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# Movie Effects on Social Dominance Orientation of Undergraduate Students

Brian C. Johnson

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MOVIE EFFECTS ON SOCIAL DOMINANCE ORIENTATION  
OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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December 2016

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Title: Movie Effects on Social Dominance Orientation of Undergraduate Students

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The purpose of this study is to explore the effects on the social dominance orientation of undergraduates in general liberal education courses of a film traditionally used to teach or complement instruction on diversity and social justice. It aims to fill a noted gap in the media effects, social sciences teaching, and social dominance orientation literatures.

As an experimental study, the present research is employing a pre-test/post-test design to measure *effects* of watching a film on viewers' social dominance orientation. Effects are determined based on participants' pretest and posttest scores of measures related to social dominance orientation and transportation into narrative worlds. A person's social dominance orientation is related to their support of racial or cultural hierarchies. A person who scores higher in SDO will be more likely to support such hierarchies. Transportation is related to being significantly engaged with a fictional narrative text or film. Those who are highly transported are more likely to be emotionally affected by the text and are more likely to connect to the action, storyline, or individual characters than those who are not absorbed. Transportation has shown to be a contributing factor in how fictional texts like film can shape beliefs and attitudes.

The results from the analysis showed mixed results indicating that demographics like race, gender, and class rank show some effect upon transportation and/or change in social dominance.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Back in 2000, I started a different doctoral journey. I was enrolled in an Ed.D. program in Children, Youth, and Family Studies at another university. When I timed out, I just reasoned that I would never finish and become a Dr. It was the Bloomsburg University provost, Dr. Ira Blake, who inspired me to get back in the game. That first semester (fall 2011), I had classes with Drs. Muchtar, Steigler, and Piwinsky. It is incredibly fitting that I complete this journey with them directing my dissertation. I am grateful for their assistance and encouragement. Dr. P., your help, especially, was invaluable!

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Overview**

Since the 1930s, film has been used for educational purposes, but in the early days, “educational” films primarily consisted of documentaries and dramatized reconstructions (Edgar, 1969). In the 1970s, there was a shift to include mainstream Hollywood feature films to complement classroom instruction (Cuban, 1986); since then, movies have been useful in a variety of ways: for experiential education; to teach symbolism and satire; and as case study to teach students to make inferences, interpretations, and in meaning-making (Champoux, 1999).

Even more recently, pursuant to academic pressures to increase teaching about issues of diversity and social justice, university faculty have turned to mainstream movies to provide fuel for classroom discussions on these issues. Heider (2008) shows students and faculty how to make connections with foreign cultural concepts for ethnographic study through the visual medium of film. Johnson and Blanchard (2008) reflect the power of this medium for the integration of diversity concepts in the humanities and social sciences classroom by incorporating film clips and conversation starter questions. Summerfield (1993) and Summerfield and Lee (2001) addressed film as a source of cultural education for understanding norms, mores, beliefs and attitudes of various groups with the American cultural context. These resources have stressed the value of using film to connect with student audiences, increasing student engagement, ease of availability, realistic portrayals.

Attending to the strategic, moral, and educational benefits of diversity are essential to the mission of higher education according to these educational and governmental entities. These organizations stress the importance of students participating in educational activities that will

deepen their understanding of personal, professional, and social responsibility to self and others while applying the principles of social justice and multicultural competence to their chosen academic track and vocational goals. The onus for providing these opportunities falls squarely on the shoulders of teaching faculty who may not be adequately prepared for this type of content or pedagogy (Starr, Shattell, & Gonzales, 2011).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Film content and/or film courses are more frequently being added to general education course requirements: as a study of popular culture; or to teach communication skills (Bell & Truman, 2010; Darbyshire & Baker, 2012) as a tool for context-based learning (Arroio, 2010); for values and character education (Brummett, 2013) and as a means to foster excitement for a course to improve student performance (Efthimiou & Llewellyn, 2007).

There is little research available assessing the extent to which diversity-related film content used in classrooms affects students' sense of self, particularly the extent to which watching diversity films may affect students' attitudes toward social hierarchies. A person's social dominance orientation may impact their individual ability to relate to others or their professional ability to provide specific services (Chonody, Woodford, Brennan, Newman, & Wang, 2014). Social dominance orientation (SDO) describes how individuals develop personal attitudes about equity and equality, particularly, how a person develops attitudes in favor of socio-cultural hierarchies in relation to predetermined attitudes toward assimilation and the acculturation of foreigners and immigrants (Bassett, 2010), affirmative action (Unzueta, Knowles & Ho, 2012), and racism (Kteily, Sidanius, & Levin, 2011; Sidanius & Pratto, 2011). Part of the academic mission of universities is to help students understand their own personal identities and how they interact with others; therefore, it is important to understand whether

using film somehow inhibits or fosters the type of personal growth that faculty members expect from students.

### **Rationale for the Study**

One of the more popular uses of film in teaching social science is to enable students to discuss and examine historical and contemporary issues of racial prejudice, stereotyping, discrimination and racism as a means to prompt discussion and self-reflection on issues of race (Ross, Kumagai, Joiner, & Lypson, 2011), understanding socio-cultural issues (Fehim Kennedy, Şenses, and Ayan (2011), as a means of promoting conflict resolution (Collett, Kelly, & Sobolewski, 2010), experiential learning about race and social inequality (Loya, & Cuevas, 2010), and social behavior (Moskovich & Sharf, 2012). These topics are very important to discuss in social science classes because the overall curricula prepare students to understand social change forces and strategies to mitigate inequalities and social stratification (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2015).

Movies can provide visual examples of the multiple manifestations of the historical and current forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination including racism, sexism, heterosexism, classism, stereotyping, prejudice, and inequality (Dowd, 2012). Films are able to present subject material in a way that may be difficult in a traditional lecture format (Fehim Kennedy, Şenses, & Ayan, 2011). The content of these films tends to fall within the drama genre, and by nature of the genre, these films movies are “serious presentations or stories with settings or life situations that portray realistic characters in conflict with either themselves, others, or forces of nature” (Filmsite, Drama Films).

### **Need for the Study**

The imperatives of general liberal education require students to participate in educational activities that will deepen their understanding of personal, professional, and social responsibility to self and others, and be able to apply the principles of social justice and multicultural competence to their chosen academic track and vocational goals. The insistence within higher education to teach diversity content in general education courses as well as in disciplinary studies requires faculty members to prepare new strategies that will increase student interest in and understanding of difficult material.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to explore the effect on the social dominance orientation of undergraduates in general liberal education courses of a film traditionally used to teach or complement instruction on diversity and social justice. It aims to fill a noted gap in the media effects, social sciences teaching, and social dominance orientation literatures.

Movies can provide useful visual texts for students to explore the multiple manifestations of oppression and how attention to socially just principles is effective for change (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012; Patterson, 2011; Reznik & Safedof, 2013). Previous studies on social dominance have focused primarily on students' experiences with diverse others and of faculty experiences with teaching and evaluation. Few studies relate to film exposure in classrooms that can enhance or decrease students' social dominance orientation and attitudes toward prejudice. While film has shown to be beneficial tools for helping students examine personal biases and values (Nugent & Shaunessy, 2003; Lee, Kane, Drane, & Kane, 2009), there is a gap in the literature as to what extent films used in class impact students' social dominance orientation.

## Theoretical Framework

A person's social dominance orientation (SDO) describes the individual's propensity toward attitudes supporting equality or inequity—who should have rights and who should not (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994). SDO is a construct of the social dominance theory of intergroup relations that focuses on the maintenance and stability of group-based social hierarchies and has been extended to determine mechanisms between personal SDO and prejudice, particularly in relation to predetermined attitudes toward assimilation and the acculturation of foreigners and immigrants (Kteily, Sidanius, & Levin, 2011; Bassett, 2010; Guimond, De Oliveira, Kamiesjki, & Sidanius, 2010), affirmative action (Ho, Sidanius, Pratto, Levin, Thomsen, Kteily, & Sheehy-Skeffington, 2012; Phelan & Rudman, 2011; Haley & Sidanius, 2006), and political orientation (Duckitt & Sibley, 2010; Perry & Sibley, 2012). Studies related to SDO have revealed a generalized orientation toward a dominant/subordinate relation in social groups (De Oliveira, Guimond & Dambrun, 2012; Pratto, Stewart & Zeineddine, 2013). Social dominance orientation can be tied to critical theory as a mechanism for examining how mass media impact and influence national opinion. A person's SDO is indicative of the ways in which a dominant group emerges in a given society and how cultural ideology grows out from the perspective of the dominant group (Doane, 2005). The ideological power of mainstream Hollywood film to support and maintain cultural hegemony invites scrutiny as it pertains to the effects it has upon students when viewing films for diversity education.

Secondarily, this study fits within and is meant to supplement our knowledge of media effects theory and is interested in how films watched for classroom use are useful in impacting student attitudes and beliefs.

## **Research Question**

This research project is concerned with understanding the effects of film watching on the social dominance orientation of undergraduate students. It is becoming more common for faculty members to use popular, mainstream films to complement their instruction on diversity issues (Tisdell, 2008). Several films have appeared as popular to use to spark diversity discussions in the classroom; these dramatic films are rife with emotionality and primarily depict diversity issues from a negative vantage point (Kunkel, 2014). This study seeks to understand the impacts of one commonly used film on the social dominance orientation of undergraduate students, but also will extend the examination of the effects of narrative transportation. Therefore, this study asks the questions:

RQ1: What are the effects of film on the social dominance orientation of undergraduate students?

RQ2: How does transportation into the narrative of a film correlate with the social dominance orientation attitudes of students?

RQ3: Do demographic variables (race, gender, class rank) affect transportation effects and social dominance?

RQ4: In what ways does the combination of race, gender, and class rank correlate with transportation and social dominance?

## **Variables**

In answering the above research questions, the following concepts will serve as variables within the study. The demographic dimensions (race, gender, class rank) are categorical variables to be discussed and will serve as independent variables for this study. Social dominance orientation and narrative transportation serve as dependent variables (DV) for this



study. Transportation relates to the manner in which a viewer becomes engrossed in a film's narrative; it is therefore important to understand how transportation correlates with how, if at all, a film may affect a person's social dominance orientation.

### **Limitations and Delimitations**

#### **Limitations**

In conducting research on the experiences of human beings, it is the goal of the researcher to be able to control for all variables in order to make extractable claims to broader populations. A limitation for this study is that it is difficult to pinpoint how/why a film may impact a viewer. This study will only examine how scores may change after watching a film, but not the factors that contributed to this change. Furthermore, the research study is not interested in students' previous exposure to the film stimuli. As with any studies of human responses, it is difficult to control for all potential confounding variables.

#### **Delimitations**

The sample for this study is drawn by convenience to the researcher and is limited to undergraduates at a single university in central Pennsylvania. Additionally, because the selected courses are for general education, it is likely that most of the participants will be within the first two years of their college experience. According to the Office of Institutional Research at Bloomsburg University, the University is a predominantly white institution (81.66% white); therefore the numbers of racial minorities in the sample population may be significantly lower than the white student population.

## **Definitions of Terms**

### **Transportation**

Transportation into a narrative world is described as the processes by which a reader or viewer is transported (absorbed) emotionally and cognitively into a fictional narrative text or film (Green & Brock, 2000). Transportation is attributed to the manner whereby narratives can affect beliefs. It is also described as absorption and may be the mechanism that dictates viewers' enjoyment of a film or text (Green, Brock, & Kaufman, 2004). This transportation causes deeper connections with characters, make storylines believable, and is the conduit through which narratives shape beliefs and attitudes (Green & Brock, 2000).

### **Social Dominance Orientation**

A person's social dominance orientation attempts to explain a person's belief in the naturalness of social hierarchies where one group benefits from social status over those who do not (Kteily, Sidanius, & Levin, 2011). It deals with the psychological predispositions of individuals with relation to participation in and support of the maintenance of prejudicial attitudes and group superiority.

## **Defining the Population**

This study uses a convenience sample of undergraduate students enrolled at a regional public university in central Pennsylvania to measure the impact of watching films on the social dominance orientation of students in general education classes. Students are an appropriate sample for this study as the interest is specifically related to university classroom teaching.

## **Significance to the Field of Communication**

The present study potentially extends the literature on media effects. Since the 1950s, media effects theories have supported the notion that media consumers can be deeply affected by

the blatant and subtle messages within film and television programs. This research study can help to explain the role film plays as a shaper of cultural attitudes and the maintenance of social hierarchies. Similarly, the study outlined here can help in the understanding of teaching praxis, particularly related to the development of coursework aimed at increasing students' learning about diversity and the development of multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills.

### **Organization of the Study**

This dissertation is organized into five chapters. The first chapter provides an overview of the research topic and outlines the nature of the problem and the study's importance to the field of communication. The second chapter provides a review of pertinent literature on the theoretical underpinnings of social dominance theory. The review includes a summary of literature on general education and diversity and a broad overview of film-based learning and the pathways for using film for instructional use in the classroom. There is also a focus on the construct of social dominance orientation and on narrative transportation into fictional sources, which serve as dependent variables.

The third chapter provides a plan for the design of the research study and includes the research questions and hypotheses based on the review of available literature. It includes an explanation of the movies used for stimulus in the study, the population and sampling techniques, data collection procedures, a section on the instruments and measures to be employed, and a description of the data analysis procedures.

The fourth chapter exhibits findings of the study based on data analysis and includes tables to explain and delineate the findings. The fifth chapter discusses the results, limitations, and recommendations for future research.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### **Introduction**

As this study is concerned with teaching praxis related to using film to complement instruction on diversity and social justice education, this chapter will examine the literature related to using feature films as a classroom teaching tool in general, but also the ways in which movies have become useful for classroom discussions or lessons about diversity, power and inequities, and the development of other student competencies. The review begins with a brief overview of the higher education mandate for liberal arts and general education outcomes followed by an examination of research on using film media through the lens of the historical frameworks of instructional technology (behaviorism, constructivism, and cognitivism) paying particular attention to how film pedagogy fits within Bloom's 1956 taxonomy of educational objectives. Bloom is widely accepted in higher education as the model for learning goals and outcomes. The review will include a discussion of the cognitive, behavioral, and affective domains and the benefits for faculty who have adopted film pedagogy to complement instruction about diversity. Relatedly, this chapter will review research that examines how viewing films influences a person's sense of self and how it impacts a person's values and beliefs despite being fictional sources. This section will also provide a short review of literature on the transportation effect, which can be described as being wholly rapt by a fictional narrative like a book or movie. Transportation serves as a salient variable in this study.

Relatedly, this chapter will also explore the role of film in educational settings both as an instructional visual aid and as a method of influencing attitude and belief change. This chapter provides a summary of relevant literature on social dominance theory and its related construct,

social dominance orientation, as a salient variable in this study. Social dominance is related to a person's attitudes in favor of racial or cultural hierarchies in society. Undoing or minimizing the effects of social dominance hierarchies can be seen as a responsibility of those who teach in the college or university classroom, particularly in the social sciences. The study has potential implications for how faculty members choose films to include in course syllabi and instruction and how they use the films to address student growth and development.

### **The Diversity Mandate in Higher Education**

The mandate for preparing students to live, study, and work in an interconnected and global marketplace has come from higher education accrediting bodies and accountability organizations who are expecting colleges and universities to move beyond mere compositional, structural diversity initiatives designed to increase the populations of diverse groups (Chang, 1999; Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1998). Increasing the presence of diverse populations on campus is important, but educators and administrators have the task of developing academic interventions such as required diversity or multicultural components within the general educational curriculum or by offering elective courses within disciplines (although specific disciplinary courses are less common) (Fink, 2013).

The American Association of Colleges and Universities (AACU) has developed a national initiative titled "Making Excellence Inclusive," calling for colleges and university faculty to integrate diversity, inclusion, and equity into the classroom experience as important to the development of democratic principles (Clayton-Pedersen & Musil, 2009). Additionally, they have tied these concepts to general education outcomes they hope campuses will adopt. In their initiative "Shared Futures: Global Learning and Social Responsibility," AACU supports the idea that university faculty help students to develop competencies related to understanding peoples

around the world, the historical roots and contemporary manifestations of oppression, and gain the intercultural skills to effectively navigate multiple cultures and seeing multiple perspectives (Hovland, 2005).

Similarly, the Middle States Commission, a higher education accrediting organization, assesses universities' general education curricula for evidence that faculty are giving students opportunities to develop learning and expertise in the areas of "justice, equity, and respect for diversity and human dignity" (Middle States Commission on Higher Education, 2006, p. 36). Their documents give credence to these principles as a mechanism for teaching students integrity and ethical practice. This call for evidence has prompted institutions to more critically examine their practice in the classrooms.

The American Association of State Colleges and Universities and the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges argued that the integration of diversity and justice is the responsibility of all members of the campus community (AASCU, 2005). Their document sets forth a series of reflective questions designed to allow faculty, staff, and administrators to examine personal and professional practices. These questions are particularly important for faculty given the pressures to integrate diversity and equity into course content. One such question refers to faculty preparation for teaching inclusively (curriculum, methodology, pedagogy). Most doctoral programs, however, prepare potential faculty members to teach content of a specific discipline, not necessarily how to teach diversity concepts or how to integrate multicultural engagement into their work (Lambert & Tice, 1993). According to Blaess, Hollywood, & Grant (2012), it is rare to find faculty who have the requisite awareness, knowledge, and skills necessary to adequately prepare students in these types of intercultural

competency areas. Gopal (2011) questions, “If they [faculty] are not prepared to teach . . . then how can they provide an equitable educational environment for their students?” (p. 374).

