews websites are valuable but not as important to this criterion, as news reviews websites have their own biases which is not the topic of this study. Popular reviewer websites such as Rotten Tomatoes will not be used because these websites tend to have shorter reviews than 300 words. The reviews that are included will concern movies with Black Marxist ideas.

3.3 Sensitizing concepts

In order to explore the sub-questions:

1. What are the differences between the reviews of professional critics and general audiences in this study?
2. What role does neoliberal ideology in mainstream film play in people's perception of films with Black Marxists ideologies as expressed on these websites?

The concepts within the theoretical framework of this thesis were operationalized into a deductive coding frame, where the categories were identified and operational definitions for each concept were determined. The categories were identified through the themes of the films and their reviews. This is used to figure out the themes of the films the reviewers interacted with and commented on, as seen in the table below.

Table 3.3

Concept	Sub-Concept	Description (Reviewer Interaction)
Media Effects Theory	Personal Perspective	Interpretation depends on personal background, beliefs, and experiences.
	Active Viewing	Audiences respond by interpreting, questioning, or identifying with content.

Concept	Sub-Concept	Description (Reviewer Interaction)
Conflict Theory	Shaping Beliefs	Films shape worldviews and can challenge or reinforce social norms.
	Structural Inequality	Films reveal systemic racism and class oppression in institutions like media and law enforcement.
	Power Struggles	Marginalized characters resist dominant systems, showing the fight for freedom or justice.
Marxist Conflict Theory	Ideological Hegemony	Mainstream values are critiqued through exaggeration or inversion to expose inequality.
	Class Struggle	Highlights exploitation and class tension through stories of labor and resistance.
	Commodification of Resistance	Capitalism absorbs and sells rebellion, identity, and trauma.
	Suppression of Radical Ideas	Radical messages are often excluded by the industry, limiting critique.
Communication Theory	Sociocultural Traditions	Films use cultural signs and language to build identity and meaning.
	Critical Communication	Storytelling is used to expose contradictions in dominant cultural norms.
	Reception Variability	Viewer interpretation varies depending on background and perspective.
Black Marxist Theory	Racialized Capitalism	Capitalism is portrayed as tied to racial inequality, showing overlapping struggles.
	Decolonial Critique	Western storytelling methods are challenged and reimagined.
	Absence in Mainstream Media	These stories are rarely shown in popular film, highlighting ideological limits in Hollywood.

In order to explore the sub-question “what are the differences between the reviews of professional critics and general audiences?”, this research takes note of the sentiment of the reviews and how the reviewers rated the film within the platform’s rating system. This research starts by building on the sub-concepts of Media Effects Theory as seen in the table, as well as Reception Variability as seen in the Communication Theory sub-concepts. To explore the sub question “what role does neoliberal ideology in mainstream film play in people’s perception of films with Black Marxists ideologies as expressed on these websites.,” the sub-concepts in the Media Effects Theory are a factor, as well as Reception Variability which is most important in this sub-question as it explores decoding of films shaped by previous audience positions.

3.4 Method of analysis

The reviews in this dataset are analyzed using the method highlighted by by Vaismoradi et al., (2016 p. 101) for theme development in both Thematic Analysis and Qualitative Content Analysis. The method guides researchers in understanding how themes are developed and making sure they are meaningful. Firstly, the key elements of the method highlight the analytical importance of the role of themes in qualitative analysis which serve as the main outcomes in the data (Vaismoradi et al., 2016, p. 103). Secondly, the method clarifies the distinction of themes and categories where categories are descriptive groupings of data and the themes provide deeper insights through subgroups (Vaismoradi et al., 2016, p. 105). Thirdly, the distinction is made that groups and themes apply to different levels of content, where themes are more up to interpretation (Vaismoradi et al., 2016, p. 105). The following paragraph explains what each step of the method entails and how they will be implemented in Letterboxd and IMDb reviews. The key concepts within this study would be black films with Marxist themes and the audiences’ perceptions, responses, and views towards the specific film.

The way of measuring the data for thematic analysis will be through the method of Clarke and Braun (2006, p. 297) which are familiarization with the data, generating codes, combining the codes into themes, reviewing the themes, determining the significance of the themes, and reporting the findings.

The familiarization of the data will be recognizing key words shown in all the reviews, generating codes, seeing common themes and messages in the reviews from the coding, review the themes and their significance to views on Black Marxism, and reporting the findings. This

study will be deductive because it is focused on a question of how reviewers engage with Black Marxism in films.

This method allows having a detailed examination of the opinion of the reviews and their ideas in relation to the research question.

The first step is data familiarization which requires reading through transcripts multiple times and identify impressions and patterns. (Vaismoradi et al., 2016, p. 103). In my data, the reviews will have to be read for the films in order to see what viewers think of the movie and what are the common critiques, ideas, or sentiments in their reviews. The second step requires highlighting significant words or phrases and labeling the data with descriptive codes through deductive or inductive reasoning (Vaismoradi et al., 2016, p. 105). Deductive reasoning will be used as there are codes or theories that might emerge in these reviews. The third step requires searching for categories and themes through grouping similar codes together where in Qualitative Content Analysis the categories are more descriptive and more interpretive in thematic analysis (Vaismoradi et al., 2016, p. 105). Categories will be made from the reviews and searching for the themes within them to describe the reviewer sentiment. The fourth step is checking if the data in each category and theme coincide and seeing the relationship between each theme (Vaismoradi et al., 2016, p. 106). This requires seeing common sentiments in the reviews and group them in order to explore commonalities in themes and categories. The fifth step is defining and naming the themes extracted from the data and exploring the importance of it (Vaismoradi et al., 2016, p. 106). This means labeling the themes gotten from these reviews, highlighting their importance, and defining them is key. The sixth step is producing the report which includes using the themes to find the narrative of the findings and explaining how the themes relate to research questions and the (Vaismoradi et al., 2016, p.100-110). The themes within the reviews will be imported into an excel sheet, highlighting the sentiment and score of the reviews, and showing representative quotes from each review in order to explore the main sentiment of each one. It will be explained how the themes extracted relate to the research question of “How do professional critics and general audiences on Letterboxd and IMDb engage with Black Marxist films?” and the sub questions of:

1. What are the differences between the reviews of professional critics and general audiences?”
2. What role does neoliberal ideology in mainstream film play in people’s perception of films with Black Marxists ideologies as expressed on these websites?

through the analyzation of themes extracted in the data.

3.5 Credibility and ethical considerations

Doing a thematic analysis on themes like this requires reflexive thinking, specifically in epistemological and ontological standpoints (Hole, 2023, p. 371). This means previous biases have to be removed when doing a thematic analysis in order to get the most objective standpoint. However, just because there is reflexive thinking in a study does not guarantee it will be completely without bias (Rettke et al., 2018, p. 490). Thus, it will have to be taken into account within this study in order to know it is not completely without bias. The bias also has to be unknown or incorporated into the study (Freshwater, 2005, p. 311). This is to ensure that the research is fully reliable for the reader. It is also important to note that a researcher being a specialist on the topic can lead to potential bias. However, it also leads to more in depth knowledge on the subject.

Doing Qualitative Content Analysis requires trustworthiness through scrutinizing each phase of the process (Elo et al., 2014, p. 2). This means every part of the data collection to the reporting of results requires scrutinizing for any possible inconsistencies. The credibility of a study also depends on the interplay between the researcher and the participants in the study (Hellberg & Öberg Tuleus, 2025, p. 1). In this study, the interplay will be between me and the reviewers. I will be the one that is choosing the reviews to analyze, which may cause me to exempt certain viewpoints from the study. However, basing the choice of review on how many likes it has may be a good gauge into a review and if people agree with it. This method unfortunately exempts reviewers without a lot of engagement in their posts and in turn does not give them a voice. This should be considered within the study in order for the reader to understand that every opinion may not have been accounted for, but with a sample size of 20 for each platform, it is deemed sufficiently within requirements for this study.

These methods of analyses have their strengths and weaknesses. Choosing a qualitative method allows an understanding of how the reviewers on Letterboxd and IMDb engage with the films on a deeper level than a quantitative method would (Cañas-Bajo et al., 2019 p. 54). Analyzing online data also means that the writer of the thesis does not have to interfere with the content of these reviews. However, one of the weaknesses of this analysis is that Letterboxd and IMDb are pseudo anonymous spaces which makes it difficult to collect demographic information on these platforms. This lack of demographic information means the researcher has to consider

the representativeness and generalizability of their sample (Kamper, 2020, p. 725). For this thesis, it is not possible to generalize the findings outside of these platforms. However, the findings are still able to show insights into how people on Letterboxd and IMDb interact with films that have black Marxist films. The result of this analysis is shared in the next chapter of the thesis.

In order to move on to the results, the positionality of the author should be disclosed in order to explore how the identity and experiences influence the work and enhance data validity and theoretical contributions (Massoud, 2022, p. 65). I am an African American, so I have experienced systemic racism as discussed in the research to various extents, as well as unfair wages working under American corporations, and have studied film and have had to analyze the themes within them for my bachelor's in media studies. This connection to the research has been able to assist me interpret the data as I had some familiarity with the topics discussed on Letterboxd and IMDb. However, during the research I made sure to ensure the research was not limited by my bias on the subject.

It should be stated that even though the bias is limited, there is potential for it to be present. Bias can be present in selection of themes, review interpretation, and how the findings are framed. Another weakness is popular voices being amplified which may not give unpopular opinions a lot of attention, making potential key points be lost in the study. One key weakness to note is also a lack of demographic information which limits the ability to observe how certain social groups respond to the films.

The weaknesses in relation to the analysis have to be noted as well. Since there is not a standardized coding scheme of thematic analysis, it makes the study mostly up to researcher interpretation. A variation researchers may be able to identify different themes in the dataset using thematic analysis, making reliability and validity be questioned. The sample size may also be limited as there are only 20 reviews from each platform. This limits the range of views and opinions that can come from the reviews of films on these platforms.

4 Results and discussion

The thematic and qualitative content analysis on the 160 reviews seen and linked on Letterboxd and IMDb resulted in different thematic categories being distinguished among them. Letterboxd and IMDb prove to be places where people share their thoughts and feelings about films and their themes. There is a broad selection of thoughts and impressions of these films spanning across different time periods.

After analyzing the codes, seven main themes could be distinguished amongst the four films: Identity and Representation, Media and Cultural Critique, Historical and Social Context, Political Agency and Resistance, Labor and Capitalism, Film Form and Aesthetics, and Emotional and Personal Impact. The overview of these themes and the sub themes can be found in table 4.1. This chapter shows the patterns in sentiment and analysis of reviewers Letterboxd and IMDb when writing about these Black Marxist films. The patterns are interpreted using the concepts related to Media Effects Theory, Conflict Theory, Marxist Conflict Theory, Communication Theory, and Black Marxist Theory.

Table 4.1

Theme	Definition	Sub-themes
1. Identity and Representation	The films explore how the themes of race, gender, and identity are constructed, represented, and experienced.	Black identity and representation Gender representation Personal identity in social context. Homophobia Cultural expression
2. Media and Cultural Critique	The films are a critique of mainstream media and common cultural narratives through satire and subversion to challenge the dominant ideologies.	Media critique Satire and subversion Cultural relevance and messaging

Theme	Definition	Sub-themes
3. Historical and Social Context	Historical references and systemic issues help connect past injustices to modern day problems.	Historical reference/context Tokenism Legacy of racial and social systems Police Brutality White Society Critique Systemic Racism Resistance and agency
4. Political Agency and Resistance	Themes of resistance, radicalism, and activism show a resistance of oppressive systems and a desire for social change.	Radicalism Black militancy Activism critique Friendship & conflict Labor and work
5. Labor and Capitalism	The films make commentaries on labor exploitation, class struggles, and economic struggles, framing them as key parts of racial oppression.	Capitalism critique Assimilation vs. rebellion Economic struggle
6. Film Form and Aesthetics	Commentary on the visual and narrative style of the films, focusing on the technicality or a lack thereof.	Visual style Cinematic technique Form/aesthetics Art and originality Emotional impact
7. Emotional and Personal Impact	Shows how films emotionally and personally affect the viewer.	Execution Sentiment (positive, negative, mixed)

4.1 Identity and Representation

Identity and representation are the first of the seven themes. The themes of identity and representation are important in relation to Black Marxism because cultural identity is crucial for struggles concerning liberation of black people from systemic structures posed against them (Ainousah, 2023 p. 13). The reviews reported how the themes of race, gender, and identity are constructed and experienced within the concepts of the films *Bamboozled*, *Sorry to Bother You*, *The Spook who Sat by The Door*, and *Babylon*. These reviews also reported how the portrayal of these themes addressed dominant narratives within society whether it was reinforcing or rejecting them. For the reviewers, identity within these films was seen as a political and cultural lens to interpret the films, as well as a way of advancing the narratives or character arcs

One key feature of the theme is the representation of Black identity, where each of the films frame it as a multifaceted experience shaped by social systems in power. For example, in the reviews of *Bamboozled*, many of the critics noted the use of blackface and minstrel imagery was able to satirically show the distortion of black culture and how it can be commodified in American media. As seen in the Key Quotes in Table 6.4, one general audience reviewer on Letterboxd wrote:

"It's ultimately a jab at the money-grubbing Hollywood, and the faceless crowd hiding behind their invisible "black face" who feed off black misery as entertainment, whether knowingly or not."

This quote is an example of how viewers see the film as an exposé of how people view black identity in pop culture in a historical and current context.

For the reviews of *Babylon*, critics said that identity was tied to cultural expression as seen in the movie, with the diasporic Black British experience being emphasized. Reviewers saw the sound system culture theme in the film as a representation of resilience and identity formation battling systemic racism. As seen in the Key Quotes in Table 6.2, one reviewer stated: "Attack the sound and you attack the community."

This review represents a sentiment that majority of both general audience and professional reviewers have which is that cultural expression is not just aesthetic, but instead political.

Reviewers also reported the gender commentary within each film. The films that came out before the 2000s were critiqued more in their depiction of gender representation and gender

roles. For example, as seen in the Key Quotes in Table 6.3, *The Spook who Sat by the Door* was seen as a film with dated representation with one reviewer saying:

“The gender depictions are dated and a little cringeworthy so just enjoy the colorful spectacle and stomach it if you can.”

This highlights that even though these films are seen as adversaries to conventional media through their politics, some conventional ideas can be reinforced.

