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## Engaging in “dangerous discussions”: Fostering cultural competence through the analysis of depictions of college life in popular films.

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**Engaging in “dangerous discussions”: Fostering cultural competence through the analysis of depictions of college life in popular films**

**Abstract**

This qualitative case study utilized critical media literacy to guide the analysis of the depiction of racially and ethnically diverse college students in contemporary popular films. Participants in this study were racially and ethnically diverse undergraduate students enrolled at a private, Predominantly White Institution in the United States. Three primary themes emerged from this study. First, students of color were more apt to recognize stereotypical portrayals of people of color in the films whereas White students’ responses were more attuned with color-blind racial ideology (CBRI). Second, media-centered discussions provided an outlet for students of color to share their personal experiences with racism, stereotyping, and prejudice. In doing so, students of color seek to build the cultural competence of peers who may hold CBRI beliefs. Finally, this study presents a need for critical media literacy. Regardless of race and/or ethnicity, the undergraduates who participated in our study communicated an importance to examine media messages, such as stereotypes of people of color, from a critical perspective. For college and university administrators, such as Chief Diversity Officers, this study is significant in presenting a means for engaging students, faculty, and other stakeholders in dialogue about racial issues in the hopes of fostering a more welcoming campus racial climate for students of color.

## Introduction

Today's college students are more racially and ethnically diverse than previous generations (The Council of Economic Advisers, 2014). Thus, higher education institutions are striving to foster a campus climate supportive of students of color (Caparoso & Collins, 2015). In 2017, forty percent of presidents of private colleges rated race relations on their campuses as either excellent or good, according to a Gallup poll conducted on behalf of *Inside Higher Ed* (Jaschik & Lederman, 2017). Yet the racial climate on college campuses in recent years has been contentious. For example, Richard Collins III, a Black student at Bowie State University, was stabbed to death on the University of Maryland campus by student Sean Christopher Urbanski, a White male, in a racially-motivated hate crime (Buncombe, 2017). Apart from violence, students of color may face other forms of discrimination on campus. For example, Shahem Mclaurin, a Black graduate student at New York University, was purposefully excluded by his peers from a class discussion because of his race (Pettit, 2019). The offending peer wrote to Mclaurin,

I'm just trying to be honest with you...I found it easier to lead the discussion without black presence in the room, since I do feel somewhat uncomfortable with the (perceived) threat that it poses – something which I have been working on, but it will take more time than I would like it to be (Pettit, 2019, n.p.).

As race-based incidents on college campuses are not uncommon, there is a need to re-examine administrative efforts towards fostering institutional climates of cultural acceptance. One recommendation for creating a more welcoming climate for students of color is through facilitating critical conversations about race on campus (Bryan, Wilson, Lewis, & Wills, 2012). Findings from previous studies (Garriott, Reiter, & Brownfield, 2016; Kavoori, 2007; and Ramasubramanian, 2007) suggest that media-based interventions may be effective in helping to dispel racial and/or ethnic stereotypes amongst college students.

According to Kendall (2011), media-consumption (e.g., television viewing, playing video games, interacting on social media) encompasses 53 hours of the average American's week. Yet, popular television shows and films oftentimes do not reflect the increasing racial and ethnic diversity of the United States. A 2015 report by Hunt and Ramon revealed that people of color were grossly underrepresented in both film and television despite constituting over half of the frequent moviegoer population. In 2016 (at the time of this study), the hashtag #OscarsSoWhite went viral on the social media platform Twitter. This hashtag communicated dissatisfaction with the lack of people of color as Academy Award nominees (Ryan, 2016). The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences responded by enlisting more people of color as presenters at the 2017 Oscars, and the film *Moonlight* (Romanski, Gardner, & Kleiner, 2016), a coming of age story about a queer Black male, won the 2017 Academy Award for Best Picture. However, outcries against a lack of diversity in Hollywood persisted in 2018 as White performers, writers, and directors won Emmy Awards for 22 of the 26 categories (Hale, 2018), which prompted one comedian to suggest the need for a new hashtag: #EmmysSoWhite.

When people of color are present onscreen, their portrayal may lead viewers to form stereotypes, particularly when their previous experiences with the depicted group(s) are limited (Lee, Bichard, Irely, Walt, & Carlson, 2009). Stereotypical portrayals of people of color in media may both normalize and reify prejudice (Hunt & Ramon, 2015). For example, Caparoso and Collins (2015) found that stereotype-based humor perpetuated derogatory thinking of "dark skin" (p. 210) peoples. Tosi (2011) hinted at the potential danger of bigoted thinking prevalent in media representations, "[M]edia reflects ideas and values about life and society, and if we see one group represented in limited ways, over time, society tends to accept those representations as truth. Hence, the need to critically examine media" (p. 14).

This study emerged from a call by Garriot et al. (2016) to understand the influence of multicultural interventions on students of color. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to employ critical media literacy to analyze the depiction of racially and ethnically diverse college students in contemporary popular films. This study is significant in suggesting that college and university administrators, such as Chief Diversity Officers, can engage their campus communities in conversations about the racial climate on their campuses such as through analysis of media messages.

### **Review of Literature**

A review of recent scholarly literature suggests that White students and students of color hold different perceptions of their institution's campus racial climate. In the hopes of creating a more positive campus racial climate for students of color, some scholars suggested that institutions of higher education engage their students, faculty, and administrators in discussing race-related issues. However, prior research has shown a reluctance by institutions and faculty to engage in such discussions. Prior research has studied the influence of media-based interventions on remediating racial stereotypes held by college students to mixed results.

#### **Differences in perceptions of campus racial climate**

A student's identity influences his or her perception of campus racial climate (Griffin, Cunningham, & Mwangi, 2016). Jackson and Heckman (2002) found that White students felt a sense of normalcy in identifying as White and expected as well as enjoyed privileges as members of their race. Jackson and Heckman (2002) argued that while the White students who participated in their study appeared more liberal than previous generations, they "inherited the same rose-colored lenses" (p. 448). Rankin and Reason (2005) discovered glaring differences between students of color and White students both in their experiences and perceptions of

campus racial climate. White students reported a higher incidence of gender harassment whereas students of color perceived the campus climate as more racist than their White peers (Rankin & Reason, 2005). White students did, however, recognize racial harassment at similar rates as students of color (Rankin & Reason, 2005).

Students of color are more likely to observe and/or experience racism and thereby perceive their campuses as hostile and/or discriminatory (Griffin et al., 2016). Hope, Keels, and Durkee (2016) stated that while explicitly racist acts are no longer socially acceptable, students of color continue to encounter racial microaggressions such as having their intelligence and/or academic performance stereotyped. "Microaggressions," Hope et al. (2016) wrote, "are particularly unsettling because they are chronic, often happen unexpectedly in public and private contexts, and often remain unchecked by perpetrators and bystanders who are usually unaware of the offensive nature of these encounters" (p. 204). Relatedly, previous research has found that campus racial climate affects students of color more than their White peers.

