PRSA's Theoretical and Data–Driven Approach to Improving Diversity & Inclusion in Public Relations

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Abstract

Drawing on the history of advancing diversity and inclusion (D&I) in the public relations (PR) profession and within its organization, Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) designed and executed a three–phase study to assess D&I perceptions. Results from focus groups, interviews, and a survey revealed that: (i) there is a unified view of inclusion, but varied views on diversity among members, (ii) chapters need support to advance their D&I efforts, and (iii) there are opportunities for PRSA to be a change agent for D&I. The paper concludes by discussing the PRSA D&I strategic plan and future directions for scholars and practitioners eager to engage in D&I efforts.

Keywords: Strategic plan, PRSA, inclusion, diversity

Introduction

The year 2020 shone an intense light on the racial injustices that are embedded in the United States' justice, education, healthcare, and economic systems for centuries. From the senseless violence culminating in deaths (some call murders) of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery (Brown, 2020; Ortiz, 2020), to the more than 570,000 and counting deaths in the U.S. due to the COVID–19 pandemic (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], n.d.), there is a heightened awareness of the need for change.

The mistreatment of underserved minority populations and the need for diversity and inclusion (D&I) efforts predates these unfortunate events. As noted by Derek Bell Jr. (1991), racism has been and continues to be a permanent feature in our society where the Whites are privileged over racial minorities in every aspect of our civilization (Hiraldo, 2010). The racial reckoning that emerged in 2020 forced several leaders including those in the profession and the academy of public relations (PR) to hone their D&I efforts with a degree of urgency (Cutter & Weber, 2020; Ward & Akhtar, 2020).

Multiple indicators suggest that D&I efforts need to be strengthened within the PR field. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2019), women held nearly 73% of all PR management jobs. However, only 10.7% of those roles were held by African Americans (who represent 13.4% of the overall population), 3% of those roles were held by Asians (who represent 5.9% of the U.S. population), and 3% of those roles were held by Hispanics or Latinos (who represent 18.3% of the U.S. population). PR practitioners of color have been found to encounter discrimination and disrespect at their workplaces due to their racial and gender identities and have struggled to feel fully integrated into their organizations (Pompper, 2004, 2007). However, each of their experiences with discrimination are unique and complex, and need dedicated investigations to better understand their complexity, and while for a long time there was only "marginal interest in the field" of PR to explore these issues (Munshi & Edwards, 2011, p.362), scholars and practitioners seem to be making inroads into this area (Bhargava & Theunissen, 2019; Vardeman-Winter & Place, 2017).

The Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) a national organization that serves PR practitioners and scholars, and the Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA), a national organization that serves PR students, are actively pursuing efforts to assess and improve D&I within their professional organizations. This study is one such effort to understand and improve D&I by PRSA. The motivation for this study came from former National D&I committee co-chair and former National Board Member Dr. Felicia Blow, APR, who wanted PRSA to pursue D&I in more proactive ways. The concept for an analysis on this effort was presented by Dr. Blow (then Mrs. Blow) to the 2018 and 2019 PRSA Boards of Directors for approval. The rationale was the low traction seen in attracting more diverse professionals from a PRSA membership point of view. Further, there had never been a formal study as proposed to assess opportunities to better track and inform programming for the expansion of diverse membership within PRSA.

Following 11 months of research, PRSA completed a comprehensive analysis in December 2019. This paper: (a) discusses the existing scholarship on PR research and theories – CRT, schema theory, and social identity theory, (b) outlines the data collection and analysis, and (c) reports the resulting first–ever, multi–year D&I strategic plan of PRSA that has a focus and determination to help bridge the gap in diverse representation and inclusion in the PR profession.

Theory Considerations Surrounding D&I

The common perception of a PR professional is that of a White, middle–class, woman (Bhargava & Theunissen, 2019; Edwards, 2011; Fitch, 2016; Vardeman-Winter & Place, 2017), having the *right* credentials and knowledge, and is also charismatic, sociable, and has a well–connected professional network (Brown, 1995; Edwards, 2012). There are also assumptions that the PR professional is likely to be abled and heterosexual (Sison, 2017; Tindall & Waters, 2013; Vardeman–Winter & Place, 2017). These gendered, heteronormative, racial, and privileged stereotypical visions of a PR professional are perpetuated within the field and are rarely questioned (see Bhargava & Theunissen, 2019; Vardeman–Winter & Place, 2017). Job advertisements for PR positions appear to illustrate, rather than challenge, these stereotypical notions (see Bhargava & Theunissen, 2019; Gaucher et al, 2011; Jännäri et al., 2018). PR students are often affected by these stereotypes and those who fit the mold are attracted to it, and those who do not fit these descriptions are turned off by the field (Bowen, 2009; Brown et al., 2011), leading to a less diverse and a more homogenous community of professionals.

Diversity in PR can be defined as having members in the field who come from different races, ages, genders, sexual orientations, religious beliefs, abilities/disabilities, nationalities, and perspectives (Austin, 2010; Bhawuck & Triandis, 1996; Sha & Ford, 2007). Diversity without inclusion is insufficient (Sison, 2017). Inclusion in PR can be defined as having the space and the processes to ensure all in the field feel a sense of respect, belonging, and empowerment regardless of their identities (Deloitte, 2013; Sison, 2017). D&I in PR is becoming a prominent factor in: (1) hiring, mentorship, retention, and promotion practices, (2) nurturing a safe and healthy work environment, and (3) developing client and community engagement (Austin, 2010; Clemsons, 2013).

While there is a general recognition that PR needs to be more diverse and inclusive (Primo, 2020), there can be, in some cases, misguided efforts to inspire this change in the field. Historically, several organizations have had a practice of hiring Black or Hispanic PR professionals, regardless of their interests or skills, solely for their connections to Black or Hispanic audiences (Dávila, 2012; Dukes, 2017; Russell, 2020). Even in the nascent days of the profession, Joseph V. Baker and Moss Kendrix (two of the earliest Black pioneers in the PR field) were sometimes recruited by White clients to solely target the African American community (Hill, 2016; Russell, 2020). While these efforts could prevent racist campaigns, they can also pigeonhole minority practitioners into assigning clients or projects by solely focusing on their race (Brown et al, 2011; Len–Rios, 1998) and instead of addressing racism in the workplace – could perpetuate it.

The prevalence and perpetuation of racism, and the "preplanned equilibrium" that continues to privilege the whites and oppress racial minorities was discussed by Derek Bell Jr. (1987, 1991, p.80), Kimberlé Crenshaw (1988), Alan Freeman (1978), and several others, who laid foundation for the development of critical race theory [CRT] (Hiraldo, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1998). The core tenets of CRT are that racism will never go away, and although it might appear that our society is improving its race relations, it will never stop privileging whites and will only support legislation and policies so long as they don't threaten the whites (Bell, 1991; Crenshaw, 1988; Freeman, 1978; Hiraldo, 2010). Several scholars who contributed to CRT recommend being vigilant, dedicated to confronting racial oppression, and allowing space to hear from the racially marginalized communities about their experiences of subordination and

discrimination (Bell, 1991; Crenshaw et al., 1995; Hiraldo, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1998). Although CRT focuses on the racially marginalized, it can be a useful framework to study other marginalized communities.

Marginalization is "the process by which individuals, social groups, and even ideas are made peripheral to the mainstream by relegating or confining them to the outer edges or margins of society" (O'Leary, 2007). Marginalization is rarely unidimensional and often culminates to disadvantage individuals in multiple ways. Various identities such as race, caste, gender, class, sexual orientation, religion, disability, appearance, etc., and can add up to generating multiple strikes against an individual (Bowleg, 2008; Crenshaw, 1991; Vardeman-Winter & Place, 2017). Each of the marginalized groups have unique histories that have shaped their disempowerment, but they all unite in how these histories continue to shape the current prejudicial and discriminatory practices against them, intentionally or unintentionally. Thus, the goal with D&I efforts should be: (i) to avoid minimizing a person's identity to a single dimension and instead recognize their intersectionality i.e., "the 'multidimensionality' of marginalized" individuals (Crenshaw, 1989) (ii) understand the historical reasons for structural inequalities that continue to exist inside the organization and in communities at large, (iii) nurture spaces to hear their voices, (iv) build inclusion through the organization's pipeline, and (v) to strive for equity and unity for all while celebrating their diversity (Bowleg, 2008; Crenshaw, 1991; Vardeman-Winter & Tindall, 2010; Vardeman-Winter & Place, 2017). In theory and intuitively the D&I goals make sense, but psychologically there might be barriers to achieving these goals. Below we outline some of these psychological barriers using research pertaining to schema and social identity theory.

