Understanding Diversity: Top Executives' Perceptions of Racial and Ethnic Diversity in Public Relations

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UNDERSTANDING DIVERSITY: TOP EXECUTIVES’ PERCEPTIONS OF RACIAL AND ETHNIC DIVERSITY IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

by

AMBER HOOPER IRIZARRY

Under the Direction of Yuki Fujioka

ABSTRACT

In public relations, minority public relations practitioners are feeling left behind by the profession (Ford & Appelbaum, 2005). Where do top executives stand on employment diversity within their organizations? An online survey of 20 top executives of small-sized public relations agencies explored how top executives’ perceptions of and normative beliefs about diversity practices were related to their future engagement in diversity practices at work. Based on the theory of reasoned action, this explanatory study found that executives’ perceptions of peer endorsement of diversity were associated with greater intention of organizational engagement in diversity practices. Neither perceived benefits of nor perceived concerns about diversity were related to future engagement. Recommendations for contacting this hard-to-reach audience, as well as suggestions for promoting diversity practices among top executives, were discussed.

INDEX WORDS: Diversity, Perceived diversity practices, Theory of reasoned action, Public relations, Executives’ perceptions, Attitude, Subjective norms, Survey methodology
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UNDERSTANDING DIVERSITY: TOP EXECUTIVES’ PERCEPTIONS OF RACIAL AND ETHNIC DIVERSITY IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

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DEDICATION

With much appreciation for all of their support, without which the completion of this work would not have been possible, this final project is dedicated to my loving family, especially Daniel, Cathy, and Kevin. For Ava—never give up.
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Achieving the successful completion of this research project would not have been possible without the thoughtful guidance of Yuki Fujioka. Thank you, Yuki, for your persistence in seeing me through to the end. A special thank you is also extended to members of the thesis committee, Cindy Hoffner and Natalie Tindall, for their patience, insight, and willingness to go above and beyond.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

America’s growing population is ever-changing, with racial and ethnic minorities—specifically Hispanics/Latinos, Blacks/African Americans, Asians, and Native Americans—increasing in number towards becoming the majority. However, despite our increasingly diverse population, the workplace does not reflect society. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) (2004), “Managerial, professional and related” positions are dominated by Caucasians and Asians,1 (see Figure 1). The BLS (2004) also states that Caucasians and Asians have higher median weekly earnings than do Hispanics and Blacks. Employment positions within the communications field can be categorized as “sales and office” or “managerial, professional, and related”, with the public relations profession considered a highly desirable field of employment (The Princeton Review, 2009; J. Taylor, 2009). Public relations is defined as the management of an organization’s mutually beneficial relationships with its constituencies (Austin & Pinkleton, 2001). Given the lower figure of minorities in managerial and professional positions, as well as their lower income, then, it may come as no surprise that minority public relations practitioners are feeling left behind by the profession, expressing “dissatisfaction with the PR profession’s commitment to diversity, perceived pervasive discrimination, and widespread concern that multicultural practitioners are relegated to a slow professional track” (Ford & Appelbaum, 2005).

This begs the converse question: Where do top executives (e.g. CEOs, COOs, presidents) stand on employment diversity within their organizations—do executives see the same issues that their employees observe? Equally as important, is top management doing more than just “talking the talk” to show their commitment to diversity within the field? These are critical

1 Although managerial, professional, and related positions may have a disproportionately higher number of Asians represented, in the field of public relations, the number of Asians—approximately 4 percent—is slightly lower than the national population number of 4.8 percent (The BPRI Group, 2005.)
questions to ask because understanding whether executives share the same viewpoints as their minority practitioners regarding the state of the profession is the first step in addressing the dissatisfaction some minority public relations practitioners feel.

![Figure 1. Percentages of racial and ethnic groups in managerial positions.](http://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2004/06/ressum.pdf)

The term “diversity” gets tossed around, most often with regard to race. Indeed, upon the introduction of affirmative action policies, “diversity” was chiefly defined by race and gender. The term today, however, is more inclusive and encompasses ethnicity, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, religious and political preferences, age, education, socioeconomic status, and more (Lynch, 1997).
This research project defined the terms “diversity” and “minority” in terms of race and ethnicity, defined specifically with Hispanic/Latino, Black/African American, Asian, and Native American populations. This project took a focus on racial and ethnic diversity because of the serious under-representation of these minority populations in the field of public relations, despite America’s changing demographics, and because of the effects of phenotypes. Aghazadeh (2004) defines phenotypes as physically observable differences and states that those with phenotypes that differ from the majority have less favorable work satisfaction, compensation, and promotion. Hacking (2005) describes phenotypes as a cognitive capacity for sorting people based on race, with race being viewed as an essential characteristic—that is, one’s race is associated with the kind of person one is. This “sorting” becomes especially dangerous when, as Amin (2010) describes, it results in thoughts from the dominant party that others are “inferior, a threat, out of place” and that one is superior and righteous, while the minority party is left with feelings of inferiority, supplication, resentment, and anger (p. 14). Race and ethnicity can be so-called easy targets for discrimination because of visible difference, while other areas of diversity—sexual orientation, marital status, religious preference, and so on—may not be apparent at first glance (Milliken & Martins, 1996). Gender presents another visible difference. Although women outnumber men in the public relations profession, women are under-represented in senior management (The BPRI Group, 2005). Though gender issues make for an obvious topic for research, it was not the focus of the specific research project at hand, as numerous other scholars have wrestled with the topic and continue to explore the gender issue.

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2 “Diversity” refers to moving away from a homogenous workplace and instead including those outside the dominant white male perspective. As Lynch (1997) states, it expands beyond race to include ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, religious and political preferences, age, education, socioeconomic status, and more. “Minority” refers to those not in the racial and ethnic majority. In America, for years, the “majority” has been Caucasian (and mostly from the white male perspective), and “minority” has referred to everyone else (e.g. Asians, Blacks/African Americas, Hispanics/Latinos, Native Americans). As the U.S. population changes, however, the terms “majority” and “minority” will no longer have the same meaning. Lehrman (2006) questions if we will continue to denote these visible differences in the future and, if so, what terminology we will use to do so.
The issue of diversity in the workplace is not a new one. There are many discussions on the advantages of a diverse workforce (Cook, 2007; Ely & Thomas, 2001; Härtel, 2004; Hon & Brunner, 2000; Hunter, 2007; McMillan-Capehart, 2005) and on attracting and retaining a diverse workforce (Culp, 2007; Pless & Maak, 2004; Ward-Johnson, 2007). There are resources on understanding employees’ viewpoints of diversity in the workplace (Ford & Appelbaum, 2005; Kotcher, 1995; Mor Barak, Cherin, & Berkman, 1998; Peppas, 2006). Though there is some discussion of the impact of CEO involvement in creating a diverse and inclusive work environment (“The professional bond,” 2006; Totta & Burke, 1995; Williams, 2007), the literature is lacking in research on top executives’ perceptions of diversity, the importance of which is discussed later in greater detail. There has been some discussion of how CEOs define diversity success (Diggs-Brown & Zaharna, 1995; Lynch, 1997), but much of the research is dated and may not reflect the change in demographics of the American workplace. As Brunner (2008) states, “The good news about diversity is that it is a part of everyday language, and it is an issue that is being addressed. The bad news is that discrimination complaints are not uncommon. The perplexing news is that some managers still ask why it is necessary to spend money, time, and energy on it” (p. 156).

The purpose of this research was to understand public relations top executives’ perceptions of and commitment to racial and ethnic diversity in the workplace and, using the theory of reasoned action, to ascertain top management’s beliefs about diversity in order to predict executives’ future behavior, such as willingness to hire, promote, and retain diverse employees and to create a corporate culture of inclusiveness and acceptance. The ultimate goal of this research was answer questions regarding executives’ actions towards racial and ethnic diversity: What factors influence how we develop diversity perspectives? What kinds of issues
are operating underneath the surface? What characteristics are correlated with people who strongly support diversity initiatives?

Using the theory of reasoned action, this study expected to find that executives’ perceived benefits of diversity is positively related to both the organizations’ and the executives’ engagement in diversity practices. Conversely, executives’ perceived concerns with the challenges of diversity was expected to be negatively related to both the organizations’ and the executives’ engagement in diversity practices. This study also expected that executives’ greater peer endorsement of diversity practices would be positively related to both the organizations’ and the executives’ engagement in diversity practices. The research also planned to discover executives’ important others and executives’ motivation to comply with the wishes and opinions of these important others.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

America’s Changing Demographics and Workplace

Diversity generally refers to race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, religious and political preferences, age, education, and socioeconomic status (Lynch, 1997). As mentioned earlier, diversity was defined in terms of race and ethnicity for this research project. The PR Coalition (2005) states that “diversity is not about exclusion, but about inclusion in all respects” (p.19). Consider the changing demographics: According to the 2010 U.S. Census, more than 16 percent of the American population is of Hispanic/Latino ethnicity—a 43 percent increase from the 2000 Census. It is important to note that ethnicity is identification with a region or country of origin. Thus, one may identify as being of Latino ethnicity while also identifying as one of many races (i.e. Black, Caucasian).

When considering race, the Black/African American population has continued rising steadily, representing 12.6 percent of the population—a 12.3 percent increase from 2000. Persons from Asian backgrounds represent 4.8 percent of the population—a 43.3 percent increase from 2000. Native Americans (defined by the Census as American Indian and Alaska Native) comprise 0.9 percent of the population—an increase of 18.4 percent. Rounding out the numbers for race, 0.2 percent of the population is Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, 6.2 percent identifies as Some Other Race Alone, and 2.9 percent are Two or More races. Finally, the 2010 White population accounted for 72.4 percent of the U.S. population—an increase of 5.7 percent. According to Census data, “three-fourths of the growth in the White population was due to growing numbers of Hispanic Whites” (September 2011, p. 6). Notably, in California, the District of Columbia, Hawaii, New Mexico, and Texas, the population is now “majority-
minority”, where people of color represent more than 50 percent of the population (U.S. Census, March 2011). In Arizona (42% minority), Florida (42%), Georgia (44%), Maryland (45%), and Nevada (46%), the minority population was nearing 50 percent (U.S. Census, March 2011). According to the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) (2008), for total employment, Caucasians account for 65.58 percent of the workforce and minorities account for 34.42 percent of the workforce. The minority group can be further categorized by Hispanic/Latino (13.48%), Black/African American (13.98%), Asian (5.3%), and Native American (0.57%).

Keeping in mind these population and workforce numbers, now consider the executive leadership within the national workforce. In private industry, Caucasians hold 88 percent of executive and senior level manager positions, according to the EEOC (2008). This is much higher than Hispanics (3.8 percent), Blacks (3.4 percent), Asians (3.9 percent), and Native Americans (0.3 percent). Caucasians are represented in management at a rate higher than the percentage of Caucasians in the national population, whereas Hispanics, Blacks, Asians, and Native Americans are underrepresented in management compared to the general population.

In a study of corporate board composition, Fairfax (2005) found that 76 percent of Fortune 1000 companies had at least one racial or ethnic minority on their corporate board, yet, despite this seemingly high number, Fairfax reminds us that minorities are still underrepresented when comparing the number of board seats available versus the national population. The same imbalance is true of administrators in state and local government as well. Caucasians hold 79.7 percent of official and administrative level positions, versus 5.9 percent for Hispanics, 11.5 percent for Blacks, 2.4 percent for Asians, and 0.5 percent for Native Americans (EEOC, 2007).

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3 For information of the methodology of the Fortune list, see http://money.cnn.com/magazines/fortune/fortune500/2010/faq/.
In the news industry, minorities hold only 9.7 percent of decision-making positions, whereas Caucasians account for 90.3 percent of positions of power (Rivas-Rodriguez, Subervi-Vélez, Bramlett-Soloman, & Heider, 2004), and the numbers of minorities are on the decline (Lehrman, 2006). Lehrman (2006) states that one of every two female news editors is planning to leave her job soon and that for every six minorities hired in news, seven left the profession.

**Current demographics in public relations.** The Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) (2007)—the national association for public relations professionals—deems diversity to be of such importance that the group has created a National Diversity Committee, charged with advancing diversity so that the membership of the society reflects the diversity within America. PRSA reports that their membership of self-identified diverse practitioners is at 14 percent, up from 7 percent in 2005 (Maul, 2010). However, as with private industry, government, and news, our case study profession, public relations, also reflects disproportionate representations of minorities in the field. The overwhelming majority of public relations positions—79.5 percent according to The BPRI Group (2005)—managerial or otherwise, are held by Caucasians (Culp, 2007), with minorities representing only 3.9 percent of senior management and 13 percent of non-management positions (The BPRI Group, 2005). Hispanics/Latinos comprise less than 5 percent of the public relations industry, while Blacks/African Americans account for only 8 percent, Asians account for approximately 4 percent, and Native Americans account for 0.1 percent (The BPRI Group, 2005). This underrepresentation of racial and ethnic minorities has been connected to discrimination, a lack of role models, and a lack of awareness about the profession (Zerbinos & Clanton, 1993). This is also problematic for the field of public relations because of the concept of requisite variety, which is foundational for creating an effective public relations firm (Hon & Brunner, 2000; Gruning, Gruning, & Dozier, 2002). The theory asserts
that “There must be at least as much diversity inside the organization as in its environment for the organization to be able to build good relationships with all critical stakeholder publics” (Gruning et. al., 2002, p. 11).

Beyond racial and ethnic discrimination, gender discrimination also still exists. As mentioned earlier, however, women outnumber men in the public relations profession, with women holding 60 percent of public relations managers jobs, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2010), though women are disproportionately under-represented in senior management (The BPRI Group, 2005). It is difficult to estimate the number of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people in the United States, much less within public relations. The national number has been estimated as ranging from 1 percent to 8 percent, with a Gallup poll showing that one-quarter of the public estimates that more than 25 percent of Americans are gay (Robison, 2002). The Williams Institute, a national think tank at UCLA Law, estimates the number of LGBT individuals at 9 million, or 3.8 percent (Gates, 2011). One snapshot survey states that gays and lesbians are represented in public relations at a rate of 3.1 percent (The BPRI Group, 2005), though this number is difficult to determine. Workers over the age of 55 or persons with disabilities are under-represented compared to the national population (7.4 versus 9.2 percent for age; 0.5 versus 20 percent for disability) (The BPRI Group, 2005). Workers with a disability are less likely to work in professional or management positions than those with no disability (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011).

