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The Media's Impact on College Students' Career Aspirations

With a Focus on Minority Students

Natasha Cooper

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Abstract

Empirical studies pertaining to media effects on career aspirations have focused particularly on children and junior high school students. However, there is a lack of research focusing on college students and the impacts the media have on their career choices. This study investigates if the media plays a significant role in college students' career choices, particularly students of ethnic and racial minority backgrounds. Students were selected from two organizations on campus with a media related mission, (N=21). Students ranged from ages 18 to 24 and were asked a series of closed and open-ended questions about their media consumption habits, their social identity, esteem, and career plans. Consistent with existing research, data analyses indicated that college minority students do consume more traditional media, such as television. However, media consumption was not directly related to students' career aspirations (regardless of whether they were of minority background or not).

The main findings from this study show that media consumption is not related to students' confidence that they will succeed in pursuing their careers of choice. Students did see media as being helpful sources of information in determining career goals. However, students were more likely to recognize sources of inspiration and models of professional success in media programs they consumed rather than in their everyday lives. The author discusses several plausible explanations for this apparent inconsistency and makes recommendations for future research directions. Future research should examine, for example, if students subconsciously make media influenced career decisions while reporting otherwise.

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Introduction

Research currently is lacking on the media's impact on college students and its influence of their career choices. With children typically being the focus of the media's impact, it is unknown whether or not college students are less prone to media influences, particularly in regards to careers. This study hopes to test the influence of the media on college students. It is hypothesized that a difference will be found between past research on younger students and this research on college students. Data is expected to prove that college students will be less affected by the media due to the fact that these students are more aware of the media and assumed to be more realistic with career aspirations. Research suggests that minority students are more affected by their increase exposure to media and its negative portrayals of them. According to Social Identity Theory, people of a particular race will identify with positive enhancing media of their own race and negative media of other races for esteem. Research has shown that minority students on average consume more television and are more susceptible to media messages, positive and negative. With a lack of positive images, minority students are expected to demonstrate a lower self-esteem generally related to potential career success. This study is being conducted in hopes of finding if college students will prove to be impacted by more significant factors, described by Social Cognitive Theory, influencing career decisions, such as their environment, grades, research, experience, and other personal factors such as self-esteem.

Literature Review

The Role of Media Consumption in Social Identity and Social Learning Theories

Henri Tajfel's social identity theory (1978) examines how one's self-esteem and pride is influenced by his or her group memberships, such as belonging to a particular ethnic or racial group, social class, or gender. Tajfel believed one's self-identity was shaped by his or her group identity (Weaver, 2011). In order for a person's esteem to be raised, the image and esteem of the groups he or she identifies with has to be enhanced too. As a group's esteem is enhanced, the division between those who belong to the in-groups and out groups becomes clearer. This division is based on the principles that one identifies him or herself as a represented member of a group they perceive to be similar to them while and identifying others, who are different, as being a part of the out group. In this study, I investigate how race and cultural group identification as well as media consumption patterns among college students relate to their career aspirations. Previous research has shown that children of all races are likely to adapt attitudes, behaviors, and values from media (King & Multon, 1996). However, there is limited research specifically focused on college students, who are at a critical stage in their lives, as they set career expectations and being to pursue professional goals.

Social identity theory predicts that people belonging to a specific racial group identify with the positive images of that race and the negative of other races to enhance their in-group's identity (Weaver, 2011). The theory's expectations are that racial groups gravitate towards positive reinforcing media messages of the race they belong. This allows for a selective exposure to media. That is to say how we identify in terms of race and ethnicity shapes our decisions about what media content we consume. Research has found that children tend to emulate behaviors of

those they perceive similar to them in terms of race and gender, thereby, implicitly or explicitly, acknowledging these individuals as authorities (Harris, 1986). In regards to media, children are then thought to more likely identify with characters that are of the same race as them (King & Multon, 1996). This study is hoping to determine if children potentially grow out of this group identification and their ways of learning by others perceived similar to them in the media, or if they still place value in what they experience and view in the media pertaining to their group identification.

Social learning theory states that career decision-making is developed from learning experiences which influence individuals either positively or negatively (Mitchell, Jones, & Krumboltz, 1971). For example, Harris (1986) found that characters that were portrayed to be heroic and popular on television were more likely to be imitated by children because they admired them. Admiration encourages children to achieve similar status and authority. This positively shapes students in wanting to achieve this same status and authority. According to Bandura (1977), watching a show where the character has a rewarding job and is successful can spark the desire for a child to pursue that specific occupation. Contrary to that, a negative portrayal that involves great struggling and mere success can have the opposite effect; that is, it can shape students' view of that occupation as unrewarding.