Individuals are continuously encoding their experiences to form their schemas (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). As individuals grow, they continuously shape and reshape their schema based on the information they are seeing, learning, experiencing, and use this information to form perceptions and ultimately make decisions (Bartlett, 1932; Piaget, 1954). Schemas are essential for efficient daily functioning, but they are not guaranteed to be accurate. Schemas developed from simplifying reality inaccurately can lead to negative stereotypical perceptions, which can persist in individuals due to social and cultural messages reinforcing those perceptions (Augoustinos & Walker, 1998). No one is immune from stereotyping, but according to the justification-suppression model, people may face conflicting emotions that can motivate individuals to suppress and not act on their prejudices (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003). Thus, while stereotypical categorization might be automatic and quick, people can decide whether and how those perceptions can affect their opinions and decision-making.

People use characteristics such as race, gender, or age to categorize individuals as either in-group or out-group members (Fiske, 1998). Social identity theory suggests that people tend to establish their identity in relation to their group memberships and they are continuously assessing whether others around them are part of their group (i.e., in-group members) or part of another group (i.e., out-group members) (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Individuals are trying to categorize themselves and others into ingroups or outgroups, all while attempting to understand the status, legitimacy, stability, permeability of and between groups, which then ultimately shapes their intergroup relations (Hogg, 2016). This uncontrollable nature of individuals to classify themselves and others into groups and sometimes having the instant urge to favor their own group (Hogg, 2016; Mummendey & Otten, 1998; Otten & Wentura, 1999), stands in stark tension with the D&I goals of breaking down group boundaries. According to the cognitive

diversity hypothesis organizations thrive when groups are less homogenous and more heterogeneous, because multiple perspectives aid in improving performance and creativity in groups (Horowitz & Horowitz, 2007; Miller, Burke, & Glick, 1998; Watson, Kumar, & Michaelsen, 1993). But simply enhancing diversity alone does not work, and there have to be efforts to complement those diversity efforts with enhancing inclusivity (Earley & Mosakowski, 2000; Kroeper et al., 2020; Watson et al., 1993). Thus, D&I efforts need to find ways to celebrate and empower unique identities while also trying to also create a larger professional unifying identity for PR students, practitioners, and scholars.

In this current era of racial reckoning there has been a proliferation of D&I efforts within organizations and on behalf of many of their clients, but there has also been a growing frustration of efforts being merely performative (Cutter & Weber, 2020; Ward & Akhtar, 2020). The D&I efforts that are focused on improving not only surface-level diversity dimensions but are authentically involved in creating an inclusive and equitable environment have been found to thrive (Earley & Mosakowski, 2000; Kroeper et al., 2020; Watson et al., 1993). For example, Beba and Church (2020) outlined four specific strategies that PepsiCo adapted for their D&I efforts that goes beyond simply growing a diverse network of employees. At PepsiCo they engage in: (1) having a team of applied psychologists analyzing data through the use of multiple methods to help inform their D&I strategies and measure their success, (2) being transparent, consistent, and authentic in their communication and actions pertaining to their D&I agenda, (3) building accountability through having employees rate their leaders'/organization's progress on their D&I goals and efforts, and (4) celebrating D&I efforts through awards and recognition, and constantly raising their bar for success (Beba & Church, 2020). There are other similar case studies and research that outline authentic D&I strategies and tactics (see, Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2021; Onyeador et al., 2021). Being data-driven, transparent, authentic, and intentional appears to be the key to practicing effective D&I (Beba & Church, 2020; Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2021; Onyeador et al., 2021).

PRSA's Strategic D&I Research

Historically, PRSA has engaged in efforts to advance D&I in the profession and within the organization for many years. For example, Black PR history–maker Joseph Varney Baker in 1958 became the first Black president of the PRSA Philadelphia Chapter (Kern-Foxworth, 2005). In addition, he was the first African American to earn the Accreditation in Public Relations (APR) designation (Meade, 2020). Since that time, dozens of practitioners of color have led their chapters, thousands have achieved their APR status and a select few have served as national PRSA Presidents.

Over the past 30 years, there have been numerous programs and tactics launched to support D&I initiatives among members (for example, Diversity & Inclusion at PRSA, n.d.; D&I Chapter Toolkit, 2020). These efforts include, but are not limited to the following activities: (i) in 1989, PRSA initiated the launch of a scholarship program for students for students of African-American/Black, Hispanic/Latino, Asian, Native American, Alaskan Native or Pacific Islander ancestry of $1,500 (Teahan et al., 2007), (ii) in 1990, PRSA initiated its philanthropy which in large part is designed to enhance efforts to engage a diverse range of ambitious and promising students to the profession through underwriting of scholarships in addition to attracting and developing diverse talent to the PR profession (Fuhrmann, 2005), (iii) established in 1990, PRSA

began the D. Parke Gibson Pioneer Award that is "PRSA's highest individual honor presented to a PR professional who has contributed to increased awareness of public relations within multicultural communities and participated in promoting issues that meet the needs of these diverse communities" (Elsasser, 2021; PRSA, CO, 2018), (iv) in 2010, PRSA launched the Chapter Diversity Awards program to recognize chapter excellence in the area of diversity (Fiske et al., 2016), (v) in 2016 and 2020, the National Committee promulgated D&I tool kits which serve as a practical guide for chapter, section, and district leaders in seeking to increase the diversity of their membership (D&I Chapter Toolkit, 2020; Fiske et al., 2016).

Also, important to highlight is that in 2010, D&I took on greater prominence within PRSA with the intentional leadership decision to enfold the multicultural section and formally establish the National D&I Committee (Fiske et al., 2016). At the time, the multicultural section required a membership fee of $60. However, the leadership at the time felt that the committee could do much better work as a committee without the barriers of fee payment in seeking greater diversity engagement (Applebaum, 2009).

Although PRSA through the efforts described above was striving to create a diverse and inclusive environment for its members, it also recognized the need to study D&I perceptions among its members. PRSA recognized that it could not assume that all members had the same schema i.e., understanding of what constituted D&I, and wanted to assess if there were differences in how various marginalized groups perceived the efficacy of PRSA's D&I efforts, nationally and in their chapters. As Danbold and Unzeuta (2020) recently found dominant and marginalized groups do not view D&I the same way. They conducted 7 studies that showed that individuals belonging to dominant (White, male) groups had significantly lower thresholds of minimum diverse representation compared to non-dominant (Black, Latino, female) groups. In other words, dominant and non-dominant groups did not agree on how much minimum representation was required in an organization for it to be termed as *diverse*. They found that those who identified as White reported lower thresholds of representation compared to those who identified as Black or Latino. Those who identified as Black or Latino however had similar thresholds for representation and did not vary significantly from each other. Similarly, those who identified as men had lower thresholds of representation compared to those who identified as women. Overall, these studies showed that definitions and perceptions of D&I vary based on group status, and that those belonging to dominant groups are more easily content with D&I efforts than nondominant groups. Additionally, given that there is evidence that for D&I efforts to be successful they need to be customized and data-driven (Beba & Church, 2020; Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2021; Onyeador et al., 2021), exploring these differences in definitions and perceptions among PRSA members was deemed important. The following research questions (RQs) guided this investigation:

    RQ1: How do the leaders and members of PRSA define diversity and inclusion?
    RQ2: How are D&I efforts being perceived among leaders and members of PRSA, nationally and on the chapter-level?
    RQ3: What are the opportunities for PRSA to be a change agent for D&I?

Methods

A request for proposals (RFP) was issued in late 2018/early 2019 to seek a consultant who would lead research on the behaviors, thoughts, attitudes of PRSA members broadly in

D&I. Bonney and Associates, a national research firm who had previously conducted a similar study with the American Marketing Association, were hired to assist with generating the instruments, the data collection, and analyses.

