

CHANGING FILM IMAGES ASSOCIATED WITH SOCIAL AND CULTURAL
VARIATIONS: AN ANALYSIS OF FUTURE-BASED AMERICAN FILM

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John L. Mueller

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ABSTRACT

Previous research has examined literature and television's relationship with society, but few have taken this approach to cinema. Technology has increased the accessibility to film, making the relationship between cinema and society a salient topic of inquiry. This paper delineates patterns in American cinema's depiction of future, or forthcoming societies and their relationships with critical events and social change. Drawing on reflection theory, I argue cinema is shaped by society. Using a mixed methods model I analyzed thematic variations in forty-four American futurist films from 1953 to 2012. Quantitative results on protagonist race and gender revealed high levels of homogeneity, depicting heroic white males in most films. Three qualitative areas focusing on the films' social world were analyzed for thematic variation. Each thematic category revealed periods of American history where a certain theme, or themes, predominated over others. From these patterns, a grounded approach was employed to interpret social phenomena co-occurred during these periods. Results showed distinct periods of thematic overlap, where each thematic category co-occurred with the other two. These macro level patterns were shown to reflect—a direct simulacra of the social world appeared—or mirror—reverse images of contemporary society were shown—the social world which created them.

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The last half century has seen substantial growth in film industry structure and revenue, with 2013 marking an increase in total revenue, despite a slight decrease in ticket sales (The Numbers 2014). Further, approximately 1.3 billion tickets were sold (The Numbers 2014) making the probability most Americans went to the theater at some point high. This is not to discount growing numbers of media outlets which created an unprecedented availability of films outside of the theater complex. Websites like Netflix and Hulu, who gained prominence on the backs of other media products, have become so successful that they too have begun creating their own television and film. This means contemporary Americans possess an unprecedented level of access to media, and with websites like Kickstarter.com¹ they now have direct agency in media production. With all this social and technological change occurring over the last half century the documentation of variations in a cultural product becomes a vital inquiry.

Previous work has examined sociological and psychological aspects of film, and some consensus exists in that film is shaped by and shapes society—cultivation theory (Gerbner 1998; Roskos-Ewoldsen, Davies, and Roskos-Ewoldsen 2004)—the former idea being much more concrete and documentable. The majority of literature on film to date focused on a basic model of reflection theory (Albrecht 1954) arguing through small samples that film reflects a single social/cultural phenomenon. A few exceptions do exist where larger samples were examined; Pisters' (2011) examination of the burgeoning film genre, the mosaic film, and Shin and Namkung's (2008) study on the *007* series. But, regardless of sample size, many of these studies provided simplified linkages to society, positing changes in film imagery reflecting shifts in the social world through the perspective of World-Systems, often ignoring cultural transitions—for example social movements and structural changes to film industry. This limitation is in line with Petersen's (1979) argument that the original reflection theory model was too simple.

¹ Kickstarter.com is a website that allows users to post their own project ideas on internet forums, where other users have the ability to donate money to the artistic creator as a means of funding their projects. This site does not cater to only film, but has been designed to support and enable micro level funding for various artistic avenues.

Griswold (1981), however, expanded Albrecht's (1954) model to include multiple markers of the social world. In doing so, she incorporated social, economic, and cultural phenomena to establish a macro level model of fictional literature (Griswold 1981). This expanded version acted as my basis for an analysis of future based, or futurist, American films—a sub-genre of action/adventure films which depict forthcoming societies. Through a mixed method exploratory study spanning 1953 to 2012, I examined thematic variation in forty-four movies. Film patterns were then cross referenced with social/cultural values and phenomena. Macro level results revealed three distinct periods of futurist film co-occurring with various social/cultural phenomena. These results showed each of the three periods to either reflect—similar social/cultural phenomena are shown in films—or mirror—images counter to current social phenomena are shown in films—current social and cultural ideologies and phenomena.

This type of examination is atypical when compared to other studies on cultural artifacts. Research has shown that there has not been a tradition of examining large samples of films. Further, these studies did not attempt to link shifts in representations in film to multiple areas of the social world. The study documented herein fills these gaps in research, making this examination a first of its kind in the sociology of film.

Through this type of analysis I argue a broader understanding of how society shapes cultural artifacts. These objects are not created in a vacuum, or by one individual transposing *only* their personal beliefs onto them. Multiple people and institutions play vital roles in the creation and dissemination of cultural products, and films are no different. As an object it permeates vast quantities of American homes, and is deeply entrenched in American ideology. It is consumption, it is entertainment. It is our deepest desires and worst fears. Through its lens we see our world and experience new realities. Whether the color of this lens is rose does not matter, what matters is without the audience the lens would not exist. This co-dependency begs a number of questions; how do we as a society affect those images? What images glitter across the screen when, as a nation we are afraid, proud, or undergoing ideological evolution? It is exactly this that I address through an exploratory examination of a sub-genre—futurist

films—of two of the top ten earners by genre for the last decade—action and adventure (The Numbers 2014).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To establish a theoretical framework for my focus on the relationships between American futuristic films and their cultural and structural origins, I employ the theoretical contributions by Albrecht (1954), Drass and Kiser (1988), and Griswold (1981), to form how media are shaped by society. This is my theoretical base in explaining how futuristic films assumed various thematic frames and ideological conceptions. Previous relevant research, outlined below, assists in establishing the groundwork for my theoretical proposition.

Few studies have attempted to document patterns in an entire genre over time, and even fewer have attempted to do so through broad macro linkages. By focusing on a single genre's relationship to the social world a broader understanding of cinema's association to society may be achieved, and this is where my research gains its strength and some of its limitations. Through the analysis documented herein I will demonstrate that throughout American History cinema can be linked to more than a single social factor or phenomenon. Furthermore, I argue a sociological focus is paramount, as establishing the psychological effects of film are impossible without subjects living in a vacuum.

Available studies have concentrated on the linkage on structural patterns related to politics or the economy (Dobson 2010; Drass and Kiser 1988; Levy 1991; Pisters 2011; Shin and Namkung 2008; Zullo 1991). Here, in this thesis, I expand previous works through an explanation on how media may affect the social world. Although there is a great deal of research arguing the interactive effects of cinema on its audiences (Gerbner 1998; Magliano et al. 1996; Magliano et al. 2001; Mulligan and Habel 2011; Roskos-Ewoldsen et al. 2004; Wasyliw and Currie 2012), it is difficult to ascertain whether these shifts in social perceptions were caused by viewing habits or some other exogenous factor. As such, for this study the psychological effects of media are only of secondary importance.

From Art-Worlds to Film-Worlds

In earlier centuries when wealth was highly concentrated, virtually all art was defined, framed, and consumed by the wealthy elite. In large part, this was because of the lack of efficient and practical means of reproduction which, in turn, kept prices high for cultural artifacts. But, in the Renaissance period, the “pictorial print” (Mukerji 1979) began to gain prominence among the lower classes of society due to mass-production for large audiences emanating from the invention of the printing press, which reproduced easily a number of times (Mukerji 1979). Pictorial images were available for viewing prior to this occurrence, as in stained glass used in large cathedrals, but a primary reason why “pictorial” images took off as a commodity of the lower class, I argue, was due in part to the high illiteracy rate common at the time. Books, prior to the printing press, were just as unaffordable as images but the difference is anyone can enjoy a picture whereas many during this period could not understand the written word.

