Representation of Minorities on College Web Pages

by

J. Cruz Perez

A CAPSTONE PROJECT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the acknowledgement

Honors Distinction

TYLER JUNIOR COLLEGE
Tyler, Texas

2020

Approved by:

Capstone Coordinator
Professor Ryan Button
Abstract/Executive Summary

Advertisements play an important role in nearly everyone’s life. Every single day people view a wide range of advertisements. With the population of America becoming more and more diverse in terms of race it would make sense that advertisements would reflect that same concept. However, it does not appear that advertisements actually reflect this idea. In the 2010 ads for the Super Bowl, only four out of the sixty-seven featured an African American in an ad. (Lapchick, 2010) Not only are minorities not being adequately represented in advertisements but they also only get featured for certain ads. African Americans find themselves featured in ads for beauty whereas Asians are found more in ads for technology. (Jacobson, 1995) There is obviously a misrepresentation of minorities in ads however, what is currently unknown is if this is true when it comes to college ads. Nearly every college, if not all, are advertising their schools so that more and more people will attend their school. The true question is whether or not college ads have continued with the mainstream ideals of advertising. A way to analyze this is by selecting 3 universities and 3 community or junior colleges by random and then looking at students presented on their website front page. Students who were being showcased on the website are students interacting with each other and are singled out for a variety of reasons. By comparing how many times a minority student appears in an advertisement versus what the overall percentage that minority group makes up at that specific school, one could determine whether or not that minority group is being adequately represented in ads. This is important because schools could possibly not be representing what their student demographics show. Just in all types of other advertisements this could affect how someone views a school and potentially how someone selects a school. This deeply impacts both the students and the schools. The data showed that the majority race within a school are being overrepresented while the minority students are being
underrepresented. With 9/10 schools having a majority consisting of whites this helps make the argument that whites are being overrepresented on college web pages compared to the others.

Introduction:

This study was designed to investigate college web pages in East Texas. The research consisted of selecting five Junior and Community Colleges and five universities and analyzing who is being displayed on the college web page. Web pages are one of the first things that students and parents will view when they are looking at colleges. College web pages are meant to be the face of the school because they play a vital role in how students interact with their school. This is why web pages were selected to analyze. With there being so many students on a web page the focus of this study was to identify students who were being featured not merely placed on the website. The criteria for determining whether someone was being featured was that the student must be at the forefront of the picture. Students who were in the background of a picture (behind other students) were not included in the data because they are merely spectators not students being featured. Being featured means being the focus of the picture therefore it could be a face or body part of a person that was identifiable. The reason for this criteria was to discover if the majority of the school were being represented equally to the school’s demographics and likewise with the minority. The basic research question is, Are colleges web pages presenting students equally to the actual school demographics?

Background:

Baumann and Ho found that within Canada’s advertisements that some were represented proportionally to the population within the country but also found that others like Hispanics were not found to have the same representation. However, after doing a content analysis they found that many of the ads did represent minorities in roles or jobs. Asians were used in ads that featured them as “workaholics” and “tech savvy”. So their role within the ads was mere a representation of what the world would think that population would be. All throughout the study they found that certain races were portrayed in several different ways to which appealed to stereotypical thoughts about that race.


Nicholas Bowman conducted a study that incorporated 8,615 students across 49 different college campuses. His study found that interactions among students of different race did very well help educational benefits only if they happened frequently. By using two separate surveys he measured leadership, psychological well-being, intellectual engagement, intercultural effectiveness and overall diversity interactions. He found that colleges and universities often promoted their campuses as diverse but the real way to help diversity was to give students the opportunity to interact with one another. With more and more institutions wanting to show their diversity, he suggested that they help advertise to underrepresented minorities by attending schools that are heavily populated by minorities. Mr. Bowman believes that there is no way for
the institutions to be able to ensure that students interact with students of other races but they should give students a “positive climate that are associated with increased diversity interactions”.


https://doi-org.tjc.idm.oclc.org/10.1111/ijpo.12203

Fleming and Harris tested to see how minorities were being affected by ads that targeted African American students. They used a system where GPR’s were measured in order to determine how often ads were featured for “junk food” like candy and sodas. Their study found that African Americans actually viewed food ads more often than White young people with respect to their age group. They found that African American young people viewed more ads which more than likely causes them to experience a higher levels of obesity. This article provides insight into how certain ads affect minorities and their likelihood to purchase goods more often.


Matthew N. Gaertner and Melissa Hart wrote this analysis to show how important racial diversity is important college campuses. Their mainpoint is that Affirmative Action is necessary to help promote diversity not merely due to race but also socioeconomic status. Many opponents believe that Affirmative Action gets rid of merit based admission however, Affirmative Action seems to help promote students who have the academics the opportunity to shine just like the
other students. Their view is that diversity on campus is good and Affirmative Action helps to facilitate this.


