

**Surviving Whiteness:
A Documentary-Practice Led Exploration of a Black PhD Student Experience in a
Predominantly White University**

By

Herbert “Natural” Langdon

Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

School of Arts and Cultures

Media, Culture and Heritage

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Newcastle University

September 2024

Abstract

This creative-practice PhD uses documentary filmmaking to capture the journey of a Black male student from the USA undertaking a PhD at a predominantly white university in the UK. The creative practice output, a 70 min film called "Surviving Whiteness", employs mobile filmmaking to adopt an autoethnographic approach intertwining personal histories, lived experience, and sociopolitical analysis to illuminate systemic challenges for people of colour in academia, including tokenism, racism, and mental health issues. By humanizing these themes, the film, "Surviving Whiteness", aims to stimulate a critical dialogue in advocating for systemic change and greater equity within educational institutions.

"Surviving Whiteness" captures the filmmaker's journey as a Black PhD student, with specific focus on accumulated personal experiences, including the challenges of relocating to a new country, the impact of COVID-19 on my study, the loss of an aunt and sister, and my own breast cancer diagnosis. The inclusion of these experiences underscores the intersection of stress, mental health, and physical illness within a systemically racially biased academic environment. My creative practice research contributes to discussions surrounding the role of autoethnography and mobile filmmaking as innovative tools for storytelling and social justice advocacy. Crucially, it highlights the empowering potential of autoethnographic filmmaking for marginalized communities to reclaim their narratives and remain resilient within oppressive systems.

Keywords: Documentary, Autoethnography, Racism, Whiteness, Ethics, Blackness

Dedication

I want to start by thanking God and my ancestors for guiding me through this process. To my parents, thank you for your love and support along the way. Mom, your selfless love and sacrifices mean the world to me. Dad, I appreciate you always pushing me to value education. To my children, your love and encouragement keep me going. To my partner, for paving the way and believing in me. And finally, to myself, for enduring and emerging through this process.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to all who have contributed to this research and stood by my side throughout this incredible journey. I am especially grateful to my supervisor, Dr. Ian McDonald, for his invaluable support during my PhD journey, his assistance in crafting my film, and thesis and his allyship in times of need. My sincere thanks also go to my supervisor, Dr. Ben Houston. I appreciate his challenging ideas, critical insights, and support, along with the encouragement from him and his family during difficult times in my PhD experience. I want to convey special thanks to my fellow filmmakers and colleagues in the PhD program. It has been a privilege to get to know you all, and I consider many of you dear friends. Your insightful opinions and perspectives have greatly enriched our discussions on documentary filmmaking and life. Finally, a special thank you to my Viva examiners, Professor Richard Clay and Dr. Matthew Hawkins, for their thoughtful engagement with my work and their valuable feedback.

I extend my gratitude to my colleagues in Film@CultureLab for their invaluable advice, inspiration, and tremendous knowledge throughout my journey. Last but certainly not least, I want to acknowledge the most important people in my life: my family, whose strength inspires me to persevere despite any challenges. I thank God for the fortitude to keep moving forward and my friends for their encouragement. To my partner, for sharing this journey with me, and to my children, for all your love and support.

Thank you to all my supporters who contributed during one of the hardest challenges of my life. Your prayers and donations helped make it possible for me to keep going and finish my studies.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Dedication.....	iii
Acknowledgments	iv
Table of Contents	v
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	7
<i>Documentary filmmaking</i>	9
<i>Enduring Legacy of the Black Experience</i>	10
<i>Whiteness, Colonialism, and the Possibility of Decolonization</i>	14
<i>Empowering African American Documentary Filmmaking for Social Change</i>	17
<i>Significance of the Study</i>	17
<i>Research Questions</i>	20
<i>Researcher position/stance</i>	21
Chapter 2- Practicing Autoethnography: Methodological Challenges and Innovations	23
2.1 <i>Autoethnography as a Method</i>	25
2.2 <i>Doing Practice-led Documentary Filmmaking: Situating ‘Surviving Whiteness’</i>	27
2.3 <i>Autoethnography in Documentary Filmmaking: Making Self the Subject</i>	32
2.4 <i>Mobile Phone Filmmaking in Documentary</i>	37
2.5 <i>First-Person / Diary Filmmaking</i>	42
Chapter 3: History of Black Documentary Film Making in the USA	47
3.1 <i>Power, Politics and the Problem of Racism: Documentary Filmmaking in the US and UK</i>	49
3.2 <i>Political and Social Implications of Black Documentary Films as Forms of Representation and Activism</i>	50
3.3 <i>Leveraging Post-Production Techniques: Case Studies of Successful Black Documentaries</i>	53
3.4 <i>Unveiling Truths: The Bold Vision of bell hooks</i>	55
3.5 <i>The White Gaze in Black Documentary Filmmaking: Navigating Representation and Lack of African American Mainstream Documentary Filmmakers</i>	56
3.6 <i>Grounding "Surviving Whiteness" in the Legacy of Influential Black Documentary Films</i>	58

3.7 Locating “Surviving Whiteness”: New Black Subjectivity and the Legacy of Black Filmmaking.....	61
Chapter 4: Surviving Whiteness: Politics, Aesthetics and Ethics	65
4.1 Personal Diary Films and Poetry: Visual Aesthetics of “Surviving Whiteness”	65
4.2 Ethics, Filmmaking and Subject: Navigating the Questions of Ethics	73
Chapter 5: Surviving Whiteness – Critical Reflections on the Creative Process	82
5.1 Techniques and Narratives: Making Surviving Whiteness	85
5.2 Pandemic, Production and Challenges.....	87
5.3 Scene Breakdown of "Surviving Whiteness"	88
5.4 Documentary as a Truth-Telling Enterprise: Visualising Vulnerability.....	92
5.5 Getting Done with the Film: Crises, Production and Function	93
Conclusion	96
<i>Autoethnographic Smartphone Filmmaking: Directions and Pathways</i>	98
<i>Surviving Whiteness: Distribution Plan and More</i>	99
Bibliography	104
Filmography	113

Chapter 1: Introduction

This study explores the critical intricacies in the intersections of documentary filmmaking, autoethnography, and decolonization in the domain of higher education. Its primary objective is to explore how these methodologies can be effectively integrated to create a documentary film. This film, titled “Surviving Whiteness”, aims not only to portray the experience of a Black PhD student in a predominantly white institution but also to challenge prevailing power dynamics, advocate for social justice, and support the ongoing quest for equity and inclusivity. Ultimately, the research endeavours to craft a documentary that authentically captures the lived experience of a Black student, sparking constructive conversations, cultivating empathy, and advancing the pursuit of a more inclusive and equitable educational landscape for all individuals.

Through an in-depth exploration of autoethnography as a research approach and documentary filmmaking as a medium, this study illuminates the potential of personal storytelling and creative expression. It does that by addressing systemic inequalities and increasing understanding of the lived experience of a Black filmmaker PhD student at a predominantly white institution navigating the challenges of tokenism. Furthermore, the study aims to provide insights into the complexities and ethical considerations that arise when addressing such sensitive and significant topics within the framework of decolonization. By examining the multifaceted nature of these methodologies and their intersection, this research contributes to the broader academic discourse surrounding both documentary filmmaking and autoethnography.

This study explores the unique experience of a Black student and filmmaker illustrates that individual subjectivities can be a platform for research and knowledge production, creative practice auto-ethnographical research, and practice-led documentary filmmaking. Filmmakers engage in self-examination, scrutinizing their biases, presumptions, and positions within the broader societal context (Behar, 1999). Using autoethnography reveals self-reflection and introspection. The

application of autoethnography in documentary filmmaking presents numerous advantages. Primarily, it enables filmmakers to infuse a unique, personal perspective into their work. As a filmmaker, I incorporate my experiences into the narrative and provide a subjective lens through which audiences can comprehend the social and cultural issues presented (MacDougall, 2022). This personal connection has the potential to evoke empathy and leave a powerful impact on viewers. Practice-led documentary techniques reveal a significant paradigm shift in understanding the role of subjectivity in knowledge production and dissemination. This perspective challenges the idea that subjectivity is a hindrance and instead underscores its importance as an integral facet of the documentary filmmaking process. As highlighted by Smith. K (2010, p.19), "subjectivity is not an obstacle to objectivity but is, on the contrary, the necessary starting point for any objective method" .

The investigation conducted by this study emphasizes the profound significance of embracing subjective perspectives in the realm of documentary filmmaking, a stance rooted in multifaceted rationales. Firstly, acknowledging subjectivity as a foundational element within practice-led documentary filmmaking facilitates the establishment of profound connections with audiences. Subjective storytelling can create a more intimate relationship between filmmaker and viewer. Subjectivity within practice-led documentary filmmaking prompts critical reflection among viewers. As articulated by Ellis (2021, p.269), "subjectivity in documentary is a form of critical engagement". By presenting diverse subjective viewpoints, filmmakers encourage viewers to contemplate varying perspectives and challenge preconceived notions. This, in turn, stimulates a more profound cognitive engagement and prompts a re-evaluation of one's own beliefs and perceptions. However, this innovative approach is not without its challenges. The incorporation of subjectivity raises methodological, theoretical, and scholarly concerns. The potential tension between subjectivity and academic rigour has sparked debates about the validity of this approach within scholarly discourse. As O'Regan (2018, p.72) posits, "There is a tension between the imperatives of filmmaking and those of academic research". The nuances of methodological frameworks and the application of theoretical constructs in conjunction with subjective perspectives necessitate careful navigation to uphold the credibility and academic integrity of practice-led documentary filmmaking.

The incorporation of subjectivity within practice-led documentary filmmaking transcends the traditional dichotomy of objective and subjective approaches. By embracing subjectivity, filmmakers establish profound audience connections, evoke empathy, and encourage critical reflection. However, the complexities of balancing subjectivity with academic rigour underscore the need for a nuanced and deliberate approach. This research study investigation illuminates subjectivity's transformative potential while also acknowledging the challenges it presents in the realm of documentary knowledge production.

Documentary filmmaking

Documentary films, with their unscripted nature, offer practitioners the freedom to express subjective perspectives, intuition, and inner subjectivities. This characteristic allows for the integration of subjectivity and embodiment, bringing forth unique insights and understandings within practice-led research approaches.

Although documentary as research is still not widely understood within the University research landscape, one can see that it is already an established field, as reflected in the emergence of a range of professional bodies. In recognizing the significance of practice-led documentary research, it is essential to acknowledge the various establishment bodies that further this field and provide platforms for practitioners and researchers to exchange ideas, present work, and foster collaborations. Among these, notable organizations, including The Centre for Documentary Research (CDR), the European Documentary Network (EDN), the International Documentary Association (IDA), The Centre for the Arts in Society (CAS) and Visible Evidence (a collection of scholars and practitioners engaged in research and debates on historical and contemporary documentary practice and nonfiction media culture) stand out. It is also important to note various journals in the field, such as Screenworks, Sightlines and Open Screen which work and publish exclusively in the domain of film practice. Additionally, there are organizations such as MeCCSA and BAFTSS which are professor-led organizations which work to form discourses, organise conferences, promote research and practice in the field. These organizations and institutions

constitute a thriving support system for practice-led documentary researchers, fostering innovation, knowledge sharing, and collaboration within the documentary community. Their commitment significantly contributes to the field's advancement and its profound impact on academia and society.

Documentary filmmaking, once primarily associated with Film Studies, has emerged as an independent field of scholarship. This recognition underscores the discipline's distinctive characteristics and methodologies, extending beyond traditional Film Studies. Establishing documentary filmmaking as a research discipline opens exciting new avenues of exploration, expanding knowledge within this dynamic and constantly developing field. Scholars now appreciate that documentary filmmaking encompasses a vast array of creative practices and research approaches that extend well beyond those offered by traditional Film Studies.

Film production research presents many unique opportunities for practice-led documentary filmmaking as a valuable research endeavour. By drawing from personal experiences, emotions, and cultural perspectives - and subjectivity - practice-led documentary filmmakers can generate unique insights that contribute to knowledge bases within their field. By exploring documentary filmmaking as an embodied creative practice, this project validates and emphasizes the significance of the body in research processes. It demonstrates that knowledge generation extends beyond textual analysis alone, encompassing the experiences, intuition, and physicality of filmmakers as valid forms of knowledge generation in practice-led documentary filmmaking. As Spatz (2017) shows, this research put forth embodied research as a methodological tool to expand this study. In the next section, I intend to discuss the historical context of this research in order to understand the location of the body in the larger terrain of racial experiences and genealogies.

Enduring Legacy of the Black Experience

The phrase "Martin Luther King's dream turning into a nightmare" encapsulates the idea that the progress made in civil rights since Martin Luther King Jr.'s era has fallen short of the envisioned reality of racial equality and justice he articulated in his iconic "I Have a Dream" speech in 1963. Despite significant strides towards desegregation and legal equality, persistent racial disparities

and systemic racism continue to plague various aspects of American society (Ray & Mahmoudi, 2022). This enduring reality suggests that King's hopeful vision of a racially harmonious society remains unattained (Nieto, 2005). This narrative carries significant implications for contemporary politics. On the one hand, it has galvanized continued activism and advocacy for racial justice, propelling movements like Black Lives Matter (hereafter BLM) to confront systemic racism and police violence (Taylor, 2016). On the other hand, it has triggered debates within the political arena. Some assert that the United States has made substantial strides in civil rights (Gates, 2019), while others emphasize that deeply entrenched racial inequities necessitate comprehensive and sustained reform efforts (Alexander, 2012; Bonilla-Silva, 2017).

Academic inquiries into this subject delve into the historical context of the civil rights movement, the progress attained since the 1960s, the persistent racial inequalities in domains such as education, housing, employment, and the criminal justice system, and the role of political institutions and policies in perpetuating or mitigating racial disparities (Anderson, A. B., & Pickering, G. W. 2008). By examining the intricate interplay between historical legacies, social and economic structures, and political dynamics, scholars aim to shed light on the complexities of racial progress and the work that remains to be done to pursue a truly equitable and just society. As Anderson and Pickering (2008, p. 6) aptly note, "The pursuit of racial equity requires an unwavering commitment to understanding and dismantling the systemic barriers that have long been embedded in American society". The contrasting experiences and perspectives associated with Barack Obama's Presidency underscore the complexities of being Black in America. Obama's election as the first Black President was a symbolic milestone, signifying societal progress and offering hope for racial advancement. It symbolized the breaking of racial barriers, portraying the potential for individuals from diverse racial backgrounds to attain the highest levels of leadership.

However, this symbolic achievement also highlighted the persisting contradictions within American society. While Obama's Presidency marked a moment of symbolic advancement, it did not signify the eradication of racial disparities. Systemic racial inequalities and tensions persisted, with countless incidents of police killings of Black individuals underscoring deep-rooted challenges. Keeanga Yamahtta Taylor, in her excellent account on BLM and the black liberation movement, shows us how the black voters were enthusiastic about the election of Obama, citing the high voter turnout. She notes how the euphoria persisted throughout the election campaigns,

where “69 percent of Black respondents told CNN pollsters that Martin Luther King’s vision had been “fulfilled” (Taylor, K.Y 2016, p.172). The coexistence of tokenism and ongoing disparities illustrated the complexities of translating symbolic achievements into substantive societal change. The election of Obama stirred both pride and frustration within the Black community. It highlighted the significance of representation and the potency of symbols in shaping public consciousness. Nevertheless, it exposed the limitations of symbolism in tackling systemic racial injustices. For instance, Taylor notes how the hopes lost their luster as the systemic attacks and police violence against the black community continued to take place. This paradox prompted conversations about the necessity for sustained efforts to address entrenched racism and cultivate an inclusive society that lives up to its aspirations.

Police killings and racial profiling continue to cast a shadow over the United States, reinforcing the dire need for systemic change. Racial profiling disproportionately targets Black individuals, causing distress and erosion of trust within Black communities. High-profile incidents of police violence against unarmed Black individuals, such as George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, have ignited nationwide protests and calls for reform. These occurrences underscore the presence of systemic racism, emphasizing the urgency of comprehensive reform measures. The paradox of racial progress and persistent disparities serves as a reminder that significant strides have been made, and the journey towards true racial equality is far from over. The narratives of symbolic triumphs and ongoing challenges intersect to shape a complex portrait of the Black experience in America. As society navigates these complexities, the collective goal remains to foster a just and equitable society where symbols of progress are translated into tangible and sustainable change.

The BLM movement emerged as an immensely significant force in contemporary politics due to its pivotal role in elevating awareness regarding systemic racism's pervasiveness and its disproportionate impact on Black communities. By consistently maintaining its position in the public eye, this movement has incited dialogue on racial profiling, police brutality, and racial disparities, catalyzing critical discussions on racial injustice and the need for comprehensive reform (Chase, 2017). By amplifying marginalized voices, the BLM movement empowers Black individuals and communities to demand justice and advocate for transformation. Chase (2017) also argues that “the rapidity of the movement’s growth, combined with its lack of a major leader figure

or figures, have channeled BLM in directions that past civil rights movements have not taken” (p.1105).

The movement's impact extends to policy reforms and increased police accountability in various regions. BLM's powerful mobilization has inspired global social activism and advocacy for racial equity, fostering unity and solidarity among individuals from diverse backgrounds. Furthermore, the movement has influenced political discourse, compelling candidates and policymakers to address racial justice and inequality as integral components of their platforms. From a research perspective, examining the BLM movement offers valuable insights into the contemporary political landscape and the potency of grassroots movements in driving policy changes and shaping public opinion. This inquiry also unravels the nexus between the BLM movement and other social justice movements, underscoring the interconnectedness of various forms of oppression. The longevity and unwavering advocacy of the BLM movement signify an enduring commitment to lasting change, rendering it an ongoing and pertinent area of research. Exploring the cultural expressions emanating from the movement, such as artistic works and literature, can illuminate its influence on contemporary culture and its resonance with diverse communities. ‘Surviving Whiteness’, in its essence, is an attempt to trace the roots of this cultural expression by using autoethnography.

Ultimately, the BLM movement's significance within contemporary politics resides in its capacity to galvanize awareness, effect policy changes, challenge conventional norms, and propel social activism. The study of BLM bears the potential to illuminate the intricacies of contemporary political dynamics, the potency of grassroots movements, and the transformative capacity of societal reform in fostering inclusivity and equity. Surmounting these challenges has demanded a reservoir of resilience, unwavering determination, and the anchoring presence of a robust support network. Moreover, it has underscored the pressing urgency for educational institutions to institute comprehensive measures that foster inclusive and equitable environments conducive to the success and well-being of Black students. Redressing systemic racism and championing diversity, equity, and inclusion are indispensable milestones toward fostering a nurturing and empowering academic environment for all students.

Whiteness, Colonialism, and the Possibility of Decolonization

The impact of colonialism on institutions and white-dominated spaces has a legacy reverberating through various aspects of modern society. Colonialism, with its deep-seated structures of power and dominance, has entrenched racial hierarchies that continue to shape the dynamics of institutions and spaces. One of the most striking consequences of colonialism is the perpetuation of systems that uphold white superiority while marginalizing voices from non-white backgrounds (Mbembe, 2016). This is particularly evident in institutions such as universities, which were often established during colonial times with an inherent Eurocentric bias, thereby side-lining non-white cultures and knowledge (Bhabra, Gebrial, & Nisancioglu, 2018). The impact of colonialism on white-dominated spaces extends beyond the past and persists in the present. These spaces often reflect colonial ideologies that favour white voices, experiences, and narratives, dismissing those of other racial backgrounds. Such influences are palpable in various aspects, from educational curricula centring on Eurocentric histories to research agendas prioritizing Western perspectives. Even leadership positions and recruitment practices within institutions can bear the imprints of colonialism, further perpetuating white dominance (Ahmed, 2019). In this context, it is crucial to clarify what is meant by 'white'—not merely as a reference to skin colour but as a system of power relations. 'White' refers to the institutionalized power structures and societal norms that privilege individuals who are perceived as white while oppressing those who are not. This conceptualization of whiteness as a system of power relations rather than simply a racial category underscores the pervasive influence of colonial legacies in maintaining racial inequities (hooks, 1992). Whiteness, as a conceptual racial category has been critically explored by Kalwant Bhopal. She notes that whiteness is an “an identity that is seemingly invisible to White groups because it is constructed as a normative baseline”. In contrast, it “is visible to people of color because they are positioned outside of its boundaries” (Bhopal, 2023, p.113).

Within the academy, the concept of decolonization emerged as a powerful response to these lingering colonial influences. It involves a comprehensive re-evaluation of knowledge systems, with a focus on elevating marginalized perspectives, cultures, and histories. By doing so, decolonization aims to redress historical injustices by centring the voices and contributions of communities historically subjugated by colonial powers. This process is about acknowledging the past and dismantling the structures that continue to reinforce racial disparities. Adébisí (2020)

states that decolonizing the curriculum is crucial for challenging the Eurocentric foundations that dominate academic institutions and for promoting a more inclusive and equitable educational environment. This work underscores the urgent need for decolonizing practices in academia and beyond by investigating how colonial legacies persist within institutions and white-dominated spaces. This might involve revising curricula to encompass diverse viewpoints, amplifying the scholarship of historically marginalized communities, and fostering an inclusive environment for scholars and students from all racial backgrounds.

However, one of the prominent challenges could be the resistance from individuals and institutions with vested interests in maintaining the status quo. Overcoming this resistance requires a well-articulated rationale for decolonization and a robust strategy for engaging with skeptics. Another limitation may stem from a lack of awareness or misunderstanding about the significance of decolonization. Gaining support for decolonizing initiatives can be hindered by a lack of understanding of the historical and systemic injustices these initiatives aim to rectify. Furthermore, the risk of tokenism and performative actions must be navigated. Some institutions may adopt decolonization as a superficial gesture without committing to substantial changes. This could undermine the genuine efforts to address racial disparities and perpetuate skepticism about the authenticity of decolonization efforts. Long-standing institutions often have deeply ingrained practices that sustain racial inequality, and reallocating resources to address these disparities can be met with resistance. Adébisí (2020) provides significant insights into these challenges and the necessity for genuine commitment to decolonization efforts. She looks into the question of legality by looking into the soft power institutions such as law schools, which she describes as the intellectual vanguard of colonialism's 'rule of law' (p.1). She notes how higher educational settings, in the context of U.K., perpetuate power through their colonial legacy. According to her, "Decolonisation within Euro-modern legal knowledge requires us to interrogate its role in producing these inequalities through the persisting, mutating, and interweaving scarlet thread of colonialism, and to unceasingly and effectively, act in response" (p.10). I have found her intricate analysis of power, higher educational institutional setting and the importance of decolonization very useful for my work.

Navigating these limitations requires perseverance, strategic planning, and creative problem-solving. By addressing these challenges head-on, my research can potentially drive significant

change in the landscape of decolonization, contributing to creating a more equitable, inclusive, and just society. Moreover, the lack of diversity in decision-making positions can present a challenge in the decolonization process. Without inclusive representation, it becomes difficult to integrate diverse perspectives and experiences, which are crucial for crafting effective and meaningful decolonizing strategies.

Navigating the complexities of historical, cultural, and social contexts is a significant hurdle in the decolonization process. Decolonization is not a one-size-fits-all approach; rather, it demands a nuanced understanding of the diverse experiences and needs of various racial and ethnic groups. Achieving this balance entails leveraging film, history, research, empathy, careful consideration, and a steadfast commitment to ongoing learning and growth. Additionally, measuring the impact and effectiveness of decolonization strategies can prove challenging. The multifaceted nature of racial disparities, compounded by interconnected factors, makes it difficult to pinpoint the exact influence of decolonization initiatives. Developing comprehensive evaluation methods that capture both tangible and intangible changes becomes paramount.