Minority public relations employee experiences and perceptions of diversity. Despite feeling satisfied with having chosen public relations as their profession, many minority public relations professionals feel they have been discriminated against (Zerbinos & Clanton, 1993). From the Ford and Appelbaum (2005) study mentioned at the outset, minority (Hispanic, Black,
and Asian) public relations practitioners have resoundingly asserted that failures within the industry exist: 56 percent state that minority practitioners are regularly given menial tasks; 48 percent have felt unfairly treated by employers and also overlooked for promotion; 63 percent have felt the need to be more qualified than Caucasians; 54 percent have experienced discrimination at work; and approximately 54 percent believe some employers do not want minority practitioners. Nearly half of minority respondents surveyed said they had considered leaving the field of public relations (Zerbinos & Clanton, 1993).

In a 2004 survey, 90 percent of all public relations professionals surveyed felt organizations could do more to improve community outreach, recruitment practices, and advancement procedures for minorities (PR Coalition, 2005). The New York City Human Rights Commission (HRC) felt more could be done as well and conducted a two-year investigation into the hiring practices of New York-based advertising agencies regarding minorities (Sanders, 2006). In September 2006, the HRC reached an agreement with sixteen of the largest advertising firms; agreements that include the establishment of minority recruitment and retention goals and that require the agencies to report on their progress yearly (New York City Commission on Human Rights, 2006). Despite these forcible measures, discrimination on the job persists for many minority employees (Haefner & Ramsey, 2007; Len-Ríos, 2002), especially with regard to pay (American Society of Association Executives, 2006; Vendrell, 1994-1995). Many minorities feel they are “tokens”—forced representatives of the entire racial or ethnic group—instead of valued employees (Bonacich, 1992), with many Hispanic and Black public relations practitioners expressing lower job satisfaction (Culp, 2007).

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4 The figures mentioned are the result of 362 public relations professionals’ responses to a survey distributed to 19 communication related professional organizations. The survey questioned professionals “regarding their views and opinions of the state of diversity in the public relations and communications industry as a whole, and within their own organization in particular” (PR Coalition, 2005, p. 22).
In their research, Hon and Brunner (2000) found that one-third of public relations practitioners surveyed, both minority and majority, believed their organizations to be “aware of diversity issues but lacking in true commitment” (p. 318)—that is, it is a nonissue or not a top priority for their organizations. To solve the problem, practitioners said diversity efforts must be driven from the top down (i.e. from the CEO) and could include activities such as diversity celebrations and diversity committees, but the strongest demonstration of commitment to diversity was reflected by diversity in top management (Hon & Brunner, 2000). The lack of commitment and low number of minorities in senior positions is discouraging not only to current public relations professionals, but also to minority students of public relations, who expressed concerns of overcoming barriers, pay inequality, and a lack of mentors (Gibson, Sanchez, & Weisgerber, 2002). To advance the profession, the field of public relations needs to do more to alleviate the serious concerns of minority practitioners and students.

*Need for Racial and Ethnic Diversity*

There is now a societal demand for diverse organizations and corporations for a number of reasons, which will be explored momentarily. First, it is worth a moment’s notice to take a more in-depth look at diversity concepts.

**Perspectives and characteristics of diversity.** Various perspectives of diversity exist in the literature. Härtel’s (2004) concept of *diversity openness* focuses on embracing and tolerating difference. There are three levels of openness ranging from perceiving difference as valuable and wanting to learn, to seeing less value in diversity but feeling moral obligations to provide access and opportunity, to finding little value in diversity and difference and instead mainly seeking to not appear prejudiced.
Similar to Härtel’s concept of diversity openness, Ely and Thomas (2001) introduce an *integration-and-learning perspective* on diversity in their work with professional services firms. The integration-and-learning perspective views the primary advantage of a multicultural workforce as allowing workers to learn from one another in a way that will make an impact at work. Each member of the group brings his or her unique experiences to the table, allowing the group as a whole to rethink and reframe business issues. This goes beyond assimilation to instead creating a culture that accepts and leverages difference. Ely and Thomas (2001) also present two other concepts of diversity: the *access-and-legitimacy perspective* and the *discrimination-and-fairness perspective*. The access-and-legitimacy perspective asserts that the company’s target market is diverse, so it is in the company’s best interest to also maintain a correspondingly diverse workforce. It is this perspective that makes the “cultural translator” case for diversity, “gaining access to and legitimacy with” the organization’s diverse clients (p. 243). The discrimination-and-fairness perspective states that there is a moral imperative to have a diverse staff because it is the right and fair thing to do, not because it will have any true organizational influence. It is only the integration-and-learning perspective that provides the most benefit to the culture of an organization because it results in minorities feeling valued and respected (Ely & Thomas, 2001).

McMillan-Capehart (2005) provides another perspective. The concepts of a *collectivist culture*—a “focus on shared objectives and cooperation”—and *individualized socialization*—informal tactics that encourage innovation—make the most of what the individual has to offer, while creating commitment to the company (p. 496). As with the previously mentioned integration-and-learning perspective, this goes beyond assimilation. The concept of individualized socialization celebrates individual difference; it pulls together those unique
characteristics that each employee has to offer and then works with the idea of collectivism that has everyone focusing on common objectives. Everyone tackles common problems through their unique lens and then comes together to creating a winning solution. This is a win-win: employees feel valued for who they are, and organizations create loyalty while benefitting from innovation.

Similarly, Pless and Maak’s (2004) culture of inclusion—recognizing, valuing, and engaging differences—is preferred for building diversity versus a culture of assimilation. To achieve a culture of inclusion, organizations must implement four phases. The first step is to raise awareness, build understanding, and encourage reflection. This is important because all of the organization—from the majority to the minority, from management to employees—needs to recognize that “there is no such thing as a given objective and true reality” (p. 137). Each individual brings to the table his or her own version of reality, and this must be recognized from the get-go. The second step is to create an inclusive corporate vision to include a culture that is free from harassment, that is encouraging of communication, that is equitable and sensitive, and that appreciates difference. The third step is to rethink key management concepts and principles, with diversity becoming a guiding vision for the organization. Similar to McMillan-Capehart’s (2004) collectivist culture, Pless and Maak (2004) call for the organization to develop shared values and beliefs. Lastly, the organization must implement an integrated human relations management system, with measurable “competencies of inclusion” incorporated (Pless & Maak, 2004). Such competencies include demonstrated respect and recognition for others or encouraging open dialogue, for example.

While each of these diversity concepts has unique features, the common thread is this: diversity is more than the old hat of assimilation; diversity is instead embracing and leveraging
individual difference. Pless and Maak’s (2004) *culture of inclusion* perspective was used as the primary perspective for this research.

**Need for a diverse organization.** Corporate diversity is relevant because of the importance in relating to the public. As mentioned earlier, in public relations theory, the concept of requisite variety is necessary to create an effective public relations firm, where the diversity within the organization must match the diversity within the organization’s environment (Hon & Brunner, 2000; Gruning, Gruning, & Dozier, 2002). This successful relationship with the public can be partially reflected in the agency’s bottom line. Consider this: as minorities grow in numbers, they are also growing in economic force (CNN.com, 2006). The combined economic impact of minorities was projected to be more than $2 trillion in 2007, according to *Black Enterprise Magazine* (Sánchez-De Alba, 2007). In 2003, that massive buying power could be broken down by race and ethnicity, according to the Selig Center for Economic Growth: Blacks spent $688 billion, Latinos spent $653 billion, and Asians spent $344 billion (Sánchez-De Alba, 2007).

More important, though, is understanding that diversity is critical to an organization’s successes because of the impact on internal corporate culture. Hon and Brunner (2000) state that diversity brings broad perspectives to management and planning. Although the literature has somewhat waffled back and forth on the advantages of diversity, there are few today who do not see the value of creating a diverse workplace. Some of the major advantages include innovation and creativity, problem solving, adaptability, decision making, and productivity (Gilbert, Stead, & Ivancevich, 1999; McMillan-Capehart, 2005; Pless & Maak, 2004; Ward-Johnson, 2007).

Innovation, creativity, and problem solving are the result of having diverse minds, with diverse beliefs and experiences, working together on business issues (Gilbert et al., 1999; Pless
When there is a diverse group of employees, companies are more flexible, adaptable, and agile at dealing with market changes (Ward-Johnson, 2007). Employees who feel valued by their companies and coworkers work harder, increasing productivity. When all employees—majority and minority—feel respected, opinions are freely shared, leading to enhanced decision making. All of this combines to create a corporation’s competitive advantage (Ely & Thomas, 2001; Hon & Brunner, 2000; Hunter, 2007). Competitive advantage is defined by Aghazadeh (2004) as corporate acknowledgement of the necessity of cultural diversity in successful competition in a global business environment or simply defined by Roberson (2006) as leveraging difference—that is, seeing differences as assets and using them for the benefit of the organization and its employees. Competitive advantage has spurred much of the discussion of diversity, mainly due to America’s changing demographics and corporations’ move towards multinational/international business. Many organizations and public relations agencies find it advantageous to have employees who reflect society and become what M. Taylor (2001) calls a cultural translator—the guide who leads their organization through the nuances of his or her particular culture.

To incorporate diversity into the workplace, an organization must develop a corporate culture that extends beyond just placing minorities in management positions to one that truly embraces diversity (Ely & Thomas, 2001). Kim (2006) asserts that to be diverse, organizations must be flexible and inclusive, acknowledging differences, and creating a work environment where those differences are celebrated.

Obstacles to Cultivating Diversity in the Workplace

Despite the advantages of maintaining a diverse workforce, obstacles still exist for attaining and retaining diversity within organizations. In fact, some managers have asked
themselves “why it is necessary to spend money, time, and energy on [diversity]” (Brunner, 2008, p. 156). The reason is simple: organizations can face obstacles in hiring, promotion, and retention of minority applicants, as evidenced by the underrepresentation of minorities described at the outset. These obstacles are typically due to communication and value differences between employees, the effectiveness and training of managers, and the corporate culture, all of which take time, commitment (including from the top), and resources (both human and monetary) to mitigate.

Thomas (1990) states that women and minorities have found their way into business, but the problem now lies in their promotions to more senior level positions. Although, Lehrman (2006) found that it has been difficult to hire and retain minority employees, at least in the news profession. Thomas (1990) also states that while prejudice may still play a role, management’s concerns over minorities’ qualifications is more of a hindrance to hiring and promotion. This is a lasting negative effect of affirmative action, according to Gilbert et al. (1999), when the perception existed that hiring standards were lowered to attract minority candidates. Ragins and Sundstrom (1989) conducted an exhaustive review of the literature regarding women in power in organizations and discovered that there are many obstacles for women to obtain positions of power: “The research…suggests that for women, the path to power contains many impediments and barriers and can be best characterized as an obstacle course” (p. 81). The obstacles are found within the social system (e.g. sex-role socialization, training/education, economic pressures) and the organization (e.g. selection and tracking, performance appraisal, recruitment practices), as well as interpersonal factors (e.g. mentors, networks, subordinate support) and individual factors (e.g. non-work roles such as mother, skills, background).
Another challenge in creating a diverse workplace lies directly with the manager. Minorities across all professions feel less valued than majority group members (Aghazadeh, 2004) and feel they are too often stuck in one role, relegated to serving as cultural interpreter—hired to communicate with the minority group they “represent” (Kern-Foxworth, 1989). Managers may stereotype or rate majority and minority employees differently in hiring and reviews (Aghazadeh, 2004). Managers also may not have the necessary training to be able to communicate with their minority employees. Bell (1990) states that White supervisors generally have fewer interactions with people of color, in contrast to more interactions Black women have had with the White community; thus, Caucasians may base perceptions on stereotypes and assumptions.

Different ethnicities and races offer different cultural perspectives, which can impact the organization. Milliken and Martins (1996) state that “differences in personality characteristics or values of the members of a group” can lead to different views on issues and on “preferred interaction styles” (p. 404). Such cultural differences can include language preferences, as with the 18 percent of the U.S. population who speaks a language other than English at home, with Spanish the prevailing language (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006).

Cultural differences can also extend to forms of communication. Milliken and Martins (1996) mention that minorities can experience feelings of alienation and instances of withholding suggestions to the group. Pless and Maak (2004) provide an example of a female Asian engineer who seldom spoke up because her upbringing encouraged her to be polite and to very carefully consider her words before speaking. Tindall (2009) found that African American public relations practitioners experienced everyday racism, including racially insensitive comments and behaviors from others. For companies to maintain (or create) a positive and diverse internal
culture, Brunner (2008) suggests that organizations need to appreciate differences and what each employee can bring to the table: “Progressive managers posses an intellectual awareness [of diversity], but they need to go beyond this point to develop a culture and plans that attract, retain, and fully utilize a diverse workforce…” (p. 157).

Nagda (2006) states that the majority group views diversity in terms of harmony and small talk, avoiding conflict. This leads to what Nagda describes as communication breakdowns, such as the menial tasks, unfair treatment, discrimination, and so forth as described earlier. Tropp and Bianchi (2006) state that minorities are less likely than the majority to perceive that diversity is valued—the level of importance or esteem with which it is regarded—but it is that very perception that the majority values diversity that is so critical to minorities. Minorities are more likely to have interest in intergroup contact—contact and interaction with the majority—if they perceive majority members as having interest as well (Tropp & Bianchi, 2006). Cues as to the majority’s interest (or lack thereof) might be the avoidance of issues—especially those considered taboo, such as race—which, according to Nagda (2006), can lead to estrangement (avoidance and separation). Nagda (2006) finds great value in deep, ongoing dialogue in building engagement, created through a “climate of intergroup encounter that is conducive to personal sharing—where participants not only feel that they have a voice, but also feel heard, acknowledged, and reciprocated” (p. 571).

A company’s cultural expectations of assimilation demonstrate to employees that the company is not truly committed to creating a welcoming and diverse organization (Gilbert et al., 1999). Härtel (2004) states that organizations that have expectations of assimilation—leaving behind those characteristics or differences that marks one as unique so that one fits into the dominant culture—are not displaying diversity openness. Conversely, demonstrating openness to
the idea of dissimilarity, through diversity-oriented human resources policies, for example, encourages a positive work environment where employees can thrive. To learn how to be better managers and create a more welcoming environment, companies often undergo diversity training programs. However, these programs are all too often associated with high costs and are too short and insufficient for creating necessary workplace change (Gilbert et al., 1999).