Elisabeth Gentry, MSW, Katie Poirier, AB, Tiana Wilkinson, BA, Siphannay Nhean, MPH, Justin Nyborn, MPH, and Michael Siegel, MD, MPH all worked together to see how alcohol ads were affecting people in the greater area of Boston. They tested three counties: Norfolk, Middlesex, and Suffolk. Over three days they went to the stations and took note of the alcohol ads that were being shown to people. They found that stations where the populations were dominated by low poverty there were more ads that featured alcohol. This reveals how strategic advertising plays in when dealing with certain types of people whether it be race, gender, sexual orientation, etc. This research once again reveals how important advertising is on the potential consumer.


Sylvia Hurtado is the Director of the Higher Education Research Institute, Adriana Ruiz Alvarado is a postdoctoral scholar, and Chelsea Guillermo-Wann is a data analyst and they studied salience amongst college students. By using a survey they were able to analyze data...
either by gender, race, sexual orientation, and level college. One of the biggest and important information they found was that students who are underrepresented tended to think about race more often. They also found that it mattered how informed students were about race. Students who were exposed to talks about racial identity were more likely to be racial salient.


Jacobson and Mazur found that race plays a major in how people perceive certain type of advertising. They found that black are more likely to be in beauty or cosmetic products. Blacks also find themselves overrepresented in ads that feature alcohol like wine, beer, and liquor. This is important because the way people perceive a group people can be affected by what they being featured in. This study is extremely significant because it reveals one way how how marketing can help or hinder the way certain people are viewed.


Ms. Kilbourne discovered that there was a significant amount of bias in media specifically dealing with women. The study found that there was a significant difference in the amount of characters, talking time, and screen time in movies between male and female characters. Women seemed to be underrepresented in movies.


[https://doi.org/tjc.idm.oclc.org/10.1007/s00148-017-0657-9](https://doi.org/tjc.idm.oclc.org/10.1007/s00148-017-0657-9)
Masanori Kuroki from the Arkansas Tech University wanted to analyze how whites felt about other races. His study focused on whites since the 2016 election to which Donald Trump. The Trump campaign ran as a way to create a form of nationalism for whites.

His study used the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Survey (BRFSS) which asked the question of how happy someone is on based on a four point scale. He found that whites are more likely to be unhappy when they are in a heavily populated area of minorities. He also found that typically younger whites were more happy.


https://doi-org.tjc.idm.oclc.org/10.1177/1932202X16630348

Joni Lakin from the University of Auburn began the study by trying to fill in the gaps that were evident from a previous research. She found that the best way to help diversity among students is to screen students rather than being referred by other people. This research is essential because it shows how many students are underrepresented. The system did not help these students achieve simply because of the lack of awareness. Another reason this research is important is because it reveals an underlying theme which is that representing minorities takes more time and money in this case because more time must be used to screen all the students. In order for minorities to get equally represented, effort will be needed.


Lapchick looked at advertisements that were aired during the 2010 Super Bowl. He found that African Americans were drastically underrepresented in terms of advertisements. He found that
there were millions of dollars spent on ads yet their ads used primarily caucasian in the ads. Also African Americans were depicted as being lower income and the African American women as single mothers. Overall, Mr. Lapchick found that the ads didn’t give a fair representation of African Americans.


It has been shown that woman are used more as objects in media and don’t get an equal amount of time in media as men. It was found that there within a 10 year frame that typically white women received more opportunities to be “stars”. Also they way genders were represented depended on gender and social status. The way specific genders, age, and ethnicity played a role in how and when people were used in advertisements.


Mr. Sanchez and his team from the University of Nevada looked to analyze how students perception of their academics and social life on the campus when it deals with diversity. They used a survey that measured “race/ethnicity, nationality, socioeconomic status/social class, gender, people with disabilities, gifted/talented individuals, language, religion, sexual identity, and geographic area/community type”. Their surveys intention was to see how diversity played a role in student’s lives and how they viewed the interactions with other people. They found that most students seemed to find that their was a good amount diversity with respect to the student
interactions however, the minority populations with respect to sexual orientation and race gave significantly lower ratings. Sanchez believes that conscious awareness would help with these problems.


This team from the U.S. Department of Commerce Economics and Statistics Administration they found that the population of the U.S. is quickly growing. The main reason for this growth in the population is due to major international immigration. Non-specific whites are expected to decrease while people of two or more races are expected to increase. Their birth rate and death rate are not moving a the same pace therefore the decline in population is due the death rate not matching their birth rate.


Whittler and Spira looked to analyze whether African Americans responded more to ads that featured other African Americans. They selected 160 African Americans and placed them into four different groups and showed the ads that featured both White and African Americans in strong weak roles and asked them a set of questions. The questions were used to determine if they could remember the product and how they felt about the African American culture. It was found that African Americans “expressed a greater liking” for ads that featured African Americans.
Method:

Due to there being thousands of college campuses across the country, the colleges that were going to be analyzed were colleges specifically located in the East Texas region. Then the colleges were separated according to their status as either a community or junior college and a university. Then each college in each list were given a number and using a random number generator five colleges per group were selected to be analyzed. This gave a randomization for the college selections. Once the colleges were selected the process began of defining who was a featured student on the web page. The criteria laid out and used was that a student is being featured when that student stands alone or in a group no larger than 5 and those students must be at the front of the picture no merely standing behind. The reason a large group of students is not considered into the data collected is because the group not the individual is being featured like the band or the student council; they are an extension of the group not individually being recognized. Also all the demographic data used in the comparison came from Collegefactual.com which is a website designed to help inform students of essentially every part of the school from its national ranking to the cost and its top programs.