One other recurring theme is personal identity in a societal context. Through all of the films, reviewers commented on the societal pressure the characters in the film had to face. These characters had to mask themselves or perform identities in order to advance themselves in society. In the reviews for *The Spook Who Sat by the Door*, the critics addressed the protagonist’s performance of fake loyalty to the state to be accepted while secretly working to empower the black community. In *Sorry to Bother You*, critics reported the protagonist’s use of the white voice as way of masking identity in order to access power. They also address how this masking causes the protagonist to lose a bit of his identity through having to mask so much. For example, one reviewer said:

“In this sense, although the concept of "white voice" does have a practical function within the narrative, its most salient characteristic is as an object of allegorical satire, a hyperbolic caricature of what African Americans need to do to survive in the Caucasian bro-culture corporate ranks of Silicon Valley; they must literally relinquish part of the self and pretend to be something Other.”

This highlights the fact that reviewers saw the idea that identity masking can be useful for people trying to get higher in power structures but also can cause them to lose parts of their identity because of it.

This theme of personal identity in a societal context can be explored through the concept of project identities. The concept of project identities is the collective effort to redefine social structures, sometimes through resistance (Smith, 2005, p. 293). Reviewers of *Babylon* and *The Spook Who Sat by the Door* acknowledged that these films showed characters and communities that resisted societal norms and assimilation to them, maintaining their own cultural autonomy. As seen in the Key Quotes in Table 6.2, one reviewer of *Babylon* said:

"Babylon is about a group of entertainers trying to withstand the tough oppressed times in London, while trying to maintain their integrity as black folk."

This review shows the sentiment that resistance against harmful power structure through maintaining one’s own identity is a prevalent topic within the films.

In order to summarize, the *Identity and Representation* theme shows how reviewers saw these films as a way to reflect on how identity fits in with power structures. Since these themes are crucial to Black Marxism, it was seen how audiences on Letterboxd and IMDb interacted with this aspect of the topic. Since majority of the reviews were mixed-positive to positive, and the like count for them was substantial when they were accessible. For this reason, I can conclude that professional critics and general audiences on Letterboxd and IMDb meaningfully engage with the idea of identity and representation within Black Marxism. The reviewers reported certain themes in the movie pertaining to identity being deeply political, contextual, and performative. Many also addressed how the portrayals of identity within the films rejected or promoted existing narratives that shape the understanding of race, culture, and gender in the real world.

From the analysis, it becomes clear that the sociocultural traditions and reception variability sub-concepts within Communication Theory as seen in table 3.3 above are dominant within this theme. The sociocultural traditions according to Kejapriya & Prabahaar (2023, p. 325) are important in this theme for the fact that the reviews address the cultural codes, social language, and identity construction in the films in order to critique them. Reception variability according to Livingstone (2008, p. 2) shows the audiences' different interpretations of identity due to what they already previously believe, which is why each movie has reviews where identity is interpreted from different lenses.

4.2 Media and Culture Critique

Media and Culture Critique is the second of the seven themes. This theme emerged in the Letterboxd and IMDb reviews of *Babylon*, *The Spook Who sat by the Door*, *Bamboozled*, and *Sorry to Bother You*, where both professional and general audience reviewers thought the films were critiquing the institutions that shape media and culture through ideological manipulation

One example of this is the reviewer perception on *Bamboozled*, a film that is a commentary of media commodifying black suffering and promoting stereotypes for profit. Many of the general audiences and professional critics commented that the film's use of minstrel imagery not only served to represent the complicity of media in reinforcing racist ideas, but also to make the viewer uncomfortable in their complicity. One viewer noted:

"A film radically uncomfortable in its display of stereotypes, leaving no one unscathed (we are all the incarnate cliché of someone else), an unpleasant illustration of why television is a lost cause."

This shows that audiences and critics recognized the film as a critique of the historical and current depictions in media, also serving to make the viewer uncomfortable in this reality.

Reviewers of *Sorry to Bother You* recognized the film's themes of commodified labor, alienation of working class, and exploitation of workers. This coincides with the sub-concept of class struggle as seen in Marxist Conflict Theory as seen in Table 3.3 above. The sub-concept addresses how labor, ownership, and class mobility are shown through exploitation and resistance in media (Olufemi, 2023 p. 84). The viewers identified with this theory and meaningfully engage with it. The viewers commented on how the film used surrealism to depict economic exploitation and the racialized dynamics of labor. This theme of economic exploitation and the racial dynamics in it is a sub-concept in Black Marxist Theory called racialized capitalism as seen in Table 3.3 above. Many of the reviewers saw a correlation between race and capitalist structures as portrayed within this film. They also noted how the film used absurdism to represent how capitalism uses marginalized bodies for profit. As seen in the Key Quotes in Table 6.5, one reviewer said:

"'Sorry to Bother You' mixes the comic, absurdist and socially critical in a delicious cocktail, both entertaining and disrupting. An indictment of the work culture, white privilege and especially the (surgous) system."

This shows that audiences and critics recognized the film for its unconventional but resonant way of critiquing the capitalist system, making the film unique and memorable.

In the film *Babylon*, professional critics and general audiences alike saw a cultural critique portrayed in the film through focusing on the themes of racial harassment and working-class life in Thatcher-era Britain. They saw the film's critique of state violence and cultural exclusion through portraying the structural marginalization of Black British youth and their resistance. As seen in the Key Quotes in Table 6.2, one reviewer says:

"Unlike a plethora of revisionist depictions of youth culture, *Babylon* captures the zeitgeist of the era, avoiding the grip of nostalgia, instead providing a harrowing yet ultimately uplifting account of a cultural and spiritual triumph over the adversities of poverty and overt racism (institutional and physical) that were still so ingrained in Thatcher's England."

Many of the reviews addressed the film's critique of state violence and how it affected the characters in the film.

Across all four films, most of the critics deeply engaged with the political implications of media and culture seen in these films. This suggests that professional critics and general audiences on these platforms engage with the media and cultural critique aspect of Black Marxism positively, showing they are not consumed passively but as ideological mediums.

To summarize, Media and Cultural Critique show that general audiences and critics on Letterboxd and IMDb engage with Black Marxist films as works that dismantle dominant ideologies seen in the world. This shows the four films ability to make people reflect about broader structures of media and power.

This exemplifies the active viewing sub concept within Media Effects Theory seen in Table 3.3 above as portrayed by Livingstone (2008, p. 3). The states that through audiences being able to actively respond to content with interpretation, resistance, or identifications (Livingstone, 2008, p. 3). It also shows the sub-concept of power struggles within Conflict Theory as seen in Table 3.3 above as the conflicts in the four films demonstrate the real-life tensions between institutional control and individual or collective liberation (Vaid, 2024, p. 100). The recognition of this theme is essential to Black Marxist thought, as it addresses corporate power and influence on culture.

4.3 Historical and Social Context

The third of the seven themes that emerged from the reviews of *Bamboozled*, *Sorry to Bother You*, *Spook Who Sat by the Door*, and *Babylon* is Historical and Societal Context. Reviewers to actively engaged with the film's commentaries on historical and current social conditions that affect black communities.

Reviewers saw the themes of racial capitalism and systemic inequality in the films and connected them to historical methods of oppression and resistance. This notion is called structural inequality. The notion was that law enforcement, corporate, and media institutions use methods of race and class control. This was especially seen in the reviews of *The Spook Who Sat by the Door*, where the viewers saw that the Black Power organizing and civil rights activism was aligned with the historical context of the 1970s. The viewers also saw the 1970s context as essential to understanding the revolutionary political implication of the films. One viewer noted:

"Few films of that era, or any other, captured any meaningful part of the essence of a black revolutionary struggle."

A lot of reviews like this highlighted an understanding of the film's historical relevance as a reaction to systemic state violence. It is also seen as a product of this state violence showing political resistance in it through black revolutionary ideals. This message is also seen in Table 3.3 above as a sub-concept called power struggles, where characters confront dominant systems to achieve liberation (Vaid, 2024, p. 98)

Babylon also was commented about in a similar vein in the reviews. Reviewers noticed how the film was a depiction of being black in a British postcolonial era. They saw that during this era as depicted in the movie; Black British people were more subject to police harassment and economic instability. As seen in the Key Quotes in Table 6.4, many of the viewers saw it as a relevant lens to view how Black British people are treated with one saying:

"*Babylon* sheds light and perspective on the struggles that the black community went through in London during the late seventies, under Thatcher rule and the ever watchful, ignorant eyes of a scarily large white nationalist percentage of the general public and authorities."

A common sentiment amongst viewers reflected in this quote is that they see the film as historically grounded and very relevant in discussions about treatment of black communities.

In the reviews of *Bamboozled*, many of the reviewers mentioned the film's use of blackface and minstrel shows as a commentary on how this thought to be lost parts of media are recreated in current landscapes. The reviewers consistently mentioned slavery and Jim Crow as important to the film's context. As seen in the Key Quotes in Table 6.4, Professional critics in particular saw the importance of connecting this film to how black people have been portrayed in media throughout history with one reviewer saying:

"It suggests that the craze for acting black (the figurative putting on of blackface) has never been more pronounced than it is today with the rise of the "hip-hop nation," as hordes of white teenagers adopt black fashion and street argot."

This sentiment amongst the reviewers is that blackface and minstrelsy is not gone but instead recreated making the film's message quite relevant.

In reviews for *Sorry to Bother You*, viewers resonated with the film's setting and characters and related it to real world economic exploitation, labor exploitation, and racialized class struggle.

The reviews used real world events such as Amazon warehouse exploitation in order to make parallels with the film's themes. As seen in the Key Quotes in Table 6.5, one reviewer noted: "Everything works so perfectly because of how wonderfully Boots Riley both mixes in the surreal comedy with issues that pervade the world in which we live in, but that's just the very least of what makes this off-the-walls comedy stand out as much as it does."

This quote represents a sentiment amongst reviewers that the film is fiction but is deeply rooted in realism when it comes to its commentary.

To summarize, Historical and Social Context shows that the professional critics and general audiences on IMDb and Letterboxd do not approach Marxist films as abstract but instead grounded in reality. Many of the reviews connect the narratives of the films to the past and present black struggle. This shows that the view these films as an avenue for consciousness in how exploitative and racist systems operate and how they can be resisted against. These films are seen as a way of uplifting oppressed voices and bringing more exposure to structural injustice that is not seen in many films.

This shows that the viewers on these platforms see these Black Marxist films as works that depict black struggle in a historical and current context and that also reflect reality even though they are works of fiction. The view that the films were reflections of historical and present realities is what Moemka (1988, p. 2) addresses in the of media effects theory subconcept called shaping beliefs in Table 3.3 above. This theme states that media shapes societal norms and also reflects real-world power structures (Moemka 1998, p. 2)

4.4 Political Agency and Resistance

The fourth of the seven themes that emerged from the reviews of *Bamboozled*, *Sorry to Bother You*, *Spook Who Sat by the Door*, and *Babylon* is Political Agency and Resistance. In both general audience and professional reviews on Letterboxd and IMDb, a common sentiment amongst the viewers were seeing the films as narratives of rebellion and resistance from systemic oppression. Many of them also saw how the protagonists and communities in the films opposed the oppressive structures put against them.

In reviews *The Spook Who Sat by the Door*, the viewers discussed the protagonist's role of being a CIA agent and a revolutionary organizer as a key representation of Black agency in oppressive systems. The protagonist used institutional knowledge from the CIA and weaponized

it against the system, which was seen as a metaphor for subversive empowerment by viewers. As seen in the Key Quotes in Table 6.3, one reviewer said:

“The most dangerous thing to the white ruling class is a band of Black people coming together and plotting, planning, and organizing... a spark will emerge, and it scares them.”

This quote represents a common sentiment on how the reviewers see the concept of power struggles as seen in Conflict Theory, where characters in the film look to dismantle dominant systems (Vaid, 2024, pp 98). To the reviewers, these films are more than just works of fiction but radical interventions in a media landscape dominated by other ideologies.

In reviews of *Babylon*, the viewers saw the symbolism of sound system culture in the film as important for the characters’ survival and a means for solidarity against oppressive systems. Reviewers saw the gatherings and expressions of frustrations through the music as an act of protest against the police. As seen in the Key Quotes in Table 6.2, one reviewer noted: "Music underlines the whole film...The importance of music and the community and rivalries it creates is so vivid."

This quote shows a common sentiment amongst the reviewers which is seeing the importance of music for the community in this film. This sentiment is reflected in the sociocultural tradition element seen in Communication Theory, where expression can be seen as oppositional but also have the ability to construct identity.

For reviewers of *Bamboozled*, they noticed a complex version of resistance with this film. One major point that some of the critics made was that the dark ending of the film represented how major forms of rebellion can also be commodified. This is aligned with a sub concept of Black Marxist Theory called the commodification of resistance where forms of resistance are reformed and repackaged into consumable products under capitalism. Many critics also tended to report the film’s satire and grotesque imagery as a form of using the oppressor’s logic against themselves through showing it harshly. As seen in the Key Quotes in Table 6.4, one critic said: "The film is all about appropriation, and how white audiences really want to see (and control) Blackness, and it is deeply uncomfortable."

This is a representation of how the resistance in the movie was shown through making uncomfortable imagery of the reality of how black people are portrayed in media. Many reviewers noticed this and saw it as a sign to be more critical in how groups are represented in media. This aligns with critical communication as seen in Table 3.3 above, because the film

exposed the contradictions in how race is viewed in media for these audiences, and in turn makes them question cultural norms (Taylor, 1998, p. 36).

Sorry to Bother You was a film that reviewers noted for its explicit imagery of labor organizing and anti-capitalist rebellion. Many reviewers saw the film as a display of how workers are put into complicity under exploitative structures because they do not have the resources or tools to be non-complicit. Reviewers also saw the film as empowering through its showing of collective action, with the movie showing an uprising against an exploitative system. As seen in the Key Quotes in Table 6.5, one reviewer said:

“Riley is a veteran political protestor, a Chomsky-literate agitator, who is here positing that the most significant divide in the US is not between white and black, it is between those with money and those without. Suggesting that the desire to cross this divide can lead to a herd mentality, the film argues that the labour force must never forget their collective strength, and must never turn on one another, as in such a situation, management will use workers like horses.”