According to Neville, Yeung, Todd, Spanierman, and Reed (2011), students of color at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) encounter racism via institutional policies and practices, curricula, and classroom interactions. Bentley-Edwards and Chapman-Hilliard (2015) argued that the racial composition of an institution of higher education is especially influential upon the academic outcomes of Black students. Harper (2009) suggested that even academically well-performing Black students encounter challenges at PWIs such as stereotyping and othering. Conversely, White students are significantly less likely to experience discrimination and bias (Yeung & Johnston, 2014). Although institutions of higher education are likely to be more diverse in terms of race and ethnicity (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012), White students may enter college with minimal previous interaction with people of color (Ford, 2012). Ford (2012)

suggested, “[W]hite students’ increased contact with students of color alone may not result in race-related attitudinal or behavioral changes” (p. 138). For example, White students are more likely to host themed-parties that openly mock people of color (Tynes, Rose, & Markoe, 2013). As increased exposure and interaction with people of color does not necessarily translate into applied change amongst White students, faculty and administrators would do well to cultivate critical conversations around race and/or ethnicity on their campuses.

### **“Dangerous discussions” at institutions of higher education**

Rankin and Reason (2005) emphasized the need to provide appropriate interventions to shift “basic assumptions, premises, and beliefs in all areas of the institution” (p. 59). In doing so, privileged assumptions are replaced with more diverse cultures and relationships (Rankin and Reason, 2005). Spanierman et al. (2008) examined the responses of White college students to individual and institutional forms of racism perpetrated against people of color. While their understandings of and responses to racism varied, the study helped participants become more aware of race and racism (Spanierman et al., 2008).

One plausible means of addressing a contentious campus racial climate is through dialogue. However, critical conversations about racism are often lacking in educational contexts—a factor that may contribute to a lack of racial literacy (Bryan et al., 2012). Bryan et al. (2012) defined *racial literacy* as “the ability to critically analyze racial/racist ideologies, norms, and patterns embedded in educational policies and practices” (p. 123). Upon developing racial literacy, students, faculty, and administrators might engage in critical and constructive conversations about topics such as racially biased educational policies, inequitable access, and/or racial incidents that have occurred on campus. Yet Harper and Hurtado (2007) found that avoidance of such conversations at institutions of higher education is commonplace.

One alternative, suggested by Glass, Glass, and Lynch (2016), is to ingrain conversations regarding race and ethnicity in courses via student-to-student interaction in which existing viewpoints could be potentially altered. However, conversations about race and ethnicity integrated into the college classroom may not always be fruitful. For example, Agnew, Mertzman, Longwell-Grice, and Saffold (2008) found that students of color—although members of a cohort—felt being open and honest in discussing issues of race and gender put them at risk. Agnew et al. (2008) pointed to a specific example of a Hmong student who remained silent as the cohort discussed the Hmong community. “Nothing was challenged,” asserted Agnew et al. (2008), “norms remained the same and continued to support the hierarchy reflected in the cohort and society” (p. 30). Nevertheless, the authors argued that faculty must be willing to discuss issues such as race and gender (Agnew et al., 2008). Yet some faculty may be hesitant to engage in what Alvarez McHatton, Keller, Shircliff, and Zalaquett (2009) term “*dangerous discussions*, or discussions pertaining to diversity that may challenge student beliefs” (p. 132).

Certain elements are prerequisites for discussing race and racism with postsecondary students. First and foremost, it is imperative that the group engaging in dialogue is racially and ethnically diverse in composition (Quaye, 2012a). The faculty member must assume the role of facilitator and establish ground rules and other accountability measures for students to abide by during such discussions (Quaye, 2012a). Zúñiga, Nagda, Chesler, and Cytron-Walker (2006) recommended intergroup dialogue for examining differences in higher education. *Intergroup dialogue* is defined as

a face-to-face facilitated learning experience that brings together students from different social identity groups over a sustained period of time to understand their commonalities and differences, examine the nature and impact of societal inequalities, and explore ways of working together toward greater equality and justice (Zúñiga et al., 2006, p. 2).



In studying intergroup dialogue, Zúñiga, Mildred, Varghese, DeJong, and Keehn (2012) found that listening to people from other social identity groups (e.g., individuals of a different racial/ethnic group or gender) helped participants to “challenge their stereotypes, beliefs, or assumptions about the other group” (p. 87).

Specifically for White educators and White students, Quaye (2012b) recommended “developing knowledge about one’s whiteness—privileges, power, and the assumptions one holds” (p. 117) as a means of acknowledging the significance of their own racial identities. This is necessary as Bonilla-Silva and Forman (2000) argued that the extent of prejudice of White respondents on surveys of racial attitudes is underestimated and perpetuated in part by color-blind racial ideology (CBRI). Neville et al. (2011) defined color-blind racial ideology as

a set of beliefs that minimize, distort, and/or ignore the existence of race and institutional racism; the foundation of this racial framework is the belief that race and racism are no longer relevant for contemporary society’s economic and social realities (p. 236).

Thus, educators and students must be aware of CBRI prior to engaging in race-related conversations. The potential dangers of CBRI include preserving a false anti-racist demeanor, blaming people of color for their lower status in society, and criticizing institutional approaches to amend racial inequality (Bonilla-Silva & Forman, 2000). Bonilla-Silva and Forman (2000) argued, “We must unmask color-blind racists by showing how their views, arguments, and lifestyles are (White) color-coded. We must also show how their color-blind rationales defend systemic White privilege” (p. 78). One potential means for cultivating dangerous discussions in higher education is through the utilization of media although studies have found mixed results in terms of influencing attitudinal and/or behavioral change.

### **Media influence: Perpetuating or disconfirming stereotypes?**

Certain ideological perspectives are emphasized (while silencing others) through media framing (Kendall, 2011). Media framing can influence the audience’s perceptions of the world,

When we read a newspaper or watch television or a movie, we live vicariously: we do not actually experience firsthand the event that we are reading about or seeing. Instead, we experience a mediated form of communication in which images and words supply us with information that shapes our perceptions of the world around us. The media selectively frame the world, and these frames manipulate salience, meaning media direct audiences to consider certain features or key points and to ignore or minimize others (Kendall, 2011, pp. 7-8).

Emulation framing is often applied to the intersection of race, class, and gender and is one prevalent approach to media framing (Kendall, 2011). The personal narrative of Oprah Winfrey is one popular example utilized in emulation framing, which suggests that people of color can overcome both racism and class-based inequalities in their pursuit of the “American Dream” with enough “hard work and determination” (Kendall, 2011, p. 50).