Despite these limitations, a dedication to researching and advocating for real decolonization is instrumental in addressing racial disparities and fostering inclusivity. Overcoming these challenges is vital in dismantling colonial legacies and working towards a more just and equitable society. By acknowledging these limitations, we are better equipped to develop comprehensive strategies that anticipate obstacles and drive impactful change. The concept of decolonization, aimed at dismantling the enduring impacts of colonialism on institutions and white-dominated spaces, is central to my research. It is the spirit of decolonization that acts as the foundational epistemology of this project, which tries to move away from Western-Eurocentric notions. While navigating these challenges, this thesis is poised to contribute to the transformative process of creating more inclusive, equitable, and culturally diverse environments within academia and society. A commitment to addressing these limitations demonstrates a dedication to meaningful change and a brighter future for all.

Empowering African American Documentary Filmmaking for Social Change

The study, conducted in the UK, assesses the experiences of an African American male at Newcastle University who encounters microaggressions and tokenism. According to Browne (2024, p.4), “Tokenism is the practice of making only a superficial effort to be inclusive of members of racialized minority groups, to create the impression that people are being treated fairly in order to avoid criticism”. By considering this definition, this study uses autoethnography as a research methodology to explore the intricacies involved in this practice. Both practice-led research and documentary filmmaking share common features, including a focus on creativity, reflective practice, experimentation, and innovation (Hickey-Moody & Kershaw, 2018). Many Black filmmakers have witnessed the transformative potential of documentary filmmaking in challenging dominant narratives and shedding light on issues of social justice and inequality (Thomas, 2022). But the COVID-19 pandemic presented unprecedented challenges for filmmakers globally, particularly those from historically marginalized communities. The pandemic disrupted production and distribution processes, exposing and exacerbating systemic inequalities that hinder Black documentary filmmakers' ability to create and share their work (Bailey, 2020). This PhD research, initiated in August 2020 at Newcastle University, employs autoethnography to analyze both the self and the surrounding world.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this PhD becomes evident through its innovative combination of documentary filmmaking, autoethnography, and critique of institutionalised approaches to decolonization, particularly within the realm of higher education. This convergence aims not only to create a visual narrative but also to stimulate profound transformative change and promote critical introspection. At its essence, my film aims to amplify the voices of marginalized Black students navigating predominantly white educational spaces. Through the medium of documentary filmmaking, their narratives attain a wider audience, illuminating the challenges they encounter and fostering

empathy and comprehension. This endeavour becomes imperative in addressing the chronic underrepresentation and marginalization of such perspectives in mainstream discourses.

Furthermore, the incorporation of autoethnography infuses the narrative with an unparalleled authenticity and introspection. As Ellis (2021, p. 273) contends, "autoethnography is an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze personal experience". This experiential lens renders the research personal, making it more relatable and emotionally evocative for viewers. This strategy not only invites audiences to forge genuine connections but also underscores the intricate interplay between individual experiences and larger societal contexts (Boylorn & Orbe, 2016).

Decolonization emerged as a central tenet, crucial in addressing historical disparities entrenched within education. By synergizing decolonization with visual storytelling, the film aspires to kindle profound reflections on prevailing educational paradigms and galvanize conversations about fostering more inclusive and equitable learning environments (Smith L.T, 2021). Furthermore, this PhD underscores the symbiosis of creative practice and scholarly inquiry. By harnessing documentary filmmaking as a research tool, the capacity of art to impel societal transformation and stimulate critical dialogues is underscored (Mannay, 2015). This interdisciplinary fusion disrupts conventional research methodologies and forges novel avenues for academic engagement (Tinkler, 2013).

More broadly, this documentary film's significance reverberates across the spectrum of social justice and equity. It enriches the ongoing discourse on the potency of visual narratives in addressing societal predicaments and nurturing understanding (Banks, 2018). By honing in on the distinctive juncture of documentary filmmaking, autoethnography, and decolonization, "Surviving Whiteness" underscores the profundity of storytelling as a catalyst for societal metamorphosis. Ultimately, the film's significance rests in its potential to recalibrate perspectives, instigate dialogues, and kindle transformative actions. Through spotlighting the narratives of marginalized individuals, harnessing the potency of personal accounts, and advocating for a decolonized educational landscape, the film envisions a realm of higher education and beyond that is more inclusive, compassionate, and equitable.

This documentary as research offers significant contributions to the interconnected domains of documentary filmmaking, autoethnography, decolonization, and higher education. By exploring the intricate intersection of these disciplines, this film generates valuable insights that both enhance theoretical understanding and inform practical applications. These contributions are pivotal in advancing scholarship and practice within each respective field while also fostering interdisciplinary dialogue and collaboration. Firstly, within the realm of documentary filmmaking, this film contributes by showcasing the potency of autoethnography as a methodology for creating socially impactful films. The exploration of autoethnography to authentically engage with subjects and narratives offers a novel approach for filmmakers seeking to convey more intimate and emotionally resonant stories. This film presents a nuanced understanding of how personal experiences can be interwoven with cultural analysis to produce documentaries that resonate deeply with audiences, challenging traditional modes of storytelling. Depicting my life in the pandemic, with the challenges I faced and then going back to the literal roots that define my identity, shows that Blackness is not just a question of identity, but rather a point of difference.

Secondly, in the context of autoethnography, this research contributes by presenting a practical application of the methodology within documentary filmmaking. While autoethnography has primarily been explored in written forms, this study extends its scope by demonstrating how it can be harnessed as a powerful tool in visual storytelling. By delving into the challenges, ethical considerations, and transformative potential of autoethnographic documentary filmmaking, this study broadens the method's horizons and inspires new avenues of exploration for researchers and practitioners alike. Furthermore, this study's focus on decolonization adds a significant layer of contribution to both documentary filmmaking and higher education literature. By critically examining how decolonization can be integrated into institutional practices, curricula, and filmmaking itself, this research provides insights into dismantling historical inequalities. The study's emphasis on challenging tokenism and fostering authentic transformation echoes the broader movement for decolonization and equitable representation within various fields.

Within the domain of higher education, 'Surviving Whiteness' contributes by shedding light on the experiences of marginalized students, particularly Black individuals, within predominantly white

institutions. By portraying their stories in a documentary format, the research amplifies these voices, making a strong case for more inclusive and culturally responsive educational environments. Additionally, the study's reflection on the potential impacts of decolonization within academia contributes to the ongoing discourse on curriculum reform and social justice within higher education institutions. Through its interdisciplinary approach, this film not only augments existing research but also opens doors for further exploration and innovation in the realms of visual storytelling, autoethnography, decolonization, and education.

Research Questions

In the context of practice-led documentary filmmaking research, these questions provide a framework for investigating the experiences of Black students in higher education institutions and exploring the potential for decolonization within these spaces.

1. How can practice-led documentary filmmaking serve as a platform to illuminate and address the challenges faced by Black students in predominantly white higher education institutions, and how can it contribute to the discourse on decolonization?
2. How does the legacy of colonialism influence the experiences of Black students within the context of academia?
3. How does the creative and personal involvement of the filmmaker impact the authenticity and effectiveness of the documentary in addressing the chosen themes?

These research questions serve as a roadmap for this thesis guiding the exploration of themes related to the experiences of Black students, the impact of colonialism, the potential for decolonization, and the role of practice-led documentary filmmaking in advocating for change.

They invite a comprehensive investigation into the subject matter and encourage critical reflection on the intersection of academia, creativity, and social justice.

Researcher position/stance

Within the context of my study, my researcher position as a Black documentary filmmaker and a PhD student carries particular significance. Being a member of the African American community and having personal experiences related to race and identity inform my standpoint. This insider perspective allows me to access nuanced insights into the experiences of Black students within higher education institutions. My positionality as a filmmaker also impacts my approach. The creative aspect of my research, combined with my personal experiences, influence the stories I choose to tell and the way I choose to tell them. By acknowledging my own identity and experiences, I can navigate the potential biases that may arise from my subjectivity and contribute to a more authentic portrayal of the subject matter.

Furthermore, my position as a PhD student within academia grants me access to theoretical frameworks, academic discourse, and research methodologies that enrich my analysis. However, it is essential to recognize that my status as a student may also shape my interactions with participants and impact the power dynamics inherent in research. Embracing my researcher position involves practising reflexivity—a critical self-awareness of how my background, beliefs, and experiences influence the research process. This awareness allows me to mitigate potential biases, critically analyze the implications of my stance, and engage with a broader range of perspectives.

In essence, my researcher position as a Black documentary filmmaker and PhD student underscores the layered nature of my study. It reflects the intersection of personal experiences, academic inquiry, and creative expression, all of which contribute to a rich and multifaceted exploration of the experiences of Black students in higher education institutions. Furthermore, subjective lenses add dimension and authenticity while deepening understanding and facilitating knowledge transfer via nonverbal means. Recognizing visual creations as carriers of knowledge challenges the traditional assumption that ability must solely depend on objective facts unaffected by subjective experiences

or personal biases. This relationship between filmmaking and knowledge production will be expanded later in the coming chapters.

Chapter 2- Practicing Autoethnography: Methodological Challenges and Innovations

This chapter delves into the dynamic intersection of creativity and academic research within documentary filmmaking. The researcher's exploration navigates the diverse methodological choices and techniques that define Practice-led Documentary Filmmaking, focusing on Autoethnography, Mobile Phone Filmmaking, First Person and Diary Filmmaking, Poetry, and Ethics. This analysis unveils the profound harmony between creativity and research that characterizes modern documentary production.

This chapter intends to detail the questions of positionality and methodology that are integral in producing a practice-based research, or any qualitative research for that matter. Holmes A.G.D (2020, p.1) views positionality as something that concerns the 'ontological assumptions' and 'epistemological assumptions' along with 'assumptions about human nature and agency' . This triad of assumptions sustain the foundation of the question of positionality, which appears as a point of intersection in between the questions of individual belief, the nature of knowledge and form of interactions. In this critical reflection positioning or locating myself as a researcher is crucial as the conventional subject/object (of research) binary is radically blurred in this research, along with the film. This positioning also acts as a reminder to re-interrogate these conventional binaries of a distanced subject and object by using the possibilities of autoethnography. This PhD is designed to provide a holistic exploration of the nuanced experiences of tokenism and microaggressions. The utilization of autoethnography, coupled with diverse techniques including smartphone documentary (Miller, 2008, Schleser, M. 2021), personal filmmaking (Minh-ha, 1991), and traditional documentary filmmaking (Nichols, 2016), aims to offer an in-depth and intimate portrayal of my journey as a Black PhD student in a predominantly white institution amidst the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, the significance of this chapter transcends the mere examination of methodologies; it accentuates the transformative potential inherent in contemporary documentary practices. With the introduction of methods such as Autoethnography, Mobile Phone Filmmaking, First Person and Diary Filmmaking, Poetry, and the ethical dimension, we elevate the documentary as a vehicle for artistic expression and a conduit for critical inquiry. These imaginations are effectively discussed from the actual, practical terrain of filmmaking and the procedural acts involved in it. Thereby, it places “Surviving Whiteness” as the critical outcome of all these points of subjective reflexivity. This multifaceted investigation serves as a valuable resource for filmmakers, scholars, and practitioners, enabling them to fully grasp how these methodologies converge to broaden the impact and scope of documentary filmmaking.

The evolution of documentary filmmaking remains perpetual, with a specific emphasis on the pivotal role of Autoethnography in authentic storytelling. This methodology elevates audience engagement by seamlessly weaving personal experiences into the rich tapestry of broader sociocultural contexts, ultimately establishing more immersive and emotionally resonant storytelling experiences. The rise of Mobile Phone Filmmaking brings to the fore the democratization of documentary production. As mobile devices become ubiquitous, this method is a beacon of accessibility, opening doors to diverse voices and perspectives. It empowers emerging filmmakers to harness this readily available medium as a potent tool for impactful storytelling.

First-person and Diary Filmmaking place a premium on self-introspection and reflection. By providing filmmakers with the platform to share their personal experiences and emotions candidly, these methods cultivate empathy within viewers and foster meaningful connections between them. The incorporation of Poetry in documentary filmmaking underscores the artistry that underpins the craft. It harnesses the evocative power of words and images to elicit profound emotions and challenge the constraints of conventional storytelling.

The chapter emphasise the indispensable role of ethics in documentary practices. A deep comprehension of the ethical considerations inherent in research and production is imperative in an ever-evolving ethical landscape. This understanding is fundamental to preserving the integrity and credibility of documentary works and ensuring they remain informative and ethically

responsible. This chapter provides insights into various documentary practices, including Practice-led Documentary Filmmaking, Autoethnography, Mobile Phone Filmmaking, First Person/ Diary Filmmaking, Poetry, and Ethics. By examining each of these issues we delve into the realm where creativity and research meet, revealing the transformative capabilities of modern documentary techniques. Through this exploration, I will unveil these methods' essential roles in crafting narratives that deeply resonate, challenge perspectives, and contribute to the dynamic evolution of the documentary genre. This chapter also tries to propose a methodological framework to situate practice-based research involving autoethnography and critical reflexivity as a point of narrative.

2.1 Autoethnography as a Method

Documentary filmmaking has a rich history dating back to the late 19th century with the Lumière brothers (Barnouw, 1993). The genre has evolved in response to changing social and political contexts, giving rise to different movements and styles (Renov, 2004). Practice-led research emphasizes filmmaking's creative process as a form of research and knowledge production. It often involves collaboration and reflexivity, with filmmakers reflecting on their practice and engaging with other practitioners and researchers (Hickey-Moody & Kershaw, 2018). Practice-led documentary filmmaking frequently challenges traditional modes of representation and storytelling, encouraging experimentation with both form and content (Dovey, J., Sobers, S., & Agusita, E., 2017).

This PhD bridges the divide between theory and practice within practice-led documentary filmmaking by acknowledging creative practice's embodied nature. It encourages an integrated approach combining theoretical frameworks with experiential knowledge, fostering deeper comprehension of their complex relationship, thereby improving research conducted on-location.

My film utilises autoethnography, exploring practice-led first-person and personal diary filmmaking. By weaving autobiographical elements with cultural, social, and political dimensions into this research project, I aim to better understand methodological choices and techniques that define practice-led Documentary Filmmaking and its broader implications. Practice-led first-

person filmmaking aims for authenticity and intimacy as critical ingredients to its overall storytelling quality. By placing the filmmaker at the heart of their narrative, this approach offers a personal viewpoint that allows audiences to build stronger bonds.

As a result, viewers experience more captivating and emotionally impactful documentaries. Additionally, this approach encourages personal reflection and self-exploration as the filmmaker delves deeper into their own experiences and emotions. Through this process, the researcher will gain more significant insights into perspectives, biases, and personal growth - thus enriching the documentary's content. Practice-led first-person filmmaking can amplify marginalized voices and stories, providing a platform for individuals or communities neglected in mainstream documentary filmmaking. By challenging dominant narratives, this approach fosters inclusivity and social justice by illuminating diverse viewpoints that may otherwise go unheard.

Autoethnography in documentary filmmaking offers three main arguments contributing to the research field. Firstly, it recognizes the significance of personal experience as a valid form of research data. By embracing the researcher's subjective encounters, emotions, and reflections, it enables a deeper understanding of the complexities and nuances of the phenomena being studied, enriching the storytelling in documentary filmmaking. Secondly, autoethnography explores the intersection of the personal and the social, acknowledging that broader cultural, social, and political contexts shape individual experiences. This approach sheds light on the more significant societal implications portrayed in documentaries, offering a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. Lastly, autoethnography emphasizes reflexivity and ethical considerations, promoting critical reflection on the researcher's positionality, biases, and ethical responsibilities. This self-awareness ensures a transparent and accountable approach to documentary filmmaking, navigating the intricacies of representation, ethical storytelling, and the power dynamics inherent in the production process. These arguments collectively contribute to advancing knowledge and developing more robust and ethically conscious documentary research.

Alisa Lebow, a prominent film scholar and practitioner has explored the question of self and subject in the documentary film making process. In her introduction to the edited volume titled 'Cinema of Me', she makes poignant observations on the idea of first person documentary, For instance,

they can be “fully autobiographical, many of them inspired by identity politics, but there are also those that choose to speak from a first person position in the role of witness, and sometimes participant observer, without being centred on the autobiographical self” (Lebow, 2012, p. 43). According to her, first person documentary can occur when “the filmmaker is present, on the soundtrack and often in view of the camera, embodying an individual and not an institutional point of view, addressing a piece of the world in front of them” (p.43). This is a crucial methodological position that I had tried to apply in my work.

First-person documentary and diary filmmaking using autoethnography will be used to provide an avenue to examine the researcher’s personal experiences as both filmmaker and subject. By placing myself as a filmmaker and subject within my documentaries, I aim to generate knowledge through an ethical lens while addressing embodiment in documentary filmmaking, racism in academia and microaggression due to tokenism. This thesis investigates the ethical dimensions of knowledge production in documentary filmmaking. It emphasizes the value of self-awareness and reflexivity when considering power dynamics and ethical concerns within research processes. By critically reflecting upon my positionality as a filmmaker and researcher, I aim to negotiate complex representation issues, challenge dominant narratives, and ensure that marginalized communities' voices and experiences are represented appropriately and authentically in documentary films.

2.2 Doing Practice-led Documentary Filmmaking: Situating ‘Surviving Whiteness’

This practice-led research reflects upon the non-fiction audio-visual works process of my filmmaking journey from the US to the UK utilizing filmed subjects. This qualitative research method encourages the researcher to reflect on their experiences and use them as a basis for broader cultural or social analysis (Ellis, 2011; Chang, 2008). Practice-led research is an emerging methodology that involves "the development of creative work as a form of research" (Sullivan, 2014, p. 1). Practice-led documentary filmmaking refers to the use of this methodology in the production of documentary films. It involves using the filmmaking process as a means of generating new knowledge and understanding about the world (Dovey, J., Sobers, S., & Agusita, E. , 2017). Practice-led documentary filmmaking offers a unique approach to documentary production that challenges traditional modes of representation and storytelling (Hickey-Moody &

Kershaw, 2018). The study of practice-led documentary filmmaking can help to develop a deeper understanding of the relationship between documentary filmmaking and research, as well as the potential of documentary as a mode of knowledge production (Dovey, J., Sobers, S., & Agusita, E. , 2017). This chapter explores the practice-led documentary filmmaking methodology, its theoretical underpinnings, and its potential for generating new knowledge and understanding about the world.

Studying practice-led documentary filmmaking holds significant importance for several reasons. This approach to documentary filmmaking integrates creative practice with research, offering a distinct avenue for generating new insights and understanding within the field of filmmaking (Hickey-Moody & Kershaw, 2018). By delving into the study of practice-led documentary filmmaking, we gain a deeper comprehension of the intricate interplay between creative expression and research methodologies. Traditional research methods often rely on detached observation and analysis, whereas practice-led documentary filmmaking necessitates active engagement with the subject matter during the filmmaking process. This approach enables filmmakers to tap into new perspectives and ideas that may not emerge through conventional research methods (Sullivan, 2014). Consequently, understanding and studying this approach can enrich our understanding of the potential of documentary filmmaking as a mode of knowledge production.

Moreover, practice-led documentary filmmaking challenges established norms of representation and storytelling (Hickey-Moody & Kershaw, 2018). It encourages filmmakers to adopt innovative techniques, experiment with narrative structures, and question conventional approaches. By exploring the nuances of this approach, we gain insights into how creativity and critical inquiry intersect and how they can be leveraged to convey complex ideas effectively. Furthermore, the study of practice-led documentary filmmaking contributes to a broader understanding of the power of documentary media in shaping public discourse and influencing social change. As Dovey, J., Sobers, S., & Agusita, E. (2017) highlights, documentaries have the potential to inspire dialogue, inform public opinion, and foster societal transformations. This underscores the significance of investigating how practice-led documentary filmmaking can harness its unique qualities to contribute to these societal shifts.

Delving into the realm of practice-led documentary filmmaking through scholarly inquiry holds paramount importance. By unravelling the intricacies of this approach, we uncover its potential to reshape documentary narratives, generate novel insights, and drive meaningful social impact. This exploration enriches our understanding of filmmaking and enhances our capacity to engage with pressing social and cultural issues. The emergence of practice-led documentary filmmaking as a distinct approach can be traced back to the convergence of creative practice and research methodologies. This approach developed in response to the growing recognition that creative works, such as films, can contribute meaningfully to the production of knowledge within various disciplines (Barrett 2007). As a result, scholars and practitioners began to explore the potential of integrating creative practices with academic research, leading to the birth of practice-led research.

Within the domain of documentary filmmaking, this approach evolved into practice-led documentary filmmaking. In the early 2000s, filmmakers and researchers began to recognize the unique capacity of documentary filmmaking to serve as a research tool (Dovey, J., Sobers, S., & Agusita, E. , 2017). This approach involves using the process of filmmaking itself as a method of inquiry, creating a symbiotic relationship between creative expression and scholarly investigation.

Practice-led research in documentary filmmaking goes beyond the mere act of producing a film. It entails a journey of learning, discovery, and reflection that takes place throughout the filmmaking process. By immersing themselves in the subject matter, filmmakers engage with the complexities of the real world in a dynamic and experiential manner. The emergence of practice-led documentary filmmaking can be viewed as a response to the limitations of traditional research methodologies. This approach offers an alternative way of generating knowledge that harnesses audio-visual storytelling's power to convey complex ideas, evoke emotions, and prompt critical thinking. The creative and reflective nature of practice-led documentary filmmaking provides a platform for nuanced exploration, enabling filmmakers to bridge the gap between academic inquiry and artistic expression.

Practice-led documentary filmmaking is a remarkable confluence of creative expression and rigorous academic inquiry. This innovative method redefines the boundaries of traditional research by weaving together the art of filmmaking and the pursuit of knowledge. Within this approach, several key characteristics emerge, shaping a dynamic and impactful mode of exploration. Integrating creative practice and research is at the heart of practice-led documentary filmmaking. Unlike conventional research methodologies, this approach immerses filmmakers in a dual role as researchers and creators. This fusion enables filmmakers to delve into their subject matter with both a level of depth *and* intimacy. Sullivan (2010) aptly describes this as "the development of creative work as a form of research" (p. 1), signalling a departure from conventional research practices.

One of the most distinctive characteristics of this approach is its emphasis on experiential learning. Practice-led documentary filmmaking engages filmmakers in a hands-on process where learning occurs through creation itself. This immersive journey empowers filmmakers to derive insights from the very act of making the film, an engagement that goes beyond mere observation or analysis. McIlwain and Brown (2017) highlight this, noting that practice-led research in documentary filmmaking is not solely about producing a film but rather about learning through its production (p. 121).

Innovative storytelling is a hallmark of practice-led documentary filmmaking. This approach encourages filmmakers to experiment with narrative techniques that fuse creativity with scholarship. This symbiosis allows for articulating complex ideas through compelling narratives, visual metaphors, and emotional resonance. Through this, filmmakers can transcend the boundaries of traditional research outputs, enabling the subject matter to be communicated effectively to a wider audience.