Finally, two final points must be mentioned. First, the very concept of “majority” and “minority” stems from what Nkomo (1992) describes as a Eurocentric view of the world. Bell (1990) echoes this sentiment stating that norms, values, and traditions are “…prototypes of the Anglo-Saxon tradition and the Protestant Ethic” (p. 465). The standard by which all is defined is from the perspective of the white male. “Other racial and ethnic groups are relegated to subcategories; their experiences are seen as outside of the mainstream…” (Nkomo, 1992, p. 489). Whites have no race, while the term “race” then becomes a referent to all other groups (Nkomo, 1992). Feagin and O’Brien (2003) also found this to be the case—Caucasian, male executives in their study do not give race much (or any) thought and do not see how their “Whiteness” has benefitted them in our society. Second, obstacles to creating a positive, diverse work environment do not exist only between Caucasians and employees of color. As ours becomes a more global workforce, issues may also arise between multicultural employee groups. Individuals’ cultural customs and communication preferences can create obstacles between various ethnic groups (Fine, 1996; Schreiber, 1996): “People of different ethnic backgrounds possess different attitudes, values, and norms that reflect their cultural ‘heritages’” (Cox, Lobel, & McLeod, 1991, p. 828).
Diversity Practices and Behaviors

Despite the potential obstacles to creating a diverse work environment, many organizations have made efforts to that end. To attain a successfully diverse, multicultural workplace, organizations need to consider how they recruit, train, and retain minority employees. The PR Coalition (2005), for example, recommended organizations focus diversity efforts in recruiting, mentoring, and advocacy. The group makes several recommendations for each of the three focus areas, including top-down commitment, reaching out to high school and college students and minority organizations, forming affinity groups, and encouraging employees to serve as role models (Ford, 2007). Ford and Appelbaum (2005) offer concrete actions for public relations agencies to enhance diversity: (1) raise awareness (e.g. create a recruitment campaign to attract multicultural students), (2) enhance industry recruitment actions (e.g. hire people of color to do recruiting, advertise openings in multicultural media, partner with multicultural organizations), (3) create opportunities for multicultural public relations practitioners (e.g. aggressively hire for senior positions, offer internships for multicultural students), and (4) work to retain multicultural employees (e.g. offer consistent mentoring, promote multicultural practitioners to visible positions).

As Hostager and De Meuse (2002) found, employees who had received diversity training were more positive about diversity and perceived that diversity was good in principle. Thus, it is worth a moment’s pause to understand the sorts of activities that may be included in diversity programming. As mentioned earlier, Nagda (2006) asserts that deep, ongoing dialogue sessions are a means of building engagement through the sharing of personal stories. Diversity training and programs can include mentoring, community outreach, networking and support groups, action plans, intensive new hire orientation sessions, and career planning programs (Lynch,
Other activities could include socials and retreats, role-playing activities, and video or speaker presentations, all of which allow for a safe environment to discuss sensitive issues.

As important as what organizations do is what they say. Nagda (2006) cites four communication processes that have an impact on what she describes as bridging difference: appreciating difference (being open to learning about others’ insights and experiences), engaging self (being involved as an active participant in interactions with others and sharing one’s personal experiences), critical self-reflection (purposefully examining one’s own perspective and views), and alliance building (relating to others and being willing to change the status quo to achieve social justice). Nagda (2006) stresses the importance of dialogue and its positive effects, including fostering “comfort in interracial/interethnic situations, learning from diverse peers, and reduction in unconscious prejudice” (p. 555). Such powerful dialogue exchanges can take place in supportive groups led by trained facilitators over an extended period of time (Nagda, 2006). Nagda tells us that these intergroup dialogues include the sharing of personal narratives, active readings and discussions, intent listening, and collaboration on ways to improve relationships.

The role of executives in diversity promotion. For corporate diversity to be truly successful, executive support is critical (Hon & Brunner, 2000; Hunter, 2007; Totta & Burke, 1995). Pettigrew (1998) says that interactions between the majority and the minority are most successful with the support of authorities, law, or custom—that is, when interaction is visibly supported by management. Executives are responsible for setting the strategic direction and priorities for their organizations and for shaping the corporate culture, while also modeling acceptable/desired corporate behavior (Roberts, 2005). Executive support of intergroup interactions is important because it should foster positive intergroup attitudes and mutual
understanding. Thus, understanding executives’ beliefs regarding diversity is critical to understanding the state of the public relations profession.

*Top Executive Experiences and Perceptions of Racial and Ethnic Diversity*

While research exists on how public relations executives view professional success and leadership (Berger & Heyman, 2005), very little research exists on executives’ perceptions of diversity within their organizations. Diggs-Brown and Zaharna’s (1995) attitudinal survey of senior public relations managers drawn from 200 public relations firms broached the subject, but that research is now more than fifteen-years old, when the demographics of America looked far different than today (e.g. In 1995, African Americans were the largest minority group, but today, Hispanics are the largest minority and in some places are the majority.). In their research, Diggs-Brown and Zaharna (1995) asked participants about their concerns regarding demographic changes, employee values, and management’s ability to lead a diverse workforce, as well as questions regarding hiring, training, and mentoring techniques. Diggs-Brown and Zaharna concluded that public relations firms, while holding a positive view of diversity, were doing little about it. Managers expressed concerns about managing a diverse workforce but did little—by way of hiring, recruitment, or training—to encourage multiculturalism.

Hon and Brunner (2000) conducted qualitative interviews with 28 public relations practitioners and 5 executives, noting that one-third of the organizations were aware of diversity but lacking commitment and one-third were moving towards true commitment, while the remainder was split between disregarding diversity and deeply embedding diversity within the organization’s culture. Executive feedback ranged from “[Diversity] is old news” (p. 318) to “You have to ‘walk the walk’” (p. 321) to diversity as a fundamental part of the organization (p. 325). One executive did notice “White male backlash” to diversity initiatives and promotions (p.
Hon and Brunner (2000) concluded that “genuine commitment from top management seems to be the best predictor of an integrated diversity strategy for organizations” (p. 334).

The Bank of Montreal understands the importance of executive support. In their research, Totta and Burke (1995) conducted a case study of the bank, who is successfully implementing diversity initiatives specifically focused on women, people with disabilities, “visible minorities”, and aboriginal people (p. 32). To achieve its vision of being a “fair and equitable employer”, the bank adopted several tactical strategies, with executive sponsorship ranking at the top (p. 33). The bank recognized the value of senior level support, citing two major advantages of executive buy-in: “[personal sponsorship] practically guaranteed executive-level interest in the issues…and it added emphasis to the message that resolving these issues was indeed a top business priority” (p. 34). Cosmetics giant Avon also sees the value of senior leadership’s involvement, wanting to get “line management to buy into the idea [of increasing diversity]” (Thomas, 1990, p. 108).

Continental Airlines stresses the importance of diversity, and it comes from the top-down. In the late nineties/early two thousands, Continental made a turnaround, and the company credited its aggressive diversity hiring initiatives (Fitzgerald, 2001). Chairman-CEO Gordon Bethune was a keynote speaker at an annual meeting of the Organization of Black Airline Pilots; he also addressed employees in an internal promotional video (Fitzgerald, 2001). The airline also created a new Diversity Council of seven executives focused on building a business case for diversity (Fitzgerald, 2001).

While great efforts are being made within corporate America, the public relations field does have recent cases of success in promoting diversity as well. Omnicom Group Inc., a global holding company of advertising and marketing firms, has both a diversity council and a Chief Diversity Officer (CDO), who assists the company’s agencies with the creation and fulfillment of
diversity plans (Maul, 2010). Omnicom’s CDO reports that many of the holding company agencies have already reached their diversity and inclusion goals (Maul, 2010). One of Omnicom’s holding companies, Porter Novelli, incorporates various actions into its diversity and inclusion plan, with strong support from senior leaders, including the president and Chief Financial Officer: a 12 month plan to attract and retain diverse employees, diversity ambassadors across the company’s U.S. offices, and partnerships with historically Black colleges and universities (Maul, 2010).

WPP, another marketing communications holding company, has also seen success within its agencies. For instance, Ogilvy has on staff a Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer, who reports that diversity and inclusion has been incorporated into all of Ogilvy’s programming, with support by the North America Chairman (Maul, 2010). The agency states that clients hold them accountable and that they also recruit outside the box, such as at the National Black MBA Association Conference (Maul, 2010). Burson-Marsteller, another WPP agency, has a diversity and inclusion council that oversees many programs: non-traditional forms of hiring, workshops, affinity groups, blogs, mentoring programs, recruitment, and partnerships (Maul, 2010).

Despite these strides made within the last decade, with the growing emphasis on diversity and the public relations profession’s proclaimed commitment to diversity, a divide still exists. For all the emphasis on affirmative action, recruitment, training, and retention policies, much is still to be done. Minorities remain underrepresented in the field, and problems with advancement and tokenism still exist. The scant research on public relations top executives’ perceptions, coupled with the emphasis on management-led diversity initiatives, supports the rationale for this research project. To understand what factors may be related to CEOs’ engagement in diversity efforts, this research project used the theory of reasoned action as a guide.
Theory of Reasoned Action

Earlier, this paper cited Pless and Maak’s (2004) culture of inclusion as a basis for creating a successfully diverse workplace, with the achievement of a culture of inclusion connected to raising awareness, building understanding, and encouraging reflection. Pless and Maak (2004) assert this is an important first step because everyone in the organization needs to recognize that “there is no such thing as a given objective and true reality” (p. 137). It is the theory of reasoned action (TRA) that provides a basis for understanding just why a “given objective” and “true reality” are impossibilities.

According to Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), the theory of reasoned action helps researchers predict behaviors. The basic premise of TRA is that behaviors are performed based on one’s intention, and the strength of that intention, to perform said behaviors (Bagozzi, 1992; Buchan, 2005; Dutta-Bergman, 2005; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Fishbein & Yzer, 2003). The intention is influenced by one’s attitude toward the behavior and subjective norms (Fishbein & Yzer, 2003). Notably, the attitudinal and normative components vary from person to person based on individual factors such as gender, culture, or past behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Park & Levine, 1999). Thus, each person brings to the table his or her own “true realities”.

There are eight parts to the theory of reasoned action: the behavior, the intention to perform said behavior, attitude toward the behavior, behavioral beliefs, outcome evaluations, subjective norms, normative beliefs, and the motivation to comply (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Park & Levine, 1999). As the literature demonstrates, there is a need for understanding where top executives stand on employment diversity within their public relations firms. To understand executives’ behavior towards diversity, we must explore their attitudes and subjective norms.
regarding diversity. It is important to understand all components of the theory of reasoned action and how they work together. Figure 2 illustrates the relationships among the eight components.

Figure 2. Ajzen and Fishbein’s basic theory of reasoned action.


Attitudes are formed by behavioral beliefs—beliefs that the behavior leads to certain outcomes—and outcome evaluations—the extent to which that outcome is viewed as positive or negative. Beliefs can be formulated by direct observation (seeing with one’s own eyes and then formulating the belief) (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) argue that attitudes are formed simultaneously when beliefs are formed, with beliefs linking “the object to some attribute; the person’s attitude toward the object is a function of his [or her] evaluations of these attributes” (p. 216). For public relations executives, a behavioral belief regarding diversity could be something such as “Diversity enhances an organization’s bottom line.” The outcome
evaluation for that behavioral belief could be positive or negative, for example, “Enhancing the company’s bottom line is good.” The result is an overall positive attitude towards diversity.

There has been a strong relationship between attitudes and intentions, but people who share similar attitudes may not carry the same intentions (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). This is because subjective norms also influence behavioral intention. Subjective norms are a critical part of the theory of reasoned action and the reason TRA was chosen for this research project.

Subjective norms are formed by normative beliefs—beliefs about whether or not one’s important others (e.g. spouse, family and friends, coworkers) would endorse the behavior—and motivation to comply—relative importance of what one’s important others believe (Buchan, 2005; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Park & Levine, 1999; Uddin & Gillett, 2002). Continuing the previous example (i.e. “Diversity enhances an organization’s bottom line.”), the important others could be the public relations agency’s board or shareholders. The normative beliefs in this instance might be “The agency’s board and shareholders think diversity is important.” The motivation to comply would be based upon how these important others influence the executive: “The agency’s board and shareholders care about the bottom line, and that is important to me.” The result is an overall positive influence of subjective norms regarding diversity and the bottom line.

When the behavioral beliefs, outcome evaluations, normative beliefs, and motivation to comply are pulled together, the result is the attitude and subjective norms, which lead to the behavioral intention and the behavior. Which of these factors—attitude or subjective norms—has more influence, if any, on the individual? The weight of the attitude versus the weight of the subjective norms is not known. For this study, the weight of these two influencing factors is not measured. Following the given scenario, our example executive finds that all of the intervening factors are positive, so he ultimately decides to encourage his agency to implement diversity
initiatives. The executive does so because he believes it will enhance the organization’s bottom line, and enhancing the bottom line is viewed positively by the executive and his important others, the agency’s board and shareholders.

**Hypotheses and Research Question**

This research study explored public relations executives’ attitudes and subjective norms towards racial and ethnic diversity and their effect on organizational and executive engagement in diversity practices. The study also explored executives important others and the motivation to comply with these important others. Attitudes and subjective norms are measured separately. The study did not measure the weight of attitudes versus subjective norms.

Because of the scarce research on leaders’ diversity attitudes in the field of public relations, research on management attitudes in other fields must be considered. Bell, Harrison, and McLaughlin (2000) used TRA to study the relationship among attitude, subjective norms, and affirmative action programs (AAPs). The multi-part study of 592 students and full-time workers confirmed that attitude does have a positive effect on intention to perform affirmative action program-related behavior. Similarly, in a hospitality industry survey, it was determined that there is a correlation between 191 hotel executives’ (general managers, owners, presidents, or CEOs) attitudes and perceived benefits of environmentally responsible initiatives and implementation of those initiatives within their hotels (Park, 2009). Though this research was focused on the environment and not diversity, Park’s study does indicate a relationship between attitude and perceived benefits and organizational outcomes.