This period also allowed wide dissemination of cultural goods and ideas through the merchant trade, eventually leading to the formation of “craft guilds”, which protected members from the problems often associated with competition (Mukerji 1979). Remnants of this idea can still be seen today in the American film industry, The Screen Actors Guild, The Academy of Motion Picture Arts, as well as a number of other cinema based union organizations. Yet, just as in cinema today, many of the original artisans and craftsmen did not participate in these guilds because of “limits imposed...on the earnings of masters” (Mukerji 1979). Mukerji (1979) goes on to state that this posed a disadvantage for the most skilled creators during that time period, a condition that may not have existed in today’s film-world. A painting is much cheaper and more practical to make than an entire film, and this presents a disadvantage for today’s film makers, forcing them to conform to market ideologies in order to succeed—this is being alleviated to a degree, in my opinion, due to the prevalence of cheap cameras and the widespread use of social media websites.

With technological advancements, a small group of entrepreneurs were able to create and display moving pictures to their audiences, and with this transition the birth of cinema began in the early 1900's. During these early years Bauman (2001) has noted that film viewings were predominantly the activity of "working-class audiences" (Bauman 2001). Some reasons for these class differences were the greater resources upper classes and academia possessed from books, and the tendency for the first reproductions of "pictorial" images to be, most popular among the lower echelon of society (Mukerji 1979). According to Mukerji (1979) the reason for this was twofold: affordability of images over books and high illiteracy rates making books impractical. Within a few decades after its invention film enjoyed a quick rise to the forefront of culture in the United States, and during the post war years of the late 1940's and early 1950's, there was a dramatic cinematic change occurring globally (Bauman 2001; Miles 2007). For one the United Kingdom's industry began to falter (Henning and Alpar 2005) along with other U.K. affiliated nations, such as Australia (Stockbridge 1978; Turner 1993), but as these nations waned the United States reinvested in their own industry and generated a hegemonic position over cinema, that has just now begun to give way to foreign film-makers.

Culture as a Concept & Reflection Theory

According to Peterson (1979) a modern concept of culture consists of "four key elements: norms, values, beliefs, and expressive symbols". Throughout American history a number of authors have documented how the models, plans of analysis, and questions asked in regards to these different facets of culture have shifted and changed (Kaufman 2004; Peterson 1979). Others have shown that such shifts are a common occurrence in social construction, as Kuhn (1962) has documented for the scientific community.

Key to these cultural analyses is the propositions of "reflection theory" (Albrecht 1954; Griswold 1981; Peterson 1979), which argues, largely, that cultural artifacts "reflect" or "mirror" the social world that created them. Albrecht (1954) noted that "reflection theory was to 'explain' in social historical rather

than individual terms the quality and greatness of literature, as well as its content, style, and forms”. Although not explicitly stated, many contemporary authors have embraced reflection theory as a means of linking cultural forms to the greater social, economic, or political worlds (Dobson 2010; Drass and Kiser 1988; Levy 1991; Pisters 2011; Shin and Namkung 2008; Zullo 1991). These perspectives on “reflective” processes are not without their critics. Peterson (1979), for example, has argued that “a single social system mirrored by a single cultural system” has been refuted in a variety of ways. The point Peterson (1979) was making was that many of these models were too simple to capture the true complexities that exist society’s relationship with a cultural artifact. And, Kaufman (2004) has noted that much of the new discourse in the cultural arena stemmed from a shift away from older traditions toward more “endogenous modes” of explanations. These new modes of explanation focus more on causal mechanisms within the cultural arena (Kaufman 2004) than the outside social structural forces that are typically examined. Despite the growth of this new form of analysis a number of authors still preferred the latter over the former as a mechanism of causation (Pisters 2011; Zullo 1991). This was typically accomplished through a Worlds-Systems perspective, placing heavy emphasis on the economy.

Cultural artifact links

As previously stated a number of authors have documented shifts in different cultural forms in relation to social, economic, or political factors in both the United States and abroad. The vast majority of literature to date focuses on a variety of older more established cultural forms, rather than film (Albrecht 1954; Barlow et al. 1995; Drass and Kiser 1988; Griswold 1981; Zullo 1991), but there is a growing population of literature that focuses on individual films, or a few films in general (Dobson 2010; Levy 1991; Pisters 2011). One of the few who have attempted analyzing an entire genre of film was Welsh (2010) who examined gender roles in the Slasher Horror genre.

It seems unfortunate that many of these studies are subject to Peterson’s (1978) criticism of one social phenomenon linked to one cultural form. This type of linkage is problematic, as it argues for a

single aspect of the social world to be the sole influence on a cultural artifact. For example Zullo (1991) links depressing and down-trodden music lyrics to changes in GNP, whereas Pister's (2011) analysis linked growing nomadism to the growing popularity of the "mosaic" style of film-making wherein "mosaic" is not a genre, but according to the author it becomes one, making it closer to the proposed study than others in some regards. The list could go on, from Levy's (1991) linkage of family structure in society to the depiction of family structures in films, to links between employment rates and the media's portrayal of crime in the news (Barlow et al. 1995). Even film series' and single films have been linked to a solitary economic, social, or political structure (Dobson 2010; Shin and Namkung 2008).

Unlike these single linkage perspectives, Griswold (1981) expanded on the ideas of reflection theory to gain a deeper more stable picture of cultural change. Her analysis of fictional literature accounted for multiple economic and/or cultural linkages to changes in fictional literature (Griswold 1981). In doing so a simplistic model was refined, allowing for a deeper understanding of society's effect on cultural forms.

Effects of Cinema on Society

A great deal of research has been conducted examining media's effect on audiences (Gerbner 1998; Magliano et al. 1996; Magliano, Miller, Zwaan 2001; Mulligan and Habel 2011; Roskos-Ewoldsen, Davies, and Roskos-Ewoldsen 2004). These processes likely occur, but it is difficult to substantively argue, as cultivation theory does, that media effects audiences real world perceptions. Human beings do not live in a vacuum; therefore media's effects on social reality cannot be disentangled from other exogenous factors.

To clarify the relationship between culture and film, it is important to note the psychological processes which may affect audience's perceptions of reality. For a movie to make sense the audience must be able to link each piece, through time and space (Magliano et al. 2001). In connecting these aspects creators may use subtle nuances or overt imagery and dialogue to activate certain psychological

processes (Magliano et al. 1996). Framing, for instance, shapes film content and imagery. Is the film action packed, a story of love, or a drama about humanity? How images are framed assists audiences in building appropriate “mental models” (Roskos-Ewoldsen et al. 2004) so answers to these questions may be inferred. From these models individuals are able to “index event(s)” which “generate inferences” about what may occur in the film (Magliano et al. 2001).

Once the audience is psychologically in tune with the film they may use the aforementioned processes to extrapolate film messages. Although a film may contain many different messages, only one dominates, or is “primary” (Mulligan and Habel 2011). For example the films *Boyz in the Hood* (1991), *South Central* (1992), and *Menace II Society* (1993) all have frames of impoverished inner-city African-American youth, which convey a number of different messages. For the aforementioned examples, messages are centered on the dangers of gang life, the consequences of drug use, and impacts of urban poverty. Heavy viewing of a particular “primary message”, according to cultivation theory, creates the opportunity for false models to be more easily accessed. This heightened level of accessibility could transfer to real world scenarios, generating sensationalized perceptions of reality based on media viewing habits. This increased accessibility is not limited to film viewing; rather from a cultivation theory perspective this ease of access may come from a number of mechanisms (Gerbner 1998; Roskos-Ewoldsen et al. 2004).