Given the prevalence of media framing and its influence on the audience’s perspectives of reality, one means of incorporating critical conversations of race and ethnicity in higher education is through viewing and analyzing media. Previous research has studied the influence of media messages on college students’ propensity to form racial stereotypes. Lee et al. (2009) studied whether television consumption led to college students’ formation of stereotypical views. Heavy viewers, who consumed 15 hours or more of television each week, stereotyped Whites as “more dependable, stable, and less angry” (p. 104), Blacks as “less agreeable and less extroverted” (p. 105), and Asians as “less responsible, less warm, and more nervous” (Lee et al., 2009, p. 105). Furthermore, heavy television viewers were more prone to exhibit negative stereotypes, and negative stereotyping was more prevalent than positive (Lee et al., 2009). Regarding popular music, Authors (2015) examined how rap lyrics influenced college students’ perceptions of Black women. Findings suggested that misogynistic lyrics and false claims of feminism contributed to students’ perceptions of financial independence and reliance on family (Moody-Ramirez & Scott, 2015). Thus, Moody-Ramirez and Scott (2015) suggested the need to

develop the critical media literacy skills of college students to equip them to deconstruct media messages.

Prior studies have also utilized media as a means of remediating stereotypical views held by college students but with mixed results. Through a media literacy course, Kavoori (2007) engaged college students in challenging stereotypical media depictions of Blacks. While students became critically aware of the role of media in perpetuating racial stereotypes, participants relied on stereotypical portrayals of Blacks in their own media products, under the assumption that audiences would view their productions as satire (Kavoori, 2007). In contrast, Ramasubramanian (2007) utilized media, such as stereotype-disconfirming news stories, as an intervention designed to reduce stereotypes among White college students. According to Ramasubramanian (2007), “[F]indings reveal that activation of implicit racial stereotypes decreases when people receive instruction on critical media literacy skills and gain exposure to stereotype-disconfirming news stories” (p. 258). Similarly, Garriott et al. (2016) studied the efficacy of three multicultural interventions implemented with White students. The entertainment intervention entailed watching video clips documenting differential treatment across various situations experienced by a Black man as compared to a White man (Garriott et al., 2016). When compared to the other two interventions (i.e., education and social norming) and the control group, White students who experienced the entertainment intervention were more likely to demonstrate White guilt—an “affective response to racial oppression” (p. 160)—and a greater awareness of racial privilege. Results from Garriott et al.’s (2016) study indicated that entertainment is a promising multicultural education intervention for White students, particularly with entertainment that illustrates both racial discrimination and racial privilege.

### **Theoretical Framework**

As this study aimed to analyze the portrayal of racially and ethnically diverse college students in popular films, the researchers utilized critical media literacy to frame this study. Critical media literacy stems from critical theory, which itself encourages critiquing society (Garofalo, 2013). Critical media literacy necessitates the analysis of media representations of ideological conflicts between social groups (Mason, 2016) such as groups formed by commonalities of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation.

The concept of ideology is important because dominant ideologies serve to reproduce dominant and subordinate social relations. Ideologies of gender might promote sexist representations of women while ideologies of race often perpetuate discriminatory representations of people of color (Kellner, 1995). As such, it is important for critical studies to focus on how the media support and reproduce dominant ideologies about difference and culture. Gramsci's (1971) notion of hegemony can serve as a lens for deconstructing mass media messages. Hegemony aims at building consensus among the masses that a certain ideology is normal and that any contradictions are deviant (Gramsci, 1971). Furthermore, hegemony attempts to manufacture consent amongst the masses (Herman & Chomsky, 1988). Consent is evident in the normalization of stereotypical, one-dimensional representations that would be inappropriate under other circumstances. One particularly effective strategy that reinforces the myths of the deviance and inferiority of oppressed groups is through the use of media stereotypes.

Critical media literacy specifically "involves cultivating skills in analyzing media codes and conventions, abilities to criticize stereotypes, dominant values, and ideologies, and competencies to interpret the multiple meanings and messages generated by media text" (Kellner & Share, 2007, p. 4). Pohan and Mathison (2007) argued that mass media has the potential to

misguide viewers' perceptions of race and multiculturalism. From a pedagogical perspective, critical media literacy may help students recognize bias, including stereotypical portrayals of people of color and women (Garofalo, 2013). Stereotypes within media can be especially detrimental because the media helps citizens make sense of the world around them, especially people of different backgrounds. Students may interrogate media messages that reproduce prejudices such as racism (Trier, 2006). Hammer (2011) recommended that after analyzing media messages from a critical perspective, students create their own media messages. Garofalo (2013) asserted that creating media products presents students with a space for discussing injustices.

For groups often subject to marginalization within the media, critical media literacy has the potential to enact change.

Media and information communication technology can be tools for empowerment when people who are most often marginalized or misrepresented in the mainstream media receive the opportunity to use these tools to tell their stories and express their concerns. For members of the dominant group, critical media literacy offers an opportunity to engage with the social realities that the majority of the world are experiencing. (Kellner & Share, 2007, p. 9)

The goal of this study was to utilize popular films depicting college life as a means of employing critical media literacy to analyze the depiction of racially and ethnically diverse college students in contemporary popular films.

### **Methodology**

The researchers designed this qualitative case study to engage racially and ethnically diverse college students in analyzing the depictions of diverse college students in contemporary films. Through this study, the researchers sought to answer the following research question:

*How do racially and ethnically diverse college students respond to media portrayals of themselves in popular films?*

## **Context**

Yardley University is a private, Predominantly White Institution located in the Southwest region of the United States. This study occurred on the campus of Yardley University during the Spring 2016 semester. Campus racial incidents had previously occurred at Yardley, including the discovery of a noose hanging from a tree after the election of President Barack Obama in 2008, the United States' first Black president.

The researchers conducted this study within the context of a leadership course. Students enrolled in the course were demographically diverse—one of the primary reasons for its selection and as suggested by Quaye (2012a) and Zúñiga et al. (2006). Enrolled students were (1) diverse in terms of race and ethnicity (2) relatively mixed in terms of gender (3) of varied classifications (e.g., sophomores, seniors) and (4) pursuing an array of majors (e.g., science, business, social sciences). Moreover, as students enrolled in a leadership course, the researchers anticipated that these students would comfortably vocalize their opinions as well as be able to enact change, if needed, on the Yardley campus.