A subjective approach distinguishes practice-led documentary filmmaking from many other research methods. Filmmakers delve deeply into their chosen subjects, often employing techniques like first-person narratives or observational styles. This immersion ensures that the experiences and perspectives of the subjects are authentically represented, creating a bridge of understanding between the audience and the subject matter. Reflection and reflexivity constitute integral

components of practice-led documentary filmmaking. Filmmakers critically analyze their creative choices, subjectivities, and biases throughout the research process. This self-awareness guarantees the ethical integrity of the work and offers a nuanced portrayal of the topic. This commitment to introspection contributes to the depth and credibility of the research findings.

Crucially, the documentary itself becomes a research output within practice-led documentary filmmaking. The film encapsulates knowledge, offering a fresh lens through which to view the subject matter. This stands in contrast to traditional research, where the output is often in the form of written texts. This approach bridges the gap between creative expression and scholarly contribution by embracing the documentary as a research artefact. Furthermore, practice-led documentary filmmaking is marked by its engagement with audiences beyond academia. The visual and emotional potency of the film transcends academic circles, offering the potential to disseminate research findings to a wider public. This outreach contributes to public discourse and raises awareness about critical issues, bridging the gap between scholarly research and societal impact.

In conclusion, practice-led documentary filmmaking emerges as a compelling and transformative approach to research. This method redefines the researcher as a filmmaker and a creator, fusing creative practice with rigorous academic inquiry. The characteristics of integration, experiential learning, innovative storytelling, subject-centeredness, reflection, and interdisciplinary engagement collectively define this approach. By recognizing the documentary as a legitimate form of research output and embracing the power of visual storytelling, practice-led documentary filmmaking paves the way for new horizons in academia and society. Practice-led research and documentary filmmaking exist in an intimate relationship, each offering something to the other. For instance, practice-led research methodologies significantly impact documentary structures, ensuring compelling yet rigorously grounded stories. Conversely, documentary filmmaking brings an inventive side to practice-led research, allowing researchers to communicate their findings to a broader audience through visual storytelling.

The success of practice-led research lies in its reflexivity, prompting filmmakers to reflect inward on their creative choices and research objectives. When combined, personal perspectives, artistic

expression, and scholarly rigour come together in practice-led filmmaking to produce films with authenticity and depth that speak directly to their target audiences. Furthermore, its adaptability enables its use across different topics, providing unique insights into complex phenomena not addressed through traditional research methods.

Practice-led filmmaking exemplifies the transformative potential of interdisciplinary collaboration in our increasingly porous society. It shows that knowledge creation transcends conventional methods and encompasses artistic expression; its effect ripples throughout academia, cinema, and community alike - amplifying voices while challenging conventions and broadening understanding of our world. Practice-led filmmaking continues to emerge as a viable means for scholars, filmmakers, and audiences to meld creativity with research. Narrative-driven inquiry allows us to rethink traditional methods of knowledge production while providing a window into understanding more deeply the intricate complexities of our world.

2.3 Autoethnography in Documentary Filmmaking: Making Self the Subject

Autoethnography is a "qualitative research method that combines personal experience with cultural analysis to understand and explore a particular phenomenon or social issue" (Ellis et al., 2011, p. 273). In this approach, the researcher is both the subject and the analyst, using their own life experiences as a lens through which to investigate larger cultural trends, social dynamics, and individual experiences (Ellis et al., 2011). Autoethnography allows me to go deeper into myself within the larger cultural and social phenomena surrounding a topic by drawing upon my own life experiences as both subject and storyteller, offering my knowledge to understand its larger sociocultural context. Since the research utilizes autoethnography as an indispensable form of inquiry and knowledge creation, I use my diary and first-person filmmaking as powerful modes of inquiry and knowledge production. Through it, I was able to foster an intimate connection between myself as the researcher and the subject matter, providing an opportunity to delve into and explore subjective experiences and perspectives that lie deep within me as an individual. By merging personal with cultural aspects, my research provides a unique lens through which to examine and

comprehend its complexity. The subjective lens allows for deeper insights and captures complexity that objective approaches may miss. In this research, I will contribute to the discussions around practice-led first-person filmmaking using autoethnography as my method.

As a dynamic and evolving research approach, autoethnography offers a powerful lens through which filmmakers can engage with their subjects and narratives in a deeply personal and reflective manner. This chapter aims to provide an in-depth understanding of how autoethnography enriches the documentary filmmaking process, aligning with the practice-led research paradigm that underpins this study. Autoethnography is not merely a research method; it is a form of storytelling that intertwines the personal and the universal, the subjective and the contextual. It allows filmmakers to immerse themselves in their narrative, not as detached observers but as active participants with a unique perspective. This methodology encourages filmmakers to explore their experiences, emotions, and biases, creating a richer and more authentic portrayal of the subject matter. As we navigate through the facets of autoethnography as a methodology in documentary filmmaking, it becomes evident that this approach holds the potential to reshape how stories are told and received. By embracing subjectivity, vulnerability, and personal connection, filmmakers can create narratives that resonate deeply with audiences and provoke meaningful dialogues. This chapter comprehensively explores autoethnography, highlighting its implications, challenges, and transformative possibilities within practice-led documentary filmmaking.

The significance of autoethnography in documentary filmmaking lies in its ability to create deeply engaging and emotionally resonant films. According to Ellis and Bochner (2006), "autoethnographic work...allows for emotional and imaginative connections with readers and viewers" (p. 100). By drawing from personal experiences, the filmmaker can offer a unique and intimate perspective that captures the complexities of human emotions and interactions. This personal touch makes the films relatable and brings authenticity and depth to the narrative. Durham et.al (2020) considers the possibility of Blackness as a potential rescript to shape power and experience and views autoethnography as a potential methodological provocation. This potential acts as a significant anchor point to my work, which provokes the conventional sensibilities by showcasing the otherwise ignored everyday mundane experiences of a marginalized person.

Furthermore, autoethnography can illuminate hidden or marginalized aspects of society that may not be easily accessible through traditional research methods. According to Chang (2016), autoethnography "can contribute to new ways of knowing and understanding, and to challenging oppressive discourses" (p. 48). Filmmakers who engage in autoethnography can provide insights into their lives and communities, revealing stories that might otherwise remain untold. This approach challenges conventional narratives and allows underrepresented voices to be heard. In essence, autoethnography enhances the impact of documentary filmmaking by blending the subjective with the analytical. By combining personal experiences with cultural analysis, filmmakers can create films that resonate deeply with audiences, offer fresh perspectives on complex issues, and contribute a more diverse and nuanced understanding of the world. Autoethnography was my choice as the format of documentary production for several compelling reasons. Autoethnography allows a unique and intimate view, giving me, both as the filmmaker and subject, the opportunity to explore my personal experiences and feelings more thoroughly while sharing these with an audience on a deeper level.

As a Black documentary filmmaker, I understood the value of personal storytelling for illuminating larger societal issues related to race, identity, and equity. Autoethnography allows me to authentically reflect on my experiences as an African American within higher education. This approach resonates well with a broader history, of Black documentary filmmaking seeking to challenge dominant narratives while amplifying underrepresented voices. It allows me to present an honest and nuanced portrayal of the challenges Black students in higher education institutions face. By sharing my experiences, struggles, and moments of empowerment, I hope to foster empathy and understanding among viewers. Finally, autoethnography allows me to weave my identities together as a Black documentary filmmaker and Ph.D. student, and contribute to both academic research and the legacy of Black documentary storytelling.

The historical context of autoethnography in documentary filmmaking is relevant to my decision to employ this methodology." As Ellis (2004) elucidates, autoethnography emerged as a research approach "to democratize the writing and analysis of culture" (p. 35), challenging traditional academic conventions. This historical evolution resonated with my aim to capture the nuanced experiences of Black students. The works of pioneering filmmakers like Agnes Varda and Chantal

Akerman, who experimented with personal and subjective storytelling in the 1960s and 70s, showcased the power of autoethnography in capturing authentic narratives. Varda and Akerman made the everyday mundane a significant part of their narrative, which altered the form of their films. Jill Daniels, another but more recent filmmaker, has also extended this practice of personal storytelling to their work. Their influence motivated me to intertwine my personal experiences with cultural analysis, echoing Ellis's notion of "evoking and analyzing emotions" (Ellis & Bochner, 2006, p. 102).

Furthermore, the historical trajectory of autoethnography underscores its potential to amplify marginalized voices. As Chang (2008) asserts, autoethnography can challenge oppressive discourses and provide a platform for underrepresented narratives. This resonated with my intent to shed light on the experiences of Black students, encouraging empathy and understanding among a broader audience. Incorporating autoethnography in "Surviving Whiteness" was a conscious decision informed by the historical lineage of filmmakers who paved the way for personal storytelling to intersect with broader cultural and societal contexts. This approach aligns with the evolution of documentary filmmaking and resonates with the transformative potential of autoethnography to create impactful narratives. Using autoethnography in documentary filmmaking offers several advantages and challenges that shape the narrative and creative process. As Ellis (2004) aptly notes, autoethnography allows filmmakers to "explore the messy, nonlinear, often contradictory nature of personal experience" (p. xix), resulting in films that are deeply personal and emotionally resonant. This is particularly valuable when addressing complex social issues, as personal experiences can create a powerful emotional connection with the audience.

On the other hand, using personal experiences in autoethnographic documentary filmmaking also presents challenges. According to Chang (2016, p.43), the inherent subjectivity of autoethnography can risk "overly subjective or biased films". This challenge underscores the need for filmmakers to navigate a delicate balance between personal reflection and critical analysis to ensure the authenticity and credibility of the film's message. Moreover, technical challenges can arise while employing autoethnography in documentary filmmaking. Bochner and Riggs (2014) highlights the need to "negotiate the subjective 'I' with the objective 'eye'" (p. 1), emphasizing the filmmaker's responsibility to manage both their perspective and the broader cultural or social context. This

dynamic requires a nuanced approach to ensure the film does not veer into self-indulgence or neglect its analytical purpose. While the advantages of autoethnography lie in its emotional engagement and unique perspective, challenges emerge from maintaining objectivity and managing the interplay between personal narrative and broader cultural analysis. As highlighted by scholars, these considerations underscore the intricate nature of autoethnography in documentary filmmaking and emphasize the importance of a thoughtful and balanced approach.

Implementing autoethnography in documentary filmmaking involves critical considerations to blend personal experience with broader cultural analysis. According to Ellis (2004), a key element is to balance subjectivity and objectivity, allowing personal experiences to be a foundation while maintaining a critical distance. Ellis suggests that filmmakers should "locate themselves in a cultural context and accept subjectivity" (p. xix), embracing the subjective nature of their experiences while being mindful of their wider implications. Filmmakers must ensure that personal reflection resonates with viewers, facilitating emotional connection while providing the necessary cultural and social context. This intersection of unique and cultural perspectives enables the audience to empathetically relate to the subject matter and grasp its broader implications.

Bochner (2012) emphasizes the courage to take risks in sharing personal experiences. This not only enriches the authenticity of the film but also contributes to its emotional impact. Bochner suggests that the "narrator must confront the chaotic, jagged, and messy side of experience" (p. 133), advocating for an unfiltered and candid portrayal that captures the complexity of the subject. Implementing autoethnography in documentary filmmaking requires a delicate equilibrium between personal reflection and cultural analysis, resonating with the audience's emotions while conveying broader cultural contexts. By embracing subjectivity, engaging the audience effectively, and being unafraid to explore the objective aspects of experience, filmmakers can create powerful and insightful films that bridge the personal and the universal.

Filmmakers have used autoethnography's potential to challenge conventional storytelling norms while amplifying marginalized voices; its introspective qualities enable filmmakers to approach complex themes more sensitively while forging deeper connections with their audiences. Autoethnography's principles of reflexivity, subjectivity, and authenticity have come into sharp

focus, revolutionizing documentary filmmaking narratives in profound ways. By accepting the filmmaker's presence within the narrative, autoethnography blurs lines between storyteller and subject to create more immersive and empathetic experiences for audiences. Autoethnography profoundly bridges the gap between personal insight and shared understanding to redefine documentary stories. Ethical considerations have also been extensively examined, emphasizing the delicate balance between authenticity and sensitivity. When filmmakers represent themselves and their subjects in films, ethical dilemmas often arise that necessitate responsible storytelling practices that eschew exploitative techniques and abuse of power. This chapter also explores these complexities regarding consent, representation and personal and collective narratives intertwining.

As we conclude our exploration of autoethnography within documentary filmmaking, its transformative power becomes ever more apparent. This approach to storytelling can reinvent its art by injecting vulnerability, authenticity, and personal connection into it. By adopting autoethnographic techniques, filmmakers can craft stories that simultaneously strike an emotional and intellectual chord for lasting dialogues and deepened impactful storytelling experiences. Autoethnography is an invaluable guide in practice-led documentary filmmaking, lighting the way to unearth untold stories, challenge prevailing viewpoints, and amplify marginalized voices. Through autoethnography, documentary filmmaking transcends its conventional boundaries by becoming an authentic vehicle for connection, empathy building and amplifying multiple voices.

2.4 Mobile Phone Filmmaking in Documentary

How is mobile filmmaking utilized as a research method in documentary filmmaking, and what are its applications in the filmmaking process? This question sums up the dynamic landscape of documentary filmmaking, where technological advancements have transformed how stories are captured, conveyed, and experienced. More specifically, using mobile phones as filmmaking tools has ushered in an exciting era of accessibility, immediacy, and creative potential in documentary production.

Mobile phone videography has had an immense effect on documentary filmmaking. According to Rosenthal (2011), mobile phones have "democratized" filmmaking by making it accessible to more

creators; as such, a surge in diverse voices and perspectives has emerged from documentaries. Furthermore, smartphones allow individuals to record their surroundings, experiences, and stories instantly, with mobile phone videography becoming an indispensable way of documenting reality unfiltered reality. In his wonderful account on smartphone film making's theory and practice, Max Schleser notes that smartphone filmmaking can "establish more democratic storytelling approaches with a drive towards equity" (Schleser, 2021, p.8). In the context of "Surviving Whiteness", I build upon his observation that smartphone film making also allows "for and facilitate bottom-up approaches and empower marginalized and underrepresented communities to provide an insider perspective about their situations and stories" (ibid).

As I explore mobile phone filmmaking within the context of documentary as a research method, it becomes evident that filmmaking's traditional boundaries have expanded well beyond specialized equipment. Smartphones have democratized filmmaking processes and empowered storytellers with cinematic power at their fingertips. This chapter delves deeper into mobile phone filmmaking as a method, detailing its use as a research instrument and its versatile applications in the documentary filmmaking landscape. Documentary filmmaking's intrinsic goal of exploring reality and cultivating nuanced narratives fits with mobile phone technology's potential. Notably, mobile filmmaking gives documentary methodologies an innovative approach to capturing authenticity. The power of mobile phones to bridge gaps between filmmakers and subjects, creating intimacy which larger equipment cannot capture is immense. Filmmakers who take advantage of this intimate environment can reach deep within topics to uncover stories that resonate more powerfully than ever, creating narratives with an enhanced sense of immediacy and connection for viewers.

Explorations of mobile phone filmmaking as an innovative documentary research methodology go far beyond technological novelty. Mobile phones' unobtrusive tools allow users to capture candid moments that would otherwise go unseen; documentaries thrive by capturing unscripted reality, and mobile phone filmmaking facilitates this by offering an unassuming conduit for documenting real-life events. This chapter critically analyzes this interplay among technology, authenticity, and methodological innovation during documentary filmmaking.

As we explore mobile phone filmmaking as a part of documentary methodology, this chapter investigates its practical applications, ethical considerations, and creative implications within documentary storytelling. Analyzing real-world case studies and engaging with scholarly discourse uncovers all the multidimensional elements mobile phone filmmaking introduces into documentary research. Our subsequent sections will journey through the production stages of mobile phone filmmaking to discover its transformative potential within this dynamic domain of documentary storytelling. The history of mobile phone documentary filmmaking is intertwined with communication technology's rapid advancement. "Mobile phones have grown from mere communication devices into powerful tools for capturing visual narratives," according to DeBerry-Spence, B., Ekpo, A. E., & Hogan, D. (2019), underscores their transformative role in reshaping the documentary landscape. From early grainy recordings on phones, memory sticks up through modern smartphones boasting HD capabilities, reflecting the remarkable journey of mobile phone filmmaking.

Mobile phone or smartphone ethnography has also been a potential field where practice and theory can be combined. For instance, a special *Sightlines* journal edition dedicated for smartphone filmmaking has explored the vast potential of the field by curating smartphone films in different ways. Similar to "Surviving Whiteness" Patrick Kelly, a practitioner notes how selfies offer "a way to distance oneself from a situation through self-reflexivity" (Berry, 2018 op.cite Kelly 2022). In his film "On Queer Selfies", he explores how selfies or selfie video notes can be a way of embracing one's own "subjectivity through a personal and reflective approach" (Kelly, 2022). Anna Chiara Sabatino, another filmmaker and scholar, notes how smartphone filmmaking can be a 'therapeutic creative practice' (Sabatino, 2022). By exploring the possibilities of filmmaking through a clinical research-intervention project, she shows us how the 'filmmaker acquires the role of facilitator, who supports the creative process of video production', where the respondents themselves are the makers of the film. Apart from that, there are various instances that show us how mobile phones can be an effective tool for ethnography.

Mobile phones and other non-traditional cameras present documentary producers with advantages and drawbacks when used for documentary production. On the one hand, mobile phones offer unparalleled portability and discretion. It is also important to note how mobiles enable filmmakers

to capture candid moments without disrupting intimate storytelling experiences as using larger cameras would do. Their discrete nature creates an environment conducive to personal storytelling experiences. Conversely, mobile phone videography has its restrictions and limitations. While mobile phones offer accessibility, they often sacrifice image and sound quality, which could impact the overall visual aesthetic of the documentary. Non-traditional cameras provide improved image quality but may lack mobility or spontaneity compared to mobile phones; the decision between these tools depends on each filmmaker's goals and creative vision.

Integrating mobile phone videography and camera use into documentary filmmaking is an exciting technological fusion. Filmmakers have leveraged mobile phones' unique characteristics to transcend conventional storytelling boundaries. Mobile phones enable a new level of intimacy with subjects, blurring the line between filmmaker and participant, which can bridge emotional gaps for more empathetic narratives. Mobile phone videography has emerged as a revolutionary tool in documentary filmmaking, breaking down barriers that once restricted participation. Berry.M (2017, p.137) aptly states: "Smartphone filmmaking democratizes the filmmaking process, enabling more individuals to participate in storytelling". This newfound accessibility holds excellent promise in shaping the documentary landscape and producing diverse narratives representing diverse voices.

Mobile phone videography's inclusive nature stems from its ease and accessibility, according to Koskinen (2004). He notes that almost everyone owns a phone equipped with a camera making it an egalitarian tool for recording real-life experiences providing individuals previously excluded due to financial or logistical limitations with a voice on screen. This enriches the documentary genre with authenticity and diversity. This videography's capacity to transcend geographical borders contributes to its inclusive nature. Mobile phones also serve as bridges between storytellers in various parts of the world, facilitating cross-cultural collaboration. Furthermore, interconnectivity promotes exchanges of ideas and perspectives, allowing documentaries to transcend cultural barriers and reach global audiences. Mobile phone videography also undermines traditional hierarchies in filmmaking.

Mobile phone videography stands as a beacon of inclusivity and accessibility in documentary filmmaking, offering people worldwide the means to share their unique narratives and perspectives

through this medium. Mobile phone videography's importance in increasing diversity while democratizing storytelling cannot be overstated as we explore this new age of documentary creation. Mobile filmmaking was my method when creating my documentary for several compelling reasons. As a black filmmaker with limited financial resources and access to high-end equipment, mobile filmmaking has proved transformative in my documentary journey. Accessibility and affordability have removed barriers often preventing marginalized voices from participating in cinematic discourse. Mobile filmmaking provides a distinct advantage in capturing intimate moments intuitively and spontaneously. The immediacy and unobtrusiveness of mobile phone cameras create an environment in which subjects can engage authentically without becoming overwhelmed by an intimidating production setup. This has allowed me to delve deeper into my stories while creating a closeness that might otherwise have been challenging with conventional equipment.

The journey of mobile documentary filmmaking has been a tribute to the dynamic synergy between technology and creativity. It shows the transformative power of accessible tools in shaping narratives, fostering inclusivity, and offering cathartic expression. The essence of filmmaking has been reinvented through this method, reiterating that the heart of a powerful story transcends the medium through which it is captured. In embracing mobile documentary filmmaking, I have embraced a method and a philosophy that encapsulates the evolving landscape of visual storytelling. As the digital world continues to evolve, the essence of storytelling remains constant, encapsulated by the words of the renowned filmmaker Martin Scorsese, "the nature of the story and the quality of the storytelling is what truly matters". With mobile documentary filmmaking, these narratives can now be captured and shared by storytellers from all walks of life.

As a research method, mobile filmmaking facilitated a participatory approach, breaking down the traditional barriers between the filmmaker and the subject. The use of mobile devices enabled me to engage with my research subject—the experience of being a Black individual in predominantly white spaces—on a more personal level. Through candid interviews, reflective moments, and on-

the-go observations, the mobile filmmaking approach became a conduit for capturing nuanced insights that might have been challenging with traditional filmmaking methods.

Moreover, the accessibility of mobile filmmaking empowered me to document my experiences in real-time, blurring the lines between the researcher and the researched. This immediacy not only added an authentic layer to the filmmaking process but also enriched the research findings with a depth of emotion and reflection that might have been diluted with conventional methods. In essence, the utilization of mobile filmmaking in "Surviving Whiteness" and as a research method in documentary filmmaking became a transformative tool, breaking conventional norms and fostering a more personal and immediate connection with the subject matter. Its applications in capturing authentic moments, facilitating participant engagement, and providing an unfiltered lens into my experiences made it an invaluable asset in both the artistic and research dimensions of the filmmaking process.

2.5 First-Person / Diary Filmmaking

The use of personal diaries in documentary filmmaking provides a captivating glimpse into individuals' lives, emotions, and thoughts. These films uniquely portray a filmmaker's experiences, allowing raw emotions to resonate deeply with audiences. This chapter delves into the progression of the personal diary film genre, tracing its evolution from its early forms to contemporary iterations, and uncovering its profound impact on documentary storytelling.

Chris Marker (1991) eloquently described the diary film as "an exploration into oneself: an intimate journey into our thoughts and emotions where the camera becomes our confidant to capture moments that would otherwise slip away." Personal diary films serve as vehicles for unfiltered self-expression, enabling filmmakers to convey their innermost thoughts and experiences in a medium that transcends conventional narration. From its inception in traditional cinema to its modern adaptations on platforms like YouTube and Vimeo, the personal diary film genre has evolved into a formidable and diverse mode of artistic expression.

The evolution of the personal diary film genre has been significantly shaped by influential contributors who have left an enduring imprint on its trajectory. Chris Marker, a cinematic luminary, introduced a distinct introspection layer to the genre. Marker's reflection on memory and history, "We do not remember. We rewrite memory as much as history is rewritten" (Marker, 1997), encapsulates his approach to intertwining personal recollection with narrative. His renowned creation, "Sans Soleil" (1983), masterfully weaves personal experiences into a global tapestry. Marker's legacy lies in his adeptness at blending personal introspection with universal themes.