The theory suggests that we learn through imitation, modeling, and observation and this requires one's active motivation to pursue a goal, attention to the program, and memory of what is portrayed (Bandura, 1977). What one imitates and observes is based on what he or she chooses is worth this active attention. People generally select what media programs they wish to engage in. Selective exposure is defined as the act of trying to expose oneself only to information that seems to confirm one's behavior and attitudes (Colorado University, 2013). Thus with selective

exposure one can form opinions and views in regards to his or her future potential success. Research has yet to show if the amount or type of exposure to media shape the way a student views him or herself and how likely they believe it is for them to succeed in achieving their career goals.

Portrayals of Ethnic Minorities as Professionals and Workers in the Media

Whether it is motivation, deterrence, or no effects, students are not immune to media's messages. Minorities' views with respect to how accurately media's depict them vary considerably. For example, the particular character traits that appear to be commonly associated with Latinos on television are lack of intelligence or low education levels and exaggerated loud accents. (Mastro , Behm-Morawitz, Kopacz, 2008). In addition, Latino's are usually seen holding service jobs (e.g. gardeners, maids). They are depicted in a respected high-status occupation only in 11% of television roles (Mastro , Behm-Morawitz &Kopacz, 2008). In a different study, in this case about portrayals of African Americans, Staples and Jones (1985) found that, "49% of African Americans are portrayed in stereotypical roles such as criminals, servants, entertainers or athletes." Dorr's 1982 study cited in King & Multon (1996) concluded that African Americans professional status had improved in the media but they were still portrayed to be as lower status workers compared to the white majority.

African Americans and Latinos are not the only minorities in the U.S., however. Research on Arab-Americans and Middle Eastern-origin Americans, more broadly suggest that they tend to be portrayed on television are portrayed on television as either dirty, unable to speak English, violent, or as thieves (Gibbs et al. 2001). Only recently have shows like the reality program "Shahs of Sunset" been aired on TV, which depicts the lavish culture of Iranian-origin

Americans. That said, the show underscores that the expensive lifestyle is made possible thanks to inheritance not because the protagonists can afford it through their hard work. Asian Americans are also of little focus in the media. They are frequently portrayed as lower class workers, as grocery store owners and martial arts instructors, with heavy accents, or as wealthy over achievers. Regardless, the variety of roles we tend to see Asian-origin Americans occupy in media is limited (Gibbs et al. 2001). In an attempt to answer the question of why ethnic minorities are portrayed in stereotypical and often clearly negative ways in the media, some research has argued that it is because upper-class white men are ones who control the mainstream media. Furthermore, ethnic media, believed to offer more accurate portrayals, fail to reach and influence larger, mass audiences. Ethnic media in most cases have smaller operating is budgets, which makes the less competitive in demanding media markets dominated by major media networks (Gibbs et. al, 2001).

Media Consumption among Ethnic Minority Students

Research shows that minority students consume on average more media than white students. In recent years the gap between African American students and white students' usage has doubled with them consuming four and a half more hours of media than white students. Again, compared to white students, the usage of media among Latino students has also quadrupled in recent years (Center on Media and Human Development Northwestern University, 2011). The biggest differences in media use are found in figures reflecting television viewership. Blacks and Hispanics watch about an hour more live TV each day than White or Asian students (3:23 average hours per day for Blacks, 3:08 hours for Hispanics, 2:28 for Asians, and 2:14 for Whites) (Center on Media and Human Development North Western University, 2011). Given the increased exposure of Blacks and Hispanics to television, it is likely that they are also more

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likely to be influenced by media's messages (and especially television content). There is a lack of empirical evidence with respect to the relationship between media consumption and the achievement gap of Blacks and Hispanics compared to whites. However, in this study I argue that social learning effects on minority background students and particularly on black and Latino students are possible due to the increased television consumption and its perceived view of being an educator by teaching behavior (King & Multon, 1996). If minority characters are presented in a positive way, the explicitness of positive characterizations can be rewarding, as Elizabeth Monk-Turner et al. (2010) research analysis demonstrated.

How Media Shape Students' Views of Their Professional Future

Seeing a repeated stereotypical portrayal can either cause a child to accept or reject the media's view of his or her race. According to Bandura, the child is then likely to attend to and imitate those people it perceives as similar to itself (McLeod, 2011). In this study, we are seeking to investigate if college students are still affected from previous repeated exposure or have matriculated a new way of thinking about media and seeing it as mere fiction rather than reality. College students differ from junior high students used in King and Multon (1996) because college students are thought to have a greater independence, stronger self-identity, their parents are less likely to be involved in their everyday life, and more developed career goals. According to Christiansen (1979), age is significant predicator of television role model influences. It is from this study, we learn children are more likely to be effected by the career portrayals they are exposed to on television.

Social cognitive theory informs our understanding of how social learning through the media occurs and how media shape individuals' social identity. The theory suggests that people

routinely observe others' behavior to inform and evaluate their own actions (Bandura, 2001). Social cognitive theory explains that a person's behavior is influenced by a fusion of triadic interactions of one's environment, personal factors, and behavior (University at Texas, 2013). Environment is defined as both one's social and physical environment. The social environment is made of family, friends, and peers from work or school, while, the physical environment is the actual location, area, or neighborhood one is in. Personal factors include internal physiological factors such as esteem. Then behavior can be described as the way one choses to act out in particular situations.

