

HOW PUBLIC RELATIONS AGENCIES COMMUNICATE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION  
PRACTICES ON THEIR WEBSITES

by

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## ABSTRACT

The public relations industry is making an effort to attain a more diverse workforce that can better represent the society that we live in and achieve the best results for clients. Using the “Leveraging variety” model (Ravazzani, 2015) as a theoretical framework, this research explores how public relations agencies are addressing and communicating their diversity and inclusion efforts through their websites. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the status of diversity and inclusion in public relations and describe how agencies are communicating those diversity and inclusion organizational practices as a way that could attract more diverse talent and improve organizational reputation. This study conducted a content analysis of 236 public relations agencies’ websites and photographs on those websites. Findings show that diversity is portrayed as a broader spectrum, as diversity of perspectives and backgrounds, not as a specific dimension. Gender and disability were found to be the most frequently mentioned dimensions of diversity. Additionally, the present study found that photographs on the websites do not reflect a diverse workforce in terms of race. In terms of gender, photographs that portrayed female and male employees together were the most frequent on the websites. According to the different approaches of diversity, this study found that most of the agencies fall into the “Assimilating minorities” approach, which has been considered the most basic approach to diversity (Uysal, 2013).

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

<i>df</i>	Degrees of freedom
<i>N</i>	Total sample number
<i>n</i>	Number in the sample
<	Less than
>	Greater than
=	Equal to
%	Percent
$X^2$	chi square
CPRE	Commission on Public Relations Education
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
PRSA	Public Relations Society of America
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences

## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my parents for always supporting me and my dreams. To my mom for being my best friend and always inspires me with everything that she does, to my dad for teaching me that we can dream big if we work hard for those dreams, to my three sisters for being an example for me and for always believing in me.

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## INTRODUCTION

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2015), more than half of all Americans will belong to a minority group by 2044. Layton-Henry (2001) defined a minority group as “a group of people with common interests or characteristics which distinguish them from the more numerous majority of the population of which they form a part or with whom they live in close proximity within a common political jurisdiction” (p. 9894). Millennials (those born between 1980 and 1994) and Generation Z (those born between 1995 and early 2000s), the two most diverse generations are joining the workforce (Pew Research Center, 2010, 2018), diversity and inclusion will garner more attention than ever from academia, professionals, and society. Industries are now focusing more efforts on concrete actions to create more diverse workforces and equal access to opportunities for minorities.

The public relations industry has worked toward achieving greater levels of diversity and inclusion since the 1990s. However, there is still work to do to increase diversity in many aspects of the organizations. In the communications industry, the topic of diversity is mostly addressed using the dimensions of race, gender, and ethnicity (Austin, 2010). This narrow scope of focus prevents individuals and organizations from obtaining the benefits that diverse workforces can offer. Industry leaders have stated that diversity without inclusion is worthless because, if diverse employees cannot bring their perspectives and experiences into the workplace, they will not reach their full potential as professionals (PRSA Foundation, 2018). Additionally, clients and companies may not be able to benefit from those diverse perspectives (PRSA Foundation, 2018).

The public relations industry needs to address these two concepts in tandem so that practitioners, clients, and the industry as a whole can enjoy the benefits of a diverse workforce.

Senior communications executives have reported dissatisfaction with the level of diversity in their organizations (Jiang, et al., 2016). Public relations leaders, in particular, have recognized that meeting communications needs in diverse cultures and recruiting top talent are part of their businesses' priorities (Berger, 2012). Today, job searches usually begin with Internet searches and, thus, companies aim to be more attentive to their digital presence. As a result, companies share job openings on their websites, as well as on other job search platforms (e.g., LinkedIn and Indeed.com). A company's website provides an opportunity to increase reach and interaction with unique stakeholders (Hong & Kioussis, 2007). For example, online corporate communication through websites can provide information about company policies (García et al., 2010). Moreover, showcasing policies related to diversity and inclusion online can attract diverse talent (Hon, 2000).

To date, most of the research about diversity in public relations focuses on gender, race, and ethnicity as the primary "dimensions" of diversity (Gröschl, 2017). The present study focuses on the following dimensions of diversity: age, ethnicity, race, nationality, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, religious beliefs, veteran status, marital status, and professional background. This research explores what dimensions of diversity are most frequently addressed by nationwide agencies.

From a theoretical standpoint, this study uses the "Leveraging variety" model to describe organizational practices executed by agencies according to the way they are communicated on their websites. This model has been used to study how organizations practice diversity and inclusion, which makes it an appropriate tool to describe diversity communication. It has also

been used in research to determine the level of diversity practices of an organization across different industries. The lack of research using the “Leveraging variety” model as a framework in the public relations industry provides an opportunity to analyze the current status of how public relations agencies are communicating these efforts online. The “Leveraging variety” model presents three stages for diversity in an organization: the “Assimilating minorities” approach, the “Integrating diversity” approach, and the “Leveraging variety” approach. Applying this model as a theoretical basis for this study can help us understand the status of diversity and inclusion practices of public relations agencies. This study can provide an in-depth description and analysis of how agencies are communicating diversity efforts through websites, which can guide other agencies that intend to establish their policies and practices in the digital space.

Research has found that corporations perform better than agencies in addressing diversity and inclusion (Bardhan, 2016). It is important to understand this comparison in order to put into perspective the work accomplished, and progress made by organizations across industries in addressing diversity and inclusion. Public relations agencies have the unique role of working with multiple companies and industries. This role makes agencies responsible for persuading audiences’ behavior by crafting and developing messages for a variety of clients. Agencies are working with these corporations that are successfully addressing diversity; therefore, it is expected that they understand their client’s organizational practices and values in order to effectively develop and deliver their services. In addition, the present study focuses on public relations agencies because this industry is projected to grow (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019). According to *PRWeek* Agency Business Report 2019, the workforce for top public relations agencies is estimated to be around 26,000 staff members.

The context and purpose of this study are given in the second chapter of this paper, following a review of previous literature addressing workforce diversity, approaches to diversity in the workplace, an analysis of the public relations workforce, diversity and inclusion in public relations practices in the U.S., and organizational web communication. The method for measuring variables around diversity and inclusion is provided in the third chapter. A description of the results is presented in chapter four. Chapter five discusses the study's significance and its contribution to the industry and academia, along with limitations of the study and direction for future research.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### **The Concept of Diversity and Inclusion**

The different definitions of diversity make its management in the workforce even more challenging. In addressing workforce diversity, Bhawuk and Triandis (1996) defined diversity as “difference in ethnicity, race, gender, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, disability, veteran status, age, national origin, and cultural and personal perspectives” (p. 85). Some scholars have focused their attention on managing diversity and define diversity using examples of differences, such as race, culture, ethnicity, gender, age, disability, and work experience (Bartz et al., 1990).

With the growing focus on diversity in the workforce, diversity has been framed and addressed in different ways (Gröschl, 2011). Some of these classifications of diversity include categories such as functional and social diversity, which addresses differences in professional skills (Schneider & Northcraft, 1999). Other classifications include “surface-level” and “deep-level” diversity, which focus, respectively, on those characteristics that are visible and those that are more psychology-based. Surface-level and deep-level diversity can also be called “visible” and “underlying” diversity, respectively. “Visible” diversity addresses characteristics that are attained at birth, such as race, gender, and age. “Underlying” diversity addresses characteristics that can be learned or acquired and that are modified and subjective experiences of diversity, such as educational and professional background (Garcia-Prieto et al., 2003). Rijamampianina and Carmichael (2005) defined diversity as “the collective, all-encompassing mix of human differences and similarities along any given dimension” (p. 110). This definition encompasses multiple dimensions previously addressed in research, known as

primary, secondary, and tertiary dimensions. Primary dimensions of diversity are gender, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, age, and mental or physical abilities. Secondary dimensions of diversity are less visible and are those that add value to the primary dimensions. These dimensions include religion, culture, sexual orientation, geographic origin, thinking style, family status, economic status, political orientation, work experience, educational background, language, and nationality. Tertiary dimensions, identified as the core of individual identity, include beliefs, attitudes, feelings, values, assumptions, perceptions, and group norms (Rijamampianina & Carmichael, 2005).

In public relations, the definition of diversity varies based on the professional and academic scope. According to the Commission on Public Relations Education (CPRE) (2016), diversity means “all differences that exist between and among people” (p. 27). When defining its role with regard to diversity and inclusion, the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) addresses diversity as “diversity of thought, cultures, disciplines, ideals, gender, disabilities, sexual orientation and age... a broad spectrum of differences” (PRSA Diversity and Inclusion Tool Kit, 2016, p. 4). PR Council, a public relations agencies trade association, has defined diversity as “race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, disability, medical condition, marital status, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity and/or expression, or age” (PR Council, 2019). All of these concepts of diversity among different industry professional organizations can influence and even determine the way that trade publications, educational programs, and public relations agencies are addressing diversity internally and also how they are communicating those efforts through their communication channels.

For the purpose of this study, diversity is defined as differences in age, ethnicity, race, nationality, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, religious beliefs, veteran status, marital

status, parenthood, and professional background. This definition includes the most commonly understood types of diversity in academia and professional publications (Austin, 2010; Grunig et al., 2007). The present study considers definitions of diversity from previous workforce diversity research and industry documents to include the differences mentioned above. The present study understands that the concept of diversity is broad. Therefore, it focuses on differences that have been previously addressed in the definition of diversity and dimensions that can be measured with the selected research method. This definition of diversity includes dimensions that have been underexamined in public relations research and practice, such as religion, age, sexual orientation, and military veteran status (Sha and Ford, 2007).

### ***Benefits of Workforce Diversity***

Having a diverse workforce can bring several benefits, such as improved financial performance, work performance, corporate reputation, internal culture, and community development. First, gender, racial, and ethnic diversity have financial benefits for companies (Herring, 2017; Hunt et al., 2015). Statistically, corporations in the top quartile for gender, racial, and ethnic diversity are more likely to have higher financial returns than their national industry medians. Studies demonstrate that companies in the top quartile for gender diversity on executive teams are 21% more likely to outperform on profitability (Hunt et al., 2018). Companies in the Top 50 by diversity publication, Diversity Inc., were shown to have a positive reputation, which led to increased shares in the short term. These positive outcomes could be related to the fact that diverse groups bring different opinions, which can improve the decision-making process and the overall work performance of a company.