## **Participants**

The researchers utilized maximum variation (heterogeneity) sampling (Harsh, 2011). Harsh (2011) described a maximum variation sample as one “constructed by identifying key dimensions of variations and then finding cases that vary from each other as much as possible” (p. 67). Thus, the researchers employed maximum variation sampling in this study to ascertain a sample that was diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, and gender. Thirty-two students participated in this study. All names used in this paper are pseudonyms, including the name of the institution of higher education at which this study occurred. Table 1 below lists the demographics of study participants in terms of gender, race, and ethnicity. Table 1 also compares participant

demographics with Yardley University's student demographics. Notably, Black students were overrepresented in our sample. Conversely, White students were underrepresented in our sample.

### **Data Sources**

The primary purpose for using films depicting college life was to raise consciousness about stereotypes amongst college students by asking them to reflect critically on such assumptions, which Mezirow (1998) suggested is the basis of transformative learning. Through the films, we were able to access students' views concerning race and privilege. Fictional characters become real as Berger (1998) argued we identify with characters and what they represent in relation to the identities of ourselves and others. Movies not only reflect our culture but also shape our consciousness about issues (Alvermann & Hagood, 2000). Thus, identifying with film characters affects our cultural understandings by influencing our beliefs about social issues, ourselves, and those of diverse racial/ethnic, class, gender, and sexual identities (Tisdell, 2008). Critical media literacy consists of contrasting and overlapping theoretical strands that are "alternatively informed by cultural studies, media studies, critical theory, feminist theory, postmodernism, and emancipatory educational studies" (Tisdell, 2008, p. 4). Yet common amongst these theoretical strands is a focus on power relationships based on race, gender, class, and sexuality in society and in the educational system as well as how alternative types of media relate to learning (Buckingham, 2003; Gee, 2004, Holtzman, 2004). Thus, it was imperative that our participants were involved in selecting the films for analysis through critical media literacy.

Prior to conducting this study, participants examined a list of films depicting college life. Two recent (at the time of the study) films were selected because most participants had previously watched both, which allowed them to more deeply analyze each film using critical media literacy. The two selected films were *22 Jump Street* (Tatum, Mortiz, & Hill, 2014) and

*Pitch Perfect 2* (Banks, Handelman, & Brooks, 2015). Both films are comedies, which Caparoso and Collins (2015) asserted often incorporate racial-, ethnic-, and gender-based stereotypes in their humor. The protagonists in *22 Jump Street* (Tatum, Mortiz, & Hill, 2014) are two White male police officers in their late 20s who enroll in college as part of an undercover drug sting operation. Whereas the protagonists in *Pitch Perfect 2* (Banks, Handelman, & Brooks, 2015) are racially and ethnically diverse, female, traditional college students who participate in acapella singing competitions. The researchers selected two films to aid in the juxtaposition of stereotyping in both films; additionally, one film featured White male protagonists whereas the other film featured racially and ethnically diverse female protagonists. Participants felt that *22 Jump Street* (Tatum, Mortiz, & Hill, 2014) more accurately portrayed the experiences of people of color (e.g., encountering microaggressions) whereas *Pitch Perfect 2* (Banks, Handelman, & Brooks, 2015) portrayed more blatant stereotypes. Quinn (a Black female) remarked, “*22 Jump Street* was a little more transparent,” adding, “that kind of stuff [i.e., blatant verbalization of stereotypes in *Pitch Perfect 2*] doesn’t happen... [P]eople would be weirded out and not just keep going as if she didn’t say anything.” Overall, participants seemed to appreciate the comedic value of *22 Jump Street* more so than *Pitch Perfect 2*. Yara (a Latina) commented, “[T]hey [i.e., producers of *Pitch Perfect 2*] were trying to do what like *22 Jump Street* did and like make [stereotypes] funny but like that didn’t work out so well.”

Surveys, focus groups, and blog posts served as the primary sources of data in this study, and the researchers collected data from each source twice. Prior to the first film screening, study participants completed a survey intended to collect demographic information (e.g., race, ethnicity, classification, major, etc.) in addition to their initial understandings and perceptions of media and stereotypes. A screening of *22 Jump Street* (Tatum et al., 2014) then occurred



immediately followed by the first focus group session. Participants were then encouraged to complete a blog post outside of class. The blog post offered participants who may have been more reserved and/or hesitant during the focus group to share their thoughts, feelings, and opinions. The same sequence of events occurred for *Pitch Perfect 2* (Banks et al., 2015). The film was screened, a focus group occurred immediately following the screening, and participants had the opportunity to share, expound upon, or reiterate their thoughts through a blog post. Finally, participants completed a post-survey to help the researchers identify growth, if any, in participants' cognizance of stereotypical portrayals in popular media and knowledge of media literacy.

The researchers utilized critical media literacy to analyze both films with the purpose of facilitating dangerous discussions about race/ethnicity, gender, and stereotypes amongst diverse college students. Through strategic questioning, the researchers engaged participants in utilizing critical media literacy skills. Participants were asked such questions not only during the focus groups but also through the surveys and blog posts so that participants could express their opinions confidentially, if desired.

The Center for Media Literacy (2005) published five essential questions for media literacy. The researchers expounded upon four of these key questions and adapted them for this study. Table 2 below presents the four key questions and their study-related adaptations, which were posed through the various data sources. Additionally, participants were asked questions such as (1) What is media literacy? (survey) (2) What does the term *stereotype* mean to you? (survey) (3) Describe your experience with stereotypes, if any. (survey) (4) In what ways, if any, has popular film and media influenced (positively or negatively) your academic identity? (blog post) (5) In what ways, if any, has popular film and media influenced (positively or negatively)

your racial/ethnic and/or gender identity? (blog post) (6) Please share your overall thoughts about this film. (blog post)

### **Data Analysis**

In analyzing this case study, the researchers adopted the explanation building technique recommended by Yin (2014). The explanation building approach seeks “to ‘explain’ a phenomenon...or ‘how’ and ‘why’ something happened” (Yin, 2014, p. 147). In doing so, the researchers employed the data analysis spiral suggested by Creswell (2013). As Creswell and Poth (2018) posited, this form of qualitative research involves an evolutionary process that requires researchers to engage in an intuitive and reflective process. As they interacted, the researchers instinctually asked study participants more questions and to provide justification for their responses (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researchers first read all of the collected data as recommended by Yin (2014). The process of memoing or writing short notations of ideas emerging from the data followed (Creswell, 2013). Memoing, as described by Yin (2014), refers to writing hints, clues, and suggestions the researchers’ preliminary interpretations of data. Next, the researchers categorized and coded the data into themes (Creswell, 2013). Findings of this study revealed three primary themes, which follow a presentation of the study’s limitations.