This comment reflects the class struggle and political consciousness sub concepts within Black Marxist Theory. These themes are something many of the reviewers noted in their comments, making the sentiment that it was a representation of organization for labor rights.

In summary, the theme of Political Agency and Resistance shows that the reviewers on Letterboxd and IMDb see these Black Marxist films as representations of realistic visions of resistance to inspire change. Resistance in these films were seen through music, violence, culture, and labor organization. Viewers on these platforms saw these films as not just critiques but calls for action that encourage viewers to think critically about systems and resist these systems. This engagement reflects active audience as seen in Table 3.3 above, where audiences found meaning in the film through seeing them as calls of action to resist oppressive systems (Livingstone 2008, p. 3).

These themes align with many sub-concepts in Table 3.3 above, particularly within Conflict Theory and Marxist Conflict Theory. It aligns with the sub-concept of class struggle because these films frame economic inequality as a theme shown through the exploitation it causes and the different forms of resistance that come from it. From the sentiments of the reviews, these films also align with the racialized capitalism sub concept of Black Marxist Theory because they present capitalism as a system tied to racial hierarchy, where black characters must navigate the intersection of class and racial struggle.

4.5 Labor and Capitalism

Labor and Capitalism is the fifth of the seven themes that was consistently engaged with in the reviews of *Sorry to Bother You*, *Bamboozled*, *The Spook Who Sat by the Door*, and *Babylon*. The professional critics and general audiences on Letterboxd and IMDb saw how each film showed how exploitative capitalist systems are and the way they exploit black labor in specific.

Sorry to Bother You in particular made reviewers reflect on labor exploitation and how race intertwines with it. Many of the reviewers saw the parallels between the film's portrayal of an exploitative company called "WorryFree" with real world companies such as Amazon or UPS. This aligns with a sub concept of Marxist Conflict Theory (as seen in Table 3.3 above) called class struggle, where viewers saw the film's narrative was about systemic labor exploitation rather than just one character arc. As seen in the Key Quotes in Table 6.5, one reviewer said:

"The entire idea of worryfree resonates very strongly with the lived experiences of so many workers, but like, i feel like the movie could've been a lot more explicit about the very intentional way the same capitalists who use workers like slave labor create the "worry" that corporations like worryfree supposedly free us from."

This represents the common sentiment among the reviewers of the film. The sentiment is that the film draws parallels to real world institutional problems in labor. It reflects the sub concept of Media Effects Theory (as seen in Table 3.3 above) called active audience. The sub concept states that viewers do not interpret media in isolation but in relation to the world around them (Livingstone, 2008, p. 3)

In *The Spook Who Sat by the Door*, reviewers recognized the film's depiction of how institutions use black labor for their own interests and limit any opportunity for revolutionary uprising. Reviewers saw the protagonist's sabotage of an institution that he partly benefitted from as a sign that corrupt systems need to be resisted against regardless of personal benefit. As seen in the Key Quotes in Table 6.3, one reviewer stated:

"When a system is deliberately corrupt... it is not only imperative but urgent to become... radical."

The quote shows that viewers believe that this film was representative of an important message. This message was that in order to successfully overcome a corrupt system, the system must be analyzed in order to take action.

The reviewers of *Bamboozled* saw them of Black cultural expression being a means of profit, even though it is exploitative and stereotypical. For the reviewers, this film drew parallels to real life, alluding to exploitative and stereotypical images of black people in real world media. The movie shows that black pain, resistance, and creativity are seen as profitable entities, which reflects real world exploitation according to the reviewers. This is a sub concept in Black Marxist Theory called the commodification of resistance (as seen in Table 3.3 above) which states rebellion, identity, and trauma are shown as being absorbed and repackaged by capitalism through neoliberal structures (Coleman, 2013, p. 170) Reviewers saw the film as an accurate depiction of how black culture is repackaged into a commodity for profit. One reviewer stated: "This movie is such an angry way of showing how the entertainment industry dehumanizes blackness to the point of using black bodies as a way to maintain and increase viewership." This statement represents how reviewers saw the film's message of black culture exploitation of profit and made real world parallels from it.

Babylon did not have as many themes of labor and capitalism from the perspective of the reviewers. However, reviewers noted that the characters were living in a state of economic instability, most likely due to capitalist infrastructures.

To summarize, professional critics and general audiences on Letterboxd and IMDb engage deeply with the Labor and Capitalism themes of these Black Marxist films. The responses reflected an understanding of how race, class, and capital are interconnected. The reviewers used the films to critique the systems that uphold the harsh realities of how they are connected. With this being the case, the reviewers did not see these films as just media but critiques of reality and a showcase of resistance.

The reviews reflect what is seen in the shaping beliefs sub-concept of Media Effects Theory (as seen in Table 3.3 above) which states that films have influence over people's perceptions, actions, and the formation of social and societal norms, sometimes through challenging preexisting ones (Moemeka, 1988, p. 4).

4.6 Film Form and Aesthetics

The film form and aesthetics for the films *Bamboozled*, *Sorry to Bother You*, *Spook Who Sat by the Door*, and *Babylon* was a quite divisive theme for reviewers. Most viewers acknowledged that the radical ideologies of these films coincided with the presentation of the films, as they are not huge productions because of the ideologies or they are presented as acts of resistance against conventional presentations. However, many critics saw the presentation of films as unprofessional and distracting from the narratives of the film. With either of these opinions on the presentations of the films, it is similar to a sub concept of Communication Theory called Critical Communication Theory. With Cultural Communication Theory, the aesthetics can be used to critique dominant communication systems, whether critics enjoy the presentation of it or not (Taylor, 1998, p. 36).

For reviews of *Bamboozled*, many reviewers noted the use of digital video over traditional film stock as a way of the film differentiating itself from other films. A lot of the reviewers highlighted that it added to the film's goal of causing the viewer discomfort. However, other viewers saw this execution for the film as a flaw. Some noted the execution of presentation was ultimately a flaw within the film. As seen in the Key Quotes in Table 6.4, one reviewer said: "Bamboozled, despite deep flaws of structure and execution, makes an incontrovertible case that its subject demands recognition and conversation."

This review embodies the overall sentiment about the positive and negative reviews of *Bamboozled*. Although critics had problems with the aesthetics of the film, the message from the movie also resonated with many people.

Sorry to Bother You was also celebrated and critiqued for its form. Many of the viewers liked the rapid tonal shifts, visual metaphors, and surrealism. They saw the absurdist comedy mixed with critiques of the labor system and class reflect the realities of living under capitalism. As seen in the Key Quotes in Table 6.5, one reviewer states:

The film's social consciousness and commentary intersect in ways that are thoughtful, snappy, and deeply rooted in (often unfortunately) a sense of genuine realism. Yet the film's image of the world is not equal to our society with microscopic precision, as its humor often tends to look at current societal issues with the mirror of a macabre fun-house.

This review represents the sentiment among viewers that the absurdism, tonal shifts, and visual metaphors added to the enjoyment of the film.

However, some of the reviewers saw the film's form as too unconventional. As seen in the Key Quotes in Table 6.5, one reviewer wrote:

I like weird but it has a lot of symbolism-which I'm not too fond of-and it is not like it is being advertised. From the trailers, it looks like a comedy about a telemarketer that finds a way to make money, and that is part of it, but then it goes into some really weirdstuff.

With this negative critique, this shows that the film's form and style were off-putting to some viewers. The unconventionality of how the film presents its message made some viewers uncomfortable.

The Spook Who Sat by the Door was more minimalist than the previous two films according to reviewers. To the viewers, the guerilla style filming gave the film a sense of authenticity. As seen in the Key Quotes in Table 6.3, one reviewer stated:

“To know that this film was shot ‘guerilla style’ and seeing the end product is nothing less than inspiring.”

This comment shows the common sentiment amongst the viewers that the film's unconventional aesthetics aided in the authenticity in the message of the film.

In the reviews of *Babylon*, many comments pertaining to the film's style were about the film's score and street-level cinematography. The sentiments of these comments were that these elements added to the authenticity of the film's message. According to critics, the aesthetics helped in making the world of the film feel like a real story with real people. As seen in the Key Quotes in Table 6.2, one reviewer stated:

“In the press notes on this re-release, it is not surprising to read that Scorsese's “Mean Streets” was an inspiration to the filmmakers, because Rosso and cinematographer Chris Menges take a very street-level approach to this world that sucks us in, and is scored by Dennis Bovell in a reggae style that makes it feel unlike anything else I had ever seen for this type of story. Images and sounds are what you will likely remember from this film, but the way we feel in the experience is what will make it stand out as one of the most significant films you'll watch in 2019, even if it came out nearly 40 years ago.”

This comment reflects the opinion of many viewers which is that the film differentiates itself from others because of how real the setting feels. This authenticity is seen through its unique cinematography and score.

In all four films, the reviewers treated the distinct aesthetic features of the films as relevant to the politics of them. The difference of visuals and sound from dominant Hollywood aesthetic were posed as a challenge to them. The reviewers embraced the defiance of these films, believing that the films being aesthetically distinct helped in their radical messaging.

In summary, the theme of Film Form and Aesthetics shows that reviewers on Letterboxd and IMDb saw the experimentation of sound, cinematography, and story in these Black Marxist films as important in their critique of racial hierarchies and capitalism. The reviewers did not analyze the films through expectations of conventional aesthetics. Instead, they analyzed the films as subversions of conventional Hollywood films through their aesthetics and ideologies.

4.7 Emotional and Personal Impact

The seventh and final theme that emerged from the general audience and professional reviews of *Bamboozled*, *Sorry to Bother You*, *Spook Who Sat by the Door*, and *Babylon* was Emotional and Personal Impact. The general audiences and professional critics saw these Black Marxist films as experiences that were able to cause a wide range of emotions for viewers. These films provoked responses such as anger, pride, grief, discomfort, and catharsis

In reviews of *Bamboozled*, majority of the reviewers acknowledged the emotional impact this had on them. Whether it was anger, discomfort, or bewilderment, captivated the reviewers could not help but discuss the emotions this film made them feel. As seen in the Key Quotes in Table 6.4 One Letterboxd reviewer states:

Every single frame of it, particularly the ending montage, drips with scathing contempt for the American media and entertainment industry's warped, fundamentally broken perspective and representation of the black community. It is astronomically unpleasant from start to finish, but that's the entire point. It wants you to feel uncomfortable. It wants

you to feel horrified. It wants you to feel sad. It wants you to feel angry, so much so that the blood in your veins is boiling piping hot.

This represents a sentiment of both professional and general audiences which is that *Bamboozled* has the power to provoke strong emotions.

For *Babylon*, the themes of sound and community resonated strongly with reviewers, with a string minority expressing their connection with this theme. Music as a sense of community and the frustration at systemic oppression was a sentiment that many viewers connected with. As seen in the Key Quotes in Table 6.2, one Letterboxd reviewer states:

What this film also is rather, is a film that imposes hope to everyone as no matter where we may be home is a feeling and that's what we see through the group of friends.

This review reflects the view of majority of the viewers, which is that the film invoked feelings of hope in a world of systemic and racial injustices.

Sorry to Bother You elicited a wide range of emotions out of reviewers, from amusement to discomfort. The film's jarring narrative and storytelling methods made reviewers feeling strong emotions. As seen in the Key Quotes in Table 6.5, one IMDb general audience reviewer said:

"Though smiling throughout, my overall emotion was of such discomfort, that I really did not want anybody to go through the same. "

This quote expresses how majority of the viewer sentiment was amusement of the film while also feeling discomfort with how close the film felt to reality at times.

For viewers of *The Spook Who Sat by the Door*, the common sentiment although not as explicitly stated as the other films is the enjoyment of it. Many of the reviews expressed a positive reaction to this film for its political messaging and its importance within a societal context. As seen in the Key Quotes in Table 6.3, one Letterboxd reviewer commented:

“I totally get why people would love this movie and why it has such a high rating, and I'm glad I've seen it.”

This reviewer expressed an understanding why this film has such positive reviews, without many conflicting feelings as the other film's reviews did. This movie provoked an uncontroversially positive emotions from critics. To summarize, the theme of Emotional and Personal Impact shows that professional and general audiences on Letterboxd and IMDb are emotionally connected with Black Marxist films. The reactions are shaped by political awareness and outrage at systemic injustices making them highly emotional. These responses highlight the importance of the ideological critiques within the films, suggesting that audiences deeply resonate with them. For professional critics and general audiences of Letterboxd and IMDb, these films are emotionally relevant because they reflect realities of life under capitalism. This means that Black Marxist films resonate with these reviewers most powerfully when they can provoke strong emotions.

Majority of the reviewers emphasized that these emotions were provoked because they connected with them personally, as the themes of systemic oppression and capitalisms were deeply resonant. This aligns with Active Audience Theory (Livingstone, 2008, p. 3) which notes that audience critiques are often representations of their own emotions and identities.

5 Conclusion

This research intended to answer the main question of “How do professional critics and general audiences on Letterboxd and IMDb engage with Black Marxist films?” Through a thematic analysis, coding 120 reviews across the four Black Marxist films of *Bamboozled*, *Sorry to Bother You*, *The Spook Who Sat by the Door*, and *Babylon*. Seven major themes emerged through the thematic analysis which were Identity and Representation, Media and Cultural Critique, Historical and Social Context, Political Agency and Resistance, Labor and Capitalism, Film Form and Aesthetics, and Emotional and Personal Impact. The theoretical frameworks in which these themes were analyzed were Media Effects Theory, Conflict Theory, Communication Theory, and Black Marxist Theory.

The research findings show that reviewers on these platforms actively engaged with Black Marxist films. Majority of the reviewers that wrote 300 words or more in their reviews interpreted and critiqued the films with an awareness and curiosity of how systems constructed around them and how the films connect to it. General audiences and professional critics saw these films as political art that reflect realities systemic oppression and portray different methods of resistance. This coincides with a sub concept in Media Effects Theory called Media and Society Theory which states media has influence over people’s perceptions, actions, and the formation of social and societal norms, sometimes through challenging preexisting ones (Moemeka, 1988, p. 4).

The films *Bamboozled* and *Babylon* were seen as relevant in relation to the history of racial systemic oppression. Films such as *Sorry to Bother You* and *The Spook Who Sat by the Door* were viewed as calls for political resistance in different ways. This correlates with Active Audience Theory as seen as a sub-concept in Media Effect Theory. This theory states that audiences use their political, social, and emotional realities to analyze and interpret media (Livingstone, 2008, p. 3).