There were three phases of data collection – two qualitative phases and one quantitative phase. The qualitative phases, which took the form of individual interviews and focus groups, served the chief goal of gathering a wide range of perspectives, particularly from those with local chapter experience, to inform the follow–up quantitative survey. For example, the qualitative phase revealed that PRSA members and leaders had varied perceptions of diversity including type and years of professional experience, in addition to the race, gender, age, sexual orientation, etc. This helped shape the question and measures pertaining to the various dimensions of diversity. Thus, the qualitative inquiry informed the quantitative survey instrument and it helped to further our understandings developed in the qualitative phase.

A combination of convenience and purposeful sampling was used to recruit participants for the interviews and focus groups. The convenience technique was used by researchers to reach the targeted group of people as they were convened at set events and were easy to reach. The purposeful sample technique relies on the judgement of the researcher in choosing whom to ask to participate and in this regard engagement with PRSA staff in terms of leader outreach was key (Harsh, 2011). Sixteen individual phone interviews were conducted during the months of February and March 2019 to accommodate the schedules of the PRSA leaders from across the country who agreed to participate in the study for no incentive. PRSA wanted diversity among its participants with respect to geography, chapter size, and range of perspectives and, although this was not intended to be a statistically valid snapshot, the consultant reiterated that the interviews represented a good mix of perspectives and experiences to achieve the purpose of informing the next phase of data collection.

Following the phone interviews, a series of focus groups were held from April to September 2019. The focus groups were held at the annual district meetings in the respective regions of the U.S. There are 114 chapters within PRSA, and all assigned to one of 10 districts throughout the country. The districts annually hold trainings for the chapters within their regions and represent a vital link between local Chapters and PRSA National. The leaders of the districts each either randomly selected participants, sought volunteers, appointed members, or used other tactics to ensure they were geographically diverse.

Seven focus groups were held during annual district meetings to accommodate nearly 70 differing voices from members, D&I chairs, district board members, and chapter leaders. Each focus group had a minimum of seven participants, with two groups having approximately 15 participants. Focus groups were held in the following locations:

- Western District-based focus group convening, in Phoenix, Arizona
- Southwest District-based focus group convening, in Houston, Texas
- Northeast District convening in, Providence, Rhode Island
- Sunshine District -based focus group convening, Tampa, Florida
- Tri-State District -based focus group convening, New York, NY
- East Central District Conference -based focus group convening, in Columbus, OH
- Midwest District Conference, held in Columbia, MO

Senior PRSA leaders, trained by Bonney, facilitated the sessions. Session leaders used identical questions as those asked during the individual interviews of PRSA leaders (see Table 1).

No attendance records were captured. The facilitators were not asked to capture demographics of the focus group participants or other factors. Although, no attempt was made for focus groups to be balanced or specifically inclusive based on race, gender, or age, the facilitators indicated that there was a good mix of age, race, and gender in each group. Special care was taken to seek engagement by chapter leadership, particularly those of diverse backgrounds. This was done predominantly through the advice and involvement of PRSA staff. The goal was to seek engagement from participant members of diverse backgrounds as much as possible. However, if a chapter had no members with varying backgrounds pertaining to age, gender, or did not include those from the Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) communities, the researchers readily engaged with those who were available. As an example of the active engagement processes, the D&I chairs of chapters were among those initially engaged.

The third phase included a survey that was launched to gather anonymous data from October 2 to October 25, 2019. The survey link was shared via email with 20,667 PRSA members and via social media with several non–PRSA members. The survey yielded 3,708 respondents, of which 3,659 reported being current members of PRSA. This represented a roughly 18% response rate. Table 2 includes all the survey measures and their scales.

Incentives were not provided for the interviews, focus groups, or surveys. Refreshments were however provided such as coffee, water, and light snacks for those participants for the focus groups.

Analysis

The team on this manuscript analyzed the data for this study. Descriptive and thematic coding techniques were used to synthesize the data. This approach answered the questions of who, what, where, and how the data were collected and identified passages of text that were linked by a common theme or idea (Saldana, 2012). The statistical computing of survey data discussed in this study was done using the programming language of R.

Results

The results from all three phases helped answer the three RQs posed in this study. RQ1 was about how members and leaders defined D&I, and the data suggested that definitions of diversity varied, but the understanding of inclusion was consistent. RQ2 was about how the current efforts of D&I were being perceived among leaders and members of PRSA, and data indicated that not everyone, on the national and chapter level, had uniform perceptions of the commitment and current state of D&I efforts and those who belonged to marginalized communities were asking for more in this area. RQ3 was looking into the opportunities for PRSA to become a change agent in D&I, and the results indicate that participants believed PRSA has already been and can continue to be influential in the D&I conversation and action and can provide more support to its chapters. These results are explained below in more detail.

Sample Characteristics and Measures

Regarding the quantitative phase of the study, Table 3 describes the demographics of the survey participants. Among the 3708 participants, most participants were between 35 to 54 years old, were predominantly female (76.08%), and most had obtained a bachelor's degree (54.25%) or more (43.3%). Most participants identified as White/Caucasian (70.77%), followed by those who identified as Black/African American (11.80%), Hispanic/Latino (7.35%), and Asian (2.66%). Participants came from a wide range of regions with a slight majority of them from the Southeast region (27.36%). While several mentioned having served as a PRSA chapter officer or board or committee member (42.31%), only some noted having served on a national PRSA committee or board (9.26%). A majority of the participants indicated having worked in PR for 20 or more years (41.78%), and while some noted having an APR certification, several (65.95%) did not indicate a specific PRSA certification. A majority of them noted being a member of PRSA for fewer than 5 years (39.76%).

The following themes emerged from the three phases of data collection and analyses. Each theme and subtheme are presented below using data together from the qualitative and quantitative procedures.

The Clarity on "Inclusion" but the Many Dimensions of "Diversity"

When asked about what D&I meant to them, there was very little disagreement about the meaning of "inclusion." One PRSA member explained inclusion in a way that captured the sentiment and meaning of inclusion shared by others in the study: *"It's not just inviting different people into the chapter. It's making sure that they feel seen, heard and have the opportunity to have a voice."* Some saw the benefits to the chapters in nurturing an inclusive culture. For example, one leader mentioned, *"Studies show that inclusion programs boost performance in companies."* Several also recognized the effort it would take to cultivate inclusivity, as one participant put it: *"You could say that being 'diverse' is simply checking off a box that says you've reached out. But to say you're 'inclusive' you have to show that there is active engagement and, well, inclusion of different people and voices in the process of the PRSA."*

While participants converged on: (1) what inclusion meant, (2) its benefits to their chapters, and (3) how it needed to be cultivated and nurtured through active measures, there were differences in what they thought counted as diversity in their chapters. Some interview and focus group participants, particularly those from smaller chapters, described diversity as an abundance or lack of demographic characteristic such as race, gender, age, management seniority, industry, sexual orientation, career stage, economic position, religion, level of experience, disability, protected class, political orientation, and political ideology. For others, diversity at their chapter was tied to psychographic characteristics such as having individuals from diverse perspectives and opinions.

Most of the survey participants selected *race* as the first factor that came to their mind when thinking about diversity (as shown in Table 2), followed by gender, age, differences in opinions and perspectives, sexual orientation, disability, work categories, professional seniority, and number of years in PRSA. Linear regressions were conducted to assess the characteristics of those who were more likely to rate race, gender, age, sexual orientation, and disability as a dimension of diversity (see Table 4).