Cultivation theory views the influences between society and media as interactive (Gerbner 1998; Roskos-Ewoldsen et al. 2004): as society shapes cinema, cinema in turn shapes society. Repetition of media images and frames possesses can condition, and prime the individual to activate mental models in real world scenarios. In theory this argues an individual who watches a great deal of the Horror Slasher genre—documented by Welsh (2010) to depict females negatively—will be more likely to view women negatively in the real world due to increased accessibility of media-based mental models (Gerbner 1998; Roskos-Ewoldsen et al. 2004).

However, as noted throughout this discussion film viewing effects cannot be separated from other social factors. A primary research focus of cultivation theory was television violence, in studying whether increases in social violence are directly related to violent media exposure, significant results could not be ascertained. This is because other factors enhancing violent behavior could operate such as increased in poverty, better crime reports, or the introduction of new laws. All that can be stated is a relationship may exist between cinema and society: while the relationship between society and cinema is much more concrete.

METHODOLOGY

Two major questions are addressed in regards to the relationship between U.S. produced futuristic film and the American social/economic structure, these are:

- Do patterns in the portrayal of social structures in futuristic film shift with changes in the current social/economic structure?
- What are the notable impacting factors that account for structural conditions depicted in the societies portrayed in futurist films?

Two Halves for a Whole

I invoke two methods to describe American produced futuristic film patterns and their relationship with real world social/economic events and crises: first, the analysis of futuristic films from 1953 to 2012; second, cross referenced those film patterns with cultural themes found in social/economic reality. In the following sections I outline the methods used in this qualitative analysis of futuristic film patterns, and the related grounded quantitative survey of social and economic data inventory to patterns in American society.

The following section documents how the sample was selected and analyzed, as well as what was examined in the social world. This segment documents how social/economic phenomena were found, as well as justifications for why they were chosen for inclusion in the study. The final section of this essay

will combine the two pieces into a fluid whole, stating how these different analyses will culminate into a single theory on futuristic film.

Analysis of Futuristic Cinema

This section describes methods employed in the film analysis. This begins with a justification of sample selection, followed by a detailed account of the variables being examined. In the next two sections I describe how each film will be coded for data collection purposes, ending with a segment accounting for the reliability of these practices.

Sample criteria and selection

Based on my research there was a large gap in the appreciation of futurist films from the early 1930's to 1952. At no other point in time was there a gap of similar range. There were other breaks, but none lasted more than two consecutive years. Due to this gap and the late 1960's being a "watershed" time of film industry change (Levy 1991), 1952 was chosen as the initiation point of film inclusion. Including films prior to major industry shifts will facilitate the identification of change. In order to identify these films, I have employed two websites, offering unique and different strengths². From these internet sites plot synopsis were read to ensure that the film did depict a future society based on a number of specific criteria. Films that were not of theatrical release, meaning straight to DVD or made for television movies, have been excluded from analysis.

The website Box Office Mojo was used to cross check films for their actual box office totals for the year in which the film was released. Though not all films were listed, this site gave opening weekend totals, annual totals, and the number of theaters the film was shown. This ensured that each film did have public acceptance and was not an obscure, rarely viewed release. For films that were too old to identify,

² Box office results will be gathered from www.boxofficemojo.com, and the sites used to gather film synopses are www.imdb.com and www.fandango.com. IMDB offers clear concise film summaries, whereas Fandango has much more in-depth detailed plot summarizations.

or not listed on websites, multiple secondary sites³ were used to establish the status of theatrical release. The other two sites⁴ were used to cross check movie synopses in order to ensure each film in the sample did meet all the criteria for inclusion. Synopses found on IMDB tended to be short and direct, making for an efficient reference site. For film summaries that were too concise, Fandango was used as a cross check, due to this websites much lengthier more detailed account of movies' plot and storyline. A secondary reason for their use over other websites was their wide acceptance by the public as a primary resource for information on movies. Most have used at least one of these two websites at some point. I have explored these sites in detail, and have found that they are excellent for plot summaries due to their concise and accurate descriptions of the broad format of films.

Through previous research and general knowledge of films, I established a list of key words and phrases to look for to typify plot summaries. From previous investigations, it became apparent that films depicting future societies tended to use specific wording or phrases to signify that they were framed for future and technological arrangements. Key terms came to include specific references to future societies such as "in the distant future", "many years into the future", or a specific A.D. year date at least a few years beyond the date when the film was actually released. It was critical for both the sampling frame and the coding scheme that the plot summary portrays "future" societies. Based on the phrases listed above all films were cross referenced between the two sites to ensure a reliable label of "futuristic film" could be applied.

From this preliminary list a number of exclusions were applied. The first was films depicting time travel, of which two types were found: first, films set in future societies, or future-time-travel films (FTT) and, second, films without a known society—time-travel-future films (TTF). To be classified as FTT approximately 75% of the film must be set in the future with no backward movement in time. TTF films are complicated, in that they contain back and forth movements through time which create multiple

³ Secondary websites consisted of www.tcm.com and www.movies.yahoo.com

⁴ Plot synopses were gathered from www.imdb.com and www.fandango.com.

futures. *Back to the Future* (1985) is a classic example of this phenomenon, as the hero travels back and forth in time on multiple occasions altering the future differently each time. Films contacting multiple futures could bias trend results, for this reason TTF films have been excluded. Three films fell into the future-time-travel (FTT) genre: 1973's *Sleeper*, 1992's *Freejack*, and 1993's *Demolition Man*. The reason for their inclusion was to obtain a unidirectional time order in which the majority of the film taking place in the future.

The other, and most important exclusion, was that of sequels, prequels, and remakes. Of these types of films only the first film from each series was included in the sample group. This was done because sequels tend to depict highly similar content as the others in the series, which may overload a particular variable if all were included. An exception was made for *Prometheus* (2012) because of the extensive temporal distance from its predecessor, *Aliens* (1979) and given that the director's stance the film *was* not a prequel to his 1979 film (Moore 2012).

After invoking all inclusive criteria ninety-two films were left for analysis. For sixteen of the years, films were unable to meet inclusion criteria; most notably for the 1960's when only half of the years contained a suitable film for analysis. For the decades of the 1950's and 1990's, there were only three years in which a film did not meet the inclusion criteria. The only decade that was almost complete was that of the 1970's, in which only one year, 1978, did not contain a film for this study. Some films had to be excluded that depicted future societies, due to difficulty in acquiring reliable synopses and accurate box office data. In keeping the number of films per decade roughly similar I argue a more accurate representation of change can be seen, by not allowing one decade to have significantly more power than others.