About 85% of the reviewers had an emotional or personal connection to these films because of their themes of labor exploitation and racial violence. This is important to note because this shows that Black Marxist films are able to provide viewers with emotional catharsis due to how they address real world themes of exploitation and oppression.

Overall, the findings suggest that Black Marxist films are engaged in a meaningful way by audiences on both platforms. Majority of the reviewers coded engaged with these films with

and praised them for their honesty rather than dismissing them for being ideologically different from other films. The fact that these responses emerged across IMDb and Letterboxd reflects that there is a culture on these platforms that wants to confront the intersections of media, labor race, and resistance of common narratives.

5.1 Social and Academic Implications

This research is able to show the key role that online platforms like IMDb and Letterboxd play in seeing audience responses to media with political messaging. These platforms are free and allow anybody from any place or background to give their viewpoints on a film, if it is within the platform's guidelines of discourse. The platform's guidelines of discourse pertaining to people giving their viewpoints include not using deemed offensive, harmful, or intolerant language to any group of people or plagiarizing someone else's review.

This study contributes to media sociology and film studies through showing that Black Marxist films are cultural texts that are internalized and reflected upon. The thematic framework is able to support further research in cultural theory, audience studies, and media analysis.

Results of this research also show the importance of alternative narratives in popular media. Alternative narratives can help people think more critically about race and class and how they are depicted. These films give alternative viewpoints to neoliberal frameworks, and the reviews showed that people are willing to watch and engage with these films. This suggests that radical narratives are not only active within radical spaces but instead can extend to mainstream platforms when given the opportunity.

5.2 Limitations and Future Research

One limitation of the study was having a selection 4 films and 160 reviews that required 300 or more words. This criterion also depended on like counts, as the reviews with higher likes were more likely to be seen. Although this criterion gave substantial data, there is also the chance of leaving out significant reviews that may not have had a 300-word count or high like ratio. The importance in noting this is taking into account that some substantial sentiments in reviews may have been left out.

Another limitation is in the time frame of the reviews of the films. *The Spook Who Sat by the Door* and *Babylon* were released before Letterboxd and IMDb ever existed. This means there are not many audience reviews during those time periods, making what audiences thought of the

films during that time more difficult. There is also the fact that IMDb is an older website than Letterboxd by two decades. As the internet has evolved over time, general audience review spaces have become more popular which can imply that audience sentiment in the past could differ from the present due to the availability and knowledge of the platforms.

One other limitation is the lack of demographic data with the reviewers. In these online spaces it is difficult to see how categories such as race, gender, or class influence these reviews. Furthermore, it is difficult to see what demographics view these films and compare them to other films. This limits the scope of generalizability.

One last limitation is the study focused on Western review platforms, which does not take review platforms of other areas into account. While this study was diverse with language and discourse, it also selects mostly English or Western reviews.

In future research, it can be explored how specific demographics such as black viewers or international viewers engage with different types of Black Marxist Films. More platforms such as Youtube, TikTok, or Reddit could be utilized to discover this even though they are not particularly reviewing platforms. Those platforms have more people on them and in turn can produce sentiments that future scholars can see and analyze. It would also be advantageous to use comparative analysis through seeing how commercially mainstream films and Black Marxist films are interpreted. This would help scholars be able to see the difference in how audiences analyze and react to the subject matter.

5.3 Answering the Sub-Questions

1. What are the differences between reviews of professional critics and general audiences?

The thematic analysis revealed differences in approach for professional and general audience reviews when it comes to Black Marxist films. Professional critics generally looked more in-depth at these films from a historical context and cinematic contexts. Within historical contexts, professional critics would review these films and acknowledge the moment in history it was released in to portray why they were particularly relevant. Within cinematic contexts, professional reviewers tended to acknowledge the differences in technical style and how these films broke traditional cinema norms.

General audiences tended to look more at these films from an emotional and personal perspective. They would often talk about how these films resonated with them on a personal

level because they related to a particular racial or class struggle portrayed within the films. The critics also noted how they felt a sort of catharsis watching the forms of resistance within the films. However, many were also able to engage critically with these films, acknowledging themes of systemic racism, labor exploitation, and media satire.

There was an overlap in how in-depth the themes of these films were interpreted. There were some people of the general audience that wrote sophisticated critiques while some professional critics reacted more emotionally to the films. The conclusion that could be made is that intellectual engagement with films in online platforms is not limited to professional critics. This would suggest that general audiences deserve more credit when it comes to their points of view on films.

2. What role does neoliberal ideology in mainstream film play in people's perception of films with Black Marxist ideologies as expressed on these websites?

Neoliberal ideology which emphasizes individualism, meritocracy, capitalism, and market friendly aesthetics has an effect in how Black Marxist films are received. Around 15% reviewers on IMDb have expressed discomfort with how capitalism was portrayed in these Black Marxist films. These reviewers would note these films were too weird, political, or preachy, especially in the case of *Sorry to Bother You* and *Bamboozled*. These reactions show that for a lot of people, neoliberal norms can shape audience perceptions of films.

However, many more professional and general audience reviews embraced these films for their breaking of ideological and aesthetic norms usually seen in neoliberal cinema. However, they also recognized how neoliberal ideology could possibly co-opt radical aesthetics. For example, some critics mentioned that the minstrel imagery in *Bamboozled* could be misinterpreted which would give less credit to its political critique.

To summarize, neoliberal ideology shapes how films are produced, distributed, and interpreted. It is important to note that since there is deep political engagement in general audience and professional reviews, it shows that audiences are aware of the societal dynamics of neoliberalism and want to resist it.

In conclusion, this study reveals Black Marxist films are deeply engaged with emotionally and intellectually by general audiences and professional critics on Letterboxd and

IMDb. These Black Marxist films found audiences on these platforms that are able to engage with their challenges of traditional cinema in ideology and aesthetics.

References

- Abbas, S. Z. (2023). Oppenheimer's Dilemma: A Marxian Examination of Power Dynamics and Ethical Justifications in Nolan's Oppenheimer. *International Journal of Literature Studies*, 3(3), 09-18. <https://doi.org/10.32996/ijts.2023.3.3.2>
- Alexandri, G., & Janoschka, M. (2019). Neoliberalism. *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Urban and Regional Studies*, 57, 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118568446.eurs0220>
- Andersson, L. (2012). There is No Alternative: The Critical Potential of Alternative Media in the Face of Neoliberalism. *TripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique. Open Access Journal for a Global Sustainable Information Society*, 10(2), 752–764. <https://doi.org/10.31269/triplec.v10i2.357>
- Benshoff, H. M. (2019). Blaxploitation filmmaking. *Routledge EBooks*, 131–138. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315668819-17>
- Betül Sarı Aksakal. (2024). From Classical Political Economics to Neoclassical (Mainstream) Economics: The Ideological Reproduction and Depoliticization Process of Economics. *Sosyo Ekonomi*, 32(60), 197–223. <https://doi.org/10.17233/sosyoekonomi.2024.02.10>
- Birchall, I. H. (1977). Marxism and Literature. *The Sociological Review*, 25(1_suppl), 92–108. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-954x.1977.tb03233.x>
- Boyd, F. B., & Bailey, N. M. (2009). Censorship in Three Metaphors. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 52(8), 653–661. <https://doi.org/10.1598/jaal.52.8.1>
- Cañas-Bajo, J., Cañas-Bajo, T., Berki, E., Juri-Petri Valtanen, & Pertti Saariluoma. (2019) Designing a New Method of Studying Feature-Length Films. *Projections*, 13(3), 53–78. <https://doi.org/10.3167/proj.2019.130304>
- Chernov, G., & McCombs, M. (2019). *The Agenda Setting Journal* (Vol. 3, pp. 63–81). John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Clarke, V., & Braun, V. (2017). Thematic Analysis. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 12(3), 297–298. Taylor & Francis. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2016.1262613>
- Coleman, L. M. (2013). The Making of Docile Dissent: Neoliberalization and Resistance in Colombia and Beyond. *International Political Sociology*, 7(2), 170–187. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ips.12016>
- Cooper, A. (2019). Neoliberal theory and film studies. *New Review of Film and Television Studies*, 17(3), 265–277. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17400309.2019.1622877>

- Craig, R. T. (1999). Communication Theory as a Field. *Communication Theory*, 9(2), 119–161.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2885.1999.tb00355.x>
- Das, R. J. (2017). *Marxist Class Theory for a Skeptical World*. Brill.
<https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004337473>
- Datenkommunikation, N. (2011). Communication Theory as a Field. Retrieved April 16, 2025,
 from
<https://ucb.catolica.edu.br/sites/000/89/arquivos/CommunicationAsAFieldRobertCraig.pdf>
- Dunning, S. K. (2020). What is the Future? Weirdness and Black Time in Sorry to Bother You. *Studies in the Fantastic*, 9(1), 44–62. <https://doi.org/10.1353/sif.2020.0002>
- Elo, S., Kääriäinen, M., Kanste, O., Pölkki, T., Utriainen, K., & Kyngäs, H. (2014). Qualitative Content analysis: a Focus on Trustworthiness. *SAGE Open*, 4(1), 1–10. Sagepub.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244014522633>
- Erigha, M. (2019). *The Hollywood Jim Crow* (pp. 141–161). NYU Press.
<https://doi.org/10.18574/nyu/9781479886647.001.0001>
- Esquenazi, J.-P. (2012). L'interprétation du film. *Cinemas*, 23(1), 35–54.
<https://doi.org/10.7202/1013367ar>
- Freshwater, D. (2005). Writing, rigour and reflexivity in nursing research. *Journal of Research in Nursing*, 10(3), 311–315. <https://doi.org/10.1177/174498710501000307>
- Gallagher, C. A. (2003). Miscounting Race: Explaining Whites' Misperceptions of Racial Group Size. *Sociological Perspectives*, 46(3), 381–396.
<https://doi.org/10.1525/sop.2003.46.3.381>
- Ganti, T. (2012). No Longer a Frivolous Singing and Dancing Nation of Movie-Makers: The Hindi Film Industry and Its Quest for Global Distinction. *Visual Anthropology*, 25(4), 340–365. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08949468.2012.688473>
- Gee, R., Mcginty, P., & Porteen, S. (2012). Film Review as Interactive Process: An Application of Symbolic Interactionist Theories of Temporality. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 2(4), 17–24. Retrieved from
https://www.ijhssnet.com/journals/Vol_2_No_4_Special_Issue_February_2012/3.pdf

- Gonzalez, C., & Mutua, A. (2022). Mapping Racial Capitalism: Implications for Law. *Journal of Law and Political Economy*, 2(2). <https://doi.org/10.5070/lp62258224>
- Guerrero, E. (2011). The Rise and Fall of Blaxploitation. *The Wiley-Blackwell History of American Film*, 2–5. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470671153.wbhaf063>
- Gvirsman, S. D. (2014). It's Not That We Don't Know, It's That We Don't Care: Explaining Why Selective Exposure Polarizes Attitudes. *Mass Communication and Society*, 17(1), 74–97. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2013.816738>
- Hadžić, F. (2022). Health Inequalities and Cognate Inequities in American Society; Racism, Neoliberalism, and Freedom from Indignity. *International Journal of Health Management and Tourism*. <https://doi.org/10.31201/ijhmt.1069446>
- Hellberg, K., & Tuleus, M. Ö. (2025). Ethical considerations within the field of qualitative research - on quality and validity. Retrieved May 12, 2025, from DIVA website: <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2%3A266187&dswid=-7480>
- Hohle, R. (2015). *Race and the Origins of American Neoliberalism* (pp. 2–16). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315735962>
- Hole, L. (2023). Handle with care; considerations of Braun and Clarke's approach to thematic analysis. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 24(4), 371–383. <https://doi.org/10.1108/qrj-08-2023-0132>
- Howell, A. (2005). Spectacle, Masculinity, and Music in Blaxploitation Cinema. Retrieved 2025, from Research Repository website: <https://research-repository.griffith.edu.au/server/api/core/bitstreams/1901355d-13cc-5188-b79d-b06fa7c3004f/content>
- Hu, Y. (2025). EXPRESS: Diversity Matters: How Film Critic Ratings Vary with Critic and Movie Cast Racial Profiles. *Journal of Marketing*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00222429251314385>
- Hudis, P. (2018). Racism and the Logic of Capital: A Fanonian Reconsideration. *Historical Materialism*, 26(2), 199–220. <https://doi.org/10.1163/1569206x-00001645>
- Hussey, I. (2014). Note on Stuart Hall's "Cultural Identity and Diaspora." *Socialist Studies/Études Socialistes*, 10(1). <https://doi.org/10.18740/s4qp4s>
- Kamper, S. J. (2020). Sampling: Linking Evidence to Practice. *Journal of Orthopaedic & Sports Physical Therapy*, 50(12), 725–726. <https://doi.org/10.2519/jospt.2020.0704>

- Kundnani, A. (2021). The racial constitution of neoliberalism. *Race & Class*, 63(1), 1-31, 030639682199270. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0306396821992706>
- Laski, G. (2010). Falling Back into History: The Uncanny Trauma of Blackface Minstrelsy in Spike Lee's Bamboozled. *Callaloo*, 33(4), 1093–1115. <https://doi.org/10.1353/cal.2010.0092>
- Levy, E., & Reid, M. A. (1994). Redefining Black Film. *The American Historical Review*, 99(5), 1748. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2168528>
- Livingstone, S. (2008). Audiences and interpretations. *E-Compós*, 10, 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.30962/ec.185>
- Massoud, M. F. (2022). The price of positionality: assessing the benefits and burdens of self-identification in research methods. *Journal of Law and Society*, 49(S1), 65–67. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jols.12372>
- Mayring, P. (2014). Qualitative Content Analysis: Theoretical Background and Procedures. *Advances in Mathematics Education*, 365–380. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-017-9181-6_13
- McMahon, J. (2015). *What Makes Hollywood Run? Capitalist Power, Risk and the Control of Social Creativity* (pp. 2-10). Retrieved from https://bnarchives.net/id/eprint/463/1/20151111_mcmahon_phd.pdf
- Mele, C. (2012). Neoliberalism, Race and the Redefining of Urban Redevelopment. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 37(2), 598–617. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2427.2012.01144.x>
- Meyers, M. (2019). Neoliberalism and the Media. *Neoliberalism and the Media*, 3–18. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315106045-1>
- Milton, D. (2025). Sociological theory: an introduction to Marxism. Retrieved February 10, 2025, from <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Sociological-theory%3A-an-introduction-to-Marxism-Milton/ce2783b6cbfdc0d3b8389a2f127b4be9f06ae21d>
- Mistry, K. B. (2012). Research and Statistics: Qualitative Research Methods. *Pediatrics in Review*, 33(11), 521–523. <https://doi.org/10.1542/pir.33-11-521>
- Moemeka, A. (1988). Mass media and rational domination: a critical review of a dominant paradigm. *Africa Media Review*, 3(1), 1–33. Retrieved from <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/12281806/>