The regression results indicated that those who were more likely to think of *race* as a diversity dimension were more likely to identify as female (B=0.13, p<0.05), as Black (B=0.22, p<0.01), and were also those who considered that it was important for PRSA diversity to reflect the full diversity of PR professionals (B=0.22, p<0.001). Compared to those who were from

"other" regions, members from regions such as Southeast (B=0.87, p<0.01), Southwest (B=0.68, p<0.05), Midwest (B=0.81, p<0.01), Northeast (B=0.94, p<0.001), and the West (B=0.74, p<0.01) were also more likely to think of *race* as a diversity dimension. Overall, across regions and those specially identifying as female, Black, Hispanic, and those who valued the diversity of PR professionals were more likely to rate *race* as a diversity dimension. The need to improve racial diversity in the field and the chapters came up often in the interviews and focus groups. For example, a chapter leader shared:

> *"In corporate America my entire board is Caucasian. I am the only African American woman in the building. This is not what the nation's demographics look like. But it's the world I live in every day. The community clearly lacks diversity in general."*

Survey participants selected *gender* as the second factor that came to their mind when thinking about diversity. Those likely to think of *gender* as a diversity dimension were more likely to be younger (B= –0.09, p<0.01), identified as female (B=0.27, p<0.01), and were also those who considered that it was important for PRSA diversity to reflect the full diversity of PR professionals (B=0.42, p<0.001). While the survey did not ask which gender needed representation in their field or chapter, for one chapter leader in the interview portion this meant that they had "*to get more men,*" because otherwise they said, "*you'd think that it's nothing but women in the field.*" One chapter leader stated that "*it's mostly white women in senior PR positions,*" while another indicated that "*PR leadership is mostly men.*" Thus, while our survey results indicate that gender was the second most salient diversity dimension, our focus group and interview data indicate that depending on the region and context, this could mean needing more men or women in the field, chapter, or in authority positions.

In addition to thinking of race and gender, the survey participants who felt it was important for PRSA to value diversity were also those who were more likely to think of *sexual orientation* and *disability* and not so much *age* as diversity dimensions. Those who were likely to think of *sexual orientation* as a diversity dimension were less likely to be Black (B= –0.52, p<0.001), compared to "other" regions, were more likely to be from the Southeast (B=0.81, p<0.05), Midwest (B=0.98, p<0.05), Northeast (B=0.94, p<0.01), West (B=0.98, p<0.05), and were more likely to consider that it was important for PRSA to reflect the full diversity of PR professionals (B=0.36, p<0.001). Those likely to think of *disability* as a diversity dimension were more likely to be older (B=0.10, p<0.001), educated (B=0.10, p<0.05), and were more likely to consider that it was important for PRSA diversity to reflect the full diversity of PR professionals (B=0.11, p<0.01). Those who were more likely to think of *age* as a diversity dimension were less likely to consider that it was important for PRSA diversity to reflect the full diversity of PR professionals (B= –0.21, p<0.001), more likely to be older (B=0.13, p<0.001), identified as female (B=0.22, p<0.001), and as Black (B=0.28, p<0.01).

The survey results also showed that those who were more likely to think of *differences in opinions and perspectives* were less likely to identify as Black (B= –0.36, p<0.05) and were less likely to be educated (B= –0.19, p<0.05). Although age did not come up as a significant factor in this regression, several in the focus groups and interviews mentioned how younger members viewed diversity to include several groups and perspectives and were relatively more comfortable with handling instances where perspectives and opinions differed.

The results from the three phases indicate that there are varied views on how PR professionals think about diversity in the field and in their chapters. As one chapter leader said, *"You can't change what you don't define."* This points to the need to ensure that there is a

dialogue and agreement on what diversity means in the field and within each chapter before embarking on ways to improve D&I.

Perceptions of PRSA Reflecting and Promoting Diversity

PRSA reflecting diversity

One PRSA member interviewed mentioned that D&I in the PR field in general has come a long way in the last few decades: *"It's definitely become better than when I was a student and just starting out. There are many, many more different looking faces, at least. But that's not the whole picture. In the 80s, it was so sexist. Back when I started, there was mostly women doing the work, but men ran the agencies."* Despite noticing such changes over the decade, nearly all PRSA members and leaders in the interviews and focus groups believed that more had to be done, meaningfully. As one leader mentioned, *"I think we're past the stage of having token people in PRSA. I become very angry when I see pictures of different kinds of people in brochures and mailings, but little or no diversity in the actual society."*

They mentioned that greater attention needed to be given to D&I within PRSA, which many did not believe currently reflected the full diversity of PR practitioners. As one PRSA member explained, *"we should be striving to include African Americans, the disabled, generations, Hispanic/Latino, LGBTQA1, multicultural, pan-Asian, immigrants, veterans, and women. No race, gender, nationality or sexual orientation should have a monopoly on leadership."* Some stressed that this was not just an option but a necessity, because *"An organization that is not welcoming to all PR talents will not be an organization that represents all PR talents"* or as another leader said, *"If we want to be the leading organization for PR people, we need to reflect the full range of people in PR."*

This was echoed in the quantitative survey as well where participants reported on a 5-point scale (1 = 'not at all important' to 5 = 'extremely important') that it was extremely important to them that PRSA reflected the full diversity of PR professionals (M=4.45, SD=0.82), and also indicated on a 5-point scale (1 = 'not at all well' to 5 = 'very well'), that PRSA nationally (M=3.38, SD=1.02) and their chapters (M=3.45, SD=1.11) were only doing somewhat well in reflecting the full diversity of PR professionals.

Some survey participants indicated, on a 5-point scale (1 = 'little to no diversity' to 5 = 'much diversity'), that the PR professionals in their respective regions were not very diverse (M=3.25, SD=1.30). The interviews and focus groups provided a potential explanation to this issue. Chapter leaders in metropolitan areas or top markets were more likely to say that there was greater diversity in their area compared to those in smaller markets who were more likely to mention that they do not have PR professionals from historically disadvantaged groups like BIPOC or disabled practitioners. Especially those in smaller areas mentioned that PRSA did not reflect the full diversity of PR practitioners, nationally or in their districts. In areas where diversity is not *"in the local water,"* as one chapter leader in a less progressive part of the country put it, lack of diversity reflected a less generally integrated and open society:

> *"Changes come slowly in our part of the country. You will find minorities in public sector agencies, government, and nonprofits. But the corporate PR sector is still women in the trenches and older men at the top."*

Some chapter leaders in these areas also felt like they were competing with other professional organizations such as "the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC)," "ColorComm," and various state and regional organizations to engage and attract

members from diverse backgrounds. Some decided to collaborate with these fellow organizations to improve their D&I efforts in their area together.

Some survey participants were more likely than others to believe that PRSA, nationally and in its chapters, was already diverse. As shown in Table 5a, the survey participants who are more likely to believe that PRSA national reflects the diversity of public relations professionals were less likely to identify as Black (B= –0.58, p<0.001), as Hispanic (B= –0.32, p<0.001), less educated (B= –0.11, p<0.001), and were/had not served as a member on any PRSA national committee (B= –0.36, p<0.001). Those who were more likely to believe that their PRSA chapters reflects the diversity of public relations professionals are less likely to identify as female (B= –0.17, p<0.001), as Black (B= –0.64, p<0.001), as Hispanic (B= –0.17, p<0 05), and were less educated (B= –0.11, p<0.01). Overall, this indicated that those who identified as Black or Hispanic, and those who were more educated were less likely to feel that PRSA national and their chapters reflect diversity of PR professionals. On the chapter level, women in addition to those who identified as Black or Hispanic, and those who were more educated, were less likely to feel that their chapters reflected diversity of PR professionals. Thus, race, gender, and education level affected perceptions of whether or not diversity was represented on PRSA national and chapter levels.