Results:

Actual school demographics  College web page statistics
Kilgore College’s main web page featured 4 students in total which consisted of three white students and one African American student. Given the statistics of the school it shows that there is an overrepresentation of white students by a margin of 18% and an under representation of minorities by 51% with no Hispanics, Asians or other races being shown on the web page.

Paris Junior College only had one picture on their web page which consisted of a white student's hand. With White being the only race displayed it is easy to say that there whites are overrepresented and minorities are not even represented.

Texas College was the only college where the majority race was a minority, African Americans. With saying that, there is an overrepresentation of African Americans and whites whereas
Hispanics, Asians, and other account of 11% of the school’s population but receive no representation.

Trinity Valley Community College had 14 students featured on their web page. They are one of the few colleges where whites were actually underrepresented by 24.3% and three out of the four minority groups were overrepresented. Both Hispanics and Asians were overrepresented, according to the school’s demographics by a factor of 14.3%. Trinity Valley was the only community college to actually overrepresent more than one minority groups.
Tyler Junior College only featured White students and Hispanic students. Whites were featured 22% more than their make-up of the school’s demographics. Hispanics were overrepresented by a fairly small margin. Once again, African Americans, Asians, and other are not represented at all on the college web page although they make up a combined 28% of the population of the school.

**University Data**

![Bar chart showing proportions of different racial groups at East Texas Baptist University](chart.png)

East Texas Baptist University featured 12 students and it is evident that they were following the pattern of the other schools, they overrepresented whites, the majority by and underrepresented the minorities. Hispanics were almost represented equally to their actual demographics and Asians appeared in the photo although it appears that a very small proportion were attending the college. African Americans were heavily underrepresented.
Le Tourneau University was quite different than the other universities because it had two minorities that were actually overrepresented, African Americans and Hispanics. With saying that, they still underrepresented students by 14.6% while the majority were overrepresented once again.

Stephen F. Austin is by far the most interesting college because it had an underrepresentation of the majority and an overrepresentation the minorities. Another major note is that with respect to the African American representation on the web page, they were almost featured identically to the exact school population of African Americans. Also Hispanics were overrepresented by 15%.
Texas A&M Texarkana only featured whites and African Americans which does equate to the majority being underrepresented however, it was by a small margin of 3%. In essence, the numbers show that the website was close to representing minorities however, only African Americans were represented and Hispanics, Asians, and others were not featured. They equate for about a fifth of the school’s population but they have no representation on their college web pages.

Like Texas A&M Texarkana the University of Texas at Tyler also only featured Whites and African Americans. UT Tyler had a very large overrepresentation of whites by a factor of 26.7%. They also did not feature any Hispanics, Asians, and others despite them taking up 31% of the
schools population. UT Tyler had by far the largest underrepresentation of minorities of the
Universities.

**Implication for further Research:**

This research has significant value for colleges. This research gives institutions a
snapshot of how unequally they are representing the majority versus minorities on their web
pages. Many colleges consider themselves to be campuses that are diverse in their student
population however, their advertisements might not truly reflect that. This study primarily looks
at how diverse the student population of their advertisements are. Advertisements play a vital
role in how a product is viewed either positively or negatively which affects how often that
product is bought. This specific research does not study how likely someone is to attend the
school however, future research could see whether these advertisements do affect their likelihood
to attend that specific school. This research could possibly pave the way for others to analyze the
importance of advertisements effect on minorities and their college selection.

**Conclusion:**

The data from the study found that the majority are being overrepresented on college’s
main web pages. For junior and community colleges, the majority were overrepresented by an
average of 10.8% for each school while the universities overrepresented the majority by an
average of 7.08% compared to the actual school demographics. The data shows that colleges are
overrepresenting the majority of the population. Comparatively, the junior and community
colleges are not representing their minorities by a larger percent compared to the universities.
Minorities are, on average, underrepresented by 2.70% on junior college levels compared to the
universities who are underrepresenting the minorities by 1.82% on average. Overall, the data
shows that minorities are not getting representation on their school’s web pages while the majority are being displayed more often. This is important because for 9/10 schools, the majority are Whites (Texas College’s majority are African Americans).

It is also important to note that 4/5 of the community or junior colleges underrepresented minorities whereas 2/5 of the universities underrepresented the minorities and the margin was far greater with community and junior colleges. From the data it appears that the universities did a better job at not over representing the majority (which were all white in this case) and better at giving the minorities the representation reflective of their actual demographics of attendance at the college.