The three factors work together to shapes one's personal agency and esteem. It is thought that believing in your efficacy affects your success. The theory focuses on learned behavior and the development of confidence to perform any action; this could include realizing goals. It is based on the behavior the individual selectively engages in to help provide them confidence to succeed at a particular goal. This means, in relation to media, the student chooses to expose themselves to media he or she feels is helping them succeed.

With the media being more accessible today researchers are more curious with the positive and negative effects that different media usage has on specific individuals. Research has been done on media stereotypical portrayals, the media's effects on education, and the media's impact on socialization. In regards to minorities, previous research has been done on the different media consumption effects. However, there is a lack of research on how media representations of minorities shape college students' career expectations. One of the few studies done on the effects of television on African American students' career aspirations was conducted by King and Multon (1996)and was with junior high school students. However, over a decade has passed since then and the media landscape has changed considerably. Social networks have become a

significant part of our media landscape; the Internet has become a more significant source of news, particularly for younger audiences. While we are now seeing an age of reality television and competition shows.

King and Multon's study is a replication and extension of Christiansen (1979) study. Both studies have focused on television effects on students' occupational goals and aspirations but with regards to children, junior high school, and high school students. Research has found that the younger the student is the more likely he or she is to be influenced by a television role model and media, there is research missing on later effects with college students, specifically those interested in media related careers. We are looking to find what the new age of media has done to career expectations and how students view themselves in comparison to the media's perception.

Past research has focused on theories that explain why and how the media shapes social identities and students' success, but there has not been much thought into other contributing factors such as parental and peer involvement. COBRAS (color blind racial attitudes), demonstrate that those who are highly accepting of diversity are not fazed by race in the media, they identify with different genres and characters regardless of the racial group they identify with. When an individual does not perceive race or their ethnic identity to be a deciding factor in their media selection, social identity, learning and cognitive theories hold little value. This is because these theories stress it is through characteristics such as identifying with ethnic and racial groups that we shape our decisions regarding media. It then leaves question of external factors such as peers and parental influence in aspirations, or even more so media role-models that are not of the same race as the student.

This study will show if older students hold the media to be an important factor in career decisions. There is the possibility that minority students can be deterred from pursing certain careers not from media stereotypical portrayals but instead from their parents' education level, a language barrier, immigration assimilation difficulties, lack of previous parental involvement or even lack of educational and economic resources, such as money for test prep courses and tutors.

Research has typically focused on effects with African American students, with a lack of focus on Hispanics and other minorities. According to the US Census the number of Hispanics in the American population has grown in recent years from 12% to now 16.7% of the population. Still Latinos are only represented by only 3.9% of characters in prime time television. From the social identity perspective, exposure to media depictions of race/ethnicity is expected to provoke group-based comparisons in order to maintain one's self-concept and possibly enhance self-esteem with viewings of your race/ethnicity in comparison to others. (Mastro et al, 2008). The ultimate goal of the study is to provide research evidence on whether or not the media has a part in student's career occupational decisions and if so how important is that role.

Methodology

Participants

The participants were 21 University at Albany undergraduate students. The students vary from freshmen to seniors. The age mean of the sample was 21 years old with the 11 students being juniors, 8 seniors, 2 freshmen and one sophomore. The gender break up included 16 women and 6 men. The participants were selected from organizations related to media fields on campus. The sample included students who were members of a student television broadcast (N=13) and members of Black Theater Production (N=8) .

Apparatus

Interview Schedule Survey. A semi-structured interview schedule which contained closed-ended and open-ended questions was used. Closed-ended questions yielded quantitative data, analyzed via SPSS. The open-ended questions afforded the opportunity for participants to elaborate their answers, add context, and share relevant stories.

This survey was self-developed. It asked for an average of twenty items. Students were asked their background demographics and the average media consumption within a week. The survey also questioned the specific types of media typically used by the students. In regards to television programs and movies, the students were asked to recall several of the last shows and films they watched. They were then asked to identify the genre and rate the show and film on a 5 point scale. Students were also asked to identify their main source for current news, such as social networks, print media, television, or radio. The survey also prompted students to talk about the representation of minority groups in the media. Students measured on a 5 point scale (1 being the weakest and 5 being the strongest) whether the depictions were accurate of specific

ethnic portrayals in the media, and then whether or not the depictions were realistic. Students were also presented with the option of not knowing the answer to these questions. Furthermore, they were presented with the opportunity to elaborate on the ways in which media depictions of their ethnic/racial background are correct or wrong. The question was open-ended allowing for examples of programs or shows.