The sample selection was restricted to one film per year, and for years with only one eligible film, this film was selected. For those years with more than one film—the highest with nine films in 2009—a random sample was taken. Based on a random number generator every sixth film from these years was

included for analysis. In total twenty-three years possessed only a single futurist film, hence twenty-three films were purposively selected for inclusion. While twenty-two years possessed multiple futurist films, from this frame a random sample was taken until one film per year was selected. The final sample included forty-five films for analysis. After sample collection only one film could not be acquired: *Captive Women* (1952). Due to a lack of a secondary film from this year the end sample initiation point was 1953, leaving a total of forty-four films for analysis. Refer to appendix A for a full list of films in the sample.

Data collection

Each film was coded quantitatively for protagonist race and gender, and qualitatively for thematic variation through open ended passages. Since there has been little research of this particular kind to date, many of these variables were chosen based on investigative exploratory research on this particular film genre. Some variables though, have been designed around previous research—modern/postmodern architecture by Harvey (1990), eutopian and dystopian societal depictions (Albrecht 1954; Drass and Kiser 1988)—but most of these variables were grounded in theory, and have been derived based on my own previous awareness of film patterns.

Variables addressed prior to film viewings are the producers, directors, length, and production company. For Production Company only the first listed in IMDB was used, because even if more than one company was involved the first identified usually contributes the most investment. Without controlling for these variables there could have been an interpretive error emanating from a possible relationship between film types, directors, and production companies.

Gender and race are the most fundamental distinction for the primary characters. Because class of the characters was found to be unclear in futurist films it was omitted from analysis. In a few cases, films were multiple coded because they contained two lead protagonists.

For the passages regarding setting structure, type of social state, and type of social change a section was provided for the coder to write a brief description of what they believed to have occurred in the film. The setting structure passage was designed to capture how each film portrayed the actual setting. There was not always a direct reference to society since some films took place outside of society on space stations. The goal was to capture rich descriptions of whichever setting was depicted, whether it was a society or a few individuals in space. The final two distinctions directly addressed society, regardless of whether it was addressed in the film. For social state the primary concern was what society's current condition of being was depicted as. Following this line, the conditions of social change addressed regarding whether the social state shifted at the end of the film. For a full code book with definitions of each variable refer to appendix B.

Transcription passages that were analyzed for thematic patterns were often done by hand for each of the three passages. These included descriptive patterns and variation in the language used. Overt themes were found for passages regarding social state—the society's depicted physical condition of being—and social change—what type of transition society underwent at the end of the film—but two themes from the social setting passages were additively generated based on sub-categories of similar terminology.

Reliability

Each film was coded by the researcher, and a random sample of fifteen films was selected for inter-coder reliability assessment. As outlined by Neuendorf (2002), a team of coders could be employed, but with a small sample size a two-coder scheme is as efficient and decreases the possible presence of a "rouge coder" (Neuendorf 2002: 145). Films were not co-viewed, meaning the inter-coder viewed the film without the presence of the researcher. This obviated the possible effect of a constructed group consensus. Holding with Neuendorf (2002), kappa scores of .80 or higher are more reliable, but due to the latent nature of the qualitative content being coded lower scores have been reported for open ended

passages—this still holds to Neuendorf’s (2002) suggestion. These lower kappa values do not fall below .5, but should be taken with consideration.

For the purpose of assessing reliability, themes derived from qualitative passages were quantified, and coders were run against each other to examine kappa scores. Social setting achieved a kappa of .803, the highest of the three passages. Following this social state achieved a kappa score of .602, and finally social change achieved kappa .595⁵. The latter two scores present limitations to study, but I argue that due to high subjectivity levels present in film imagery, despite rigid conceptual definitions, it would be difficult to attain much higher. Naturally, scores for the more objective protagonist data were much more reliable, achieving a perfect relationship for race and gender—kappa 1.00.

RESULTS

The following section is based on results from a qualitative analysis of forty-four future based American films, and quantitative section assessing protagonist race and gender. The latter of which, at the end of this section, will be kept brief as little phenotypical variation was found. I begin by discussing dominant themes for each of the passages discussed above. The final segment of qualitative results will extend the findings to capture a macro level of change in futurist films.

Social Setting Themes

The film themes were found to correspond to four types: benign, dismal, thriving, and mixed. Benign was the only theme that did not consist of a number of sub-markers, as these films’ passages often contained the words “contemporary” or “similar to current social settings”. I define this as benign in that these settings having no significant difference to social settings current to the films production date. The categories dismal and thriving were derived based on sub-categories of themes that possessed both

⁵ I feel it important to note that after reviewing the random sample of films to be inter-coded, more than a few presented inherent difficulties, even for the researcher, due to the highly subjective ambiguous nature of the film—*Assignment Outer Space* (1960), *Silent Running* (1972), *Solarbabies* (1986), and *Delicatessen* (1991). Each of these films presented very unique scenarios, creating difficulty in establishing some kind of social base of society.

similarity and overlap in their cinematic representations. Each of these two categories was based on five recurrent sub-themes. The label dismal was generated through themes of dirt, decay, dark atmosphere, neon lighting, and dank climates. Also common in these films were moderate to high levels of stratification, although it did not always follow current stratification systems—in a number of films it was based on mankind versus robots: *The Creation of the Humanoids* (1962) and *I, Robot* (2004). An exemplar dismal themed film was 1982's *Blade Runner*, which depicted a decrepitly stratified society. Rain fell perpetually along city streets, neon lights cutting through the dark night which engulfed social spaces. A society in perpetual twilight buried in grime and decomposition.

Whereas the label of thriving was based on themes of cleanliness, efficiency, whites, bright atmosphere, and minimal use of vibrant colors. *THX 1138* (1971) exemplified this category. This film portrayed society in a bright clean atmosphere, filled with whites. Little color was emphasized, nor was darkness or decay. Society in this film—and this categorical theme—was highly efficient and typically modern in design, depicting little stratification of negative consequence. I concluded these five themes were mutually exclusive; as such a dichotomy was created to establish a broader representation of setting.

Films depicting a benign setting differed little from the society that created them. Meaning, a quick glance at representations shown offered little insight into the fact that a future society was being portrayed. A recent example of this type of film was *In Time* (2011). This film held little connection to futurist societies outside of a technological advancement involving longevity. These films showed similar levels of decay and modernity to the current social world in which they were created. *Runaway* (1984) for example, despite its futurist time frame, showed little variation to contemporary social settings in suburban and urban America. Unlike the other themes found, had the writers/directors removed a single aspect—robotics from the above film, a specific year date from *On the Beach* (1959), or biotechnology from *In Time* (2011)—distinguishing these films as futurist would have been difficult.

It is important to note, type of social setting was the only question analyzed that permitted thematic overlap. A benign theme never shared the screen, but there were a few cases where films possessed a sub-theme from the thriving category and the dismal category—18.18% (n=8). In only one instance was this not a one to one ratio—*Alien* (1979) showed both utter darkness in dank environments, as well as pure white rooms free of these themes. In a genre often pigeonholed as dystopian, it was no surprise, as table 1 shows, the majority of films depicted dismal settings—40.91% (N=18). The other three categories were fairly close to each other, at roughly 20% each.

