

Written evidence submitted by Hannah Graham (COM0114)

I feel as though the scientists or people who work in science that are popular or 'famous' in the media are few and far between. For example, I would say the most popular in the media would be Stephen Hawking, a fantastic scientist well deserving of his fame and popularity. Then there is a massive gap between the next set of science professionals: Brian Cox and Richard Dawkins for example. After this there are many well respected scientists but not well known in the media. I believe this to be a real shame as children today should be looking up to scientists as role models and not to celebrities such as reality TV stars or singers for example. I also don't think that the most famous or popular scientists in the media are very diverse. Scientists are mainly middle class white men so are not necessarily role models representative of the population of Britain.

I think the media portrays science in a very inaccessible way, especially for children. I think the media portrays science in the same way that the media portrays politics. I think the media should have a moral duty to make science more accessible to the public to inspire a new generation of scientists in the UK. To make both more accessible for the general population, they need to be broken down and delivered to the population in easy to manage chunks and not assuming that the general population understand scientific language. I think a great way to get children more engaged would be to go into schools, or even set up a youth scientists board to get the views of young people. If young people can understand, then everyone can understand.

As a computer scientist (both my BSc and MSc were studied at Teesside University), I don't recall seeing any STEM campaigns that influenced my University decisions. Fortunately I have been interested in computer science from a very early age and chose to study it in higher education irrespective of any campaigns. In terms of modern campaigns, I have heard of the WISE campaign, aiming to inspire girls and women to study and build careers using science, technology, engineering and maths, however I really don't think any of these campaigns are very widely known in the media. Online, yes, but in terms of TV and radio etc - I don't recall seeing any STEM campaigns advertised. I think these campaigns are fantastic, rewarding our female scientists that have gone the extra mile in their field, however I think they should be broadcast far and wide. Especially the winners of awards. I think the winners of the awards should be advertised on TV to inspire other young women to go on to achieve the same.

I do visit Science museums and exhibitions if they are held in my area or are easily accessible to attend. I thoroughly enjoy the Science Museum in London and I think it is so important to keep this free to the public as it is a great example of opening up science to everyone. Similar museums and exhibitions should be in every city in the UK as obviously not everybody can get to London. I think the museum is very engaging and interactive, therefore very interesting for both children and adults alike. It can easily fill a whole afternoon's entertainment.

Other than charity adverts such as Cancer Research UK or drug awareness adverts etc, I don't ever recall seeing any other adverts that relate to raising awareness in science. It's a real shame that children aspire to become actors and actresses, singers etc rather than wanting to be the next astrophysicist or neuroscientist. I actually think the only way that children gain any knowledge or awareness of science careers is through TV shows such as The Big Bang Theory - and that's American!

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