- Morgan, H. (2021). The Work of Whiteness. In *Routledge eBooks*. Informa.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429266447>
- Morningstar, N. (2020). Neoliberalism. *Cambridge Encyclopedia of Anthropology*.
<https://doi.org/10.29164/20neolib>
- Moy, P., Tewksbury, D., & Rinke, E. M. (2016). Agenda-Setting, Priming, and Framing. *The International Encyclopedia of Communication Theory and Philosophy*, 1–13.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118766804.wbiect266>
- Mumby, D. K. (1993). Narrative and Social Control: Critical Perspectives. In *Political Psychology*. Wiley-Blackwell. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483345277>
- Myszka, M. (2021). Becoming Horse—Capitalism and the Human Identity: An Analysis of Boots Riley’s Sorry to Bother You. *EXtREme 21 Going beyond in Post-Millennial North American Literature and Culture*, 15(15 (Autumn 2021)), 261–272.
<https://doi.org/10.7311/pjas.15/2/2021.06>
- Ndlovu Gatsheni, S. J., & Ndlovu, M. (2022). Sobre la decolonialidad negra marxista. *Tabula Rasa*, (42), 97–122. <https://doi.org/10.25058/20112742.n42.04>
- Neuman, W. R., & Guggenheim, L. (2011). The Evolution of Media Effects Theory: A Six-Stage Model of Cumulative Research. *Communication Theory*, 21(2), 169–196.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2885.2011.01381.x>
- Niraj, R., & Singh, J. (2015). Impact of user-generated and professional critics reviews on Bollywood movie success. *Australasian Marketing Journal (AMJ)*, 23(3), 179–187.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ausmj.2015.02.001>
- None Kejapriya S, & Prabahar, N. S. (2023). The Self and the Society: A Critique of Sociocultural Narratives in Media and Literature. *Shanlax International Journal of English*, 12(S1-Dec), 324–329. <https://doi.org/10.34293/rtdh.v12is1-dec.101>
- Norman, H. (2019). *Racism and Resistance: Contextualizing Sorry to Bother You in the Neoliberal Movement*
- Nwonka, C. J. (2021). Policing Black Film: Racism, Black Resistance and the Applicational Dexterity of Race Relations in Babylon. *Sociology*, 55(4), 16–20.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038520985793>
- Olufemi, D. (2023). Class Struggle: Money, Power, Oppression, and Resistance. *The Creative Launcher*, 8(2), 81–90. <https://doi.org/10.53032/tcl.2023.8.2.11>

- Ortner, S. (2013). Not Hollywood: independent film at the twilight of the American dream. *Choice Reviews Online*, 50(12), 50–684450–6844, (6-30)
<https://doi.org/10.5860/choice.50-6844>
- Özden, M. (2024). Content and Thematic Analysis Techniques in Qualitative Research: Purpose, Process and Features. *Deleted Journal*, 2(1), 64–81. <https://doi.org/10.59455/qietp.20>
- Prabakaran, P., & Sudharsan, R. (2024). The Role that Movies Play in Shaping Both Individual Daily Routines and Societal Norms. *Shanlax International Journal of Management*, 11(S1-Mar), 34–38. <https://doi.org/10.34293/management.v11is1-mar.7996>
- Palinkas, L., Horwitz, S., Green, C., Wisdom, J., Duan, N., & Hoagwood, K. (2015). Purposeful Sampling for Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis in Mixed Method Implementation Research. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research*, 42(5), 533–544. PubMed Central. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10488-013-0528-y>
- Perse, E. M. (2001). *Media Effects and Society* (pp. 1–570). Routledge.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781410600820>
- Pileggi, M. S., Grabe, M. E., Holderman, L. B., & de Montigny, M. (2000). Business As Usual: The American Dream in Hollywood Business Films. *Mass Communication and Society*, 3(2-3), 207–228. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327825mcs0323_03
- Prince, S. (2000). A new pot of gold: Hollywood under the electronic rainbow, 1980-1989. *Choice Reviews Online*, 37(10), 37–558537–5585. <https://doi.org/10.5860/choice.37-5585>
- Razaz Ainousah. (2023). Cultural Identity and Racism. □Al-□Majallah Al-Dawlīyah Lil-Buḥūth Al-'Ilmīyah, 2(11), 11–33. <https://doi.org/10.59992/ijsr.2023.v2n11p1>
- Rettke, H., Pretto, M., Spichiger, E., Frei, I. A., & Spirig, R. (2018). Using Reflexive Thinking to Establish Rigor in Qualitative Research. *Nursing Research*, 67(6), 490–497.
<https://doi.org/10.1097/nnr.0000000000000307>
- Rivas, M. L. (2024). cine de izquierda estadounidense y la resistencia al fascismo nativo en los primeros años de la Guerra Fría. Un análisis de Strange Victory, de Leo Hurwitz. *La Cifra Impar Revista de Estudios de Audiovisuales*, (3), 91–119.
<https://doi.org/10.58180/lci.3.2024.44>
- Robinson, C. J. (1985). Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition. *Labour / Le Travail*, 16, 313-320. <https://doi.org/10.2307/25142575>

- Robinson, M. (2000). The Construction and Reinforcement of Myths of Race and Crime. *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*, 16(2), 133–156.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1043986200016002002>
- Rosen, I. (2022). Billion dollar madness: examining the paradox of financial satire through the 1980s economic crisis in Israeli comedy films. *Journal of Israeli History*, 40(1), 1–21.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13531042.2022.2136563>
- Saull, R. (2018). Racism and Far Right Imaginaries Within Neo-liberal Political Economy. *New Political Economy*, 23(5), 588–608. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13563467.2017.1417370>
- Sheppard, S. N. (2013). Persistently Displaced: Situated Knowledges and Interrelated Histories in *The Spook Who Sat by the Door*. *Cinema Journal*, 52(2), 71–92.
<https://doi.org/10.1353/cj.2013.0009>
- Simon, R. (2016). The Conflict Paradigm in Sociology and the Study of Social Inequality: Paradox and Possibility. *Theory in Action*, 9(1), 1–31.
<https://transformativestudies.org/wp-content/uploads/10.3798tia.1937-0237.16001.pdf>
- Smith, G. (2005). Religious Identities, Social Networks and the Power of Information. *Fieldwork in Religion*, 1(3), 292–307. <https://doi.org/10.1558/firn.v1i3.291>
- Sukur, M. (2023). Dominasi Kuasa Kapitalis terhadap Buruh dalam Plot Film Sorry to Bother You Ditinjau melalui Semiotika John Fiske. *Sense*, 6(2), 159–170.
<https://doi.org/10.24821/sense.v6i2.11221>
- Taylor, C. (1999). The mask of art: breaking the aesthetic contract--film and literature. *Choice Reviews Online*, 36(08), 36–42. <https://doi.org/10.5860/choice.36-4273>
- Vaid, R. (2024). Media's Contribution to Society Resistance and Empowerment: A Study of the God of Small Things. *ShodhKosh Journal of Visual and Performing Arts*, 5(1), 98–104.
<https://doi.org/10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i1.2024.744>
- Vaismoradi, M., Jones, J., Turunen, H., & Snelgrove, S. (2016). Theme Development in Qualitative Content Analysis and Thematic Analysis. *Journal of Nursing Education and Practice*, 6(5), 100–110.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/290552438_Theme_development_in_qualitative_content_analysis_and_thematic_analysis

- Wayne, M. (2003). Post-Fordism, Monopoly Capitalism, and Hollywood's Media Industrial Complex. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 6(1), 82–103.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1367877903006001005>
- Wayne, M. (2015). Understanding Film: Marxist Perspectives. Retrieved February 10, 2025, from <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Understanding-Film%3A-Marxist-Perspectives-Wayne/5ddeaf5803ab08521411e04b27729f1dbeb04afb>
- Weaver, A. J. (2011). The Role of Actors' Race in White Audiences' Selective Exposure to Movies. *Journal of Communication*, 61(2), 369–385. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2011.01544.x>
- White, M. D., & Marsh, E. E. (2006). Content Analysis: A Flexible Methodology. *Library Trends*, 55(1), 22–45. <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/202361>
- White, R. (2018). Neoliberalism. *Routledge EBooks*, 333–337.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315744902-75>
- Williams, M., & Moser, T. (2019). The Art of Coding and Thematic Exploration in Qualitative Research. *International Management Review*, 15(1). Retrieved from <https://www.imrjournal.org/uploads/1/4/2/8/14286482/imr-v15n1art4.pdf>
- Womack, A. (2012, July 1). Ridicule and Wonder: The Beginnings of Minstrelsy and New York. Retrieved April 16, 2025, from Semantic Scholar website:
<https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Ridicule-and-Wonder%3A-The-Beginnings-of-Minstrelsy-Womack/cf1d42d0aedddc430b0399e80a4654d67f10b8d4>
- Wright, E. O. (2005). Foundations of a neo-Marxist class analysis. *Approaches to Class Analysis*, 4–30. <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511488900.002>
- Wright, K. O. (2017). Content Analysis, Qualitative. *The International Encyclopedia of Communication Research Methods*, 1–9.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118901731.iecrm0044>
- Xia, S. (2024). Machine learning and deep learning-based sentiment analysis of IMDB user reviews. *Applied and Computational Engineering*, 53(1), 113–125.
<https://doi.org/10.54254/2755-2721/53/20241305>
- Xie, Y., Al Imran, M., Yasin, B., Syed, A., Bin, S., & Alsagoff, L. (2022). Multicultural Education an Overview of Stuart Hall's Encoding and Decoding Theory with Film Communication. *Multicultural Education*, 8(1). <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.5894796>

- Yaquinto, M. (2015). Cinema as Political Activism: Contemporary Meanings in *The Spook Who Sat by the Door*. *Black Camera*, 6(1), 5. <https://doi.org/10.2979/blackcamera.6.1.5>
- Yaquinto, M., Corbin, A., & Martin, M. (2009). Editor's Notes. *Russell: The Journal of Bertrand Russell Studies*, 29(1), 3–4. <https://doi.org/10.1353/rss.2009.0000>
- Zhang, T. (2024). The Anti-Corporate Films Nostalgic Inclination. *Communications in Humanities Research*, 25(1), 262–266. <https://doi.org/10.54254/2753-7064/25/20231980>
- Zhang, X., & Chrysanthos Dellarocas. (2006). The Lord Of The Ratings: Is A Movie's Fate is Influenced by Reviews? Retrieved April 16, 2025, from AIS Electronic Library (AISeL) website: <https://aisel.aisnet.org/icis2006/117/>

Appendix:

Table 6.1

Themes	Sub-Themes	Codes
1. Identity and Representation	Black identity and representation	Representation of Blackness Performance of identity, Code-switching, Postcolonial identity, Sound system culture
	Gender and intersectionality	Gender representation, Intersectionality of race and gender
	Personal identity in social context	Assimilation vs. resistance, Social perception of self-identity, masking
2. Media and Cultural Critique	Critique of dominant media	Media exploitation, Minstrelsy and satire, Mass media complicity
	Satirical disruption	Surrealism as critique, Dark comedy, Grotesque symbolism
	Cultural consumption and complicity	Audience complicity, Cultural appropriation
3. Historical and Social Context	Structural oppression	Systemic racism, Police violence
	Historical relevance	Civil Rights era, Minstrelsy
	Racial capitalism	Racialized exploitation
4. Political Agency and Resistance	Revolutionary action	Radical organizing, Collective uprising, Sabotage
	Everyday resistance	Music as protest, Identity as resistance, Cultural defiance
	Suppression of radicalism	Banning/censorship, Silencing political voices

Themes	Sub-Themes	Codes
5. Labor and Capitalism	Class struggle	Worker exploitation, Wage labor critique, Union organizing
	Commodification of culture	Black culture as product, Monetized rebellion, Entertainment industry dynamics
	Neoliberal labor conditions	Workplace alienation, Corporate control
6. Film Form and Aesthetics	Aesthetic innovation	Surrealist, Nonlinear storytelling
	Symbolism and visual critique	White voice device, Blackface as motif, Absurdist exaggeration
	Form as resistance	Rejection of Hollywood norms, Intentional discomfort
7. Emotional and Personal Impact	Emotional resonance	Viewer anger/sadness/validation, Trauma ,catharsis Emotional overload
	Personal identification	Feeling seen, Relating to characters, Connecting through lived experience
	Empowerment through recognition	Uplift through visibility, Community through narrative