Research has shown that diversity can increase problem-solving abilities and creativity (Cox, 1993; Herring, 2015). Nemeth (2012) supports the notion that having minority viewpoints

can foster a higher quality of performance and decision-making skills. Researchers have tested different dimensions of diversity (age, ethnicity, and gender) to study the outcomes of diverse group performances. They concluded that diverse groups provided a wider variety of ideas, choices, and solutions than nondiverse groups (Richard et al., 2002). Miller and del Carmen Triana (2009) stated that gender and racial diversity in the boardroom of a company can positively impact innovation practices in research and development within an organization. Given this evidence, bringing different perspectives to the workplace can improve important skills that impact the organization's performance.

Likewise, organizations have acknowledged the importance of diversity and inclusion for organizational success and its impact on different areas, such as corporate reputation, internal culture, and community development (Chohan, 2017). Racial and gender diversity have shown to have a positive impact on a company's reputation and corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices, which can lead to an improved reputation (Bear, 2010; Miller & del Carmen Triana, 2009). Effective CSR practices, in turn, can help build better relationships with communities where organizations are established.

### ***The Role of Inclusion in Workforce Diversity***

Organizations need inclusion to fully benefit from workforce diversity. Ravazzani (2018) considers diversity management to be the strategic process where an organization uses the potential of all employees to create an inclusive environment and to help to achieve organizational goals. This definition emphasizes the importance of the relationship between diversity and inclusion. The practice of inclusion in the workplace includes elements such as the level to which individuals feel as though they are part of important organizational processes, their feeling of job safety, their access to sensitive information, their role in the decision-making

processes and how their ideas are taken into account (Sabharwal, 2014). It is important to address differences and develop practices and policies that promote inclusion in the workplace; Having practices that exclusively address diversity does not automatically mean that the organization is inclusive and empowers individuals from all groups (Holvino et al., 2004).

As with diversity, research has shown that the feeling of belonging to an organization can positively influence work performance by increasing familiarity and reducing bias (Mor-Barak, 2011). Literature shows that there is a significant relationship between organizational belonging and personal innovation, responsibility, leadership and managerial support (Tabatabaee et al., 2016). Having inclusion practices in place can provide better opportunities for minority groups by offering them career development opportunities. Additionally, diversity and inclusion in the workplace can reinforce a company's message of positive culture and social purpose (DeNicola & Di Maria, 2019).

### **Diversity Approaches in Organizations**

Scholars have developed models to understand how organizations address diversity. Every approach presents a different focus. Some of these approaches include the discrimination and fairness paradigm, the access and legitimacy paradigm, and the integration and learning paradigm (Thomas & Ely, 1996). The discrimination and fairness paradigm describes when diversity is managed under the statement of assimilation: diverse members should blend in with the company. The access and legitimacy paradigm considers diversity as the right thing to do and recognizes its benefits for the business. This approach celebrates differences. An example of the access and legitimacy paradigm can be assigning a Hispanic employee to just Hispanic market accounts. The integration and learning paradigm, introduced in 1996 as the learning and effectiveness paradigm (Thomas & Ely, 1996), allows full integration of the diverse perspectives

of an employee to the company’s mission. This approach allows the company to take real benefits of diversity. As an alternative to these approaches, Mazzei and Ravazzani (2008) developed the leveraging difference model using an organizational, social, and marketing perspective.

<b>Action (How)</b>	<b>Assimilating</b>	<b>Managing</b>	<b>Leveraging</b>
<b>Focus (What)</b>	Minorities	Diversity	Differences, identities
<b>Aims (Why)</b>	Legal correctness	Political correctness, philanthropy, organizational benefits	Global competition, differences marketing, knowledge creation, social responsiveness
<b>Practices (Means)</b>	Quota system	Work-life balance, part-time activities, multicultural communication	Marketing practices: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Partnerships with stakeholders</li> <li>- Customized products</li> <li>- Employees’ external networks and communities of practice</li> <li>- Intercultural communication</li> </ul> Organizational practices: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Training for differences sensitiveness</li> <li>- Recruitment for competencies</li> <li>- Job rotation</li> <li>- Heterogeneous work team</li> </ul>

Figure 1. Leveraging Differences Model. Adapted from Leveraging differences in a global competitive context: A qualitative analysis by Mazzei, A. & Ravazzani, S., 2008, Paper presented to the *7th International Congress on Marketing Trends*, p. 13.

This model presents the leveraging variety approach, which focuses on differences and identities, such as skills, competencies, abilities, and knowledge, as well as their potential to create competitive and marketing advantages for organizations (Mazzei & Ravazzani, 2008). One of the main differences between this approach and the assimilating and managing approaches is its focus on identities and differences, which should “become a deeply embedded organizational value, incorporated into the day-to-day activities and the human resources system to empower organization culture that fosters a respectful, inclusive, and knowledge-based

environment” (p.14). This model features inclusion as a core element and addresses diversity as more than socio-demographic differences. This model does not exclusively focus on primary and secondary dimensions of diversity, but also acknowledges the importance of the tertiary dimension of diversity for the organization.

The “Assimilating minorities” approach states that the policies addressing minorities emphasizes employees, whereas the diversity policies are exclusively related to the Human Resources department of the company (Mazzei & Ravazzani, 2012). In contrast, the “Leveraging variety” model includes diversity management as the second level of addressing diversity in the organizations (Mazzei and Ravazzani, 2008). In 2012, the term addressed the “managing” as an “integrating” approach (See Fig. 2). The “Integrating diversity” approach focuses on equity and integration based on socio-demographic differences such as age, race, physical ability, class, sexual orientation, cultural background, and religious faith (Mazzei & Ravazzani, 2012). The leveraging difference model was tested by prior research (Ravazzani, 2015; Uysal, 2013) and has changed since its original model (See Table 2), becoming the “Leveraging variety” model. The “Leveraging variety” model addresses variety as a need for every organization. Previous research has found that the two prevailing approaches to diversity in corporations are “Assimilating minorities” and “Integrating diversity” (Mazzei & Ravazzani, 2012; Uysal, 2013).

The “Leveraging variety” model addresses the following as organizational practices: training for employees on difference sensitivity, recruiting for competencies, job rotation, and a heterogeneous work team. Organizational practices of assimilation and integrating approaches include multicultural communication, quota systems, recruitment of diverse people, networking events, mentorship programs to youth, tutoring in schools, part-time work, working from home,

flexible work hours, facilities for disabled people, cross-functional teams, external partnerships, diversity supplier, philanthropic activities, and work-life balance.

<b>Approach Indicators</b>	<b>Assimilating minorities</b>	<b>Integrating Diversity</b>	<b>Leveraging variety</b>
<b>Aim</b>	Equal opportunities	Social expectations	Competition
<b>Dimensions</b>	Gender, parenthood and disability	Race, nationality, language, religion, sexual orientation, age	Competencies, knowledge, networks
<b>Practices</b>	Quota systems	Flexible working, work-life balance, expansion of the recruitment pool, training, partnership with dedicated institutions of networks, internal and external communication	Heterogeneous teams, employee networks, diverse suppliers, employment in innovation-related areas, evaluation of policy objectives
<b>Management structure</b>	Barely existent	Dedicated role and planning	Dedicated structure, planning and budget
<b>Benefits</b>	Equity of treatment, reduced lawsuits	Employee motivation, corporate image	Innovation, new markets
<b>Negative effects</b>	Lowering of hiring and promotion standards, negative self-perceptions of competence	Increased conflicts, reverse discrimination	Pigeonholing

Figure 2. Assimilating minorities approach, to “Integrating diversity” approach to “Leveraging variety” approach. Adapted from “Understanding approaches to managing diversity in the workplace” by S. Ravazzani, 2015, *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal*, 35(2). p. 156.

Understanding how organizations address diversity is important for identifying current practices that could be replicated by other organizations. At the same time, recognizing approaches to diversity management can help organizations evaluate their work more deeply and identify gaps in those practices. Identifying gaps can help organizations restructure their diversity and inclusion efforts to get better results and create more effective ways to communicate these efforts through their communication channels, including websites.

### **Public Relations’ Current Workforce in the U.S.**

Public relations is a female-dominated field, from college to professional settings (Vardeman-Winter & Place, 2017). According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 72% of public

relations employees are women. However, although women constitute 70% of the public relations workforce in the U.S., they only represent 30% of agency C-suite executives (Vardeman-Winter & Place, 2017). Currently, only 26.6% of CEOs of the top 15 agencies included in the Holmes Report Global Top 250 public relations Agency ranking are women.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2020), the public relations workforce is 89.8% Caucasian, 8.0% Black, 0.4% Asian, and 1.4% Hispanic. Understanding the current industry demographics and specific actions taken related to diversity and inclusion will provide academics and practitioners with a better understanding of how the industry could apply new knowledge to achieve greater diversity and inclusion results.

One area to improve is recruitment techniques (Brown et al., 2011). Job opportunities for public relations specialists are projected to grow by nine percent over the next 10 years (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019). While job opportunities for public relations professionals are increasing, the demographics in the United States will continue to change and to become more diverse. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in July 2018, Hispanic people constituted 18.1% of the U.S. population, making the Hispanic community the largest ethnic or racial minority in the country. Millennials, those born between 1980 and 1994, and Gen Z, those born from 1995 to early 2000s, are the most diverse generations in the U.S. (Dimock, 2019). Forty-eight percent of Gen Z are racial or ethnic minorities. Forty percent of the current workforce consists of both millennials and Gen Z (Fry, 2018). Being a diverse generation makes millennials more willing to embrace diversity in the workplace (Serini & Krider, 2015). A recent survey (Kochlar, 2017) showed that 47% of millennials consider the diversity and inclusion of a workplace an important criterion in their job search. Organizations should adopt a welcoming, inclusive, and sensitive environment to diversity to attract, recruit, and retain the best talent (Waymer & VanSlette,

2013). In sum, the changing demographics of the younger generations and growing job opportunities represent both an opportunity and a challenge to attract, retain, and promote diverse talent in the industry.

### **Diversity and Inclusion in Public Relations in the U.S.**

It is important to understand the current demographics of the public relations profession. Moreover, we need to understand what actions should be taken to promote diversity in the industry, from the college level to the professional level. Public relations practitioners and scholars have recognized that diversity and inclusion in the field is one of the biggest challenges and priorities of the industry (CPRE, 2016; PR Council, 2018; PRSA Foundation, 2018; USC Annenberg, 2019). In 2015, PRSA renamed the Diversity Committee and changed it to “The Diversity and Inclusion Committee” (PRSA, 2019). The association recognized that the demographics of the world are in flux and the industry should reflect these changing demographics. In addition, PRSA created the PRSA Foundation to specifically address the promotion of diversity among public relations agencies and companies (PRSA Foundation, 2019). The PRSA Foundation hosts the Paladin Awards, which honor communications professionals who have made a "significant and measurable impact" on enhancing diversity and inclusion in the industry (PRSA Foundation, 2019).