### **Limitations**

This study is not without its limitations. First, the researchers must acknowledge their own biases in conducting this study. Four of the five researchers are people of color. Second, as a case study, the findings are bound to the specific context of a leadership course at Yardley University. Thus, these findings may not generalize to other universities. Third, our maximum variation sample rendered an overrepresentation of Black students and underrepresentation of White students when compared with the Yardley University student population as a whole. Thus,

other students enrolled at Yardley at the time of this study may not have shared the thoughts, feelings, and opinions expressed by study participants. Finally, students of color were instrumental to this study as they addressed issues of marginalization with frankness and vulnerability. Thus, we must acknowledge that study participants of color assumed some of the emotional labor inherent within these types of conversations although this was unintended. We do not want to propagate a reliance on students of color to educate their peers and/or undertake emotional labor. In fact, it was our intention that the analysis of popular films through critical media literacy would help to avoid this situation.

### **Findings**

Three primary themes emerged from this study. The first theme was that our participants of color were more apt to recognize and name stereotypical portrayals of people of color in both films. Whereas White participants were more likely not to view the portrayals of people of color in the films as stereotypical and instead vocalized comments that reflected color-blind racial ideology. The second theme that emerged from our study was a need to build cultural competence amongst college students. Participants of color vocalized this need and expressed their willingness to help develop their peers' cultural competence. The third theme was participants' recognition of the need to analyze media messages using critical media literacy.

#### **Recognition of stereotypes vs. color-blind racial ideology**

Students of color were both quick to recognize and vocalize the stereotypical portrayal of people of color in both films. Yet White participants were either not cognizant of or not forthright in stating their recognition of racially-based stereotypes in either film. Furthermore, the comments of some White participants suggest that they may ascribe to color-blind racial ideology.

Discussion of a scene in *22 Jump Street* (Tatum et al., 2014) revealed a discrepancy between how students of color perceived the scene and how White students perceived it. In the scene, Captain Dickson (a Black male) became infuriated and began to yell, curse, and throw food after realizing that Schmidt (one of his White male subordinates) had a sexual relationship with his college-aged daughter. Ivette (a Black female) recognized the portrayal of Captain Dickson as a stereotype of Black males. Ivette commented, “[T]he captain, he was kind of like loud and aggressive—that could be a racial thing. I guess saying that Black people are more loud.” Wesley (a Black male) added that Captain Dickson was portrayed as “boisterous” in this scene. However, Cadence (a White female) disagreed with Ivette and Wesley. Cadence countered, “I don’t think it has to do anything with race at all. I think it’s just a dad being protective of his daughter. I think everyone’s reading a little too into it but that’s just me.” Later in the conversation, Emily (a White female) made comments that supported Cadence’s view. Emily asserted, “[Captain Dickson] like completely went overboard, but he was going overboard as a dad and not as a Black man or a Black dad. I think he was just being a dad.” In the first blog post, which allowed students to express their opinions confidentially, Teresa (a Latina) wrote,

I agree on some things we talked in class, but I also feel like some stereotypes were stretched. For example, in the scene where the dad [i.e., Captain Dickson] overreacts and is very angry about his worker [i.e., Schmidt] dating his daughter, some people were saying that the movie was representing how African Americans get more angry. I don't think this is true, and the movie was only being comical and creating [a] point of how overprotective fathers can be.

As with the first focus group, discussion of a scene from *Pitch Perfect 2* (Banks et al., 2015) also revealed a discrepancy between the opinions of most students of color and White students regarding stereotypical portrayals. However, Teresa, a Latina, seemed to agree with her White counterparts in dismissing Captain Dickson’s portrayal as stereotypical. This finding seems to align with research conducted by Alemán and Gaytán (2017) who found that some students of

color are resistant to critical race pedagogy within the higher education classroom. These students of color may hold CBRI-laden perspectives and hold “the perception that people should not notice racial difference, nor judge people based on their skin color because doing so actually invites divisiveness” (Alemán & Gaytán, 2017, p. 138). Additionally, Haywood (2017) suggested that some light-or white-skinned members of the Latinx community may harbor colorism and consequently, “anti-Black Latino racism” (p. 959).

In one scene from *Pitch Perfect 2* (Banks et al., 2015), the collegiate acapella group at the center of the film had a bad performance and began blaming each other. The character Cynthia Rose (a Black female) believes that Chloe (a White female) attributes the poor performance to her. In turn, Cynthia Rose blames Flo (a Latina from Guatemala) who responds by saying, “Sure, blame the minority” (Banks et al., 2015, n.p.). Quinn (a Black female) took issue with this scene in the movie. Quinn remarked,

[R]egarding the ‘blame the minority’ comment, I think it kind of downplays minorities in a way that it kind of suggests that we’re always trying to play the victim, which is kind of annoying because a lot of times we are the victim. But I think it kind of desensitizes people to these struggles.

In her blog post, Helena (a Latina) wrote of this portrayal, “The way Hispanics were presented in this movie was awful. They are portrayed as poor, uneducated people who are always dealing with a crisis—while the movie tries to make fun of them.” In contrast, Zoe (a White female) asserted, “[E]verything [Flo] is saying, it’s not fitting like a stereotype, it’s like situational because it happens to be happening in place where she’s from [i.e., Guatemala], not because of like her race.” The differences amongst the majority of students of color in recognizing racially- and/or ethnically-based stereotypes and their White peers in dismissing the portrayal of characters of color as such revealed the need to intentionally cultivate cultural competence amongst college students.

### **Fostering cultural competence**

A need to develop the cultural competence of White students was not only recognized by the researchers but also vocalized by participants of color. Vonk (2001) offered a three-pronged definition of *cultural competence*: an individual's (1) knowledge or understanding of the experiences of others (2) attitude, or "self-awareness of assumptions, values, and biases that are a part of his or her own cultural and worldview" (p. 247), and (3) skills for facilitating cross-cultural communication.

*The need for and willingness to build cultural competence in one's peers.* During our second focus group, the researchers engaged participants in debriefing both films. Matthew (a White male) commented,

One thing that I liked about the movies is that while they'll make race jokes a lot—it's never like the other characters [are] being derogatory towards the other characters because of [race]. And I feel like in today's college, like the vast majority of the time no one is really derogatory towards each other for race things...

At this point, Matthew received perplexed looks from his Black classmates, which led Matthew to add, "...at least that's my experience." These comments evidently struck participants of color who had previously vocalized their recognition of stereotypical portrayals of people of color in both films. Matthew's failure to recognize that the prejudices encountered by students of color in the films might mirror the reality of students of color on college campuses revealed a need to develop cultural competence.

While debriefing *22 Jump Street* (Tatum et al., 2014), Zach (a Black male) expressed disapproval of the character Schmidt's (i.e., a White male police officer) lack of cultural competence. Zach took issue with how Schmidt interacted with Captain Dickson (a Black male).