Chronologically four distinct time periods emerged: 1953–1976, 1977–1980, 1981–2001, and 2002–2012. These periods were generated based on thematic repetition, and despite some ebb and flow, dominant themes repetition was not broken by more than one consecutive year—except in cases of transition periods to be described below. As shown in table 2, the initial period showed benign or thriving settings to dominate, followed by mixed social settings in the second period⁶. The former was dominated by films which were difficult to distinguish from current social setting—*Frankenstein 1970* (1958), *Fahrenheit 451* (1966)—or films classified as thriving social settings—*Sleeper* (1973). Whereas the former showed no salient patterns due to the small time frame. I argue this small period of high flux acted as a transitory mechanism into the third thematic period.

The third period depicted dismal settings in the vast majority of the films, accounting for exactly three quarters of the films from 1981 to 2001. This period of decayed decrepit social settings was exemplified by the films *Freejack* (1992) and *Johnny Mnemonic* (1995). Mixed social settings appeared dominant again during the final period; results from this final period are limited though, as the actual distribution of thematic variation is fairly similar. It is possible this period may be another transitory mechanism, as it shares similarities with the transition period mentioned previously. Both of these time frames were short lived, and contained mixed social settings. Meaning films during these periods showed

⁶ The second period was the only time frame where at least one film from each theme did not appear.

characteristics of both dismal and thriving setting, as seen in the films *Alien* (1979) and *The Island* (2005).

Social State Themes

Themes which emerged from the analysis of society's current state followed three formats: space/no mention, chaotic, and non-chaotic. In space/no mention themes no society was shown or mentioned in the film. This occurred in some instances due to the nature of what was being depicted, as some of these films took place entirely in space and did not depict social structures, or discuss society in any way. Essentially, the space/no mention theme refers to those films which take place entirely outside of social structures and contexts. Examples of this were *Assignment: Outer Space* (1960) and *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968). These films depicted narratives outside of the social world, typically on space stations in seemingly solitary environments.

There were times when society was mentioned or shown in the sub-text or background of the film, but this often took multiple viewings, rewinding, and/or paying detailed attention to each second to catch—hence this question's kappa scores were lower than anticipated. *Silent Running* (1972) and *Prometheus* (2012) portray extremely subtle quick representations of society. The former possessed a brief dialogue at the beginning directly referencing the state of society on Earth, and *Prometheus* (2012) actually showed society for a few seconds just after the astronauts wake up from cryo-stasis. I, personally had to rewind *Logan's Run* (1972) multiple times to hear the entire dialogue which said society was free of disease, war and unemployment.

Two typifications of “societies” were apparent in film themes. First was those depictions of societies torn by war, hate, disease, and other markers that noted similar conditions of chaos. These societies possessed a narrative comparable to Drass and Kiser's (1988) definition of a dystopian society—hate and violence are commonplace, and there may seem to be a lack of emotional control by society as a whole. This theme was prominently displayed in 1991's *Delicatessen*—based on cannibalism due to

starvation—and *Starship Troopers* (1997) which showed Earth under the threat of extinction from an alien species. These films contained high levels of geographic separations—*Zardoz* (1974), *Children of Men* (2006), and *In Time* (2011)—and possibilities of population die outs—*On the Beach* (1959), *The Creation of the Humanoids* (1962), and *Johnny Mnemonic* (1995).

The second typified “society” depicted films showing virtual utopias, free from the negative aspects of a chaotic society. These consensus conditions were achieved through a combination of voluntary action and coercion. Non-chaotic films showed societies in a state of peace, often sedated—literally—free from both mental and physical trauma. These often were not perfect utopias, as these societies often possessed high levels of government control and oppression. For instance 1973’s *Sleeper* did show a resistance to the government, but this was done rather passively—this could be in part to this film being a comedy. Another example was *Demolition Man* (1993) where the core of society is free of all crime, except for minor vandalism and theft of food—a dystopian society is eventually shown underground containing a minority of the population, but this is only briefly shown in comparison to the non-chaotic society.

In a similar finding to social settings, chaotic states were the dominant theme over the entire sample, with a similar margin as to social settings—an approximate decrease of 20% for the second most dominant category. Themes of chaotic societies were found in just over half of the sample, as seen in table 3. Non-chaotic societies were shown at a rate of roughly 20% less than their chaotic counterpart, whereas the space/no mention category documented the remaining 11% of the sample. Patterns were found to show three distinct periods of representation—which, again, were based on thematic repetition—the first lasted from the inclusion point to 1980, and contained an almost equal prevalence of chaotic versus non-chaotic social states. Table 4 goes on to show the second period from 1981 to 2000 was unquestionably dominated by chaotic representations, whereas the last period film enters back into a state of near equilibrium.

Social Change Themes

The final question to be addressed was how the films depicted types of change: static, or no social change, and dynamic, drastic social changes. Although every film contains some sort of climax point to the plot, it does not always reference back to larger society. For some films, dynamic changes for the hero did not affect the larger social world, as shown at the end of *Freejack* (1992). At the end of *Freejack* (1992) the protagonist assumes the life of his enemy, but despite his new found power no inference can be made that he attempted to alter the status quo. Thus, there was a dynamic change for character but not for society. These are not the focus of this inquiry. As such, these films were static in reference to social change. Another example of this was the film *1984* (1956), in which the protagonist attempted to find the rebellion to alter the status quo. It is later revealed a rebellion may not even exist and he is ultimately brainwashed into submission. Again this signified changes for the character, but not for the social structure.

Dynamic themes categorized films based on major changes occurring to the social structure at the end of the film; if the status quo of the society depicted is altered, then the society was classified as dynamic. This was epitomized in the film *Equilibrium* (2002), where the protagonist destroyed facilities that produced media propaganda and pharmaceuticals which inhibited emotion, as well as killing the oppressive leader of the current social structure portrayed. *Daybreakers* (2009) also fell into the category of dynamic change. In this film the end showed the protagonist becoming a vaccine for vampirism, which then infected those who feed on him. Once he was bitten a domino effect was created reshaping the current structure of society.

This dichotomy was distributed roughly equal across the sample time frame with films depicting static change occurring slightly more often than dynamic films; 54.55% to 45.45%. However, the appearances of the two types showed interesting variation over three time periods based, again, on repetitive dominance. The first period lasted from the sample inception date to 1973, and was dominated

by static changes. As table 5 shows over three quarters of the films from this early period did not reflect notable changes in social structures. *1984* (1956) and *No Blade of Grass* (1970) are examples of static change films from this initial period. The second period—1974 to 1998—by contrast found nearly equal distribution of static versus dynamic change. During this second period there was constant ebb and flow between static change and dynamic change, with only one instance of a theme running for more than two consecutive years—1982 to 1985 were all static, in the remaining years a theme never repeated for more than two uninterrupted years. Examples of this are 1987 and 1988's *Robocop* and *Alien Nation* which demonstrated static changes, while films like *Demolition Man* (1993) and *Johnny Mnemonic* (1995) were characterized by dynamic social changes. And, the final period, lasting until 2012, showed major shifts to society's status quo at the film's climax with 82% of films ending in dynamic social change. As such, films like *Children of Men* (2006) and *Battlefield Earth* (2000) dominated this period of American futurist film.

Thematic Overlap

After thorough examination, three periods of overlap were generated using the time periods of each of the three themes discussed above. These periods were based on spans of time which showed consistent themes in *all* three areas previously discussed. For example period I for social setting lasted from 1953 to 1976, while period I for social state lasted from 1953 to 1980. In combination with the third theme of social change—period I 1953 to 1973—it can be seen that from 1953 to 1973 themes remained consistent in what was predominant, showing benign or thriving social settings roughly equally distributed among chaotic and non-chaotic societies showing no social change.