In the same way, educational institutions and organizations are offering scholarships and awards, creating leadership positions to oversee diversity and inclusion initiatives, and developing other methods to provide racial and ethnic minorities with the opportunity to thrive in the industry (CPRE, 2019). For example, the “Diversity & Inclusion Award,” established by the American University School of Communication and the University of Oregon School of Journalism and Communication’s faculty and staff diversity committee, helps student groups

host multicultural events. In addition, there is The Plank Center at the University of Alabama, which hosts the Diversity and Inclusion Summit and awards diverse students with the opportunity to attend. Speakers at this event include diversity researchers and professionals who advocate for diversity in the industry (CPRE, 2019). The Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA), the student branch of PRSA, has adopted the diversity and inclusion policies of PRSA to address diversity and inclusion in the profession. The PR Council, a trade association of public relations and integrated marketing agencies in the United States, has established diversity and inclusion as one of its highest priorities. The PR Council has also shown its commitment by writing a diversity and inclusion pledge, which states its commitment to continue to develop efforts for the promotion of greater diversity and inclusion in the industry.

This literature review presents different efforts and initiatives that academia and the industry are utilizing to intentionally improve diversity and inclusion in public relations. Unfortunately, diversity metrics have not changed significantly. The numbers presented in the current workforce section are not significantly different from those presented by Fitzpatrick and Bronstein (2006) more than ten years ago, which showed that white women represented around 60% of the public relations workforce, but did not represent a greater percentage of management positions. The conversation around diversity and inclusion in the industry keeps gaining momentum, but the changes are happening slowly, even though research has shown that diversity can improve business practices and outcomes.

### ***Diversity and Inclusion in Public Relations Scholarship***

In the past, diversity studies used to mostly address the concept of diversity regarding issues of race, gender, and class (Grunig, et al., 2007). Some prior studies, however, did consider more than one dimension of practitioners. For example, Pompper (2005; 2012) investigated the

impact of the relationship of gender and race in the experiences of public relations practitioners. Pompper (2005) also conducted a critical analysis of how the terms of race, ethnicity, and culture are addressed in public relations scholarship. Additionally, Wallace (2008) studied the intersectionality between ethnicity and gender. Specifically, she studied the experiences of Latina public relations practitioners in agencies and provided recommendations for avoiding the negative effects of diversity, such as tokenism and pigeonholing. Similarly, gender identity and sexual orientation diversity research in public relations has been conducted from an experience perspective using queer theory (Tindall et al., 2012). Ciszek's research (2018; 2019) focused on sexuality, gender identities, and how queer theory can be used to communicate effectively with the LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer) community. Prior research has also analyzed how industry publications address diversity. Industry publications such as *The Strategist* and *PR Tactics* were found to follow the same research approach of focusing mainly on diversity regarding gender, race, and ethnicity (Austin, 2010). Most of the research around diversity and inclusion in the industry has been studied from a qualitative perspective, providing descriptions of the experiences of diverse practitioners and information about understudied populations (Sha & Ford, 2007). These studies have led researchers to gather information about these populations and provide recommendations to address diversity in the workplace effectively.

Jiang et al. (2016) examine the current status and best practices of diversity and inclusion in the industry. They conducted a survey among the members of the Arthur W. Page Society, a professional association for senior public relations, corporate communications executives, and educators. They found that the concept of diversity is mostly defined in terms of race (92%), ethnicity (87.8%), gender (87.8%), disability (69.5%), age (67%), sexual orientation (63%), and

veteran status (52.4%). It is crucial to understand how senior public relations practitioners are addressing the concept of diversity because they can establish changes within their organizations and then advocate for diversity and inclusion, in any of its dimensions.

### ***Addressing the Diversity and Inclusion Challenge in Public Relations***

Public relations practitioners and academics have shared their thoughts on ways to increase diversity in the public relations workforce. The initiatives can be divided into steps or areas of work; those areas of work include attracting diverse talent to choose public relations as a major, recruiting diverse talent into the workforce, and promoting those diverse talents to leadership positions.

The first step is attracting diverse talent to the major of public relations. Attracting diverse talent is a task that should start from high school (Brown et al., 2011; Radanovich, 2014). Academia suggests that the industry should create programs and initiatives that give middle and high school students opportunities to learn more about the profession so they can consider those professions as options in college. A large number of public relations students have found the career “by accident” (Bowen, 2009; PRSA Foundation, 2018). In addition, there are misconceptions among students, regardless of minority status, about what public relations is and what public relations practitioners do (Brown et al., 2011). African American and Hispanic professionals have agreed that those misconceptions could be a barrier when considering public relations as a career option (Brown et al., 2011; Radanovich, 2014). In public relations practice, having a professional dedicated to attracting and recruiting talent is the most common strategy (Jiang et al., 2016). From the college-level to the industry level, intentional recruitment of diverse talent should be a practice in place.

The second step to diversify the profession is the retention of diverse employees, which can also be thought of from an educational and professional standpoint. The establishment of mentoring programs can help diverse students learn about the industry and the different opportunities that it offers. Lack of mentorship has been identified as an obstacle to pursuing a career and staying in the profession once in an entry-level position (Gibson, 2002; Len-Rios, 1998). According to Fitzpatrick (2013, as cited in Place & Vardeman-Winter, 2018), mentorship is an integral part of the development of diverse talent in leadership positions. Mentorship programs can also allow mentees to advance faster in their careers, achieve higher incomes, and, in general, have more desirable professional outcomes than those who are not mentored (Kalbfleisch, 2002).

The third step to achieve diversity in the workplace is diverse leadership. Once in the industry, diverse talents should be given the same opportunities to occupy leadership positions within the organization. Diverse talent can bring their perspectives to their leadership practices and can also be a role model for diverse talents in college-level and entry-level positions. Role models can be defined as “individuals who provide an example of the kind of success that one may achieve, and often also provide a template of the behaviors that are needed to achieve such success” (Lockwood, 2006, p. 36).

### **Organizational Web Communication**

Organizations use the Internet as the main communication channel. Websites are a tool that allows organizations to build relationships and increase interaction with their different audiences (Hong & Kiouisis, 2007; McAllister-Spooner, 2009). Podnar (2015) showed that a website is an integral part of the corporate communication strategy. Therefore, organizations should have a functional and robust web presence in order to reach their strategic audiences, such

as potential employees. The website of an organization is a way to attract talent while sharing the company's identity, values, interests, and attributes (Capriotti & Moreno, 2007). This image can influence potential applicants' initial job decisions (Turban & Greening, 1997).

Consequently, a company should effectively communicate its policies and culture so it can attract the best talent. Talent is attracted to organizations whose members are similar to themselves in various attributes (De Cooman, 2013). A company's website is the most effective talent branding tool when candidates are searching for jobs, followed by online professional networks and social media (LinkedIn, 2015); each of these are tools that have helped companies find and recruit the best talent faster because they are being used by job seekers most frequently. Corporate websites can provide information about a company's policies, values, and practices, including the organization's diversity initiatives (Waymer, 2010). Research has shown that diversity messages on websites and in recruitment material can make an organization look like a place where its members can develop initiatives to embrace differences, including racial differences. Moreover, these diversity messages on websites and in recruitment material can increase organizational attractiveness in minority group applicants and increase the processing of information (Baum, et al., 2016; Walker, et al., 2012).

### ***Visuals in Corporate Websites***

Visual communication elements on corporate websites are an important element to communicate messages effectively. As the consumption of visual content rises across communication channels (Khoja, 2018), the role of images is more important than ever. The different formats of visual content, whether images, graphics, or videos, can lead to intuitive responses and create emotions, which can ultimately influence attitudes and behaviors (Geise & Baden, 2015; Iyer, et al., 2014). Visual messages can increase the effect of a text message. Public

relations agencies and corporations, in general, are constantly creating more interactive ways to communicate through their websites. The use of images, videos, and text together is a practice they are implementing. Including these visuals can shape users' perceptions of those companies.

Research in visual communications has used framing, semiotics, agenda-setting, and cultivation as theoretical frameworks (Fahmy et al., 2014). The use of framing as the theoretical framework to study visuals allows studies to identify and describe a standpoint, reasoning for using specific visuals, and the impact of the visuals on the audience. The other theoretical frameworks mainly focus on the meaning behind the images and their effects on the viewers. Organizations use photographs to showcase their leadership, employees, work, products, community, services, and clients. McLellan and Stelle (2001) stated that photographs could influence how people feel about the credibility of a newspaper. Their study suggests that photographs can play the same role in corporate websites. The representation in corporate websites' photographs can influence how audiences feel about the credibility of a corporation when talking about certain topics (e.g., diversity and inclusion practices).

Organizations' use of websites has been extensively studied, from the website used by Fortune 500 companies (e.g., McCorkindale & Morgoch, 2013) to government organizations (e.g., Hong, 2013) and nonprofits (e.g., Uzunoğlu & Misci Kip, 2014). However, research regarding public relations agencies' website use is still in its early development, especially as related to communication of diversity and inclusion efforts. Sebastião (2013) studied how public relations consultancies in Portugal used websites and describe the content that they shared online. In addition, Akwari (2017) researched dialogic principles in the top 250 public relations agencies' websites. This study found that public relations agencies' have dialogic principles on their websites and that they provide relevant information for their stakeholders. In relationship to

diversity and inclusion practices and its disclosures on websites, Uysal (2013) addressed how corporations communicated those efforts and discussed that diversity communication via websites should encompass all aspects of diversity, from employee diversity to supplier diversity and corporate social responsibility. Research regarding communicating diversity through websites has typically used a qualitative approach, using framing theory and discourse analysis (e.g., Maier & Ravazzani, 2019; Pereira, 2016; Ravazzani, 2015). Recently, Maiorescu-Murphy (2020) studied online diversity communication in different industries. She analyzed 5 years of social media posts of companies in the financial, tech, and consumer goods industry to determine how they were communicating diversity on their social channels. Her study proposed a theoretical model to address online diversity communication across organizations. To study the extent to which public relations agencies use websites to communicate diversity and inclusion efforts through their websites, the following research questions are presented:

**RQ1.** What dimensions of diversity are addressed most frequently by public relations agencies on their websites?

**RQ1A.** Which genders and races are frequently portrayed in the photographs of public relations agencies' websites?

**RQ2:** What diversity and inclusion practices do public relations agencies communicate on their websites?

Mundy (2015) stated that “diversity as a core organizational value—as evidenced through policies and programs—is crucial to organizational success; conveying those values to stakeholders is also an important part of public relations’ ethical responsibility” (p. 1). The way that diversity and inclusion are addressed can influence organizational success. Furthermore, the

way they are addressed can also determine the resources that the company will allocate to these practices and can influence the overall strategy behind diversity and inclusion efforts.