To make up for the deficit in preparedness to teach diversity concepts, some faculty members have turned to using feature films to bridge the gaps (Forlin & Chambers, 2011). According to Ross, Kumagai, Joiner, and Lypson (2011), films use the power of narrative to “enhance perspective-taking and empathy, and help learners—including faculty—to critically assess their own assumptions and biases in their “encounters with otherness” (p. 189). Teaching diversity concepts through film, then, affords educators with both a medium and instructional strategy for engaging student learning about diversity issues, including race and ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, nationality and language, socioeconomic status, and ability, as well as the intersections and complexities among them (Johnson, 2009).

Hurtado & DeAngelo (2012) suggest common general education outcomes related to diversity including: student understanding of self as a vehicle for understanding cultural similarities, differences and experiences; the historical and current role of culture and language in shaping economic, social, and political realities and worldviews; the historical and current forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination including racism, sexism, heterosexism, classism, and inequality; and the strategies that advance social and economic justice and be able to apply principles of ethical practice and diversity within chosen academic field. One such strategy involves adopting a film-based pedagogy presenting mainstream film to students as a complement to traditional lecture or as an instructional activity. The academic literature acknowledges that film is a shaper of cultural values and is an effective instructional tool (Berk, 2009); this study fills a gap in the literature by investigating whether such films have an effect upon students’ attitudes toward social hierarchies.

Within the general education mandate, the lion's share of the responsibility for teaching diversity issues has fallen to faculty within the social sciences (Humphreys, 1997). Teaching faculty have begun to examine the benefits of adopting a film-based pedagogy as a classroom tool, not only as a source of entertainment, but also as complement to traditional methods of instruction (Porter & Wimmer, 2012). Researchers have addressed the cognitive and affective domains of Bloom's taxonomy as a framework, and have begun to outline discipline-specific strategies and rationale for incorporating film into curricula (Goldenberg, Lee, & O'Bannon, 2010).

One of the primary learning outcomes of educating for diversity is the development of increased understanding of personal cultural self-awareness, particularly in the understanding of personal ethnocentrism and the ways that cultural identities affect interactions and behaviors with others (Locke & Bailey, 2013). Faculty promote activities that ask students to become more cognizant of their own multicultural identities; in doing so, they become more fluent when engaging with others who are different (Cuyjet, Howard-Hamilton, & Cooper, 2012). This idea of possessing a comprehensive multicultural awareness of self as a vehicle for understanding of cultural similarities, differences, and experience is essential in the development of the personal dispositions and values that are needed by those who live and work in a diverse world (Hurtado & DeAngelo, 2012). As self-awareness is essential to diversity learning, it is imperative to examine Hollywood film because of its role as a shaper of individuals' identities as well as their attitudes and beliefs about social issues.

### **Film Classroom Benefits**

Giroux (1997) suggests that Hollywood film has "as much cultural authority and legitimacy for teaching specific roles, values and ideals as do the more traditional sites of



learning such as the public schools, religious institutions and the family” (p. 53). Similarly, in a 1952 Supreme Court decision in *Burstyn v. Wilson* regarding the role of film in society, the justices’ ruling read:

It cannot be doubted that motion pictures are a significant medium for the communication of ideas. They may affect public attitudes and behavior in a variety of ways, ranging from direct espousal of a political or social doctrine to the subtle shaping of thought that characterizes all artistic expression. The importance of motion pictures as an organ of public opinion is not lessened by the fact that they are designed to entertain as well as to inform. (as cited in Baumann, 2007, p. 102)

Choosing the *right* film to use in a course has proven to be one of the most challenging aspects of adopting a film-based pedagogy (Brown, 2011; Johnson, 2009). There are numerous films to choose from that may address diversity issues; this may complicate matters for faculty as the films can enhance or potentially inhibit learning the subject matter. Stoddard and Marcus (2010) surveyed high school teachers to find out the most common films used in history and social studies classes. They identified a trend that many teachers selected films “that represent very emotional events in history, or films that present a perspective that is often left out of, or marginalized in, textbooks” (Stoddard & Marcus, 2010, p. 85). Stevens (2003) described using feature films that present the “emotional and social aspects of society” (Stevens, 2003, p. 65) as a means to connect students to historical memory. Marcus, Paxton, & Meyerson (2006) acknowledge the role that film has played in shaping students’ thinking about history and encourage teachers to use movies to redirect that learning.

Shaw (1998) addressed the volume of available films that teachers often turn to for instruction about diversity issues, particularly those that afford attention toward issues of

intolerance, stereotyping, and civil rights. She cites the importance of using films “dealing with themes concerning human nature, human relationships, and the tendency of human beings to question the nature and hierarchy of the world in which they exist” (Shaw, 1998, p. 44). Because of the wealth of films from which to choose, teachers must have a clear purpose for selecting a particular film. Stoddard and Marcus (2010) argue that teachers be sure that the chosen film articulates the proper perspective of the lesson. Wheeler and Davoust (1994) shared how essential it is that those faculties have a curricular plan for the film—one that encourages critical thinking and problem solving. In their survey, Stoddard and Marcus (2010) showed that teachers were not limited by the age of a film, noting that teachers chose some films “specifically because they are dated” (Stoddard & Marcus, 2010, p. 86) as the films may exemplify settings, norms, and values that are consistent with a particular time period. Addressing film selection, Stevens (2003) identified a criterion list for film selection that is based on, among other things, questioning whether the film will “provoke a reaction and discussion” (Stevens, 2003, p. 66), emphasizing the value of personal and group communication as a strategy for promoting multicultural learning.

Each person has been socialized into ways of knowing and being by familial entities, religious traditions, knowledge communities, educational systems, and even media sources such as film (Johnson & Blanchard, 2008). In K-12 schooling, not much emphasis is placed on critically engaging with media literacy skills, and students come to the university level with limited experiences as critical thinkers about film (Stevens, 2003). Students may find it challenging to evaluate or critique movies as for many years they have only been consumers of entertainment (Schmidt, 2012). Educators, then, may need to help students “read” films as social commentary or to make critical/analytical judgments (Golden, 2001). Additionally, faculty must

be aware of the ways in which popular American films offer competing perspectives on American history, culture, and society (Butler, Zaromb, Lyle, & Roediger, 2009). Educating for diversity requires deeper student learning and intercultural skills development introduced at the higher levels of Bloom's Taxonomy.

### **Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives**

In higher education, the push for students to learn critical, higher order thinking skills follows Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives (Bloom, Engelhart, Furst, Hill, & Krathwohl, 1956). This taxonomy presents learning as a multi-tiered and hierarchical structure (from lowest to highest): knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Each of these is situated in the affective, cognitive, and psychomotor domains. The taxonomy presents a systematic process of alignment between standards and educational goals, objectives, products, and activities

Widely recognized as a classification system for establishing learning outcomes for students, Bloom's taxonomy provides a core lexicon for educators. The taxonomy primarily covers two domains: cognitive and affective. The cognitive domain primarily refers to mental information processing that does not relate to emotions or feelings; the affective domain speaks to those emotional and subjective values and feelings. Regardless of domain area, the educational objectives range from lower order to higher order—from simple to complex, from recall to critical thinking and problem solving. Higher order activities are the preferred trajectory for learning in higher education as to reach these levels; students must be actively engaged and committed to learning. These activities tend to be transformative and experiential.

Bloom, et al (1956) created this taxonomy as a classification system that made learning objectives clear and meaningful; provided for reliable testing and evaluation measures; and

facilitated the development of new learning theories (Chyung, 2008). Bloom and his colleagues initially outlined their hierarchical cognitive goals (focused primarily on developing intellectual skills):

- Knowledge. Specifically related to the ability to recall information.
- Comprehension. The ability to translate, interpret, and extrapolate information.
- Application. To make use of information and/or to move from the abstract to the concrete.
- Analysis. Breaking down information to see patterns and relationships.
- Synthesis. Learning constituted by student ability to bringing disparate information together to form new information.
- Evaluation. Appraisals or value judgments about the veracity, goodness, or rightness of methods, solutions, or materials.

Similarly, the framework for learning in the affective domain proffers a hierarchical structure regarding what can be described as intangibles (emotions, values, and attitudes):

- Receiving. Developing awareness caused by some type of stimulus.
- Responding. Once stimulus is received, the learner responds to, rejects, affirms or otherwise complies.
- Valuing. Once a response is made, there is an internalization of information or some level of acceptance/confirmation.
- Organization. Learner begins to conceptualize or structure the information pursuant to the value judgment.
- Characterization by value. The learner develops a pattern for future action based upon the internalized structure developed in the previous steps.

The taxonomy was designed to emphasize the importance of complexity of learning and effectiveness of teaching. The addition of instructional media opened opportunities to add to that complexity. For years, the use of audiovisual aids like photographs, dioramas, slide projectors, and filmstrips were the primary method of introducing media for instructional purposes (Garrison & Akyol, 2009). The following section describes the educational benefits and outcomes of using film as an instructional tool in manners consistent with Bloom's cognitive and affective domains.

For decades, classroom instruction has employed a traditional lecture format where the teacher imparts information and students become receptacles. In recent years, that traditionalism has been challenged as educational research has stressed the need for students to be more involved in the creation of knowledge and to be recognized for already having ways of knowing that are important to the course content (Taboada & Guthrie, 2006). Film pedagogy has been advanced as a promising method of facilitating classroom communication by offering instructors a more interactive, student centered classroom experience. Movies are already a popular medium, and their pervasiveness has the potential to create a classroom consensus that is so important for deeper and sustained dialogue. Film offers benefits for all learning domains: cognitive, affective, and behavioral; as students grow in their knowledge, motivation, and skills, the potential for enhancing group communication in classrooms grows exponentially (Naughton, 2006; Pegrum, 2008).

### **Bloom's Taxonomy and Film Pedagogy**

The primary objective of this section is to examine the literature on the usefulness of using the medium of mainstream Hollywood film as a part of instructional pedagogy, particularly applying the literature to the domains of Bloom's (1956) taxonomy of student learning. As a

popular mass medium, film has the potential to have both entertainment and educational value; and according to recent research, both are necessary and beneficial in the classroom.

### **Using Film for Cognitive Development**

The cognitive domain involves knowledge and the development of intellectual skills. This includes the recall or recognition of specific facts, procedural patterns, and concepts that serve in the development of intellectual abilities and skills (Bloom, et al., 1956).

Using film to enhance classroom instruction benefits students' cognition by increasing memory (English & Nielson, 2010), providing visual cues (Hansen, 1933), promoting student engagement and connection to the course content (Butler, et al., 2009), which increases retention of materials and fosters critical thinking (Lip & Li, 2010).

Integrating movie clips into instruction promotes memory and recall of information. Film in the classroom improves retention of information by providing strong images and emotional content; these viewed cues then become pathways for students to internalize the information and to be able to remember important details. English & Nielson (2010) studied two hundred fifty undergraduate students' recall of facts and information retention following film viewing. The researchers were particularly interested in whether emotional arousal caused by watching films increased students' ability to accurately eschew false memory. The students viewed four film clips and afterwards completed a fifteen-item questionnaire; some of the items contained misinformation. A week later, the same questionnaire was re-administered. Results showed that those students who exhibited higher arousal retained information better and were able to reject misinformation at higher levels than those in the control group.

In an early research study, Hansen (1933) argues that "without exception" moving pictures are proven tools to promote learning (Hansen, 1933, p. 1). Findings showed that not

only did the experimental groups acquire more information (learning) through the video clips; they also retained the information longer than those in the control group. As students are able to retain more information, their attention and engagement increases. Through use of film clips, learners develop increased linkages between story details and related course content; in turn, fostering creativity by stimulating the flow of ideas for classroom discussion or in written activities (Butler, et al., 2009).

Butler, et al (2009) continued to study learning from fictional films. In their study, participants read shorter texts about topics from the historical record and then watched clips from related fictional films. Each film contained correct and factual information related to the text and one piece of misinformation that was not consistent with the text. When tested, participants were able to more often produce the correct answers to questions when they read the text and were shown correct information from the film over when they read the text alone. The results also showed that students reproduced the film inaccuracies despite being charged to answer the questions based on the reading of the texts. These results show that viewing films containing correct and incorrect information has both positive and negative impact on student learning. Lip & Li (2010) found that attending to film pedagogy allows for the transfer of critical thinking skills to assorted situations.

Following a discussion on the pedagogical advantages and challenges of incorporating film media in classroom instruction, Barnett & Kafka (2007) offer strategies for using two films, *The Red Planet* and *The Core* to engage students in an introductory science course. They argue that because students (aged 10-22) spend at minimum three hours weekly watching movies and eight hours watching television, college science courses should also teach students to critically evaluate the science-related media. They argue that one advantage of film pedagogy helps

students “avoid the disconnect that often occurs when students learn a concept and then are expected to apply that concept in real-world situations” (p. 32). The article reports on classroom activities where film or television media were added to course content. Following lecture and class discussion about various science topics, students were shown related video clips from mainstream media and were asked a series of questions and to reflect on the accuracy of the science present in the scenes. Results indicated that the use of film clips were effective in promoting both student interest in and understanding of course content.

In the end, film in the classroom not only increases students’ retention of information, they are more likely then to understand the course content, which increases the likelihood that learning in the affective domain is also being enhanced.

### **Affective Domain and Film**

The affective domain includes factors such as student motivation, attitudes, perceptions and values. Teachers can increase their effectiveness by considering the affective domain in planning courses, delivering lectures and activities, and assessing student learning. Incorporating film clips into classroom instruction has the potential to significantly impacts students’ disposition toward classroom attendance, interest, and can serve as a catalyst to increased involvement by students (Bloom, et al , 1956).

Developing a classroom community is one approach that enhances affective learning. One of the immediate benefits of instructional pedagogies with film is that movie watching is mostly a communal experience. Jowett and Linton (1980) argue that movies create a type of “visual public consensus” (p. 75). They speak to the power of film to bypass traditional forces of socialization and education (family, church, school) and establish immediate relational contact with the watcher. Film engages a wide audience, cuts to the heart of issues quickly and provides



an accessible meeting place for people of different backgrounds. Because of this, movies serve as a vehicle for collaboration, helping to build the connections with other students and the instructor.

The idea of developing a community of learners has been shown to positively affect upon social factors, cognition, and teaching efficacy. In a multi-university study, Shea & Bidjerano (2008) surveyed over two thousand students on the benefits of classroom community (in an online context). McKinney, McKinney, Franiuk, & Schweitzer (2006) measured students' satisfaction throughout a semester long psychology course in relation to students' experience of classroom community. Summers & Svinicki (2007) examined the links between classroom community and student motivation; their study showed that interactive classrooms and collaborative learning affected student motivation and performance in higher degrees than for students in traditional lecture-style classes. These findings confirm Rovai's (2002) study of three hundred fourteen students across twenty-six different courses that when learners "feel a sense of community, it is possible that this emotional connectedness may provide the support needed for them not only to complete successfully a class or a program, but also to learn more" (Rovai, 2002, p. 321).

It is important to grab a student's attention as a part of the learning process (Keller, 1987). By using feature films in class, faculty members are able to grab students' attention and inspire and motivate students. Berk (2009) developed a theoretical essay on the value of using film to engage the "Net Generation" (Berk, 2009, p. 14). He suggests a framework for incorporating film clips and other multimedia into the classroom as a means to draw on various learning styles and multiple intelligences. Auerbach (2012) suggests that mixing methodologies to incorporate video offers an interactive approach to classroom content proffering film use in

energizing a learning situation. Smith, Cavanaugh, and Moore (2011) created experimental conditions using multimedia used in conjunction with live teaching using student engagement questionnaires that examined study times and self-directed learning between experimental and control groups. While there was no significant difference in attitudes toward the method of instruction, students in the multimedia groups reported studying more and suggested that the videos facilitated information processing thereby enhancing student self-efficacy. That sense of anticipation fosters more positive attitudes about course content.

As faculty members are able to increase student engagement and motivation, students' attitudes toward content and learning become much more positive. Using film in class becomes a catalyst to decreasing students' anxiety and tension about tougher subjects like diversity (Barkley, 2009). To promote learning, educators should identify components of instruction that increase learning motivation, allowing students to be provoked to pursue and use knowledge and skills (Butler, et al., 2009). Skills development is a final domain in Bloom's taxonomy. It involves application of knowledge to promote hands-on learning.

### **Psychomotor Skills as Disciplinary Application**

The psychomotor domain traditionally entails behavioral skills development. Similarly hierarchical, psychomotor skills involve imitation, manipulation, precision, articulation, and naturalization—often centered on physical activity. Involvement in sports, doing scientific experiments, making group or individual presentations, and role-play are often considered in the affective domain (Rupani & Bhutto, 2011). As the concept of psychomotor skills relates to skills development, this section will review how film is used instructionally to help students build specific skills within varied disciplines.