PRSA promoting diversity

An overwhelming majority of the survey participants (78.29%) indicated that PRSA should be promoting greater diversity in the PR profession. A chapter leader in an interview said, *"PRSA should be setting a good example that's not only good for the society and its chapters, but good for society in general."* Another described it as, *"a matter of survival. If we don't represent the full diversity of public relations people, we won't grow"* or as another put it, *"It's a matter of heart and survival. It's the right thing to do. And if we don't provide what people want, they'll go somewhere else."*

Several survey participants indicated on a 5-point scale (1= 'not at all committed' to 5 = 'very committed') that they believed PRSA nationally (M=3.78, SD=0.96) and their PRSA chapters (M=3.79, SD=1.04) were somewhat committed to making sure that they reflect the full diversity of PR professionals. But as shown in Table 5b, those who identified as Black (B= –0.33, p<0.001) and as Hispanic (B= –0.23, p<0.001) were less likely to indicate that PRSA national was committed to reflect diversity of PR professionals. Those from the Southeast (B=0.46, p<0.05) and Southwest (B=0.44, p<0.05), Midwest (B=0.42, p<0.05) compared to "other" regions, and those who have been members of PRSA for a longer time (B=0.05, p<0.01) however were more likely to indicate that PRSA national was committed to reflect diversity of PR professionals. Those who identified as female (B= –0.11, p<0.05), as Black (B= –0.39, p<0.001), and those who were more educated (B= –0.12, p<0.001) were less likely to indicate that their PRSA chapter was committed to reflect diversity of PR professionals. But again, those in the Southeast (B=0.58, p<0.01) and the Southwest region (B= 0.55, p<0.05) compared to the "other" regions, and those who had been a PRSA member for a longer time (B=0.04, p<0.05) however were more likely to indicate that their PRSA chapter was committed to reflect diversity of PR professionals. Overall, those who were associated with PRSA for a long time were more likely to agree that PRSA national and their chapters were more likely committed to diversity, but those who identified as Black or as Hispanic were less likely to feel this way about both PRSA national, and those who identified as female or as Black were less likely to feel this way about their chapter.

Chapter Leaders Needing Support

As discussed above, several PRSA members and leaders indicated that *"a commitment to D&I will help all of us find acceptance,"* they *"[wanted] to own the position of PR thought leader,"* recognized that, *"without diversity, we risk becoming nothing more than an echo chamber for our own thoughts,"* and felt that diversity can pave way to "*more and better ideas*" making them "*more productive*." Several however struggled to understand where to begin. One chapter leader noted, *"I'll admit I'm a little confused. Is D&I about having members of different races or is it about having programs about how to work with minority media, for example, or about African American history?* Another mentioned, *"Right now, we don't know what we don't know about how diverse the PR world is in our area. We have no idea how to even start."*

For some others it was not knowing how their D&I efforts will be perceived by those in their chapters: *"Right now, we don't even know how to talk about this topic for fear of offending someone or suggesting that there should be racial or ethnic quotas."* Another leader mentioned being worried about how, *"for some of our board members and members at large it's going to be uncomfortable talking about this at first."* The same leader however also believed that *"it's good to be uncomfortable every now and then, and that if we have good guidance on how to approach this subject they will come around."*

Several noted that they could benefit from guidance on D&I efforts from the more experienced or more diverse chapters. They recommended launching a series of case studies to understand how each chapter was working on their D&I efforts and suggested teaming the smaller chapters with larger ones so they could learn from their fellow chapters on the process and tools available to implement D&I efforts. The chapter leaders recognized that there could be no *one–size–fits–all* solution to help all chapters with their D&I needs but noted that they could benefit from being able to reach out to PRSA for resources that can help their specific needs.

PRSA as a Change Agent for D&I – Current Efforts and Recommendations

Several also mentioned how "*PRSA could lead the way" on D&I* and why it's important for it to do so. As one chapter president mentioned: "*I suspect many of us in this profession are working on diversity and inclusion programs for our clients. If PRSA doesn't take it upon itself to become more diverse and inclusive, we're going to look like the cobbler's children who had no shoes."* More specifically, another mentioned that PRSA could start by taking concrete steps such as "*modeling the diversity it stands for on its own board. I think it has to start from the top down and it has to be part of a culture of the organization."*

Compared to a year ago, most survey participants indicated that both nationally (44.51%) and in their chapters (41.29%) they did not notice any change with respect to diversity. Logistic regressions were conducted to assess which individuals were more likely to indicate that they did not notice any change in the past year with respect to diversity in PRSA national and their chapters (as shown in table 5c). Results indicated that those who were older (B= –0.03, p<0.001), did not identify as female (B= –0.06, p<0.001), identified as Black (0.16, p<0.001), as Hispanic (B=0.08, p<0.05), and those had been PRSA members for a longer time (B=0.03, p<0.001) were more likely to indicate that there had been no change in PRSA national with respect to diversity. Similarly, those who identified as Black (B=0.09, p<0.01), as Hispanic (B=0.08, p<0.05), those who had been a PRSA member for a longer time (B=0.02, p<0.01), and those who served or were serving on the chapter committees (B=0.1, p<0.001) were more likely to indicate that there was no change in their PRSA chapter with respect to diversity. Overall, those who identified as Black or Hispanic, and those who had been PRSA members for a long

time were more likely to indicate that they had not noticed much change in the last year with respect to diversity in PRSA national or their chapter.

Survey participants were asked to indicate on 5-point scale (1=not at all well to 5=very well), their opinion on how well PRSA and their chapters were doing on several D&I efforts (see Table 2). While several members indicated that PRSA (M= 3.89, SD=0.73) and their chapters (M=3.90, SD=0.81) were doing somewhat well with their D&I efforts nationally and on their chapter-levels respectively, linear regressions indicated that some were more likely to indicate more satisfaction than other with these efforts.

As shown in Table 6a, the linear regression shows that those who were younger (B= –0.03, p<0.05), with lower education (B= –0.05, p<0.01), and those who had been members for a longer duration (B=0.03, p<0.01), and those who were more likely to agree that PRSA national reflected the diversity of PR professionals (B=0.23, p<0.001), and those who were more likely to agree that PRSA national is committed to diversity (B=0.24, p<0.001) were more likely to believe that PRSA national is engaged in D&I practices. A closer look at tables 5a and 5b shows that those who identified as Black or as Hispanic were less likely to feel that PRSA national reflected diversity of PR professionals or that it was committed to diversity. Table 6a also shows a similar narrative, where those who identified as Black (B= –0.26, p<0.001) or as Hispanic (B= –0.12, p<0.05) were less likely to feel that PRSA national was engaged in those specific D&I practices, before taking into consideration the other factors such as reflection of diversity or commitment to diversity.

Table 6b shows that those who were younger (B= –0.02, p<0.05), those who had served or continued to serve on PRSA chapter committees (B=0.10, p<0.001), those who believed that their chapter reflected the diversity of PR professionals (B=0.16, p<0.001), those who were more likely to believe their chapter was committed to diversity (B=0.41, p<0.001), and those who believed that there had not been much change in the last year (B=0.11, p<0.001) all believed that their chapter was engaging in the specific D&I practices. However, again, as shown in tables 5a and 5b, those who identified as female, Black, or Hispanic were less likely to believe that their chapter reflected diversity of PR professionals, and those who identified as female or Black were less likely to believe that their chapter was committed to diversity. Table 6b also shows that those who identified as Black (B= –0.25, p<0.001) and those with more education (B= –0.10, p<0.001) were less likely to believe that their chapters were engaged in the specific D&I practices, but those from the Southeast region (B=0.38, p<0.05) compared to the "other" regions, and those who served/serve on their chapter committees (B=0.24, p<0.001) were more likely to believe that their chapter were engaged in the D&I practices.

When asked about how PRSA could do better, several in the interviews and focus groups made the following suggestions. They mentioned that PRSA could: (1) reinforce the importance of D&I in its national communication and outreach to chapters and members, (2) make its own diversity clear by making sure its board and committees reflect the diversity of modern PR practitioners, (3) work to strengthen its connection with colleges and universities including PRSSA chapters, (4) create networks of mentorship so that college graduates did not disappear from the PRSA between the time they finished college and the time they settled into their first professional job, and (5) provide resources to chapters that enable them to be confident diversity missionaries.