Jonas Mekas, often hailed as the "godfather of American avant-garde cinema," embraced the personal diary film as a visual journal of existence. Mekas's assertion, "My filmmaking is more like making a diary. It's like a big notebook, a visual notebook, where I put down my experiences, observations, thoughts" (Mekas, 2003), succinctly encapsulates his creative approach. In "Diaries, Notes, and Sketches" (1969), his magnum opus, he captures fleeting moments, embodying life's spontaneity. Mekas's contributions underscore the genre's potential for intimacy, establishing a direct link between the filmmaker's introspections and the viewer's perception.

Chantal Akerman, a visionary Belgian filmmaker, harnessed the personal diary film to excavate emotional landscapes. Akerman's candid assertion, "I make films because I need to talk because I need to say something because otherwise, I would be suffocated" (Akerman, 2013), encapsulates her creative drive. In "No Home Movie" (2015), her masterpiece, she delves into her relationship with her mother and her sense of belonging. Akerman's legacy rests on her ability to translate personal encounters into narratives that resonate universally with audiences.

At the heart of personal diary films lies subjectivity and introspection. Unlike traditional documentaries that often uphold a sense of objectivity, personal diary films prioritize an intimate portrayal of the filmmaker's inner thoughts, emotions, and personal experiences. As Marker (1997) aptly describes, these films provide "a direct and unmediated view" into the filmmaker's soul. This emphasis on subjectivity fosters a profound sense of connection between the creator and the audience, inviting viewers to witness a raw and unfiltered account of the filmmaker's journey. Another distinctive feature is the notion of unmediated expression. In personal diary films, filmmakers bare their experiences, observations, and emotions without the conventional constraints

of narrative mediation. Unlike documentaries that may rely on narration or expert commentary, personal diary films allow for a direct and uninhibited channeling of emotions, enabling audiences to engage with the unfiltered essence of the creator's experiences.

In summation, the evolution and influence of the personal diary film genre are indebted to the contributions of filmmakers such as Chris Marker, Jonas Mekas, and Chantal Akerman. Their distinct voices have reshaped the landscape of cinematic introspection and elevated the genre to a realm where personal experiences merge seamlessly with collective emotions. The resonance of personal diary films lies in their capacity to bridge the gap between individual encounters and shared human connections. The personal diary film genre possesses a set of distinct characteristics that set it apart from other forms of documentary filmmaking. These features collectively contribute to the genre's capacity to offer an unfiltered glimpse into filmmakers' innermost thoughts and emotions. By closely examining these defining attributes, we can understand the unique nature of personal diary films and their impact on cinematic storytelling.

The emphasis on self-exploration is central to the genre. Personal diary films allow filmmakers to explore their memories, contemplations, and emotions. In contrast to documentaries that often centre on external events or subjects, personal diary films pivot inward, presenting an intricate narrative of the filmmaker's journey. This focus on self-exploration grants audiences access to the filmmaker's internal world, enabling a deeper understanding of the emotions and reflections that drive their storytelling. Moreover, personal diary films frequently blur the boundaries between the personal and the universal. Filmmakers utilize their individual experiences to explore broader, universally relevant themes. This amalgamation of the personal and the universal cultivates a shared connection between the creator's unique narrative and the collective human experience, underscoring the genre's capacity to resonate deeply with audiences.

Artistic interpretation is yet another hallmark of personal diary films. While traditional documentaries often prioritize factual accuracy, personal diary films embrace artistic freedom. Filmmakers may employ experimental techniques, symbolism, and creative storytelling methods to convey emotions and experiences profoundly. This emphasis on artistic interpretation enables personal diary films to transcend conventional documentary forms and foster a heightened emotional resonance. The defining features that set personal diary films apart from other forms of

documentary filmmaking encompass subjectivity and introspection, unmediated expression, emphasis on self-exploration, blurring of boundaries between personal and universal, and artistic interpretation. These characteristics collectively contribute to the genre's unique ability to convey authentic human stories and emotions. Personal diary films offer a profoundly intimate cinematic experience that invites audiences to journey into the inner worlds of filmmakers and share their personal narratives.

Within the framework of my film "Surviving Whiteness," the deliberate integration of Diary Filmmaking, fostered a direct engagement with the camera to present immediate and authentic personal reflections on the thematic dimensions explored within the documentary. This methodological choice allowed for a seamless narrative integration, wherein diary entries became integral components of the broader storyline, serving as reflective pauses or transitions between different segments. The diary entries served as moments of introspection intricately woven into the fabric of the film's overarching narrative. This integration provided not only a scholarly depth but also established a more personal and intimate connection between the filmmaker and the audience. The diary became a lens through which the multifaceted exploration of tokenism, racism, the experience of being Black in a predominantly white academic setting, and the performative nature of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) efforts gained a heightened sense of immediacy and authenticity.

As a Ph.D. student, Black filmmaker, and American citizen attending University in the UK, navigating the challenges of a global pandemic, these intricate aspects of my identity profoundly influenced my motivation to adopt autoethnography. The decision to directly address the camera and share experiences in real-time was not merely a methodological choice but a deliberate effort to fuse the personal and the academic. This dynamic interplay shaped the narrative arc of "Surviving Whiteness," allowing for an intimate exploration of my experiences and the intricate layers of my filmmaking process. The incorporation of Diary Filmmaking in "Surviving Whiteness" served as a methodological choice that transcended traditional approaches. It facilitated an immediate and unfiltered presentation of reflections, adding an authentic layer to the exploration of complex themes. The seamless narrative integration of diary entries contributed to a broader

discourse on autoethnography in documentary filmmaking, establishing a powerful and resonant connection with the audience.

Chapter 3: History of Black Documentary Film Making in the USA

The history of Black documentary filmmaking is a testament to the power of storytelling as a tool for change and empowerment. This chapter embarks on a journey to uncover the layers of history that have often remained hidden beneath the surface of mainstream narratives. By addressing the crucial questions of racism, representation and integration, this chapter attempts to examine the contributions of Black documentary filmmakers. As we peel back the layers of time, we recognise that their stories are not just about the past but also the present and the future. This legacy continues to shape the landscape of documentary filmmaking and the broader culture. As a Black filmmaker, my challenge is to locate my work in the rich genealogy of Black documentary filmmaking history. Throughout the evolution of the documentary genre, the voices and perspectives of Black filmmakers have played a significant role in challenging norms, illuminating marginalised stories, and contributing to the broader cultural discourse. While placing my work in this larger terrain of discourse, I intend to bring forth the questions of representation, authenticity, and narration in the intersection of storytelling as critical practice.

Documentary filmmaking is a prominent means of translating real-life experiences without any mediation of fiction to the audience. In my work, I attempt to expand the legacy of this tradition by offering insights into the everyday experiences of Black lives in the Western world while also looking at the culture and history of the black identity. In doing so, it attempts to honour the legacy of Black documentary filmmakers like Oscar Micheaux, who had been critical in bringing forth the questions of social discrimination and racial injustice in their silent-era productions. The history of Black documentary filmmaking is a testament to the resilience and creativity of Black filmmakers who navigated institutional barriers to tell their stories. My work builds upon their foundation by exploring a broad spectrum of narratives, from personal stories of triumph to critical examinations of social injustices. This intersection of personal and societal narratives is a hallmark of documentary filmmaking that I embrace as a Black filmmaker.

Moreover, my work aligns with the legacy of Black documentary filmmakers who sought to challenge dominant narratives and amplify marginalised voices from white dominated countries. Just as Marlon Riggs pushed boundaries with his exploration of Black gay identity in "Tongues Untied (1989)", my work strives to confront stereotypes, dismantle biases, and reshape the discourse around the Black experience. Harper, P. B. (1995, p.70) notes that Riggs has 'altered not only our sense of what constitutes viable television broadcast but the terms of what counts as 'creative development' in the traditional realm of video production'. He also identifies the introduction of 'narrative voice-over', which is effectively used by Riggs in his production for collecting personal experiences. By drawing inspiration from this narrative technique, "Surviving Whiteness" also uses narrative voice-over as a technique to collectivize personal questions. In weaving my narrative into documentary filmmaking history, I recognise that my work is part of an ongoing conversation. It is a dialogue with the past and an engagement with the future. By honouring the legacy of those who paved the way and pushing the boundaries of storytelling, my work contributes to the genre's evolution. The stories I tell, the perspectives I amplify, and the emotions I evoke become threads that enrich the collective tapestry of documentary filmmaking, inviting audiences to connect, reflect, and engage with the world around them.

The history of documentary filmmaking is woven with diverse narratives, voices, and perspectives. Within this intricate realm, the contributions of Black documentary filmmakers hold a pivotal place. It is important to note that while Black narrative films have received focus and attention, Black documentary film 'has been largely neglected' (Klotman, Cutler 1999). Therefore, it is important to trace the genealogical pathways through which this genre has evolved from. This journey through time reveals a genre's challenges, triumphs, and evolution that has reflected and shaped societal perceptions. For instance, Pearl Bowser (1999) traces the history of black documentary filmmaking to the emergence of black community photographers. This chapter embarks on a voyage into the history of Black documentary filmmaking, tracing its emergence, growth, and the impactful narratives it has brought to light.

Exploring the history of Black documentary filmmaking is essential to illuminating the multifaceted dimensions of the Black experience. It sheds light on narratives often overlooked by mainstream media and history books, offering a platform for voices that have been marginalised or silenced. Through this exploration, we uncover stories that challenge preconceptions, redefine identities, and contribute to a more inclusive understanding of history and culture.

3.1 Power, Politics and the Problem of Racism: Documentary Filmmaking in the US and UK

Racism's pervasive presence has cast a long shadow over documentary filmmaking in the United States and the United Kingdom. Its influence extends beyond mere aesthetics and directly impacts crafted narratives, perpetuating stereotypes and impeding authentic portrayals of the Black experience (Diawara, 1993). Exploring the profound impact of racism on documentary filmmaking unveils a complex interplay between societal biases, artistic expression, and the determination of Black filmmakers to navigate this challenging terrain. Eminent Black literary theorist and writer bell hooks and her insights in the realm of visual culture has been very useful for thinking about my work. Visual narratives, according to bell hooks (1996: 3), 'not only provide a narrative for specific discourses of race, sex and class'. For her, 'they provide a shared experience, a common starting point from which diverse audience can dialogue about these charged issues'. In her magnificent work on Black images of history, Black artist and scholar Deborah Willis has noted that "visual photographs can be used as a narrative form to explore personal memories" (Willis 2014, p.2). It is within this potentiality of such narratives that we should discuss the problem of power and racism involved in the making of documentary films and narratives.

Racism's deep-rooted influence often manifests in shaping narratives that reflect preconceived biases and discriminatory perspectives. In both the US and the UK, the history of documentary filmmaking has witnessed instances where Black subjects were portrayed through a narrow lens, reinforcing harmful stereotypes. The perpetuation of these stereotypes through documentary filmmaking has contributed to a distorted representation of the Black experience, further entrenching biases within broader society. The Black subject was always represented as an object to be ridiculed, passively mentioned or actively condemned. This burden of representation made the re-presentation of an authentic Black subject and experience almost impossible. It is at this point that we should critically analyse the pervasive influence of racism in the production of Black subjects on visual mediums, particularly documentary films.

The influence of racism extends beyond narrative shaping to hinder authentic representations of the Black experience. Documentary filmmaking has frequently been inhibited by systemic racism, limiting opportunities for Black filmmakers to share their own stories (hooks, 1992). This limitation results in a skewed perspective where stories are told from an outsider's viewpoint,

perpetuating a cycle of misrepresentation and underrepresentation. The impact of racism on documentary filmmaking is met head-on by Black filmmakers who strive to break free from its constraints. These filmmakers recognise the urgency of countering stereotypes and expanding narratives to embrace the complexity of the Black experience (Diawara, 1993). Their challenges are multifaceted, ranging from securing funding to confronting institutional biases. However, these obstacles have sparked creativity and innovation, inspiring Black filmmakers to forge their paths and platforms (hooks, 1992).

By examining the impact of racism on documentary filmmaking, we gain a deeper understanding of the complexities that Black filmmakers navigate. A report on race, gender and topics in documentary films prepared by Centre for Media and Social Impact identifies “dominance of structural racism as a contributing factor to many social problems” (Borum, C., Weissman, P. and Conrad-Pérez, D. 2022, p.12). By presenting statistics from 2014-2020, it shows that ‘BIPOC film directors are far more likely to acknowledge realities of race and racism in their documentaries than White directors’ (p.16). As they confront systemic racism and challenge dominant narratives, these Black filmmakers become trailblazers in reshaping the documentary landscape. The profound influence of racism on documentary filmmaking in the US and UK cannot be understated. Its legacy of shaping narratives and perpetuating stereotypes has posed significant challenges for Black filmmakers. Yet, in the face of these obstacles, Black filmmakers have demonstrated resilience, creativity, and a fierce dedication to authentic representation. By understanding the extent of racism's impact, we appreciate the urgency of dismantling biased structures and amplifying diverse voices. Through their craft, Black filmmakers continue to rewrite the narrative, challenging the status quo and shaping a documentary landscape that embraces inclusivity and empowerment.

3.2 Political and Social Implications of Black Documentary Films as Forms of Representation and Activism

Documentary filmmaking has emerged as a powerful vehicle for social and political activism, particularly within Black independent documentary filmmaking. The medium has evolved beyond mere storytelling to serve as a platform for advocacy, social justice, and the reclamation of marginalised narratives. Through a comprehensive analysis, we can gain insight into the transformative role of Black documentary films in challenging conventional norms, empowering communities, and fostering meaningful dialogue.

Black documentary films have emerged as potent tools for advocating social justice and equality, serving as megaphones for silenced voices. Movies like "13th" (DuVernay, 2016) and "Whose Streets?" (Sabaah & Folayan, 2017) interrogate systemic racism and mass incarceration, advocating for reform and equal treatment under the law. By unveiling the harsh realities of racial injustice, these films stir viewers to engage in activism, driving tangible change within their communities. "13th", for instance, discusses the question of black criminality through a critical lens. In doing so, it challenges a 'fundamental narrative' regarding the idea of criminality (Vicente, M. E. G, 2021). It also presents a 'counter-narrative', in terms of its visuality, aesthetics and narrative, that shows the dialectic of the historical relationship between "white America" and "black America", namely the ongoing power struggle and the possible reasons as for why racial discrimination remains so embedded in American society (p.109). By doing that, it acts as a catalyst to produce a terrain to discuss these crucial questions of racism and its interplays between power.

Due to their lived experience, Black documentary filmmakers often challenge mainstream narratives and dismantle deeply ingrained stereotypes. These films offer alternative perspectives highlighting Black experiences' richness and diversity. For instance, "I Am Not Your Negro" (Peck, 2016) challenges the sanitised portrayal of American history by revealing the raw truths of racism and its impact on Black lives. This approach allows marginalised communities to reclaim their stories, rewrite the narrative, and assert their agency (Espinosa, 2001). The impact of Black independent documentary filmmakers extends beyond the screen, fostering essential dialogue, empathy, and understanding. Films like "The Black Panthers: Vanguard of the Revolution" provide historical context that encourages viewers to examine contemporary social issues critically doing this close analysis, these documentaries serve as catalysts for informed discussions, pushing audiences to confront uncomfortable truths and bridge divides.

The political and social implications of Black documentary films are profound and far-reaching. These films operate as powerful instruments of change, propelling social justice movements forward and advocating for equality. Challenging mainstream narratives and stereotypes empowers marginalised communities to assert their stories and experiences. Moreover, their impact extends to fostering dialogue, empathy, and understanding among audiences, ultimately contributing to a more informed and socially conscious society. The transformative role of Black independent documentary filmmakers in shaping discourse and driving change underscores the remarkable potential of documentary filmmaking as a medium for activism.

An example of how documentary filmmaking has had a significant social impact is *Hoop Dreams* (James, 1994), which, though directed by a white filmmaker, captures the lived experiences of two African American high school basketball players as they navigate systemic barriers in education and sport. The film brings attention to issues of racial inequality, educational disparities, and the economic struggles faced by Black families. Its release sparked national conversations on the intersection of race, class, and opportunity in America, particularly concerning access to education for Black youth. *Hoop Dreams* demonstrated how documentary films can challenge societal assumptions and inspire conversations about policy and institutional change.

However, it is worth questioning whether *Hoop Dreams* would have gained the same level of mainstream success and critical acclaim had it been directed by a Black filmmaker. Steve James, a white filmmaker, directed the film, and it went on to receive numerous awards and significant recognition, including an Academy Award nomination for Best Film Editing. At the time, *Hoop Dreams* was one of the highest-grossing documentaries ever made, earning over \$11.8 million at the box office. While its merits are undeniable, the success of *Hoop Dreams* may reflect a broader trend: Black filmmakers telling Black stories often do not receive the same opportunities or recognition.

Comparatively, Black-directed documentaries have struggled for recognition despite their significance. For example, Marlon Riggs' *Tongues Untied* (1989), a groundbreaking exploration of Black gay identity, faced backlash and controversy despite critical acclaim. Similarly, *Daughters of the Dust* (1991) by Julie Dash—a pioneering work of Black cinema—received far less commercial success despite its artistry. These examples point to the industry's long-standing bias where Black filmmakers, particularly those telling Black stories, have faced significant structural challenges in gaining visibility and acclaim.

The numbers further highlight this disparity. According to a USC Annenberg Inclusion Initiative study, only 6.6% of documentary filmmakers are Black, and they face difficulties in securing festival premieres, theatrical distribution, and awards recognition (Smith, S.L., Pieper, K. and Wheeler, S. 2024). This underrepresentation is compounded by a lack of funding opportunities, with white filmmakers often having more accessible access to financial resources and institutional support.

It is reasonable to argue that *Hoop Dreams* gained notoriety and mainstream acceptance that might not have been available if a Black filmmaker had directed it. White filmmakers' proximity to the dominant power structures in Hollywood may afford them greater access to resources, distribution, and media coverage, amplifying their films to a broader audience. While Black filmmakers are often left navigating institutional barriers, white directors who tell Black stories may benefit from a system that privileges their voices, even when representing marginalized communities. This dynamic raises critical questions about who gets to tell Black stories and how racial dynamics in the industry shape which films receive recognition. *Hoop Dreams*'s success underscores the necessity of examining how race and power operate within the documentary film world. Black stories often reach wider audiences when told through the lens of white filmmakers, while Black directors remain under-supported.

3.3 Leveraging Post-Production Techniques: Case Studies of Successful Black Documentaries

Through impactful works, documentary filmmaking has illuminated the Black experience, culture, and history. The post-production phase of these documentaries have been key to enhancing storytelling, invoking emotions, and amplifying their messages. This section delves into compelling case studies of successful Black documentaries that employ a spectrum of post-production techniques. These techniques create immersive narratives that resonate with audiences and contribute to the broader discourse.

This chapter examines case studies of documentaries directed by Black filmmakers that ingeniously integrate various post-production techniques. Through adept usage of editing, sound design, colour correction, visual effects, and music composition, these filmmakers align their choices with creative visions, thereby amplifying their films' impact. Documentaries often utilise editing as a fundamental post-production technique to shape the narrative flow and emphasise key themes.

One such example is “the aforementioned "13th," directed by Ava DuVernay. This documentary examines racial inequality within the American criminal justice system. Using strategic editing,

DuVernay weaves together historical footage, interviews, and compelling visuals to build a coherent argument and foster a deeper understanding of systemic racism (DuVernay, 2016). The sound design also plays a crucial role in enhancing the emotional resonance of documentaries.

Raoul Peck's "I Am Not Your Negro" employs a dynamic sound design that complements James Baldwin's evocative prose, creating an immersive auditory experience that heightens the film's impact (Peck, 2016). This technique adds depth to the narrative and immerses the audience in Baldwin's perspective, fostering a more profound emotional connection. Colour correction and visual effects are pivotal in establishing the tone and atmosphere of documentaries. In Stanley Nelson's "The Black Panthers: Vanguard of the Revolution", colour correction recreates the movement's vibrant visual aesthetics, evoking the era's revolutionary spirit (Nelson, 2015). This technique aligns with the film's goal of capturing the movement's essence and impact on history.

Music composition is another powerful tool used by Black filmmakers to underscore the emotional and thematic elements of their documentaries. In "Time," directed by Garrett Bradley, the emotive score complements the intimate portrayal of a woman's journey for justice and prison reform, enhancing the film's emotional resonance. The importance of combining techniques becomes evident when exploring the benefits of a multidimensional approach in Black-directed documentary filmmaking. By blending techniques, filmmakers can create a more immersive and impactful narrative that resonates with audiences on various levels. Furthermore, this approach allows for a richer representation of complex themes such as blackness, race, and identity, transcending traditional storytelling boundaries.

A striking example of technique integration is in "Black to Techno" (2019), directed by Jenn Nkiru. This documentary explores the roots of techno music and its connection to Black culture. Nkiru seamlessly combines *cinéma vérité*, participatory, and reflexive filmmaking techniques to convey techno music's emotional impact while examining its cultural significance. This multidimensional approach enhances the film's engagement and encourages viewers to reflect on the intersection of music, culture, and identity. Black-directed documentaries have significantly leveraged post-production techniques to amplify their storytelling impact. These filmmakers have effectively communicated their creative visions and conveyed powerful messages through the integration of

editing, sound design, colour correction, visual effects, and music composition. Combining techniques further enriches the documentary experience, enabling filmmakers to explore complex themes and challenge societal norms, thus fostering a deeper understanding of the Black experience and its significance.

3.4 Unveiling Truths: The Bold Vision of bell hooks

The power of filmmaking lies not only in its ability to entertain but also in its capacity to shape perceptions, influence narratives, and define cultural norms. In the realm of representation, film plays a pivotal role in constructing our understanding of race, identity, and social dynamics. As bell hooks, a prominent cultural critic, author, and social activist, has ardently pointed out in her works, the portrayal of race and representation in film carries profound implications for society. Here, I delved into the significance of filmmaking as a medium for representation, drawing from bell hooks' insightful analyses to underscore the impact of accurate and inclusive portrayals on dismantling stereotypes and promoting social progress.

The visual nature of film imbues it with immense power to convey messages and influence opinions. hooks asserts that film representations often hinge on stereotypes reinforcing power dynamics and societal norms. She calls for critically examining these representations to challenge the perpetuation of harmful stereotypes. hooks notes that films frequently portray racial minorities in roles that align with preconceived notions, thus limiting their opportunities for authentic, multidimensional representation. She urges filmmakers to recognise the dangers of such representations and strive for a more nuanced and diverse portrayal of characters and experiences (hooks, 1992).

According to hooks, filmmakers are responsible for creating representations that accurately reflect the diversity and complexity of human experiences. She emphasises that accurate representation necessitates understanding the intersections between race, gender, and class. Filmmakers who embrace this responsibility can contribute to the dismantling of hegemonic narratives that have historically marginalised certain groups. hooks advocates for an intersectional approach to filmmaking that recognises the interconnectedness of various aspects of identity (hooks, 1991).

One of the central themes in hooks' work is the importance of challenging dominant narratives in film. She points out that the prevailing white gaze often shapes the portrayal of racial minorities, reinforcing notions of exoticism or otherness. hooks contends that filmmakers should prioritise the perspectives and experiences of marginalised communities, allowing them to control their narratives. By doing so, filmmakers can subvert the mainstream gaze and offer authentic insights into the lived realities of diverse individuals (hooks, 1992). For hooks, the potential of film to promote social change is undeniable. She envisions a cinema that critiques existing power structures and actively contributes to their transformation. By creating films that challenge stereotypes and question oppressive norms, filmmakers can engage audiences in meaningful conversations about race, identity, and justice. hooks believes that cinema can foster empathy and understanding, catalysing societal attitudes and behavioural shifts (hooks, 1996).