Film has grown in its popularity for classroom use, and while not all university educators have embraced movie pedagogy, some faculty members argue that it has revolutionized classroom teaching in disciplines such as theology, nursing, medicine, psychology, teacher education, economics, recreation and sport, business education, and social work (Ragains, 2013). A newer field addressing sustainability and social conscience through film is emergent (Clemens & Hamakawa, 2010). Specialists in these fields share the above outlined benefits of integrating film into course content, but there are varied reasons why film has been beneficial in specific, disciplinary ways.

One such manner that film integrates with discipline specific teaching is in providing outside of textbook learning for fields where human interaction is necessary. Theology educators use film as a way of broadening students' understanding of the connection of theological studies to other areas of life, and in doing so, making those who practice ministry more well rounded and grounded with the laity (Mercadante, 2007; Snyder, 2007). In allied health careers like nursing and medical education, moving pictures allow for a humanistic approach to experiential learning where characters can represent real-life patients for situational learning (Herrman, 2006). Additionally, medical students can learn professionalism as they study film representations; Lumlertgul, Kijpaisalratana, Pityaratstian, and Wangsaturaka (2009) used film to teach students in medical education courses about the ethics of care, gaining informed consent, and moral and critical thinking.

There have been similar benefits found when social work educators use film scenes as case studies (Liles, 2007). In his theoretical essay, Liles (2007) highlights the effective use of film in social work education as it prepares students for real-world application in addition to its affective benefit for student engagement and discussion. He contends that film can be used as a

method to evaluate specific characters (patients with mental health diagnoses, the indigent, families in crisis) and how to potentially work with them, and to consider how social work is represented as a profession. He also highlights how film can be used as a therapeutic tool itself in work with real clients.

In addition to the human touch, some fields use film as a way of extending theory into practice. University business educators not only make use of film, but they also integrate television clips, animations, and other increasingly popular media to illustrate the full spectrum of business-related topics (Smith, 2009). Some teachers even have gone to the extent of using film as the primary instructional strategy, effectively eliminating student textbooks (Leet & Houser, 2003). In economics, educators have been able to use film to exemplify how economics is “relevant to virtually every aspect of their everyday lives” (Sexton, 2006, p. 417). Parker (2009) extends this idea of the usefulness of film in illustrating concepts such as ethics, product placement, team leadership, and human resource management. The idea of film connecting to the everyday lived experience of students has been shown to be valuable in multiple fields, particularly with how students learn about diversity and multicultural and self-awareness.

### **Film Effects on Identity Beliefs**

Both teachers and learners bring unique experiences and outlooks to the classroom experience. They each bring to bear experiences related that have been shaped by heritage and worldview, through cultural underpinnings that have been developed through the intersections of multiple identity dimensions.

Loes, Pascarella, and Umbach (2012) reported on a longitudinal study of over 4000 undergraduate students from nineteen universities. They examined what they called “diversity experiences” that students had participated in during their pre-college and collegiate years.

Classroom interactions with diverse others fit within that model of diversity experiences. A person's cultural identities may be influenced by Hollywood images. As an example, Gomillion and Giuliano (2011) examines the role film plays in the development of a person's identity. In their study, they surveyed one hundred twenty-six gay individuals (ages 18-64) to examine the role of film and television media representations on their self-identification as homosexual. Findings indicated that the (mis) representations and/or lack of visibility of gay characters or themes in film had an effect on how they felt about themselves in relation to sexual orientation identity. The correlation between SDO ideology and beliefs in the "normalcy" of heterosexuality is a worthy consideration (Johnson, 2012).

### **Film Effects on Attitudes and Beliefs**

Fehim-Kennedy, et al [2011] articulates the value of using film within a framework of critical teaching pedagogy. They outline the power of film in the classroom as a method for student enjoyment, but also in redeveloping student interest in important social issues. Their argument is based on the idea that film can be useful to "create political consciousness and social awareness" (Fehim Kennedy, et al., 2011, p. 3) among students. This study took place among freshmen students taking introductory social science general education courses at a private university in Turkey. These courses covered content related to race, gender, socioeconomic class, and inequalities. The study was conducted in two stages: inquiry and survey. The inquiry stage required 545 students to write essays after viewing one of three films that were chosen because the themes of the films mirrored issues within the Turkish society. The researchers wanted to observe through the student essays whether there was an effect on students' critical consciousness.

Analysis of the student papers revealed high student interest in the course material and their responses were more critical. To test the effectiveness of using film as a teaching method, the researchers developed a fourteen-item survey that was given to one hundred twelve students who participated in the first stage. The survey questions asked students to rate their opinions with regard to the extent that the films helped them learn about diversity issues and whether films were a complement to other instructional strategies. As expected, students favored watching films more than reading the textbooks and a large percentage of students indicated the films were “necessary” (Fehim Kennedy, et al., 2011, p. 7) to understand the content and themes of the course.

Studies have confirmed that media play a role in the development of political ideologies. Mulligan and Habel (2011) sought to identify whether fictional films affect viewers’ attitudes about the issue of the legality and morality of abortion. The treatment group viewed the 1999 film *Cider House Rules*, a film that frames the abortion issue through the lens of a person whose pregnancy was the result of incest. The film’s central theme presents a pro-choice message consistent with a political communication frame. In addition to the viewers’ attitudes regarding abortion, the researchers also wanted to see the effect of the film on the issue of morality (defined as following one’s conscience rather than following a code of conduct). Researchers found that those who watched the film were more likely to agree with the moral message of the film as well as expressing a more pro-choice attitude for abortion in the context of the film. Contrary to their initial expectations, the film did not appear to change attitudes about the issue of abortion outside of the context of the film. This study suggests that fictional film can play a role in the development of students’ attitudes about provocative subjects.

Mulligan and Habel (2012) extend previous research on testing the effects of feature films on the political attitudes and beliefs of viewers. In their previous study in 2011, they offer evidence that fictional media have an effect upon political attitudes. In this study, they examine whether the film *Wag the Dog* impacts viewers' trust in the American government. This study is informed by Butler, Koopman, and Zimbardo's (1995) work that tested whether the conspiracy theories surrounding President Kennedy's assassination in Oliver Stone's *JFK* affected viewers' political attitudes. Consistent with the literature on fictional media, Mulligan and Habel (2012) postulate that viewers are willing to suspend disbelief of when the viewers/readers have perceptions of realism and connection to the film or book. The researchers question whether that realism is influenced by the familiarity of the setting of the film. They postulate that fiction is less influential when the setting is "close to home" (Mulligan & Habel, 2012, p. 6). This researcher questions whether films watched in a classroom setting have a similar effect. Will viewers who watch a fictional film suspend disbelief because the film is shown for educational purposes? Does that boost it's the perception of realism?

Mulligan and Habel (2012) offered course credit to 191 undergraduate students in an introductory course in U.S. politics at a mid-sized Midwestern university. Participants were randomly assigned to a control and treatment group. Both groups were shown the same five slides giving matching details of the action of the film; the treatment group would also watch the film. In the film *Wag the Dog*, the president of the United States couples with a Hollywood producer to stage a fake war to cover up a scandal involving an illicit sexual affair just prior to his reelection bid. After being shown the five slides, participants answered two questions on the likelihood that the real president would stage a fake war and whether they believed that a fake war had actually been staged in the past. Results showed that those who deemed the film more

realistic were more likely to be affected by the content—they were significantly more likely to believe that a fake war was possible and had already occurred. Mulligan and Habel (2012) underscore the role of fictional narratives on affecting consumers' attitudes and beliefs and supports the need to understand film's potential impact upon social dominance orientation.

In an experimental field study, Butler, et al (1995) question the extent to which watching the controversial film *JFK* influenced audience emotions, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. As expected, the politically controversial film aroused feelings of anger and changed respondents' beliefs toward accepting the conspiracy theories. While post-viewing results indicated increased mood, beliefs, and judgments, the surveys indicate that these changes did not carry over into the general, real-life attitudes toward politics in general. On the measure related to intended behaviors, respondents reported a significant post-viewing intent to vote or make political contributions. One positive effect was that viewers suggested an increased intent to strengthen their commitment to become more informed about matters of government.

The implications of our findings that emotions, beliefs, and behavioral intentions can be significantly influenced by a movie such as *JFK* should strongly underscore concern that the media, even the cinema where fiction and fact may be unabashedly indistinguishable, is a powerful tool both for education and for misinformation.” (p. 255)

In their study on the impact of watching a prime-time television docudrama on nuclear war, Feldman and Sigelman (1985) found that watching a television film had minimal effects on the attitudes of viewers. In November 1983, the ABC network aired *The Day After*, which depicts life following a nuclear attack on America. According to the authors, the film caused a public uproar in print and television media. Their study sought to understand the effects of watching this film, particularly related to how it might shed new light on the political impact of



prime-time television. Consistent with other studies of this nature, measures regarding perceived realism were included (realism was found to have little bearing on results except for in the area dealing with military spending). The authors indicate that the tremendous media coverage of the film may have poisoned the participants as their findings indicate that much of the *total* impact of the film resulted more from the media attention than from viewing the film itself. While the article did not list the demographics of the participants, the researchers indicated that education seemed to be the most intervening variable; less educated viewers expressed more worry about nuclear war and about the defense spending strategies of then-President Ronald Reagan.

Similar to Feldman and Sigelman (1985) and Butler, Koopman, and Zimbardo (1995), Lenart and McGraw (1989) sought to understand the impact of television docudramas upon political attitudes. These authors contend that in the late eighties and early nineties, there was a conservative shift of attitudes in favor of America or America's military prowess and a decline in favorable attitudes toward Russians. Similar to Feldman and Sigelman (1985), media coverage of the film's content appeared to be an intervening variable and was more likely to influence participants' changes in attitudes. These findings are interesting given the fact that films are fictional in nature.

### **Fictional Sources Attitude Change**

The use of fictional sources (film, literature, television, etc.) in the classroom has been shown to be valuable as a method to support learning of course content (Marsh, Meade, & Roediger, 2003). There is a need, however, to assess whether fictional sources promote learning misinformation. Studies suggest the factors affecting learning from fictional sources include the learner's age (younger students tend to learn from fictional sources), prior knowledge (what learners bring to the text does not "protect" (Marsh, Meade, & Roediger, 2003, p. 458) them

from misinformation present in the fictional source), and need for cognition (determined by individuals who preference higher order, more complex problems—these students tend to be more likely to distrust fictional sources). They also considered how time and repetition affected learning. Consistent with the literature on learning, these authors follow the pattern of short-term interventions (single, brief exposure) on the long and short-term effects on learning. Marsh, et al [2012] suggest that because films are “rich in visual and auditory information” (Marsh, et al., 2012 p. 463); students tend to be able to recall information from films more easily than traditional texts.

Gerrig and Prentice (1991) sought to understand whether information from fictional narratives like those in movies and books are integrated into consumers’ real-life knowledge base. Results showed that fictional information sometimes “creates inappropriate states of the world” (Gerrig & Prentice, 1991, p. 338) that do not necessarily become embedded into long-term memory in the same way as factual information.

Busselle and Bilandzic (2008) provide a theoretical framework that attempts to explain the effect of perceptions of “unrealness” in the critical engagement of learners dealing with fictional sources, particularly upon transportation and identification with central characters. They explain a process by which transportation is interpreted by a loss of self and the real world. According to their mental model, transportation and engagement with narrative happens regardless of medium (print, television, film). Like Marsh, et al (2012), Busselle and Bilandzic (2008) postulate that in order to be transported, individuals must be willing to suspend disbelief in the fictionality of a text. Their contention is that “texts are approached with initial credulity and not with incredulity, unless otherwise prompted” (Busselle and Bilandzic, 2008, p. 265). Viewers of film texts or readers of printed texts must distinguish between external realism

judgments (defined as the decision where what is fictional approaches real world) or relative realism where audiences accept even unlikely narrative circumstances that are not within their sense of reality by judging the relative plausibility as consistent with what *could be*. Regarding transportation, Busselle and Bilandzic (2008) recognize viewers' predispositions and preferences toward genre, authors, actors, or moods may interrupt audience engagement with the text.

Green, Garst, and Brock (2004) support the notion that fictional literature and film sources can influence viewers' attitudes. The authors provide a theoretical framework that attempts to explain two potential mechanisms that undergird fictional communication: low elaborative scrutiny and high experienced transportation. Low elaborative scrutiny suggests that consumers of fictional materials are less likely to critically think about or scrutinize fictional content than non-fictional. Similarly, individuals who are highly transported into a fiction narrative are those who read the content as having high personal relevance. Their review suggests that individuals are willing to "alter their real-world beliefs" (Green, Garst, & Brock, 2004, p.173) in response to fictional narratives, particularly those that engage the reader/viewer through cognitive, emotional, and mental pathways. Films in the drama genre tend to use these techniques to engage the reader, so it stands to reason that dramatic films could potentially impact a person's social dominance orientation.

In their essay examining the psychological processes affecting a narrative's impact, Gerring and Rapp (2004) question the extent to which an individual reader's transportation into a narrative world is able to change the person's attitudes and beliefs. Consistent with other literature on transportation, they suggest that those who report greater transportation experience deeper impact on their attitudes or beliefs. This is reported to be an outcome of "willing construction of disbelief" (Gerring & Rapp, 2004, p. 267) where readers suspend their

knowledge that the text is a work of fiction so as not to minimize their narrative experience. To measure transportation effect, the researchers used the transportation scale measure of Green and Brock (2000) that examined whether respondents could picture the events of the narrative actually happening or could see themselves within the narrative situation. To better understand the effects of watching film on social dominance orientation, examining the role of transportation into narrative worlds is necessary.

### **Transportation Effects**

Absorption into a narrative world is described as the processes by which a reader or viewer is “transported” emotionally and cognitively into a fictional narrative text or film. Transportation is attributed to the manner whereby narratives can affect beliefs. It is also described as absorption and may be the mechanism that dictates viewers’ enjoyment of a film or text. This transportation causes deeper connections with characters, makes storylines believable, and is the conduit through which narratives shape beliefs and attitudes.

Green and Brock’s (2000) seminal article describes four different experiments examining the functions of transportation into literary texts; these experiments specifically addressed how transportation affected connection and identification with story characters. Green and Brock (2000) developed a transportation scale (eleven general items, four text specific items) with a seven-point Likert scale. The general items assessed the degree to which respondents agreed with statements such as: “While I was reading the narrative, I could easily picture the events in it taking place” or “I could picture myself in the scene of the events described in the narrative,” or “The events in the narrative are relevant to my everyday life.” One experiment revealed “narrative based belief change” (Green & Brock, 2000, p. 717) does affect character evaluations and general beliefs.

According to Green, Brock, and Kaufmann (2004), transportation is a “distinct mental process, an integrative melding of attention, imagery, and feelings” (Green, Brock, & Kaufmann, 2004, p. 312). They indicate that film, more than literary texts, is particularly effective for transportation because viewers are more likely to respond to the visual imagery. These authors suggest that transportation is a “desired state” (Green, Brock, & Kaufmann, 2004, p. 314) when consuming movies and is essential for enjoyment. Feature films are often able to pull people in through appeals to emotionality—this is particularly true of dramatic films. Green, et al (2004) indicate that there are numerous influences affecting enjoyment: how well crafted and detailed the narrative, situational factors such as whether there are distractions in the theater, and plausibility of the action.

### **Entertainment-Education and Transportation**

As entertainment media have become more popular in educational settings as tools for classroom instruction on various topics, it is important to examine how messaging within these programs impacts viewers to promote social change. The intentional inclusion of pro-social messages in entertainment media has been called entertainment-education. This section will explore the literature on the relationships between entertainment-education and transportation into narrative worlds.

Singhal and Rogers (2002) explain the theoretical underpinnings of the use of educational messaging in entertainment media. These messages (which can be simply a few lines of dialogue, entire episodes, or larger story arcs) are intentionally placed into media programming to promote social or behavioral change; the study of entertainment-education allows researchers to understand media outlets, like television programming, as agents of cultural/educational persuasion and as sheer entertainment.

Slater and Rouner (2002) explain the effectiveness of entertainment-education sources as an influence of personal beliefs and attitudes, but stipulates that these effects are limited by “the individual’s readiness to change” (Slater & Rouner, 2002, p. 174). They argue that the elaboration likelihood model of persuasion that seeks to understand how people process persuasive messaging enhances this change. Slater and Rouner (2002) apply this theory to “message movies” (Slater & Rouner, 2002, p. 176), or those films that intentionally try to persuade audiences to feel certain attitudes or emotions. They postulate that in order for the ELM to work, viewers must experience absorption (being transported into the narrative), and thereby be willing to suspend disbelief in the fictional nature of the medium. This level of engagement with a film narrative results in increased cognition and affective responses. Slater and Rouner (2002) cite the transportation studies of Green and Brock (2000) as essential to understanding the interrelation between ELM and entertainment-education.

Moyer-Guse (2008) extends the arguments made by Slater and Rouner (2002) that absorption and transportation into narrative worlds are an important factor in the effectiveness of entertainment-education as a mechanism for promoting pro-social change among media consumers. Reviewing various literature on entertainment-education and transportation, Moyer-Guse (2008) advances a theoretical model that distinguishes between entertainment-education messages and those deemed “overly persuasive” (Moyer-Guse, 2008, p. 409), such as public service announcements that are more readily dismissed by viewers as “preachy.” The model suggests seven different areas that must be attended to reduce resistance to the messaging, including parasocial interaction, identification with characters, and enjoyment of the narrative. As audiences connect more to the characters or to the story, they are more likely to accept the messaging within entertainment-education because it is contextualized within the narrative.