Table 6.2 Babylon Codes

Reviewer	Platform	Rating	Sentiment	Systemic Racism	Police Brutality	Sound System Culture	Postcolonial Identity	Friendship & Conflict	Homophobia	Representation / Visibility	White Society Critique	Economic Struggle	Personal Impact	Cinematic Technique	Gender Commentary	Date	Likes	Dislikes	Key Quotes
Jenna Ipcar	Letterboxd	4.5/5	Positive	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1				"It flips the script by showing the full and diverse world of
Mark Cunliffe	Letterboxd	4/5	Positive	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	15-Aug-15	59	N/A	"With its depiction of a distinctive cultural sub-section of our
Zachary	Letterboxd	4.5/5	Positive	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	12-May-21	26	N/A	"Babylon is joyful and ferocious, hopeful and bleak."
Steven Sheehan	Letterboxd	4.5/5	Positive	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	4-Jun-16	26	N/A	"The resurrection of the 80s... has revealed a nasty under
Daisoujou	Letterboxd	4/5	Positive	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	8-Feb-21	40	N/A	"You have to train yourself to not stand up for your value
Kurd	Letterboxd	5/5	Positive	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	24-Jun-20	26	N/A	"The film creates this horrific miasma of hatred, where you
Violet Kay	Letterboxd	4/5	Positive	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	31-Mar-22	23	N/A	"Babylon has sheer galvanised fury of its era by not uncor
J	Letterboxd	4/5	Positive	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	7-Nov-21	22	N/A	"Bigotry doesn't stop with words; it only begins with the
FilmsInSight	Letterboxd	4.5/5	Positive	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2-Feb-22	23	N/A	"At heart, it is a story of a group of friends motioning thro
Lee Does Not Exist	Letterboxd	5/5	Positive	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	20-Jun-23	22	N/A	"What's most apparent in Babylon is the sheer joy it depic
Mister All Sunday	Letterboxd	5/5	Positive	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	7-Nov-19	18	N/A	"So perhaps the best way to say fuck you to their world is
Matt	Letterboxd	4/5	Positive	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	26-Oct-20	17	N/A	"Babylon sheds light and perspective on the struggles that
mateowah	Letterboxd	5/5	Positive	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	31-May-22	12	N/A	"Music allows the main characters to have a sense of com
Grant McLanaghan	Letterboxd	4/5	Positive	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	10-Jan-22	12	N/A	"Beefy's just as British as those that are hurling ignorant,
mattechel	Letterboxd	3/5	Positive	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1-Jul-24	9	N/A	"It's an engaging enough character study—it reminded me
Jonathan Gilligan	Letterboxd	4.5/5	Positive	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	10-Feb-22	8	N/A	"The themes of racism and xenophobia is hauntingly relev
Wayne	Letterboxd	3.5/5	Positive	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	16-Oct-21	8	N/A	"What this spectacle is rather, is one genuinely raw and tra
PJ	Letterboxd	4/5	Positive	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	22-May-22	6	N/A	"Babylon is under the group of entertainers trying to withsta
bex	Letterboxd	4.5/5	Positive	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	17-Feb-24	6	N/A	"Music underlines the whole film...The importance of mus
luckyhoss	Letterboxd	4/5	Positive	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	27-Jan-21	6	N/A	"It was definitely a fascinating peek at it [Rastafari]...and I
andyberry1	IMDb User Reviews	7/10	Positive	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	2-Sep-13	5	0	"Babylon should definitely have a place in anyone's top 10
Ali John Catterall	IMDb User Reviews	10/10	Positive	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	21-Jun-10	16	0	"Attack the sound and you attack the community."
MattBairdSound	IMDb User Reviews	None	Mixed	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	8-Jan-08	7	14	"Is there any point making a film called Babylon without a
THR Staff	IMDb External Review	N/A	Positive	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	8-Mar-19	N/A	N/A	"Babylon spills over with killer reggae on its soundtrack,
Wesley Morris	IMDb External Review	N/A	Positive	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7-Mar-19	N/A	N/A	"This movie is more interested in what feels real than what
Richard Hittaker	IMDb External Review	N/A	Mixed-Positive	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	5-Apr-19	N/A	N/A	"This is my fucking country, lady, and it's never been fu
Roger Moore	IMDb External Review	N/A	Mixed-Positive	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	4-Mar-19	N/A	N/A	"Babylon brims over with life in ways that few films of rece
Candice Frederick	IMDb External Review	N/A	Mixed-Positive	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	5-Mar-19	N/A	N/A	"Babylon' was never released in America. It's a 1980 film
Jonathan Christian	IMDb External Review	N/A	Mixed-Negative	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	7-Mar-19	N/A	N/A	"Babylon is a glorified workprint—a grimy flick equipped w
Sharon Autenrieth	IMDb External Review	N/A	Positive	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	5-Sep-19	N/A	N/A	"The greatness of the past is in the eye of the beholder, and
Brian Skutle	IMDb External Review	N/A	Positive	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	21-Dec-22	N/A	N/A	"The film's primary character is Blue (played by Brinsley Fo
Kathy Fennessy	IMDb External Review	N/A	Mixed	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	4-Apr-19	N/A	N/A	"Babylon is hardly a feel-good proposition, but it captures
Chris Barsanti	IMDb External Review	6/10	Mixed	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1-Apr-19	N/A	N/A	"Babylon seems like less of a time capsule than a warning
Frank Ochieng	IMDb External Review	N/A	Positive	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	9-Mar-19	N/A	N/A	"Babylon foreshadowed the black youth profiling epidem
Kathryn Schroeder	IMDb External Review	4/5	Positive	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	8-Mar-19	N/A	N/A	"Babylon is an exemplary example of how to craft an hon
Rouven Linnarz (German)	IMDb External Review	N/A	Positive	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	12-Jan-24	N/A	N/A	"At night, Blue and his friends make music, escaping the
Angus Wolfe Murray	IMDb External Review	N/A	Positive	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	4-Dec-08	N/A	N/A	"With the release of the DVD 28 years later its importanc
Joel Karamath	IMDb External Review	N/A	Positive	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	13-Oct-09	N/A	N/A	"Unlike a plethora of revisionist depictions of youth cultur
Marco Pierrard (French)	IMDb External Review	N/A	Positive	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	14-Oct-20	N/A	N/A	"Babylon does not advocate, he is concerned about it. But
Paul Seidel (German)	IMDb External Review	7.5/10	Positive	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	None Found	N/A	N/A	"Their movements between family, friends and the white n

For readability, all the complete key quotes from the above table are found below:

Key Quotes

"It flips the script by showing the full and diverse world of the black community... while the outsiders (white people) are shown strictly as the unpredictable spikes of fringe violence."

"With its depiction of a distinctive cultural sub-section of our 1980s society and its unflinching gritty approach... it's easy to draw a line from Babylon to Shane Meadows' This Is England."

“Babylon is joyful and ferocious, hopeful and bleak.”

"The resurrection of the 80s... has revealed a nasty undercurrent of suppressed prejudice that has always existed."

"You have to train yourself to not stand up for your value as an equal person, because society will show you it doesn't think you are, every time."

“The film creates this horrific miasma of hatred, where you can feel the anger and despair continually bubbling up within the group, because it’s impossible to escape the oppression blanketing them.”

“Babylon has sheer galvanised fury of its era by not uncompromising a deep outlook directed, produced and powered by excellent collaboration of talents.”

“Bigotry doesn’t stop with words; it only begins with them.”

“At heart, it is a story of a group of friends motioning through their day-to-day life, sometimes metaphorically stepping over another citizen traveling foot — merely attempting to gain a foot further than his unknown fellow man in desperate hope of avoiding falling under.”

“What’s most apparent in Babylon is the sheer joy it depicts when the music and the people come together; the dancing and the smiles when the bass hits.”

“So perhaps the best way to say fuck you to their world is to live your truth.”

“Babylon sheds light and perspective on the struggles that the black community went through in London during the late seventies, under Thatcher rule and the ever watchful, ignorant eyes of a scarily large white nationalist percentage of the general public and authorities.”

“Music allows the main characters to have a sense of community that is near to nonexistent within their world.”

"Beefy’s just as British as those that are hurling ignorant, repugnant invective in his direction. So his sense of belonging but not belonging... it’s the kind of thing that’d fuck you up if you let it."

"It's an engaging enough character study--it reminded me a bit of that Denzel movie...where we just wait until a very patient and stiff jawed Denzel finally snaps after one too many hassles with everyone around him."

"The themes of racism and xenophobia is hauntingly relevant to today...Babylon is literally about people living their lives, trying to live in a world where they're judged just for being there."

"What this spectacle is rather, is one genuinely raw and tragic impression of what it's like to live with all kinds of unfair treatment that inevitably comes with life..."

"Babylon is about a group of entertainers trying to withstand the tough oppressed times in London, while trying to maintain there integrity as black folk."

"Music underlines the whole film...The importance of music and the community and rivalries it creates is so vivid."

"It was definitely a fascinating peek at it [Rastafari]...and I wish I had more knowledge about it all."

"Babylon should definitely have a place in anyone's top 100 British films of all time."

"Attack the sound and you attack the community."

"Is there any point making a film called Babylon without a sign post to a way OUT of Babylon?"

"Babylon spills over with killer reggae on its soundtrack, the music feeling very different in this urban context than it does in The Harder They Come."

"This movie is more interested in what feels real than what seems right."

"This is my fucking country, lady, and it's never been fucking lovely. It's always been a fucking tip, for as long as I can remember."

"Babylon brims over with life in ways that few films of recent vintage could manage, a movie-moment that remembers when 'One Love' was enough to end any argument and calm any troubled waters."

"'Babylon' was never released in America. It's a 1980 film with subtitles and no big-name stars that centers on poor black male youths in London living among neighbors who shout, 'Go back to your country!' from their bedroom windows on a regular basis."

“Babylon is a glorified workprint—a grimy flick equipped with a feverish pitch that desperately strives to scream something profound, but loses its voice in the aftershock of choppy pacing and an aimless plot.”

"The greatness of the past is in the eye of the beholder, and often depends on whether you're looking at it from the top or the bottom of the social ladder."

"The film's primary character is Blue (played by Brinsley Forde), who is a mechanic and reggae artist who has to deal with the racist words and philosophies of his boss (played by Mel Smith), as well as racial profiling and garden variety bigotry away from work, and away from the club he and his friends spin at."

"Babylon is hardly a feel-good proposition, but it captures the highs--the music, the camaraderie--and lows--the homophobia, the misogyny--of an underrepresented scene with lacerating, you-are-fucking-there precision."

"Babylon seems like less of a time capsule than a warning."

"Babylon foreshadowed the black youth profiling epidemic so commonly practiced."

"Babylon is an exemplary example of how to craft an honest film that speaks volumes in a subtle way that audiences will resonate with on multiple levels."

"At night, Blue and his friends make music, escaping their struggles with reggae as their soundtrack."

"With the release of the DVD 28 years later its importance can at last be appreciated."

"Unlike a plethora of revisionist depictions of youth culture, Babylon captures the zeitgeist of the era, avoiding the grip of nostalgia, instead providing a harrowing yet ultimately uplifting account of a cultural and spiritual triumph over the adversities of poverty and overt racism (institutional and physical) that were still so ingrained in Thatcher's England."

"Babylon does not advocate, he is concerned about it. But in the face of this cruelly realistic mirror stretched out of society, it decided to look."

"Their movements between family, friends and the white neighborhood, between responsibility for themselves and for others, between the one-constricted, uncertain reality and the dream of the music business show edgy, by no means flawless figures that allow stereotypical facades to break open

Table 6.3: The Spook Who Sat by the Door Codes

Reviewer	Platform	Rating	Sentiment	Tokenism	Black Militancy	Radicalism	Assimilation vs. Rebellion	Satire/Subversion	Gender Representation	Cinematic Technique	Cultural Relevance	Emotional Impact	Historical Context	Date	Likes	Dislikes	Key Quotes
Jerry	Letterboxd	4.5/5	Positive	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1 11-Jun-23	103	N/A	"When a sy
Joshua Dysart	Letterboxd	4.5/5	Positive	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1 16-May-22	83	N/A	"Truly polit
Elisha Luckett	Letterboxd	2.5/5	Mixed-Negative	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1 22-Jan-21	79	N/A	"What goo
Todd	Letterboxd	4.5/5	Positive	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1 14-Aug-19	95	N/A	"Remembe
Sally Jane Black	Letterboxd	Unrated	Mixed-Positive	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1 8-Feb-15	84	N/A	"That I wen
joshuabriend	Letterboxd	5/5	Positive	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1 9-Aug-24	7	N/A	"For a lot o
mosquitodragon	Letterboxd	3/5	Mixed	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	1 8-Jul-23	33	N/A	"It's more t
GigaKaiju	Letterboxd	4.5/5	Positive	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1 16-Feb-23	30	N/A	"You think
More_Badass	Letterboxd	5/5	Positive	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1 15-Jun-20	20	N/A	"Spook is r
Corwyn	Letterboxd	4.5/5	Positive	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1 28-Dec-23	15	N/A	"You got th
Mitchell Beaupre	Letterboxd	4/5	Positive	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1 21-Sep-20	13	N/A	"This is a m
BarbaLuga	Letterboxd	4/5	Positive	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1 28-Jan-25	10	N/A	"They pulle
JoeHalcyon	Letterboxd	3.5/5	Positive	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1 10-Feb-24	11	N/A	"It did wha
Jack Barry	Letterboxd	2.5/5	Negative	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1 14-Jan-21	11	N/A	"It's just lik
Charlie Herndon	Letterboxd	None	Positive	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1 19-Sep-20	10	N/A	"A good, far
Jon Dieringer	Letterboxd	4/5	Positive	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1 20-Jul-18	11	N/A	"An incid
AuteurTheory	Letterboxd	5/5	Positive	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1 24-Mar-20	9	N/A	"Our prota
Rafael "Parker!!" Jovine	Letterboxd	4/5	Positive	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1 9-Feb-23	153	N/A	"Just the in
treadyster	Letterboxd	3.5/5	Mixed-Positive	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1 2-Dec-23	8	N/A	"To Dixon,
Keith Adams Jr	Letterboxd	4/5	Positive	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1 7-Feb-23	9	N/A	"The most
Baroque	IMDb User Reviews	10/10	Positive	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1 7-Oct-00	19	4	"-- but afte
mark.waltz	IMDb User Reviews	7/10	Positive	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1 19-Jun-24	0	0	". A white n
Killakai	IMDb User Reviews	9/10	Positive	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1 15-Sep-06	5	1	"Director h
frankenbenz	IMDb User Reviews	6/10	Mixed-Positive	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1 18-Jul-08	5	4	"Few films
Cortlyn Kelly	IMDb External Reviews	N/A	Positive	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1 31-Oct-24	N/A	N/A	"Like "The S
Peter Hanson	IMDb External Reviews	N/A	Positive	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1 7-Nov-13	N/A	N/A	"We keep
Brian Bankston	IMDb External Reviews	N/A	Positive	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1 13-Jul-10	N/A	N/A	"THE SPOO
Lukas Foerster (German)	IMDb External Reviews	N/A	Positive	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1 27-Oct-06	N/A	N/A	"Dixon sho
Kevin Lyons	IMDb External Reviews	N/A	Positive	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1 10-Jun-19	N/A	N/A	"It's a furio
Richard Brody	IMDb External Reviews	N/A	Positive	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1 20-Jul-18	N/A	N/A	"As with s
Lisa Marie Bowman	IMDb External Reviews	N/A	Positive	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1 4-May-24	N/A	N/A	"It's the rare
Christopher Armstead	IMDb External Reviews	N/A	Positive	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1 N/A	N/A	N/A	"It is a wor
Emiliano Fernández (Spanish)	IMDb External Reviews	10/10	Positive	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1 N/A	N/A	N/A	"A great cla
Vern	IMDb External Reviews	N/A	Positive	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1 26-Feb-14	N/A	N/A	"This genui
kimnewman	IMDb External Reviews	N/A	Positive	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1 18-Feb-22	N/A	N/A	"Generatio
Sarah G. Vincent	IMDb External Reviews	N/A	Positive	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1 25-Aug-24	N/A	N/A	"His goal is
Oliver Nöding (German)	IMDb External Reviews	N/A	Positive	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1 23-Aug-18	N/A	N/A	"A radical,
thgrouh	IMDb External Reviews	N/A	Positive	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1 14-Nov-06	N/A	N/A	"The Spook
Josh Larsen	IMDb External Reviews	N/A	Positive	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1 10-Feb-23	N/A	N/A	"The Spook
Nickkarner	IMDb External Reviews	N/A	Positive	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1 14-Feb-22	N/A	N/A	"What wou

For readability, all the complete key quotes from the above table are found below:

Key Quotes

“When a system is deliberately corrupt... it’s not only imperative but urgent to become... radical.”