Discussion

The results from this study connect to the existing scholarship in this area, and below we discuss how they confirm or provide new information to the current body of work focused on D&I. As discussed above, findings of this study reveal generally that PRSA members have a similar understanding of inclusion and that view is in alignment with existing literature (Deloitte, 2013; Sison, 2017). However, their schemas on diversity varied significantly (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). The qualitative results revealed the different dimensions that could be associated with diversity were in line with previous research (Austin, 2010; Bhawuck & Triandis, 1996; Sha & Ford, 2007). However, the survey analysis showed that those who identify as Black were more likely to think about race and age, and less likely to think of sexual orientation or differences in opinions/perspectives. Those who identified as female were more likely to think of race, gender, and age as dimensions of diversity. Those who considered that it is important for PRSA to reflect diversity were more likely to be thinking of race, gender, sexual orientation, and disability, and were less likely to be thinking of age as dimensions of diversity. These results solidify how when participants indicated that they want to see more diversity, they were not all thinking of the same dimensions of diversity. This again illustrates that notions of diversity are diverse. These findings also reiterate how marginalization is rarely unidimensional and that diversity considerations must not focus on only one aspect but on multiple aspects of one's identity through intersectionality (Bowleg, 2008; Crenshaw, 1991; Vardeman–Winter & Place, 2017). This study indicates that those dimensions need to include race, age, gender, sexual orientation, and disability. These findings are similar to those outlined by Danbold and Unzueta (2020) where the marginalized groups have varying perceptions on diversity compared to the dominant ones. These findings point to the need of improving the perception that PR professionals only include White women and can be from other diverse backgrounds (Bhargava & Theunissen, 2019; Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019; Edwards, 2011; Fitch, 2016; Vardeman–Winter & Place, 2017).

The findings of this study also reinforce Derek Bell Jr's (1991) argument about how racism never goes away. As several CRT scholars have noted, D&I efforts that only align with the interests of the dominant group will never be sufficient to bring racial equity (Bell, 1991; Crenshaw, 1988; Hiraldo, 2010; Ladson–Billings, 1997). There must be consistent and deliberate efforts that include holding space to hear stories from the marginalized groups i.e., counter-stories that express the experiences of subordination and discrimination (Bell, 1987, 1991; Crenshaw, 1988). This study, through its focus groups, interviews, and survey, held that space for PRSA members to express their perceptions of D&I efforts conducted by PRSA, nationally and in their chapters.

The finding about – the longer an individual is associated with PRSA or is/was a member on the chapter committees, the more likely they were to view the national/chapters more positively with respect to D&I efforts – seems to highlight an in–group favoritism or bias. This suggests that longer the membership or involvement with chapter committees, the higher the need to be protective of their organization/chapter (Hogg, 2016; Mummendey & Otten, 1998; Otten & Wentura, 1999). While loyalty can be beneficial and should be appreciated by organizations, it also indicates that there might be an in–group bias that could be clouding their perceptions. On the other hand, if it is the case that the older members seem to know more about the D&I efforts compared to the younger/newer members, then efforts should be made to

communicate these repeatedly to newer members. Alternatively, those who served or were serving on national PRSA committees were less likely to see their national organization reflect diversity or feel that they were successful in practicing D&I. These members seem to be more attuned to the need for more work with D&I, which seems to confirm the findings from the collective research efforts.

Overall, the findings of this study informed the new three–year D&I strategic plan for PRSA that includes intents to:

(1) Enforce D&I initiatives to address hiring and advancement, including in PRSA national's board, staff, and vendor sections

(2) Train members and leaders to address unconscious bias,

(3) Establish a diversity advisory board to examine intersectionality,

(4) Develop best practices to ensure inclusion regardless of race, age, or career stage,

(5) Encourage partnerships between PRSA and complementary organizations, including students and their organizations within colleges and universities such as PRSSA,

(6) Call out cases of intolerance in the PR world,

(7) Ensure an environment in which anyone can pursue his or her career path in PR, and

(8) Create a network of PRSA members or staff from historically marginalized groups who can be missionaries for diversity and inclusion to the media and other industries.

Limitations

The findings of this study should be considered in light of the following limitations. This study is not representative of the general population of PR practitioners. This limitation however was a clear motivation for this study such that PRSA could grow to have a diverse membership, and that it could inspire industries to also pursue efforts to improve diversity among practitioners and leadership as well.

Another limitation had to do with measures employed. While the survey included measures of race, gender, and age, it did not include other demographic information pertaining to the participants' sexual orientations, religion, ideologies, disabilities, nationalities, etc. Given how diversity involves these various dimensions and how PRSA is striving to improve diversity along multiple dimensions, this is a significant limitation, which will be addressed in future studies. Measuring these additional dimensions and including them in the regression analyses could help improve the variance explained for various variables assessing D&I perceptions.

Future Directions

As discussed above, PRSA has established a three–year D&I strategic plan (D&I Strategic Plan, 2020). That plan was built using data from this research. The plan has been under execution since May 2020. A follow–up study has been executed to measure progress against the 2019 quantitative survey of PRSA members. Future considerations for research are being assessed for external partners. The view within the strategic planning process is that ensuring that the full industry is moving forward will ensure that the efforts of PRSA go even farther. To that end, PRSA is working with groups such as the Diversity Action Alliance and is considering others to enhance D&I within the communications industry. The survey also received an impressive 49 responses from non–members (even though the survey was not targeted to this

group). Therefore, increasing participation by non–members in future research efforts will help contribute to existing discussions of similarities and differences between practitioners who are PRSA members and non–members (see Hazelton & Sha, 2012).

In addition, one element of qualitative research involved a session with the PR department chairs of select historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs). The feedback gained from that 2019 session was valuable in providing much–needed guidance in future academic engagement with future practitioners from historically disadvantaged groups. As an example, financial resources remain a significant barrier for students and their faculty advisors from HBCUs to attend national events. While the pandemic has prompted national gatherings to be facilitated in more accessible, virtual settings, the financial challenges will be exacerbated for many of these HBCUs and options are being explored that will improve accessibility and engagement by a broader diversity of the profession (Murray, 2020). Efforts are also being examined within PRSA to engage historically Hispanic–Serving Institutions (HSIs) who are facing similar challenges.

There are additional areas of research that can help inform our work. As noted previously, PRSA has initiated programs over the last 30 or so years designed specifically to D&I within the organization specifically and throughout the industry, more broadly (Diversity & Inclusion at PRSA, n.d.; D&I Chapter Toolkit, 2020). That represents a wealth of data that could be examined to determine their effectiveness – particularly as it relates to long term change within the field.

As an example, as discussed earlier, PRSA initiated the launch of a scholarship program for students of African-American/Black, Hispanic/Latino, Asian, Native American, Alaskan Native or Pacific Islander ancestry for $1,500 each (Teahan et al., 2007). Determining how many of those students went into the field and assessing their status in their public relations careers could help to guide additional pipeline programs in the future. This effort could also include the similar work that the PRSA Foundation and now the Diversity Action Alliance has pursued in this area. Beyond financial support, the various awards that PRSA and other entities confer on individuals and organizations recognized for their D&I could be analyzed in determining what best practices have been effective over the long term to determine replication potential in the future.

Even within PRSA's structure there are opportunities that can be examined to ensure that they are yielding meaningful results. With PRSA launching its national PRSA D&I Committee in 2010 to oversee its yearly diversity activities, there is a decade of work that can help direct the next decade and beyond. Finally, with PRSSA establishing the D&I Officer position across its chapters in 2018, there is a research effort already underway to determine how effective this has been and where more support by the students might be needed. All of these could help drive PRSA's D&I Strategic Plan within its own organization and throughout the public relations field.

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Tables

Table 1

Interview & focus group questions

What does "diversity and inclusion" mean to PRSA chapter leaders and members?
How diverse and inclusive is the wider world of modern public relations perceived to be?
How well does PRSA reflect this landscape?
Does this matter to PRSA chapter leaders and members?
What responsibility does PRSA have to change this condition?
How can PRSA work to make the public relations profession more diverse and inclusive?
How can PRSA help its chapters to become diverse and inclusive?
Why is diversity/inclusion important to PRSA?