In conclusion, bell hooks' incisive analysis of filmmaking and representation underscores the profound impact that cinematic portrayals can have on our perceptions of race and identity. Filmmakers can challenge stereotypes, rewrite narratives, and foster social change. By embracing hooks' insights, the film industry can move beyond perpetuating harmful stereotypes and contribute to a more equitable and just society. It is incumbent upon filmmakers to recognise their responsibility in shaping public discourse and craft representations that reflect our world's diverse, complex realities. "Surviving Whiteness", in this sense, embodies the ideals of bell hooks by radically negating the potential of a passive gaze by actively contributing to first-hand visual and voice narration.

3.5 The White Gaze in Black Documentary Filmmaking: Navigating Representation and Lack of African American Mainstream Documentary Filmmakers

Documentary filmmaking has long been a platform for telling real stories, exposing truths, and sharing diverse perspectives. However, examining the history of Black documentary filmmaking, it becomes apparent that the influence of the "white gaze" has often shaped narratives and limited authentic representation. This part delves into the complexities of the white gaze in Black documentary filmmaking while also addressing the lack of African American mainstream documentary filmmakers. For instance, according to the aforementioned report by CMSI, 81% of the directors of films that dealt with the questions of race and gender are whites. Through examining

these interconnected issues, we gain insight into the ongoing struggle for authentic representation and the need for diverse voices to shape cinematic narratives.

The White Gaze: Definition and Implications

The white gaze refers to the perspective and lens through which stories are told, often influenced by white, Eurocentric norms and perspectives. In the context of Black documentary filmmaking, the white gaze can distort or oversimplify the Black experience, perpetuating stereotypes and reinforcing power dynamics. This influence can result in documentaries that prioritise the comfort and understanding of white audiences over the accurate portrayal of Black realities (hooks, 1992). The historical context of the white gaze in Black documentary filmmaking can be traced back to early films like "The Birth of a Nation" (1915), which depicted Black individuals as subservient and dangerous. This portrayal laid the foundation for decades of harmful stereotypes Hollywood and the media perpetuated. The white gaze not only shaped the narratives but also influenced who held the reins of power in the industry, limiting the perspectives and stories deemed worthy of being told.

Black documentary filmmakers have faced the challenge of navigating the white gaze while striving for authentic representation. The need to conform to established norms and cater to mainstream expectations can hinder the ability to tell stories with nuance and complexity. Filmmakers may find themselves between the desire to challenge stereotypes and the pressure to appeal to a broader, often white, audience (Diawara, 1993). Despite these challenges, African American documentary filmmakers have emerged to reclaim their narratives and challenge the white gaze. Ava DuVernay's "13th" (2016) boldly exposes the deep-rooted racism within the American criminal justice system, offering a critical perspective on mass incarceration. DuVernay's approach disrupts the white gaze by unapologetically demanding recognition and action by placing the Black experience at the centre of the narrative (DuVernay, 2016). For instance, bell hooks, in her crucial intervention, proposes the logic of 'the oppositional gaze', where the black gaze acts as a "gesture of resistance, challenging the authority" (hooks, 1993, p.115). In this work, she traces the genealogy of looking in the context of slave history. She tries to critically locate looking as a rebellion or a refusal to adhere to the dominant gaze. One can assume that this proposition by hooks might have had a significant influence on the contemporary Black documentary film-makers who have tried to oppose the white gaze by re-claiming their subject position.

While progress has been made, the lack of mainstream African American documentary filmmakers remains a significant issue. The barriers to entry, lack of representation in decision-making positions, and the lingering influence of the white gaze all contribute to the underrepresentation of African American voices in the industry. This scarcity perpetuates a cycle where the white gaze shapes narratives and perspectives. Efforts to break free from the white gaze and empower African American documentary filmmakers are gaining momentum. Documentaries like "I Am Not Your Negro" (2016), directed by Raoul Peck, which explores the works of James Baldwin, challenge dominant narratives and offer a distinctly African American perspective. These films provide insight into the lived experiences of Black individuals, offering audiences a chance to engage with stories that defy the constraints of the white gaze (Peck, 2016).

The white gaze in Black documentary filmmaking is a complex issue that continues to influence the stories, the perspectives shared, and the individuals empowered to tell them. While the struggle for authentic representation persists, African American documentary filmmakers push the boundaries of storytelling, demanding recognition and reframing the narrative. By reclaiming the spaces and subjectivity by turning the gaze critically, African American documentary filmmakers are creating a new aesthetic terrain to reverse the gaze. But as the industry evolves, it is essential to acknowledge the historical impact of the white gaze and actively work towards dismantling its hold on cinematic representation by calling it out critically. Through amplifying diverse voices, embracing authentic storytelling, and challenging established norms, we move closer to a cinematic landscape that reflects the multifaceted reality of the African American experience and beyond. The journey towards authentic representation requires a concerted effort from filmmakers, audiences, and industry stakeholders. Here, I will take three documentaries that has informed and influenced the production and formation of "Surviving Whiteness", namely *Tongues Untied* (1989), directed by Marlon.T. Riggs, *Field Niggas* (2015) by Khalik Allah and *Handsworth Songs* (1986) directed by John Akomfrah and produced by Black Audio Film Collective.

3.6 Grounding "Surviving Whiteness" in the Legacy of Influential Black Documentary Films

Tongues Untied (1989) by Marlon T. Riggs

Marlon T. Riggs' *Tongues Untied* (1989) emerges as a seminal work within the landscape of documentary filmmaking, offering a deeply personal and politically charged narrative on Black gay identity. Riggs, an African American filmmaker and gay rights activist, created *Tongues Untied*

amidst the sociopolitical turmoil of the late 1980s, a period marked by heightened racial tensions and the burgeoning AIDS crisis. The film's cultural context is vital, as it reflects Riggs' efforts to challenge the pervasive marginalization of Black gay men within both the broader Black community and the predominantly white gay community. The main themes of *Tongues Untied* revolve around Black gay identity, intersectionality, and activism. Riggs masterfully interweaves his personal narrative with broader social issues, employing poetry and performance to articulate the complexities of Black gay life. This intersectional approach underscores the multifaceted nature of identity, highlighting how race, sexuality, and activism intersect and shape individual experiences.

Innovatively, Riggs employs personal narrative and poetry to create an emotive and resonant cinematic experience. The film's experimental and non-linear structure disrupts conventional documentary forms, allowing Riggs to convey the fragmented and often tumultuous experiences of Black gay men. This stylistic choice not only enhances the film's emotional impact but also challenges viewers to engage with the narrative on a deeper, more introspective level. *Tongues Untied* received critical acclaim for its bold and unflinching portrayal of marginalized identities, though it also sparked controversy, particularly from conservative groups who objected to its candid exploration of homosexuality and race. Despite this, the film's influence on LGBTQ+ and Black cinema is undeniable. It paved the way for subsequent works that seek to amplify marginalized voices, setting a precedent for using documentary filmmaking as a tool for social justice and representation.

Field Niggas (2015) by Khalik Allah

Khalik Allah's *Field Niggas* (2015) presents a raw and intimate portrayal of urban life, race, and socio-economic struggles in contemporary America. Allah, a street photographer and filmmaker, captures the nocturnal life of Harlem's inhabitants with a compassionate and unfiltered lens, providing a stark commentary on the socio-political landscape of the time. The main themes of *Field Niggas* include urban life, race, and socio-economic struggles. Allah's work delves into the lives of individuals marginalized by systemic inequalities, presenting their stories with an authenticity that challenges stereotypes and humanizes his subjects. The film's socio-political

context is critical, as it reflects ongoing debates around police brutality, poverty, and racial discrimination in the United States.

Innovatively, Allah employs a distinctive cinematic style characterized by night-time photography and intimate close-ups. This approach creates a visually arresting narrative that immerses viewers in the nocturnal world of his subjects. The film's sound design further enhances its impact, utilizing disjointed audio-visual narratives to mirror the fragmented realities of urban life. *Field Niggas* received positive critical response for its unconventional approach and empathetic portrayal of marginalized communities. Its influence on contemporary documentary practices is significant, inspiring filmmakers to adopt more experimental techniques and to focus on the lived experiences of marginalized individuals.

Handsworth Songs (1986) by John Akomfrah and Black Audio Film Collective

Handsworth Songs (1986), directed by John Akomfrah and produced by the Black Audio Film Collective, stands as a pioneering work in the British film movement. Akomfrah and his collective created the film in response to the 1985 Handsworth riots, capturing the racial tensions and urban unrest that defined the era. The main themes of Handsworth Songs include race relations, urban unrest, and historical memory. The film offers a nuanced exploration of the socio-political factors that contributed to the riots, presenting a multi-layered narrative that intertwines personal stories with broader historical and cultural contexts.

Innovatively, Handsworth Songs employs a multi-layered narrative structure and archival footage, blending past and present to create a rich tapestry of voices and images. The use of music, sound, and visual metaphors further enhances the film's impact, allowing Akomfrah to convey complex themes with poetic resonance. The film received critical acclaim for its innovative approach and its significant role in the British film movement (Mercer, 1988). Its influence on future generations of filmmakers is profound, inspiring new approaches to documentary filmmaking that emphasize intersectionality and historical context.

The influence of *Tongues Untied*, *Field Niggas*, and *Handsworth Songs* on “Surviving Whiteness” is evident in several key areas. Firstly, these films' use of intersectional narratives to address

complex identities and socio-political contexts serves as a foundational approach for “Surviving Whiteness”. Like its predecessors, “Surviving Whiteness” employs personal narrative and lived experience to explore themes of race, identity, and systemic inequality. Secondly, the innovative techniques used by Riggs, Allah, and Akomfrah—such as experimental structures, intimate close-ups, and multi-layered narratives—inform the stylistic choices in “Surviving Whiteness”. By incorporating these elements, the film aims to create an immersive and impactful narrative that challenges conventional documentary forms. Thirdly, the social impact of these groundbreaking films—through their contributions to social justice, representation, and discourse—provides a model for “Surviving Whiteness”. The film aspires to follow in the footsteps of these influential works by advocating for systemic change and greater equity within educational institutions.

3.7 Locating “Surviving Whiteness”: New Black Subjectivity and the Legacy of Black Filmmaking

As a Black documentary filmmaker and PhD student, my film "Surviving Whiteness" is located within the rich history of Black documentary filmmaking. My film is rooted in the rich tradition of using visual storytelling as a tool for social commentary and change. My film aligns with the longstanding practice of Black filmmakers who have used their work to amplify underrepresented voices and shed light on pressing social issues.

"Surviving Whiteness" continues the legacy established by visionary Black documentary filmmakers who paved the way for authentic and nuanced storytelling. Filmmakers such as Marlon Riggs, Ava DuVernay, and Raoul Peck have shown that documentaries can be powerful instruments for challenging stereotypes, addressing systemic inequalities, and advocating for justice. My film contributes to this legacy by focusing on the experiences of a Black student in higher education institutions, a topic that has received inadequate attention in mainstream discourse.

Being a Black documentary filmmaker and a PhD student adds personal and scholarly depth to "Surviving Whiteness." This intersection of personal identity and academic inquiry allows me to bring a nuanced understanding of the challenges faced by Black students in predominantly white

educational environments. In the context of Black documentary filmmaking, "Surviving Whiteness" is a contemporary exploration of the complexities that arise when individuals from marginalised communities navigate institutions historically shaped by systemic racism..

As I continue to develop "Surviving Whiteness" beyond the context of my PhD studies, I am responsible for contributing to the ongoing dialogue about race, equity, and representation. Just as Black documentary filmmakers of the past have opened doors for future generations, I hope that "Surviving Whiteness" contributes to a broader understanding of the experiences of Black students, sparks important conversations, and paves the way for more inclusive narratives in the world of documentary filmmaking. "Surviving Whiteness" seamlessly connects to this legacy by addressing the experiences of Black students within higher education institutions—a subject often overlooked. Like Marlon Riggs, Ava DuVernay, and Raoul Peck before me, I aim to confront stereotypes, address systemic injustices, and advocate for justice through my work. My film integrates the tradition of those who have used the documentary form to create thought-provoking narratives that transcend boundaries. In doing so, "Surviving Whiteness" extends this alternative genealogy of political documentary filmmaking by creating significant ruptures in the form of narration.

Informed by my identity and academic journey, "Surviving Whiteness" delves into a nuanced exploration of Black students' challenges. My role as a Black filmmaker and PhD student adds a layer of personal understanding to the narrative, akin to the unique perspectives that Charles Burnett and Julie Dash brought to their storytelling. Just as they shed light on their communities, "Surviving Whiteness" brings an intimate understanding of the issues it portrays. In the broader context of Black documentary filmmaking, "Surviving Whiteness" is a contemporary examination of navigating institutions marked by systemic racism. It stands alongside the works of St. Clair Bourne and Shola Lynch, who spotlighted the struggles and triumphs of Black individuals in diverse contexts. Using my film as a medium, I add my voice to the ongoing conversation around race, equity, and representation. As I continue my journey in filmmaking and academia, I aim to contribute to the discourse on racial dynamics and representation. Just as past Black documentary filmmakers opened doors, I aim to expand the narrative further and make space for inclusive stories. Through "Surviving Whiteness," I aspire to foster dialogue, amplify perspectives, and pave the way for a more diverse and inclusive future in documentary filmmaking. My film "Surviving

"Whiteness" is a testament to Black documentary filmmaking's enduring legacy. It aligns with the trajectory of those who have boldly harnessed the medium to challenge the status quo, ignite discussions, and inspire change. By placing my film within this lineage, I strive to honour the journey of those who came before me and contribute to the ongoing evolution of Black documentary filmmaking.

In conclusion, Chapter 3 has explored the intricate history and evolution of Black documentary filmmaking, tracing its roots from the pioneers who paved the way to the contemporary filmmakers who continue to shape the landscape. Through the lens of history, we've witnessed the perseverance of Black filmmakers in the face of systemic challenges, including limited representation and access. Their unwavering dedication to telling authentic stories has expanded the boundaries of documentary filmmaking, challenged societal norms, and fostered conversations around race, identity, and social justice.

Furthermore, this chapter has shed light on the impact of racism on documentary filmmaking, highlighting its pervasive influence on narratives and representation. By acknowledging these issues, we gain insight into the struggles faced by Black documentary filmmakers and how they navigate these complexities. Additionally, we've explored the significant contributions of Black independent documentary filmmakers, whose radical narratives have paved the way for transformative storytelling. Their films have challenged stereotypes and sparked vital conversations, enabling audiences to engage with a more nuanced understanding of the Black experience. Moreover, exploring post-production techniques has demonstrated how Black filmmakers adroitly utilise these tools to craft compelling narratives. By blending techniques and engaging in creative experimentation, these filmmakers have created immersive experiences that resonate with audiences emotionally and intellectually.

Finally, "Surviving Whiteness" stands as a testament to the legacy of Black documentary filmmaking and as an embodiment of my dual roles as a filmmaker and a PhD student. This convergence of creative expression and scholarly inquiry underscores the potential for documentary filmmaking to contribute meaningfully to academic discussions. By following in the footsteps of Black documentary filmmakers who have used their art to amplify marginalised

narratives, "Surviving Whiteness" adds a new layer to the ongoing story of Black filmmakers' impact on both the documentary genre and the field of education.

Chapter 4: Surviving Whiteness: Politics, Aesthetics and Ethics

In this chapter, I intend to discuss how the aesthetics, politics and ethics of ‘Surviving Whiteness’ are shaped and formed. It also tries to delineate the interconnections between the same by exploring them through the film's structure and theme. There have been a number of discussions about the idea of politics and aesthetics intertwining in works of art. For instance, Walter Benjamin, in his renowned essay ‘The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction’, warns us of the dangers of introducing aesthetics to the political life. For Benjamin, Fascism aestheticizes politics by introducing aesthetics into the political realm. He argues that “communism responds by politicizing art” (Benjamin, 2018, p.31). For Jacques Ranciere, in contrast, the context of late capitalism demands us to re-think the politics of art (Ranciere, 2003, p. 135). These two important ruminations on the question and relation of politics and aesthetics leads us into one important conclusion; that the question of aesthetics is not a value-neutral one devoid of social, cultural and political implications. But rather, it is the amalgamation of these very implications. Therefore, we can understand that all aesthetic choices have an underlying political context. It is in this realm that I want to discuss the politics and aesthetics of “Surviving Whiteness”. In addition to that, I also want to stress the question of ethics, which is often taken for granted especially in the realm of documentary making. Here in this chapter, I describe the visual aesthetics of documentary films, followed by a reflexive account on the question of ethics and subject in making a documentary film.

4.1 Personal Diary Films and Poetry: Visual Aesthetics of “Surviving Whiteness”

Personal diary films inhabit a realm of cinematic storytelling where various standard techniques and approaches are harnessed to vividly convey the filmmaker's distinctive perspective and experiences. These creative methods effectively transform the cinematic medium into an intimate

canvas for storytelling, allowing audiences to be fully immersed in the filmmaker's world. This exploration delves into the techniques and approaches that have become synonymous with personal diary films, facilitating a deeper appreciation of their inherent narrative potency.

In creating my film "Surviving Whiteness," I embraced the rich narrative potential inherent in personal diary filmmaking, employing various techniques and approaches to provide a vivid portrayal of my distinctive perspective and experiences. Frequently employing narration and voiceover, I utilized these fundamental tools to serve as a direct conduit for my thoughts and emotions. By sharing my authentic voice, I aimed to grant audiences privileged access to my inner reflections, fostering a profound sense of intimacy and authenticity. This technique played a pivotal role in drawing viewers into my personal odyssey. In the opening scene of "Surviving Whiteness," the voice-over became a narrative anchor, offering a contextual framework and forging an emotional connection with the audience. As the somber occasion of my Aunt Sharone Jones's funeral unfolded, my voice-over served as a guide, imparting a nuanced understanding of the human experience of loss. By sharing my personal reflections on this moment of profound grief, the audience was invited not only to witness but to empathize with the intricacies of life's inevitable farewells.

Transitioning from this deeply personal context, voice-over became a dynamic tool in my encounters with the statue of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in Newcastle. In the first encounter, my voice exuded hope and excitement, mirroring the anticipation of a new chapter symbolized by Dr. King's statue—a beacon of freedom and inclusiveness. As I articulated my aspirations, dreams, and initial positive thoughts about my experience in Newcastle, the voice-over facilitated a bridge between the personal and the symbolic, creating a narrative thread that resonated with the audience's own sense of possibility. However, the tone shifted in the second encounter with Dr. King's statue, unveiling the complex layers of my evolving perceptions. Through voice-over, I conveyed the realization that a statue, no matter how symbolic, is insufficient if not accompanied by tangible efforts for real change and inclusion. The historical context of universities and their tokenistic gestures played out in my personal experience, revealing a stark contrast between the promise of inclusivity and the isolating reality of being the only Black person in my program.

As the voice-over continued, I shared my sense of being used as a token by the university for the sake of appearances, questioning the authenticity of the institution's commitment to inclusivity. This candid reflection, spoken in my own voice, provided audiences with a raw and unfiltered perspective on the challenges of navigating a predominantly white academic space. In the culmination of these voice-over reflections with the MLK statue, I pondered how Dr. King would feel about the instrumental use of his image. The voice-over served not just as a narrative device but as a vehicle for introspection, inviting the audience to join me in questioning the sincerity of institutional gestures and reflecting on the implications of using iconic figures in pursuit of diversity and inclusion. The frequent use of voice-over in "Surviving Whiteness" was a deliberate choice to guide the audience through my emotional landscape, from grief to hope, and eventually to the sobering realization of tokenism. It played a pivotal role in making the documentary not just a visual experience but a deeply personal and introspective journey.

Recognizing handheld cinematography as a hallmark of personal diary films, during shooting in Newcastle and hospital diagnosis scenes in the USA, I deliberately embraced this visual style to offer an immediate and unfiltered perspective. The intentional use of handheld cameras aimed to emulate the spontaneity of my viewpoint, capturing fleeting moments in their raw essence. This technique was instrumental in establishing an immersive experience, allowing audiences to feel as though they were sharing my very presence throughout the film.

In "Surviving Whiteness," I personally harnessed the power of montage and collage techniques as a sophisticated means of juxtaposing diverse visuals. In the impactful segment, "8:46 Justice for George Floyd," I consciously layered different elements, seamlessly blending audio from the tragic murder of George Floyd with visuals of an African Safari and the serene beauty of animals in nature. Coupled with voiceovers from Black Scholars sharing profound insights on black freedom, history, and liberation, this deliberate collage aimed not only to provide historical context but also to offer a scholarly perspective from a pan-African viewpoint. This intricate visual interplay effectively mirrored the multifaceted nature of my experiences, guiding viewers through various facets of the narrative.

Using montage, I provided fleeting glimpses into my surroundings, memories, and emotions, creating a tapestry of images that enriched the storytelling in "Surviving Whiteness." I strategically incorporated visual symbols and recurring motifs to encapsulate the intricate emotions and experiences embedded in the narrative, creating a unique visual language within the film. This layer of symbolism engaged viewers on a deeper level, encouraging them to explore the narrative with heightened interpretative depth, adding a nuanced layer to the storytelling.

The intentional inclusion of diary entries and textual overlays within "Surviving Whiteness" played a crucial role in supplementing the visual narrative. In moments where I am immersed in the lived experience, whether in my room or at the Newcastle University student radio station, I wanted to ensure clarity in expressing what tokenism feels like while attempting to understand it simultaneously. By intertwining written reflections and introspections, I provided audiences with a more intimate perspective on my inner world. This fusion of written and visual mediums significantly enriched the narrative, deepening the audience's understanding of my personal journey.

Embarking on a profound journey to Africa became a pivotal chapter in the narrative of "Surviving Whiteness," one that allowed me to delve into the exploration of my African identity. As I travelled through vibrant communities in Nigeria, Ghana, South Africa, Ethiopia, and various other corners of the African diaspora, the camera captured not only the landscapes but the essence of diverse cultures. The incorporation of this footage was a deliberate choice to enhance the authenticity of the documentary, providing a first-hand look into the rich tapestry of traditions and identities that contribute to my heritage.

Seamlessly weaving found footage and archive material into the fabric of "Surviving Whiteness," I aimed to offer audiences glimpses into my past. This choice was driven by the desire to create a palpable connection to personal history, bridging temporal gaps and enriching the narrative with layers of lived experience. The visual journey became a bridge between my present self and the moments that shaped my identity, fostering a more immersive storytelling experience.

Time, as a dynamic element, underwent conscious manipulation in "Surviving Whiteness." Techniques such as fast-forward, slow motion, and time-lapses played a crucial role in shaping the narrative. The footage from my grandmother's 80th birthday party, presented with temporal alterations, served a dual purpose. It not only conveyed the palpable sense of missing family but also provided the audience with a window into the events that heightened my sense of disconnection while studying in the UK. This unconventional approach challenged the linear constraints of time, mirroring the intricate, non-linear nature of memory and emotion. The result was a more nuanced portrayal of my unique perspective, capturing the complexity of emotions tied to family, identity, and the unfolding journey documented in "Surviving Whiteness."