The final section of the survey was designed for students' career and professional aspirations following graduation as well as an esteem assessment. They were asked in an open ended question about their career plans and what they saw themselves doing 5 years from now. This question was followed with asking what shows or films students watch in regards to their field of interest, if any. We then sought to find how well represented each student believed that people of ethnic minority backgrounds are in the industry or profession they hope to pursue and what the primary sources they believed led them to this conclusion. Students were asked to identify what they believed influenced their confidence in making career decisions, i.e. friends, family, television shows, films, news, academic research, or other. Finally students were asked to take the Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (Song et. al, 2011) in which they read to themselves a series of ten statements. Students were asked how much they agreed or disagreed (on a scale of 1 to 4) with each of 10 different statements. After students completed background information about their gender and age, they completed the study by indicating how important academic success was to him or her and by comparing their academic performance to their peers.

Procedure

The study conducted focused on students involved in organizations on campus related to media fields. Students were selected from two groups, the University at Albany Black Theatre

Production, and Albany Student Television's broadcasting news program. Students were informed of the purpose of the research and were personally asked to participate in the study, assuring confidentiality. While students were not offered extra credit and they did not benefit directly from participation, the researcher explained that their contribution would contribute information regarding college students' media consumption patterns and how these patterns shape their identity and their career goals.

With respect to the Black Theater Production, the researcher requested and received approval to recruit from the organization's Vice President and President Elect for 2013-14, Shanese Rouse. Access for the Broadcasting News Program was recruited from the approval of the producer Samantha Potter. The researcher then spoke to the participating members of both organizations during one of their weekly meetings to conduct the study.

Over the course of a week, Black Theater Production students were interviewed individually in a private meeting room provided by student housing. Over the period of two days Albany Student Television students were interviewed in private in the filming studio. Each individual was told that participation was completely voluntary, that their answers to questions would not be linked to any information that identifies them (data collected anonymously), and that they were free to walk away from the interview at any point, if they felt uncomfortable. The PI then obtained informed consent from every participant. Students were read each question and options (when provided). The last page of the questionnaire, which included a personal esteem assessment, was then filled out privately by the students.

The interviews were audio-recorded to ensure that no data were lost and to be able to revisit answers to the open-ended questions. Such answers were transcribed verbatim and these

data were subjected to a thematic analysis. As participants were anonymous, the data cannot be linked to students' names.

Analysis

The analysis of the study was conducted by running as series of tests run by analysis software to analyze that data. LSD, Boneferroni, Dunnet T3, Dunnet C, Dunnet T (2sided) tests were run to see the comparisons between ethnic television consumption variations between the different races. Paired sample statistics and T-tests were used to compare different media usage averages, standard deviation and standard error mean. Cross ethnic group comparisons were than conducted to find the difference in specific media consumptions and students' news sources. Correlation test were used to show the significance between minority race visibility in the media and students' minority portrayal and their capability to see themselves in characters of their own race. Independent tests were conducted separately analyzing the data on students' career inspirations and their correlation to their own race and gender. Shows and movies listed were then analyzed by descriptions provided by IMDB to compare to the student's career plans students listed in an open-ended question.

Results

<u>Student's Media Consumption Pattern</u>

A paired samples t-test was conducted and showed that when asked about the media college students consumed in the past week, they typically spend more time on social media, than compared to other outlets of media such as, television, radio, or music. Students on average consume 12 hours each week on social media, which was described as sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Tumbler. Meanwhile, television proved to be only three hours for both major broadcasting networks such as ABC, and for cable networks such as Bravo. With a t-test value of -3.641 and sig (2-tailed) of .002 for major mainstream English television networks and social media, this difference proved to be significant. The difference was also significant between English language cable TV and social media, with a t-test value of -3.329 and sign. (2-tailed) of .003. Student might not be influenced by traditional media (i.e. television, radio

Table 1: College Students Average Media Consumption	
Media Type	College Students Average Reported Weekly Consumption
Major English-language TV networks such as NBC,ABC, FOX, CBS	3.10
Major English-language cable TV networks, such as MTV, VH1, HBO, Bravo	3.19
Listening to major language radio stations	3.38
Major Newspapers	2.76
Ethnic television channels	1.52
Ethnic radio stations	.67
Newspapers catering to specific ethnic backgrounds	0
Websites, excluding social media	3.29

Social Media like Facebook, Twitter, Tumbler	12.38
Video Games	1.86
Listening to music not broadcasted from a radio station	5.95
Watching movies (online, home, theater)	2.95

movies) rather can more likely be shaped by newer media outlets such as social media.

When media consumption was broken down according to racial differences, the data collected proved to be consistent with past research. African American students consumed twice as much television as Caucasian students. African American college students (N=10) in the sample reported an average of four hours spent on mainstream English television networks, which was higher than any other race, and Caucasian college students (N=5) reported an average consumption of two hours a week on mainstream English television networks. An ANOVA (Analysis of Variance Test) comparing the amount of time consuming programs on ethnic television networks, such as BET and Telemundo, suggests African Americans and Hispanics reported an average consumption twice as high as Caucasian students, whom reported to watching less than a half hour each week. Then a follow up test showed a significant mean difference (I-J) of 1.80 between the time African American college students spent on ethnic television and the time Caucasian students spent on it. Also in regards to media consumption, there was a difference in time spent on video games, as African Americans reported using no time in the last week playing video games, and Caucasians, on average, reported a consumption of 7 hours with a standard deviation of 10.4.