Given the absence of research in the extant literature on the application of the “Leveraging variety” model in public relations agencies, the purpose of this study is to evaluate the status of diversity and inclusion statements displayed on public relations agencies’ websites using the “Leveraging variety” model. By using the “Leveraging variety” model theoretical framework, this study intends to identify what practices are most commonly used to communicate diversity and inclusion practices on public relations agencies’ websites. To analyze the diversity and inclusion practices of public relations agencies, the following research question is presented:

**RQ3:** Which diversity models (assimilation, diversity management, leveraging variety) are reflected on public relations’ websites?

Since this study is exclusively analyzing websites, we will focus on the dimensions, practices, and managing structures as approach indicators of the model.

## METHOD

### **Research Design**

To answer the research questions, this study conducted a quantitative content analysis of the websites of public relations agencies in the United States. Content analysis is “a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use” (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 18). Quantitative content analysis allows for the study of large amounts of textual information and systematic identification of specific properties. Content analysis of an organization’s documents is recommended as an approach to understanding their corporate practices (Bowen, 2009). Therefore, an analysis of the content presented on public relations agencies’ websites should enable researchers to measure the diversity and inclusion practices that these agencies currently have.

### **Sampling Procedure**

A list of public relations agencies was collected from the *PRWeek* Agency Business Report 2019, The Holmes Report Global Top 250 Public Relations Agencies Ranking, and the O’Dwyer PR Ranking 2019. After combining these lists and deleting the duplicates or agencies that have merged with other agencies, a total of 236 U.S. based agencies were included as a sample (See list in Appendix 1). Only U.S. based agencies’ websites were analyzed because we exclusively focused on diversity and inclusion in the United States.

This study analyzed the web pages that address the organizational practices of the public relations agencies. No services, practices, case studies, work, news, and blog sections were

coded. Content in PDF format on websites was analyzed since some organizations upload their diversity and inclusion reports in this format. These reports can offer important information about diversity and inclusion practices. To be coded, the PDF document was required to be on the company's website. Therefore, if the PDF was opened on another website, it was not coded. If any content redirected to a parent company website or social media pages, it was not analyzed because this study only examined content available on the websites.

The unit of analysis was a web page, which provides content about the company and its different initiatives. The present study analyzed text and photographs present on the analyzed web pages. For the visual content analysis, every photo appearing in the webpages of the sample websites was analyzed. Photographs on the coded web pages are the type of visual content that was used to help this study understand what type of diversity is portrayed on the websites. No background photographs or photographs where the user needed to click again in order to see them were coded. A screenshot of the website was taken to save all the photographs analyzed. The coding was done directly on an Excel spreadsheet and then transferred to SPSS to run statistics and an analysis of the results. Data was collected from January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020 to January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

### **Coding Scheme**

The "Leveraging variety" model proposed by Mazzei and Ravazzani (2008) was the foundation for creating the coding scheme. The study adopted coding schemes used to analyze diversity management (Uysal, 2013). This coding scheme developed different elements and items that conformed each of the approaches present in the "Leveraging variety" model. Using preexisting coding schemes helped this study to determine measurement units and categories, one of the difficulties of this method (Berger, 2016). The coding scheme also considered items

mentioned as organizational practices on the survey instrument used by Mazzei (2015) when studying managing diversity in the workplace. Other items present in the coding scheme were chosen from best practices in diversity management (Madera, 2013) and items present in the websites of ten randomly picked organizations that are part of the 2019 Diversity, Inc Top 50 companies for diversity, which recognizes the leading companies in diversity management in corporate America. The coding scheme used in the present study includes the following variables and it can be seen in Appendix 2:

1. Equal opportunity statement: the company states that it is an equal opportunity workplace.
2. Diversity and inclusion statement is operationalized as content on the website that specifically describes the company's commitment to diversity and inclusion. Diversity addresses visible and underlying diversity. The statement could include characteristics such as age, gender, nationality, sexual orientation, ethnicity, race, religion, parenthood, marital status, veteran status, diversity of thought, identity importance, and minority status. Any statement recognizing the importance of employee identity was identified as a diversity and inclusion statement since the "Leveraging variety" model focuses on it.
3. Dimensions of diversity address age, gender identity, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, parenthood, marital status, veteran status, diversity of skills, and mention of beliefs, in general, identity, and professional backgrounds.
4. Diversity and inclusion organizational practices:
  - a. Diversity Training: instructive program designed to provide a more positive group interaction through the reduction of prejudice and discrimination, reinforcing knowledge, and motivation of participant to actively interact with diverse others.

- b. Flexible work hours: offering employees the opportunity to work from home and getting vacations for special occasions and seasons.
- c. Resources groups: identity-based employee networks (LGBT group, women group, Latino group, Asian group, parents' group, etc.)
- d. Strategic partnerships: partnerships with different networks of professional organizations, nonprofits, certifications, and academia.
- e. Mentorship program: a structured program to develop beneficial one-on-one relationships between students and professionals or just between professionals.  
(Source: [www.shrm.org/](http://www.shrm.org/))
- f. Minority recruitment program: recruitment initiatives to recruit professionals from minority groups. This includes job recruitment, internship recruitment, and fellowship recruitment.
- g. Professional development program: training and educational opportunities to educate and improve professional skills for employees.
- h. Diversity and inclusion activities with the community: donation or volunteering with nonprofits who work with diverse and minority groups. These groups include women, race minorities (Black and Hispanic-Latino), LGBT, veterans, and persons with disabilities. These also include diversity suppliers' programs. A diversity suppliers program is a program where the agency connects minority groups, such as women, veterans, persons with disabilities, and LGBT-owned small businesses, to business opportunities.

5. Diversity-related information on website

- a. Diversity and inclusion officer or council: person in the company whose role in the company is to empower employees. The role is strategic and provides important connections with other functional areas within the organization, such as marketing, legal, and human resources (diversitybestpractices.com). It was coded as “present” or “absent” on the website. A council is defined as a group of members who advocate for diversity and inclusion practices in the organization.
  - b. Location of the diversity statement on website
6. Agency’s information on website:
- a. Agency locations: only U.S. or also international locations.
  - b. Practice area of agency: the agency offers service to a specific industry, such as healthcare, or provides services to multiple industries.
  - c. CEO gender
  - d. Leadership/Team gender

The presence or absence of items determined which diversity approach the agency was seen to be reflecting on its website.

7. Firm independency: Independent firm means that an agency is not part of the following Public Relations Holding Groups: Interpublic Group, WPP, Omnicom Group, BlueFocus Communication Group, DJE Holding, PROI Worldwide, Publicis Groupe, WorldCom Public Relations Group, Huntsworth Group, IPREX, Havas PR, Next 15, or other company (Source: The Holmes Report).

Table 1  
*Diversity model classification*

<b>Item on website</b>	<b>Assimilating minorities</b>	<b>Integrating Diversity</b>	<b>Leveraging variety</b>
Equal opportunity / Nondiscrimination policy statement	X		

Do not addresses any dimension of inclusion and diversity or just the following dimensions of diversity: gender, parenthood and disability	X		
Diversity and inclusion statement		X	X
Diversity training		X	X
Resource Groups		X	X
Strategic partnerships		X	X
Mentorship program		X	X
Minority recruitment program		X	X
Diversity and inclusion activities with the community		X	X
Diversity and inclusion officer and/or Council		X	X
Diversity and inclusion as core value (present on home page, description of the agency or have its own web page)			X

To fall into the “Assimilating minorities” approach, the agency contained at least one of the two items in Table 3. To fall into the “Integrating diversity” approach, the agency had at least one of the items. As shown in Table 3, the main difference between the “Integrating diversity” and the “Leveraging variety” approach is that the agencies categorized in the “Leveraging variety” approach present diversity and/or inclusion as part of the core values of the agency. To fall into the “Leveraging variety” approach, the agency was required to show diversity and inclusion as a core value, which means the diversity and inclusion statement was present on the homepage, values section, or on its own section on the webpage. Because this study aimed to describe what diversity organizational practices are communicated on websites, an agency was

categorized as using the “Leveraging variety” approach if it had diversity as a core value, even if did not communicate another practice.

Following the content analysis, this study analyzed the diversity and inclusion statements found on the agencies’ websites with the purpose of identifying themes, patterns, and meaning. This analysis offered a description of how public relations agencies are communicating diversity and inclusion. The diversity and inclusion statements were copied and pasted into an Excel spreadsheet and then transferred to NVivo, a qualitative data analysis computer software, to identify and analyze patterns and themes of these statements.