Moyer-Guse (2008) concludes with an invitation for researchers to empirically scrutinize this model as a means to understanding the functions of entertainment-education.

Extending the connections between transportation (Green & Brock, 2000) and entertainment-education, Murphy, Frank, Moran, and Patnoe-Woodley (2011) examined the interactions between character involvement, narrative involvement, and emotional connection to the narrative. Findings suggested that those who experienced high levels of transportation within the narrative were more likely to experience change in relevant knowledge, behaviors, and attitudes; these results are consistent with earlier studies of the efficacy of entertainment-education messaging (Slater & Rouner, 2002; Moyer-Guse, 2008).

### **Social Dominance Theory**

Within human societies, there exists a propensity to organize within affinity groups that are centered on common belief systems or values (Connelly & Kelloway, 2003). Yet, regardless of this preference for communal living, groups tend to develop social hierarchies whereby one group benefits from social status while others are subordinated through various mechanisms (Pratto, Sidanius, & Levin, 2006). These benefits for socially predominant groups (access to education, housing, health care, legal protections) are at odds with the opposite effects given to community members in targeted minority groups. This dominant position manifests as systematic attitudes and actions of prejudice, superiority, and self-righteousness of one group in relation to a target group (Lockhart & Shaw, n.d.).

Kteily, Sidanius, and Levin (2011) attempt to delineate whether a person's SDO is a cause or an effect of prejudicial attitudes toward ethnic "others." They contend that most research on SDO has been limited by being studied in short-term experiments so they established a longitudinal study following undergraduate students at UCLA from their freshmen year

through the senior year of study. Of the original 748 white students in the freshmen study, two hundred sixty-eight participants completed the senior year study. Participants completed several measures: the SDO scale and measures of intergroup prejudice and discrimination (one focused on positive feelings toward Latinos, Asians, and Blacks; the second asked about the friendships with persons of a racial out-group). Kelly, et al., (2011) hypothesized that Whites SDO levels would serve as a cause of prejudice than being situational and contextualized, as previous research has suggested. Their hypothesis was confirmed, as over time the students' SDO levels and opinions toward out-groups had not changed much over the four-year space of time.

Persons from cultural majority groups often struggle when confronted by the notion that they belong to identity groups that maintain systems of power and how those dimensions grant them a dominant social status. Their predominant status also allows for portions of their own identities to go unexamined which often hinders their ability to interact with disempowered minority groups. They have difficulty engaging with the systemic, institutional nature of racial, sexual, religious, national, linguistic, and ethnic predominance—how they work in society and at the individual level—and the Intersectionality of the constructs (Dru, 2006).

Pratto and Stewart (2012) questioned how dominant groups seemed to be unaware of their own place of privilege in contrast to those in subordinate groups. They acknowledged that minorities had more awareness of social status as members of an affinity group while those in dominant positions were able to recognize subordinate group status (and associated stereotypes) but identified their status simply as *normal*. They were also concerned with the cultural norms that directed attention away from dominant group status and privilege, a sort of bait and switch that normalizes and hides the hierarchies related to race, gender, and sexual orientation. This



blindness inhibits dominants from seeing their superiority as privilege and makes dominant group status less salient.

Pratto and Stewart (2012) surveyed undergraduate students from private and public, elite and non-elite colleges in California and in New England. They included measures to test SDO, perceived social status, in-group salience (strength of self identity), and in-group affiliation (strength of group identity). Across all tests and group identities (race, sex, sexual orientation), group membership was more salient for members of subordinated groups: Blacks and Latinos were more aware than Whites; women held more awareness than men; LGBT participants were more aware of sexual orientation than heterosexuals. Similarly, dominant individuals held higher levels of social dominance orientation. In sum, according to Pratto and Stewart (2012), those with dominant group identities were largely unaware of their superior positions while group identity and status are salient matters for members of subordinate groups.

Kahn, Ho, Sidanius, and Pratto (2009) examined the degree of perceived status differences among first year and upperclassmen undergraduate students as they relate to perceptions of fairness in society. The researchers wanted to examine perceptions of racial/ethnic hierarchy to see if they were consistent with social dominance literature in students' beliefs in the superior status of Whites and the lower status of racial minorities. Their study considered how racial group status, SDO, and beliefs in societal fairness relate to the perceived status difference of undergraduate students. Following Sidanius and Pratto (1999), they expected that those in lower status groups would perceive a greater degree of separation between high and low groups. Their study involved two separate samples at UCLA: 500 first year students and well over 600 participants of mixed class years (freshmen through seniors).

To understand the nature of social hierarchies is to explore and explicate the structures of predominance to better understand how cultural minorities experience American society. Social dominance theory (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999) was developed to understand the mechanisms and processes by which these social hierarchies are formed and supported. According to Pratto, et al (2006), social dominance theory is to be understood at multiple levels of analysis “including cultural ideologies and policies, institutional practices, relations of individuals to others inside and outside their groups, the psychological predispositions of individuals, and the interaction between the evolved psychologies of men and women” (Pratto, et al., 2006, p. 272).

### **Trimorphic Structure**

Social dominance theory has revealed how group dominance manifests in most societies within one of three distinct systems related to 1) age where adults have status and power over children; 2) gender where males tends to have unequal social, economic, political, or military power over women; and, 3) a culturally contextual arbitrary set system that gives preference in dimensions such as race, nationality, religion, ethnicity, socioeconomic class, and/or sexual orientation. Age, gender, and arbitrary-set dimensions in human societies have been described as universal across global societies, each differing in degrees and variations across culture and over time. An example might be the definition of what constitutes “adulthood” in one country versus another.

While the three structures appear to be universalized, there are critical distinctions among these systems, specifically related to flexibility, level of violence, and focus (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). The example above regarding age of childhood or adulthood is an example of how the age system can be flexible while the delineation between male and female is an example of flexibility within the gender system. Within the arbitrary set system, social dimensions appear to

have more malleable properties depending upon context and time (Sidanius & Veniegas, 2000). There is also recognition of the role that violence has played in the development of social hierarchies. This violence, according to Pratto, et al (2006) is heaviest within arbitrary set systems than age or gender systems. Relatedly, the violence tends to be focused on the maintenance of male dominance of other males within arbitrary set conditions.

Male violence and discrimination are seen as primary targets of social dominance theory. Men tend to perpetrate interpersonal violence (McCarry, 2010) and intergroup violence (Pratto & Stewart, 2011) more than women. Similarly, men are the greatest perpetrators of violence through criminal activity and military campaigns. Acts of group discrimination tend to be more directed at males as well. Sidanius and Pratto (1999) argue that the evidence that suggests that males are more often targeted by other males within arbitrary set systems across several areas including criminal justice and housing. This “subordinate male target hypothesis” (SMTH) suggests that discrimination experienced by men with non-dominant co-identities is more significant than the same discriminations faced by women in the same target identity groups (Veenstra, 2013).

Interested in understanding the intersections of gender, race, sexual orientation, education and income with the subordinate male target hypothesis, Veenstra (2013) conducted telephone interviews with over 1300 Canadian women and men over the age of nineteen. They questioned how gender mediated the self-reported experiences of routine or chronic discrimination. The results agreed with the SMTH in that men with lower education experienced more chronic and routine discrimination than less-educated women; similar results occurred for men from lower income brackets. Contrary to expectations, gender and sexual orientation showed no significant predictive relationship to SMTH.

Reviewing much of the empirical work on social dominance theory, specifically related to the subordinate male target hypothesis, Purdie-Vaughns and Eibach (2008) develop the notion that those men who come from multiple subordinate group identities are not only likely to experience more discrimination in society, the intersections of their subordinate identities will render them “invisible.” They acknowledge that socially dominant behaviors are more common from dominant identities over those males with suppressed identities. As such, they theoretically expect that ethnic minority males are much more likely to experience discrimination more than their female counterparts. Their model of intersectional invisibility explains that men with multiple subordinate identities are “non-prototypical members” (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008, p. 380) of a social group and therefore should experience both advantages and disadvantages as ascribed to their dominant and subordinate statuses.

Confirming the literature on the subordinate male target hypothesis, Navarette, McDonald, Milina, and Sidanius (2010) examined the gendered nature of intergroup bias and prejudice. They postulated that interethnic aggression would be higher among white males toward non-white target males significantly more than female-female aggression; this argument is consistent across social dominance literature that male dominance is a heavily supported societal ideal.

Lee, Pratto, and Johnson (2011) synthesized social dominance research for nearly thirty years to examine the differences between genders and racial/ethnic groups in their support of group-based hierarchies. Their meta-analysis confirmed much of what is known about social dominance in that men invariably have higher support for group hierarchy and that women and racial minorities tend to possess lower SDO and express opposition to group status hierarchy.

## **Social Hierarchy Mechanisms**

The development of social hierarchies “works” because individuals and groups operate under certain societal, shared ideologies. These myths shape public and personal consciousness about subordinate or superordinate groups and are traditionally maintained in values, beliefs, stereotypes, and cultural norms. Social dominance theory highlights two types of myths in operation in group-based inequity: hierarchy enhancing and hierarchy attenuating myths.

The enhancing myths offer rationalization of beliefs that support oppression and inequality such as racism and sexism. The general argument is that inequality is fair and a “natural” dimension of society. These ideologies sustain dominance at the personal, interpersonal, and group levels. Not only do majority-identified persons willingly benefit from these myths, those in subordinate groups who share these ideals collaborate with those in majority groups to maintain oppression and inequality.

In contrast, hierarchy-attenuating myths offer support for equality and preference for more universal and human rights. Educational systems like universities tend to be attenuating institutions (Pratto, et al., 2006). Attenuating myths are in stark opposition to the beliefs consistent with hierarchy enhancing myths. Social dominance theory assumes that members of predominant groups will exhibit great support for enhancing mythologies more than those in targeted groups who give more credence to attenuating myths. Sidanius & Pratto (1999) established, however, that regardless of position, there is often more consensus for legitimizing myths across superordinate and subordinate groups. Again, this shared consensus is what produces and maintains hierarchical supports.

Legitimizing myths play a great deal in the development and support of individual discriminatory behaviors. Non-target groups often provide benefits to others within similar social

strata. For instance, with regard to employment, super-ordinates have the ability to offer jobs to others within their affinity group while the poor and disenfranchised remain unemployed. These individual acts when aggregated over time, they provide a basis for inequality on a grand scale that is biased against those in target groups. The allocation of resources and power then falls to those in dominant positions or groups thereby giving them a more positive social value. This is not to say that all individuals in higher social or cultural classes believe and/or act in concert with hierarchy enhancing mythology, nor does this mean their attitudes are predetermined. The difference is most often contextual rather than randomly assigned; this has more to do with a person's social dominance orientation toward hierarchal group status preference.

In American culture, assimilation, multiculturalism, and colorblindness serve as “acculturation ideologies” (Levin, Matthews, Guimond, Sidanius, Pratto, Kteily, Pitpitan, & Dover, 2012) that serve as methods to invite ethnic others into mainstream society. Levin, et al., (2012) asserts that assimilation is a hierarchy-enhancing ideology that serves as a mediating factor when examining the relationship between SDO and prejudice.

Analysis showed that assimilation indeed was a hierarchy-enhancing ideology; students who highly supported assimilation (the idea that foreigners and other ethnics become “like” the dominant group) were positively associated with social dominance and prejudice. The higher the SDO score, the more endorsement of prejudicial attitudes toward subordinate groups. Results showed also that multiculturalism and colorblindness served as hierarchy-attenuating values and were associated with less prejudicial attitudes and lower SDO scores. According to the authors, “This implies that high SDO Whites may be willing to let go of group prejudices as a hierarchy-enhancing strategy when they think people care more about their identities as individuals than as members of blended national group” (Levin, et al., 2012, p. 212).

Ramasubramanian (2010) examines the role of television portrayals as endorsing hierarchy enhancing or hierarchy attenuating legitimizing myths, specifically whether the stereotypes of Latinos and Blacks as lazy and prone to criminal behavior. Ramasubramanian (2010) examines how televised portrayals of African Americans and Latinos affect White viewers—particularly how these characterizations influence real-life attitudes and beliefs and whether these changes in attitude affect viewers’ support for race-targeted policies, such as affirmative action. 323 undergraduates enrolled in a communications course completed a series of test measures about their perceptions of racial groups, their belief in stereotypes, attitudes of prejudice, and support for affirmative action programs.

To examine the perceived stereotypes of racial groups on television, participants were asked to reflect on their level of agreement with the common images depicted. Regarding depictions of minorities, two themes emerged: (a) perceived criminality and (b) laziness. They also completed a measure to examine their endorsement of real life stereotypes. The same themes of lazy criminals emerged. Regarding their own prejudicial feelings, respondents indicated their agreement with generalized statements about minority groups; racial prejudice, then, was measured regarding sentiments of ingroup superiority. In general, prejudicial feelings and toward minorities correlated with acceptance of televised minority characterizations as authentic. There was a lack of support for affirmative action programs regardless of priming for specific outgroups. What role does television (or film) characterization or themes play in hierarchy enhancing or attenuating ideology? Ramasubramanian (2010) argues that the “findings from this study strengthen the existing attitudinal literature that suggests that emotions are a greater predictor of behavioral intentions than are beliefs” (Ramasubramanian, 2010, p. 116).

Thomsen, Green, and Sidanius (2008) compare right wing authoritarianism (RWA) and social dominance orientation (SDO) in terms of individual differences related to how individuals respond to primes for ethnic persecution for immigrants. As in previous research, SDO and RWA were shown to have similar compliments, with subtle differences. The authors explain the differences as “hypotheses”: RWA operates from the “in-group conformity hypothesis” (Thomsen, Green, & Sidanius, 2008, p. 1457), which is described as animosity aimed at immigrants who refuse to assimilate to dominant host culture. SDO is associated with the “status boundary hypothesis” (Thomsen, Green, & Sidanius, 2008, p. 1457) described as animosity toward an immigrant who *is* willing to assimilate, but that assimilation is seen as threatening to dominant group superiority.

Morrison and Ybarra (2008) investigates the correlation between perceived threats to dominant group status and depth of group identification on social dominance orientation. Sidanius and Veniegas (2000) described how SDO is situational and contextual. In this study, population had perceived the presence of such a large minority population as a threat. In study one, white students’ perceptions of threat from Asian Americans were correlated with their racial group identification, and social dominance orientation. Forty-nine students and staff (all White) completed several surveys related to realistic threat (from minority out-groups), racial identification (degree of identification with racial category), and the SDO scale. Analysis of the data showed that among those who were highly identified with their racial group, perceived threat highly related to increased SDO. In the second study, fifty-two students and staff (all non-Asian American) were randomly separated into an experimental and a control group.

Consistently, DeOliveira, Guimond, and Dambrun (2012) were concerned with the function of social position as a predictor of a person’s social dominance orientation. (Might class



rank equate to social position?) They conducted two separate studies to ascertain whether social position was related to position power within a normative context. In other words, in what ways does the environment (hierarchy attenuating or hierarchy enhancing) played a role in whether those in dominant positions generated and supported negative attitudes toward subordinates. Similarly, those who held dominant positions and perceived an HE environment that favored inequality were more likely to support inequity.

### **Collaborative Support for Social Hierarchy**

While the idea of social hierarchies benefit those in superior positions or groups, it is important to understand that there appears to be collusion between dominants and subordinate individuals and groups in the establishment and continuation of dominance. This “behavioral asymmetry” (Pratto, et al., 2006) preferences dominant groups, at times, with the approval of the subordinate groups. There are three primary types of asymmetry: asymmetrical in-group bias, self-debilitation, and ideological asymmetry.

Asymmetrical in-group bias occurs when dominants display more in-group favoritism. This asymmetry is encouraged by people’s affirmation of the legitimizing myths. If a social system is considered legitimate, dominant groups tend to display a higher degree of favor to like kind members than to subordinates. Sidanius & Pratto (1999) studied American adults’ beliefs in the egalitarian nature of American society. Whites (dominants) showed higher levels of ethnic preference than those in targeted racial minority groups. In contrast, when respondents were primed with the value of American being unjust and unequal, members of minority groups exhibited higher levels of ethnic favoritism. When members of subordinate groups develop behaviors that can be deemed self-destructive, they contribute to their own self-debilitation.

The pervasiveness of attitudes in support of social hierarchies and the consistency of the legitimizing myths prevail, even in the arbitrary set system dimensions such as race and ethnicity, nationality, and religion. These topics are the most consistent in the literature about social dominance orientation. Yet, similarly, socioeconomic class and sexual orientation are culturally contextual in the development of rules and the manifestations of values—the standards of desirability and goodness. The following sections outline pertinent literature on the intersections of SDO and sexual orientation and socioeconomic class.

### **Social Dominance in the Classroom**

Teaching faculty are expected to develop the curricula that prepares students to understand social forces, personal relations, methods to change society and embrace social justice, and strategies for social controls, and to mitigate inequalities and social stratification. Subsequently, undergraduate cultural studies—where students learn how culture creates and transforms individual experiences, everyday life, social relations and power—are essential to this academic preparation. Examinations of social dominance in the classroom in recent literature has focused primarily on how dominance appears in terms of student behavior and attitude and in the impacts of teaching and learning about social dominance through a social justice framework.