Table 2

Survey measures

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Diversity rank: There are many dimensions to "diversity." Please rank the items below in order of how they come to mind for you. (Scale, 1 = first to 10 = last)		
Different opinions and perspectives (perspectives)	4.14	2.29
Gender identity (gender)	3.64	1.91
Disability (disability)	4.59	1.48
Sexual orientation (orientation)	4.16	1.85
Age (age)	4.14	1.45
Race (race)	1.64	1.34
Work category (work)	6.66	1.55
Professional seniority (professional)	7.16	1.40
Number of years in PRSA	8.62	1.14
Importance – PRSA(nat): How important is it to you that PRSA reflect the full diversity of public relations professionals? (Scale, coded, 1 = not at all important to 5 = extremely important– reverse coded here)	4.45	0.82
Commitment – PRSA (nat): Thinking of PRSA nationally, how committed do you believe PRSA is to making sure the association reflects the full diversity of public relations professionals? (Scale, coded with 1 = not at all committed, 2 = not very committed, 3 = don't know, 4 = somewhat committed, 5 = very committed– reverse coded here)	3.78	0.96
Diversity – PRSA(nat): Thinking of PRSA nationally, how well do you believe PRSA reflects the diversity of public relations professionals? (Scale, coded with 1 = not at all well, 2 = not very well,	3.38	1.02

3 = don't know, 4 = somewhat well, 5 = very well– reverse coded here)		
Changes – PRSA (nat): Compared to a year ago, would you say PRSA is:		
More diverse *(n = 551)*	—	
Less diverse *(n = 27)*	—	
Have not noticed any change *(n = 1467)*	—	
Don't know *(n = 1251)*		
D&I – PRSA(nat): How well do you believe PRSA is doing in each of the following areas? (Scale, coded with 1 = not at all well, 2 = not very well, 3 = don't know, 4 = somewhat well, 5 = very well– reverse coded here)		
Respecting all races, faiths and cultures	3.93	0.94
Welcoming to all who practice public relations	4.26	0.95
Making all members feel valued	3.85	1.07
Respecting the wisdom of long–time members	3.98	1.02
Mentoring young members	3.69	1.11
Creating opportunities for all members to be involved	3.68	1.16
Being open to everyone, regardless of ideology	3.84	1.02
Cronbach's alpha (0.83)		
D&I – PRSAnat_scale	3.89	0.73

Table 2

Survey measures (cont.d)

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Area – Diversity: How diverse would you say the world of public relations professionals is in your geographic area? (Scale, coded with 1 = little to no diversity, 2 = not much diversity, 3 = don't know, 4 = some diversity, 5 = much diversity– reverse coded here)	3.25	1.30
Diversity – PRSA(chap): How well do you believe your PRSA Chapter reflects the diversity of public relations professionals in your region? (Scale, coded with 1 = not at all well, 2 = not very well, 3 = don't know, 4 = somewhat well, 5 = very well– reverse coded here)	3.45	1.11
Commitment – PRSA(chap): How committed do you believe your local Chapter leadership is to making sure PRSA reflects the full diversity of public relations professionals in your area? (Scale, coded with 1 = not at all committed, 2 = not very committed, 3 = don't know, 4 = somewhat committed, 5 = very committed– reverse coded here)	3.79	1.04
Changes – PRSA (chap): Compared to a year ago, would you say your PRSA chapter is:		

More diverse *(n = 582)*	—	
Less diverse *(n = 50)*	—	
Have not noticed any change *(n = 1247)*	—	
Don't know *(n = 1141)*	—	
D&I – PRSA(chapt): How well do you believe your PRSA chapter is doing in each of the following areas? (Scale, coded with 1 = not at all well, 2 = not very well, 3 = don't know, 4 = somewhat well, 5 = very well– reverse coded here)		
Respecting all races, faiths and cultures	4.01	0.96
Welcoming to all who practice public relations	4.17	0.99
Making all members feel valued	3.81	1.10
Respecting the wisdom of long–time members	3.70	1.11
Mentoring young members	3.92	1.03
Creating opportunities for all members to be involved	3.72	1.18
Being open to everyone, regardless of ideology	3.93	1.01
Cronbach's alpha (0.88)		
D&I – PRSAchap_scale	3.90	0.81
Promoting: Do you believe PRSA should be promoting greater diversity in the public relations profession, or not?		
Yes *(n = 2246)*	—	
No *(n = 170)*	—	
Don't know *(n = 453)*	—	

Table 3

Demographics

Variable (Mean, Standard Deviation)	N (%)
Age: (M = 3.60, SD = 1.27) (removing 'prefer not to answer')	
1. 18–24	115 (4.13%)
2. 25–34	491 (17.63%)
3. 35–44	679 (24.38%)
4. 45–54	774 (27.79%)
5. 55–64	553 (19.86%)
6. 65+	173(6.06%)
7. Prefer not to answer	71(1.91%)
Gender identity:	
1. Male	630 (22.07%)
2. Female	2172 (76.08%)
3. Non–binary	5 (0.18%)
4. Transgender female	0 (0%)
5. Transgender male	1 (0.04%)
6. Gender variant/nonconforming	0 (0%)
7. Prefer not to answer	38 (1.33%)
8. Other	9 (0.32%)

Education: (M = 3.47, SD = 0.61) (removing 'prefer not to answer,' and 'other')	
1. High school or less	2 (0.07%)
2. Some college	39 (1.36%)
3. Bachelor's degree	1552 (54.25%)
4. Master's degree	1103 (38.55%)
5. Doctorate	136 (4.75%)
6. Other	15 (0.52%)
7. Prefer not to answer	14 (0.49%)
Employment status:	
1. Employed full–time	2399 (84%)
2. Employed part–time	50 (1.75%)
3. Self–employed	287 (10.05%)
4. Unemployed	30 (1.05%)
5. Student	7 (0.25%)
6. Retired	71 (2.49%)
7. Other	12 (0.42%)
Race:	
1. White/Caucasian	2022 (70.77%)
2. Black/African American	337 (11.80%)
3. Hispanic/Latino	210 (7.35%)
4. Asian	76 (2.66%)
5. American Indian or Alaska Native	16 (0.56%)
6. Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	8 (0.28%)
7. Multi–racial	48 (1.68%)
8. Other	35 (1.23%)

Table 3

Demographics (contd.)

Variable (M, SD)	N (%)
Race (contd):	105 (3.68%)
9. Prefer not to answer	
Service (nat): Are you, or have you ever served on a national PRSA committee or board?	
1. Yes	265 (9.26%)
2. No	2573 (89.93%)
3. Prefer not to answer	23 (0.80%)
Service (chap): Are you, or have you ever served as a PRSA Chapter officer or board or committee member?	
1. Yes	1210 (42.31%)
2. No	1620 (56.64%)
3. Prefer not to answer	30 (1.05%)
PR_Years: How long have you worked in public relations? (M = 2.99, SD = 1.07) (removing 'prefer not to answer')	
1. Fewer than 5 years	401 (14.02%)

2. 5 – 9 years	431 (15.07%)
3. 10 – 19 years	812 (28.39%)
4. 20 or more years	1195 (41.78%)
5. Prefer not to answer	21 (0.73%)
PRSA_Years: How long have you been a member of PRSA? (M = 2.48, SD = 1.53)	
1. Fewer than 5 years	1132 (39.76%)
2. 5 – 9 years	525 (18.44%)
3. 10 – 14 years	407 (14.30%)
4. 15 – 19 years	245 (8.61%)
5. 20 or more years	538 (18.90%)
Certification: Your level of PRSA certification:	
1. APR	675 (23.67%)
2. APR+M	14 (0.49%)
3. CPR	3 (0.11%)
4. Fellow	126 (4.42%)
5. Other	153 (5.36%)
6. None of the above	1881 (65.95%)
Region: Your region of residence:	
1. Midwest (IA, IL, IN, KS, MI, MN, MO, ND, NE, OH, SD, WI)	582 (20.36%)
2. Northeast (CT, DC, DE, MA, MD, ME, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VT)	552 (19.31%)
3. Southeast (AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, SC, TN, VA, WV)	782 (27.36%)
4. Southwest (AZ, NM, OK, TX)	357 (12.49%)
5. West (AK, CA, CO, HI, ID, MT, NV, OR, UT, WA, WY)	561 (19.63%)
6. Other	24 (0.84%)

Table 4

Linear regressions of dimensions of diversity

	Race	Gender	Sexual Orientation	Disability	Age	Differences in opinions & perspectives
	B(SE)	B(SE)	B(SE)	B(SE)	B(SE)	B(SE)
Intercept	6.65(0.35)***	4.41(0.50)***	3.52(0.49)***	0.40(0.40)***	6.51(0.39)***	7.55(0.61)***
Age	–0.01(0.03)	–0.09(0.04)**	–0.06(0.03)	0.10(0.03)***	0.13(0.03)***	–0.03(0.04)
Female	0.13(0.06)*	0.27(0.09)**	–0.05(0.08)	0.001(0.07)	0.22(0.07)***	–0.13(0.11)