In "Surviving Whiteness," I prioritized the depiction of emotions, moods, and sensations over a fixed plot, superseding linear storytelling conventions. This emphasis resulted in a visceral experience that resonated far beyond narrative confines, offering audiences a profound exploration of my internal world. In summary, the integration of these techniques and approaches in "Surviving Whiteness" seamlessly wove together a narrative that invited audiences into my internal world. Through first-person narration, visual aesthetics, symbolism, and an unwavering commitment to authenticity, "Surviving Whiteness" transcended traditional documentary forms, providing a profoundly personal and uniquely immersive cinematic experience. The film not only enriched the art of storytelling but also navigated the complex interplay between artistic expression and ethical responsibility, maintaining the dignity of my narrative and the individuals implicated. The comprehensive exploration of ethical considerations in "Surviving Whiteness" offers valuable insights into the intricate balance between personal storytelling and ethical duty.

As this chapter concludes, it becomes evident that personal diary films provide a fascinating window into the human experience. They explore emotions, memories, and vulnerability while striking a deep emotional chord beyond just watching on screen. At this intersection between individual journey and collective empathy lies First-Person Diary Filmmaking as an art form capable of shifting perceptions, building empathy networks, and exploring what it means to be human. Filmmakers continue exploring this genre while carrying forward its legacy and venturing into uncharted territories of self-expression, storytelling, and ethical considerations.

Documentary filmmaking has long been celebrated for its ability to capture reality as it unfolds, yet there lies within that reality an intricate tapestry of emotions, experiences and perspectives which requires more nuanced examination. This chapter explores this rich world of poetry within documentary filmmaking, where two artistic forms come together to enhance the narrative fabric further and provide a more profound examination of the human experience. Poetry is pivotal in enriching documentary storytelling by infusing emotions and messages that resonate deeply with the audience. Integrating poetry into documentary filmmaking transcends the conventional boundaries of factual representation, allowing filmmakers to delve into their subjects' emotional and psychological dimensions). In his account on Poetics in Documentary, Keith Marley, by borrowing from Bill Nichols, observes that 'films that creates a lyrical impression rather than imparting knowledge or information about specific events, people or places' has the potential to 'to produce 'alternative forms of knowledge', rather than simply providing a 'straightforward transfer of knowledge' (Marley, 2023, p.3). Jill Magi (2015) notes how 'poetry can offer the field of documentary an important form to think about (p.273). This integration amplifies the impact of storytelling by tapping into the human experience and evoking profound emotions that linger long after the credits roll.

Exploring this intriguing relationship requires exploring the works of filmmakers who dared to combine poetry with documentary forms. Through careful analysis and engaging examples, this chapter will demonstrate how directors have harnessed poetry's emotional, aesthetic, and introspective powers in ways that go beyond traditional documentary narratives. In our pursuit of understanding the intricate relationship between poetry and documentary filmmaking, we must explore its theoretical underpinnings. Literary and cinematic scholars' works will guide our journey, providing insights into what makes an ordinary documentary into an eye-opening visual poem.

At the core of this inquiry lies an essential question: How does poetry change documentary film narrative, elevating it beyond mere observation into exploring the emotional and human dimensions of its stories being told? This chapter investigates poetry's impactful transformative powers in documentary filmmaking with insightful analyses and powerful quotes. The evolution continued into modern times, where filmmakers leveraged poetry's versatility to convey intricate emotions and perspectives. The concept of "documentary poetry," exemplifies this progression by

seamlessly blending poetic narratives with visual storytelling. This approach transcends traditional documentary structures, enabling films to evoke profound emotions and challenge conventional viewpoints.

The historical evolution of poetry in documentary filmmaking underscores its journey from experimental beginnings to its current status as an integral narrative tool. This evolution reflects filmmakers' ongoing exploration of poetry's power to capture human experiences and emotions, enriching documentary storytelling's tapestry. The role of poetry extends beyond conveying information; it also challenges dominant narratives and offers alternative viewpoints. In "Sankofa", the use of poetry integrates African cultural heritage, providing a distinct lens through which to view the narrative of slavery. This approach enables filmmakers to disrupt conventional modes of understanding, fostering critical engagement with societal issues. Similarly, Jili Magi's *Poetry in Light* utilizes the medium of light and shadow as metaphors, interweaving visual and verbal poetry to explore themes of memory, loss, and identity. Magi's work pushes the boundaries of documentary storytelling, inviting viewers into a meditative, almost dreamlike reflection on the fragility of human existence.

An example of poetry in documentary film might read like this:

"Through veils of light,
The past is but a shimmer,
A flicker in the distance,
Time bends and breaks,
Yet we hold on to its fragile threads,
In shadows, we find ourselves,
Fleeting, yet infinite,
Always becoming."

This type of poetic integration serves to enhance the film's emotional depth, providing audiences with a visual and lyrical experience that transcends conventional narrative structure, allowing room for introspection and personal interpretation. In conclusion, poetry enhances documentary storytelling by enriching emotions, conveying messages, and creating a profound connection with the audience. Through its power to evoke empathy, encapsulate complex ideas, and challenge conventional narratives, poetry transforms documentaries into emotionally resonant and intellectually stimulating experiences. In the crafting of "Surviving Whiteness," poetry emerged as a poignant and evocative tool, intricately woven into specific scenes to amplify the thematic depth of the documentary. Through the verses of renowned poets and original compositions, poetry became a vehicle for addressing the systemic nature of tokenism, racism, and injustice across different timelines.

These poetic inspirations have been a significant tool to formulate the form of my film. The haunting echoes of Zora Neale Hurston's "How It Feels to Be Colored Me" reverberated in spoken word poetry, bridging the gap between 1928 and 2020. This poetic narration, voiced by me, served as a powerful commentary on the enduring nature of systemic issues. As these verses unfolded, accompanied by a montage of stock footage, the audience was immersed in the historical continuum of struggles against racial injustice. The poem "Martin's Nightmare" by Kyla Renee Lacey emerged as a visceral exploration of the dreams and nightmares of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. The poetic rendition, delivered in my voice, delved into the complexities of integrating Black individuals into a society that often betrayed their interests. With poignant scenes from Newcastle University, including the statue of Dr. King, the poem intersected with my personal experiences on campus, juxtaposing the idealized vision with the historical realities embedded in the university's leadership.

In a deeply personal composition titled "Fatherless Child," I explored the spiritual and physical neglect experienced by the global Black community living in oppressive conditions. The poem, written and narrated by me, delved into the emptiness akin to a fatherless child seeking answers from a higher power. The visuals, depicting water, nature, and empty playgrounds, complemented the profound themes embedded in the verses.

Langston Hughes' "Freedom" became a symbolic anthem, expressing the desire for liberation and equality. As I traversed the Tyne Bridge in Newcastle, the poem underscored the longing for autonomy and the struggle against the societal constraints that often reduced me to a stereotypical identity. The juxtaposition of the poem against the backdrop of the bridge created a powerful visual and emotional resonance. In essence, the integration of poetry in "Surviving Whiteness" was a deliberate choice to transcend traditional storytelling boundaries. It served as a literary thread, weaving together disparate yet interconnected narratives, timelines, and emotions. The carefully selected poems, spoken in my voice, became a catalyst for a richer, more nuanced exploration of the documentary's themes. Each poem was not just a lyrical interlude but a profound commentary, enriching the visual narrative and inviting the audience to engage on a deeper, more introspective level.

4.2 Ethics, Filmmaking and Subject: Navigating the Questions of Ethics

Throughout the filmmaking and editing process of my film "Surviving Whiteness," I was intricately involved in every step, considering ethics as a guiding principle in my approach. As the main subject of the film, I recognized the paramount importance of the question of privacy and the ways in which I should negotiate with it. Given that the film closely followed my personal experiences, I ensured that ethical considerations were embedded in every decision, especially concerning colleagues who appeared in the footage. Respecting their privacy and maintaining a truthful portrayal was paramount. I meticulously edited the content to exclude any elements that could cast my colleagues unfairly without their explicit consent and knowledge. My commitment to ethical filmmaking extended to the protection of subjects within the narrative. I implemented rigorous ethical standards during the editing process, making conscientious decisions to safeguard the dignity and privacy of those featured. Any content that could potentially compromise the well-being or reputation of individuals was carefully evaluated and, if necessary, excluded from the final cut.

Ethics in documentary filmmaking encompasses a spectrum of considerations, from the portrayal of subjects to the manipulation of truth, from participants' informed consent and well-being to the filmmaker's subjectivity. In her PhD thesis titled 'Beyond the frame: A Study in Observational Documentary Ethics', Katherine Nash explores the question of ethics in documentary filmmaking. She observes that 'documentary may lose credibility with its audience if the principle of honesty is undermined in the race to entertain' (Nash, 2009, p.32). In her another work on ethics and documentary, she also notes the limitations of textual analysis in 'contributing to an ethic of documentary practice', which according to her, exceeds the text (Nash, 2011, p.3). The power of media to shape perceptions and attitudes underscores the significant influence that ethical choices wield, extending their ramifications beyond the screen to impact the lives and perceptions of both those depicted and those watching. Ethical considerations are embedded within the very essence of documentary filmmaking, where the authenticity of storytelling encounters the artistry of filmmaking. Filmmakers face the intricate challenge of maintaining a delicate equilibrium between their role as storytellers and their commitment to represent reality faithfully. This equilibrium is manifested in choices concerning editing, visual aesthetics, and narrative structure, each wielding the potential to shape an audience's perception and emotional engagement with the documentary.

Moreover, ethical considerations intersect with broader power dynamics, representation, and social equity concerns. Filmmakers must be acutely aware of avoiding stereotypes, exploiting vulnerable subjects, and perpetuating biases. The ethical dimensions extend to issues of cultural appropriation, where sensitive and respectful portrayals become crucial to prevent harm and misrepresentation. The significance of reflexivity, transparency, and continuous discourse with participants, audiences, and collaborators cannot be overstated. This chapter delves into diverse ethical frameworks and guidelines proposed by industry bodies, such as the Code of Best Practices in Fair Use for Online Video and scrutinizes the role of institutional review boards in overseeing the ethical dimensions of documentary projects.

In an era where information and narratives circulate with unprecedented speed and influence, the ethical considerations of documentary filmmaking have far-reaching implications. This chapter seeks to unravel the intricate ethical subtleties that filmmakers navigate, presenting a holistic understanding of the ethical tapestry underpinning documentary filmmaking's craft. Documentary

filmmaking is a powerful medium for exploring real-world issues and conveying stories that might otherwise remain untold. However, this process is fraught with ethical dilemmas that filmmakers must grapple with to ensure the integrity of their work. This essay delves into some common ethical challenges documentary filmmakers face and their implications for the practice. One of documentary filmmaking's most pressing ethical concerns revolves around obtaining informed consent, especially when working with vulnerable populations. Filmmakers must navigate power dynamics and ensure that participants understand the potential impact of their involvement. Balancing the desire to create a compelling narrative with safeguarding participants' rights raises fundamental ethical questions.

The tension between artistic creativity and accuracy poses a significant ethical challenge for documentary filmmakers. Renov (1993, p.30) asserts, "The ethical challenge lies in the balance between creative storytelling and maintaining the authenticity of the events being depicted." Using reenactments or staged scenes to enhance storytelling can blur the line between truth and fiction, impacting the film's credibility. Filmmakers face the ethical responsibility of acknowledging such creative interventions transparently without misleading audiences. Documentary filmmakers must navigate the ethical complexity of capturing intimate moments without infringing upon the subjects' privacy or exploiting their emotions. Livingston, P. and Plantinga, C.R. (2009, p.88) emphasizes, "Filmmakers must navigate the fine line between capturing authentic emotions and respecting the privacy and dignity of their subjects." This dilemma is particularly poignant when documenting emotional experiences, as filmmakers strive to convey genuine sentiments without causing harm or discomfort. Striking the right balance requires sensitivity and respect for the subjects' boundaries.

The ethical dilemma of selective representation challenges documentary filmmakers to ensure their narratives are unbiased and avoid perpetuating stereotypes. Nichols (1991, p.129) warns against "the perpetuation of preconceived narratives that might undermine the complexity of the subjects being documented." Filmmakers face the moral imperative to present a comprehensive view of their subjects, even when it involves sacrificing narrative simplicity for a more accurate depiction. Striving for balance in representing diverse perspectives is crucial to maintaining ethical standards.

Filmmakers often encounter situations where they must decide whether to intervene in unfolding events or prioritize their role as observers. Naficy (2003, p.263) emphasizes, "The ethical decision to intervene or remain an observer is a delicate balance that requires thoughtful consideration of the potential consequences." This dilemma arises when filmmakers must weigh their responsibility to document against the duty to prevent harm. Striking the right balance requires a nuanced understanding of the context and the potential impact of their actions.

In conclusion, ethical dilemmas are inherent to the practice of documentary filmmaking, stemming from the need to balance truth with impact, creativity with accuracy, and observation with intervention. As filmmakers navigate these challenges, they contribute to the ongoing discourse on the ethical responsibilities of media creators. Documentary filmmakers can ensure that their work upholds ethical standards while effectively conveying compelling narratives to audiences by engaging in thoughtful reflection and maintaining a commitment to transparency and integrity.

Ethical considerations were also deeply embedded in the research process and design of "Surviving Whiteness." Before filming, I ensured transparency by clearly communicating the purpose of the documentary and seeking informed consent from those involved. This ethical foundation was crucial in fostering an environment of trust and collaboration. The film delved into sensitive themes such as tokenism and racism, necessitating a careful and ethical approach in handling such content. I took deliberate steps to present these aspects with sensitivity, avoiding gratuitous or exploitative portrayals. The goal was to engage viewers in meaningful conversations without causing harm to the subjects or perpetuating stereotypes.

Certain narratives within "Surviving Whiteness" touched upon vulnerable aspects of my personal journey. In the spirit of ethical storytelling, I navigated these narratives with care, ensuring that their inclusion served a purpose in advancing the film's thematic exploration rather than sensationalizing personal challenges. "Documentary filmmaking, at its heart, is an ethical endeavour," Nichols (1991, p.167) poignantly states. Filmmakers wield immense power in shaping narratives, influencing perceptions, and impacting real lives. Throughout the filmmaking and research process, I maintained a reflective ethical practice. This involved ongoing considerations of the impact of my choices on all stakeholders, from participants to viewers. Ethical reflexivity

was integral to refining the documentary, aligning it with ethical standards, and ensuring that it contributed positively to the discourse on the issues explored. As a Ph.D. student and filmmaker, I recognized the delicate balance between academic rigour and ethical responsibility. The research process was designed to adhere to ethical guidelines while producing valuable insights. This involved continuous self-reflection and adjustments to ensure that the research design and execution aligned with ethical standards.

In essence, ethics played a pivotal role in shaping the entire trajectory of "Surviving Whiteness." From the initial design and informed consent to the meticulous editing process, ethical considerations were not only a theoretical framework but an active and integral part of my decision-making. This ethical commitment aimed not only to protect the subjects and subject matter but also to contribute responsibly to the broader academic and social discussions initiated by the film. Documentary filmmaking is a platform for storytelling and a nexus of ethical considerations that profoundly impact the authenticity and impact of the narratives presented. As audiences engage with documentary films, they implicitly trust filmmakers to portray real-life stories with integrity and accuracy.

Filmmaking is intertwined with a web of ethical concerns, especially for Black filmmakers who bear the dual responsibility of artistic expression and representing marginalized communities. The cinematic landscape has historically perpetuated stereotypes and marginalized voices, prompting Black filmmakers to confront ethical complexities head-on. Next, I delve into the ethical concerns unique to Black filmmakers and explores how they navigate the delicate balance between creative expression and social responsibility.

Authentic representation stands as a pivotal ethical concern for Black filmmakers. They grapple with the challenge of authentically portraying the experiences and stories of Black individuals and communities without reducing them to stereotypes. Authenticity underscores the filmmaker's commitment to honouring the complexities of Black lives. Black filmmakers are acutely aware of the ethical tightrope of cultural appropriation and exploitation. They face the dilemma of telling stories that may not directly mirror their experiences while avoiding cultural appropriation or misrepresentation. Black filmmakers must remain vigilant in portraying cultures and communities

beyond their own. The ethical responsibility of Black filmmakers extends to the communities they represent. They must navigate the fine line between sharing stories that need to be heard and avoiding the risk of retraumatizing communities or exposing them to harm. As Berry (2017) emphasizes, "Black filmmakers have a moral responsibility to weigh the potential impact of their narratives on the communities they represent." Ethical considerations entail prioritizing the well-being of those whose stories are being shared.

Empowerment and sensationalism pose a dichotomous ethical challenge for Black filmmakers. They must assess whether their narratives empower Black communities or feed into sensationalism that caters to preconceived narratives. Ahmed (2019, p.19) underscores the significance of "offering stories that uplift without exploiting the struggles." Ethical filmmaking amplifies the voices of Black individuals without commodifying their pain for entertainment. Black filmmakers also often face funding, distribution, and representation barriers within the film industry. This raises ethical questions about who holds the power to tell Black stories and whose perspectives are being centred. As Diawara (1992) states, "Ethics demand dismantling gatekeeping structures that limit Black filmmakers' autonomy and representation." Ethical filmmaking requires advocating for diverse voices and equitable opportunities.

The ethical concerns of Black filmmakers are deeply rooted in the pursuit of authentic representation, cultural sensitivity, and social responsibility. Navigating these concerns demands a commitment to empowering communities, fostering authenticity, and challenging systemic barriers. Black filmmakers stand at the forefront of transforming ethical narratives in cinema, shedding light on the complex interplay between creativity, responsibility, and the portrayal of marginalized experiences. The landscape of documentary filmmaking is marked by ethical complexities that demand filmmakers to navigate a delicate balance between creative expression and moral responsibilities. As documentaries wield immense influence in shaping perceptions and understanding, it becomes paramount to explore recommended solutions and best practices that filmmakers can adopt to ensure ethical considerations are seamlessly integrated throughout the filmmaking journey.

Transparent communication is the cornerstone of ethical documentary filmmaking. Filmmakers must engage in open dialogues with participants, stakeholders, and collaborators, ensuring everyone comprehends the project's objectives and potential outcomes. This approach extends to obtaining informed consent, allowing subjects to make informed decisions about their involvement. This practice underscores respect for autonomy and safeguards participants' rights. Ethical considerations should be integrated into the very fabric of pre-production planning. Filmmakers must anticipate potential ethical challenges, align the project's goals with ethical guidelines, and establish protocols for handling sensitive situations. This proactive approach empowers filmmakers to navigate challenges with clarity and integrity. A commitment to diverse perspectives and balanced representation is pivotal in ethical documentary filmmaking. Filmmakers must actively seek out diverse voices and narratives that reflect the complexity of the subject matter. Engaging with various viewpoints prevents perpetuating biases and ensures that the documentary truly reflects the multi-faceted reality.

Ethical considerations extend into the realms of editing and post-production. Filmmakers are responsible for upholding the content's integrity while editing, resisting the temptation to manipulate scenes for dramatic effect. Ethical editing ensures that the final product remains faithful to the documented experiences and does not mislead audiences. Giving credit where it's due is another critical aspect of ethical documentary filmmaking. Filmmakers must transparently acknowledge the contributions of collaborators, participants, and sources. This extends to disclosing affiliations, funding sources, and potential conflicts of interest. This practice not only upholds transparency but also respects the integrity of the collaborative process and fosters trust among all stakeholders.

In conclusion, ethical documentary filmmaking requires a multifaceted approach that starts with transparent communication and extends to every phase of the filmmaking journey. Adopting recommended solutions and best practices, including informed consent, diverse representation, ethical pre-production planning, integrity in editing, and continuous reflection, ensures that filmmakers navigate ethical dilemmas with integrity and contribute to a responsible and impactful documentary landscape. This reflective practice enables filmmakers to maintain ethical integrity and adjust their strategies as needed. Exploring ethics in documentary filmmaking delves into a complex and nuanced landscape where filmmakers must balance their artistic vision with their

responsibility to subjects, audiences, and society. As this chapter has illuminated, ethical considerations are not just theoretical discourse but integral to documentary filmmaking's essence. Drawing from the insights of scholars and practitioners, this chapter navigated the multifaceted dimensions of ethical concerns, the challenges they pose, and the imperative to uphold ethical standards throughout the filmmaking journey.

Filmmakers wield immense power in shaping narratives, influencing perceptions, and impacting real lives. The ethical dimensions highlighted in this chapter underscore the significance of filmmaking as a means of communication that can either perpetuate harm or promote understanding and positive change. Ethical awareness becomes paramount as the stories we tell hold the potential to shape cultural narratives. The principles of informed consent, respect, and cultural sensitivity emphasized by Plantinga (2009) underscore the ethical bedrock on which documentary filmmakers stand. The conscientious consideration of the impact of our work on subjects and audiences must guide every stage of the filmmaking process. Much like journalists, documentary filmmakers act as conduits between reality and representation. This intermediary role necessitates an ethical obligation to truthfulness and accuracy. The cautionary words of Renov (1993) remind us that "the real ethical danger in documentary filmmaking lies not in manipulation, but in misrepresentation." Ethical filmmaking is a commitment to depicting the truth while acknowledging the subjectivity inherent in every creative act.

This chapter highlights the intersection of ethics and storytelling, offering a blueprint for filmmakers to tread this complex terrain. Ethical dilemmas may not always have clear-cut solutions, but the robust dialogue emphasizes the importance of intentionality and reflection. Filmmakers must remain vigilant in pursuing ethical excellence, as this commitment elevates documentary filmmaking from mere storytelling to a socially responsible and transformative art form. In short, ethics in documentary filmmaking is an ongoing conversation, a continuous negotiation between artistic expression and ethical responsibility. The path forward lies in recognising documentary filmmakers' power, embracing ethical principles, and fostering a deep understanding of the impact of our narratives.

Chapter 5: Surviving Whiteness – Critical Reflections on the Creative Process

The inception of "Surviving Whiteness" as a documentary film was born from an unexpected origin, evolving from a personal coping mechanism into a public exploration of the challenges faced by a Black Ph.D. student in a predominantly white institution. Initially conceived as a private video diary to navigate academic and mental health struggles, the transition to filmmaking marked a pivotal moment in the creative process. This shift was prompted by the university not allowing me to travel to Africa to shoot my original dissertation, "Who am I?" Exploring my African Heritage" because of the Covid-19 pandemic. When I realized I had to develop a new research project, I remembered the footage I accumulated over two years, which led to realizing the narrative potential inherent in my experiences.

As the focus shifted from personal therapy to storytelling, my approach to filming transformed. What began as a means of processing emotions became a deliberate effort to capture moments of vulnerability and authenticity for a broader audience. The decision to edit the film primarily in chronological order was driven by the need to make sense of over 20 hours of raw footage and maintain the narrative arc's integrity. By structuring the film chronologically, I aimed to provide viewers with a coherent and immersive journey through my experiences, allowing them to witness the evolution of my perspective over time.

Throughout the editing process, I grappled with the challenge of balancing personal vulnerability with ethical storytelling. While authenticity was paramount, privacy considerations and the potential impact of sharing intimate moments with a broader audience necessitated careful reflection and consultation with my supervisor. By prioritizing transparency and reflexivity, I navigated this challenge while remaining true to the essence of my experiences. In crafting

"Surviving Whiteness," I aimed to create a film that resonated with a diverse audience beyond academia. By integrating personal narratives, cultural insights, and reflections on systemic issues, I aimed to foster empathy and understanding among viewers from all backgrounds. Documentary filmmaking techniques and post-production played a crucial role in realizing this vision, allowing me to shape a compelling narrative that engaged viewers intellectually and emotionally.