Osei-Kofi, Patton, Shahjahan, and Patton (2010) positions the college classroom as a central location for learning about social justice. Arguing that “there is no acceptable alternative to not doing this work” (p. 326), the researchers outline their own methods for concentrating social justice within graduate work on the study of higher education. Their theoretical model describes a series of “challenges and possibilities” related to developing programmatic changes to curricula: institutional context, forms of mobilization, resource allocation, and organizational structures. They delineate the importance of moving beyond a mere “celebration of diversity”

toward a better understanding of difference, particularly the mechanisms that bring about social change.

This type of teaching is not without its own challenges, particularly as the social dominance ideas of students are exposed in classrooms. Pittman (2010) asserts that social dominance attitudes of white male students appears as negative reaction to women of color as faculty members—challenging their authority, teaching competency, and scholarly expertise. Pittman conducted structured, in-depth interviews with seventeen female faculty of color at a midwestern university that revealed “gendered racism” (187) from white male students as a significant barrier in the classroom. In addition to the challenges above, some of these women also described subtle (and perhaps, at times, overt) threats to their personal and professional lives as white males engaged in what the faculty described as threatening or intimidating behaviors.

Analysis by Simmons and Parks-Yancy (2012) showed that students were more likely to perceive joking when the brunt of the “joke” was a member of the same race as the professor in the case scenario. For instance, those who were White and had high SDO did not perceive racism when the White professor made racial comments about White students. This was not the same for high SDO whites when the Black professor made negative racial comments toward White students; participants were offended at the notion.

Smith and Lander (2012) posit that the ethnic identity of the faculty member impacts receptiveness of social dominance content in that white students tend to support white teachers, while the motives of minority teachers are questioned. Smith and Lander (2012) echoes Pittman (2010) when they report that faculty teaching is “filtered through white eyes” (337) and the skin color of the educator shapes students’ opinions on efficacy or deficiency of the instruction.

Similarly, Reid (2010) supports the research that white student evaluations for women and racial minorities were generally more negative than white male professors. In his study, Reid (2010) examined over 3700 student evaluations at the top twenty-five liberal arts institutions on the website Ratemyprofessors.com. The website invites students to assess: overall quality of instruction; “easiness” of the instructor (Reid, 2010, p. 141); clarity and helpfulness of the instructor. Results showed that white male professors were more often rated as “best” instructors and the worst were most often black males and Asians. Interestingly, blacks and Asians were often deemed “easiest;” the researchers question whether this phenomenon is related to lower expectations of intellectual rigor—a belief consistent with social dominance literature—or if it was considered a safety mechanism for minority faculty to shield themselves from being perceived as hostile or in relation to fears associated with receiving low ratings on official course evaluations that relate to tenure and promotion.

Fuentes, Chanthongthip, and Rios (2010) assert the importance of faculty adopting social justice as a framework and pedagogical tool, particularly in the first year of college. They describe this type of teaching as essential “to help students become knowledgeable, skilled, and committed to working toward democratic aims” (Fuentes, et al., 2010, p. 357). They report on the experiences of nineteen university students and the instructor of a course on social justice. Through examination of course assignments and activities, teaching strategies and topics, classroom observations, open-ended surveys, and student and instructor interviews, Fuentes, et al., (2010) describe a model for transformative pedagogy that

includes critical multicultural education approaches with their focus on structural forces of oppression, multiple points of view, and democracy (and its contradictions) within a pedagogy aimed at an apprenticeship in democracy. It includes Freirian (1973) dialogic

perspectives that focus on problem-posing, critical analysis, and engaged action or praxis. It also includes active learning by bringing students' lived experiences into the classroom as well as 'activities, simulations, case studies, or videos in the classroom' ..." (Fuentes, et al., 2010, p. 360).

They make recommendations for general education courses in the first year experiences of college students and suggest that educators look for opportunities not just to show students the ills of societal oppression (consciousness-raising), but also mechanisms to take action toward mitigating these factors.

Fuentes, et al., (2010), Osei-Kofi, Patton, Shahjahan, & (2010), Osei-Kofi, et al., (2010) argue the value of addressing diversity issues in the classroom; their findings support the argument that students who have been taught to think critically about issues of difference are much better prepared to be global citizens in a multicultural and interconnected society (May & Sleeter, 2010). Similarly, Shaw (1998) concludes that the using film for diversity education offers faculty a chance to move students from "consciousness to empowerment, from seeing the issues as they relate to others to seeing them as they relate to their own lives" (Shaw, 1998, p. 48). The following sections will outline the value of using mainstream film media in classrooms, paying particular attention to the manners in which film can serve as a tool of diversity education. From teacher training programs to social sciences and humanities, even in recreation and sports education, film has shown to be beneficial tools for helping students examine personal biases and values (Lee, Drane, & Kane, 2009; Nugent & Shaunessy, 2003;). Film challenges students to reflect on personal values and worldviews, previous knowledge including prejudices, and possessing factual information about other groups (rather than relying on

stereotypes), and to develop tailored behavioral skills consistent with others' cultural identities (Tyler & Guth, 1999).

### **Summary**

Wheeler and Davoust (1994) argues against using video in the classroom purely for entertainment purposes. They suggest that when media is used in classes as a complement or reinforcement for class lessons, it is more effective. They preference curriculum-based videos over entertainment media, but describe a process by which teachers should choose which media is most appropriate. They suggest the importance of: having a comprehensive plan for how the media is connected to the curriculum; media that promotes problem-solving inquiry; and, a strong connection between the audio and video that holds students' interests.

Similarly, Stoddard and Marcus (2010) outline strategies to encourage teachers to incorporate film in the high school history classroom as a method of increasing student engagement and understanding of content. The authors identify a list of films that are useful in teaching historical subjects related to racial issues and stereotyping, issues related to wars and militarism, and other historical issues. They proffer that teachers must have a clear purpose for using a particular film and that they make sure that the film is consistent with course goals or learning objectives.

Stevens (2003) argues that using mainstream film in classroom teaching should not only be an exercise in college and high school classrooms, but should also be used in the middle school, especially with relation to teaching history concepts. He posits that films provide "mental 'hooks'" (Stevens, 2003, p. 65) where students can remember historical data. Like Wheeler and Davoust (1994), Stevens (2003) offers a criterion list for film selection that maximizes using the film medium in history classes, including ascertaining whether the film represents historical

events or some technological innovation, whether the film accurately conveys themes or feelings of the time period in which the film is set, whether the film follows genre conventions, and whether the film is age-appropriate and will it inspire or provoke discussion. The essay includes a list of eighteen films and details their links to film history and to US history.

Shaw (1998) describes the challenges, advantages, and strategies of using film to address diversity issues, especially dealing with stereotyping, hate crimes, and the historical period of the American Civil Rights movement. Shaw (1998) recognizes that students tend not to be well versed in having discussions about these difficult topics and introduces film as a mediator between the historical and the fictional. Shaw (1998) also introduces film to students as a mechanism for teaching visual literacy and to develop students' understandings of political messaging in the media. The article discusses film's usefulness as a method of framing difficult topics. Shaw (1998) contends that most of the canonical literature used in classrooms provokes students to "question the nature and hierarchy of the world in which they exist" (Shaw, 1998, p. 44), and using film, even adaptations of these works, increases students' needs to have a lexicon for communication about diversity in order to examine the social forces that perpetuate discrimination. Shaw (1998) explains how using film helps students visualize and enact action research projects involving historical versus fictionalized accounts, examining biographical versus media portrayals, even staged case studies for classroom discussion. Shaw (1998) concludes that the penultimate goal of using film in class for diversity education is to move students from "consciousness to empowerment, from seeing the issues as they relate to others to seeing them as they relate to their own lives" (Shaw, 1998, p. 48).

To ascertain what students actually learn from watching films in a history class, Marcus, Paxton, and Meyerson (2006) believe that students learn much from popular media—even how

to “make meaning of their lives” (Marcus, et al., 2006, p. 517), but suggest that not enough literature exists to explain what they learn. They question how students’ “ideas about history are indeed shaped ‘at the movies’” (Marcus, et al., 2006, p. 519). Researchers found that films were used for multiple purposes: as introductory “hooks” for certain topics; as a source of information (i.e., textbook information); or for visual critical examination of issues raised by textbooks. Additionally, through the student interviews, the researchers found that students did not necessarily believe that feature films were a trustworthy source of historical information in the same way that other primary source material (photographs, news articles, etc.) and documentary films were trustworthy. Interestingly though, according to the teacher interviews, students were less likely to dispute the veracity of feature films despite their lack of trust or belief.

The present study seeks to understand the impact of classroom film on students’ social dominance orientation. The following chapter outlines the methods for recruiting students and details the data collection procedures for the research project.



## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research is to evaluate the relationship between movie watching (as an intervention) and social dominance orientation (as outcome) in order to contribute to the field of media affects, liberal arts education, and classroom instruction research. This chapter (a) outlines the research questions and hypotheses, (b) describes the research design, (c) details the movie stimuli, (d) explains the sample population selection, (e) describes the data collection procedures, (f) reviews the instruments used, and (g) provides an explanation of the data analysis procedures.

As discussed earlier, the use of mainstream film for classroom instruction has gained in popularity in recent years, particularly for the teaching of diversity issues in the social sciences. Mainstream Hollywood film serves as a purveyor of American culture and ideology. This is reflected in the comments of then president and CEO of the Motion Picture Association of America, Dan Glickman, who, upon his election in 2004, underscored Hollywood's significance on a world stage, "The symbol of America is the movie industry" (Rich, 2004, p. 18). As such, film plays a significant role in how we come to understand society and ourselves. Giroux (1998) suggests that American audiences have elevated the cultural legitimacy and authority of film to levels higher than that of parents, educational institutions, and religious traditions. Barrios (2003) adds

Film, in exchange, cannot invent what doesn't already exist. It reflects, reproduces, copies, caricatures. It learns from its audiences and imparts to them, sharing with its viewers a peculiar and intense collusion. We end up experiencing much of our lives and our relationships in terms of what we've seen on the screen (Barrios, 2003, p. 2).

As an institution, Hollywood film has significant influence over American culture and the individual's understanding of the world. It is important, then, to pay attention to the prescriptive power of film as we examine the mechanisms of social dominance (Saucier, 2010). Blockbuster films are a mainstay of the American entertainment scene and seemingly have found a solid place in educational curricula, but little work has been done to understand whether popular films used in support of diversity education have any effect upon social dominance orientation.

### **Research Design**

This research experiment utilized a pretest-posttest design where participants were randomly assigned to control or treatment groups. The treatment group watched a dramatic film and completed a battery (see Appendices A-C) of scale measures. The control group watched an action-adventure film unrelated to diversity. A pretest/posttest design is appropriate as the researcher wishes to identify changes in participants' social dominance orientation following the viewing of a film. The pretest will be used to identify a baseline; posttest will be used for comparison. Treatment group results will also be compared to each other. The design will test each variable and composite score.

The treatment group watched *Do the Right Thing*, a 1989 film by Spike Lee featuring content that focuses on race/racism and/or social/economic inequality. Based on the body of literature on films used to promote discussions on diversity, one film, *Crash* (2004) emerges as the most commonly used film in college classrooms. Because of its popularity and the likelihood that participants have been exposed to the film already, that film will not be used for the present study. *Do the Right Thing* (1989) is often used as an implement in diversity education (Tyler & Guth, 1999). Consistent with the drama genre, this film contains content that is designed to produce an emotional outcome for the viewer. As an experimental study, the present research is

employing a pre-test/post-test design to measure *effects* of watching a film on viewers' social dominance orientation.

While empirical literature on film as it affects a person's beliefs and attitudes is plentiful, existing research does not examine the links between film viewing and social dominance orientation. There is also a dearth of research to assess the role of transportation into narrative worlds when students view films in a classroom environment. What role, if any, does the genre of the film watched in the classroom affect transportation and ultimately a student's social dominance orientation? These are the questions underlying the present research, and for these reasons, social dominance orientation and transportation will serve as dependent variables for this study.

### **Research Question**

The central question underlying this study is: *What are the effects of watching movies on the social dominance orientation of undergraduate students?*

The movie in this study means movies that are feature-length (running time longer than 40 minutes) moving pictures that are scripted for the entertainment of the public. Effects will be determined based on the amount of change in participants' pretest and posttest scores of measures related to social dominance orientation and transportation into narrative worlds. A person's social dominance orientation shows how that person believes and attitudes in support of racial or cultural hierarchies. A person who scores higher in SDO will be more likely to support such hierarchies. Transportation is related to being significantly engaged with a fictional narrative text or film. Those who are highly transported are more likely to be emotionally effected by the text and are more likely to connect to the action, storyline, or individual characters than those who are not absorbed. Transportation has shown to be a contributing factor

in how fictional texts like film can shape beliefs and attitudes (Green & Brock, 2000; Green, Brock, & Kaufman, 2004).

### **Hypotheses**

Busselle and Bilandzic (2008) recognizes those viewers' predispositions and preferences toward genre, authors, actors, or moods may interrupt their engagement with the text, but also contend that dramatic films engage the reader/viewer through cognitive, emotional, and mental pathways. This is consistent with Butler, Koopman, and Zimbardo (1995) who showed that viewers' political beliefs were affected by emotionally charged movies. Because of their potential emotional impact, viewers are more likely to be transported into dramatic narrative worlds: an argument supported by Green, Garst, and Brock (2004).

The present study assumes that the genre of a film will have an impact upon individuals' engagement (transportation). As dramatic films are intended by definition to draw upon real-life settings and storylines through emotional content, it can be presumed that viewers will be more easily transported into the fictional world. As transportation increases, film viewing may be more likely to impact personal beliefs and attitudes, such as social dominance orientation. Conversely, films in the action-adventure genre may not necessarily promote transportation because of the emphasis on fantastical imagery and loud special effects; as such, these films may not have as deep an affect on dominance attitudes. To that end, this study anticipates:

- H-1.1 The change in social dominance scores will be greater for those watching the *Do the Right Thing* movie (treatment group) than for the control group watching *The Avengers*.
- H-1.2 The transportation effect will be stronger for those watching the *Do the Right Thing (treatment)* movie than for the control group.

As the film *Do the Right Thing* focuses on race and racism and the tensions between ethnic groups, the film centers viewership on topics that should elicit feelings consistent with responses on the SDO scale. Cooper (1998) suggests that white and black viewers reacted strongly and oppositely to the film's content. To that end, it is expected that viewing the treatment film will cause significant change in SDO scores from pre- to -post:

- H-2.1 For the treatment group, there will be a significant difference in the change in social dominance scores based on race.
- H-2.2 For the treatment group, there will be a significant difference in the transportation effect based on race.
- H-2.3 For the treatment group, there will be a significant difference in the social dominance scores based on gender.
- H-2.4 For the treatment group, there will be a significant difference in the change in transportation scores based on gender.
- H-2.5 For the treatment group, there will be a significant difference in the social dominance scores based on class rank.
- H-2.6 For the treatment group, there will be a significant difference in the change in transportation scores based on class rank.

Fischhoff, Antonio, and Lewis (1998) found that blacks were twice as likely to favorite films in the drama genre than were whites. Whites and blacks had similar rankings for the action-adventure genre. Similarly, age and gender correlated with favorite film genre. Expectations for the transportation effect are presupposed to be similar to Fischhoff, et al., (1998):

- H-3.1 For the treatment group, there will be a significant correlation between the transportation effect and the change in social dominance.

- H-3.2 For the control group, there will be a significant correlation between the transportation effect and the change in social dominance.
- H-3.3 For African-Americans in the treatment group, there will be a significant correlation between the transportation effect and the change in social dominance.
- H-3.4 For whites in the treatment group, there will be a significant correlation between the transportation effect and the change in social dominance.
- H-3.5 For females in the treatment group, there will be a significant correlation between the transportation effect and the change in social dominance.
- H-3.6 For males in the treatment group, there will be a significant correlation between the transportation effect and the change in social dominance.

Similar to Fischhoff, et al (1998), race, gender, and age (defined here as class rank) are expected to have some correlation to transportation effect and to social dominance orientation:

- H-4.1 For African-American males in the treatment group, there will be a significant correlation between the transportation effect and the change in social dominance.
- H-4.2 For African-American females in the treatment group, there will be a significant correlation between the transportation effect and the change in social dominance.
- H-4.3 For white males in the treatment group, there will be a significant correlation between the transportation effect and the change in social dominance.
- H-4.4 For white females in the treatment group, there will be a significant correlation between the transportation effect and the change in social dominance.

### **Movie Stimulus**

This research study uses popular American film as stimulus for the experiment. Student participants will be randomly assigned to control or treatment groups. The treatment group will watch the following film:

***Do the Right Thing (1989)***

Spike Lee's third film, *Do the Right Thing*, was released in the summer of 1989. Lee wrote, produced, directed, and starred in this film. The budget for the film was \$6 million and the box office receipts exceeded \$37 million. The film has enjoyed both popular praise, and in some cases, a place in the canon of educational films addressing race and ethnic relations (Pinterits & Atkinson, 1998).