“Truly politically perilous and thematically unpredictable cinema is rare indeed.”

“What good is a purportedly revolutionary text if I can look away from it?”

“Remember that a smiling black man is invisible.”

“That I went in looking for nuance to counteract this flaw... perhaps let me see depth where I wanted it.”

“For a lot of us... stripping of one’s cultural & ideological-political heritage is increasingly permanent.”

“It’s more like a dramatized thought experiment.”

“You think we’re playing games killing white strangers? ... anybody who gets between us and freedom has got to go.”

“Spook is racial fury solidified into raw revolutionary manifesto.”

“You got the airborne out there now. 40 percent of those troops are black... if you hesitate with any one of them because he’s black just once... You’d be one dead cobra.”

“This is a movie that never gives easy answers, but it’s filled with appropriate rage and cries out for something to happen.”

“They pulled no punches... it still might be the best example of this particular boundary being pushed in film even up to present day.”

“It did what so many of these films failed to do. It made its message clear.”

“It’s just like the black man’s version of ‘project mayhem’ in ‘Fight Club’... an hour-and-a-half of an angry black daydream of the American Dream.”

“A good, fantastically crafted dramatization can put you in the perspective of a very radicalized person while also not preaching to you.”

“An incendiary and uncompromising cry to organize and fight whose radicality remains undiminished.”

“Our protagonist... is first and foremost a black power philosopher... a suit and tie wearing, bespectacled, political radical.”

“Just the implication of its title and meaning, where basically for a while, these institutions used to hire a token Black man or woman who would be seated close to the office entrance so that people who came and went could see that the company was racially mixed...”

“To Dixon, an oppressed internal colony can be liberated if a single messianic genius recruits some crack squads... But we don’t see the masses.”

“The most dangerous thing to the white ruling class is a band of Black people coming together and plotting, planning, and organizing... a spark will emerge and it scares them.”

"-- but after seeing Spook it is safe to say Dixon's talents were simply better suited for the small screen."

". A white man (like myself) may find the diatribes against "whitey" shocking, but this film was made during a time of great racial strife, and it echos those times."

"Director Ivan Dixon really gets his point of view across without slapping the non-black viewer, and it definitely opens the door to conversation regardless of the fact that it's a 50-plus year old film."

"Few films of that era, or any other, captured any meaningful part of the essence of a black revolutionary struggle."

"Like “The Spook Who Sat by the Door,” the authentic, psychedelic fashion of Black folk in the 70s saturates the screen with immense color that matches the vibrancy of the music we hear."

“We keep waiting for the moment when the film will pull the brakes and suggest that the violent solution is excessive, but it never comes... The Spook Who Sat by the Door clearly considers the civil rights movement insufficiently revolutionary.”

"THE SPOOK WHO SAT BY THE DOOR (1973) wants the same thing, but gets its pent up frustrations across as a wake up call for those to stop waiting for hand outs and start paving the way for a future of self sufficiency and dependence in one's own ability to obtain and succeed.

"Dixon shows with meticulous precision how the enemy's weapons must be used against him, how traitors in one's own ranks are eliminated, which tools can be used and which are better left undone."

"It’s a furious, vivid and robust look at the plight of African Americans in early 1970s America (“your oppressors hardly know you exist,” Freeman tells his rapidly growing army of freedom fighters, “that’s the real issue”) that may be rough around the edges but which has lost none of its power to shock and enlighten in equal measure."

"As with so many independent films—sadly and unsurprisingly, particularly ones directed by women and people of color—the disappearance of this one also contributed to the erasure of careers, mentorship, influence, and power of another sort, which, judging by the fate of “The Spook Who Sat By the Door,” seems to have mattered desperately to law-enforcement officials: power in the world of movies itself."

"It's the rare political film to actually feature conversations about actual politics and it's a film that asks how far people would be willing to go to accomplish change."

"It is a work of fiction, and I'd even go so far to say it's almost Science Fiction as it is basically dealing with an alternate reality, but it is one hell of a challenging work of fiction that really should be seen by as many people as possible"

“A great classic of political cinema about armed Black resistance against the white establishment and its repressive apparatus, as well as a clandestinity willing to die for the cause and kill an equal if he betrays his own.”

“This genuinely is a movie that advocates armed rebellion against the government. Okay, so far so good, but in this movie it's Black people doing it and the president is still white! So they would be against it!”

"Generations on, it remains a potent set of arguments and surprisingly good drama; it's one of a handful of contemporary films – The Revolutionary, The Man, even Wild in the Streets – which tried to look at the turmoil in America at the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the '70s."

"His goal is to stop being treated as foreigners in their native country in the hopes that the treatment will be restricted outside their borders.”

“A radical, immensely exciting and gripping film, which at the time of its creation was much too close in the painful truth and showed no interest in mediation.”

“The Spook... is still absolutely unbroken in its morally sensitive moments and carried over the conditions by an unbridled rage.”

"The Spook Who Sat by the Door itself deserved more; largely forgotten amidst discussions of African-American cinema, I didn't come across the film until critic Elvis Mitchell highlighted it in his invaluable 2022 documentary, Is That Black Enough For You?!?"

“What would happen if James Bond went rogue... The word ‘spook’ has a double meaning, acting as both a racial slur and a derogatory term for spy.”

Table 6.4: Bamboozled Codes

Date	Reviewer	Platform	Likes	Sentiment	Black Identity	Media Critique	Racial Violence	Resistance/Agency	Satire	Gender	Historical Reference	Form/Aesthetic	Rating	Key Quotes
25-Mar-20	Penny	Letterboxd	728	Positive	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	4.5/5	"Spike Lee's satire of black portrayal in the entertainment industry might have been a fail
4-Apr-21	Nick	Letterboxd	254	Positive	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	4.5/5	"It's ultimately a jab at the money-grubbing Hollywood, and the faceless cro
3-Feb-21	Stephen Gillespie	Letterboxd	203	Positive	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	5/5	"The film is all about appropriation, and how white audiences really want to
7-Jun-20	Justin Peterson	Letterboxd	185	Positive	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	5/5	"While Bamboozled is an extremely difficult film, I feel that it is also very imp
8-Feb-22	Rafael Jovine	Letterboxd	127	Mixed Positive	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	4.5/5	"All in all, a film that is still relevant and biting in its satire of the media and o
5-Dec-20	Jay	Letterboxd	90	Positive	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	5/5	"This movie is such an angry way of showing how the entertainment industry
12-Jun-20	Zachary	Letterboxd	83	Positive	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	5/5	"Spike's as mad as hell, and he's not going to take this anymore! Bamboozled
4-Feb-21	Noah Cassidy	Letterboxd	80	Positive	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	4.5/5	"Racism has no easy solution because it is so ingrained into our history. It is
29-Mar-21	cleansing my soul of addiction	Letterboxd	78	Positive	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	5/5	". this is a worthless film, a miserable exercise in futility probably no better t
24-Jun-20	Josefina (Girl On the Shore)	Letterboxd	67	Positive	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	5/5	"Exhausting, confrontational, surreal, and utterly uncompromising. I wish to
4-Feb-24	Edgar Cochran	Letterboxd	62	Positive	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	4/5	"The plot climax of the film is something I don't buy at all; it is unnecessarily
10-May-20	Dawson Joyce	Letterboxd	57	Positive	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	4.5/5	"Warts and all, Bamboozled is a racial commentary that's equal parts darkly
16-Feb-21	Kunga Sagar	Letterboxd	47	Positive	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	4/5	"Race relations is simply what triggers the conflict of the American people, t
6-Jun-23	Tanner	Letterboxd	45	Mixed	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	3/5	"It's no doubt a film that deserves consideration but it's more captivating as
28-Apr-20	Mike D'Angelo	Letterboxd	42	Mixed	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	2/5	"Presumably he feels that the blackface tradition lives on today in some les
30-Mar-14	Steven Sheehan	Letterboxd	39	Positive	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	3.5/5	"Not everything in the film is successful but the overriding sentiment is an in
18-Aug-23	Mitchell Beaupre	Letterboxd	38	Positive	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	4.5/5	"Bamboozled might be messy, and it's also one of the most significant works
25-Feb-22	RebelCommander	Letterboxd	32	Positive	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	4.5/5	"It presents the history behind minstrel performances. As we see the show's
28-Jan-18	Kurd	Letterboxd	33	Mixed	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	None	"This is one of those where I appreciate the satire and what Spike Lee is tryin
29-Jan-24	Micah	Letterboxd	29	Positive	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	0/5	"bamboozled is a brilliant film notable for its afro-pessimism and controlled
11-Nov-01	zetes	IMDb User Reviews	57	Positive	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	9/10	" Bamboozled is an enormous jolt to our current, apathetic world. "
27-Feb-10	bobsrock	IMDb User Reviews	12	Mixed	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	7/10	"I was held captive every step of the way. I just wish he had picked a better a
25-Feb-12	lisa-fench	IMDb User Reviews	13	Positive	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	0/7/10	"The movie is heartbreaking as is the behavior of many Americans. Thank you
9-Apr-08	Hancock the Superb	IMDb User Reviews	8	Mixed	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	6/10	"The movie is also damaged by its cop-out ending, which uses violence as an
21-Oct-00	nocabout	IMDb User Reviews	50	Positive	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	10/10	"An incredibly important film, for any consumer, and by definition, any creat
11-Jul-08	Quinoa1984	IMDb User Reviews	9	Negative	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	4.5/10	"Bamboozled goes up and down in its level of pretentiousness and ineptitude
6-Mar-10	DarthVoorhees	IMDb User Reviews	5	Mixed	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	6/10	"What is there to say about these minstrel shows? They were an ugly part of
15-Oct-01	FunnyMann	IMDb User Reviews	1	Positive	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	7/10	"This is a good film for people who don't want to forget what they just saw as
8-Mar-02	stevfallonnyc	IMDb User Reviews	12	Negative	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1/10	"There is nothing here to "get." "Bamboozled" is such a hack piece of garbage
23-Mar-02	tedg	IMDb User Reviews	7	Mixed	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	None	". It is as much a slave and exploiter of stereotypes as it condemns."
6-Oct-00	Roger Ebert	IMDb External Reviews	N/A	Mixed	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	None	"The power of the racist image tramples over the material and asserts only it
6-Oct-00	Stephen Holden	IMDb External Reviews	N/A	Positive	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	None	"It suggests that the craze for acting black (the figurative putting on of blackf
20-Oct-00	Peter Travers	IMDb External Reviews	N/A	Positive	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	None	"Until Bamboozled goes off the rails by turning violent and hectoring in its pu
20-Oct-00	Edward Guthmann	IMDb External Reviews	N/A	Positive	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	None	"He doesn't update it with any discussion of black images on TV right now an
Not Found	Thomas Willman (German)	IMDb External Reviews	N/A	Positive	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	None	"For all its political commitment, for everything that makes this film likeable
14-Aug-01	Frederik Asschenfeldt Vandrup (Danis	IMDb External Reviews	N/A	Positive	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	4/6	" Spike Lee shows for the first time that his frank and burning commitment to
22-Dec-16	Jean-Gavril Sluka (French)	IMDb External Reviews	N/A	Positive	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	None	"A film radically uncomfortable in its display of stereotypes, leaving no one u
Nov-00	Nicksflickpicks	IMDb External Reviews	N/A	Positive	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	B	"Bamboozled, despite deep flaws of structure and execution, makes an inco
6-Aug-13	JerryAtTheMovies	IMDb External Reviews	N/A	Positive	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	None	"Bamboozled" is too fractured and blunt to really score (and has a rather m
27-Jun-11	Finn Clark	IMDb External Reviews	N/A	Positive	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	None	"I certainly wouldn't recommend watching this for entertainment, but I resp

For readability, all the complete key quotes from the above table are found below:

Key Quotes

"Spike Lee's satire of black portrayal in the entertainment industry might have been a failure critically and financially upon release, but 20 years later, it is much needed and proved to be ahead of its time."

"It's ultimately a jab at the money-grubbing Hollywood, and the faceless crowd hiding behind their invisible "black face" who feed off black misery as entertainment, whether knowingly or not."

"The film is all about appropriation, and how white audiences really want to see (and control) Blackness, and it is deeply uncomfortable."

"While Bamboozled is an extremely difficult film, I feel that it is also very important in helping to better understand the history of racially exploitative and demeaning entertainment in America."

"All in all, a film that is still relevant and biting in its satire of the media and of some of the systematic racism that is part of the show business industry."

"This movie is such an angry way of showing how the entertainment industry dehumanizes blackness to the point of using black bodies as a way to maintain and increase viewership." "All in all, a film that is still relevant and biting in its satire of the media and of some of the systematic racism that is part of the show business industry."

"Spike's as mad as hell, and he's not going to take this anymore! Bamboozled, Spike Lee's pitch black comedy about the war zone between blackness and show business cites Peter Finch's famous refrain twice."

"Racism has no easy solution because it is so ingrained into our history. It is history, and the history books will keep on coming"

". this is a worthless film, a miserable exercise in futility probably no better than the violent exploitation of Steve McQueen, Ava DuVernay and Barry Jenkins. but that in and of itself is a triumph born out of the relentless pessimism it exudes from start to finish"

"Exhausting, confrontational, surreal, and utterly uncompromising. I wish to see more film like this. "

"The plot climax of the film is something I don't buy at all; it is unnecessarily forced and sensationalist for a statement that was already on the correct tracks, but still props to Damon Wayans for his best career role and Jada participating in unusual Hollywood films during the 90s and early 2000s concerning race topics."

