INTRODUCTION

- Sidney Poitier has been studied in light of his acting career and how he eliminated racial barriers for black actors in the 1960s.
- Scholars’ preoccupation with Sidney, the actor, freezes him in the community of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. While his cultural significance as a Hollywood icon has been heavily studied, little research has been conducted on his personal life.
- Sidney’s autobiographies allow new insights and discoveries of Sidney, the man, beyond the realm of entertainment.

PURPOSE STATEMENT

This study surveys the conflict between two opposing spheres: the entertainment and domestic, in which Sidney Poitier negotiates mainstream Hollywood. More specifically, this study investigates Sidney’s narrative of domesticity to locate the ways he conveyed his identity in the sphere of entertainment.

- Of particular interest are the teachings of Reginald Poitier, Sidney Poitier’s father, and the ways Reginald’s blueprint for man/fatherhood caused interior conflict for Sidney the father/husband/actor, as he came of age in the culture of entertainment.

BACKGROUND

- According to Keith Clark, terms such as manhood, marriage, and the culture of entertainment all introduce an excess of impassioned, conflicted, and contradictory responses (1).
- Sidney Poitier’s struggle to attain his masculinity status as a husband/struggling actor stresses him because of his upbringing] with his father’s teaching about family and involvement in the Hollywood industry)” (Clark 1).
- Scholars’ preoccupation with Sidney, the actor, freezes him in the community of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. While his cultural significance as a Hollywood icon has been heavily studied, little research has been conducted on his personal life.

ANALYSIS

Respect for the old ones was everywhere in evidence in this patriarchal society. Young people were required to be honest, live up to their responsibilities, and respect their elders. (Poitier 10)

You become a part of this family once again. We’re going to put the protection of this family around you. Therefore, you have a responsibility to this family. (Poitier 32)

When I tell you that this house is my home and if I tell you under this roof you have to do what I tell you—you have to respect this house and respect me—you listen and you do it. Under my roof you never get so old or so big that you’re outside the jurisdiction of my parentship. (Poitier 33)

The above quotations bear out Reginald Poitier’s blueprints of fatherhood, manhood, and family. They also reveal how important a man’s masculinity is to Reginald Poitier. More importantly, it shows “specifically sectoral and operational issues (such as the role of men in family planning and reproductive health)” (Cleaver 5). Accepting the traditional gender roles of the 1940s and 1950s, the man is considered the “bread winner.” Therefore, he must be capable of providing for his family. Commonly, the man produces work outside the home; however, that is not the case for Sidney Poitier. Instead, he is a black male living in a capitalist society on a beginner actor’s salary where he must provide the income for his family. He struggles to accept his father’s moral code of fatherhood, while simultaneously embracing Hollywood culture. He eventually views himself as a man oriented by society’s conceptions of black manhood (Clark 2) The declarations made within the memoirs of Sidney Poitier’s autobiographies reveal the stresses of two communities—marriage and the culture of entertainment that are incompatible with each other—all in which affected his first marriage with Juanita Hardy that eventually led to his extra-marital affair with Dianna Carroll.

DISCUSSION

- How is the theme of manhood and marriage in the 1940s and 1950s expressed in Poitier’s autobiography?
- How do Reginald Poitier’s ethics work for Sidney Poitier and Juanita hardy?
- How is Poitier’s extra-marital affair addressed in his autobiographies?
- Describe the function in which Poitier’s autobiographies serve. How is autobiography used as a larger metaphor for the connection between his father’s blueprints of family, manhood, and marriage?

WORKS CITED