Spike Lee dives headfirst into a maelstrom of racial and social ills, using as his springboard the hottest day of the year on one block in Brooklyn, NY. The film's action centers on the exploits of the neighborhood pizza delivery guy, Mookie (Lee) who works for Sal (Danny Aiello) and his sons, who run the local Italian pizzeria in the neighborhood. When a community member threatens to organize a neighborhood boycott of Sal's restaurant because of the invisibility of a non-white person on Sal's "wall of fame," tensions ignite between the community's Black, Hispanic, Korean, and White population. Mookie is also chided by his sister and his girlfriend for not taking care of his responsibilities as a man. The heat coupled with racial tensions lead to an explosive riot when a white police officer kills a young, black male.

The majority of scholarship related to *Do the Right Thing* centers on matters of race and ethnicity. Mitchell (1991) praises the film for its depictions of the complexities of racial consciousness and at the same time challenges the film's reliance on only black-white polemics. Cooper (1998) examines the differences between reactions of black and non-black viewers. In her investigation of undergraduate students' essay responses, she identified that the film's racist

subtexts were clearly visible to black viewers, while non-black viewers justified the present racism through identification with the film's white characters, even dismissing their negative behavior in the film.

Manley (1994) argues that *Do the Right Thing* "can be used to bring alive for students the concepts of the race and ethnic relations field" (p. 135). He suggests that professors critically examine the forms of communication between dominant and subordinate groups particularly in relation to concepts of power, resource control, leadership and status, and constructions of race and race identity. Additionally, Manley (1994) suggests that the film is rife for critical thinking about racial hegemony and students' attitudes and beliefs about racial and ethnic stratification.

The control group will view *The Avengers*, a 2012 blockbuster movie falling in the superhero action-adventure fantasy genre. In this film, a team of superheroes combines their talents and forces to stop an alien invasion and save Earth from global domination. The film was selected as it was not readily identified as a "diversity" film or often used in support of diversity education.

### **Population and Sample**

Undergraduate students enrolled at Bloomsburg University (BU), a public university situated in central Pennsylvania, will serve as the sample. Participants were invited to participate by their enrollment in classes within social science departments: Anthropology, Sociology, Political Science, and Communication Studies. The courses selected include: Interpersonal Communication, Public Speaking, Gender Issues in Communication, and Small Group Communication.

These classes are chosen as they fit are all designated as "general education" courses and, as such, are able to be taken by any undergraduate student regardless of declared or intended



major. According to the academic catalog, these courses earn either general education points in “cultures and diversity” or in the social sciences areas of the general education curriculum. Because they are general education courses, the sections tend to be larger, providing convenient access to a sizeable number of potential participants.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

Following Human Subjects (IRB) protocols, the researcher obtained permission from the faculty members of the individual sections of each course to visit classes to invite students to participate in the study. Participation was voluntary—no students gained any monetary remuneration or academic credit for participation. A prize was offered as an incentive to complete all parts of the study (randomly awarded). There was no penalty for non-participation. Interested students completed an informed consent form in the classroom.

Participants were randomly assigned to either a control group or a treatment group. On the date of collection, participants met at a pre-arranged location and were randomly assigned to a treatment or control group and instructed to go to the appropriate classroom. In that location, they completed the SDO scale (pre-test) and a demographic profile. The researcher read the instructions and the title and plot summary for the film and started the films in the classrooms. Participants were instructed to turn off cell phones, to limit talking during the screening, and to stay awake and engaged. At the conclusion of the films, participants completed a posttest SDO scale and the Transportation Scale (Green & Brock, 2000). Participants who complete the study were entered into a drawing for a monetary prize of \$100.00.

Using SPSS, the researcher examined changes on the SDO scale of each participant and also made comparisons between demographic groups based on the variables of race, gender, and socioeconomic class. Participants were informed only that the study is about media effects on

audience.

### **Instruments**

1. Pre-Survey. The participants will complete a demographic profile. Demographic variables include race, gender, family income, major, grade point average, and class rank. [Appendix A].
2. Social Dominance Orientation Scale. Participants will be asked to complete a paper-based social dominance orientation scale (Sidanius & Pratto, 2003) before and immediately after the film treatment. The SDO-6 is the latest iteration of the instrument that uses a 7-point Likert scale to rate each of 16 items; participants rate their agreement or disagreement with the statements from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Statements refer to participants' feelings regarding social equality or inequality.[Appendix B]
3. Transportation Scale. To assess student interest or connection to the film treatments, the transportation scale will be used as a quality measure and will be completed during the post-test examination. The transportation scale has 11 general items, 4 text specific items) with a seven-point Likert scale. The general items assessed the degree to which respondents agreed with statements such as: "While I was viewing the film, I could easily picture the events in it taking place" or "I could picture myself in the scene of the events described in the narrative," or "The events in the narrative are relevant to my everyday life." [Appendix C]

### **Summary**

The following chapter outlines results of the data analysis procedures that include testing for individual amount of change between pretest and posttest scores as well as differences between treatment groups. Data will be analyzed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics will be presented on the social demographics of the participants including race, gender, and academic major. Independent sample t-tests will be employed to examine pre- and post- mean scores within treatment groups. A p value of .005 is sought to determine statistical significance (Reinard, 2006). One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) is the statistical method often used to code for experiment treatments such as in this study (Reinard, 2006). Additional tests of differences will include Chi square and Spearman's rho.

## CHAPTER 4

### DATA AND ANALYSIS

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to explore the effects of watching films upon the social dominance orientation of undergraduate students in a university classroom setting in order to extend the literature on teaching praxis and film pedagogy. This chapter presents the results of the study, directly addressing the research questions and hypotheses presented in Chapter 3. The results presentation begins with a reporting of participant descriptive statistics and by analyzing whether or not significant differences exist between the control and treatment groups with regard to race, gender, or class rank. The research questions proposed in this study, along with the corresponding hypotheses, were then analyzed through quantitative analysis. Differences both within groups and between groups are presented under each research question.

#### **Sample Demographics**

Study participants were recruited from among various general education courses at Bloomsburg University, a midsized public university in central Pennsylvania. A total of 86 students completed both parts of the study (pretest and posttest). There were 20 students in the control group and 66 students in the treatment group. The student demographics for each group are noted below in Table 1:

Table 1

*Sample Demographics*

<i>Race</i>	CONTROL	TREATMENT	TOTAL
White	13	47	60
Black	5	13	18
Asian	1	1	2
Latino	0	3	3
Biracial	1	2	3
<i>Total</i>	20	66	86
<i>Gender</i>			
Female	16	32	48
Male	4	33	37
Transgender	0	0	0
No Identifier	0	1	1
<i>Total</i>	20	66	86
<i>Class Rank</i>			
Freshman	4	9	13
Sophomore	4	24	28
Junior	2	22	24
Senior	10	11	21
<i>Total</i>	20	66	86

As was expected of this population, a large percentage self-identified as white. Just over half were female. Over fifty percent of the population were members of the junior or senior class; it was expected that the sample would largely be made up of freshmen and sophomores given that they were enrolled in general education classes (Quitadamo & Kurtz, 2007).

A Pearson’s Chi Square was conducted to confirm whether or not significant differences existed among the control and treatment groups for race, gender, and class rank—all nominal level data. The table below reports the results of the tests of differences for demographics of the sample population.

Table 2

*Tests of Differences for Demographics*

	Chi Square	Degrees of Freedom	Significance (p-value)
Race	2.17 <sup>a</sup>	4	.70
Gender	6.24 <sup>b</sup>	2	.04
Class Rank	11.65 <sup>c</sup>	3	.01
a. 7 cells (70% have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .47. b. 2 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .23. c. 2 cells (25%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 3.02.			

At the  $\alpha = .05$  level of significance there was, as indicated on Table 2, enough evidence to conclude there was a significant difference that existed among the control and treatment groups with regard to gender, but not race. Class rank showed a significance of .009. Therefore, any differences among the control group and treatment might be attributed to a difference in these characteristics.

Prior to movie stimulus, all participants completed a social dominance orientation scale pretest to establish a baseline for the SDO variable and to demonstrate equality among the groups. The next table presents the means and standard deviations for all participants, as a whole and within groups. The table does the breakout by race but not all possible subgroups. A comparison of the means reveals strong similarities among the treatment. Further, the means of each group is within one standard deviation of the overall mean, indicating a degree of similarity between the groups on SDO for statistical comparison.

Table 3

*Comparisons Between Means and Standard Deviations for SDO*

	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Min.	Max.	Between Component Variance
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound			
Whites	47	1.29	1.01	.15	.99	1.59	-1.85	3.00	
Blacks	13	1.56	.83	.23	1.06	2.05	.31	3.00	
Hispanic	1	-.73					-.73	-.73	
Asian	3	1.10	.61	.35	-.41	2.61	.40	1.50	
Biracial	2	.50	.97	.68	-8.23	9.23	-.18	1.18	
Total	66	1.28	.98	.12	1.04	1.52	-1.85	3.00	
Fixed Effects			.96	.11	1.04	1.52			.09
Random Effects				.25	.58	1.98			

The data from the Table 3 demonstrates that participants, as a whole, had a positive outlook on the inappropriateness of group divisions by hierarchy. Each of 16 questions on SDO ranged from 1 to 7. As half of questions contribute positively to overall SDO and half negatively - range is actually -4.0 to + 4.0, so scores are slightly above midpoint of zero. In general, participants had low social dominance attitudes.

**Research Question One**

What are the effects of film on the social dominance orientation of undergraduate students?

In the following section, analysis of the change in social dominance scores following viewing of the films, particularly the treatment film, *Do the Right Thing*. This reduction is expected given the content of the film, particularly the death of a young, black man at the hands of the police. The racist dialogue throughout the film seemed to come to a head with this young man’s murder. The dramatic conclusion of the film will produce a greater reduction for those in the treatment group because of the emotional intensity and topicality of the film compared to the

control group movie, *The Avengers* in the fantasy action/adventure genre, which has little to do with race or racism, but more about working together as a team to defeat a common enemy (in this case an alien invasion).

**H-1.1**

The change in social dominance scores will be more negative (i.e., a greater reduction in social dominance) for those watching the *Do the Right Thing* movie (treatment group) than for the control group.

Table 4

*Comparison of Change in SDO Scores Between the Control and Treatment Groups*

Group	N	Mean	Std Dev	Std Error	Levene's	t-test	Significance
Control	20	-1.05	1.65	0.37	F =11.6e p=.001	t=-3.60 df=22.57	p=.002
Treatment	66	0.34	.91				

An independent samples t-test was run between the control and the treatment group on the amount of change in pre-test to post-test social dominance scores. With a significant Levene's test for homogeneity of variances, equal variances were not assumed. As can be seen in Table 4, the control group saw a drop in social dominance scores of -1.05 compared to an increase for the treatment group of 0.34. The t-test confirmed the difference was significant at the p=.002 level. It was expected that the treatment group would have a larger decline but they increase. The control group has the larger decline, which is the reverse of what was expected—it is significant but opposite the prediction. Perhaps the emphasis on working together and teamwork in *The Avengers* affected students' attitudes.

**H-1.2**

The transportation effect will be stronger (i.e., higher transportation scores) for those watching the *Do the Right Thing* movie (treatment group) than for the control group.



The present study assumes that the genre of a film will have an impact upon individuals' engagement (transportation). As dramatic films are intended by definition to draw upon real-life settings and storylines through emotional content, it can be presumed that viewers will be more easily transported into the fictional world. The action of *Do the Right Thing* mirrors present day realities similar to that of deaths of Michael Brown and Freddie Gray and the protests of the Black Lives Matter Movement of 2014 and 2015. As *The Avengers* is more fantastical and may negatively impact transportation as the action may be more difficult to translate into the real world.

Table 5

*Comparison of Transportation Scores Between the Control and Treatment Groups*

<b>Group</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std Dev</b>	<b>Std Error</b>	<b>Levene's</b>	<b>t-test</b>	<b>Significance</b>
Control	20	1.67	.10	0.38	F =7.33	t=-2.96	p=.004
Treatment	66	2.38	1.05	.13	p=.008	df=84	

An independent samples t-test was run between the control and the treatment group on the amount of change in pre-test to post-test social dominance scores. With a significant Levene's test for homogeneity of variances, equal variances were not assumed. As can be seen in Table 5, the control group mean score was 1.67 and the treatment group's 2.38. The t-test confirmed the difference was significant at the p=.004 level. Thus, the results supported the predicted hypothesis.

### **Research Question Two**

How does transportation into the narrative of a film correlate to the social dominance orientation attitudes of students?

The question of genre conventions and cultivation raised by Cohen and Weimann (2000) prompt an expectation that contemporary students will be moved by the action of the films.

Similarly, Green and Clark (2013) saw differences in black adolescents transportation when viewing other black characters. They found that “Transported individuals may also perceive a narrative’s events as more resembling direct experience, which tends to have a greater impact on attitudes” (Green & Clark, 2013, p. 480).

**H-2.1**

For the treatment group, there will be a significant difference in the change in social dominance scores based on race.

It is expected that black viewers of *Do the Right Thing* will experience a more significant decrease in the social dominance scores than whites will. For race, there were only 6 not identifying as black or white. None of the other race categories had more than three – which means not enough for sound statistical analysis. Thus, this study will focus only primarily on Blacks and Whites in the analysis.

Table 6

*Comparison of SDO Scores Between Racial Groups in the Treatment Group*

<b>Group</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std Dev</b>	<b>Std Error</b>	<b>Levene’s</b>	<b>t-test</b>	<b>Significance</b>
White	47	.28	1.02	.15	F=1.43 p=.24	t=-.78 df=58	.44
Black	13	.51	.59	.16			

An independent samples t-test was run between racial groups on the amount of change in pre-test to post-test social dominance scores. With a non-significant Levene’s test for homogeneity of variances, equal variances were assumed. As can be seen in Table 6, the white students’ group saw a slight rise in social dominance scores of .28 compared to an increase for the black group at .51. The t-test confirmed the difference was not significant at the p=.05 level. While the mean difference from pre-test to post-test in social dominance scores for black

students was indeed greater than white students’, contrary to expectations, the changes in social dominance were not statistically significant.

**H-2.2**

For the treatment group, there will be a significant difference in the transportation effect based on race.

Pursuant to Green and Clark (2013), it is expected that racial differences in the treatment group will significantly impact transportation into the *Do The Right Thing* narrative. Cooper (1998) found racial differences in viewers’ experiences with this film.

Table 7

*Comparison of Transportation Scores Between Racial Groups in the Treatment Group*

<b>Group</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std Dev</b>	<b>Std Error</b>	<b>Levene’s</b>	<b>t-test</b>	<b>Significance</b>
White	47	2.21	.92	.13	F=.1.38 p=.25	t=-3.6 df=58	.001
Black	13	3.28	1.05	.29			

An independent samples t-test was run between racial groups on the post-viewing transportation scores. With a non-significant Levene’s test for homogeneity of variances, equal variances were assumed. As can be seen in Table 7, the white students’ group saw a slight rise in transportation scores of 2.21 compared to an increase for the black group at 3.28. The t-test confirmed the difference was significant at the .001 level (p=.05) confirming the hypothesis that black viewers were more transported by *Do the Right Thing*.

**H-2.3**

For the treatment group, there will be a significant difference in the change in social dominance scores based on gender.

Women tend to espouse lower attitudes in favor of social hierarchies than men (Lippa & Arad, 1999) so it makes sense to expect that the violence and language of *Do the Right Thing*

would produce a deeper impact upon female viewer’s social dominance. Note: For gender, there was only one subject not identifying as male or female. Thus, when examining gender, the remainder of this study will focus only on those identifying as male or female for the analysis.

Table 8

*Comparison of SDO Scores Between Gender Groups in the Treatment Group*

<b>Group</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std Dev</b>	<b>Std Error</b>	<b>Levene’s</b>	<b>t-test</b>	<b>Significance</b>
Female	32	.15	1.02	.18	F=.54 p=.46	t=-1.77 df=63	.08
Male	33	.55	.75	.13			

An independent samples t-test was run between gender groups on the amount of change in pre-test to post-test social dominance scores. With a non-significant Levene’s test for homogeneity of variances, equal variances were assumed. As can be seen in Table 8, the female students’ group saw a slight rise in social dominance scores of .15 compared to an increase for the male group at .55. The t-test confirmed the difference was not significant at the p=.05 level. In this case, male students experienced the greater difference in social dominance scores, but the amount of change was not statistically greater than for females.

**H-2.4**

For the treatment group, there will be a significant difference in the transportation effect based on gender.

Green and Brock (2000) found that the women in their study reported higher levels of transportation into the emotionality of the narrative being studied, but found little correlation and significant interaction between gender and transportation. In their study of audiences’ favorite films, Fischhoff, et al., (1998) found that 28% of women in their sample reported a preference for viewing dramatic films. It was expected, then, that female students would show high transportation effect when viewing *Do the Right Thing*.

Table 9

*Comparison of Transportation Scores Between Gender Groups in the Treatment Group*

Group	N	Mean	Std Dev	Std Error	Levene's	t-test	Significance
Female	32	2.18	1.12	.20	F=.25	t=-1.9	.06
Male	33	2.65	.86	.15	p=.62	df=63	

An independent samples t-test was run between gender groups on the transportation scale following viewing of *Do the Right Thing*.. With a non-significant Levene's test for homogeneity of variances, equal variances were assumed. As can be seen in Table 9, the female students' group was not as highly transported as the male students. The t-test confirmed the difference was not significant at the p=.05 level. In this case, male students experienced the greater transportation scores, but their difference was not statistically different from female scores.