### ***Visual Content Analysis***

The present study understands that gender and race can go beyond visual characteristics. Nevertheless, for the purpose of this study, gender identity and race were coded using visible characteristics that were defined during coder training and in the codebook (See Appendix 2). Using how the coder perceived the individual in the pictures to code race and gender is a dimension of the definition of diversity (Sha and Ford, 2007). The following items were used to code gender identity and race:

1. Quantity of people in the picture addresses how many people are present in the picture to code
  - a. 1 person
  - b. 2 to 4 individuals in the picture
  - c. More than 4 individuals in the picture
2. Gender identity: Mention of genders as male, female, nonbinary, or transgender. Gender was coded in a binary way as male or female.
  - a. Female

- b. Male
3. Race: Geographic pattern of variation in some biological traits that distinguish different human populations.
- a. Exclusively White
  - b. Exclusively Black
  - c. Exclusively Other race
  - d. White and Black
  - e. White and another race
  - f. Black and another race
  - g. More than 3 races
  - h. Unable to determine

### **Intercoder Reliability**

A codebook was developed to code the variables (See Appendix 2). Coding the diversity statements provided by the public relations agencies' websites was done by two coders: the researcher and a colleague, a communications professional acting as a trained, independent coder. During the coder training, a discussion was done using examples. Changes were made to the codebook after the first round of sample coding. A sample of 35 websites, 15% of the sample, was analyzed to determine intercoder reliability using Krippendorff alpha. Alpha was computed through the online utility ReCal2 ([www.dfreelon.org](http://www.dfreelon.org)) for each variable. The coefficient was .85 for equality statement (V1), .87 for diversity and inclusion statement (V2), 1 for age, gender, race, sexual orientation, beliefs, identity as a dimensions of diversity (V3, V4, V5, V7, V10, V11), .84 for ethnicity as a dimension of diversity (V6), .80 for parenthood, professional backgrounds and other category of diversity as dimension of diversity (V8, V9,

V12), 1 for training, resource groups, strategic partnerships and minority recruitment (V13, V15, V16, V18), .88 for flexible working (V14), .82 for mentorship program (V17), .83 for professional development (V19), .80 for D&I activity with community (V20), 1 for diversity officer or council (V21), .81 for location of content and agency location (V22, V23), .84 for practices areas and firm independency (V24, V25), .94 for CEO gender (V26), .99 for team gender (V27). For the visual analysis, the coefficient was .87 for the number of people on the picture (V28), .80 for the gender portrayed (V29), and .81 for the races portrayed (V30). All the coefficients reached the acceptable limits (Riffe et al., 2005).

### **Statistical Analyses**

Descriptive statistics were used for the statistical analysis. Frequency distributions were used to answer all the research questions in this study. A chi-square test was used to determine significant relationships between the presence of a diversity statement and certain dimensions of diversity, organizational practices, and agencies' information.

To describe more in-detail the way that public relations agencies are communicating their diversity and inclusion practices, this study conducted the statistical analysis not only on the overall sample but also on agencies divided by organizational size (large, mid-size, and small agencies) and size according to revenue (large, mid-size, small, and boutique agencies). Following Beer's (1964) definition of organizational size, the present study categorized the agencies as follows: agencies with more than 500 employees in the United States were considered large, agencies with 100 to 499 employees were considered mid-size, and agencies with 1 to 99 employees were considered small. Using the *PRWeek* Awards Entry kit 2019 (*PRWeek*, 2019) as a guide, this study also divided the agencies by revenue or income reported in 2018. The categories were "large agency" (more than \$65 million in revenue or income), "mid-

size agency” (between \$15 and \$65 million in revenue or income), “small agency” (between \$5 and \$15 million in revenue or income), and “boutique agency” (less than \$5 million in revenue or income).

## RESULTS

This chapter is divided into sections. The first section presents general information about the sample of public relations agencies found on their websites, including the size of the agency, international locations, practice areas, the gender of the CEO, and leadership gender. The other section presents the answers to the proposed research questions. Out of the 236 websites, a total of 1,117 web pages were analyzed for this study.

### **Agency Profiles**

Table 2 presents general information about the agencies. A majority of the analyzed agencies were small agencies ( $n = 167$ , 70.3%) followed by mid-size agencies ( $n = 48$ , 20.3%), and large agencies ( $n = 11$ , 4.7%). Eleven agencies (4.7%) did not provide information on their websites or profile information from which the sample was constructed. In terms of revenue or income, small and boutique agencies made up most of the sample ( $n = 153$ , 64.8%), followed by mid-size agencies ( $n = 44$ , 18.6%) and large agencies ( $n = 20$ , 8.5%).

Most of the agencies do not have international locations ( $n = 167$ , 70.8%) while only 69 agencies have international locations (29.2%). When examining the practice areas, most of the agencies offer multiple practice areas ( $n = 185$ , 78.4%). The agencies that focused on multiple practices areas ( $n = 51$ , 21.6%) mainly focused on tech public relations, healthcare public relations, and public affairs.

From a holding company perspective, most of the agencies in this sample did not disclose clearly whether or not they were an independent firm on their websites ( $n = 161$ , 68.2%). Out of those

agencies that provided the information, 59 agencies were independent (25%) and 16 were not independent firms (6.8%).

The present research analyzed the presence of males and females portrayed in leadership and team roles in order to explore the gender diversity of public relations agencies. In an analysis of CEO representation, 130 agencies had male CEOs (55.1%) and 81 agencies had female CEOs (34.3), compared to the smaller percentage that had both genders leading the agencies ( $n = 6$ , 8.5%). Out of the 236 agencies, 19 agencies (8.1%) did not provide this information on their websites.

This research analyzed how many female leaders or team members were portrayed on the leadership and/or team sections of the sample. On their websites, most of the agencies portrayed having 51%-75% female employees ( $n = 82$ , 34.7%).

Table 2  
*Agency profiles*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1. Agency size *	Large	11	4.7
	Mid-size	47	19.9
	Small	167	70.8
	Unable to determine	11	4.7
	Total	236	100.0
2. Agency size **	Large	20	8.5
	Mid-size	44	18.6
	Small	61	25.8
	Boutique	92	39.0
	Unable to determine	19	8.1
Total	236	100.0	
3. Agency locations	Agency with international locations	69	29.2
	Agency without international locations	167	70.8
	Total	236	100.0
4. Agency practice areas	One practice area	51	21.6
	Multiple practice areas	185	78.4
	Total	236	100.0

Table 2 (Continued)

5. Agency independency	Independent	59	25.0
	No independent	16	6.8
	No information provided	161	68.2
	Total	236	100.0
6. Agency- CEO/President Gender	Female	81	34.3
	Male	130	55.1
	Both	6	2.5
	No information on website	19	8.1
	Total	236	236
7. Agency leadership/team gender	0-25% female	10	4.2
	26%-50% female	63	26.7
	51%-75% female	82	34.7
	76%- 100% female	58	24.6
	No information on website	23	9.7
	Total	236	100.0

*Note.* \* Agency size by number of employees. \*\*Agency size by revenue or income.

### **Dimensions of Diversity in Public Relations Agencies' Websites**

Research question one (RQ1) sought to describe what dimensions of diversity are the most frequently addressed by public relations agencies on their websites. To answer this question, the study selected various dimensions of diversity previously studied and coded whether these dimensions were present or absent on the agencies' websites. Table 3 reports that diversity of skills and professional backgrounds is the most frequently mentioned dimension of diversity on agencies' websites ( $n = 37, 15.7\%$ ), followed by gender ( $n = 33, 14\%$ ) and disability ( $n = 30, 12.7\%$ ). The fourth most-mentioned dimension of diversity is parenthood ( $n = 22, 9.3\%$ ), followed by ethnicity ( $n = 18, 7.6\%$ ) and race ( $n = 17, 7.2\%$ ). The "other" dimension of diversity was mentioned as often as race on the websites ( $n = 17, 7.2\%$ ). This "other" category included dimensions such as veteran status and marital status. The three dimensions of diversity that were mentioned least were sexual orientation ( $n = 13, 5.5\%$ ), age ( $n = 12, 5.1\%$ ), and beliefs ( $n = 10, 4.2\%$ ). The beliefs category included political and religious beliefs, as well as any other mention of other beliefs.

Table 3

*Dimensions of diversity*

<b>Dimension of diversity</b>	<b>Present</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Diversity of skills and professional backgrounds	37	15.7
Gender	33	14
Disability	30	12.7
Parenthood	22	9.3
Ethnicity	18	7.6
Race	17	7.2
Other (veteran, marital, other)	17	7.2
Sexual orientation	13	5.5
Age	12	5.1
Mention of beliefs in general	10	4.2

*Dimensions of Diversity by Agencies Size*

After addressing the dimensions of diversity for the industry overall, the present study also analyzed how agencies are addressing diversity according to their size, based on number of employees. Table 4 shows that ethnicity is the most frequently mentioned dimension of diversity among large public relations agencies ( $n = 4$ , 36.4%); gender, race, parenthood, skills and professional backgrounds, and identity were addressed with the same frequency ( $n = 3$ , 27.3%). Less communicated dimensions of diversity included age, disability, sexual orientation, and beliefs ( $n = 2$ , 18.2%) and other dimensions of diversity ( $n = 1$ , 9.1%)

Table 4

*Dimensions of diversity in large agencies*

<b>Dimension of diversity</b>	<b>Present</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Ethnicity	4	36.4
Gender	3	27.3
Race	3	27.3
Parenthood	3	27.3
Skills and professional backgrounds	3	27.3
Identity	3	27.3
Age	2	18.2
Disability	2	18.2
Sexual orientation	2	18.2
Beliefs	2	18.2

Table 5 reports that mid-size agencies mostly addressed diversity from the dimension of skills and professional backgrounds ( $n = 10$ , 21.3%), followed by gender ( $n = 8$ , 17.0%), parenthood ( $n = 7$ , 14.9%), disability ( $n = 5$ , 10.6%), race ( $n = 4$ , 8.5%), ethnicity ( $n = 4$ , 8.5%), sexual orientation, ( $n = 3$ , 6.4%), beliefs ( $n = 3$ , 6.4%), and other dimensions of diversity ( $n = 3$ , 6.4%). Age ( $n = 1$ , 2.1%) and identity ( $n = 1$ , 2.1%) were the least mentioned dimensions of diversity.

Table 5

*Dimensions of diversity in mid-size agencies*

<b>Dimension of diversity</b>	<b>Present</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Skills and professional backgrounds	10	21.3
Gender	8	17.0
Parenthood	7	14.9
Disability	5	10.6
Race	4	8.5
Ethnicity	4	8.5
Sexual orientation	3	6.4
Beliefs	3	6.4
Other	3	6.4
Age	1	2.1
Identity	1	2.1

Similarly, small agencies addressed diversity of skills and professional backgrounds ( $n = 24$ , 14.4%) and gender ( $n = 20$ , 12%) the most. Table 6 shows that disability was mentioned on 18 websites (10.8%), followed by other dimensions of diversity ( $n = 13$ , 7.8%), parenthood ( $n = 10$ , 6%), and race ( $n = 8$ , 4.8%). Age and sexual orientation were addressed with the same frequency ( $n = 7$ , 4.2%). Beliefs and identity were the least frequently addressed dimensions of diversity ( $n = 4$ , 2.4%).