Table 2: Ethnic Television Consumption: Racial Descriptive Results

Recorded Race	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
African American	2.20	1.48	10
Latino	1.67	1.5	3
White	.40	.89	5
Other	1.0	1.0	3
Total	1.52	1.4	21

When African American college students were asked about the importance of specific news sources, the most significant sources proved to be friends, family, classmates, coworkers, (3.40) and social networking sites (2.90). With Hispanics (*N*=3), the significant sources were newspapers (4.7) and websites or blogs (4.0). Caucasian students top news sources were listed as social networking (4.40) and friends, family, classmates, and coworkers (4.0).

Another finding of the study was a positive correlation between how visible minorities were in the media and how realistic the student viewed the portrayal of minorities in the media. Students reported minorities' portrayals of being more accurate the more visible they reported the specific minority group. For example, African Americans were reported as being the most visible of minority groups for each student, and were overall seen as being the most realistically portrayed minority. It is important to specify that a realistic portrayal does not equal a positive or negative portrayal.

When it came to career representations in the desired field for each student, white students reported that they felt their race was between being represented equally with minorities

to being somewhat over represented. Contrary to this minority students reported being between equally represented in the career field they desired and being somewhat underrepresented. It is also important to note most students reported their career of choice being in the media and entertainment industry from this sample.

A negative correlation between race visibility and students being able to see themselves in characters demonstrated that students that the least diversity there was in a media program (less minority visibility), the more likely students reported they were able to see themselves. Inversely, the more visible minorities were in the media, the less likely students reported being able to see themselves.

An explanation of these findings would be the more visible a minority is in the media a student is consuming, the more portrayals students are to see, including accurate or inaccurate portrayals. And our research showed, if a student finds the portrayals to be unrealistic, the least likely they are to report seeing themselves. However, as stated previously the more visible a race is in the media, the more accurate the portrayal. Therefore, the more accurate the portrayals of minorities, the least likely students are to report seeing themselves. This can be an example of Social Identity theory's in group and out group tendencies. Students, whether or not they are minorities will not identify themselves with a group if they do not perceive the depiction to be positive. It can be assumed then that the portrayals of minorities are perceived to be negative, while being realistic, therefore students do not report seeing themselves in these characters. When it came to specific minority groups, African Americans and Hispanics were reported as being more realistic specifically the more visible they were.

When it came to extremeness, students reported the more realistic portrayals were for a minority group the less extreme portrayals were of minorities, in general. Students then reported

a negative correlation that the more helpful television shows and movies were, the less extreme they thought minority portrayals were. The correlation was not significant but showed the more realistic the media is, the less extreme students are to perceive it and the more helpful they find it in terms of making career decisions.

Out of the inspirations reported, 17 of the sample, (N =21), reported an inspiration that was of the same racial background of the student. Interestingly, 17 students also reported a professional inspiration that was of the same gender as well, 15 in which included having the same gender and race as their listed career inspiration.

Relationship Between TV Shows, Movies Students Watch and Career Choices

A college student's weekly schedule typically can be hectic. In college, students have more freedom in choosing their class times and usually shape their day around those times. Depending on the schedule, students may or may not have leisure time each day. However, in the sample *N*=21, students reported a weekly average of eight hours watching television, three for major broadcasting networks, such as NBC, ABC, CBS and Fox, three hours watching cable television networks such as Bravo, MTV, and HBO, and an average of two hours on ethnic broadcasting networks such as BET and Telemundo (minority students consuming an average of two hours and whites consuming less than one hour). Students then reported an average of two and half hours each week watching movies; this means that students watch on average about one movie each week. In a month, students on average reported watching three movies.

Students generally reported watching television shows and movies for entertainment purposes. Results were based on analyses of student' responses to open-ended questions about why they select certain television shows and movies. The most common answers were amusement and entertainment. However, in a select few students indicated watching shows that

related to career fields they were going to explore, particularly in the journalism field. For example, a student listed watching Mad Man due to its showing of the public relations field, while another student listed the Rachel Maddow show, her reasoning was, " I admire Rachel Maddow for her investigative reporting and sarcasm." Other examples were seen with shows like The View and Wendy Williams, in which students listed watching them because they admired a particular style of reporting similar to what they wish to do. Shows and movies genres varied from Dramas, Talk Shows, Cartoons, Reality Television, and Comedies. Comedy was the most common genre for movies, while Drama and Reality Television were the most common television genres. Students typically did not report watching television shows that correlated to their career aspirations, just in those few cases. On average students reported watching no movies in the past month that had relation to their future career path, but reported an average of watching at least one show that was related to their future career.