Going back to *22 Jump Street*, the victim of WhyPhy [i.e., illicit drug overdose] was Black. The captain knows she's Black. The captain is Black. But at the end of the day, he is a police captain, he sees victims of different races all the time, so he doesn't necessarily

need you to point—he didn't need Schmidt to point out that she was the victim and [Schmidt's] gonna care so much more about this case because she is Black. You know? He didn't need that.

However, Quinn (Black female) felt that Schmidt's lack of cultural competence in the film accurately portrayed reality. Quinn remarked,

[E]ven though, yes, it was like, 'Why is [Schmidt] saying that?' I feel like that's very accurate. Like that's happened to me a lot of times. Where I'm just kind of like, 'Okay. You know, we don't have to highlight [race]. Yes, I get it.'

Quinn and Zach's comments denote a lack of cultural competence exhibited by the character Schmidt, specifically a lack of cross-cultural communication skills.

This conversation led the researchers to ask all participants if they felt comfortable verbally responding to derogatory comments either observed by or directed at them. Both Zach and Quinn responded affirmatively. Quinn added, "But I also feel like as a minority, I might have a little bit more practice and experience in doing that." Yara (a Latina) agreed and offered an example of her responding to a racially insensitive comment. Yara stated, "[P]eople come up to me, and they're like, 'Oh, do you speak Mexican?' And I'm like, 'No, I speak Spanish.' And so that like really bothers me." Yara's comments offer an example of a person of color seeking to build the second-prong of the offending party's cultural competence by challenging his or her assumptions and reshaping his or her attitude towards people of color. Yara's comments seemed to hit home with Zach who elaborated,

Going off of what you [i.e., Yara] were saying, anytime like a racist joke is brought up or a gender joke or a sexual orientation joke is brought up, and somebody's offended like the person who gets offended by it always has to explain why they're offended by it. Especially like whenever somebody brings up my race or like stereotypical African-American features that I may possess or may not possess. 'Cause you know, they don't really know me. They just assume base off of my race and the things that they assume about my race. They just say things. I have to explain to them, 'No, that's not the case. Could you not say that anymore?' or 'Don't say things like that around me or about me.' And they're like, 'Why?' And in my head, it's just like, 'Why do I have to explain why to you? If I feel uncomfortable with you sayin' something to me.' Because people like to say

things to you and want you to be like, 'Aw, it's good. It's fine. Your feelings aren't hurt. You don't care.' You know? Especially when you're a guy. The stereotype is that guys aren't supposed to care about anything and so it's like yeah, it like creates a fire inside you. Like it hurts when people tell you things like that and then you have to explain to them, 'Oh yes. This did hurt me because you shouldn't be saying that's like that. That's offensive to me.'

Zach communicated a need to build the first-prong of cultural competence, knowledge or understanding of others' experiences, in the offending party. Quinn contributed her own example of experiencing prejudice, specifically that other Yardley students ask if she is an athlete.

But at the same time, I can't really get that mad. I'll just say, 'No. I [am] on an academic scholarship...!' And that's cool, as long as [they're] receptive of it and like willing to learn and like willing to grow from that experience because I think that's how we become culturally competent as people.

The vulnerability of our participants of color in sharing their experiences with prejudice seemed to have a positive impact on White students who participated in our study.

*Improvements in White students' recognition of stereotypes.* Prior to our participants of color sharing their encounters with bigotry, several White participants vocalized what they felt was an oversensitivity to racial issues. Stephanie (a White female) wrote in her first blog post,

I think that I both agree and disagree with the way people were represented. There were a lot of false stereotypes, but I think that was kinda the point. I think everyone is reading way too much into the movie. It wasn't made to make a point or offend people or even "reverse stereotypes" like some people were saying. It's a movie. We as people have to remember to take things on screens with a grain of salt. There are people in college like the characters. I have no doubt about that, but there are plenty of people who aren't, and I think people already know that.

Blayne (a White female) echoed this sentiment in her own blog post, "I think that the media portrays racial inequality, and as mentioned, is not as prevalent on college campus[es]." Despite previous vocalizations by participants of color on the presence of racial and ethnic stereotypes in both films, Gavin (a White male) wrote, "I don't have any problems with the way anyone was portrayed." However, a shift in White students' recognition of stereotypes present in the films



shifted following the aforementioned conversations in which participants of color (e.g., Zach, Quinn, and Yara) shared their encounters with prejudice.

In the second blog post (following the screening of both films and the second focus group) Pauline (a White female) wrote, “I disagree with the use of the exploitation of humor from stereotypes [in the film]. It only perpetuates the stereotypes.” Emily (a White female) also wrote, “There were some racial stereotypes I didn’t agree with.” Similarly, Sam (a White male) wrote, “The films played on perceived stereotypes much more heavily and more aggressively in very antagonizing forms that I didn’t agree with. The movies positively influenced me to notice stereotypical, poor taste jokes.” The differences in opinion expressed by White participants between both blog posts may be attributed to two factors that particularly influenced the second blog post: (1) having analyzed two films through critical media literacy and (2) having heard participants of color express their personal experiences with stereotyping during both focus groups. Regardless of race or ethnicity, participants in this study recognized a need for college students to employ critical media literacy.

### **Building cultural competence by employing critical media literacy**

Prior to watching both films, participants acknowledged the influential role of media in their lives. Xavier (a White male) wrote, “I have been surrounded and shaped by media my whole life. It has influenced me in innumerable ways.” Cole (a White male) wrote how media has shaped his view of other races and ethnicities.

I have found myself judging many ethnicities by their stereotypes in popular media. Popular media has influenced me to think that Asians are smart, Black people are dumb; men are the aggressors and drug dealers and influencers while women are the victims.

Yet as previously mentioned, analysis of both films seemed to shift the perceptions of some of our White participants’ views of stereotypes present in popular media.

In terms of our participants of color, Claudia (a Latina) recognized the lack of representation of racially and ethnically diverse college students in popular media. Furthermore, Claudia connected stereotypes presented in media with those encountered by students of color at Yardley. Claudia penned, “The student population in many of these films are white and wealthy students, which is highly similar to [Yardley]. Minorities, especially Latino[s] and Black[s] are never portrayed as the stars [and are] in college because of scholarships only.” In her blog post, Helena (a Latina) wrote, “[These films are] funny when just watching it with a friend. Upon analysis, however, the film loses its commercial effect.” Teresa (a Latina) added, “Somebody in class mentioned that usually in films, only Caucasian and African American races are represented. I agree with this and definitely think that other races are misidentified and underrepresented. Even African Americans aren’t seen as often.”

Given that participants of color mentioned cultural competence during one of the focus group discussions, the researchers asked if watching and analyzing the films fostered cultural competence. Zach (a Black male) stated,

I think it will only help you if you watch it in the sense of how we're watching it—where we take time to discuss the movie and the flaws that we see in it. [W]e're talking about how it would make us feel in real life if it actually happened to us.