As stated above, the first period lasted from 1953 to 1973, followed by a brief period of fluctuating themes until 1981—by “fluctuating” I mean periods of time with little thematic consistency. These periods may contain multiple themes from one variable; this was due to transitions occurring in dominant themes. The second overlap occurred and proceeded until 1998, and was again followed by a

brief fluctuating period. The final period of thematic coincidence occurred from 2002 to 2012. The first and last periods showed a similarity not shared by the second period. Specifically, these two eras revealed clearly delineated transitions—either static or dynamic, but no fluctuation. Whereas the second period showed just the opposite: high levels of fluctuation in transitional outcomes at the end of the film. For a full model refer to figure 1.

As previously discussed, the first period of thematic consistency began in 1953 and lasted to 1973, and showed benign or thriving settings occurring in fluctuating social states, and static transitions. Dominant themes did appear in reference to types of social settings and type of transition, but not in regards to the current social state depicted. Examples from this period are represented by the films *Project Moonbase* (1953)—benign, chaotic, static—and *THX 1138* (1972)—thriving, non-chaotic, static. The second period—1981 to 1998—showed significant changes in the thematic format previously discussed in the first phase. During this second coming, films did possess dominant themes for social setting and social state, but lacked a clear pattern of transition. Films from this second period of consistency portrayed society as highly dismal and chaotic, but the end climaxes held no specific patterns. Films representative of this period were *Outland* (1981)—dismal, chaotic, dynamic—and *Brazil* (1985)—dismal, chaotic, static.

The final period—2002 to 2012—showed some similarity with the first period, in that consistency was again achieved in type of change depicted. Secondly, during period I and period III a great deal of ebb and flow existed in type of social state depicted. This third period was dominated by fluctuating social settings and social states, possessing a distinct pattern of dynamic transition. *I, Robot* (2004) and *Daybreakers* (2009) were representative of this thematic structure, showing thriving and dismal settings in the same film, in states that were either chaotic or non-chaotic—the former being non-chaotic, while the latter was highly chaotic—but ultimately ending in dynamic transitions.

Extraneous Results

It is important to note a few significant results regarding the protagonist of these films. Of the forty-four films analyzed only three portrayed a woman in the protagonist role. Even more striking about these three films, one does not involve a woman as the sole lead—Farrah Fawcett shares the lead with Kirk Douglas in *Saturn 3* (1980)—, and the other two were Ridley Scott films—*Alien* (1979) and *Prometheus* (2012). Further, all three of these women appeared white⁷.

Also, of the remaining forty-one films depicting male protagonists, all but two depicted white protagonists. Of the two non-white characters one was black—Will Smith in *I, Robot* (2004)—while the other was classified as a robot—*Wall-e* (2008). Although the later of these films contained a robot, which possessed no gender, it can be inferred what gender this character is based on the plot line. Not only did the protagonist possess a male name, but through gender stereotypes and gendered behaviors it became obvious through the course of the film that “Wall-e” was male. Despite the genre specific nature of this study, I argue that these principles should hold in the broader genre of *Action* in general, showing greater success rates for films depicting white male leads over all other combinations. Though not the central focus of the research, these gender-by-race findings are important and worth further exploration.

DISCUSSION

In the following section I offer some explanations as to the relationship between macro level futurist film patterns and social phenomena. I focus on macro level patterns—those discussed in the thematic overlap section above—for the purposes of simplicity, and as a means of establishing a general theory of thematic change in futurist cinema. Micro level patterns can be linked with societal conditions, but I argue this would inhibit the true meaning of the relationship between film and society. Further,

⁷ I use the clarifier *appeared* because Noomi Rapace possessed a mild accent and more olive toned complexion in the film. From this some may infer that this character may not be classified as Anglo, but she appears to predominantly be of European decent.

unlike previous research, I document how multiple structures have played a role in thematic shifts over time. These appear below.

Period I: A Shifting Society 1953–1973

During the first thematic period lasting two decades—1953 to 1973—the United States was facing many threatening international challenges. The status quo of American society was being confronted on a number of levels ranging from cultural to scientific. Social movements had sprung that opposed U.S. war, and advocated civil rights for many American minorities. In addition, there appeared radical changes in the American citizenry including the “sexual revolution”.

Corresponding to these social changes from 1953 to 1973, the motion picture industry in the United States underwent significant alterations. Jack Valenti’s induction as Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) president in 1966 ushered in significant changes to the American film rating system (MPAA 2013). The former oppressive system of censorship, known as the Hays Code—named for its founder William Hays—had become outdated (MPAA 2013). Seeing this, Valenti almost immediately began altering the MPAA rating system to correspond to American society’s changing perception of obscenity (MPAA 2013). Further, the most recent “comprehensive” set of copyright laws was enacted in the Copyright Act of 1976, which broadened control and protection over media content by the U.S. government (MPAA 2013).

Taken together, this period saw substantial changes to America’s current state of being. Women and minorities made significant headway, global war seemed to be on the horizon, humanity took great leaps over nature touching the stars, and the film industry became increasingly tolerant of a wider range of discourse and representations. During this period the U.S. appeared to be in a state of internal development and external uncertainty, as multiple areas of society were shifting rapidly.

Paradoxically and perhaps because of disruptive changes in society, futurist film depicted almost the opposite of current society’s state of being during these years. As discussed previously, period I

showed thriving or benign societies, contrasting what was occurring in the social world where social movements challenged the status quo. Further, transitions at the end of films portrayed static societies, or societies left unchanged by the events of the movie, which again contrasts to what society seemed to have undergone. Uncertainty was likely common as many Americans feared the possibilities of the Cold War and Vietnam, and man landed on the moon.

This proposes a shifting social world, yet films of this period typically resulted in static societies, which suggests findings in opposition to reflection theory. But, I propose this does not oppose reflection theory, rather this suggest a more complex version of the theory. Instead of being a theoretical “mirror” image of society, these findings show a true mirror image, capable of reversing the image—left appears as right, a dynamic society appears as static. The only theme that partially reflects society was social state themes, which saw no patterns in thematic variation. From which, a literal interpretation of reflection theory would suggest that chaotic states should appear in film during this period, but a theme of fluctuating themes, I argue, conveys a similar meaning of uncertainty. These findings in conjunction suggest a single cultural artifact is capable of “reflecting” society—uncertainty in society reflects fluctuating social state depictions—and “mirroring” society—a dynamic society appears static on film.

Period II: A Stabilizing Society 1981–1998

The second thematic period—1981 to 1998—in the United States saw some semblance of stability, as many of the changes from the previous period had begun to wane or take effect. The civil rights and women’s movements began to slow as the cold war came to an end towards to late 1980’s. The only major shifts in American social structure was the War on Drugs, initiated by then President Reagan, and the exponential expansion of the World Wide Web. Welfare programs were also reformed in approximately the mid 1990’s during a time of American economic prosperity. Though these changes were historically salient, they paled in comparison to the level of evolution which occurred in the period prior.