**H-2.5**

For the treatment group, there will be a significant difference in the change in social dominance scores based on class rank.

Empirical evidence suggests that more educated peoples tend to possess more hierarchy attenuating attitudes (Sidanius, Pratto, & Bobo, 1994). Similarly, Sidanius, Sinclair, & Pratto (2006) argues "Based on previous research, there is reason to expect an inverse linear relationship between SDO and educational exposure in the United States. Increasing educational exposure appears to depress the expression of SDO" (Sidanius, et al., 1994, p. 1641). It is expected, then, that higher class rank will evidence lower SDO scores after viewing as there is likelihood that advancement in education will enable students to be more critical of the film's plot and action.

Table 10

*Comparison of Change in Social Dominance Scores by Class Rank*

Class Rank	N	Mean	Std Dev	Std Err	F-value	Significance
Freshmen	9	.52	0.39	0.13	F=2.12 df=3,62	p=.11
Sophomore	24	.25	1.16	0.24		
Junior	22	.10	.59	0.13		
Senior	11	.88	.95	0.29		
Total	66	.34	.91	0.11		

Levene's = 1.67 (df=3.62) p = .18

As there were four categories for rank, a way-one ANOVA was used. The Levene's test for homogeneity of variances was not significant. As table 10 shows, there was not a significant difference in the amount of change in social dominance scores (F=2.12 df=3.62,p=.11) across the various student ranks for the treatment group. Seniors experienced the largest increase as their SDO went up. This counters the idea education would lower SDO.

## **H-2.6**

For the treatment group, there will be a significant difference in the transportation effect based on class rank.

Green, Brock, and Kaufman (2004) argues that younger viewers are more “naturally drawn into narrative worlds” (Green, et al., 2004, p. 316). In their study of viewers’ favorite films, Fischhoff, et al [1999] reported that younger adolescents and college-aged viewers prefer films in the dramatic genre. Pouliot and Cowen (2007) argued that these younger viewers are especially susceptible to those “Films whose content corresponded to well-known social themes and film genres also had a greater influence on memory and emotions” (Pouliot & Cowen, 2007, p. 241). To that end, it is expected that freshmen and sophomores are more likely to report more significant transportation scores following the treatment film.

Table 11

*Comparison of Transportation Scores by Class Rank*

Class Rank	N	Mean	Std Dev	Std Err	F-value	Significance
Freshmen	9	2.73	.62	0.21	F=.56 df=3.62	p=.65
Sophomore	24	2.36	.94	0.19		
Junior	22	2.21	1.38	0.30		
Senior	11	2.49	.83	0.25		
Total	66	2.39	1.05	0.13		

Levene's = 2.54 (df=3.62) p = .066

As there were four categories for rank, a way-one ANOVA was used. The Levene's test for homogeneity of variances was not significant. As table X2 shows, there was not a significant difference in the transportation scores (F=.56, df=3.62,p=.65) across the various student ranks for the treatment group. There seemed to be some modest level of absorption into the narrative of the film as the overall mean was 2.39 on a 5-point scale with 5.00 indicating maximum measured transportation effect. It should be noted the range by ranks varied from a high of 2.73 for freshmen to a low of 2.21 for juniors – a range of 0.52 or 10% on the 5-point transportation scale.

### **Research Question Three**

Do demographic variables (race, gender, class rank) affect transportation effects and social dominance?

It has been stipulated that demographic factors affect genre choice and favorite films (Fischhoff, et al [1988] and that transportation and race are correlated (Green & Clark, 2013). In this series of hypotheses, the relationships between demographic categories, transportation, and change in social dominance will be examined. It is important to note that gender and race will be examined separately.

Czopp and Monteith (2003) make the argument that when confronted with race and racist narratives and texts, viewers “elicited more guilt and apologetic-corrective responses” (Czopp & Monteith, 2003, p. 532). As such, viewers that are absorbed into the narrative of *Do the Right Thing* with its emphasis on race and racism would likely experience an inverse effect on their social dominance scores. Regarding transportation, Fischhoff, et al [1998] indicated that over a fifth of college aged viewers prefer action-adventure films like the control film *The Avengers*. Given this propensity toward the genre, it is expected that students in this sample will be highly interested in the film. Transportation may not happen at high degrees given the superhero/alien premise, but students should be immersed in the film’s plot. As the film focuses on equality and teamwork between the heroes, student attitudes against social hierarchies may be reduced.

According to Davis and Gandy (1999), group affinity and racial pride among African Americans is correlated with media representations. Blacks who are absorbed into the narrative may be triggered into identifying with their minority status and may lean toward hierarchy attenuating attitudes. Cooper (1998) suggests that white students’ identification with the white characters in the film *Do the Right Thing* may desensitize white students from the racism in the film and that they may justify the actions of the white characters. It is expected that transportation for white students may cause an increase in white students’ social dominance scores.

Women involved in the Fischhoff, et al [1998] study reported high interest in dramatic films (31%). The action and plot of *Do the Right Thing* are consistent with the drama genre and conventions. Accordingly, female students in the treatment group should experience higher transportation into the narrative and because the invariance hypothesis of social dominance theory suggests that women have lower SDO attitudes than men (Sidanius, Pratto, & Bobo,



1994), it is expected that transportation be related to social dominance orientation. The invariance hypothesis of social dominance theory (Sidanius, et al., 1994) suggests that men possess higher social dominance scores. SDO scores will probably increase as the film's content suggests that social hierarchies and group inequalities, especially among the male characters, are evident.

The hypotheses for Research Question Three include:

**H-3.1**

For the treatment group, there will be a significant correlation between the transportation effect and the change in social dominance.

**H-3.2**

For the control group, there will be a significant correlation between the transportation effect and the change in social dominance.

**H-3.3**

For African-Americans in the treatment group, there will be a significant correlation between higher transportation scores and a reduction in social dominance.

**H-3.4**

For Whites in the treatment group, there will be a significant correlation between the transportation effect and the change in social dominance.

**H-3.5**

For Females in the treatment group, there will be a significant correlation between the transportation effect and the change in social dominance.

### H-3.6

For Males in the treatment group, there will be a significant correlation between the transportation effect and the change in social dominance.

Table 12

*Correlations Between Demographics, Transportation and Social Dominance*

Hypothesis	N	Spearman <i>rho</i>	Significance
H-3.1	66	.16	.19
H-3.2	20	.60	.01
H-3.3	13	.14	.66
H-3.4	47	.12	.44
H-3.5	32	-.045	.81
H-3.6	34	.29	.10

To test for the correlation between the transportation effect and the change in social dominance for the treatment group, a Spearman *rho* was used. As seen in Table 12, the correlation was not significant (Spearman *rho*=0.163,  $p=.190$ ). It was expected that a higher degree of transportation effect should be reflected in a greater impact on the social dominance score. Specifically, an inverse effect was seen given the emotional intensity of the *Do the Right Thing* film. In other words, the social dominance score would decline for those who felt more immersed and engaged in the movie. The data shows this was not the case. H-3.2 was confirmed for the control group at  $p=.01$  for transportation's correlation to the change in social dominance. For H-3.3, through application of the Spearman's *rho*, this hypothesis was unsupported. Spearman's *rho* equaled 0.14 and  $p=.66$ . There was no significant relationship for African American viewer's transportation and reduction or change in social dominance. One possibility in effect here follows Mulligan & Habel (2012) idea that the action is "too close to home" (p. 6) to be influential enough for transportation. In H-3.4, the expectation was for there to be a significant relationship between transportation and change in SDO scores. Spearman's *rho* (.14)

does not confirm a statistical relationship ( $p=.66$ ) between white students' transportation and the change in social dominance scores. To test for the correlation between the transportation effect and the change in social dominance for the control group, a Spearman *rho* was used. The relationship between transportation and amount of change in social dominance is statistically significant for the students in the control group (H-3.2). As evident, both groups increased together. It is possible the action/fantasy element engaged the treatment group in a more neutral way than happened for the control group.

Hypothesis 3.5 has not been supported as there appears no statistically significant relationship between transportation and social dominance scores after viewing *Do the Right Thing* (Spearman's  $\rho = -.05$ ,  $p=.81$ ). The mean transportation score for men (2.58) was higher than that of women (2.18) and men's posttest SDO score was .37 greater than that of women. There did not appear a statistically significant relationship between men's transportation scores and their SDO scores. This hypothesis was unconfirmed as shown in Table 12 where Spearman's  $\rho$  is  $-0.05$  and  $p=.81$ .

Hypothesis 3.6 expected that males would be more highly transported and would see greater SDO reduction after watching *Do the Right Thing*. Spearman's  $\rho$  (.29,  $p=.10$ ) indicates a non-statistically significant relationship.

#### **Research Question Four**

##### In what ways do race and gender correlate with transportation and social dominance?

The fourth research question examines how participant demographics (gender and race) correlate with transportation and social dominance. Unlike earlier hypotheses, for Hyp. 4.1-4.4, race and gender are not being considered as separate elements as in RQ3. The number of black subjects in each group is pretty small, as a result, it is unlikely to see significance. Because of

this, reporting of the stats is meant to be illustrative rather than inferential. The hypotheses for Research Question Four include:

**H-4.1**

For African-American males in the treatment group, there will be a significant correlation between higher transportation effect and the reduction in social dominance.

**H-4.2**

For African-American Females in the treatment group, there will be a significant correlation between the transportation effect and the change in social dominance.

**H-4.3**

For White Males in the treatment group, there will be a significant correlation between the transportation effect and the change in social dominance.

**H-4.4**

For White Females in the treatment group, there will be a significant correlation between the transportation effect and the change in social dominance.

Table 13 provides a summary table of the hypotheses related to Research Question 4:

Table 13

*Correlations Among Race and Gender with Social Dominance and Transportation Scores*

Hypothesis	N	Spearman's rho	Significance
H-4.1	7	.29	.54
H-4.2	6	.06	.91
H-4.3	23	.14	.53
H-4.4	23	-.16	.46

As Table 13 shows, there is no statistically significant relationship between gender and race and transportation and the change in social dominance scores. Hypotheses in this fourth category are unsupported wholly. It is possible that the small numbers of participants in each category has played into this relationship. In the treatment group, the numbers of black students in the treatment group are probably insufficient to see patterns; similarly, the actual values also suggest no relationship.

**Conclusion**

This study was interested in examining the effects of watching films typically used to complement teaching on diversity and social justice in university undergraduate social science courses. The study utilized a pretest-posttest experimental design where participants completed a demographic profile including race, gender, and class rank along with a social dominance orientation scale prior to viewing a film in a classroom setting. Following the film screening, participants completed a posttest SDO scale and a transportation scale. The control group watched *The Avengers*, an action-adventure movie where a team of superheroes battled an alien invader intent on domination of the Earth. The treatment group viewed *Do the Right Thing*, a 1989 film written and directed by Spike Lee. The action of the film examined racial and ethnic relations in a New York City borough. Data analysis involved independent samples t-tests, ANOVAs, and correlations examining demographic categories with transportation effects and

change in social dominance scores. Results are meant to inform the literature on teaching praxis using film pedagogy for instruction in diversity in liberal arts education.

### **Supported Hypotheses**

The first research question was interested in the effects of film on students' social dominance orientation scores. Hypothesis 1.1 expected significance in the reduction of social dominance scores for those students watching *Do the Right Thing* than for those watching *The Avengers*. The control group saw the greatest drop in SDO while the treatment group increased slightly. The plot of *Do the Right Thing* mirrors contemporary society as the death of a young black male at the hands of a police officer; it's believable that students identified with the action thereby affecting their social dominance attitudes.

Similarly, the differences in the types of films screened were expected to affect students' transportation. Hypothesis 1.2 was also supported as students in the treatment group show statistically significant transportation into the narrative of *Do the Right Thing* opposed to *The Avengers*.

The second research question investigated transportation's effect on SDO change. Hypothesis 2.2 examined transported into *Do the Right Thing* by race. As expected, there was confirmation that race affected transportation into the film's narrative. This finding is consistent with Cooper's (1998) findings related to differential racial reactions to viewing the same film.

The third research question examined separately the demographic variables and transportation and their relationship to SDO change. Hypothesis 3.2 showed a significant relationship between transportation and change in social dominance orientation for students in the control group. It is assumed that the film's emphasis on teamwork and unity positively affected students and was related to the SDO change.

## Unsupported Hypotheses

Hypothesis 2.3 expected that gender would show a significant effect upon change in social dominance. Against expectations, male students experienced the greater difference in change in social dominance scores, but the amount of change was not statistically greater than for females. Similarly, Hypothesis 2.4 expected that gender would play a role in the transportation effects of students viewing *Do the Right Thing*. Male students experienced the greater transportation; it is possible that the predominantly male cast enabled men to more identify with the characters and story. Although men were transported, this effect was not statistically differential.

Hypothesis 2.5 examined class rank as a variable in relation to likelihood of greater reduction in SDO scores. It was expected that freshmen viewers would experience the most significant SDO change, but seniors experienced the largest change in mean scores. While this was the result, there was no difference in the amount of change across class ranks.

Hypotheses related to RQ3 examined how demographic factors separately affected transportation and SDO change. It was expected that a higher degree of transportation would be reflected in a greater impact on the social dominance score. Specifically, an inverse effect was expected given the emotional intensity of *Do the Right Thing*, and there would be a decline in SDO for those who felt more immersed and engaged in the movie. The data in Table 12 shows this was not the case and Hypothesis 3.1 was unsupported as statistically significant relationship did not exist between transportation and SDO change for students in the treatment group.

Contrary to expectations, there was no statistically significant relationship between African-American viewers of *Do the Right Thing* in terms of transportation and SDO change (Hypothesis 3.3). Mulligan and Habel (2012) offer the possibility that the action of *Do the Right*

*Thing* may have been too realistic and interrupted students' transportation into the film. Similarly, Hypothesis 3.4 was not supported showing that for white students in the treatment group, there was not a significant relationship between higher transportation and reduction in SDO scores. Likewise gender (Hypotheses 3.5, 3.6) showed no statistically significant relationship between transportation and SDO change. The fourth research question looked concurrently at demographic factors (gender and race) and how they correlated to transportation effect and SDO change. None of the related hypotheses were supported. It is possible that the small sample size made the correlations unlikely.

In the next chapter, these findings will be interpreted in relation to their impact upon the teaching praxis and media effects literature and the field of mass communications. Additionally, the chapter will detail limitations of the study and outline areas for future research.



## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of films watched in a classroom environment upon the social dominance orientation of undergraduate students in order to contribute to the body of knowledge of teaching praxis and diversity education. There is little empirical evidence related to the role of film as an influencer of social dominance attitudes and beliefs. The research is wide and growing on the value of using mainstream film as a complement to instruction in the social sciences, but that research has not extended to the study of social dominance. Much research has been done on how film functions as a purveyor of culture, but the dearth of research on the intersections of social dominance theory and classroom film education have prompted this current research study. This research undertook an investigation into one of the most common films used in university classrooms for diversity education. The study examined students' social dominance orientation scores following exposure to the film. The study was also interested in how transportation into the film narrative also affects social dominance scores.

A person's social dominance orientation helps to explain their support or rejection of culturally based social hierarchies and their attitudes related to equality and inequality. Higher SDO scores tend to reveal in prejudicial attitudes toward racial minorities, toward feelings related to dominance and superiority, in antimony toward foreigners and immigrants, and on the appropriateness of affirmative action programs and policies. Transportation defines the degree in which individuals are caught up (transported) into a fictional narrative. Transportation (also called absorption) involves more than mere interest in a fictional story, but more a willingness to

suspend disbelief in the fiction to believe in its realism and plausibility. This research hypothesized that as student viewers became more transported, there would be differential affects upon their social dominance orientations.

## **Interpretation of Results and Discussion**

### **Research Question One**

The first research question compared differences in mean scores on pre- and post-tests of social dominance of those students watching the treatment film, *Do the Right Thing* (1989) and the students in the control group who watched *The Avengers* (2012). The results were opposite, however, than the expectation. Students' social dominance orientation scores in the control group decreased more than the students in the treatment group. It can be assumed that the special effects and high production value of *The Avengers* was partly responsible. In examining SDO and *The Avengers*, this finding is consistent with Cohen and Weimann's (2000) report on cultivation effects and genre where they stated "If TV [movies] can create a scary world, why should it not be able to create a more trusting and friendly world?" (Cohen & Weimann, 2000, p. 102). Perhaps the emphasis on teamwork affected students' attitudes? Another possibility prohibiting reduction in the treatment group is the overwhelming media coverage of blacks being killed by police officers since 2015. Perhaps students have grown desensitized to the action portrayed in the scene of Radio Raheem's death.

### **Research Question Two**

The second research question investigates transportation, social dominance and the intersection of race for viewers of *Do the Right Thing*. Black students' SDO scores increased by nearly 50% more than white students. While this was not statistically significant, the finding was inconsistent with the literature on black viewers of black actors. Cooper (1998) examined the

differences between reactions of black and non-black viewers to *Do the Right Thing*. In her investigation of undergraduate students' essay responses, she identified that the film's racist subtexts were clearly visible to black viewers, while non-black viewers justified the present racism through identification with the film's white characters, even dismissing their negative behavior in the film.