The film serves as more than just a documentary; it is a testament to the power of storytelling to provoke critical dialogue, inspire social change, and advocate for a more inclusive and equitable society. Through my journey as a filmmaker and storyteller, I aim to amplify marginalized voices, challenge dominant narratives, and contribute to the ongoing pursuit of justice and equity within higher education and beyond. Furthermore, the challenges of isolation and bureaucratic institutionalism, compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic and heightened racial tensions, underscored the complexities of my experiences as a Black Ph.D. student. The sudden transition to online learning, coupled with the loss of my aunt and the pervasive sense of isolation, prompted a period of introspection and self-discovery. Despite the initial disillusionment with the bureaucratic nature of academia, the experience ultimately served as a catalyst for personal and artistic growth.

"Surviving Whiteness" reflects the intersecting forces of tokenism, isolation, bureaucracy, and systemic inequity within higher education. By authentically sharing my journey and engaging viewers in critical dialogue, the film aims to challenge entrenched narratives and advocate for a more inclusive and equitable future. Through the transformative power of storytelling, "Surviving Whiteness" embodies the potential for individual experiences to catalyze broader social change. In the production of "Surviving Whiteness," I employed various documentary filmmaking techniques to craft a narrative that authentically portrays the experiences of Black students in higher education. These techniques include Cinéma vérité, Direct cinema, Observational filmmaking, Participatory filmmaking, and Reflexive filmmaking, each impacting the narrative in unique ways. In the following section, I will describe the techniques that characterize the production of "Surviving Whiteness" in detail.

Cinéma vérité, known for its emphasis on capturing unfiltered reality, allowed me to authentically document candid moments and genuine emotions experienced by the subjects. As Jean Rouch, one

of the pioneers of this technique, stated in his “Chronicle of a Summer”, "The camera eye is more perspicacious and more accurate than the human eye" (Rouch, J. and Mori, E, 1961). This approach facilitated an intimate portrayal of their lives, fostering authenticity and immersion for the audience. "The very process of filming and editing," as Bill Nichols cautioned, however unobtrusive, changes the reality being documented" (Nichols, 1991, p.8). The lack of control over the narrative and potential ethical dilemmas posed challenges in ensuring a cohesive and ethically sound documentary.

Similarly, Direct cinema, which shares similarities with Cinéma vérité, prioritized observational filmmaking without intervention. As Richard Leacock, one of the pioneers of Direct Cinema, articulated in his “Frames of Reference”, "We tried to avoid changing the environment or people being filmed." (Leacock, 1960). Direct cinema provides viewers with an unmediated view of the subjects' experiences by allowing events to unfold naturally. However, as Albert Maysles warned us in his “Gimme Shelter”, "The truth is not in the camera, but in the eye of the beholder" (Maysles, 1970). While this approach preserved the integrity of the footage, it also posed challenges in maintaining narrative coherence and audience engagement without a clear storyline or structure.

Observational filmmaking, a foundational approach in documentary filmmaking, involves capturing subjects' lives as they unfolded organically.. This technique enabled me to delve deeply into the complexities of the Black student experience, presenting unfiltered glimpses into their daily lives and struggles. However, as Errol Morris cautioned in his “The Fog of War”, "The camera lies all the time; lies 24 times/second" (Morris, 2003). The extensive time and resources required to capture sufficient footage and the risk of oversimplifying complex issues posed significant challenges.

Participatory filmmaking empowers subjects to share their perspectives and shape the narrative collaboratively. As Trinh T. Minh-ha, known for her participatory documentaries, articulated, "The film is not made for them but with them" (Minh-ha, 1990, p.80). By engaging subjects as active participants in the filmmaking process, I sought to amplify their voices and foster inclusivity. Balancing multiple viewpoints and negotiating power dynamics between filmmakers and subjects presented complexities in maintaining narrative cohesion and objectivity.

Reflexive filmmaking, the overarching technique employed in "Surviving Whiteness," involved acknowledging the filmmaker's role in shaping the narrative and the subjective nature of documentary representation. As Michael Renov, a scholar of reflexive filmmaking, stated, "Reflexivity alerts viewers to the constructedness of the film, to the fact that it is a representation and not reality itself" (Renov, 1993, p.133). By incorporating self-reflection, commentary, and meta narrative elements within the film, I encouraged viewers to engage with the documentary form and question their assumptions critically. While Reflexive filmmaking facilitated transparency and authenticity, it also risked self-indulgence and detracted from narrative coherence if not executed skillfully.

Overall, each documentary filmmaking technique offers distinct advantages and disadvantages, impacting the narrative differently. From fostering authenticity and immersion to posing challenges in maintaining narrative coherence and objectivity, filmmakers must carefully consider their projects' objectives, subjects, and audience when selecting the most appropriate technique. Through thoughtful execution and a nuanced understanding of these techniques, documentary filmmakers can craft compelling narratives that provoke thought-provoking conversations and foster a deeper understanding of the human experience. In the coming part, I will try to show the intricate details of "Surviving Whiteness" by pointing out significant shots and their importance. It will also describe about how the pandemic was a major disruption in the production and creative process of "Surviving Whiteness" and the ways in which I tackled these challenges.

5.1 Techniques and Narratives: Making Surviving Whiteness

Documentary filmmaking encompasses diverse techniques, each with advantages and disadvantages, shaping the narrative and audience engagement (Nichols, 1991). In the documentary film "Surviving Whiteness," these techniques are employed to delve into the experiences of a Black PhD student in higher education. By examining the various approaches used in "Surviving Whiteness," we gain insight into their impact on the storytelling process and the audience's understanding of the subject matter.

Cinéma vérité, characterized by its emphasis on capturing raw and authentic moments, offers a compelling portrayal of reality in "Surviving Whiteness". While this technique enhances the film's realism and emotional resonance, it also challenges maintaining narrative coherence and addressing ethical considerations regarding privacy and consent (Nichols, 1991). Direct cinema, another observational approach, provides an unfiltered glimpse into the lives of the individuals featured in "Surviving Whiteness". This technique prioritizes authenticity and immersion, allowing viewers to witness events as they happen without intervention. However, the lack of narrative structure and context may challenge audience engagement and understanding (Maysles, 1970).

Observational filmmaking, characterized by its in-depth exploration of subjects' lives and experiences, enriches the narrative of "Surviving Whiteness" with nuanced insights and emotional depth. Observational filmmaking fosters empathy and understanding among viewers by capturing subtle interactions and details. However, the resource-intensive nature of this approach and the risk of oversimplification may limit its accessibility and effectiveness in reaching a wider audience (Morris, 2003).

Participatory filmmaking empowers the subjects of "Surviving Whiteness" to actively participate in shaping the narrative, promoting diversity and inclusivity in storytelling. While this technique amplifies marginalized voices and fosters collaboration, it raises questions about power dynamics and narrative coherence. Reflexive filmmaking, employed throughout "Surviving Whiteness," encourages viewers to critically engage with the documentary form and subject matter (Renov, 1993). Reflexive filmmaking promotes transparency and authenticity by acknowledging the filmmaker's role in shaping the narrative and integrating self-reflection. However, the potential for self-indulgence and challenges in execution may affect audience reception (Renov, 1993).

"Surviving Whiteness" demonstrates the diverse range of documentary filmmaking techniques and their impact on storytelling. By understanding the advantages and disadvantages of each approach, filmmakers can make informed decisions to create compelling and impactful documentaries that resonate with audiences (Renov, 1993). Through a combination of cinéma vérité, direct cinema,

observational filmmaking, participatory filmmaking, and reflexive filmmaking, "Surviving Whiteness" offers a multifaceted exploration of the experiences of Black students in higher education, fostering empathy, understanding, and critical engagement among viewers

5.2 Pandemic, Production and Challenges

The original vision for my dissertation was deeply personal and meaningful—I intended to travel to Africa to trace my ancestry through DNA, a journey that would not only reconnect me with my roots but also allow me to create a documentary highlighting the legacy of slavery and white supremacy, and how these forces have historically severed ties between African Americans and their ancestral heritage. This was going to be a project of healing and reclamation, using film as a medium to visually and emotionally reconnect with my lineage. However, COVID-19 abruptly disrupted those plans. The pandemic fundamentally shifted my trajectory, as it did for so many around the world. In the early stages of the pandemic, universities, including Newcastle, imposed severe travel restrictions. The borders were closed, flights were grounded, and I found myself confined, unable to make the pilgrimage to Africa. This was heartbreaking because the project was not just academic—it was spiritual, ancestral, and therapeutic. I had already invested time, energy, and resources into this vision, but it became clear that, under COVID restrictions, the possibility of international travel was untenable.

The university's strict adherence to COVID guidelines and their reluctance to provide any flexibility for my unique dissertation only exacerbated the situation. It felt like I was trapped in a system that couldn't accommodate a different way of thinking or working, especially when it came to a Black student's desire to explore their heritage and identity through creative means. I had to "adapt" to the circumstances, but what was at stake for me went far beyond just submitting a project—it was about rediscovering and representing my history, my ancestry, and the untold stories of my people.

As the dream of traveling to Africa dissolved, I was forced to pivot in my dissertation process. I had to completely reframe my creative vision. This wasn't just a shift in logistics; it felt like a

disruption of purpose. Without the ability to trace my roots physically, I needed to find a new way to engage with the core themes of my project. This shift challenged my creative process in a way I wasn't prepared for. I had to think about how I could still honor the ancestral journey, but in a way that made sense given the restrictions. Instead of traveling, I turned inward. I started focusing on the experiences I was currently living through, and what it meant to be a Black man pursuing a PhD in a predominantly white institution, amidst a global pandemic. I began to reflect more on systemic racism, isolation, and how these external forces mirrored the larger oppression my ancestors had faced. This became the new foundation of my film, and I realized that while I could no longer trace my ancestry through physical travel, I could explore it through the lens of my current lived experiences in the UK, engaging with themes of displacement, identity, and survival.

COVID-19 and the university's restrictions didn't just alter my dissertation—it redefined my approach to storytelling. This forced me to lean into discomfort, to grapple with the pain of lost opportunities, but also to find new ways to represent the intersection of my personal and collective history. While my original plan would have been a journey of physical reconnection, this new direction pushed me to explore the internal and external struggles of being Black in a world that often feels disconnected from us, even when we are right in its center.

5.3 Scene Breakdown of "Surviving Whiteness"

In this section, we will go through the breakdown of the important scenes that are crucial to the narrative of my film.

1. Auntie Ronnie's Funeral (Opening Scene)

Significance: The opening scene sets the emotional tone for the entire documentary. The pandemic-era funeral, marked by restrictions, serves as a microcosm of the personal and global grief that characterizes COVID-19. The limited attendees and social distancing rules visually and emotionally highlight the isolation people were experiencing. This event serves as a catalyst for the filmmaker's decision to apply for a PhD at Newcastle University, drawing a connection between loss, mortality, and the urgency to pursue life-altering opportunities.

2. Montage of Desolate New York City

Significance: The deserted New York City, a city known for its energy and crowds, is a visual metaphor for the global paralysis caused by COVID-19. The juxtaposition of such a lively city becoming a ghost town highlights the universal nature of the pandemic's impact. It also acts as a reflective moment for the filmmaker, underscoring the unprecedented nature of the time and connecting personal loss with a worldwide experience.

3. Preparing for Departure to Newcastle (1:41)

Significance: This scene illustrates the financial burden that many, particularly within Black and poor communities, faced during the pandemic. The filmmaker is seen negotiating with credit card companies, revealing the economic disparities exacerbated by COVID-19. This sequence sets the stage for the personal and financial challenges that will continue to unfold throughout the documentary, all while offering commentary on the disproportionate impact on marginalized communities.

4. Ancestral Reflection: Living Out My Ancestors' Dreams (2:41)

Significance: The filmmaker reflects on their lineage and ancestral dreams. This deeply personal moment provides a sense of historical and emotional grounding, emphasizing that the filmmaker's journey is not just academic but a fulfillment of dreams deferred by centuries of racial oppression. It connects the personal with the historical, and the future with the past, showing the filmmaker's PhD journey as an act of reclaiming identity.

5. First Day at Newcastle: Quarantine (2:41)

Significance: The 14-day quarantine in isolation mirrors the filmmaker's broader sense of alienation and struggle as a Black individual in a predominantly white academic space. The montage of the new city and the dorm room serves as a visual metaphor for the emotional isolation that accompanies both COVID-19 and the challenges of being an outsider in a foreign, academic world.

6. BBC News: 100,000 Deaths and Pandemic Fatigue (4:21)

Significance: This scene of grim news updates from the UK reinforces the doom and gloom of the pandemic and reflects the ongoing global struggle. It also amplifies the sense of helplessness and

vulnerability experienced by the filmmaker and others during this period, drawing parallels between personal suffering and the wider world.

7. The Struggle for Basic Needs: COVID Test Expense (4:27)

Significance: The high cost of the COVID-19 test (\$300 USD) without university assistance highlights the filmmaker's growing frustration with the lack of institutional support. It underscores the disparity between expectations and reality for international students and the challenges of navigating healthcare and education systems as a Black foreigner during the pandemic.

8. Isolation and the Discovery of Dr. MLK's Legacy (5:07)

Significance: The discovery of footage of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. receiving an honorary doctorate from Newcastle University becomes a moment of inspiration. This marks a pivotal shift in the film as the filmmaker draws connections between their personal journey and Dr. King's legacy, grounding the academic pursuit in a broader social justice narrative. The filmmaker's reflection on quarantine-induced overeating foreshadows future health issues, including their breast cancer diagnosis.

9. Exploring Newcastle: A Gothic Scene (7:47)

Significance: The exploration of Newcastle after quarantine evokes a "Dracula movie" vibe, with the filmmaker comparing the city's gray, desolate atmosphere to their emotional and physical state. The mood of the scene reflects the contrast between their excitement to explore and the isolation that persists even after being physically freed from quarantine.

10. First Interaction with MLK Statue (8:27)

Significance: The conversation with Dr. King's statue sets up a metaphysical dialogue that spans the rest of the film. It highlights the filmmaker's quest to reconcile their academic pursuits with the legacy of civil rights activism. This scene is crucial because it introduces the dual narrative of inner and outer conversations — the personal struggle as a Black man in a white institution and the broader struggle against systemic racism.

11. Editing African Travel Footage (9:13)

Significance: This scene contrasts the present academic journey with past experiences in Africa, where the filmmaker helped youth tell their own stories. It emphasizes the power of storytelling as a form of agency and reaffirms the filmmaker's commitment to decolonizing narratives and empowering Black voices. The footage showcases the filmmaker's previous work and experience as an educator and documentarian.

12. COVID Spreading on Campus (10:23)

Significance: As the film cuts between fantasy, reality, past, and present, the filmmaker faces the threat of COVID-19 spreading within the dorms. This moment returns to the theme of isolation and the ongoing trauma induced by the pandemic, which continues to disrupt normalcy and exacerbate the filmmaker's mental health struggles.

13. Protests and Performative Activism (28:37)

Significance: The recurring protests in Newcastle serve as an observation on the performative nature of some activism in predominantly white spaces. The filmmaker, coming from an environment where protest is a matter of survival, comments on the seemingly trivialized protests in the UK, which often lack real stakes or systemic change. This scene reflects the filmmaker's frustration with superficial activism that doesn't address deeper racial inequities.

14. Final Conversation with MLK Statue (46:57)

Significance: In this last dialogue with the MLK statue, the filmmaker voices their feelings of betrayal by Newcastle University. The statue becomes a symbol of performative allyship, representing institutions that celebrate diversity in superficial ways without enacting meaningful change. This climactic scene brings together themes of systemic racism, tokenism, and the alienation of Black scholars in predominantly white spaces.

15. Breast Cancer Diagnosis (58:52)

Significance: The filmmaker's breast cancer diagnosis is one of the most vulnerable and profound moments in the documentary. Coming on the heels of their sister's death, it adds layers of personal trauma and highlights the intersection of health, race, and systemic oppression. The filmmaker's decision to include this scene shows their commitment to transparency and underscores the physical and emotional toll of navigating racism, academia, and health care as a Black person.

16. Homecoming: Brownsville, Brooklyn (1:06:17)

Significance: The filmmaker returns to their home in Brownsville, Brooklyn, reflecting on the changes both in the community and within themselves. This scene underscores the complexity of belonging and alienation — while Brownsville will always be home, the filmmaker’s experiences have changed their perspective on systemic oppression. It serves as a commentary on the ways in which white supremacy infiltrates every facet of life, even in predominantly Black spaces.

5.4 Documentary as a Truth-Telling Enterprise: Visualising Vulnerability

Incorporating the diagnosis of breast cancer footage into my film "Surviving Whiteness" was a decision fraught with uncertainty and ethical considerations. Initially, I grappled with the notion of divulging such a profoundly personal and private medical situation to a broader audience. I harbored concerns about the potential repercussions of sharing this aspect of my life, particularly without a clear understanding of how my health, life, and care would evolve post-filming.

However, as I reflected on the significance of the breast cancer diagnosis within the broader context of my narrative, I recognized its intrinsic importance as a pivotal moment in my life during the film's production. The diagnosis not only underscored the fragility of life but also served as a stark reminder of the interconnectedness between physical and mental well-being. Acknowledging the role of stress and mental health in contributing to physical illness, I felt compelled to shed light on this aspect of my journey, highlighting the multifaceted factors that can influence health outcomes.

Moreover, by including the breast cancer diagnosis in the film, I aimed to destigmatize conversations surrounding illness and promote awareness of the complex interplay between lifestyle factors, genetics, and health. Research has shown that stress, along with dietary habits, physical activity levels, and genetic predispositions, can significantly impact cancer risk and progression (Cohen, Janicki-Deverts, & Miller, 2007). By sharing my story, I hoped to inspire

others to prioritize their health and well-being, recognizing the transformative power of proactive lifestyle changes.

Ultimately, the decision to include the breast cancer diagnosis footage in "Surviving Whiteness" was motivated by a desire for authenticity and transparency. It was a testament to my commitment to honesty and vulnerability in storytelling despite the inherent risks and uncertainties. To show the vulnerabilities involved without any manipulative mediation is the foundational method I have accepted for shooting 'Surviving Whiteness.' Documentary, generally considered a truth-telling enterprise, is often built on structured manipulations. I intended to challenge this series of foundations by radically departing from it and visualizing everyday vulnerabilities. Furthermore, it symbolized my unwavering determination to take control of my health and transform my life for the better, serving as a poignant reminder of resilience and empowerment in the face of adversity.

5.5 Getting Done with the Film: Crises, Production and Function

Combining multiple documentary filmmaking techniques presents creative opportunities and challenges in crafting a cohesive and impactful storytelling experience. In the production of "Surviving Whiteness," I encountered various obstacles when integrating techniques such as Cinéma vérité, Direct cinema, Observational filmmaking, Participatory filmmaking, and Reflexive filmmaking. However, through careful planning, collaboration, and creative problem-solving, I found solutions to ensure a seamless and engaging narrative for my audience.

One of the primary challenges I faced was maintaining consistency and coherence while employing diverse documentary filmmaking techniques throughout "Surviving Whiteness." Each technique has its stylistic conventions, visual aesthetics, and narrative approaches, which can sometimes clash or disrupt the film's flow if not integrated harmoniously. To address this challenge, I conducted thorough research on each technique, studying its principles, applications, and best practices. By understanding the unique strengths and limitations of each approach, I strategically deployed them in a manner that complemented rather than contradicted one another.

Another challenge was striking a balance between subjective storytelling and objective observation in "Surviving Whiteness." As a reflexive film that invites viewers to engage with the documentary form critically, it was essential to maintain authenticity and transparency while still offering a compelling narrative arc. To achieve this balance, I adopted a reflexive approach that acknowledged the role of the filmmaker in shaping the narrative while also prioritizing the experiences and perspectives of the subjects. By incorporating moments of self-reflection, commentary, and meta-narrative within the film, I invited audiences to question their assumptions and engage in a deeper exploration of the subject matter.

Furthermore, navigating the ethical considerations of documentary filmmaking posed significant challenges in "Surviving Whiteness." As a filmmaker committed to integrity and social responsibility, I grappled with dilemmas related to informed consent, privacy, and representation throughout the production process. To address these challenges, I established clear communication channels with my subjects, ensuring they understood the purpose and implications of their participation in the film. Additionally, I prioritized ethical storytelling practices, respecting the autonomy and dignity of the individuals featured in "Surviving Whiteness" while also striving to authentically amplify their voices and experiences.

Moreover, the logistical constraints of production, such as budgetary and time constraints, presented practical challenges in effectively combining multiple documentary filmmaking techniques. I adopted a flexible and resourceful approach to overcome these challenges, leveraging available resources, collaborating with a diverse team of creatives, and prioritizing efficient workflow management. By maximizing the use of technology, outsourcing specialized tasks, and optimizing production schedules, I could streamline the filmmaking process and ensure the timely delivery of a feature length documentary.

Integrating multiple documentary filmmaking techniques in "Surviving Whiteness" posed various challenges, ranging from stylistic coherence to ethical considerations and logistical constraints. However, through meticulous planning, creative problem-solving, and a commitment to ethical

storytelling, I found solutions to overcome these challenges and deliver a cohesive and impactful storytelling experience for my audience. By embracing the complexities of documentary filmmaking and leveraging the strengths of each technique, "Surviving Whiteness" exemplifies the transformative potential of interdisciplinary collaboration and innovative storytelling in the realm of documentary filmmaking.

Conclusion

The journey to my PhD has been filled with twists, turns, challenges, and triumphs. It began with my decision to pursue filmmaking, a passion that ignited at Benedict College, a historically black college in Columbia, SC. After spending two years at a four-year college, I realized that filmmaking was my calling, prompting me to dedicate my life to mastering the craft. Over 20 years, I immersed myself in filmmaking, photography, and various jobs working with youth and underserved communities. Despite facing doubts and obstacles, I remained steadfast in pursuing learning and growth. Teaching young people how to use cameras abroad fueled my desire to continue my education and advance my career. At the age of 42, I decided to return to school and complete what I had started over two decades ago – earning my bachelor's degree. Enrolling in SUNY Empire State College, I earned my BA, laying the foundation for further academic pursuits. Aspiring to become a professor, I recognized the importance of obtaining a master's degree. I enrolled in the Directors Program at SVA, completing an intensive one-year Master's Professional degree. My journey culminated in a thesis film produced and directed in Bahia, Brazil, titled "Nikita."

Despite facing societal barriers and self-doubt, I never let go of my childhood dream of earning a PhD. The global pandemic and the resurgence of the BLM movement further fueled my determination to pursue higher education. Encouraged by the symbolic presence of a Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. statue at Newcastle University, I applied to their film by practice PhD program. I documented my reality and the world around me at Newcastle University, culminating in creating the film "Surviving Whiteness."

In academia, knowledge is often defined as information systematically gathered, analyzed, and interpreted to understand the world around us. This knowledge encompasses a wide range of disciplines, methodologies, and perspectives, all contributing to our collective understanding of complex phenomena. In the context of documentary filmmaking, knowledge extends beyond traditional scholarly pursuits to encompass experiential, emotional, and sensory insights that

deepen our appreciation of human experiences . Through the medium of film, filmmakers have the opportunity to capture and convey knowledge in ways that resonate with audiences on both intellectual and emotional levels). As "Surviving Whiteness" concludes its journey from conception to completion, it stands as a testament to the multifaceted nature of knowledge within the Academy. Drawing on personal experiences, cultural insights, and academic discourse, the film offers a nuanced exploration of the challenges faced by Black PhD students in higher education. Through a blend of autoethnography, participatory filmmaking, and reflexive storytelling, "Surviving Whiteness" transcends traditional boundaries of knowledge production, inviting viewers to critically engage with the complexities of systemic racism and tokenism within academia.