Table 6

*Dimensions of diversity in large agencies*

<b>Dimension of diversity</b>	<b>Present</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Skills and professional backgrounds	24	14.4
Gender	20	12
Disability	18	10.8
Other	13	7.8
Parenthood	10	6.0
Ethnicity	9	5.4
Race	8	4.8
Age	7	4.2
Sexual Orientation	7	4.2
Beliefs	4	2.4
Identity	4	2.4

Gender was the only dimension of diversity mentioned the same frequency across all sizes of public relations agencies. Mid-size agencies and small agencies mentioned diversity of skills and professional backgrounds, disabilities, and ethnicity with the same frequency. These results show that large agencies are not only addressing more dimensions of diversity, but they are also doing so in a more uniformed way.

### **Race and Gender Diversity in the Photographs of Public Relations Agencies' Websites**

The “Leveraging variety” model approach suggests the organizational practice of having heterogeneous teams. In this manner, RQ1A asks about gender and race representation in visual photographs on agency websites. Out of the total sample ( $N = 236$ ), 112 agencies (47.45%) had photographs on their websites. A total of 641 photographs were analyzed.

Table 7 contains the number of persons in the pictures of the agencies' websites. This analysis was performed to describe the quantity of individuals in the picture in relationship to the portrayal of certain genders and races. Most of the pictures ( $n = 258$ , 40.2%) have between 2 and

4 individuals, followed by with more than 4 individuals ( $n = 231, 36.0\%$ ) and with only 1 individual ( $23.7\%$ ), respectively. These photographs included testimonials, pictures, and photos on different sections of the coded web pages.

Table 7

*Quantity of individuals on pictures*

<b>Quantity of individuals</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1 individual	152	23.7
2-4 individual	258	40.2
More than 4 individuals	231	36.0

RQ1A examined the frequency of genders and races portrayed in the photographs. Table 8 demonstrates the genders portrayed in the pictures. It was found that slightly more pictures portrayed both female and male individuals ( $n = 316, 49.3\%$ ) than only female individuals ( $n = 233, 36.3\%$ ). Photographs with only male portrayed ( $n = 90, 14.0\%$ ) were less frequent than photographs with only female portrayed.

Table 8

*Gender portrayal on photograph on websites*

<b>Gender portrayed</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Female	233	36.3
Male	90	14.0
Both	316	49.3

The present study coded race by whether one race was exclusively portrayed or whether multiple races were represented in a picture. Table 9 shows that most of the photographs portrayed exclusively white individuals ( $n = 281, 43.8\%$ ), followed by photographs with white individuals and individuals of another race ( $n = 136, 21.2\%$ ) such as Asian, Native, Middle Eastern, or Pacific Islander, coded as “exclusively other.” Photographs portraying three or more

races ( $n = 71$ , 11.1%) were more frequent than photographs with exclusively black individuals ( $n = 12$ , 1.9%). Photographs with white and black individuals ( $n = 62$ , 9.7%) were slightly more frequent than photographs with individuals who fell under the “exclusively other” category ( $n = 54$ , 8.4%). The representation of black individuals with individuals of a race coded as “Black and Other” ( $n = 3$ , 0.5) was the least common in the photographs.

Table 9

*Race portrayal on photographs on websites*

<b>Race portrayed</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Exclusively White	281	43.8
White and Other	136	21.2
More than 3 races	71	11.1
White and Black	62	9.7
Exclusively Other	54	8.4
Exclusively Black	12	1.9
Black and Other	3	.5

*Note.* Other includes Natives, Pacific Islander, Middle Eastern and Asians.

***Gender and Race portrayal in Photographs of large public relations agencies***

Since large public relations agencies employ more than half (approx. 14,326 professionals) of the public relations practitioners who work in public relations agencies in the U.S., this study analyzed how gender and race are portrayed in photographs on large public relations agencies’ websites. A total of 73 photographs (11.3% of the total photograph’s sample) were analyzed. Table 10 shows that the portrayal of women and men together ( $n = 32$ , 43.8%) was slightly more frequent than the portrayal of just women ( $n = 31$ , 42.5%) in photographs. Similarly, men ( $n = 10$ , 13.7%) were portrayed less frequently compared to women. Compared to the industry as a whole, large public relations agencies had a higher percentage of women and men portrayed in photographs individually and a lower percentage of both women and men portrayed together in photographs.

Table 10

*Gender portrayal on photograph on websites – Large agencies*

<b>Gender portrayed</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Female	31	42.5
Male	10	13.7
Both	32	43.8

With regards to race, Table 11 shows that, similar to the overall industry, large agencies also portray exclusively white individuals ( $n= 18, 24.7\%$ ) more frequently than any other race. Interestingly, the second most frequently portrayed category of races was “more than 3 races” ( $n= 16, 21.9\%$ ). The percentage difference was not as big in large agencies as compared to in the overall industry. Photographs with White and Black individuals were the third most portrayed ones ( $n = 11, 15.1\%$ ), followed by photographs which exclusively featured individuals from races such as Native, Pacific Islander, Asian, or Middle Eastern ( $n = 10, 13.7\%$ ). The fifth most frequent category of races portrayed in photographs on the websites was “White and other,” which was slightly less frequent than the “Exclusively other” category ( $n = 9, 12.3\%$ ). As with the overall analysis of photographs of the industry, the “Exclusively Black” ( $n = 6, 8.2\%$ ) and “Black and Other” ( $n = 2, 2.7\%$ ) category were least frequently portrayed in the websites’ photographs.

Table 11

*Race portrayal on photographs on websites*

<b>Race portrayed</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Exclusively White	18	24.7
More than 3 races	16	21.9
White and Black	11	15.1
Exclusively Other	10	13.7
White and Other	9	12.3
Exclusively Black	6	8.2
Black and Other	2	2.7

*Note.* Other includes Natives, Pacific Islander, Middle Eastern and Asians.

## Diversity and Inclusion Practices Communication on Websites

The “Leveraging variety” model proposes specific organizational practices for the different diversity approaches within organizations. RQ2 sought to describe what practices agencies communicate through their websites. Table 12 reports the results of the frequency among organizational practices. These organizational practices were coded as “present” or “absent.” The most frequent practice communicated on the websites was the practice of professional development ( $n = 107, 45.3\%$ ), followed by flexible work hours ( $n = 78, 33.1\%$ ). The “Leveraging variety” model also presents strategic partnerships as a practice of the diversity management approach. This practice was the third most commonly communicated across websites ( $n = 25, 10.6\%$ ). As shown in Table 12, the other organizational practices were present in less than 10% of the websites of the sample. These other practices were those that specifically address diversity and inclusion. These practices were mentorship programs, diversity and inclusion (D&I) activities with the community, which included volunteering with organizations that address diversity issues and diversity suppliers’ programs, the presence of a diversity and inclusion officer or council, and resource groups and trainings that explicitly address diversity and inclusion topics. When resource groups were communicated, they addressed the different dimensions of diversity (i.e., race, gender, parenthood, and ethnicity).

Table 12

### *Organizational practices*

<b>Practice</b>	<b>Present</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
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Professional development	107	45.3
Flexible work hours	78	33.1
Strategic partnership	25	10.6
Mentorship program	23	9.7
D&I activities with community	21	8.9
Minority recruitment	13	5.5
D&I officer or council	9	3.8
Resource groups	4	1.7
Training (around diversity)	9	3.8

***Comparing organizational practices across agency size***

To have a better understanding of the organizational practices that public relations agencies are communicating, this study analyzed and compared the practices across agency size. Figure 3 shows what organizational practices are most frequently communicated by public relations agencies on their websites according to agency size. As in the overall industry analysis, flexible work hours and professional development were the most frequently communicated organizational practices. A difference from the overall industry analysis was that large agencies are communicating more practices, such as minority recruitment, D&I officer or council, training, and strategic partnerships. This detailed comparison shows that small agencies were not found to have communicated resources groups or D&I officer as organizational practices.

Professional development was the most frequently communicated organizational practices by mid-size ( $n = 27, 57.4\%$ ) and small agencies ( $n = 67, 40\%$ ), followed by flexible hours ( $n = 17, 36.2\%$  vs.  $n = 49, 29.3\%$ ) For mid-size agencies, mentorship programs ( $n = 6, 12.8\%$ ) and minority recruitment ( $n = 5, 10.6\%$ ) were communicated in at least 10% of the agencies.

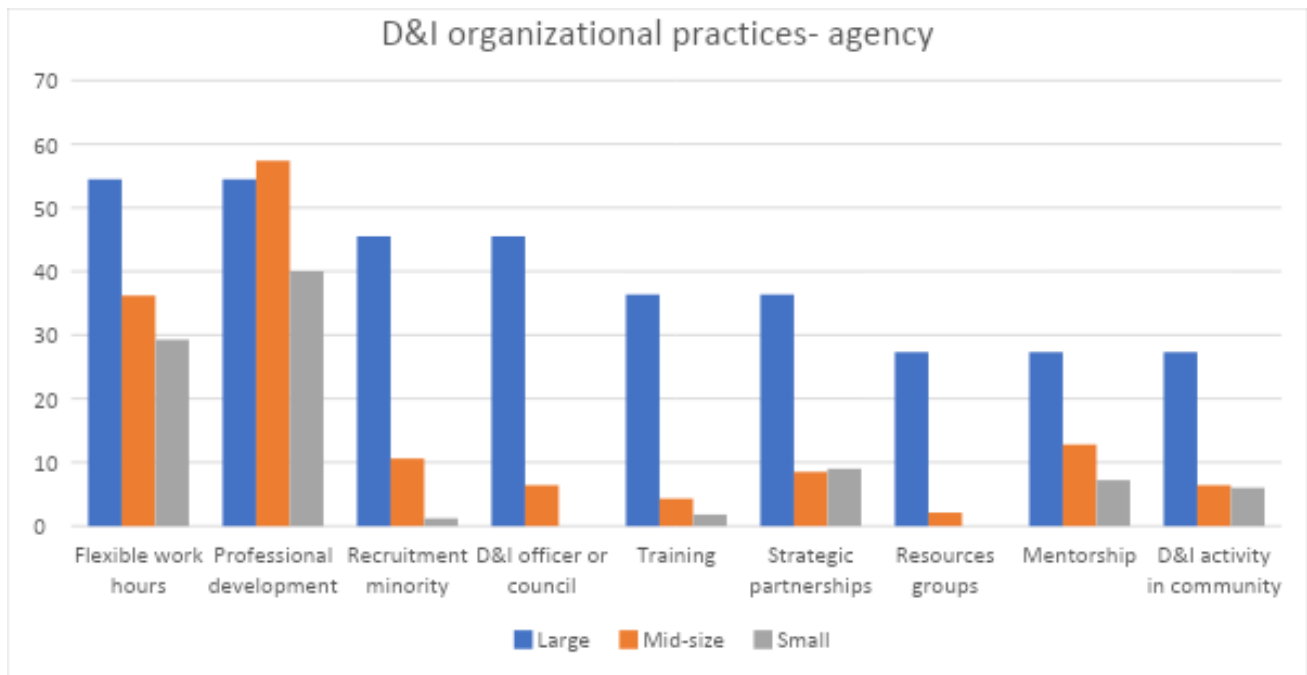


Figure 3 D&I Organizational practices- Agency size

RQ3 asked which diversity model (assimilation, diversity management, or “Leveraging variety”) are most frequently reflected on public relations agencies’ websites. After coding the presence or absence of certain organizational practices presented by the “Leveraging variety” model and the presence or absence of diversity and inclusion statements, each agency was categorized under a diversity approach according to the information seen in Table 1, which was provided on the agencies’ websites. Table 13 demonstrates that the assimilation approach is the most frequently portrayed ( $n = 156, 66.1\%$ ), followed by diversity management approach ( $n = 63, 26.7\%$ ) and the “Leveraging variety” approach ( $n = 17, 7.2\%$ ). Agencies that only had an equal opportunity statement ( $n = 46, 19.5\%$ ), only addressed gender, parenthood, and disability dimensions of diversity, or that did not mention any information about diversity fell under the assimilation category. Agencies that had a diversity and inclusion statement or organizational