What Shapes Students' Career-Related Decisions

Data showed that college students typically are not turning to television and movies for career decisions. When asked in a close ended question "How helpful have television/movie characters or personalities been in terms of helping you decide what kind of job you want," students responded with an average answer for television being somewhat helpful to a little helpful only two students reporting it to be very helpful. Students then reported movies as being not helpful at all to a little helpful and only one student reporting it to be very helpful.

Students were more likely to report personal factors (family, friends, people they know in the industry, academic research, and academic success) of influencing knowledge and esteem in regards to their career. The most common answers when students were asked to rank the level of influence each factor had on their confidence to success in achieving professional goals and their

sources of information, were family and friends. Other popular answers were academic research and industry experience. This supported my hypothesis that media is not the dominant factor for college students career decisions.

However, when it came to naming one person as an inspiration in their career field, only nine students reported knowing their inspiration through personal contact. This proved to be a contradiction in students not being ranking media as one of the primary influences in sources of information and career confidence. Most students reported knowing of the inspiration only through television while others reported knowing him or her from books or magazines. This suggests that college students may not be consuming media right now that is closely related to their field of choice, but at some point did and were inspired. Also, this suggests students may not be aware of the media's influence on their career choices.

Media Portrayals and Social Identity

According to Social Identity theory, racial groups tend to identify with more positive images of their race and are more likely to watch positive reinforcing messages of them, and watch negative portrayals of other races.

African American Sub Sample: When African American students were asked about the visibility of specific minority groups in the media they consume, the data showed that they reported seeing more African Americans than people of other minority backgrounds in the media.

Table 3: How Visible is Each Minority in the Media African Americans Consume?

Minority Portrayed	Visibility on 5 point Scale
African Americans	3.70
Hispanics	3.10
Asians	2.20
Native Americans	1.50
Arab Americans	1.70

African Americans were more likely to see Hispanics as being visible in their media usage, in comparison to other minorities listed (Asians, Native Americans, and Arab-Americans). When questioned about how realistic the portrayal of each minority was, African American students listed their own race as being portrayed the most accurate, and Hispanics being the second most realistic. When asked how extreme the portrayals of minorities in the news media are, African American students were ambivalent with an average mean off 2.75 out of a scale of 1 to 4. When asked if they could see themselves in the portrayal of characters who were African Americans, students reported an ambivalent score of 3.50 out of a scale of 1 to 7. Students neither strongly agreed or disagreed about seeing themselves. As mentioned in the literature review, Staples and Jones (1985) reported that 49% of African Americans are portrayed in stereotypical roles such as criminals or servants. These results prove to be consistent with past research that the media does not give a variety of selection of portrayals for African Americans leaving them to with little characters to identify with.

The media maintains a generic view of minorities in media. Mainstream and cable networks incorporate African Americans and Hispanics in their definition of minorities but

typically do not include other ethnicities such as Native Americans, Asians and Asian Americans, as well as Arabs and Arabs Americans. When Caucasian students were asked about the visibility of minorities in the media they regularly consume, they reported African Americans as being predominantly visible (a four on a one to five scale). Hispanics were the second most reported visible minority (three on a one to five scale), while native Americans, Asian Americans, and Arab Americans, were reported as being barely visible in the media they use. Both African Americans and Latinos reported seeing African Americans more than others in their minority visibility questions. This could be attributed to the media industries generic use of American Americans as the minority quota. However, according to Social Identity theory African Americans were expected to report seeing more of themselves in media because people are more likely to identify with others of their own racial group.

White Sub- Sample: Data showed that Caucasian students viewed Hispanics as being portrayed in the media more realistically than other minorities, with African Americans leading closely behind them. They viewed both races as neither being completely realistic and completely unrealistic; rather they were mutual with a score of 3.20 for African Americans and 3.25 for Hispanics, on a five-point scale, five being completely realistic. This suggests white students could not clarify whether or not the media's portrayal of minorities were accurate; they were indecisive. Africans American students and Hispanic students neither strongly agreed nor disagreed about seeing themselves in minority characters in the media. Also, both averaged a score of a three on a five- point scale in regards to minority portrayals being extreme in the news, stating they neither completely disagreed or agreed.

Relationships of Media to Overall Self-Esteem and Pursing Career Goals

The self-esteem assessment results did not show a significant difference between the esteem of minority students and white students, regardless of the difference among them in the amount of media they consume. This showed that the amount of media that college students are consuming may not play a factor in their self-esteem. A number of factors can contribute to these results including the fact that college students are believed to be more mature and independent compared to younger students. This maturity can give them a better sense of who they are and a less likelihood of their esteem being affected by the amount of type of media they consume. There was also no significant difference between minority students and whites in whether or not they were encouraged or discouraged in pursing their future career. While there was a time difference in consumption of minority students in comparison to white students, encouragement level was not affected. This suggests that not only are college minority students not more necessarily affected by portrayals, both negative and positive, in the media they are consuming, there is also not correlation on how much media a student uses and how discouraged or encouraged a student is from that .

