

Graduate Students' Perspectives on Pushout: Training for Equity in Education and Mental Health



Jennifer M. Cooper, PhD, Juliet Schwarz, MS, Arielle Misrok, BA, Zainub Mallick, BS, & Baila Kivelevitz, BA

INTRO

Systemic racism and its deleterious impact on minoritized ethnic groups is a critical area of training for psychology graduate students (APA, 2017). Over the last 5-10 years, scholars have developed models to build trainees' competencies in multiculturalism, advocacy and social justice within school psychology graduate preparation programs (e.g., Miranda et al., 2014). Following the murder of George Floyd in summer 2020, calls to address systemic racism (García-Vázquez et al., 2020) and further integrate anti-racist approaches in training (Cooper et al., 2020; Williams et al., 2020) were adopted. However, little research exists on effective social justice and anti-racist pedagogy within school psychology. Findings from a pilot study examining the utility of social issue documentary film (i.e., *Pushout: The Criminalization of Black Girls in Schools*) as a tool for anti-racist and social justice pedagogy are presented herein.

METHODS

Graduate students enrolled in a school-clinical child psychology program (N=9) in the northeastern U.S. were recruited to participate in an online study that included: 1. Completing a pre-test knowledge assessment; 2. attending a documentary film screening; 3. participating in a guided group discussion led by trained doctoral-level student facilitators; and 4. completing a post-test. The sample was 100% female; 100% doctoral students; 56% white, 33% Black, and 11% Asian. Total participation time was two hours and participants received \$15 gift cards. All procedures were approved by the researcher's IRB.

RESULTS

Participants reported an increase in awareness and understanding in the following areas after the event:

- 44% “much higher” and 56% “slightly higher” related to **racial injustice in school discipline and school-to-prison pipeline**
- 78% “much higher” and 22% “slightly higher” related to **adultification and criminalization** facing Black girls in schools
- 56% “much higher” and 44% “slightly higher” related to **alternatives to punitive disciplinary and school pushout**

100% of participants reported gains in knowledge from pre to post-test and found using social issue documentary film “much more effective” compared to traditional teaching methods.