practices of the model, but not as a core value or on its own section, fell under the diversity management category.

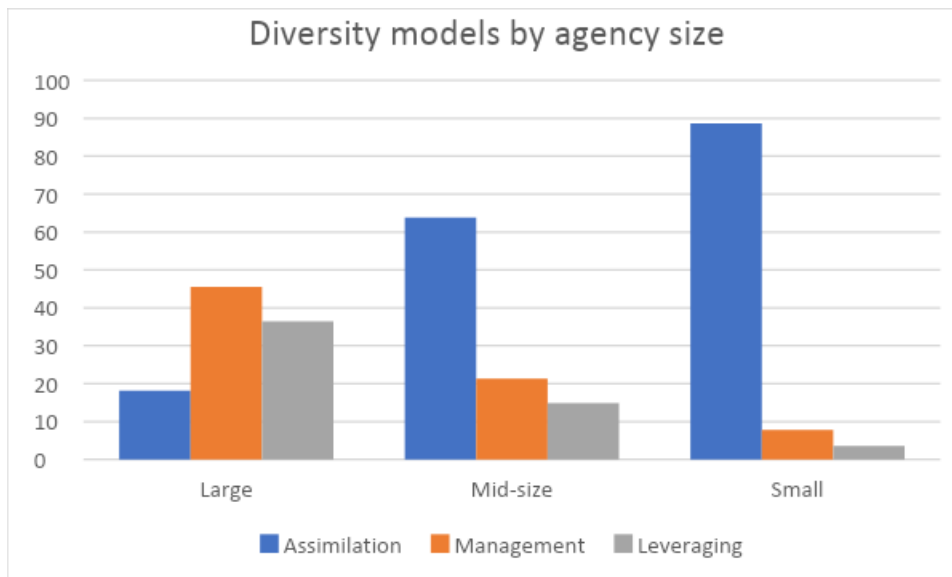
Table 13

*Diversity models reflected on public relations agencies' websites*

<b>Model</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Assimilation	156	66.1
Management	63	26.7
Leveraging	17	7.2

***Comparing diversity models across agency size***

Figure 5 presents a detailed picture of the agency sizes by the diversity model. Most of the large agencies fell into the diversity management model ( $n = 5$ , 45.5%). In relationship to the overall industry analysis, most of the mid-size agencies ( $n = 30$ , 63.8%) and small agencies ( $n = 148$ , 88.6%) fell into the assimilation minorities model.



*Figure 4- Diversity models by agency size*

This descriptive study also examined where the diversity and inclusion statement was located on public relations agencies' websites. Out of a sample of 236 websites, only 45 websites (19.1%) had a diversity and inclusion statement. The majority of the diversity and inclusion statements were located on the "Culture" or "Career" webpage ( $n = 24$ , 53.3%) and 24.4% ( $n = 11$ ) on the "About Us" webpage. For 15.5% ( $n = 7$ ) agencies, the diversity and inclusion statement was located on multiple webpages. Just three agencies had their diversity and inclusion statement on their "Home" page ( $n = 1$ , 2.2%), "CSR/Community" webpage ( $n = 1$ , 2.2%), or its own "Diversity and Inclusion" webpage ( $n = 1$ , 2.2%).

Chi-square tests were conducted to determine if there was a significant relationship between the presence of diversity and inclusion statements and the dimensions of diversity, organizational practices, or agencies' characteristics. Findings show that the relationship between diversity and inclusion statements and agency size (number of employees) was statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 28.05$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p < .01$ ). As seen in Figure 5, most of the large agencies ( $n = 7$ , 63%) had diversity and inclusion statements on their websites. The smaller the agency, the less presence of diversity and inclusion statements. Further, only 33.3% of mid-size agencies ( $n = 16$ ) had diversity and inclusion statements. Small agencies made up most of the sample of this study, and only 7.2% ( $n = 20$ ) of them providing a diversity and inclusion statement on their websites. Overall, websites of large agencies were found to be more likely to communicate their diversity and inclusion commitment through statements on their websites (70% of the large agencies vs. 33.3% of mid-size agencies vs. 12.1% of small agencies).

Similarly, the relationship between diversity and inclusion statements and agency size (by revenue or income) was also found to be statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 23.92$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p < .01$ ). As

seen in Figure 6, more than half ( $n = 11$ , 55%) of the large agencies had a diversity and inclusion statement on their websites. Contrastingly, only 27.3% of mid-size agencies ( $n = 12$ ) had a diversity and inclusion statement. Just as with agency size by employment, the smaller the agency, the less likelihood of a diversity and inclusion statement presence on websites. Consistent with this finding, a smaller percentage ( $n = 8$ , 8.7%) of boutique agencies were found to have a diversity and inclusion statement on their websites compared to small agencies ( $n = 13$ , 21.3%)

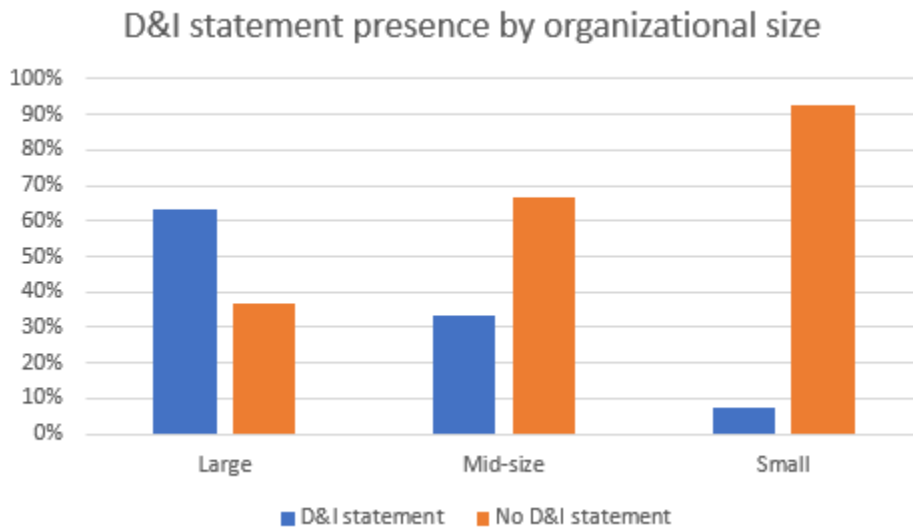


Figure 5. D&I statement presence by agency size (by number of employees)

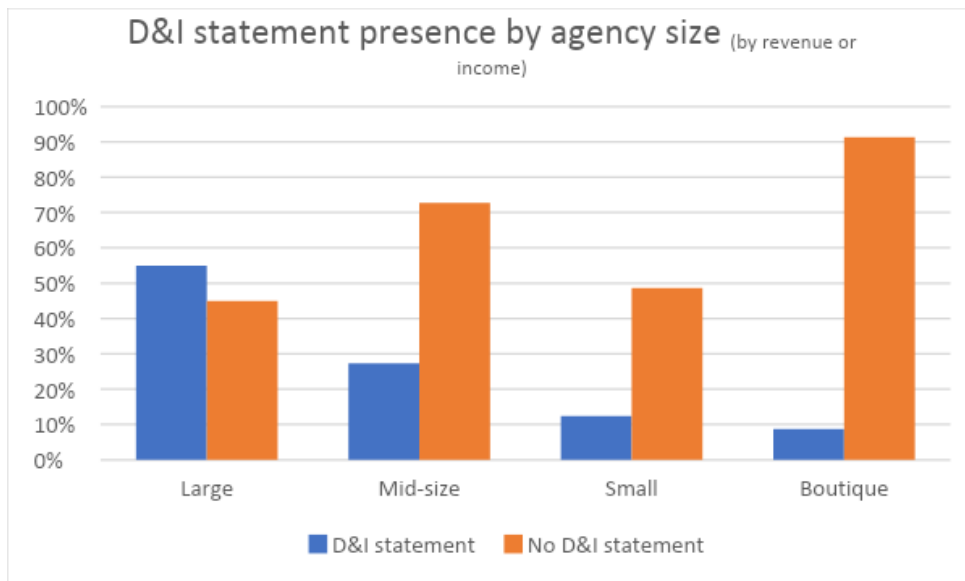


Figure 6. D&I State presence by agency size (by revenue or income)

Given that the goal of this study was to examine the status of diversity portrayed in public relations agencies' websites, a Chi-square test was conducted to determine if there was any significant relationship between a specific diversity dimension and the presence of diversity and inclusion statements on websites. The test confirmed a statistically significant relationship between the presence of these statements and the mention of gender as a dimension of diversity ( $\chi^2 = 21.51, df = 1, p < .01$ ). Out of all the websites that had a diversity and inclusion statement, 35.6% of them mentioned gender in the coded web pages. This shows that agencies that have a diversity and inclusion statement on their websites are more likely to address gender as a dimension of diversity than agencies that their counterparts.