The amount of encouragement students felt in being able to succeed in their desired career path was positively correlated to how helpful television and movies were in choosing a career. However, the Pearson correlation was not significant which could be due to the size of the sample. The correlation showed that students who reported a show and movie as being very helpful in making decisions on careers, were more encouraged that they could succeed in that profession, regardless of racial groups. There was also a positive correlation between how helpful students found television shows to be helpful and movies to be helpful. The more likely a student was to report that a show was helpful, the more likely they reported a movie was helpful.

Discussion

In this study, media did not prove to be a significant factor in college students' career aspirations, regardless of the students' race. Generally, there were no differences between Caucasian students and minority students' reported media influence, but there was a difference in the amount of media consumed between racial groups proving that hypothesis correct. African American students reported watching twice as much major mainstream English television networks, compared to Caucasian students. Hispanics reported an average of an hour more, during a week, compared to Caucasian students. This replicated the findings from the Center on Media and Human Development from Northwestern University's research, proving that African American and Hispanics, on average, consume more television.

Media Consumption Do Not Influence Students Professional Aspirations Directly

Despite the considerable amount of time students reported spending with media of all sorts over the course of a typical week, this study did not support the hypothesis that increased exposure to media causes an increased influence in minority students. According to past research, African American students are expected to be more susceptible to modeling effects, such as mocking behavior, due to frequent television viewing, them believing that television is an educator, their belief in what is depicted on television, and their identification with African American characters (King & Multon, 1996). There were no significant racial differences found in this study between the encouragements of all media, in regards to making career decisions. African American students also proved to have performed just as well on the self-esteem

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assessment as Caucasian students, even though African Americans average media weekly consumption was much higher. This may have been due to the sample being college students in comparison to the King and Multon study where junior high school students were used. My analyses indicated that for students in this study television exposure was not related to their levels of esteem in terms choosing a career or knowledge about their career of choice.

This study also proved that ethnic television is more commonly watched by minority students. This remains consistent with Tajfel's Social Identity Theory assumption that one's racial group influences the type of media they consume (Tajfel, 1978). The hypothesis that people tend to consume media with positive reinforcing messages about their racial background was not fully supported true because while minority background students were more likely to consume media related to their race, the data did not indicate that ethnic media are more influential than mainstream television networks in terms of influencing students' esteem. According to Social Identity Theory, selective exposure is active in choosing one's media usage, with the greater likelihood of consuming media with the racial group one belongs to (Tajfel, 1978). This explains that Caucasian students particularly would not be watching more television shows with minorities in the cast. Contrary, minority students were more likely to be consuming ethnic television due to the fact that it caters more to their race and ethnicity. Social Cognitive Theory also predicts that students were drawn to individuals belonging to their "in group" because people tend to observe behavioral tendencies similar to their own, in order to evaluate their behavior (Bandura, 2001).

Social Cognitive Theory states that one's decisions are influenced by their environment, personal factors, and their behavior (University at Texas, 2013). The data from this study supported the notion that personal factors, in particular, shape students' career decisions.

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Students were more likely to report being influenced by parents, family, friends, experiences, academic research and accomplishments rather than media. Moreover, students' media consumption (i.e., the number of hours students spent per week with various types of media, traditional and new) did not strongly correlate with how confident they felt about succeeding in pursuing their career of choice. In addition, students typically did not report watching shows and movies that were portraying professions they wished to pursue. This could be due to the stress from the college environment that students mainly take to the media as an entertainment outlet rather than a career educational medium. Also this could be attributed to the sample being comprised mainly of college juniors and seniors, who are assumed to have already shaped their career path prior to what they are now seeing on television and in the media. Students, on average, reported typically liking a show and choosing to watch it because they found it to be amusing. Furthermore, college students reported consuming a significantly greater amount of social media in comparison to watching television shows and movies. Past research has been focused on television as a primary influence on career decisions on students, but social media is proving to be the more dominant medium of media being used today. Future research should study the impact of social media on college students' professional aspirations and goals. Given that students reported interpersonal relationships as more important sources of influence when it came to making career-related choices and the fact that communication via social media has characteristics of both interpersonal and mass communication, one might expect social media use to shape students' views around possible careers and their professional prospects in significant ways.

Media's Indirect Roles in Shaping College Students Career-Related Goals

Interestingly, although students reported that media was not a main factor in influencing their confidence to succeed in achieving professional goals or did not report television or movies related to their future careers as being very helpful, when asked to name a professional inspiration, students typically listed someone who they saw on television, or read about in books and magazines. There are several possible reasons why students contradicted themselves in this study.