However, Yara (a Latina) communicated that audiences may develop an incorrect sense of cultural competence based on the portrayal of people of color in films. In commenting on the Latina character, Flo, from *Pitch Perfect 2* (Banks et al., 2015), Yara stated,

[P]eople might think it's okay to make those type of jokes and might take it as normal. I have tons of friends who will get that comment like, 'Oh, does your dad sell drugs?' Or 'Is your dad in the drug industry?' You know, that sucks that like being Hispanic is known for that, and I feel like her [i.e., Flo] comments make it seem like it's okay to say that when it is definitely not.

Yara's comments indicate a concern that media depictions of people of color may hinder the development of appropriate cross-cultural communication skills, the third prong of cultural competence.

Utilizing critical media literacy to foster dangerous discussions amongst college students is imperative. As our participant Zach suggested, upon first viewing, both films were simply entertaining. With a second viewing utilizing critical media literacy, however, participants became more cognizant of stereotyping in both films. Similarly, participants indicated on both the pre- and post-surveys that bias exists in the media. However, comments identifying certain media outlets as politically biased prevailed in the pre-survey. Notably, Nick (a White male) wrote on the pre-survey, "ESPN has a huge [emphasis added by participant] SEC football bias." On the post-survey, however, Nick responded to a question of whether popular films accurately depict the collegiate experience by stating, "No, maybe portrays stereotypes." Similarly, more participants explicitly mentioned the prevalence of stereotypes within media on the post-survey.

Table 3 below synthesizes changes in our participants' awareness of media literacy and stereotyping within the media (e.g., already aware, increased awareness, unaltered awareness) according to participants' racial identities. Of note is that some participants completed only the pre- and/or post-survey; therefore, a pre-/post-survey comparison could not be made for these participants. Table 3 denotes that our Black and Latinx participants were previously aware of media literacy and stereotyping within the media. However, we argue that participating in our study benefitted our participants of color by providing a forum for them to combat deficit perspectives and discuss their lived experiences, if any, with encountering such perspectives. Forty-two percent (n=8) of our White participants' awareness of media literacy increased from pre- to post-survey. Markedly, 53% (n=10) of our White participants' awareness of stereotyping

within media increased from pre- to post-survey although 26% (n=5) were already cognizant of such biases within media. These findings suggest that critical media literacy may be successful in engaging diverse college students in critical conversations of race and/or ethnicity as well as nurturing critical awareness of racial/ethnic biases amongst White students.

### **Discussion**

The findings of our study echo those that emerged from previous research yet also offer new insights into utilizing media-focused interventions to foster multiculturalism on college campuses, specifically for students of color. The first theme that emerged from our study denoted that stereotypical portrayals of people of color in both films initially evoked responses akin to color-blind racial ideology (CBRI) from White participants. Bryan et al. (2012) suggested that CBRI leads individuals to lack sensitivity to or awareness of racial injustice. Vue, Haslerig, and Allen (2017) argued

Colorblindness is far from neutral or a panacea, as is evident when we examine how it operates and is deployed. Colorblindness functions as a silencing mechanism; it mutes racialized experiences because there is no space for these “lived experiences” within the framework (p. 869).

In our study, the comments made by some White participants exuded CBRI by readily dismissing stereotypical portrayals of people of color. Yet the frankness with which CRBI-laden opinions were stated led to a critical conversation about the need for cultural competence.

Ford (2012) argued that institutions of higher education must not only seek to foster representational racial diversity but also foster “interactional diversity” to address “issues of power, privilege, and social justice” (p. 138). The second theme that emerged from our study suggests faculty may create a safe space by which to engage their students in dangerous discussions as well as foster cultural competence. However, our study found that the films themselves were not particularly adept at building cultural competence. In fact, quite the

opposite, but critical analysis of the films offered an opportunity for students of color to vocalize their experiences with bigotry in situations both on and off campus. The vulnerability of the students of color who participated in our study in sharing such personal experiences was influential upon White participants. Prior to these conversations, White students were more likely to express perspectives attuned to color-blind racial ideology whereas afterward, White students were more likely to acknowledge the presence of racial stereotypes in the films and express their disagreement with these negative portrayals.

When integrating critical race pedagogy within the higher education classroom, students of color often feel empowered, yet, for some, “the course material [can] resonat[e] too painfully with their own experiences (Alemán & Gaytán, 2017, p. 140). As stated in the Limitations section, we did not intend for students of color to undertake emotional labor as participants in our study; however, we acknowledge that this was a factor in our study. White students also often undertake emotional labor and may express feelings of “denial, anger, guilt, and shame” (Alemán & Gaytán, 2017, p. 128) during critical conversations of race and/or ethnicity. Thus, developing cultural competence amongst White students requires their vulnerability in acknowledging underlying biases and/or problematic ideological assumptions held, if any, as well as a willingness to embrace diverse perspectives that challenge these mindsets.

In melding together the second and third themes that emerged from our study, our findings suggest that critical media literacy could be employed to help students identify stereotypical portrayals of people of color in the media. In turn, such analysis can serve as a means for students to engage in dangerous discussions. In this study, we utilized critical media literacy to focus on ideological critiques and analyses of the politics of representation of crucial dimensions of gender, race, class, and sexuality as suggested by Kellner (1998).

### **Connections to prior research**

Students of color who participated in our study vocalized their experiences with racial microaggressions at Yardley and beyond. For example, Quinn (a Black female) stated that other Yardley students often assume that she is a member of one of the university's athletic teams, which is an example of a microinsult (Tynes et al., 2013). Prior to students of color vocalizing their experiences with bigotry, White students were more likely to engage in microinvalidation (Tynes et al., 2013) by readily dismissing stereotypical portrayals of people of color in the films. Without the bravery and transparency of the students of color in offering personal examples of encounters with prejudice, these microinvalidations may have continued to be perpetuated as Hope et al. (2016) asserted that microaggressions are often unchecked. Similarly, our study suggests that the dialogue amongst our racially diverse participants helped to alter the perspectives previously held by White participants. This finding mirrors Garriott et al. (2016) who found that entertainment is a promising intervention, particularly for White students. Our findings also echo those of Glass et al. (2016) and Neville, Poterat, Lewis, & Spanierman (2014) who found that multicultural education may help to reduce color-blind racial ideology.

Likewise, findings from our study support previous research conducted by Tucciarone (2007) who claimed that film could serve as one avenue for teaching college students about differences in perspectives and opinions held by peers within their same context of college life. In this study, our participants employed critical media literacy to question and evaluate the portrayal of racially and ethnically diverse students in popular films. As each of our participants attended Yardley, their real-life experiences functioned as a comparative basis for the attitudes and beliefs that the media conveyed about college life (Hawk & Hill, 2016).