The future of "Surviving Whiteness" holds promise for continued impact and engagement. Plans for the film include wider distribution through film festivals, educational institutions, and community screenings, with the aim of reaching diverse audiences and sparking meaningful dialogue. By leveraging digital platforms and social media channels, "Surviving Whiteness" seeks to amplify marginalized voices, challenge dominant narratives, and advocate for social justice and equity within higher education and beyond. In restating and elaborating on the introduction, the importance of "Surviving Whiteness" as a documentary film becomes evident. By foregrounding personal experiences and employing an autoethnographic approach, the film contributes to a deeper understanding of the Black student experience and sheds light on the enduring impacts of systemic racism. As a pioneering work in mobile filmmaking and autoethnographic documentary practice, "Surviving Whiteness" advances the field by expanding the boundaries of storytelling and representation.

The main findings of this thesis underscore the significance and impact of "Surviving Whiteness" as a documentary film. Through its authentic portrayal of the Black student experience, the film challenges viewers to confront their own biases and assumptions, fostering empathy, understanding, and social change. The use of limited test screenings provided valuable insights into audience reception and informed revisions to enhance the film's effectiveness and resonance. "Surviving Whiteness" makes important contributions to the field of documentary filmmaking by pushing the boundaries of storytelling, representation, and advocacy. By centering marginalized voices and

experiences, the film advances critical conversations about race, identity, and power dynamics within higher education and society at large. Moving forward, the potential of autoethnography and mobile filmmaking to amplify diverse perspectives and effect social change remains a rich area for future research and exploration. As "Surviving Whiteness" continues to inspire dialogue and action, it reaffirms the transformative power of storytelling to challenge inequities, promote empathy, and envision a more just and inclusive world. In conclusion, I would like to reiterate the themes that I have been discussing by foregrounding the documentary as a text itself.

This dissertation was an attempt to find answers to three major questions; The first question was how can practice-led documentary filmmaking serve as a platform to illuminate and address the challenges faced by Black students in predominantly white higher education institutions, and how can it contribute to the discourse on decolonization? Through "Surviving Whiteness", I have tried to show how practice led filmmaking can serve as an ideal platform to understand the contradictions of predominantly white higher education institutions in regard to their accommodative and inclusive spaces. I tried to trace it through my own experience as a student in such an academic space. As a black student, I tried to reflect on my subjectivity and its intersections at these public spaces to understand how the identity is viewed and engaged with in these spaces. Secondly, also tried to address the question of how the legacy of colonialism influences the experiences of it Black students within the context of academia. I tried to look into this question through the legacy of Black American filmmaking, which has tried to respond to the colonial gaze and knowledge production by inverting the gaze. The third question was regarding how the creative and personal involvement of the filmmaker impacts the authenticity and effectiveness of the documentary in addressing the chosen themes. This I addressed through navigating the concept of autoethnography through my personal experiences.

Autoethnographic Smartphone Filmmaking: Directions and Pathways

Looking ahead, the future of autoethnography and mobile filmmaking holds significant promise for advocacy, storytelling, and social change. These approaches offer unique opportunities to amplify marginalized voices, challenge dominant narratives, and foster empathy and understanding among viewers. In terms of advocacy, autoethnography and mobile filmmaking enable individuals

from marginalized communities to reclaim their narratives and challenge oppressive systems of power. By centering their own experiences and perspectives, filmmakers can advocate for social justice, equity, and inclusion within various spheres of society.

Furthermore, the potential contributions of autoethnography and mobile filmmaking to the field of documentary filmmaking are vast and far-reaching. These approaches offer innovative ways to engage with audiences, blur the lines between subjectivity and objectivity, and explore complex sociocultural phenomena. By embracing subjective storytelling and personal reflexivity, filmmakers can create more nuanced and authentic portrayals of human experiences, challenging viewers to critically reflect on their own beliefs and biases.

Future research in autoethnographic and mobile filmmaking documentary filmmaking could explore several avenues for further inquiry and exploration. One area of focus could involve examining the ethical implications of using personal narratives and experiences in documentary storytelling, particularly in relation to issues of consent, privacy, and representation. Additionally, research could investigate the impact of autoethnographic and mobile filmmaking on audience perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors. By conducting audience reception studies and qualitative interviews, researchers can gain insights into how viewers engage with and interpret autoethnographic films, as well as the potential implications for social change and advocacy efforts.

Moreover, future research could explore the intersectionality of identities and experiences within autoethnographic and mobile filmmaking. By centering the voices of individuals from diverse backgrounds and marginalized communities, researchers can uncover the complexities of intersecting social categories such as race, gender, sexuality, and class, and their impact on storytelling practices and audience reception.

Surviving Whiteness: Distribution Plan and More

In the following part, I intend to sketch the distribution plans for “Surviving Whiteness”, which is very crucial for the long-term relevance of the work.

Target Audience Identification

The film "Surviving Whiteness" is designed to appeal to a diverse audience that includes but is not limited to academic scholars, students, social justice advocates, educators, healthcare professionals, and the general public interested in racial equity and social justice. Identifying and understanding these key demographics is crucial for effective distribution. The film aims to reach individuals who are directly affected by systemic racism, as well as allies and institutions that are positioned to enact change.

Film Festival Circuits

One of the primary strategies for distributing "Surviving Whiteness" is through film festival circuits, both domestically and internationally. These festivals serve as platforms that showcase diverse narratives and provide a launchpad for broader distribution deals. In the U.S., festivals such as the Sundance Film Festival, Toronto International Film Festival, and the Pan African Film Festival are key venues for reaching an audience that is engaged with social justice and diversity issues. In Europe, particularly in the UK, there are several film festivals that focus on academic films and showcase documentary films. The Sheffield Doc/Fest is one of the leading documentary festivals in the UK, offering a rich program that engages with both academic and public audiences. Additionally, the BFI London Film Festival often features documentary categories that align with the themes of racial equity and social justice. Other notable European festivals include the IDFA (International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam) in the Netherlands, which is one of the largest documentary festivals in the world, and the CPH in Copenhagen, which focuses on innovative and socially engaged documentaries. These festivals are ideal for connecting with international distributors, educators, and social activists, and provide opportunities for screenings, discussions, and networking with audiences that are receptive to the film's themes.

Educational Distribution

Educational institutions, including universities, colleges, and high schools, are vital venues for distributing "Surviving Whiteness." The film can be integrated into curricula across disciplines

such as sociology, anthropology, film studies, African American studies, and education. By partnering with academic publishers and creating comprehensive study guides and discussion materials, the film can serve as a critical educational tool that fosters dialogue and learning. Additionally, licensing agreements with educational distributors can ensure that the film is widely accessible within these institutions.

Digital and Streaming Platforms

In the contemporary media landscape, digital and streaming platforms represent a significant opportunity for broad distribution. Platforms like Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, Hulu, and educational streaming services like Kanopy are essential for reaching a global audience. Negotiating with these platforms can ensure that "Surviving Whiteness" is available to viewers worldwide, with the potential for subtitles and dubbing in multiple languages to enhance accessibility.

Community Screenings and Grassroots Distribution

To further ensure that "Surviving Whiteness" reaches its intended audience, community screenings and grassroots distribution strategies will be employed. Collaborations with non-profit organizations, community groups, and social justice organizations can facilitate screenings in local communities, providing a space for conversation and action. These events can also include panel discussions and workshops, fostering a deeper engagement with the film's themes.

Social Media and Digital Marketing

A robust social media and digital marketing campaign is crucial for the film's distribution strategy. Utilizing platforms like Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube, the film can engage audiences through trailers, behind-the-scenes content, interviews, and interactive campaigns. Social media influencers and partnerships with advocacy organizations can further amplify the film's reach, ensuring that it resonates with a wide and diverse audience.

Continued Engagement and Impact Campaigns

Beyond the initial distribution phase, "Surviving Whiteness" will implement sustained engagement strategies to maintain its impact. Collaborating with advocacy groups and educational institutions, the film will be part of ongoing impact campaigns that encourage action and dialogue around issues of racial equity, whiteness, and social justice. Creating an online platform that provides resources, discussion guides, and forums can keep the conversation alive and facilitate the development of a community of practice.

Expansion into Multimedia and Cross-Platform Storytelling

As part of its future direction, the film will explore expansion into multimedia and cross-platform storytelling. This could include the development of a podcast series that delves deeper into the stories and themes presented in the film, interviews with experts and activists, and the exploration of related issues in healthcare, education, and mental health. Additionally, an interactive website could provide an immersive experience with additional content such as infographics, short documentaries, and interactive timelines.

Ongoing Research and Collaboration

The themes explored in "Surviving Whiteness" are dynamic and ever-evolving. Thus, there is a need for ongoing research and collaboration with scholars, activists, and institutions to update the film's content and findings. This could involve releasing updated versions of the film or creating supplementary content that reflects new research, societal changes, and emerging narratives. Collaborating with academic institutions and research centers can provide the necessary resources and expertise for this continued work.

Advocacy and Policy Influence

Finally, "Surviving Whiteness" aims to move beyond awareness-raising and contribute to tangible social change. Engaging with policymakers, educators, and healthcare professionals, the film seeks to influence policies and practices within institutions. By participating in policy forums,

conferences, and workshops, the film can contribute to the development of equitable practices in education, healthcare, and beyond.

Bibliography

Adébisí, F. (2023) 'The Law School: Colonial Ground Zero—a Colonial Convergence in the Human and Space–Time', in *Decolonisation and Legal Knowledge*, pp. 128-147. Bristol University Press.

Ahmed, A.K. (2019) *The rise of fallism: #RhodesMustFall and the movement to decolonize the university*. Columbia University.

Alexander, L.M. (2012) *African or American?: Black identity and political activism in New York City, 1784-1861*. University of Illinois Press.

Anderson, A.B. and Pickering, G.W. (2008) *Confronting the color line: the broken promise of the civil rights movement in Chicago*. University of Georgia Press.

Aufderheide, P. (2022) 'Ethics in documentary: a conversation with Patricia Aufderheide', *Variety*. Available at: <https://variety.com/2022/film/global/ethics-documentary-patricia-aufderheide-1235417748/> (Accessed: [19/07/2024]).

Bailey, C. (2020) *Measuring Objectivity in Documentary Films*. Master's thesis, University of Arkansas at Little Rock.

Banks, M. (2018) *Using visual data in qualitative research*. 2nd edn. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Barnouw, E. (1993) *Documentary: a history of the non-fiction film*. Oxford University Press.

Barrett, E. (2007) 'Introduction: Art as the production of knowledge', in *Art as the Production of Knowledge*.

Behar, R. (1999) 'Ethnography: cherishing our second-fiddle genre', *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 28(5), pp. 472-484.

Benjamin, W. (2018) 'The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction', in *A museum studies approach to heritage*, pp. 226-243. Routledge.

Berry, M. and Berry, M. (2017) 'Making films and video art with smartphones: Creating with mobile media', pp. 131-151.

Bhabra, G.K., Gebrial, D. and Nişancioğlu, K. (2018) *Decolonising the university*. Pluto Press.

Bhopal, K., 2023. Critical race theory: Confronting, challenging, and rethinking white privilege. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 49(1), pp.111-128.

Bochner, A. (2012) 'On first-person narrative scholarship: autoethnography as acts of meaning', *Narrative Inquiry*, 22, pp. 1-10. doi: 10.1075/ni.22.1.10boc.

Bochner, A.P. and Riggs, N.A. (2014) 'Practicing narrative inquiry', in Leavy, P. (ed.) *The Oxford handbook of qualitative research*, pp. 195–222. Oxford University Press.

Bonilla-Silva, E. (2017) 'What we were, what we are, and what we should be: The racial problem of American sociology', *Social Problems*, 64(2), pp. 179-187.

Borum, C., Weissman, P. and Conrad-Pérez, D. (2022) *The lens reflected: what stories & storytellers get the green light in documentary's streaming age? Race, gender, and topics in documentary films distributed across cable, streaming, and public media networks (2014-2020)*. Center for Media & Social Impact.

Boylorn, R.M. and Orbe, M.P. (2016) 'Introduction: Critical autoethnography as method of choice', in *Critical Autoethnography*, pp. 13-26. Routledge.

Bowser, P., 1999. Pioneers of Black documentary film. *Struggles for Representation: African American Documentary Film and Video*, pp.1-33.

Browne, S. (2024) 'Structural racism in Canadian universities: moving beyond tokenism'. University of Alberta. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7939/r3-g629-2d57>

Chang, H. (2016) *Autoethnography as method*. Routledge.

Chase, G. (2017) 'The early history of the Black Lives Matter movement, and the implications thereof', *Nev. LJ*, 18, p. 1091.

Cohen, L., Manion, L. and Morrison, K. (2013) 'The ethics of educational and social research', in *Research Methods in Education*, pp. 99-128. Routledge.

Cohen, S., Janicki-Deverts, D. and Miller, G.E. (2007) 'Psychological stress and disease', *JAMA*, 298(14), pp. 1685-1687.

DeBerry-Spence, B., Ekpo, A.E. and Hogan, D. (2019) 'Mobile phone visual ethnography (MpVE): bridging transformative photography and mobile phone ethnography', *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*, 38(1), pp. 81-95.

Dovey, J., Sobers, S. and Agusita, E. (2017) 'Purpose and platforms of community filmmaking', in *Community Filmmaking: Diversity, Practices and Places*.

Decker, C. (2007) 'Richard Leacock and the Origins of Direct Cinema: Re-assessing the Idea of an 'Uncontrolled Cinema''.

Dixon, W.W. (2003) 'An Interview with Albert Maysles', *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, 20(3), pp. 177-192.

Diawara, M. (1992) 'Black Studies, Cultural Studies Performative Acts', *Afterimage*, 20(3), pp. 6-7.

Diawara, M. (1993) 'Noir by noirs: Towards a new realism in black cinema', *African American Review*, 27(4), pp. 525-537.

Durham, A., McFerguson, M., Sanders, S. and Woodruffe, A. (2020) 'The future of autoethnography is Black', *Journal of Autoethnography*, 1(3), pp. 289-296.

Dovey, J., Sobers, S. and Agusita, E. (2017) 'Purpose and Platforms of Community Filmmaking', in *Community Filmmaking: Diversity, Practices and Places*.

Ellis, C. (2004) *The ethnographic I: a methodological novel about autoethnography*. AltaMira Press.

Ellis, C.S. and Bochner, A.P. (2006) 'Analyzing analytic autoethnography: an autopsy', *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 35(4), pp. 429-449.

Ellis, C., Adams, T.E. and Bochner, A.P. (2011) 'Autoethnography: an overview', *Historical Social Research/Historische Sozialforschung*, pp. 273-290.

Ellis, J. (2021) 'How documentaries mark themselves out from fiction: a genre-based approach', *Studies in Documentary Film*, 15(2), pp. 140-150.

Gates Jr, H.L. (2019) 'Hate Speech', in *African Americans and the First Amendment: The Case for Liberty and Equality*, p. 91.

Harper, P.B. (1995) 'Marlon Riggs: The subjective position of documentary video', *Art Journal*, 54(4), pp. 69-72.

Hickey-Moody, A. and Page, T. (eds.) (2015) *Arts, Pedagogy and Cultural Resistance: New Materialisms*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Holmes, A.G.D. (2020) 'Researcher positionality: a consideration of its influence and place in qualitative research—A new researcher guide', *Shanlax International Journal of Education*, 8(4), pp. 1-10

Hooks, B. (1992). *Yearning: Race, gender, and cultural politics*. Boston: South End Press.

Hooks, B. (1996) 'Teaching to transgress: Education as the practice of freedom', *Journal of Leisure Research*, 28(4), p. 316.

Hooks, B. and Julien, I. (1991) 'States of Desire', *Transition*, (53), pp. 168-184.

Johnson, M. and Ghuman, P. (2020) *Blindsight: The (mostly) hidden ways marketing reshapes our brains*. BenBella Books.

Joseph Mbembe, A. (2016) 'Decolonizing the university: New directions', *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education*, 15(1), pp. 29-45.

Klotman, P.R. and Cutler, J.K. (eds.) (1999) *Struggles for Representation: African American Documentary Film and Video*. Indiana University Press.

Kelly, P. (2022) 'Smartphone filmmaking for queer Australian documentary', *Studies in Documentary Film*, 16(2), pp. 140-155.

Koskinen, I. (2004) 'Seeing with mobile images: towards perpetual visual contact', in *T-Mobile Hungary 2004 Conference*, June.

Lebow, A. (ed.) (2012) *The Cinema of Me: The Self and Subjectivity in First Person Documentary*. Columbia University Press.

MacDougall, D. (2022) 'Seven types of collaboration', *Studies in Documentary Film*, 16(1), pp. 18-37.

Magi, J. (2014) 'Poetry in light of documentary', *Chicago Review*, 59(1/2), pp. 248-275.

Marley, K. (2023) 'Chapter one: Poetics in documentary: exposition as expression', in *The place of poetics within documentary filmmaking: the art of fact*, p. 1.

Mannay, D. (2015) *Visual, Narrative and Creative Research Methods: Application, Reflection and Ethics*. Routledge.

Marcus, L. (2009) 'The creative treatment of actuality: John Grierson, Documentary Cinema and "Fact" in the 1930s', *Intermodernism: Literary Culture in Mid-Twentieth-Century Britain*, pp. 189-207.

Mercer, K. (1988) 'Recoding narratives of race and nation', in *Black film, British cinema*, pp. 4-14.

Miller, K. (2008) 'The accidental carjack: ethnography, gameworld tourism, and Grand Theft Auto', *Game Studies: The International Journal of Computer Game Research*, 8(1).

Minh-Ha, T.T. (1990) 'Documentary is/not a name', *October*, 52, pp. 77-98.

Nash, K. (2011) 'Beyond the frame: researching documentary ethics', *Text*, 15(Special 11), pp. 1-13.

Nash, K., Williamson, D. and Croft, J. (2010) 'Beyond the frame: A study in observational documentary ethics'.

Naficy, H. (2003) 'Iranian cinema', in *Companion Encyclopedia of Middle Eastern and North African Film*, pp. 146-238. Routledge.

Nichols, B. (1991) *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary*.

Nichols, B. (2016) *Speaking Truths with Film: Evidence, Ethics, Politics in Documentary*. University of California Press.

Nichols, B. (2024) *Introduction to Documentary*. Indiana University Press.

Nieto, S. (2005) 'Social justice in hard times: celebrating the vision of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.', *Multicultural Perspectives*, 7(1), pp. 3-7.

O'Regan, T. (2018) 'Revisiting film cities and film services: Methodology, theory and applications', *Journal of African Cinemas*, 10(1-2), pp. 9-29.

Livingston, P. and Plantinga, C.R. (eds.) (2009) *The Routledge Companion to Philosophy and Film*. London: Routledge, p. 39.

Rancière, J. (2003) 'Politics and aesthetics: an interview', *Angelaki*, 8(2), pp. 191-211.

Ray, R. and Mahmoudi, H. (eds) (2022) *Systemic racism in America: sociological theory, education inequality, and social change*. Routledge.

- Renov, M. (1993). 'Theorizing documentary', *In: Theorizing Documentary*. Edited by Renov, M. New York: Routledge, pp. 1-9.
- Renov, M. (2004). *The subject of documentary*. University of Minnesota Press
- Rancière, J. (2003) 'Politics and aesthetics: an interview', *Angelaki*, 8(2), pp. 191-211.
- Rosenthal, A. (2011) *Succeeding as a documentary filmmaker: a guide to the professional world*. SIU Press.
- Schleser, M. (2021) *Smartphone Filmmaking: Theory and Practice*. Bloomsbury Publishing USA.
- Sefton-Green, J. (2019) 'Learning creative identities in filmmaking: the dubious pleasures of precarity', in *Young People's Transitions into Creative Work*, pp. 64-83. Routledge.
- Smith, K. (2010) 'Gramsci at the margins: subjectivity and subalternity in a theory of hegemony', *International Gramsci Journal*, 1(2), pp. 39-50.
- Smith, L.T. (2021) *Decolonizing methodologies: research and indigenous peoples*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Smith, L.T. (2017) *Towards Developing Indigenous Methodologies: Kaupapa Māori Research*. Critical Conversations in Kaupapa Maori.
- Smith, S.L., Pieper, K. and Wheeler, S. (2024) *Inequality in 1,700 popular films: examining portrayals of gender, race/ethnicity, LGBTQ+ & disability from 2007 to 2023*.
- Spatz, B. (2017) 'Embodied research: a methodology', *Liminalities*, 13(2).

Sullivan, G. (2014) 'The art of research', *Studies in Art Education*, 55(4), pp. 270-286.

Taylor, K.Y. (2016) *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation*. Haymarket Books.

Thomas, L. (2022) 'Towards equity: Developing a national approach to improving social justice through higher education in England', in *Equity Policies in Global Higher Education: Reducing Inequality and Increasing Participation and Attainment*, pp. 89-115. Cham: Springer International Publishing.

Tinkler, P. (2014) *Using photographs in social and historical research*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Vicente, M.E.G. (2021) 'Black dissent in America: exploring Ava DuVernay's *Selma* and *13th* against the background of the 2020 anti-racial discrimination protests', *Biblos*, 7, pp. 95-115.

Willis, D. (2014) *Black: a celebration of a culture*. Simon and Schuster.

Filmography

- Akomfrah, J. (1986) *Handsworth Songs* [Film]. Black Audio Film Collective.
- Akerman, C. (2015) *No Home Movie* [Film]. Paradise Films.
- Allah, K. (2015) *Field Niggas* [Film]. Maysles Films.
- Bradley, G. (2020) *Time* [Film]. Concordia Studio.
- Dash, J. (1991) *Daughters of the Dust* [Film]. Kino International.
- DuVernay, A. (2016) *13th* [Film]. Netflix.
- Frampton, H. (1960) *Frames of Reference*. USA: [Publisher/Production Company].
- Gerima, H. (1993) *Sankofa* [Film]. Mypheduh Films.
- James, S. (1994) *Hoop Dreams* [Film]. Fine Line Features.
- Leacock, R. (1960) *Frames of Reference*. USA: [Publisher/Production Company].
- Marker, C. (1983) *Sans Soleil* [Film]. Argos Films.
- Maysles, A. (1970) *Gimme Shelter*. USA: D.A. Pennebaker.
- Morris, E. (Director) (2003) *The Fog of War: Eleven Lessons from the Life of Robert S. McNamara*. USA: Sony Pictures Classics.
- Nelson, S. (2015) *The Black Panthers: Vanguard of the Revolution* [Film]. Firelight Films.
- Nkuru, J. (2019) *Black to Techno* [Film]. Frieze.
- Peck, R. (2016) *I Am Not Your Negro* [Film]. Velvet Film.
- Riggs, M. (1989) *Tongues Untied* [Film]. Frameline.
- Rouch, J. and Mori, E. (1961) *Chronicle of a Summer*. France: Les Films du Village.

Sabaah, L. & Folayan, D. (2017) *Whose Streets?* [Film]. Magnolia Pictures.

Griffith, D.W. (1915) *The Birth of a Nation* [Film]. David W. Griffith Corp.