According to the theory of reasoned action, therefore, when leaders perceive diversity within organizations to be more beneficial—such as increased competitive advantage, enhanced
problem solving, more productivity, and creativity—leaders are more likely to support diversity initiatives. Thus,

**H1a:** Executives’ perceived benefits of diversity are positively related to organizational engagement of diversity practices.

This hypothesis examined the top executive’s positive attitudes toward diversity. This was measured through items that explore the executive’s attitude about the perceived benefits of diversity.

Linnehan, Chrobot-Mason, and Konrad (2006) determined in their research that the theory of reasoned action “is a useful model for evaluating reactions to diversity in organizations” (p. 435). Using a Likert scale, the authors conducted a survey of 852 public service employees to measure the organization’s diversity culture. The researchers found that the intention “to engage in diversity-related behaviors [was] positively related to attitudes and subjective norms toward these behaviors” (p. 421). Thus,

**H1b:** Executives’ perceived benefits of diversity are positively related to personal engagement in diversity activities.

This hypothesis further delves into the executive’s attitude and personal engagement in diversity activities.

While the literature has demonstrated the many positive benefits of diversity in the workplace, top management may also be aware of some challenges associated with diversity. Although not focused on diversity, Bommer, Rubin, and Baldwin’s (2004) study of transformational leadership behavior discovered a relationship between a leader’s negative attitude—in this case, cynicism about organizational change—and the leader’s level of transformational leadership behavior. Bommer et al. surveyed 227 leaders from eight
manufacturing firms and found that leader cynicism led to lower levels of transformational leadership behavior. Perhaps cynicism is a result of feeling powerless. As mentioned earlier, Ragins and Sundstrom’s (1989) work on gender and power in organizations found that there are several factors that influence an individual’s power within an organization: the social system, the organization, interpersonal factors, and individual factors. They define power as the “…influence by one person over others, stemming from a position in an organization, from an interpersonal relationship, or from an individual characteristic” (p. 51), with power developing over the time span of an individual’s career. The chief decision maker for a public relations firm should have the ultimate decision-making authority. However, as mentioned earlier, important others (e.g. the agency board, human resources) play a major role in influencing the executive’s decisions and power.

Another particularly relevant research project was conducted by Kim and Yang (2009) regarding crisis communications and racial crisis dynamics. In their study of 207 university students, the authors provided mock newspaper articles describing scenarios of racial discrimination, as well as various corporate crisis responses. They hypothesized that those participants who have a greater negative emotional response to the scenarios would have a more negative perception of the company’s reputation; this hypothesis was supported. The Kim and Yang (2009) study is especially relevant, as it is in the field of public relations.

According to the theory of reasoned action, therefore, when top management perceives diversity within organizations to cause issues—such as communication problems among employees, issues with hiring and retention, or commitment of time and resources—or when leaders feel it is out of their power to effect change regarding diversity, leaders are less likely to support diversity initiatives. Thus,
H2a: Executives’ perceived concerns of diversity are negatively related to organizational engagement of diversity practices.

This hypothesis examined the top executive’s negative attitudes toward diversity, measured with items pertaining to perceived concerns with diversity.

Dass and Parker (1999) devised a framework for linking top management’s diversity perspectives with their organization’s condition and performance. They note that a poor fit between perspectives and the organization’s strategic responses can have associated economic costs. Dass and Parker also discuss a resistance perspective, whereby pressure for more diversity is perceived negatively and results in avoidance and defiance. Thus,

H2b: Executives’ perceived concerns towards diversity are negatively related to personal engagement in diversity activities.

This hypothesis further delves into the executive’s attitude regarding diversity activities and expects less personal engagement from the executive.

The theory of reasoned action suggests that top management’s behavior is not only influenced by their attitudes about diversity, but also by their subjective norms regarding diversity. Considering the nature of the public relations profession, what important others—valued clients and partners, peer CEOs and executives, agency board members, employees, and professional associations—think of them is surely of special interest to public relations executives. In an academic setting, for example, Buttner, Lowe, and Billings-Harris (2006), found that structural pressures from boards of advisors and peer business school deans had a strong effect on business schools’ diversity activities. Buttner et al. (2006) tested 143 business school leaders’ regarding the organization’s level of diversity activities. They found that when the school’s diversity orientation is strong, diversity activities are more extensive. Such
orientation can include diversity as an organizational strategic priority—often set with guidance from the board of advisors—or as a requirement of the executive’s annual performance review—again, typically conducted by the board of advisors.

In the Bommer et al. (2004) study mentioned previously, the authors also tested for the influence of peer managers on a leader’s level of transformational leadership behavior. They found that the level of transformational leadership behavior of peer managers increased the level of transformational leadership behavior of the organization’s leader. Similarly, in their research on attitude and affirmative action programs cited earlier, Bell et al. (2000) found that subjective norms regarding AAPs had a positive effect on intentions to perform AAP-related behaviors.

Although not one of the studies examining diversity issues, Hambrick, Finkelstein, and Mooney (2005) also suggest the importance of relevant others in the CEOs’ decision making, in this case, as decisions relate to job performance. They reported that a CEO’s beliefs about the expectations of his or her performance held by the organization’s directors, owners, and stakeholders significantly affected the CEO’s perceptions about job requirements. Similarly, Buchan (2005) reported that ethical decision-making is influenced by what an individual thinks important others will think about the behavior. According to the theory of reasoned action, therefore, when top management believes that people who are important to them think that executives should participate in diversity activities, they are more likely to perform the behavior. Thus,

H3a: Executives’ perceptions of greater peer endorsement of diversity will be positively related to organizational intent to engage in diversity practices.

H3b: Executives’ perception of greater peer endorsement of diversity will be positively related to personal engagement in diversity practices.
The study included different types of “significant others” to reflect the many influencers, stakeholders, and audiences involved in executives’ work environments.

Finally, a research question emerged from this study as well. Of these significant others (agency board, clients, employees, peer executives, industry associations and professional organizations), what is the level of influence on executives?

RQ1: Of executives’ important others (agency board, clients, employees, peer executives, industry associations and professional organizations), which is most important to the executive to comply with their wishes?
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Sample Recruitment Procedure

Participants solicited for this study were 523 public relations agency top executives or their designees. For this study, the participants were a convenience sample of executives with email addresses, pulled from 544 public relations agencies from firms listed online in the O’Dwyers Public Relations Firms Database and the members of Council of Public Relations Firms. The O’Dwyer Company has covered the public relations industry for more than 40 years and has produced an annual listing of U.S. and international public relations firms since 1970. The Council of Public Relations Firms is a membership organization of public relations agencies of various sizes and specialties. These two sources were used because they are well-respected and because executive contact information is readily available. Other potential sources were vetted but not used. For instance, the membership list of the Public Relations Society of America is not sorted based on job title, so obtaining the appropriate contacts is not possible. The Arthur W. Page Society is another potential source, but they do not release their membership list. The voluntary survey was emailed to the organizations’ chief decision maker (e.g. Chief Executive Officer, Chief Operating Officer, president) on March 14, 2012, and only one contact person was approached at each company.

Sixteen of the email addresses bounced back as email delivery failure. Six executives unsubscribed from the survey email list. Thus, a total of 501 final contacts remained on the email list for a follow-up reminder sent two weeks later on March 22. Two additional emails were sent on March 29 and April 9. These emails indicated extensions of the participation deadline. In total, 20 participants (4% response rate) completed the survey. Seven participants
requested a copy of the final results. The issues of limited response rate will be discussed in Chapter 5.

Participants

Demographic data are shown in Table 1. In total, 20 public relations executives (60% male, 20% female, 20% not reporting) completed the survey. The majority of Respondents are White (70%), followed by Asian (5%) and Hispanic (5%), with 20 percent of Respondents not reporting race or ethnicity. Respondents chose from a range of job titles, including Chief Executive Officer (35%), President (35%), Principal (15%), Chairman/Chairperson (10%), Partner (5%), and Founder (5%). The mean tenure for Respondents in their current position is 13.07 years ($SD = 6.55$, Range = 3 - 25). Most Respondents earned at least a Bachelor’s degree (55%), with others having also earned a Master’s degree (20%), and 25 percent not reporting. The mean score for political leaning is 4.81 ($SD = 1.97$; 1 = Strongly Conservative; 7 = Strongly Liberal).

Company descriptive data are shown in Table 2. Both corporate headquarters and the Respondent’s physical office locations vary: Northeast U.S. (31.3%), Midwest U.S. (25%), Southern U.S. (18.8%), Western U.S. (18.8%), International (6.3%). To further describe their location, Respondents selected from urban (70%), rural (5%), and suburban (5%) areas, with 20 percent not reporting. The majority of agencies do not have minority owners (55%), while a portion do indeed have minority owners (25%), with 20 percent not reporting. The size of most of the public relations agencies managed by the surveyed executives is relatively small. Company sizes ranged from 10 or fewer employees (40%), to 11 – 50 employees (25%), to 51 – 100 employees (10%), to 101 – 500 employees (5%), with 20 percent not responding.
Table 1

*Demographic Characteristics of Survey Respondents*

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| Race/Ethnicity                   |      |              |
|---------------------             |      |              |
| White                 | 70.0 | 14           |
| Asian                 | 5.0  | 1            |
| Hispanic              | 5.0  | 1            |
| Not reporting         | 20.0 | 4            |

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tenure (in Years)</td>
<td>13.07</td>
<td>6.55</td>
<td>3 – 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Leaning</td>
<td>4.81</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>1 – 7 **</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Respondents were allowed to choose more than one job title.

**Note: 1 = Strongly Conservative, 7 = Strongly Liberal

N = 20
Table 2

Descriptive Characteristics of Survey Respondents’ Agencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptive Characteristic</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Response No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Corporate and Respondents’</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office Headquarters</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Work Location</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>70.0</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not reporting</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minority Ownership</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No minority owners</td>
<td>55.0</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority owners</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not reporting</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of Employees</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 or fewer</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-50</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-100</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101-500</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not reporting</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: N = 20*

Research Design

In order to answer the questions raised, this study employed a Web-based cross-sectional survey designed to collect data about top management’s attitudes and behavior relating to diversity. These professionals were contacted by email using a survey service (Survey Monkey), which included an introduction, consent form, and survey questionnaire (see Appendices A, B,
The survey instrument was a questionnaire of closed-ended items that measured public relations top executives’ attitudes and subjective norms regarding diversity. The survey also measured management’s personal behaviors and their organizations’ practices in diversity engagement. The survey instrument was a compilation of several previously tested scales, including Buttner et al.’s (2006) “Diversity Activities Scale”, De Meuse and Hostager’s (2001) “Workplace Diversity Survey”, Ford and Appelbaum’s (2005) survey, and the PR Coalition’s (2005) “Diversity Tracking Survey”. The survey included some modified items, based on these scales and based on the literature review.

The survey contained a total of 97 items, with an estimated completion time of approximately 15 minutes. The independent variables measured included executives’ attitudes regarding diversity and executives’ subjective norms (peer endorsement) regarding diversity. The dependent variables measured were organizational practices and executive behavior, especially executive personal engagement in diversity activities.

Measures

**Executives’ perceived benefits of diversity.** Respondents indicated to what extent they agreed or disagreed with ten positive statements about diversity (1 = Strongly disagree; 7 = Strongly agree) (De Meuse & Hostager, 2001). Statements included items such as “Diversity is an asset for organizations.” Response scores were averaged. Higher number indicates greater perceived benefits (alpha = .88)

**Executives’ perceived concerns with diversity.** Respondents indicated to what extent they agreed or disagreed with ten negative statements about diversity (1 = Strongly disagree; 7 = Strongly agree) (De Meuse & Hostager, 2001). Statements included items such as “Diversity
requires too much of a time commitment.” Response scores were averaged. Higher number indicates greater perceived concerns (alpha = .78).

**Executive personal engagement in diversity-related activities.** Respondents were asked to indicate how often they participate in each of the following activities for employees (7 = Very often; 1 = Never): Career planning programs, Community outreach, Intensive new hire orientations, Mentoring, and Networking and support groups (Ford & Appelbaum, 2005; Gibson et al., 2002; Pettigrew, 1998). Response scores for these four items were averaged. Higher number indicates more frequent participation (alpha = .87).

**Intention to participate in diversity practices.** Respondents were asked to indicate to what extent they consider participating in each of 15 diversity practices listed within the next 5 years (7 = Highly likely to consider; 1 = Not at all likely to consider) (Buttner et al., 2006). Some of the items included “A standing committee, task force, or action council monitors the agency’s diversity climate.” or “Employee satisfaction is routinely evaluated and compared among racial/ethnic groups.” The items were slightly modified for flow and to change the wording from the academic setting that Buttner et al. (2006) studied, to a public relations setting, such as from “business school” to “agency” or from “faculty members” to “employees”. Response scores were averaged. Higher number indicates greater intention (alpha = .88).

**Perceived peer endorsement regarding diversity.** Respondents indicated to what extent they agreed or disagreed with items regarding pressure to implement diversity strategies within the organization and peer influence on the executive’s personal engagement in diversity activities (1 = Strongly disagree; 7 = Strongly agree) (Buchan, 2005; Buttner et al., 2006; Kida, 1982). The items included “I feel pressure from my [important other] to implement diversity strategies in my agency.” and “Most of my [important others] who are important to me think that I should
participate in diversity activities within my agency. Response scores were averaged for each of the following five possible significant others: the agency’s board (alpha = .91), the agency’s clients (alpha = .88), the agency’s employees (alpha = .79), the executive’s peer CEOs (alpha = .78), and professional organizations (alpha = .78). Higher number indicates greater endorsement.

**Executives’ willingness to comply with important others.** Participants were asked to indicate the importance of complying with the expressed wishes or opinions of important others: Professional Association/Industry, Peer executives, Agency’s board members, Agency’s clients, and Employees. This was measured with a seven-point Likert scale (7 = Very important; 1 = Not important at all).

For descriptive purposes only, the following variables were also included in the survey.

**Current and past diversity practices.** Respondents were asked to indicate whether or not their agencies participate currently (or have participated in the past) in each of 15 diversity practices listed (7 = Highly likely to consider; 1 = Not at all likely to consider) (Buttner et al., 2006). These were the same items as used with the “intention to participate in diversity practices” measures—only these were slightly modified to capture current or previous practice, instead of future intent to practice.