### **Research Question Three**

The third question investigates correlations between transportation, race, and gender and the effects upon social dominance orientation after exposure to the treatment film. This question examines the demographic variables (race and gender) in isolation. The hypotheses related to demographics and the correlations to transportation and SDO were unsupported for those viewing *Do the Right Thing*. There was a significant correlation, however, for the viewers of *The Avengers*. While unexpected, this finding was consistent with Fischhoff, et al [1998] as the viewers showed greater interest in the film. Of the two films, *The Avengers* was a more recent film and that factor may have had an affect on students' interest.

### **Research Question Four**

The fourth question addresses correlations between race and gender and transportation effect upon the posttest social dominance orientation scores within the treatment group. Cooper (1998) argues that black viewers of *Do the Right Thing* have an easier time connecting to the action of the film and may justify it as realistic due to their relationship to American racism and discrimination. Finding fictional narratives realistic is an important tenet of transportation theory (Green & Brock, 2000) and it was expected that black students' transportation would increase and be statistically related to a reduction in their SDO scores post-viewing. It was expected that SDO and transportation among black females would mirror black men. As Cooper (1998)

contends, it was expected that white viewers would misunderstand the theme and action of the film and have less transportation and perhaps higher SDO (less reduction) scores following the film than black viewers. There was no statistically significant relationship between gender, race, transportation and social dominance orientation across the treatment group. This finding leaves more options for teachers when choosing films to show in class. Teachers may want to carefully consider how the action of the film may affect students' viewing experiences.

### **Implications**

21<sup>st</sup> century learning includes acknowledging the place in our culture of the Hollywood film industry. Educators, like college faculty, have an awesome responsibility to provide students with opportunities to reflectively engage with the ways they have had their lives shaped by the movies they seen and experienced. Faculty, must, in turn, recognize that showing a film in class carries with it extra baggage related to how the films affect the student viewer. Student experiences and comfort with diversity education are limited (and sometimes negative). Students are often reticent to participate in diversity conversations with peers and with faculty in classes. The faculty, themselves, are sometimes ill prepared to effectively engage student learning about issues of diversity, social justice, and inequities. They have turned to mainstream movies to provide subject-oriented content that can demonstrate the issues being covered in class, but in what ways are they affecting change in the students' belief systems? This study wanted to understand the potential impact to students' social dominance orientations after viewing one of the most commonly used films in diversity education.

The study confirmed that film content does have some affect upon students' SDO scores. This evidences a need for educators to be aware of the potential when selecting a film to watch in class. Films should be used in concert with and not as a substitute for educational content

(readings, direct instruction). While it is nearly impossible for a faculty member to know how a film will influence any particular student, but they should be aware of the possibility of a negative consequence to beliefs and attitudes. How a film's characters and storylines impact students may differ by various variables such as their race, gender, age, and educational experiences.

The findings from this study are interesting but mixed. While race and gender in other studies have correlated with belief change, in this study, the expected hypotheses were unconfirmed. Interestingly, students experienced significant transportation into *The Avengers* rather than *Do the Right Thing*. Different reasons can be postulated on this result: *Do the Right Thing* was significantly older (released in 1989) and *The Avengers* more recently (in 2012). It is possible that students are more programmed to appreciate contemporary production standards and special effects affecting their transportation into the narrative. More research on SDO and transportation is needed, particularly with newer and more contemporary films.

### **Limitations**

A limitation of this study is generalizing to a larger population. The sample was comprised solely of undergraduate students from one single central Pennsylvania university. This demographic may not be comparable to other demographics.

Similarly, because there is limited research on film as a function of social dominance orientation, until comparable studies have been attempted, it should be noted that the films that were employed might limit this study. Still, there are more films to be considered. Johnson & Blanchard (2009), Johnson (2015), Tyler & Guth (1999), Bumpus (2005) and others have identified various feature films that have proven useful in diversity education. Popular films have included *Crash* (2004), *American History X* (1998), *Falling Down* (1993), and *Bamboozled*

(2000). The most commonly used films are older and may be dismissed as “not relevant” by contemporary students. More recent films should be considered as well.

The present study does not take into account participants past exposure to the films shown. Prior viewing may very well have impacted transportation. Future research should attempt to control for previous exposure to the stimulus films. Additionally, this research did not examine students’ previous experiences with diversity education. Participants’ pretest SDO scores were relatively low; this may have been the result of previous education on issues of diversity and equality. The sample population included more upperclassmen than expected. It is reasonable to assume they had been exposed to this type of teaching in previous classes at the university.

It is nearly impossible to remove all potential bias from experimental research with human beings, the researcher acknowledges the possibility of recency bias in the participants’ responses to the SDO scale from pre- to posttest.

A potential limitation is the relative aged-ness of *Do the Right Thing*. This film was made before a large number of the participants were even born. The control film, *The Avengers*, had more recent production value and special effects and may have more deeply impacted students’ opinions.

### **Future Research**

An area for study involves the extent to which priming as a method of framing influences how attitudes are shaped by media texts. Sidanius and Pratto (1999) showed that when respondents were primed with the value of American being unjust and unequal, members of minority groups exhibited higher levels of ethnic favoritism. Similarly, Butler, Zaromb, Lyle, & Roediger (2009) used written texts to prime student learning of information when viewing their

film adaptation. Mulligan and Habel (2011) used priming in their investigation of film and attitudes toward abortion. Gerring and Rapp (2004) showed how priming had an effect on how viewers are transported into narrative texts and therefore deeper espousal of certain attitudes. Priming may be useful in uncovering students' operating mythologies prior to pre-tests of SDO.

Social dominance theory operates using activation of embedded mythologies. As has been stated earlier, teachers should use film in conjunction with classroom instruction, but do so with the thought that teachers may activate primary hierarchical ideologies in their introductions of the film. The act of priming involves intentionally activating a person's attitudes and beliefs using cue or prime words. For example, racial priming theory (Mendelberg, 2001) suggests that media cues can activate racial attitudes as seen in examinations of political ads (Valentino, Hutchings, & White, 2002). Priming for attitudes is essentially a form of "framing" or akin to the work of agenda-setting theory (McCombs, Shaw, & Weaver, 1997). Investigating the effects of priming on social dominance change may be an important area for SDO film research.

The timing and immediacy between the pretest, movie screening, and posttest SDO should be examined. A related question is how SDO changes are made following an intervention like watching a film. Do deep-seated personal beliefs and attitudes shift following a two-hour film, no matter how transported a viewer? A future study may want to examine the lasting impacts to SDO after an extended period of time.

On the question of transportation, one area that is underexplored is whether transportation is an ideal quality for classroom education. Certainly, interest in an educational tool is invaluable, but Green & Brock (2000) question the manner in which absorption affects beliefs, but in the classroom environment, particularly when teachers are focusing on media literacy skills, a question remains how transportation conflicts with media literacy education.

This study has relied on the results of Fischhoff, et al [1998] regarding demographics and favorite film choice. That study examined how demographics correlated to genre interest. The purpose of this study is to explore the effects on the social dominance orientation of undergraduates in general liberal education courses of an array of films traditionally used to teach or complement instruction on diversity and social justice. The study will examine films in the drama genre as they are most often used in classroom instruction, and also films fitting in the comedy genre. A mixed genre study may provide interesting results.

It may also be interesting to see how character demographics play into transportation. For instance, how might white and black viewers respond to a white protagonist. Certain films like *Falling Down* (1993) and *White Man's Burden* (1995) feature a white protagonist coming to terms with multicultural awareness and identity issues.

Finally, the “goal” of diversity education (through film is to present opportunities to critically examine the tensions of diversity engagement—educational, sociopolitical, historical—apparent in American society. The films commonly used in these examples present diversity as a problem that needs solved—often through dramatic and emotional appeals (sometimes violent). The findings related to student interest in *The Avengers* leaves room for faculty to choose alternative films that are based on these goals as outcomes: teamwork, equality, and fairness. It is possible that the “unfinished business” of *Do the Right Thing* may have left students without a positive feeling of hope of resolution.



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## Appendix A

### Pre-Screening Questionnaire

**Please provide the following information by darkening the circle of the number which corresponds with how you personally identify:**

#### Demographic Profile

1. Race

- A. White
- B. Black or African American
- C. Asian or Pacific Islander
- D. Latino or Hispanic
- E. Native American
- F. Biracial or Multiracial
- G. Choose not to identify

2. Sex (

- A. Female
- B. Male
- C. Transgender
- D. Choose not to identify

3. Class Rank

- A. Freshman
- B. Sophomore
- C. Junior
- D. Senior



Appendix B

Pre-Screening Questionnaire

Below are a series of statements with which you may either agree or disagree. For each statement, please indicate the degree of your agreement or disagreement by **darkening** the appropriate number from '1' to '7'. Remember that your first responses are usually the most accurate.

**Strongly  
Disagree/Disapprove**

- |                                                                                                                           |   |   |   |   |   |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4. Some groups of people are just more worthy than others.<br>.....1<br>.....7                                            | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 5. In getting what your group wants, it is sometimes necessary<br>to use force against other<br>groups.....1<br>.....7    | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 6. Superior groups should dominate inferior<br>groups.....1<br>.....7                                                     | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 7. To get ahead in life, it is sometimes necessary to step on<br>other<br>groups.....1<br>.....7                          | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 8. If certain groups of people stayed in their place, we<br>would have fewer problems.<br>.....1<br>.....7                | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 9. It's probably a good thing that certain groups are at the<br>top and other groups are at the<br>bottom.....1<br>.....7 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 10. Inferior groups should stay in their<br>place.....1<br>.....7                                                         | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 11. Sometimes other groups must be kept in their<br>place.....1<br>.....7                                                 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |



4. I was mentally involved in the film while watching it.
- |            |   |   |   |   |   |           |
|------------|---|---|---|---|---|-----------|
| 1          | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7         |
| not at all |   |   |   |   |   | very much |
5. After the movie ended, I found it easy to put it out of my mind.
- |            |   |   |   |   |   |           |
|------------|---|---|---|---|---|-----------|
| 1          | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7         |
| not at all |   |   |   |   |   | very much |
6. I definitely wanted to see how the movie ended.
- |            |   |   |   |   |   |           |
|------------|---|---|---|---|---|-----------|
| 1          | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7         |
| not at all |   |   |   |   |   | very much |
7. The movie affected me emotionally.
- |            |   |   |   |   |   |           |
|------------|---|---|---|---|---|-----------|
| 1          | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7         |
| not at all |   |   |   |   |   | very much |
8. I found myself thinking of ways the movie could have turned out differently.
- |            |   |   |   |   |   |           |
|------------|---|---|---|---|---|-----------|
| 1          | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7         |
| not at all |   |   |   |   |   | very much |
9. I found my mind wandering while watching the movie.
- |            |   |   |   |   |   |           |
|------------|---|---|---|---|---|-----------|
| 1          | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7         |
| not at all |   |   |   |   |   | very much |
10. The events in the movie are relevant to my everyday life.
- |            |   |   |   |   |   |           |
|------------|---|---|---|---|---|-----------|
| 1          | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7         |
| not at all |   |   |   |   |   | very much |
11. The events in the movie have changed my life.
- |            |   |   |   |   |   |           |
|------------|---|---|---|---|---|-----------|
| 1          | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7         |
| not at all |   |   |   |   |   | very much |
12. I had a vivid mental image of [character name].
- |            |   |   |   |   |   |           |
|------------|---|---|---|---|---|-----------|
| 1          | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7         |
| not at all |   |   |   |   |   | very much |

## Appendix D

### Post-Screening Questionnaire

Below are a series of statements with which you may either agree or disagree. For each statement, please indicate the degree of your agreement or disagreement by **darkening** the appropriate number from '1' to '7'. Remember that your first responses are usually the most accurate.

**Strongly  
Disagree/Disapprove**

13. Some groups of people are just more worthy than others.
- .....1      2      3      4      5      6
- .....7

14. In getting what your group wants, it is sometimes necessary to use force against other groups.....	1	2	3	4	5	6
.....	7					
15. Superior groups should dominate inferior groups.....	1	2	3	4	5	6
.....	7					
16. To get ahead in life, it is sometimes necessary to step on other groups.....	1	2	3	4	5	6
.....	7					
17. If certain groups of people stayed in their place, we would have fewer problems. ....	1	2	3	4	5	6
.....	7					
18. It's probably a good thing that certain groups are at the top and other groups are at the bottom .....	1	2	3	4	5	6
.....	7					
19. Inferior groups should stay in their place .....	1	2	3	4	5	6
.....	7					
20. Sometimes other groups must be kept in their place. ....	1	2	3	4	5	6
.....	7					
21. It would be good if all groups could be equal.....	1	2	3	4	5	6
.....	7					
22. Group equality should be given an equal chance in life. ....	1	2	3	4	5	6
.....	7					
23. All groups should be given an equal chance in life. ....	1	2	3	4	5	6
.....	7					
24. We should do what we can to equalize conditions for different groups.....	1	2	3	4	5	6
.....	7					

25. Increased social equality.....	1	2	3	4	5	6
.....	7					
26. We would have fewer problems if we treated different groups more equally.....	1	2	3	4	5	6
.....	7					
27. We should strive to make incomes more equal.....	1	2	3	4	5	6
.....	7					
28. No one group should dominate in society.....	1	2	3	4	5	6
.....	7					

## Appendix E

### Treatment Group Instructions

#### Introduction

Thank you for participating in this research study of movie effects on audiences. Please listen carefully to all instructions. You have received an envelope that has a randomized identity number on the outside label. Please use this number instead of your name on any forms inside the envelope.

In a few moments, you will be watching a film. Before I start the film, I need some information about you. Please remember that this study is anonymous and your personal identity will not be shared in any way. While it is important to us that you complete the full study, you may choose to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty or consequence to you.

Before I start the film, there are two questionnaires that we ask that you complete. The first is a simple survey of your demographic profile including your race, gender, class rank, and other information. The second is a questionnaire that captures your attitudes about certain topics. Please answer honestly. Your answers are confidential and anonymous for your protection. On the questionnaire, there are seven choices ranging from “strongly disagree/disapprove” through “strongly agree/approve”. Please circle the number that matches your feelings about each statement.

#### **Pre-Screening**

Today you will be watching a movie titled *Do the Right Thing*. This film was made in 1989 and star Spike Lee as Mookie. Mookie works as a pizza deliveryman for Sal’s Famous Pizzeria in the Bedford-Stuyvesant area of New York City. It’s the hottest day of the year and the heat seems to be causing numerous problems in the neighborhood.

During the film, please refrain from using your cell phones, talking, or disrupting the viewing experience of others. If at all possible, please do not leave the room for the duration of the film. At the conclusion of the film, which lasts (elapsed time), you will be asked to complete two additional brief surveys.

#### **Post-Screening**

Please complete the final two brief questionnaires. On each, there are seven choices ranging from “strongly disagree/disapprove” through “strongly agree/approve”. Please circle the number that matches your feelings about each statement. Also, there is one open-ended question for you to answer. Please print your answers clearly in this section.

Thank you for your participation. Please make sure to put all paperwork back into the envelope and seal the envelope. You may leave the envelope on the desk as you exit.

## Appendix F

### Control Group Instructions

#### **Introduction**

Thank you for participating in this research study of movie effects on audiences. Please listen carefully to all instructions. You have received an envelope that has a randomized identity number on the outside label. Please use this number instead of your name on any forms inside the envelope.

In a few moments, you will be watching a film. Before I start the film, I need some information about you. Please remember that this study is anonymous and your personal identity will not be shared in any way. While it is important to us that you complete the full study, you may choose to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty or consequence to you.

Before I start the film, there are two questionnaires that we ask that you complete. The first is a simple survey of your demographic profile including your race, gender, class rank, and other information. The second is a questionnaire that captures your attitudes about certain topics. Please answer honestly. Your answers are confidential and anonymous for your protection. On the questionnaire, there are seven choices ranging from “strongly disagree/disapprove” through “strongly agree/approve”. Please circle the number that matches your feelings about each statement.

#### **Pre-Screening**

Today you will be watching the action-adventure film *The Avengers* (2012) starring an ensemble cast including Robert Downey, Jr. as the Iron Man, Chris Evans as Captain America, and Scarlett Johansson as the Black Widow. In this film, a team of heroes gathers their strength to fight the alien Loki who wants to enslave humans around the world. The runtime for the film is 2 hours and 10 minutes.

During the film, please refrain from using your cell phones, talking, or disrupting the viewing experience of others. If at all possible, please do not leave the room for the duration of the film. At the conclusion of the film, which lasts (elapsed time), you will be asked to complete two additional brief surveys.

#### **Post-Screening**

Please complete the final two brief questionnaires. On each, there are seven choices ranging from “strongly disagree/disapprove” through “strongly agree/approve”. Please circle the number that matches your feelings about each statement. Also, there is one open-ended question for you to answer. Please print your answers clearly in this section.

Thank you for your participation. Please make sure to put all paperwork back into the envelope and seal the envelope. You may leave the envelope on the desk as you exit.