Black	0.22(0.08)**	0.23(0.12)	–0.52(0.12)***	–0.02(0.09)	0.28(0.09)**	–0.36(0.14)*
Hispanic	0.01(0.10)	0.01(0.14)	–0.07(0.14)	0.08(0.11)	–0.12(0.11)	–0.24(0.17)
Education	–0.03(0.04)	0.06(0.06)	0.05(0.06)	0.10(0.05)*	–0.07(0.05)	–0.19(0.08)*
Southeast	0.87(0.28)**	–0.08(0.40)	0.81(0.39)*	–0.04(0.32)	–0.10(0.31)	–0.48(0.48)
Southwest	0.68(0.28)*	–0.24(0.40)	0.43(0.39)	–0.38(0.33)	0.04(0.31)	–0.17(0.49)
Midwest	0.81(0.28)**	0.09(0.40)	0.98(0.39)*	0.05(0.32)	–0.13(0.31)	–0.65(0.49)
Northeast	0.94(0.28)***	0.22(0.40)	1.07(0.39)*	0.10(0.32)	–0.24(0.31)	–0.72(0.49)
West	0.74(0.28)*	0.05(0.40)	0.98(0.39)*	–0.01(0.32)	–0.19(0.31)	–0.49(0.49)
Years in PRSA	–0.12(0.02)	–0.02(0.03)	0.01(0.03)	–0.002(0.02)	0.01(0.02)	0.07(0.04)
Importance of diversity in PRSA	0.22(0.03)***	0.42(0.05)***	0.36(0.05)***	0.11(0.04)*	–0.21(0.04)***	–0.11(0.06)
$R^2(R^2_{adj})$	0.04(0.03)	0.06(0.05)	0.04(0.04)	0.02(0.02)	0.04(0.03)	0.02(0.01)

*$p<0.05$. **$p<0.01$. ***$p<0.001$.

Table 5a

Linear regressions of reflecting diversity in PRSA national and chapter

	Diversity – PRSA(nat)	Diversity – PRSA(chap)
	B(SE)	B(SE)
Intercept	3.78(0.25)***	3.78(0.27)***
Age	–0.004(0.02)	0.01(0.02)
Female	–0.08(0.05)	–0.17(0.05)***
Black	–0.58(0.06)***	–0.64(0.07)***
Hispanic	–0.32(0.08)***	–0.17(0.08)*
Southeast	0.25(0.21)	0.28(0.23)
Southwest	0.22(0.22)	0.44(0.23)
Midwest	0.20(0.22)	–0.06(0.23)
Northeast	0.16(0.22)	0.09(0.23)
West	0.09(0.22)	0.16(0.23)
Education	–0.11(0.03)***	–0.11(0.04)**
Years in PRSA	–0.001(0.02)	0.03(0.02)

Member of PRSA committee (nat)	–0.36(0.07)***	—
Member of PRSA committee (chap)	—	–0.02(0.05)
$R^2(R^2_{adj})$	0.06(0.05)	0.06(0.06)

*p<0.05. **p<0.01. ***p<0.001.

Table 5b

Linear regressions of commitment to diversity in PRSA national and chapter

	Commitment – PRSA(nat)	Commitment – PRSA(chap)
	B(SE)	B(SE)
Intercept	3.66(0.24)***	3.78(0.25)***
Age	–0.03(0.02)	–0.01(0.02)
Female	–0.04(0.04)	–0.11(0.05)*
Black	–0.33(0.06)***	–0.39(0.06)***
Hispanic	–0.23(0.07)***	–0.08(0.08)
Southeast	0.46(0.20)*	0.58(0.21)**
Southwest	0.44(0.21)*	0.55(0.22)*
Midwest	0.42(0.21)*	0.31(0.22)
Northeast	0.33(0.21)	0.33(0.22)
West	0.28(0.21)	0.27(0.22)
Education	–0.05(0.03)	–0.12(0.03)***
Years in PRSA	0.05(0.02)**	0.04(0.02)*
Member of PRSA committee (nat)	0.01(0.07)	—
Member of PRSA committee (chap)	—	0.31(0.04)***
$R^2(R^2_{adj})$	0.03(0.02)	0.07(0.07)

*p<0.05. **p<0.01. ***p<0.001.

Table 5c

Logistic regressions of those who indicated no change in the last year with respect to diversity in PRSA national and chapter

	Commitment – PRSA(nat)	Commitment – PRSA(chap)
	B(SE)	B(SE)
Intercept	0.46(0.12)***	0.33(0.12)***
Age	–0.03(0.01)***	–0.002(0.01)
Female	–0.06(0.02)**	–0.03(0.02)
Black	0.16(0.03)***	0.09(0.03)**
Hispanic	0.08(0.04)*	0.08(0.04)*
Southeast	–0.02(0.11)	0.09(0.10)

Southwest	–0.04(0.11)	0.01(0.11)
Midwest	0.01(0.11)	0.10(0.10)
Northeast	–0.03(0.11)	0.03(0.10)
West	0.03(0.11)	0.08(0.10)
Education	0.02(0.02)	–0.02(0.02)
Years in PRSA	0.03(0.01)***	0.02(0.01)**
Member of PRSA committee (nat)	0.02(0.04)	—
Member of PRSA committee (chap)	—	0.10(0.02)***

*p<0.05. **p<0.01. ***p<0.001.

Table 6a

Linear regressions of D&I practices in PRSA national

	D&I efforts – PRSA(nat)	D&I efforts – PRSA(nat)
	B(SE)	B(SE)
Intercept	4.16(0.18)***	2.47(0.10)***
Age	–0.03(0.01)*	–0.03(0.01)*
Female	–0.01(0.03)	0.01(0.03)
Black	–0.26(0.04)***	–0.04(0.04)
Hispanic	–0.12(0.05)*	0.01(0.05)
Southeast	0.21(0.15)	0.05(0.13)
Southwest	0.15(0.16)	–0.004(0.13)
Midwest	0.13(0.15)	–0.02(0.13)
Northeast	0.13(0.15)	0.01(0.13)
West	0.05(0.15)	–0.04(0.13)
Education	–0.09(0.02)***	–0.05(0.02)**
Years in PRSA	0.04(0.01)**	0.03(0.01)**
Member of PRSA committee (nat)	–0.14(0.05)**	–0.05(0.04)
Reflecting of diversity (nat)	—	0.23(0.01)***
Commitment to diversity (nat)	—	0.24(0.01)***
No change in the past year (nat)	—	–0.04(0.02)
$R^2(R^2_{adj})$	0.03(0.03)	0.33(0.32)

*p<0.05. **p<0.01. ***p<0.001.

Table 6b

Linear regressions of D&I practices in PRSA chapter

	D&I efforts – PRSA(chap)	D&I efforts – PRSA(chap)
	B(SE)	B(SE)
Intercept	3.99(0.20)***	1.78(0.16)***
Age	–0.03(0.2)	–0.02(0.01)*
Female	–0.02(0.04)	0.05(0.03)
Black	–0.25(0.05)***	0.01(0.04)
Hispanic	–0.03(0.06)	0.02(0.05)
Southeast	0.38(0.17)*	0.12(0.13)
Southwest	0.32(0.17)	0.07(0.13)
Midwest	0.25(0.17)	0.16(0.13)
Northeast	0.20(0.17)	0.09(0.13)
West	0.20(0.17)	0.09(0.13)
Education	–0.10(0.03)***	–0.03(0.02)
Years in PRSA	0.01(0.01)	–0.01(0.01)
Member of PRSA committee (chap)	0.24(0.04)***	0.10(0.03)***
Reflecting of diversity (chap)	—	0.16(0.01)***
Commitment to diversity (chap)	—	0.41(0.01)***
No change in the past year (chap)	—	0.11(0.02)***
$R^2(R^2_{adj})$	0.05(0.05)	0.46(0.45)

*$p<0.05$. **$p<0.01$. ***$p<0.001$.