**Demographic measures.** The survey also included some demographic measures such as gender, age, race/ethnicity, education, and political leaning. In addition, questions regarding the organization (geographic location, number of employees, owners) and the executive (title and tenure) were included for describing samples.

Data Analysis

Descriptive analysis was used to describe participating executives. Cronbach’s alpha was used to assess measurement reliabilities of each multiple-item measure. Correlation analysis
using the Pearson correlation coefficient was used to examine all of the hypotheses and the relationships between attitudes and behaviors and subjective norms and behaviors.
CHAPTER 4
RESULTS

Perceived Benefits of Racial and Ethnic Diversity

Results of descriptive analyses are shown in Table 3. Overall, public relations top executives generally agreed that the supposed benefits of diversity are positive and indeed beneficial to the organization and its employees ($M = 5.5, SD = 1.02$). Respondents especially felt that diversity is an asset ($M = 6.15, SD = 1.23$) and that it is enriching ($M = 5.90, SD = 1.45$). Executives also believe that employees who feel respected and valued share their opinions ($M = 6.65, SD = 0.93$) and work harder ($M = 6.45, SD = 0.76$). The benefits to the company, then, are enhanced decision-making and increased productivity, which is consistent with current scholarly literature.

Perceived Concerns with Racial and Ethnic Diversity

Results of descriptive analyses are shown in Table 3. In general, the top level executives surveyed did not perceive diversity as necessarily challenging (negative) ($M = 3.21, SD = 0.91$), but it varies depending on the item. Respondents especially felt strongly in opposition to the idea that diversity requires personal sacrifices ($M = 1.82, SD = 1.07$), that diversity is unprofitable ($M = 1.82, SD = 1.19$), or that hiring standards must be lowered for minority candidates ($M = 1.76, SD = 0.97$). Notably, executives did feel that organizations face difficulties in the hiring, promotion, and retention of diverse employees ($M = 5.06, SD = 1.98$). This is an area that the industry needs to deal with, and executives recognize such is the case.
Table 3

Means, Standard Deviations, and Reliabilities of Index Variables: Perceived Benefits and Concerns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Index: Perceived Benefits of Diversity...</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5.51</td>
<td>1.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makes employees feel respected/share opinions</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6.65</td>
<td>.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makes employees feel valued/work harder</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6.45</td>
<td>.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is an asset for organizations</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6.15</td>
<td>1.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is enriching</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5.90</td>
<td>1.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizations should acknowledge/celebrate differences</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5.35</td>
<td>1.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increases competitive advantage</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5.25</td>
<td>1.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leads through nuances of particular cultures</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5.20</td>
<td>1.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leads to increased creativity</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5.20</td>
<td>1.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leads to agility with market changes</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4.65</td>
<td>2.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leads to increased problem solving</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>1.71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cronbach’s alpha: .88

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Index: Perceived Concerns with Diversity...</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has obstacles in hiring, promoting, and retaining diverse employees</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5.06</td>
<td>1.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee differences exist</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4.71</td>
<td>1.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training insufficient for creating change</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>1.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alters a company’s culture</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>1.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managers lack sufficient training</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>1.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is expensive for organizations</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>1.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requires too much of a time commitment</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leads me to make personal sacrifices</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>1.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiring standards must be lowered for minority candidates</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1.76</td>
<td>.97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cronbach’s alpha: .78

Note: Higher number indicates greater perceived benefits/concerns (7 = greatest)

Executive Participation in Diversity Activities

Results are included in Table 4. There were five activities listed, and, on average, executives were mostly neutral or slightly positive regarding participation. The activities that executives participate in most are mentoring ($M = 5.88$, $SD = 2.47$), networking and support groups ($M = 5.88$, $SD = 1.96$), and community outreach ($M = 5.31$, $SD = 2.65$)—activities that
executives can participate in outside the agency, such as within their local communities or associations. This may reflect the limited diversity practices offered within their agencies.

Table 4

*Means, Standard Deviations, and Reliabilities of Index Variables: Executive Participation in Diversity Activities*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Index: Executive Participation in Diversity Activities</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5.32</td>
<td>2.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5.88</td>
<td>2.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking and support groups</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5.88</td>
<td>1.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community outreach</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5.31</td>
<td>2.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career planning programs</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4.81</td>
<td>2.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intensive new hire orientation sessions</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>3.04</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Cronbach’s alpha: .87*

*Note:* Higher number indicates more frequent participation (7 = Very often, 1 = Never)

Current and Past Diversity Practices

Results are reported in Table 5. Notably, for nearly all of the items, executives reported that the diversity programming offered currently or in the past was 0 = Not applicable, indicating that the organization has never offered the diversity activity in question. There are only two activities that a larger percentage of the agencies do participate in: formal mentoring programs (50%) and routine exit interviews (43.8%). However, the lack of programming offered demonstrates that there is more that agencies can be doing to enhance diversity programming for their employees, particularly among small-sized agencies. As described in the literature review, larger agencies are already implementing (or have implemented) diversity programming (Maul,
2010), so, perhaps the issue now rests with the many smaller agencies that make up a portion of the public relations industry.

Table 5

*Public Relations Agency Diversity Programming Currently or Previously Offered*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diversity Program</th>
<th>Current %</th>
<th>Previous %</th>
<th>Not Applicable %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal mentoring program for new hires</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>37.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Routine exit interviews</td>
<td>43.8</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>56.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity celebration activities</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>75.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity communication plan</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>81.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goals for increasing number of minorities</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>87.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diverse agency board</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>87.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager accountability for diversity goals</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>87.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity retention action plans</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>93.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity training for employees</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>81.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executives/managers participate in training</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>93.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity recruiting action plans</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>93.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standing diversity committee</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>87.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring progress of diversity goals</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>93.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEO monitors employee demographics</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>93.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring employee satisfaction</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>93.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: N = 16*

*Intention to Offer Diversity Programming*

Response scores were averaged, and results are included in Table 6. With only two exceptions, executives indicated that their agencies were unlikely within the next five years to offer any of the programs described. Executives did indicate they would consider offering formal mentoring for new employees ($M = 5.43, SD = 1.70$) and conducting formal exit interviews when employees leave the agency ($M = 5.57, SD = 2.07$). As Table 5 indicates, these two programs are the same programs that agencies currently offer or have offered in the past.
Table 6

**Means, Standard Deviations, and Reliabilities of Index Variables: Diversity Practice Intentions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Index: Diversity Practice Intentions</strong></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>1.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Routine exit interviews</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5.57</td>
<td>2.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal mentoring program for new hires</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5.43</td>
<td>1.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity retention action plans</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>2.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity recruiting action plans</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>1.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity communication plan</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>2.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity training for employees</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>1.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring progress of diversity goals</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>1.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goals for increasing number of minorities</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>1.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEO monitors employee demographics</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>1.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity celebration activities</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>1.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diverse agency board</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>1.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executives/managers participate in training</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>1.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager accountability for diversity goals</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>1.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standing diversity committee</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>1.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring employee satisfaction</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1.79</td>
<td>1.63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Cronbach’s alpha: .91*

*Note:* Higher number indicates greater intention (7 = Highly likely to consider, 1 = Not at all likely to consider)

**Perceived Peer Endorsement**

Results are reported in Table 7. In general, top management did not seem to feel strongly that important others (Professional Associations/Industry, Peer Executives, Agency Board, Agency Clients, and Agency Employees) believe the executives need to engage in or implement diversity strategies at work. Of these important others, Industry Associations had the greatest influence on executives regarding diversity ($M = 3.08$, $SD = 1.77$), followed by Agency Boards ($M = 2.41$, $SD = 1.50$) and Agency Employees ($M = 2.35$, $SD = 1.40$), though still slight, and Agency Clients had the least influence on executives regarding diversity ($M = 2.00$, $SD = 1.22$).
### Table 7

**Means, Standard Deviations, and Reliabilities of Index Variables: Perceived Peer Endorsement**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Index: Perceived Peer Endorsement</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Associations/Industry...</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>1.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>think that I should participate in diversity activities within my agency.</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>2.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pressure me to implement diversity strategies in my agency.</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2.41</td>
<td>1.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cronbach’s alpha: .78</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency Board...</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2.41</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>think that I should participate in diversity activities within my agency.</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>1.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pressure me to implement diversity strategies in my agency.</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cronbach’s alpha: .91</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency Employees...</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>1.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>think that I should participate in diversity activities within my agency.</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>1.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pressure me to implement diversity strategies in my agency.</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>1.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cronbach’s alpha: .79</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Executives...</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>1.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>think that I should participate in diversity activities within my agency.</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>1.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pressure me to implement diversity strategies in my agency.</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>1.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cronbach’s alpha: .78</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency Clients...</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>think that I should participate in diversity activities within my agency.</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>1.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pressure me to implement diversity strategies in my agency.</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>1.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cronbach’s alpha: .88</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Higher number indicates greater perceived peer endorsement (7 = greatest)*
Executives’ Willingness to Comply with Important Others

**Research Question 1.** This study’s research question sought to discover for which of executives’ important others (agency board, clients, employees, peer executives, industry associations and professional organizations) it is most important to the executive to comply with their wishes. In general, as shown in Table 8, important others are indeed influential to executives. Top management indicated how important it is to follow the expressed wishes or opinions of these important others, with Agency Clients ($M = 6.28, SD = .75$) and Agency Employees ($M = 5.94, SD = 1.06$) having the most influence on executives and Professional Associations/Industry having the least influence ($M = 2.94, SD = 1.83$).

Table 8

**Executives’ Willingness to Comply with Important Others**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Important Other</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agency Clients</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6.28</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency Employees</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5.94</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Executives</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4.94</td>
<td>1.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency Board</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>1.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Associations/Industry</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>1.83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* Higher number indicates more important ($7 = $Very important$, 1 = Not important at all$)

**Reliability**

Reliability for each of the key index variables was examined using Cronbach’s alpha. Results are presented in Tables 3, 4, 6, and 7. Overall, reliability was high for all of the key variables examined in the hypotheses. For the perceptions of diversity subscales, reliability was high for both perceived benefits (alpha = .88) and perceived concerns (alpha = .78). Reliability
was high for both diversity practice intentions (alpha = .91) and executive frequency of personal participation in diversity activities (alpha = .87). Reliability was also high for the following subjective norms index variables: agency board (alpha = .91); agency clients (alpha = .88); agency employees (alpha = .79); professional associations/industry (alpha = .78); and peer executives (alpha = .78).

**Testing Hypotheses**

Results of correlation analysis appear in Table 9. Results of each specific hypothesis also appear in Table 10 (intention to participate in organizational diversity practices) and Table 11 (personal engagement). Most of the results were not statistically significant, given the limited sample size.

**Hypothesis 1.** Hypothesis 1 stated that executives’ perceived benefits of diversity would be positively related to organizational diversity practices (H1a) and to personal engagement in diversity activities (H1b). Results were not statistically significant for either H1a, $r = .19 (17), p = .24$, or H1b, $r = .41 (16), p = .06$. H1a and H1b were not supported.

**Hypothesis 2.** Hypothesis 2 stated that executives’ perceived concerns of diversity would be negatively related to organizational diversity practices (H2a) and to personal engagement in diversity activities (H2b). Results were not statistically significant for either H2a, $r = .23 (17), p = .19$, or H2b, $r = .06 (16), p = .42$. Neither H2a nor H2b were supported.

**Hypothesis 3.** Hypothesis 3 stated that an executive’s perception of greater peer endorsement of diversity would be positively related to organizational intention to engage in diversity practices (H3a) and personal engagement in diversity activities (H3b). For H3a, organizational diversity practice intention, results showed a significant positive correlation for four of the five items: Peers: $r = .76 (17), p < .001$; Board: $r = .68 (16), p < .001$; Clients: $r = .75$
(17), \( p > .001 \); Employees: \( r = .65 \) (16), \( p < .005 \). It did not show a significant positive correlation for Professional Associations/Industry, \( r = .26 \) (17), \( p = .16 \). H3a was partially supported.

Results were not statistically significant for H3b: Professional Associations/Industry, \( r = -.17 \) (16), \( p = .27 \); Peers: \( r = .03 \) (16), \( p = .46 \); Board: \( r = .20 \) (15), \( p = .24 \); Clients: \( r = .01 \) (17), \( p = .48 \); and Employees: \( r = -.21 \) (15), \( p = .23 \). H3b was not supported.