The first possible explanation is because of the particular sample of students. Students were selected from media-focused student organizations on campus. Generally, these students' reported career aspirations included news/sports anchors, broadcasters, actors, film makers, journalists, video programmers, and television show personalities. While students may not have found what they consume in the media to be helpful, they could be using it to reaffirm a career decision made previously and shaped by other factors. For example, a student listed being a journalist in the open-ended question, "Tell me about your career and professional goals. What would you love to do when you're done with college?" She then listed Diane Sawyer and Robin Roberts as people in the field she inspired to become. This suggested that her confidence to succeed in her career is not coming from what she views from her inspirations on television. Rather her career esteem and decisions are being influenced by other factors while she wishes to obtain her inspirations' career level of success.

What these students viewed on television and in movies might be generally considered as positive reinforcement for their careers-related choices because students were more likely to report a professional inspiration as being someone they viewed in the media. According to Social Learning Theory, this is due to admiration (King & Multon, 1996). Admiration is linked to characters (particularly those in media-related professions, including journalists, producers, and

actors) being portrayed in a heroic positive light. The media tend to glorify these media-related professions, rather than describe them realistically. Bandura (1977) discussed that positive and rewarding portrayals of an occupation sparks desire in children and this study showed that college students still maintain this spark from childhood when viewing a reinforcing portrayal.

These results demonstrated that positive reinforcing messages in some way assist students with their careers because they reported being inspired by someone in their field they felt achieved a certain level of success. Research from past findings showed that television does supply role models but that this influences a child's behavior and attitude (King & Multon, 1996). The age difference in the studies suggests that, as a child, students rely on their role models to shape their decisions. In contrast, college students do not see their role models as someone who affects their confidence and behavior. However, because they do not think them as impacting them does not mean they are not doing so; students may be unaware.

This leads to a second reasoning behind students' contradictory responses that could be they are unaware of the media influences. The media and what they are watching can be unconsciously shaping students' decisions. They might report that what they see on television and in movies are not helpful in making career choices and that the news, TV shows, and movies, are not significant influences in their confidence to succeed, but in reality are being either encouraged or discouraged by viewing an inspiration in the media. The lack of choices for inspirations in a student's race might subconsciously impact a minority student's career esteem.

Who Are Students' Career Role Models?

Out of the inspirations reported, 17 students of the sample, (N =21), reported an inspiration that was of the same racial background of the student; while the same number of

students reported having an inspiration of the same sex as them. This suggests race and sex equally have an impact on students choosing their role models. In the Multon and King (1996) study, it was stated that children imitate models of their same race and same sex that hold an authority or status. The research from this study remained consistent with this assumption, as it was shown that a student typically related to someone who was of the same race and gender. The few differences in race and gender were not surprising as they were with females and minorities. The exceptions to students who did not report an inspiration being the same sex were females who reported male inspirations. The exceptions to the students who did not report someone of the same race being an inspiration were minorities, particularly Hispanics and a Korean student. This suggests there might not be as many visible, in the media and in their life, inspirations of this racial group and of women. Gibbs et. al (2011) research pointed out that other minorities are not predominantly used in the media and when they are seen, they tend to be portrayed in a negative light. Our research also showed that students typically reported seeing little to no portrayals of minorities that were not African Americans and seeing some that were Hispanics. This suggests that the media defines "minority" mainly as "African American" and they largely overlook other ethnicities. Therefore there are few role models of a particular race other than white. Furthermore, the literature indicates that historically African Americans tend to be portrayed in a negative light in the media (Gibbs et. al, 2011). Insofar as media use African American characters as "stand-ins" for all characters of minority background and those characters are more often than not bad role models, the negative, indirect impact of media on minority college students' career aspirations. may be more damaging than suggested by a surface analysis of the answers college students offered in the context of this study.

A final reason behind students' inspiration answers is that students may associate inspirations to be people who are out of touch with them. By definition an inspiration is the process of being mentally stimulated to do or feel something (dictionary.com). In today's society people place the word inspiration with a positive connotation, even further, some people see inspirations as people at the highest level of obtainable success, in which the person may not individually know him or her. An inspiration in this study proved to be more so someone students reported not knowing through physical contact, suggesting they may associate an inspiration with someone who is in a position out of reach to them.

Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

Limitations of this study included the sample size and selection. Using 21 students provided some significant findings, but more defined results could have been demonstrated using a bigger sized sample. Also, students were specifically chosen from two organizations on campus relating to broadcasting and acting. Using students whose career occupation that varied across fields could have produced different results particularly in the inspiration open-ended question. If students were selected from a science or Nano-technology orientated sample, there may not have been as many inspirations listed from the media.

Further research should focus more on college students' career aspirations and the media effects using a bigger and more career diverse sample. Future research also can be done on social media effects on students' career choices, compared to past research that has particularly focused on television being the dominant force. With the rise of Twitter as a news source, and sites such as Tumbler, Facebook, and Instagram being a daily part of students' lives, it is not predicting on what they are seeing that can shape their personal and career choices.

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