By now the film industry had also begun to stabilize, as Jack Valenti remained president of the MPAA well after this period had come to an end. The only major adjustment to his reformed rating system came with the introduction of the Pg-13 rating in 1984 (MAPP 2013). New copyright statutes also took effect—Piracy and Counterfeiting Amendments Act of 1982 and Cable Communications Policy Act of 1984 (MPAA 2013)—but were not of major consequence to the film industry at present. Taken together this suggests that both film industry and social change had begun to slow down, or become stagnant in some areas. Threat of foreign attack was no longer at the forefront of American minds—Desert Storm was brief in comparison to the total number of years the former period was under foreign threat—and new morally diverse representations were being allowed to dawn the silver screens (MPAA 2013). I argue this period was an America settling into being, rather than still in a state of becoming. Those events that ushered an America becoming had passed, and a new age seemed to emerge.

Again, the thematic content of futurist films during this period contrast to stabilizing conditions of the larger society invite exploration. Period II saw futurist films display themes of dismal settings, often engulfed in decay and darkness. These dismal settings coincided with themes of chaotic social states where threat of attack, crime, and segregation were constant threats to actors in the film. Further, no apparent patterns arose in the end of the films of this period, meaning ebb and flow to how society was affected by the protagonist's actions was shown in period II. Again, a literal interpretation of reflection theory does not fit, as society should be in a similar state of turmoil and confusion, yet the events described above do not elicit such a picture. Contrasting to period I, futurist films from period II showed more of a “mirror”—a stable thriving society appears chaotic and dismal in its films—rather than a direct “reflection”.

Period III: A Second Becoming 2002–2012

I posit the final period of thematic variation showed the United States regressing back to a similar state of social flux that appeared in period I. Major events occurred just prior to, and well after the start

year of 2002. The events of September 11, 2001 re-instilled a fear that had receded: the fear of foreign threat. Following these traumatic events major changes occurred to American policy and law. Privacy seemed to be on the wane for many public places and people, especially those who fit the profile of terrorist, a term that took on substantially greater meaning to most Americans following media coverage of the ensuing events. Further, economic recession seemed to beckon the American public instilling more fear and uncertainty into the general population. But, all was not lost, many advances to science occurred during this final period. Construction began on the international space station—just prior, 1998—and physics sprung forward with the trapping of anti-matter in 2010. Social movements too abounded once again, as they did during period I. Gays and lesbians banded together advocating for same-sex marriage rights, the nation saw its first black president, and discourse on immigration was taking on new meaning.

The film industry was not alone in this torrent of evolution; it too faced major obstacles with the expansion of piracy. In addition this span of ten years saw three different MPAA presidents. Following Jack Valenti's retirement in 2004 former U.S. Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman took office, and took immediate action in the digital revolution that was occurring in media (MPAA 2013). Not only did digital film distribution increase, but major changes had to be made to copyright laws as a means of protecting the industry's intellectual property (MPAA 2013). By now public technologies had become widely available allowing for increased pirating of protected content. One major creation from this expansion in illegal activity was the Family Entertainment and Copyright Act of 2005, which explicitly prohibited filming in a theater (MPAA 2013). With the millennia, technology final caught up with, and surpassed, the Piracy and Counterfeiting Amendments Act of 1982, forcing the industry to make special amendments to protect their property.

Similar to period I, the final period showed an American society and film industry undergoing rapid evolution. For the first time in decades fear of foreign threat had been re-realized, social movements were growing again, and the idea of domestic terrorism and attack from within became a real possibility—I argue this possibility always existed, but during this period, just as in period I, certain

social factors contributed to it becoming more conscious. In addition, the film industry was facing sweeping shifts in how it was structured. The growing prevalence of digital distribution offered new opportunities for revenue and theft, and henceforth had to be controlled and monitored. Being that many of these digital enterprises are still increasing—Netflix, Hulu, Amazon, and many others—recent economic recovery, shifting perceptions of race, and fear of foreign attack—at least in the medias eyes with the Boston bombing in 2013—the United States once again appeared to be in a state of internal development and external uncertainty.

Differing from the previous two periods, the third and final phase showed increased *reflection* of society, at least in its initial stages. Early instability in social structures and film industry in period III was reflected in futurist themes through high levels of fluctuation. But, it should be noted, just as in period I, reflection theory would argue that an unstable society should produce unstable representations, and again this only occurs to a degree. No pattern is shown in both social setting and social state themes, suggesting a reflection, but not a perfect one. The final theme of dynamic transitions in this period does fit with reflection theory more so, since the social world is in a state of transition, it would follow that film endings would depict mass social change.

It is important to note, period's I and II were roughly twenty years, while period III was only ten. I argue this explains many of the inconsistent findings from the final period, as it is only halfway through its cycle. With more data points I am confident period III would appear as period I or II thematically “reflecting” *and/or* “mirroring” society—dynamic transitions in futurist films suggest a reflection of uncertainty of domestic threat and shifting ideologies on categories of difference, while unstable social setting and state patterns suggests a mirror of a stabilizing economy—a stabilizing society appears unstable in its films.

SUMMARY & LIMITATIONS

Through a reflection theory perspective, I have argued that society shapes cinema. Further, certain types of imagery have been shown to co-occur with specific social/cultural phenomena. Meaning, across time thematic variation in American film has reflected, or mirrored, current social and cultural values and ideas within U.S. society. Historical periods undergoing social revolution in combination with foreign threat depicted films with a distinct and stable pattern of transition. During these periods of fear of foreign threat and social change American films ended with either static change—period I consistently showed no changes to society or the status quo—or dynamic change—period III consistently showed dramatic changes to society and/or the status quo. Whereas historical periods not facing these societal occurrences—period II—showed little consistency in type of social change depicted. However, this period did show consistent patterns in types of social settings and states depicted; an aspect atypical of the other two film periods⁸.

The present study does possess a few limitations that should be addressed. First, it is paramount that this type of examination be done on other genres of film, as the current study's focus is on a small portion of a much larger market. As stated previously futurist films are a sub-genre of the action and adventure classifications, each of which have reliably shown to be highly ranked at the box office, making this type of sample representative of a much larger body of work. Nonetheless, this study does not account for variation in dramas, thrillers, or comedies which are also top earning genres at the box office (The Numbers 2014).

Second, the sample used herein is generalizable to the rest of the genre, but only for theatrical releases. In order to establish generalization for the entire genre of futurist film direct to DVD releases and made for television movies must also be accounted for. Lastly, although including one film per year allows for establishing chronological thematic change, it cannot capture within year variation. Future

⁸ Period I did show consistency in social settings depicted. This was the only other consistent pattern found during period I and period III outside of social change.

research should examine multiple films from the same year to test for thematic consistency. This may be impractical for older years, as documented in this paper the earlier the year of study the less likely multiple films could be found which fit inclusion criteria. Being that this genre depicts the future technology played a vital role in its growth, and much of this growth did not occur until the mid to late 1980's and into the 1990's. It is within the latter half of my sample that multiple films per year became common, and where future research should focus.

The final limitation, and perhaps the most salient, is the subjectivity of categorizing what state society was in. I realize that it is plausible for another model of the current state of society to be presented, as the social world is so vast it cannot be summed to perfection by a handful of events. However, the construction of America's current state was based on avenues of society examined by previous works. Meaning real world phenomenon was not cherry picked, each aspect of the social world examined was derived from previous literature on other cultural forms. Despite being limited in my interpretation of the social world during a particular time period, because this categorization was based in how other research examined the social world, I believe other interpretations of America's current state during these periods would fit with reflection theory's model of either reflecting or mirroring what is socially occurring.