In summary, significant results were found only between perceived peer endorsement of diversity by important others and intention to engage in organizational diversity practices. Implications for limited sample size and these results will be explored in the discussion section.
Table 9

*Correlations and Significances Between Index Variables*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>b</th>
<th>c</th>
<th>d</th>
<th>e</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>g</th>
<th>h</th>
<th>i</th>
<th>j</th>
<th>k</th>
<th>l</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Perceived concerns</td>
<td>-0.036</td>
<td>0.225</td>
<td>0.617***</td>
<td>0.405*</td>
<td>0.451*</td>
<td>0.341#</td>
<td>0.363#</td>
<td>0.497*</td>
<td>-0.519**</td>
<td>-0.111</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Perceived benefits</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>0.188</td>
<td>-0.192</td>
<td>0.105</td>
<td>0.279</td>
<td>0.354#</td>
<td>0.327#</td>
<td>-0.125</td>
<td>-0.167</td>
<td>0.229</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Intention to offer diversity programs</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>0.262</td>
<td>0.758***</td>
<td>0.679***</td>
<td>0.753***</td>
<td>0.648***</td>
<td>-0.135</td>
<td>-0.106</td>
<td>-0.399#</td>
<td>0.216</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Professional associations/Industry</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>0.608***</td>
<td>0.571**</td>
<td>0.448</td>
<td>0.567**</td>
<td>-0.167</td>
<td>-0.011</td>
<td>-0.325</td>
<td>-0.121</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Peer executives</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>0.876***</td>
<td>0.864***</td>
<td>0.746***</td>
<td>0.029</td>
<td>0.051</td>
<td>-0.384#</td>
<td>-0.080</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Agency board</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>0.920***</td>
<td>0.795***</td>
<td>0.195</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>-0.428#</td>
<td>0.091</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Agency clients</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>0.836***</td>
<td>0.011</td>
<td>-0.032</td>
<td>-0.370#</td>
<td>-0.020</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. Agency employees</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>-0.205</td>
<td>-0.300</td>
<td>-0.336</td>
<td>0.181</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Executive participation</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>0.313</td>
<td>0.047</td>
<td>0.147</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j. Gender</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>-0.470</td>
<td>-0.206</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k. Tenure</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>-0.385</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>l. Area</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: *p ≤ .05, **p ≤ .01, ***p ≤ .001, #p ≤ .10*

a. Perceived concerns: Index all 10 diversity concern items
b. Perceived benefits: Index all 10 diversity benefits items
c. Intention to offer diversity programs: Index all 15 diversity practice intention items
d. Professional associations/industry: Index 2 subjective norms items
e. Peer executives: Index 2 subjective norms items
f. Agency board: Index 2 subjective norms items
g. Agency clients: Index 2 subjective norm items
h. Agency employees: Index 2 subjective norm items
i. Executive participation: Index 5 items, frequency of personal participation in diversity activities
j. Gender: Female or Male
k. Tenure: Number of years in current position
l. Area: Company geographic location
Table 10

**Results of Hypotheses Testing: Intention to Offer Diversity Programming**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>r</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intention to offer diversity programming and...</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H1a:</strong> perceived benefits</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>H1a not supported</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H2a:</strong> perceived concerns</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>H2a not supported</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H3a:</strong> perceived peer endorsement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional associations/industry</td>
<td>.26</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer executives</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency board</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency clients</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency employees</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>H3a partially supported</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11

**Results of Hypotheses Testing: Executives’ Personal Engagement**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>r</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Executives’ personal engagement and...</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H1b:</strong> perceived benefits</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>H1b not supported</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H2b:</strong> perceived concerns</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>H2b not supported</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H3b:</strong> perceived peer endorsement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional associations/industry</td>
<td>-.17</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer executives</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency board</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency clients</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency employees</td>
<td>-.21</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>H3b not supported</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The current study examined public relations top executives’ personal beliefs about diversity practices at work (both benefits and challenges) and how these beliefs were related to their current engagement in diversity-related activities and their intention to officially implement diversity-enhancing programs in their agencies in the future. In addition to personal beliefs, the study looked at social influence (perceived peer endorsement of diversity practices) and how it is related to top management’s intended diversity practices.

The limited sample size (n = 20) left most of the findings as not statistically significant. Yet, several significant finding emerged, providing information not previously known about public relations top management. First, an executive’s perception of greater peer endorsement—specifically peer executives and the agency’s board, clients, and employees—of diversity is positively related to the organization’s future engagement in diversity practices. Grunig et al. (2002) reiterate as well that others (e.g. outside organizations such as government agencies and industry associations) are very important to decision makers. The results offer an interesting paradox. On the one hand, when looking at the individual items measuring perceived peer endorsement, executives did not feel that these important others believe the executives need to engage in or implement diversity strategies at work. Yet, when looking at the correlation between the influence of these important others and the intention of top management to offer diversity programs in the future, there is a relationship. Perhaps, in order to take the next step in pursuing diversity activities, executives need a “push” from these important others. This “push” should start with agency clients and agency employees, as executives indicated that these are the
audiences whose expressed wishes or opinions are of most importance, another important piece of information not previously known about public relations executives.

Another key finding from this survey is that, among the diversity activities listed, public relations agencies only currently offer formal mentoring programs and routine exit interviews, and these are the only two programs they plan to offer in the future, presumably because they are already currently in practice. The diversity-related activities that executives are least likely to offer in the future are those related to evaluation and executive personal engagement, including monitoring employee satisfaction by racial/ethnic groups and by rank, creating a standing diversity committee, holding managers accountable for achieving specific diversity goals, routinely having executives and managers actively participate in diversity training, and having executives regularly monitor racial/ethnic demographics of employees by level, among others.

This reaction from public relations management regarding implementation of diversity activities is somewhat surprising, given their general agreement that diversity is indeed beneficial to the organization and its employees. Executives indicated their belief that diversity is an asset, that it is enriching, and that employees who feel respected and valued share their opinions and work harder. Further, top management indicated their awareness of the difficulties in hiring, promotion, and retention of diverse employees. It is a wonder, then, why executives are not planning to do more to enhance diversity within their agencies. The executives themselves are mostly well-educated, Caucasian men who are politically moderate and who have worked in their current position for an average of 13 years, primarily in urban locations in the United States in the Northeast and Midwest. For this survey, influencing factors could be company size, as most of the Respondents work at firms with fewer than 50 employees, or the fact that most of the Respondents work at non-minority owned agencies. Executives may not be receiving that “push”
from employees or agency board members/owners to do more to enhance diversity and appear to not be making such a “push” on their own.

From their 1995 study, Diggs-Brown and Zaharna found that public relations firms viewed diversity positively but were doing little about it. More than 15 years later, the case remains the same. This is why the profession is lagging in diversity promotion and why minority public relations professionals are unhappy, as described at the outset. Agencies are aware of the problems but are not offering—and do not plan to offer—the necessary programs, policies, and procedures to make for real change, and this is coming from the top down. The findings from this survey indicate a strong need for executives to do more, both personally and organizationally, to enhance diversity within their agencies.

*Identifying the Problems: Lessons Learned and Diversity Best Practices for Top Management*

Executives said that they recognize diversity is beneficial to an organization and its employees—it is an asset and is enriching. Employees who feel respected and valued share their opinions and work harder, leading to enhanced decision-making and increased productivity. Executives further stated that they do not believe diversity to be unprofitable or that hiring standards must be lowered for minority candidates. So, where is the deadlock? Why are executives not doing more? As mentioned in the literature review, one-third of public relations practitioners surveyed, both minority and majority, believed their organizations to be “aware of diversity issues but lacking in true commitment” (p. 318) and that diversity efforts must be driven from the top down to achieve progress (Hon & Brunner, 2000). Couple this with the other findings of this research, and it becomes apparent that the most pressing need to enhance diversity in the public relations industry is to promote diversity activities among top executives. Some suggestions and best practices, based on this research and the literature, are discussed.
**Become actively engaged.** The results of this survey demonstrate that executives do not believe diversity requires them to make personal sacrifices. Yet, of the potential diversity programs agencies could offer in the future, executives were least likely to implement programs that required their personal involvement: monitoring employee satisfaction by racial/ethnic groups and by rank, creating a standing diversity committee, holding managers accountable for achieving specific diversity goals, routinely having executives and managers actively participate in diversity training, and having executives regularly monitor racial/ethnic demographics of employees by level. Executives need to step up and take a more active role in advocating for diversity within their agencies. They need to be front and center to employees, championing diversity programs and activities and being personally engaged (Anyaso, 2008; Conklin, 2006; Evans & Chun, 2007). Both Porter Novelli and Ogilvy public relations agencies have diversity plans and programming, with strong support from senior leaders, including the chairman/president (Maul, 2010). It is important to point out that both of these agencies are part of larger holding companies who were forced to enact diversity measures by outside parties (New York City Commission on Human Rights, 2006). Aronson (2002) does warn executives not to go overboard so as to appear to be bullying employees into accepting diversity initiatives, but to have executives definitely be visibly supportive of the cause.

**Listen to important others.** Public relations executives also need to listen to their influential important others. For starters, top management can follow the example set by their peers. In the advertising industry, great strides have been made to enhance diversity initiatives. Though government forced advertising agencies to make these steps, progress has been made nonetheless (New York City Commission on Human Rights, 2006). As described in the literature review, many larger public relations agencies are also already engaging in diversity programs.
Omnicom Group Inc. has both a diversity council and a Chief Diversity Officer, who assists the company’s agencies with the creation and fulfillment of diversity plans (Maul, 2010). Porter Novelli has a diversity and inclusion plan (Maul, 2010). Ogilvy has a Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer, as well as diversity programming (Maul, 2010). Burson-Marsteller has a diversity and inclusion council that oversees many programs as well (Maul, 2010). Despite these strides at larger firms, more must be done throughout the industry, particularly within the smaller or mid-sized agencies.

Executives also need to listen to their racial and ethnic minority employees, who are extremely dissatisfied with the state of diversity in the profession (Brunner, 2008; Ford & Appelbaum, 2005). Though satisfied with public relations as a profession, these employees have felt discriminated against (Ford & Appelbaum, 2005; Zerbinos & Clanton, 1993), have felt as though they were token employees (Bonacich, 1992), have been regularly given menial tasks, have been overlooked for promotion, have felt the need to be more qualified than Caucasians, and have felt their employers do not want minority practitioners (Ford & Appelbaum, 2005). Approximately half of minority practitioners have considered leaving the field of public relations (Zerbinos & Clanton, 1993).

The overwhelming majority (90%) of all public relations professionals feel organizations could do more to improve community outreach, recruitment practices, and advancement procedures for minorities (PR Coalition, 2005). Opening an honest dialogue with racial and ethnic minority employees will take time, and employees will want to see true commitment from their leadership (Tropp & Bianchi, 2006). Employees will need a safe space to discuss these issues—without fear of retribution—so that they feel heard and acknowledged (Nagda, 2006). Employees who have a say will feel valued and respected, a benefit recognized by executives in
this study. Conversely, top management also needs to be aware of the concerns majority employees may feel about new initiatives and be prepared to address such issues (Aronson, 2002), such as White male backlash (Hon & Brunner, 2000). To do so, Aronson (2002) suggests executives reiterate to employees that diversity is about inclusiveness, that it is smart for the organization, and that all employees will have a say in the creation of a diversity plan. To bring together executives and employees, professional and industry associations can perhaps pave the road for open dialogue via workshops and training. These associations should also continue to impress upon CEOs and other top executives—through publications, at meetings and conventions, online—the importance of prioritizing diversity programming within their agencies.

Lastly, executives need to keep in mind the changing face of America and who their clients will be in the future. Public relations powerhouse Ogilvy states that clients hold them accountable for diversity (Maul, 2010). While other executives may not feel pressured at this time by their clients to implement or engage in diversity programming, the day will come when clients will start expecting and demanding agencies to be more diverse.

**Implement best practices within the agency.** Executives need to advocate for diversity programming within their agencies, even if others—perhaps the board or owners—do not see the value at this time. Diversity Best Practices (2011), an organization for diversity thought leaders, recommends several best practices for CEOs and other top executives to follow, based on their benchmarking assessments: (1) require direct report of workforce diversity metrics to the CEO from the organization’s diversity executives (i.e. Chief Diversity Officer), (2) publish a CEO diversity statement on the organization’s Website and corporate collateral, (3) meet regularly with diversity executives, (4) provide workplace diversity updates to board of directors annually, (5) provide workplace diversity updates to employees annually, (6) oversee
management compensation plans connected to diversity outcomes, (7) encourage supplier
diversity, and (8) chair the organization’s diversity committee (2011). Aronson (2002) also
suggests tying executive compensation to diversity metrics, in an effort to focus management’s
attention on this important area.

Other action items for top brass include creating a diversity strategic plan, with a strong
vision statement and clear, measurable goals (Brunner, 2008). This plan will offer accountability
to internal and external stakeholders by offering measurable goals and giving diversity initiatives
resources and priority (Evans & Chun, 2007). A good diversity strategic plan includes an
evaluation of where the organization is currently; identification of gaps between the current
space and where the organization wants to go; connection between the diversity strategic plan
and the organization’s larger strategic plan; and explanation of the business case for diversity,
including executive support (Evans & Chun, 2007). Measurements must be taken and follow-up
should be conducted, as appropriate. Finally, executives need to communicate their agencies’
diversity plans with their employees and clients—identified by executives as their two most
important audiences.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Sampling related considerations will be discussed later, and, as such, this section
identifies other limitations associated with the current research.

This study used the theory of reasoned action as a theoretical framework to examine the
relationships between attitudes, subjective norms, and behavior. According to the theory,
behaviors are performed based on one’s intention, and the strength of that intention, to perform
said behaviors (Bagozzi, 1992; Buchan, 2005; Dutta-Bergman, 2005; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975;
Fishbein & Yzer, 2003), with the intention influenced by one’s attitude toward the behavior and
subjective norms (Fishbein & Yzer, 2003). The three hypotheses tested measured the relationships between attitudes, subjective norms (peer endorsement), and agency/executive intended behavior. However, for this project, the weight of attitude and subjective norms was not measured. Thus, we do not know if it is the executive’s attitude or the importance of subjective norms that has greater importance to the executive in decision-making. Future research should explore whether it is one’s attitude or the role of subjective norms that plays a larger role in decision-making for public relations executives.

Based on TRA, this study considered that attitudes and normative beliefs affected intention, but the causal relationship was not examined. It is possible that the direction of causality could even be the opposite; we do not know, based on the nature of the survey data. The data are correlational, which does demonstrate a relationship among variables, but it is not causal, demonstrating how an independent variable affects a dependent variable. Future research should explore this causal relationship to determine if attitudes and normative beliefs do indeed cause executives to behavior in a specific manner.

There is a potential for social desirability bias, whereby Respondents provided answers they believed the researchers wished to see instead of giving honest answers. Future research should explore executives’ level of social desirability bias with regards to diversity.

There is also a risk of self-selection bias: those participants who are interested in diversity and workplace issues may have participated in the survey, while those who do not have a strong interest may have opted out. Future research should explore why public relations executives choose not to participate in either diversity-related research or in diversity programming. Additionally, those who participated in this survey lead agencies with fewer than 50 employees
on staff. Because participants belonged to small-sized agencies, future researchers should explore the attitudes of executives at mid- to large-sized agencies.

The focus of this study was top management’s attitudes and behaviors towards diversity; thus, the research examined only the executives’ perspectives of diversity at work. In order to achieve a better understanding of diversity practices within public relations agencies, both executives’ and agency employees’ perspectives need to be taken into consideration. Future research should, thus, include both views.

None of the items on the survey requested the demographic composition of Respondents’ companies. This was intentionally omitted, as it was uncertain as to whether the C-suite executive would have this information. Because the racial and ethnic makeup of employees of Respondents’ firms is unknown, we do not know if these agencies are already racially and ethnically diverse. Future researchers should ask this question in studies of this nature to account for how diverse organizations already are.