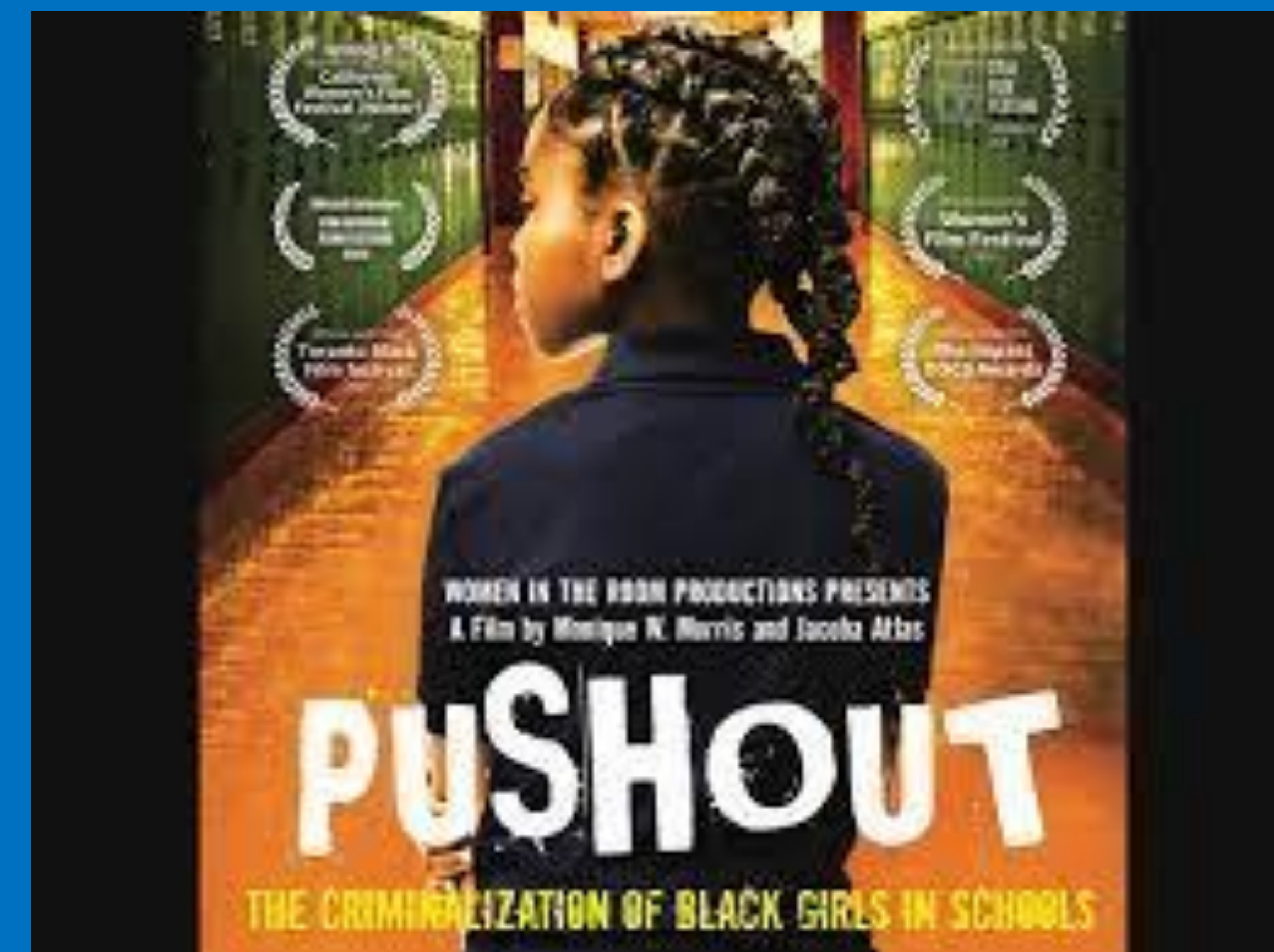
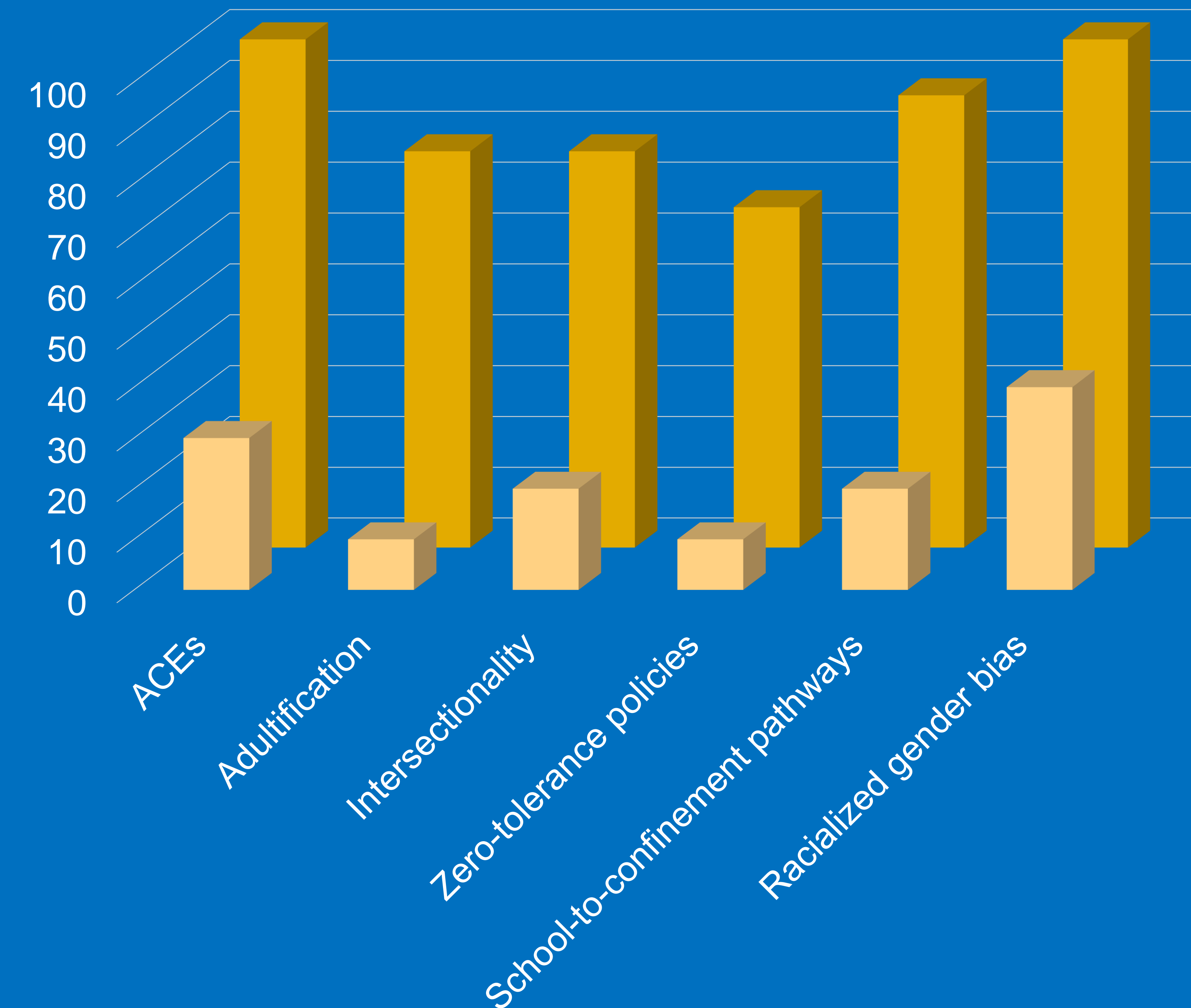


Figure 1. % of participants “very knowledgeable” or “extremely knowledgeable” about key terms from film at pre-test and post-test



RESULTS (CONT'D)

Key themes about how to incorporate learnings into current/future work:

- look for alternate approaches to discipline that prioritize children's well-being rather than punitive techniques
- consider client's backgrounds and intersectional identities in every clinical encounter
- “important reminder to listen to people's experiences and see them as human. To acknowledge their individual situations in order to help them”
- “a better understanding of the systems that have time and time again challenged, neglected, and unjustly reacted to these young girls and families. Holding this in mind as I work to align with and support them and recognize that I, too, am a part of this larger oppressive system”

IMPLICATIONS & LIMITATIONS

Students found this format of training a valuable and effective alternative to traditional teaching methods. Use of documentaries that directly highlight the experiences of individuals/groups affected by social inequities and systemic racism allow training programs to expand students' understanding of cultural humility and social justice. This format offers the unique opportunity to engage students by sharing and reflecting on diverse lived experiences and thinking critically about ways to work toward effective change via a supported discussion to process key learnings.

This study is limited by the small and homogeneous sample (entirely female doctoral students from one graduate program). Thus, these findings may not be generalizable to a wider sample. However, this pilot study indicates the need for further investigation given the positive initial results.

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jennifer.cooper@yu.edu



@DrJenniferCoop