"Warts and all, Bamboozled is a racial commentary that's equal parts darkly funny, insightful, and thoroughly crushing"

"Race relations is simply what triggers the conflict of the American people, the media exploiting it appears to be the root of the problem. "

"It's no doubt a film that deserves consideration but it's more captivating as something to ponder than it is as an actual film."

"Presumably he feels that the blackface tradition lives on today in some less ostentatious form (otherwise why address the subject in a contemporary context?); apart from a brief remark about TV execs preferring images of blacks as buffoons, however, no argument ever coalesces, making the outlandish scenario seem like a paranoid fantasy—provocation for provocation's sake.

" Not everything in the film is successful but the overriding sentiment is an important one that makes this one of the most important films in his catalogue"

"Bamboozled might be messy, and it's also one of the most significant works of the 21st century, and easily among Spike's very best"

" It presents the history behind minstrel performances. As we see the show's construction transform, we also know the impact on the cast, crew, and broader society."

"This is one of those where I appreciate the satire and what Spike Lee is trying to do, but the film itself is kind of lacking. "

"bamboozled is a brilliant film notable for its afro-pessimism and controlled rage, while being hilariously caked in irony."

" Bamboozled is an enormous jolt to our current, apathetic world. "

"I was held captive every step of the way. I just wish he had picked a better and more effective way to satirize his subjects, as well as maybe broaden the horizons; only then could it really take root."

"The movie is heartbreaking as is the behavior of many Americans. Thank you Spike Lee."

"The movie is also damaged by its cop-out ending, which uses violence as an easy solution to the problems it has set up"

"An incredibly important film, for any consumer, and by definition, any creator of popular culture who may be responsible for the perpetuation and dissemination of DAMAGING and DEGRADING stereotypes."

"Bamboozled goes up and down in its level of pretentiousness and ineptitude."

"What is there to say about these minstrel shows? They were an ugly part of our American past, but they are far from being relevant now."

"This is a good film for people who don't want to forget what they just saw as soon as the credits roll."

"There is nothing here to "get." "Bamboozled" is such a hack piece of garbage, it doesn't come across as "profound," "deep" or anything else the typical NYU film student feels he or she is so good at expressing."

""". It is as much a slave and exploiter of stereotypes as it condemns.""

"

"The power of the racist image tramples over the material and asserts only itself."

"It suggests that the craze for acting black (the figurative putting on of blackface) has never been more pronounced than it is today with the rise of the "hip-hop nation," as hordes of white teenagers adopt black fashion and street argot."

"Until Bamboozled goes off the rails by turning violent and hectoring in its push for profundity, Lee gets in some choice licks at ghetto fashion (the Tommy Hilnigger collection, with bullet holes included), know-nothing rappers ("Reading hurts my head") and racial profiling. "

"He doesn't update it with any discussion of black images on TV right now and how they've broken away from, or reinforced, the damning iconography of the past."

"For all its political commitment, for everything that makes this film likeable, it remains at the same time a witty, sharp satire, great cinema in its ability to connect very different levels and aspects."

" Spike Lee shows for the first time that his frank and burning commitment to black rights can also be channeled into a fascinating cinematic language."

"A film radically uncomfortable in its display of stereotypes, leaving no one unscathed (we are all the incarnate cliché of someone else), an unpleasant illustration of why television is a lost cause."

"Bamboozled, despite deep flaws of structure and execution, makes an incontrovertible case that its subject demands recognition and conversation."

""Bamboozled" is too fractured and blunt to really score (and has a rather muddy look due to being filmed on digital video), but it does make you reflect on how race is portrayed in the media in today's world."

"I certainly wouldn't recommend watching this for entertainment, but I respect the power of what Lee's saying."

Table 6.5: Sorry to Bother You Codes

Date	Reviewer	Platform	Likes	Rating	Sentiment	Race	Labor	Satire	Capitalism	White Voice	Art	Originality	Execution	Activism Cri	Debut/Auteu	Identity	Gender	Media	Visual Style	Key Quotes
2-Sep-18	SilentDawn	Letterboxd	441	4.5/5	Positive		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1 "Not just a confident debut, but
1-Jun-18	Kevin Y	Letterboxd	292	3/5	Mixed Positive		1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1 "Sure, Riley doesn't seem to have
13-Jul-18	Vincent Briscoe	Letterboxd	213	0.5/5	Negative		1	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	0 "What is ultimately the problem v
15-Feb-25	Rafael Jovine	Letterboxd	173	4.5/5	Positive		1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1 "Its commentary as well as much
6-Nov-18	Justin Peterson	Letterboxd	118	4/5	Positive		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1 "Sorry to Bother You is jammed pa
29-Jun-22	David James	Letterboxd	110	5/5	Positive		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	1 "I just can't emphasize enough ho
13-Jul-18	Tooley I Am King	Letterboxd	110	2.5/5	Mixed		0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0 "If it had been less obnoxious wif
9-Nov-18	Tony (tectactoe)	Letterboxd	110	2.5/5	Mixed-Negative		1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	0 "There's way too much trying to h
31-Jan-21	matthewcutchen	Letterboxd	91	5/5	Positive		0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1 "It's strange, funny, satirical, reck
29-Dec-18	Issac	Letterboxd	81	4.5/5	Positive		1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1 "You could say that this movie is j
26-Apr-20	Nick J	Letterboxd	75	4.5/5	Positive		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1 "It doesn't waste your time, it rew
14-Mar-18	Elle Driver	Letterboxd	70	4/5	Positive		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	1 "Insanely funny, deliciously deme
27-Jul-18	Austin Burke	Letterboxd	69	3/5	Mixed		1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	1 "It's the most divisive movie (in m
13-Jul-18	Wesley R. Ball	Letterboxd	69	4/5	Positive		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1 "It works in every way it should, an
21-May-21	Chris	Letterboxd	66	3/5	Mixed		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1 "With that said, I do admire the cl
9-Aug-23	EvilMonkeyToes	Letterboxd	60	4/5	Positive		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1 "It is, of course, an exaggeration o
9-Nov-18	robin moon	Letterboxd	58	3/5	Mixed		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1 "The entire idea of worryfree reso
2-May-18	Brian Formo	Letterboxd	57	4/5	Positive		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1 "Sorry to Bother you is concerned
10-Dec-18	Steve G	Letterboxd	54	4.5/5	Positive		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1 "Race, of course, plays a part and
13-Jul-18	Jaime Rebanal	Letterboxd	54	4.5/5	Positive		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1 "Everything works so perfectly bec
2-Sep-18	rk6314	IMDb User Reviews	653	8/10	Positive		1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	1 "If you don't like absurdist humor,
21-Oct-18	djbattick	IMDb User Reviews	118	7/10	Mixed Positive		1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	1 "Though smiling throughout, my o
18-Jul-18	Jared Andrews	IMDb User Reviews	234	8/10	Positive		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1 "It makes a radical left turn in the
24-Dec-18	Bertaut	IMDb User Reviews	154	7/10	Positive		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1 "Exploring the intersection betwe
3-May-18	idennis32	IMDb User Reviews	262	6/10	Mixed Negative		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	1 "But the real crime is how they di
17-Oct-18	zfisher-20437	IMDb User Reviews	12	7/10	Positive		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1 "Every time I thought I knew wher
20-Aug-19	Prismark10	IMDb User Reviews	16	6/10	Mixed Positive		1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	1 "What starts out as a social satire
15-Jul-18	stevenbeard	IMDb User Reviews	60	5/10	Negative		1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	1 "I like weird but it has a lot of sym
29-Jun-18	bastille-852-731547	IMDb User Reviews	156	10/10	Positive		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1 "The film's social consciousness s
22-Jul-18	christianmaxwell	IMDb User Reviews	61	10/10	Positive		1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1 "All in all this is a movie about cap
6-Jul-18	Brian Tallerico	IMDb External Reviews	N/A	N/A	Positive		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1 "It never loses sight of its need to
11-Jul-18	James Berardinelli	IMDb External Reviews	N/A	N/A	Mixed Positive		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	1 "The film isn't going to find fans an
29-Jan-19	Caroline Vié (French)	IMDb External Reviews	N/A	N/A	Positive		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1 "Sorry To Bother You" mixes the g
2-Jul-18	A.O. Scott	IMDb External Reviews	N/A	N/A	Positive		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1 "Mr. Riley's futurism is not merely
3-Jul-18	April Wolfe	IMDb External Reviews	N/A	N/A	Positive		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1 "If you thought Silicon Valley's ske
2-Jul-18	Lara Zarum	IMDb External Reviews	N/A	N/A	Positive		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1 "Whether or not Riley goes mains
4-Dec-18	Simon Hooper	IMDb External Reviews	N/A	N/A	Mixed Positive		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1 "Riley's script has some very good
22-Aug-19	Alex Mazereeuw	IMDb External Reviews	N/A	N/A	Positive		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1 "Sorry to Bother You" mixes the c
31-Mar-20	Carlos Murcia	IMDb External Reviews	N/A	N/A	Mixed Positive		1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	1 "The film probably would have wo
10-Nov-18	Michael Fleig	IMDb External Reviews	N/A	N/A	Mixed Positive		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1 "After BlackKklansman and Get O

For readability, all the complete key quotes from the above table are found below:

Key Quotes

"Not just a confident debut, but a clear-eyed, sobering view of the global world, unraveling and collapsing while their hold on us tightens.

"Sure, Riley doesn't seem to have a grand, unifying satirical message here, but its wild style is nonetheless effective because the satire is so distinctly vi

"What is ultimately the problem with these kinds of political films is usually one of two things: their politics are too mild for how much they're patting the

"Its commentary as well as much of its narrative and satire is overtly unsubtle, very straightforward yet it's the way he chooses to tell this that places this

"Sorry to Bother You is jammed packed with so much commentary on the current state of America's workforce, and excellently presents its criticisms in

"I just can't emphasize enough how, despite some typical debut-movie roughness, this movie fucking slaps in all the ways that matter."

"If it had been less obnoxious with its message (A MESSAGE I AGREE WITH) I would have loved it more, but oh well. "I just can't emphasize enough how,

"There's way too much trying to happen here, and Riley opens up several cans of worms but fails to really do anything with any of 'em, leaving the final p

"It's strange, funny, satirical, reckless, incisive, insightful, hyper-stylized, patient, energetic, messy, paradoxical, fablistic, wandering, enigmatic, shocki

"You could say that this movie is just trying to show you the evils behind all these "-ism's", which it is but it's also a great movie with a great story along

"It doesn't waste your time, it rewards your investment, it's clear with its message and delivers that message so effectively with this creative cusp-between

"Insanely funny, deliciously demented, absolutely outrageous, loaded with phenomenal performances, completely audacious, and poised with style - S

"It's the most divisive movie (in my head) that I have ever seen. It is so different and weird. It is something that take monumental turns that you will never

"It works in every way it should, and is every bit as entertaining as I had expected it to be- with some welcome surprises thrown into the mix as Cassius d

"With that said, I do admire the clear passion for the underlying message and how weird this is willing to go to deliver it. I just personally believe that the

had expected it to be- with some welcome surprises thrown into the mix as Cassius dives deeper and deeper into this insane dystopian corporation."

"It is, of course, an exaggeration of the modern world of capitalism and business--but the hyperbole is not too far from the reality."

"the entire idea of worryfree resonates very strongly with the lived experiences of so many workers, but like, i feel like the movie could've been a lot more

"Sorry to Bother you is concerned with 400 years of history that's just now caught up to a faster plane to the future. It's Marxist. It's wild. It's imperfect. It

"Race, of course, plays a part and so it should considering how capitalism steps on minorities hardest of all."

"Everything works so perfectly because of how wonderfully Boots Riley both mixes in the surreal comedy with issues that pervade the world in which we

"If you don't like absurdist humor, or if you don't like movies that are at least semi-overt political statements (especially if the political statement is oppo

"Though smiling throughout, my overall emotion was of such discomfort, that I really did not want anybody to go through the same. "

"It makes a radical left turn in the third act that will tempt some viewers to jump ship. My advice: stay on board. Even if you don't want to totally buy in, ju

"Exploring the intersection between race and economics from a wholly satirical point-of-view, the film both condemns and sympathises with those who

"But the real crime is how they ditched this really thematic angle of the story dealing with identity crisis and how Cassius is selling out to "the man" due to

"Every time I thought I knew where it was going, it jerked me into another dimension."

"What starts out as a social satire quickly morphs as a surreal attack on modern capitalism. Governments and corporations do not give a damn if the poor

"I like weird but it has a lot of symbolism-which I'm not too fond of-and it is not like it is being advertised. From the trailers, it looks like a comedy about a

"The film's social consciousness and commentary intersect in ways that are thoughtful, snappy, and deeply rooted in (often unfortunately) a sense of genre
macabre fun-house."

"All in all this is a movie about capitalism and how companies are driven to make money rather than care about the well-being of their workers. This is sh

"It never loses sight of its need to entertain along with the fact that it serves as a wake-up call for viewers to ask more questions about their priorities and

"The film isn't going to find fans among those who lean to the right but that's not a concern for Riley. He's making a statement and isn't concerned about

"Sorry To Bother You" mixes the genres to make the viewer laugh by making him uncomfortable."

"Mr. Riley's futurism is not merely speculative or playful, and while "Sorry to Bother You" is too nimble to be polemical, it is insistently political. Cassius

"If you thought Silicon Valley's skewering of tech bros was cutting, Riley's version of a Bay Area capitalist asshole is diced up with a block of QVC-sold G

"Whether or not Riley goes mainstream, he has shot his shot with Sorry to Bother You, a film bleeding with the passion and energy of a director who desi

"Riley's script has some very good moments in it and some incisive commentary but the satire gets ever more sledgehammer heavy."

"'Sorry to Bother You' mixes the comic, absurdist and socially critical in a delicious cocktail, both entertaining and disrupting. An indictment of the work

"The film probably would have worked better if fantastic tone and political criticism had better congenital."

"After BlacKkKlansman and Get Out, Sorry to Bother You, who takes place in a kind of parallel present of the USA, joins a rank of films that approach bla