This project demonstrated that executives are currently not offering and do not plan to offer diversity programming within their agencies. This could be due to any number of factors, including already having a diverse staff, as mentioned above, but also a lack of time, monetary resources, etc. Future researchers should explore further what is holding the executives back.

These and other lessons to be learned from the research regarding possible reasons for non-response, as well as recommendations for reaching top public relations executives regarding diversity surveys, will be explored further. To extend the work and build upon the important findings of this study, future researchers could consider other means of delving deeper into the issue, such as through in-depth personal interviews. Feagin and O’Brien (2003) were able to gain valuable insights into the perspectives of race of high-powered, White men in their research.
They gained the sort of information not available through close-ended surveys—insights that come only after building rapport between the interviewer and interviewee. Interviews may provide a good means for allowing researchers to tackle such a sensitive topic—one that many executives may be fearful of addressing in written form due to legal implications or fear of backlash. For an interview project, future researchers should be sure to consider matching interviewer and interviewee so as to maximize rapport-building. For instance, in the current study, the researcher’s name appears to be that of a female, possibly of Latin origin. Respondents may have made judgments on name only and felt unsure about sharing information with an unknown entity. Face-to-face interviews could eliminate this uncertainty and set interviewees at ease.

**Methodological Observations: Sample Recruitment Issues and Future Suggestions**

The methodological disappointments with the low response rate for this research rest in three main categories: target audience, online survey, and topic. Suggestions for overcoming these issues in future research is provided in hopes that the lessons learned here will benefit other scholars.

**Target audience.** The task of targeting top executives always presents a challenge. Cicelyota and Harrison (2006) found that executives’ response rates to mail surveys have been declining over the years. In a survey of accounting executives, lack of time, organizational constraints (e.g. organization not willing to release the data), and lack of interest in surveys were all factors in executives’ decisions not to participate (Falconer & Hodgett, 1999). The low response rate and low survey completion rate for this project demonstrate just how difficult it is to garner feedback from these important top executives. Despite the challenges presented with this survey, exploring the attitudes of chief decision makers is a key part of diving deeper into
understanding the shortcomings with diversity within public relations. There are a few reasons why the response rate for this project may be lower than anticipated.

First, the list for this survey was comprised of harvested email addresses from two reputable public relations organizations (O’Dwyers Public Relations Firms Database and Council of Public Relations Firms). The primary researcher visited the website of each agency on these lists to confirm the name and contact of the chief executive or equivalent. Of the 523 emails sent, 339 addresses (64.8%) were specific addresses for the top level executive. The remaining 184 addresses (35.2%) were generic or alternate addresses, such as info@companyname.com. Thus, more than one-third of the agencies contacted were addressed by a generic email address, which very likely would be monitored by another staff person (Cycyota & Harrison, 2006). Email filters may have resulted in non-delivery (Duda & Nobile, 2010), such as with the 16 bounceback emails received. As such, the top level executive may have never received the request to participate in the survey.

Second, CEO-level employees are notoriously busy individuals with limited time. Though the survey completion time was only an estimated fifteen minutes, that may have been time top executives could not make in their day. Because this audience is so busy, many have executive assistants who screen emails. There is no way of knowing how many of the requests to participate were screened out and discarded by assistants (Scott, Jeon, Joyce, Humphreys, Kalb, Witt, & Leahy, 2011). To encourage participation in the future, researchers should consider incentives or prizes, such as gift cards, if budgets will allow, as such incentives have been shown to increase participation and completion rates (Alessi & Martin, 2010; Harcombe, Derrett, Herbison, & McBride, 2011), though Cycyota and Harrison (2006) found incentives not to be an enhancement for encouraging executive response rates with mail surveys. For this project, a
copy of the survey results was offered as an incentive, with seven individuals requesting these results. For the rest of the survey pool, however, this may have not been incentive enough, and this researcher’s budget, unfortunately, did not allow for larger prizes.

Third, with the exception of the researcher’s supporting university, there was not a supporting organization that co-sponsored this survey. Cycyota and Harrison (2006) found that organizational sponsorship from a group (e.g. professional organization) or individual (e.g. someone within the executive’s network) recognized by the executive increased mail survey response rates. The survey participants may not have trusted the researcher without the endorsement of an organization that they readily recognized, such as the Public Relations Society of America. Though obtaining mail lists for this project from PRSA or The Arthur W. Page Society was not feasible for this project, for future research, if possible, partnering with either of these two organizations would perhaps lend the name recognition that public relations executives would prefer, thus increasing response rates (Harcombe et al., 2011).

Fourth, the targeted executives may have been fatigued with receiving multiple email correspondences regarding this project. They simply may not have wished to participate in the survey, no matter the number of requests made to them. Cycyota and Harrison (2006) found that follow-up to executives with mail surveys did not increase response rates. Harcombe et al. (2011) list various reasons as to why people participate in a survey: altruism, interest in the topic, sense of duty, free time/enjoyment in taking surveys, feeling that the survey applies to them, or a career influence. Indeed, topical salience—timeliness or relevance—was a factor for increasing mail survey response rates from executives (Cycyota & Harrison, 2006). For those who did begin to complete the survey but failed to answer it in its entirety, Ross and Reynolds (1996) offer two explanations: the respondents either did not have the information (i.e. perhaps a human resources
staffer could better address) or did not wish to divulge the information, perhaps due to the sensitive nature of the issue.

Some executives may have preferred to participate in a paper or telephone survey, rather than online. For instance, doctors prefer paper to online surveys (Scott et al., 2011). Further, those participants who do not take part in an online survey may be very different from those who do participate. In one study, researchers found that non-Responders to an online survey were likely to be older than average Respondents (Duda & Nobile, 2010). Duda and Nobile (2010) also found that online Respondents in their research were more likely to be affluent, male, and well-educated, whereas telephone survey Respondents were more reflective of the total population studied. They state that those who participate in online surveys may be more interested in the topic than those who do not participate, thereby biasing the data (Duda & Nobile, 2010). Email is a cost-effective manner of distributing a survey, though it is not the only option. In a study of doctors, sequential mixed mode (online survey followed-up with a paper reminder) yielded a higher response rate than online alone, while also being cost-effective (Scott et al., 2011). Future researchers should consider pairing email surveys with postal mail and/or telephone follow-up, if costs will allow. This does present possible issues with maintaining anonymity, so researchers will need to plan ahead to address this potential concern, such as possibly sending a reminder to all participants.

Still, the Internet is described by Alessi and Martin (2010) as “…a useful tool for conducting research on…sensitive topics…” (p. 123). In a study of college students, Hanna, Weinberg, Dant, and Berger (2005) found no significant difference between Web- and paper-based surveys when it came to questions of a sensitive nature. In fact, the authors stated that those who participated in anonymous Web-based surveys were in a “partially disinhibited state.”
Web Respondents are more “self-aware and thoughtful; thus they may be more likely to disclose deeper feelings” (Hanna et al., 2005, p. 354).

**Online survey.** Though the final survey distributed to participants was designed to be as easy for participants to engage with as possible, there are still some elements of the process that may have contributed to the low response rate. Recognizing these limitations and their implications may help future researchers as they design surveys for this audience. As mentioned earlier, participant resistance to online surveys could be a contributing factor in the decision to participate in the survey. Providing a paper option, or at least a postal or telephone follow-up, may increase participation rates, as non-response is easier online (e.g. simply delete the email) than via an interview (Scott et al., 2011). And, by partnering with a supporting organization, researchers may be able to gain the trust of participants, thereby increasing the likelihood of engaging respondents.

For this email survey, from the beginning, participants were informed that the survey would require a minimal investment of time (an estimated 15 minutes) and that questions could be skipped, if need be. Despite this information, participants may have been dissuaded from participating by taking an initial look at the survey and feeling intimidated by its length. To mitigate this issue in the future, researchers should be more explicit in stating that the survey is a quick one, despite the appearance, in addition to offering an incentive, as mentioned earlier. Part of what contributed to the survey’s length was the need to reframe and repeat sections of questions, such as the diversity programs currently offered versus the likelihood of offering those programs in the future. From a research standpoint, framing questions in this manner allows for analysis of the results, but from the participant’s perspective, it may seem too repetitive (Harcombe et al., 2011).
Lastly regarding the survey format, participants were required to complete the survey in one session versus being able to begin the survey and the return at a later point to complete the survey, as time allowed. Formatting the survey in this manner was done to protect participant privacy, as it prevented the need to collect IP addresses or provide a login. Given the short estimated time of completion for the survey, it did not seem necessary to allow multiple logins for a 15-minute survey, at the expense of ensuring privacy. Alessi and Martin (2010) suggest that allowing the option to complete surveys in more than one sitting may very well increase completion rates. Future researchers should consider if the potential benefit of allowing respondents to leave and return to the survey would outweigh the drawbacks.

**Topic.** Diversity is a timely topic, but it is also a sensitive topic (e.g. fears of discrimination lawsuits, affirmative action backlash) (Aronson, 2002; Feagin & O’Brien, 2003). In their studies on powerful, White male executives, Feagin and O’Brien (2003) found that most of their research participants had very limited contact with Black Americans (outside of domestic/service capacities or education/military situations) and reiterated that the way people think about race stems from childhood exposure to inherited racial attitudes. Executives may be fearful of seeming prejudiced or of “saying the wrong thing”.

It is because of this sensitive nature of the topic that so many reassurances were put into place and reiterated to participants that their responses would be private. As mentioned earlier, the Internet is a good means for collecting data on sensitive topics, not just diversity, but other highly sensitive topics such as risky sexual behavior among LGBT persons (Alessi & Martin, 2010) or sexual promiscuity among college students (Hanna et al., 2005). Still, perhaps participants remained concerned that their results would remain confidential, as Scott et al. (2011) surmised in their study of doctors’ survey behaviors. Because diversity can be so highly
charged, participants may have avoided the survey entirely, unless they had a special interest in it, which in its own right is problematic (e.g. response bias) (Duda & Nobile, 2010). Beyond assurances of anonymity, researchers can, again, co-sponsor with a trusted organization, build rapport with participants, and clearly communicate information about the study, including its benefits, in hopes of relieving worries about survey participation (Harcombe et al., 2011).
CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

From the start, this research project sought the answers to some tough questions: What factors influence how we develop diversity perspectives? What kinds of issues are operating underneath the surface? What characteristics are correlated with people who strongly support diversity initiatives? As the literature review demonstrated, one of the most influential factors in implementing diversity initiatives and programming is the level of involvement of the CEO and other top executives. Because of the importance of top-down influence, this study focused on examining the beliefs and behaviors of CEOs and provided some key insights not previously known about this important audience, as well as some recommendations for CEOs to follow.

Based on the theory of reasoned action, it has been tested and confirmed that an executive’s perception of greater peer endorsement of diversity is positively related to organizational engagement in diversity practices. Thus, the role of important others is an important one in developing diversity perspectives. From this research project, it seems that if public relations executives receive indications from people important to them (i.e. peer executives and the agency’s board, clients, and employees) that implementation of diversity practices is important, executives would be more willing to implement such programs, supporting TRA. The important others, then, especially employees and clients, need to become more vocal to CEOs and other top management about wanting to see more done with implementing diversity programming. This presents a challenge, as described earlier. Employees may not feel secure in speaking freely and directly to top management about the issues within the organization. Until executives create a safe space for dialogue, employees will be less likely to directly express their frustrations. Yet, from the abundant research, it is clear that racial and
ethnic minorities are dissatisfied with the state of diversity in public relations. CEOs, as the chief
decision maker, need to be the ones to make open communication happen and to begin the
process of implementing diversity programming.

However, from this survey, we learned that public relations executives in small-sized
agencies are not planning on offering diversity programming (outside formal mentoring
programs and routine exit interviews) in the future, nor are they planning on becoming
personally engaged in diversity activities themselves. This is in spite of the fact that executives
generally agree that diversity is beneficial to the organization and its employees. This is a
paradox that would be worthy of future research. Executives are in the power position to start
implementing diversity practices within their public relations agencies in order to turn around the
dissatisfaction within the profession.

Though the results from this research project may not have offered insight into specific
characteristics associated with people who are strong supporters of diversity programming, we
did learn that the Respondents to this survey are themselves not strong supporters of such
initiatives. These top executives have the power to make the necessary changes to improve the
future of public relations. Whether executives answer the call remains to be seen.
REFERENCES


Vendrell, I. B. (1994-1995). What is Hispanic public relations and where is it going?


*Tactics, 15*-17.


A  Introductory Email

Dear Public Relations Executive’s Name,

As the senior executive at a public relations firm conducting business in the United States, you are invited to participate in a study about your perceptions of and experiences in the public relations industry. This senior leadership project is part of a study being conducted by Amber Irizarry, a graduate student at Georgia State University. This is a research survey required as part of the completion of my Master of Arts thesis program.

This online research study, which should take about 15 minutes to complete, asks you to indicate your opinions and perceptions of the workplace and public relations profession. One purpose of this study is to achieve a better understanding of senior executive opinions, and we would like to include your honest and valuable opinions. Should you wish to designate another person to complete the survey on behalf of your organization, please feel free to do so. Please keep in mind that this is a survey of senior level executives.

Your results will be confidential. No identifying information about you or your organization is being collected. Computer IP addresses will not be collected.

The survey can be completed online using the link provided. Please complete your survey by Wednesday, March 28, 2012. Only one response per company should be submitted.

SURVEY LINK: https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/MBSLMFF

Thank you, in advance, for your participation in this important research. As a token of appreciation, a copy of the results of this research can be provided to you. A separate link will be provided at the end of the survey, if you wish to receive the final results.

Amber Hooper Irizarry, Master of Arts degree candidate, ahooper2@student.gsu.edu
Dr. Yuki Fujioka, Thesis Advisor, jouykf@langate.gsu.edu
Department of Communication, Georgia State University

To opt out of receiving additional information regarding this survey, please reply to this email with UNSUBSCRIBE in the subject line.
B  Informed Consent

Georgia State University Department of Communication
Informed Consent

Title: Public Relations Management Project
Principal Investigator: Yuki Fujioka, Ph.D., faculty advisor
                        Amber H. Irizarry, student investigator

Purpose: You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of the study is to investigate your perceptions of and experiences with the workplace and the public relations industry. You are invited to participate because you are a senior leader in the public relations industry. A total of 199 participants will be recruited for this study. You will participate in one web-based survey session. Participation will require approximately 15 minutes of your time. The survey must be completed in one session.