Our study contrasted the findings of previous research. In their study, Agnew et al. (2008) found that students were more likely to remain silent as faculty attempted to engage their students in race-related conversations. However, our participants of color readily vocalized their recognition of racial stereotypes in the film, their encounters with prejudice on campus, and a willingness to help their peers build cultural competence. Alvarez McHatton et al. (2009) reported on the hesitance of faculty at institutions of higher education to integrate dangerous discussion in their classroom. However, the dangerous discussions at the center of this study occurred in a course taught by a White woman.

### **Implications for Practice**

Campus racial incidents continue to occur on college campuses. However, Cole and Harper (2017) suggest that such incidents are more likely to receive increased notoriety as they “go viral” (p. 318) in an era of social media. As colleges and universities continue to increase in terms of racial and ethnic diversity, administrators can no longer afford to shy away from directly addressing racially based incidents on their campuses and campus communities (Cole & Harper, 2017). Our study suggests that analyzing popular media through critical media literacy can help address tensions within the campus racial climate. Analyzing popular films, for example, presents White students the opportunity to recognize stereotypes perpetuated in the media. Whereas students of color can use such media messages as a springboard to share their own experiences with bigotry with their White peers. Thus, faculty should be encouraged to utilize media as a tool for engaging their students in dangerous discussions. Furthermore, our study suggests that employing critical media literacy in this way can help to build cultural competence amongst college students, which is needed as the number of campus racial incidents continues to grow amidst a current politically divisive climate.

Chief Diversity Officers can work towards creating institutions of higher education that build, recognize, explore, and embrace cultural diversity by creating and sustaining university-wide programming that allows students, faculty, staff, and administrators to participate in forums that celebrate cultural differences among the campus community. All too often, programs are implemented seasonally with respect to national observances (e.g., Hispanic Heritage Month, Chinese New Year, Black History Month). However, along with such events is an implicit understanding that the only time to recognize, respect, and honor this cultural group is during this season. Programming might also be negated for other cultural groups underrepresented on campus.

Chief Diversity Officers can ensure that university-wide programming is not limited to a contributions approach (in which cultures are seasonally celebrated) but instead reflects a transformative approach (in which students develop an understanding of diverse cultural perspectives through critical thinking) (Vacca, Vacca, Mraz, 2017). Frequently facilitating initiatives that represent an array of cultural communities will increase the cultural competence of campus community constituents. Suggested examples include: (1) coordinating a monthly lecture series featuring perspectives of underrepresented social and cultural groups; (2) garnering more attention and participation in diversity-related programs, events, and activities; (3) encouraging university administrators to regularly attend diversity-related institutional events with an opportunity to directly dialogue with members of the community; (4) encouraging cultural competence by providing diversity and inclusion statements and mandates across all university courses and building support for reporting instances in which violations occur; and (5) providing professional development and mandatory course offerings to further educate the



campus community on racism, implicit bias, and microaggressive behaviors that further exclude, alienate, and isolate members of the campus community.

### **Conclusion**

This study suggests that the use of critical media literacy to analyze depictions of racially and ethnically diverse college students in the media may be fruitful in several ways. As one participant in this study remarked, without viewing popular film and television through the lens of critical media literacy the audience is susceptible to accepting any negative stereotypical portrayals of a character whose race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or religion varies from their own. Analysis and discussion of popular films and television can not only build students' critical thinking skills but also lead to frank conversations about stereotyping people of different backgrounds. Moreover, analysis of stereotypical portrayals of people of color presents students of color with a springboard for sharing their own personal experiences with bigotry. Some White students may think that prejudicial or discriminatory acts happen on other campuses. Yet through our focus groups, White study participants realized that unfortunately, their peers of color have been subjected to prejudicial words or actions on their very campus. Our findings suggested that participating in this study helped White participants to remove their "rose-colored lenses" (Jackson & Heckman, 2002) by dispelling the notion that their campus is a safe haven free of the racial stereotyping that occurs off campus. Findings from our study suggest that this dialogue can help to foster cultural competence amongst White students, particularly their recognition of microaggressions perpetuated against students of color both in film and on their campuses. College and university administrators can encourage media-focused conversations to build cultural competence amongst their students as well as engage their campus communities in dangerous discussions to foster a more welcoming campus climate for students of color.

**Tables***Table 1**Participants' demographics compared to Yardley student demographics*

	Participants	Yardley student population
Female	59% (n=19)	59%
Male	40% (n=13)	41%
Black	25% (n=8)	7%
Latinx	16% (n=5)	14%
White	59% (n=19)	65%
Asian	0% (n=0)	6%
Native	0% (n=0)	0.5%
Two or more races	0% (n=0)	5%

Table 2  
*Adapted media literacy-related questions*

Center for Media Literacy (2005) key questions	Study-related adaptations
“What creative techniques are used to attract my attention” (p. 28)	What assumptions did you make based upon the way the film leads the audience to believe is the victim? ( <i>22 Jump Street</i> ) (focus group)
“How might different people understand this message differently from me?” (p. 42)	How did you all receive, or how do you think the audience, or even the character, might receive [given situation]? (focus group)
“What lifestyle, values, and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?” (p. 56)	<p>Who is not in this film? Why do you think that [these groups] are not in the film? (focus group)</p> <p>Are the portrayals of college students in this film accurate or inaccurate, in your opinion? (focus group)</p> <p>What are some assumptions, if any, that you might make about college students in general based on this film? (focus group)</p> <p>How does this film portray different characters in terms of their race and ethnicity? (focus group)</p> <p>What are some assumptions, if any, that you might make about the race or ethnicity of the characters? (focus group)</p> <p>In what ways does the film positively portray race, ethnicity, and/or gender, if any? Give examples. (focus group)</p> <p>Did this film depict different races or genders in a negative light? If so, give examples. (focus group)</p> <p>Did you agree and/or disagree with the way in which an ethnic group or gender was represented in the film? (blog post)</p> <p>Did you identify any stereotypes based on race, ethnicity, and/or gender that were present in the film? If so, give examples. (focus group)</p>
“Why is this message being sent?” (p. 68)	Do you think bias exists in the media? Why or why not? (survey)

*Table 3**Changes in participants' awareness from pre- to post-survey*

	Number of participants	Already aware of media literacy	Increased awareness of media literacy	Unaltered awareness of media literacy	Already aware of stereotyping	Increased awareness of stereotyping	Unaltered awareness of stereotyping	Unable to determine (i.e., missing data)
Black	8	(n=4)			(n=4)			(n=4)
Latinx	5	(n=2)	(n=1)		(n=3)			(n=2)
White	19	(n=7)	(n=8)	(n=2)	(n=5)	(n=10)	(n=2)	(n=2)

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