Despite limitations, based on a rigorous methodology this study is generalizable to a larger body of work in the film industry. Further, I have argued here that American produced futurist film presents a parallel simulacrum of the society which created it, or a mirror image of its social world where cinematic imagery depicts the reverse of what is occurring within the host society. To test these results future research should focus on other genres using a similar methodological framework. In doing so a deeper understanding of historical variation in film may be acquired, this could then be used as a map of future American films or compared to other foreign cinema industries. Only by abandoning simplistic models and embracing complex ones, can the complexities which underpin the relationship between society and

film be understood. For this reason future research on film should examine the entire social milieu and how it effects cinematic imagery, rather than focusing on a single social or cultural phenomenon.

Appendix A: Futurist Film Sample

Year	Title
1953	Project Moonbase
1956	1984
1958	Frankenstein 1970
1959	On the Beach
1960	Assignment Outer Space
1962	The Creation of the Humanoids
1964	The Last Man on Earth
1966	Fahrenheit 451
1968	2001: A Space Odyssey
1970	No Blade of Grass
1971	THX 1138
1972	Silent Running
1973	Sleeper
1974	Zardoz
1975	Rollerball
1976	Logan's Run
1977	Star Wars IV
1979	Alien
1980	Saturn 3
1981	Outland
1982	Blade Runner
1984	Runaway
1985	Brazil
1986	Solarbabies
1987	Robocop
1988	Alien Nation
1990	Total Recall
1991	Delicatessen
1992	Freejack
1993	Demolition Man
1995	Johnny Mnemonic
1997	Starship Troopers
1998	Lost in Space
2000	Battlefield Earth
2001	A.I.: Artificial Intelligence
2002	Equilibrium
2004	I, Robot
2005	The Island
2006	Children of Men

2008	Wall-e
2009	Daybreakers
2010	Repo Men
2011	In Time
2012	Prometheus

Appendix B: Futurist Film Codebook

Unit of Analysis: Each individual film from the sample set.

Film Title: Full title of the film, including year.

Coder ID: Identify the number I.D. of the coder from the specific coder I.D. sheet.

Director(s): Name(s) of the individual(s) who directed the film.

Production Company: The first production company listed in IMDB.

Film Length: The length of the film rounded to the nearest minute.

Gender & Race of Primary Characters: Code the gender and race of both the protagonist(s) and the antagonist(s) for the film.

- **Protagonist(s) Gender** – What gender is the main character (i.e. the hero). If more than one character exists code for both—a combination would mean one male and one female lead character.
 - 0 = Male
 - 1 = Female
 - 2 = Combination
- **Protagonist(s) Race** – What race is the main character (i.e. the hero). If more than one character exists code for both—for a combination list which race categories these are.
 - 1 = White
 - 2 = African-American
 - 3 = Hispanic

- 4 = Asian
- 5 = Mixed
- 6 = Combination _____, _____
- 7 = Ambiguous

Social Setting - Using a short paragraph describe how the setting/city structure was depicted in the film. This section is used to illicit deep descriptions of what imagery was used in portraying the environment the characters were involved with.

Social State - Using a short paragraph describe whether this film portrayed an un-chaotic (eutopian) or chaotic (dystopian) society. This section is used to establish what condition of being the society depicted is in.

Social Change - Using a short paragraph describe whether the film ended with the same type of society—either un-chaotic (eutopian) or chaotic (dystopian)—that it began with. This section is used to document transitions at the end of films. Specifically, this question examines how society was affected by the actions of the hero/heroine, *not* how the protagonist was affected.

Table 1: Type of Social Setting Depicted 1953-2012

Film Setting Type	Percent of Films
Benign	18.18% (N=8)
Dismal	40.91% (N=18)
Thriving	22.73% (N=10)
Dismal/Thriving Fluctuation	18.18% (N=8)

Table 2: Chronological Patterns of Dominance in Film Setting Depiction

Film Setting Type	Patterned Periods of Time			
	1953–1976	1977–1980	1981–2001	2002–2012
Benign or Thriving Settings	81.25% (N=13)	0% (N=0)	18.75% (N=3)	22.22% (N=2)
Dismal/Thriving Fluctuation Setting Themes	6.25% (N=1)	66.67% (N=2)	6.25% (N=1)	44.44% (N=4)
Dismal Settings	12.5% (N=2)	33.33% (N=1)	75% (N=12)	33.33% (N=3)

Table 3: Current State of Depicted Society 1953–2012

Type of Social State	Percent of Films
Chaotic	54.55% (N=24)
Non-Chaotic	34.09% (N=15)
Space/No Mention	11.36% (N=5)

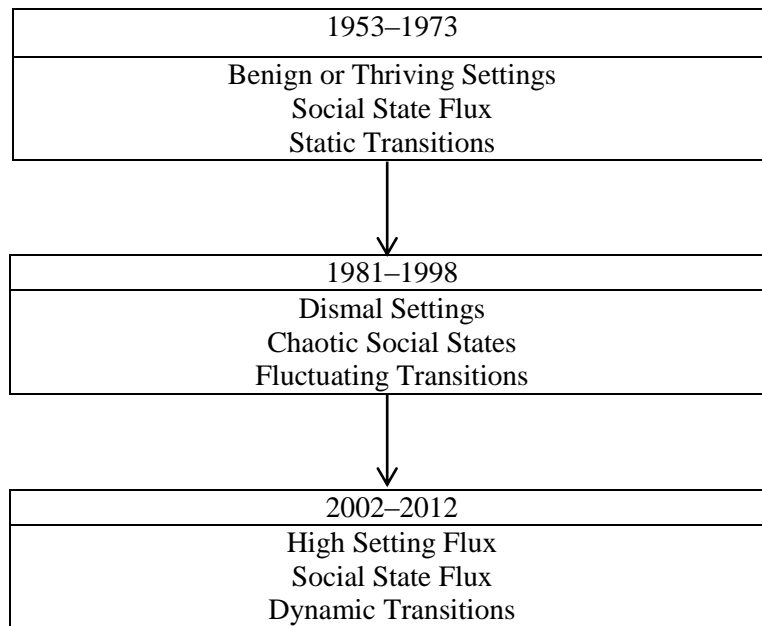
Table 4: Chronological Patterns of Dominance in Social States Depicted

Type of Social State	Patterned Periods of Time		
	1953–1980	1981–2000	2001–2012
Chaotic Social State	42.11% (N=8)	80% (N=12)	40% (N=4)
Non-Chaotic State	36.84% (N=7)	20% (N=3)	50% (N=5)
Space/No Mention	21.05% (N=4)	0% (N=0)	10% (N=1)

Table 5: Chronological Patterns of Dominance in Social Change Depicted

Social Change Type	Patterned Periods of Time		
	1953–1973	1974–1998	2000–2012
Static Change	84.62% (N=11)	55% (N=11)	18.18% (N=2)
Dynamic Change	15.38% (N=2)	45% (N=9)	81.82% (N=9)

Figure 1: Macro Level Chronological Patterns



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