Procedures: If you decide to participate, you will participate in an online survey via the Survey Monkey survey system. You will be asked to indicate your opinions and perceptions of the workplace and public relations industry. You will also be asked some information about yourself (title, gender, etc). This survey does not collect any identifying information about you or your organization. The total time of this short survey will be about 15 minutes. This survey program allows you to skip questions.

Risks: In this study, you will not have any more risks than you would in a normal day of life. However, in order to accommodate any possible psychological discomfort due to the exposure to any attitudinal questions, the study assures that (a) your participation will be completely voluntarily, (b) responses should be kept confidential, and (c) you could withdraw from the study at any time.

Benefits: Participation in this study may not benefit you personally but will be greatly valuable to the field of public relations. Results of this research can be provided to you. A separate link will be provided at the end of the survey, if you wish to receive the final results.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal: Participation in research is voluntary. You do not have to be in this study. If you decide to be in the study and change your mind, you have the right to drop out at any time. You may skip questions or stop participating at any time. Should you wish to designate another person to complete the survey on behalf of your organization, please feel free to do so. Please keep in mind that this is a survey of senior level executives. Only one response should be submitted per organization.

Confidentiality: We will keep your records private to the extent allowed by law. Yuki Fujioka, Ph.D., and Amber H. Irizarry will have access to the survey responses you provide. Your information will be confidential. No identifying information about you or your organization is being collected. Computer IP addresses will not be collected. The findings will be summarized and reported in group form. You or your organization will not be identified personally.
Survey responses may be shared with those who make sure the study is done correctly, such as the Georgia State University Institutional Review Board or the Office for Human Research Protection. The information you provide will be stored on a password- and firewall-protected computer. Your name and other facts that might point to you are not being collected. Survey findings will be summarized and reported in group form.

**Contact Persons:** If you have questions about this study, contact Yuki Fujioka, Ph.D., faculty advisor, at yfujioka@gsu.edu or 404-413-5600, or Amber H. Irizarry, student investigator, at ahooper2@student.gsu.edu or 646-476-8744. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this research study, you may contact Susan Vogtner in the Office of Research Integrity at 404-413-3513 or svogtner1@gsu.edu.

**Copy of Consent Form to Subject:** If you would like a copy of this informed consent information, please print this page before proceeding.

If you are 18 years or older and willing to volunteer for this research, please click the "I agree" button below.

Are you 18 years or older, and do you agree to participate in this study?

I agree
I do not agree
### C Survey Instrument

**Public Relations Management Project: Section A**

We would like your opinions on the following statements about diversity in the workplace.

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following items, on a scale ranging from 1="Strongly disagree" to 7="Strongly agree".

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1=Strongly disagree</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7 = Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Employees who reflect society can lead an organization through nuances of particular cultures.</td>
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<td>〇</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Diversity is expensive for organizations.</td>
<td>〇</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Diverse organizations should create an environment where differences are acknowledged and celebrated.</td>
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<td>4. I believe that diversity training is insufficient for creating necessary workplace change.</td>
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<td>5. Diversity is an asset for organizations.</td>
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<td>6. Diversity leads me to make personal sacrifices.</td>
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<td>7. I believe that diversity is enriching.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following items.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>1 = Strongly disagree</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7 = Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8. Diversity is unprofitable for organizations.</td>
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<td>9. Diverse employees lead to companies being more agile at dealing with market changes.</td>
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<td>10. Diversity requires too much of a time commitment.</td>
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<td>11. I believe that diversity leads to increased creativity.</td>
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<td>12. Managers do not have the necessary training to be able to communicate with their diverse employees.</td>
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<td>13. Diversity leads to increased problem solving.</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. Organizations face obstacles in hiring, promoting, and retaining diverse employees.</td>
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<td>15. When employees feel respected, opinions are freely shared, enhancing decision-making.</td>
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<tr>
<td>16. Hiring standards must be lowered to hire minority candidates.</td>
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<td>17. Employees who feel valued by their company work harder, increasing productivity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>18. Communication and value differences exist among employees of different racial and ethnic backgrounds.</td>
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<td>19. Diversity increases a company’s competitive advantage.</td>
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<td>20. Diversity alters a company’s established corporate culture.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Public Relations Management Project: Section B

How would you describe the ways your organization reaches major decisions?

Please indicate how well each of the following statements describes your agency's decision-making process, on a scale ranging from 1=“Doesn't describe at all” to 7=“Describes very well.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1=Doesn't describe at all</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7=Describes very well</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21. Decisions in this organization are made by individuals largely working alone.</td>
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<tr>
<td>22. Decisions in this organization are made with thorough discussion between all people who will be affected in a major way.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Decisions in this organization are based on tradition here—the way things have always been done.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Decisions in this organization are based on the assessment and recommendation of study committees designated for the issue in question.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please indicate how well each of the following statements describes your agency's decision-making process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1=Doesn't describe at all</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7=Describes very well</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25. Decisions in this organization are based on open debate among employees.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Decisions in this organization are made by trial-and-error. We try things and see if they work.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Decisions in this organization are based on scientific facts, evidence and/or research findings.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Decisions in this organization are based on authority here—the way the CEO and the people close to him or her want things done.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Think about other people whose opinions matter to you at work, such as professional associations, your clients, other executives, and your employees.

Indicate the response that best reflects the extent of your agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements, on a scale ranging from 1="Strongly disagree" to 7="Strongly agree".

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1=Strongly disagree</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>29. Professional organizations, such as professional/industry associations, that are important to me think that I should participate in diversity activities within my agency.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. I feel pressure from the professional organizations, such as from professional/industry associations, to implement diversity strategies in my agency.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. My peer executives who are important to me think that I should participate in diversity activities within my agency.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. I feel pressure from other executives to implement diversity strategies in my agency.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Think about other people whose opinions matter to you at work. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>1=Strongly disagree</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7=Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>33. Those individuals who are important to me such as the agency's board, think that I should participate in diversity activities within my agency.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. I feel pressure from my agency's board to implement diversity strategies in my agency.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. Most of the agency's clients that are important to the agency think that I should participate in diversity activities within my agency.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36. I feel pressure from my agency's clients to implement diversity strategies in my agency.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Think about other people whose opinions matter to you at work. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>1=Strongly disagree</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7=Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>37. My agency's employees think that I should participate in diversity activities within my agency.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38. I feel pressure from my employees to implement diversity strategies in my agency.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. Most of my friends and family who are personally important to me think that I should engage with diversity.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40. I feel pressure from my friends and family to engage with diversity.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How important is it for you to comply with each of the following people?

Please indicate how important it is to you to follow the expressed wishes or opinions of the people listed, on a scale ranging from 1="Not important at all" to 7="Very important" to you to comply.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1=Not important at all</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7=Very important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>41. Professional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Association/Industry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42. Your peer executives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43. Agency's board members</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44. Agency's clients</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45. Employees</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46. Personal friends and family</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Public Relations Management Project: Section D

For this next set of questions, think about the how likely your agency would be to consider participating in each of the following activities in the next 5 years.

Please use the scale from 1="Not at all likely to consider" to 7="Highly likely to consider" the activity.

My agency establishes...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>47. A program that explicitly communicates (e.g., memos,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>public announcements, promotional materials) the agency's commitment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to diversity.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48. Activities to celebrate diverse racial/ethnic heritages.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49. A clear goal that the agency's board represents the racial/ethnic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>diversity of the overall community.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50. A formal system for a standing committee/task force/action council</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to monitor the agency's diversity climate.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51. A program that offers diversity training for the</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>agency's employees to support the agency's goals.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How likely is your agency to consider participating in each of the following activities in the next 5 years?

My agency establishes...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1=Not at all likely to consider</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7=Highly likely to consider</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>52.</td>
<td>A principle that executives and managers actively participate in diversity training.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53.</td>
<td>Action plans that emphasize the goal of recruiting a workforce representative of the agency's racial/ethnic demographics.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54.</td>
<td>Action plans that emphasize the goal of retaining a workforce representative of the agency's racial/ethnic demographics.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55.</td>
<td>A formal mentoring programs for new employees.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56.</td>
<td>Formal written goals and timetables for increasing the number of minority managers and employees.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How likely is your agency to consider participating in each of the following activities in the next 5 years?

My agency establishes...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>1=Not at all likely to consider</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7=Highly likely to consider</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A formal system that effectively monitors the progress for accomplishing the agency's diversity goals.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A principle that managers are held accountable for achieving specific diversity goals, including a component in the performance review of managers.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A formal policy that executives routinely monitor racial/ethnic demographics of employees by level (Executives, Senior Management, Mid-management, Entry-level).</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A procedure that monitors employee satisfaction by racial/ethnic groups and by rank.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A principle that exit interviews are routinely conducted when employees leave.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Public Relations Management Project: Section E

Has your agency participated in the following activities in the past, or does your agency currently participate in these activities?

Please select either 1="Currently participates" or 2="Participated in the past but not currently", whichever is appropriate. If your organization does not offer these activities, please choose 0="Not applicable".

My agency establishes...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>1=Currently participates</th>
<th>2=Participated in the past but not currently</th>
<th>0=Not applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A program that explicitly communicates (e.g. memos, public announcements, promotional materials) the agency's commitment to diversity.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities to celebrate diverse racial/ethnic heritages.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A clear goal that the agency's board represents the racial/ethnic diversity of the overall community.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A formal system for a standing committee/task force/action council to monitor the agency's diversity climate.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A program that offers diversity training for the agency's employees to support the agency's goals.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Has your agency participated in the following activities in the past, or does your agency currently participate in these activities?

My agency establishes...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>1=Currently participates</th>
<th>2=Participated in the past but not currently</th>
<th>0=Not applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>67. A principle that executives and managers actively participate in diversity training</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68. Action plans that emphasize the goal of recruiting a workforce representative of the agency's racial/ethnic demographics</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69. Action plans that emphasize the goal of retaining a workforce representative of the agency's racial/ethnic demographics</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70. A formal mentoring programs for new employees.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71. Formal written goals and timetables for increasing the number of minority managers and employees</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Has your agency participated in the following activities in the past, or does your agency currently participate in these activities?

**My agency establishes...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1=Currently participates</th>
<th>2=Participated in the past but not currently</th>
<th>3=Not applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>72.</td>
<td>A formal system that effectively monitors the progress for accomplishing the agency's diversity goals.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73.</td>
<td>A principle that managers are held accountable for achieving specific diversity goals, including a component in the performance review of managers.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74.</td>
<td>A formal policy that executives routinely monitor racial/ethnic demographics of employees by level (Executives, Senior Management, Mid-management, Entry-level).</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75.</td>
<td>A procedure that monitors employee satisfaction by racial/ethnic groups and by rank.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76.</td>
<td>A principle that exit interviews are routinely conducted when employees leave.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Public Relations Management Project: Section F

How do you feel about the following statements?

Please indicate how well each of the following statements describes you, on a scale from 1="Doesn't describe at all" to 7="Describes very well".

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>1=Doesn't describe at all</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7=Describes very well</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>77. I interact with other professionals outside my ethnic group.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78. I oscillate between my culture and another to work in public relations.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79. Because of my race/ethnicity, in my public relations experience, I disassociate myself from my culture.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80. In my professional career, I personally mentor public relations practitioners.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How often do you participate in each of the following diversity programs, on a scale from 1="Never" to 7="Very often"?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>1=Never</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7=Very often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>81. Career planning programs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>82. Community outreach</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83. Intensive new hire orientation sessions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84. Mentoring</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85. Networking and support groups</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Public Relations Management Project: Section G

Finally, we would like to know about you. The next few questions are for statistical purposes only.

86. Where is your agency’s headquarters located? (Please list the U.S. state or note if located outside the U.S.)

87. Where is the office you work from located? (Please list your U.S. state or note if located outside the U.S.)

88. How would you describe the area you work from? (Choose one.)
   ○ Rural
   ○ Suburban
   ○ Urban

89. How many people are employed by your organization? (Choose one.)
   ○ 10 or fewer
   ○ 11-50
   ○ 51-100
   ○ 101-500
   ○ more than 500

90. Are one or more of the owners of your agency members of a racial or ethnic minority? (Choose one.)
   ○ No
   ○ Yes
   ○ Do not know
91. What is your title? (Choose all that apply.)
- Chairman/Chairperson
- Chief Executive Officer
- Chief Operating Officer
- President
- Managing Director
- Managing Partner
- Partner
- Principal
Other (Please specify):

92. How many years have you been in your current position?

93. Please indicate your gender.
- Female
- Male

94. Please indicate your highest level of formal education completed. (Choose one.)
- Some high school
- High school diploma or GED
- Technical or junior college
- Some college
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Doctoral degree
Other professional degree (Please specify):

95. Please indicate your political leaning, on a scale from 1="Strongly Conservative" to 7="Strongly Liberal".

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political leaning</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

96. What is your age?
97. Please indicate your race and/or ethnicity. (Choose all that apply.)

☐ Asian
☐ American Indian
☐ Black or African American
☐ Hispanic or Latino(a)
☐ Non-Hispanic White
☐ Prefer not to say

Other (Please specify):
D IRB Approval

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Mail:  P.O. Box 3999
       Atlanta, Georgia  30302-3999

In Person:  Alumni Hall
            30 Courtland St, Suite 217

Phone:  404/413-3500
Fax:    404/413-3504

January 30, 2012

Principal Investigator: Fujioka, Yuki

Student PI: Amber H Irizarry

Protocol Department: Communication

Protocol Title: Diversity Project

Submission Type: Protocol H12301

Review Type: Exempt Review, Category 2

Approval Date: January 30, 2012

The Georgia State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and approved your IRB protocol entitled Diversity Project. The approval date is listed above.

Exempt protocols do not require yearly renewal. However, if any changes occur in the protocol that would change the category of review, you must re-submit the protocol for IRB review. When the protocol is complete, a Study Closure Form must be submitted to the IRB.

Any adverse reactions or problems resulting from this investigation must be reported immediately to the University Institutional Review Board. For more information, please visit our website at www.gsu.edu/irb.

Sincerely,

Susan Vogtner, IRB Member

Federal Wide Assurance Number:  00000129