### **Diversity Statements on Public Relations Agencies' Websites**

To provide a more detailed description of how public relations agencies' websites are communicating their commitment to diversity and inclusion, the 45 diversity and inclusion statements found were analyzed to identify common themes. The following four themes emerged around the statements.

### ***Dimensions of Diversity in Diversity and Inclusion Statements***

First, the diversity and inclusion statements were found to reflect that agencies varied in how they addressed diversity. Some agencies only mentioned their commitment to diverse groups and diversity without addressing a specific group. Among the dimensions of diversity that were specifically mentioned in these statements are gender, beliefs, sexual orientation, race and ethnicity (sometimes referred to as “persons of color” or “minorities”), and diversity of backgrounds, experience, and ideas. Disability, parenthood, veteran status, and marital status were not mentioned in these statements.

### ***Diversity and Inclusion and Organizational Culture***

The statements mentioned that diversity and inclusion were important for the organizational culture, which led them to mention how that inclusive culture could lead to professional and personal growth. The agency Edelman (Edelman, n.d.) stated the following:

“We are committed to maintaining an open and nurturing environment that fosters collaboration, drives diverse thinking, and creates a culture that respects and celebrates diversity and inclusion (D&I).”

This statement reflects that diversity and inclusion is intentional and is considered an organizational practice that influences the organizational culture. W2O Group (W2O, n.d.) had a statement that addressed professional development as the following:

“We aim to create an inclusive environment that allows our people to grow and thrive, advancing the thinkers and leaders of tomorrow.”

This statement recognizes the importance of an inclusive environment in achieving better performance. This effect on individual performance led to the next theme that emerged during this analysis: the impact of diversity on the agency’s work.

### ***Diversity and its Impact on Agency Work***

In the diversity and inclusion statements, agencies also mentioned and recognized the impact that a diverse and inclusive culture can have on their overall work and performance, which can lead to better financial performance as well. The “Leveraging variety” model presents innovation and new markets as benefits of having diverse talents with different competencies. Taft Communications (Taft Communications, n.d.), one of the agencies, clearly stated the following:

“What happens when you throw different kinds of people together to work on different kinds of projects? Great ideas of every kind. Team Taft includes folks of many stripes, men and women who’ve experienced life from many different angles. We do more than pay lip service to diversity. We embrace it to be smarter for our clients.

In addition to mentioning the influence of diversity on their work for clients and overall results, agencies also mentioned how their employees should reflect the world we live in.

### ***Agencies That Reflect Their Audiences***

Some of the diversity and inclusion statements expressed commitment to diversity as a result of the agencies wanting their employees to reflect the world we live in, the clients they serve, and the audiences they want to reach and influence. Fleishman Hillard (Fleishman Hillard, n.d.) stated the following:

“We believe in the power of perspective and a team that reflects the world in which we live, the stakeholders we serve, and the clients with whom we partner. Our best thinking, creativity, and results originate from diverse talent and experiences.”

The “Leveraging variety” model focuses on using the variety of talents to improve solutions and results. This statement is an example of how an agency is embracing diversity because they

recognize that having employees that represent the community with whom they do business can benefit their overall work.

## DISCUSSION

The goal of this study was to describe, explore, and evaluate how public relations agencies address diversity and inclusion on their websites. The “Leveraging variety” model was applied to evaluate the status of diversity and inclusion statements on public relations agencies’ websites. This discussion addresses a summary of the results, as well as theoretical and practical implications and limitations and future research.

### **Dimensions of Diversity in Public Relations Agencies’ Websites**

The overall results indicated that diversity of skills and professional backgrounds are the most frequently addressed dimension of diversity on public relations agencies’ websites.

Agencies were found to be addressing diversity from a dimension of competencies and knowledge, which are the main dimensions of focus for the “Leveraging variety” model. In the public relations industry, the diversity issue has been addressed from a minority group perspective (Edwards, 2013). With this clear racial inequality in the public relations industry, why do agencies focus on diversity from a skill and professional backgrounds perspective? Could this mean that they do not address visible diversity directly? The concept of diversity is broad, and it is important to recognize how it is addressed both in the industry and academia to identify areas of improvement. Addressing diversity from a skills and professional backgrounds dimension could be a way to be more inclusive and avoid excluding any other dimension of diversity. Similarly, it could be a way agencies demonstrate their effort to be more welcoming to professionals from all different backgrounds. These practices could be based in previous research that shows that diversity messages on a website can increase organizational attractiveness in

minority group applicants and increase the processing of information (Allen, 2007; Baum, et al., 2016; Walker, et al., 2012).

The second most addressed dimensions are gender, disability, and parenthood. The fact that gender and disability are frequently mentioned may be rooted in a legal reason, namely, that Equal Employment Opportunity laws address those dimensions. It could also be explained by the fact that public relations is a female-dominated industry, and there currently is a conversation about women empowerment and their development as business leaders (Vardeman-Winter & Place, 2017). In the photographs on the agencies' websites, which are used as an element to communicate messages about diversity, more pictures are shown of female and male employees together, which is positive because it could invite more male professionals to apply to the agencies (De Cooman, 2013). With regard to gender, agencies are portraying an industry that is more balanced than in reality. At the same time, regarding race, agencies portray the industry as it is. That is, lacking racial diversity. The lack of racial diversity in pictures on agency websites could indicate that they are not addressing visible diversity. In order to be perceived as an agency with diverse employees and, at the same time, attract more diverse talent, visuals should support the diversity messages in place (Geise & Baden, 2015; Iyer, et al., 2014; Mundy ,2015b). When addressing diversity, a vast majority of senior communications professionals defined diversity using the dimensions of race and ethnicity (Jiang, et al., 2016). Nevertheless, the overall industry definition of diversity is not supported by visuals on the agencies' websites.

### ***Large agencies and the dimensions of diversity***

This study has referred to the Diversity Inc. Top 50 companies. Most of the organizations that are part of this list are large corporations that are required to have at least 1,000 employees. With this in mind, the present study analyzed how large agencies, which could be the industry

equivalent to the “big corporations,” address diversity. In contrast to the overall industry analysis, large agencies are addressing diversity mostly from the dimensions of ethnicity, gender, and race, which are also the ways that the existing research has mostly addressed diversity research (Grunig, et al., 2007). Large agencies are also addressing diversity in a more balanced way, since the dimensions of diversity addressed on their websites were addressed almost with the same frequency.

The photographs on the large agencies’ websites were somewhat different from the overall industry analysis. Regarding gender, this study shows a slight difference between the overall industry and the large agencies. The most significant differences were regarding race. Even though, “Exclusively White” was the most frequently portrayed category, the second most frequently portrayed category was “more than 3 races,” which could mean that large agencies are being intentional about portraying a more diverse workforce. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2020), the second biggest employed race in the public relations industry is Black, but the photographs with exclusively Black individuals or Black individuals and other races were less frequently portrayed than the rest of the categories coded in this study. Even though large public relations agencies are implementing the best practices according to the research, the portrayal of a diverse workforce by large agencies still must be improved.

### **Organizational Practices and Diversity and Inclusion**

As the conversation surrounding diversity and inclusion in the public relations industry gains more and more momentum and importance, it is expected that organizations will use their different communication channels, websites included, to communicate their organizational practices regarding diversity and inclusion. This study examines the communication of

organizational practices because they are a part of organizational culture. Following the organizational practices presented by Mazzei and Ravazzani (2015) when approaching diversity in an organization, our findings showed that professional development and flexible work hours are the most frequently communicated practices on websites, followed by strategic partnerships typically done within the local community. These three practices are organizational practices that fall into the “Integrating diversity” approach of the model. Regarding agency size, there were no differences in the frequency that agencies were communicating these two practices.

As mentioned before, professional development opportunities included internships offered to college students, professional training programs, and international exchange programs for employees in companies with international locations. Offering internship programs is a good practice that gives students and young professionals the opportunity to gain experience. Young professionals have stated how important internships are for their professional development (Waymer, et al., 2016). Additionally, ongoing professional development programs can help employees keep up to date with industry trends and new technological developments that can help with the creation of new campaigns and, therefore, impact client work and help the organization. Another professional development opportunity is the international exchange program, which can help employees develop different skills and get the benefits of working with a more diverse team.

Organizations might communicate their flexible work hours practices on their websites as a way to recruit the best talent since almost half of Millennials (40%) have been shown to consider the flexibility of working from anywhere a priority when evaluating job opportunities (Berger, 2019). Flexible work hours is a practice that organizations have in place as part of their work-life balance initiatives (Shagvaliyeva & Yazdanifard, 2014). Research has shown that

public relations professionals perceive the profession as a field where achieving work-life balance is not possible because of its unpredictable nature, making it all the more important for organizations to communicate their flexible work hours (Aldoory, et al., 2008).

Strategic partnerships were the third most common organizational practice as an overall industry. This might be explained by the corporate social responsibility practices that these agencies have in place. Previous research has shown that corporate websites might address diversity and inclusion issues from a corporate social responsibility rationale (Maier & Ravazzani, 2019; Uysal, 2013). This study shows that agencies are partnering with organizations to recruit talent, provide scholarships, organize events that promote diversity and inclusion, and conduct professional development initiatives, and trainings (e.g., PR Council, PRSA Foundation, LAGRANT Foundation), all of which can promote diversity. For mid-size agencies, the third most communicated practice was a D&I community, which as strategic partnerships can be related to CSR, since they are volunteering with nonprofits that work with diverse or minority groups. For large agencies, the third most common organizational practice was recruitment of minorities, which implies that large agencies are actively looking for diverse talent.

Other practices that were communicated on the websites include mentorship programs, diversity and inclusion activities within the community, minority recruitment practices, resource groups, training, and a diversity and inclusion officer or council. Mentorship programs, one of these practices, are being communicated on websites as a benefit of working for the agency. This is a positive practice that can help diverse talent move forward and achieve leadership positions (Fitzpatrick, 2013, as cited in Place & Vardeman-Winter, 2018). Diversity and inclusion activities with the community included not only volunteering, but also diverse supplier programs. The diverse supplier program is an organizational practice that is part of the “Leveraging

variety” approach. It is important that an agency communicate this practice so a diverse supplier can know about it and contact them to create business opportunities. This practice goes beyond organizational culture; it is a practice that reflects how agencies include and impact the communities where they do business. Having organizational practices that work with different stakeholders suggests that agencies might be approaching diversity from a more holistic viewpoint than just a CSR initiative or an employee engagement initiative. The integration of diversity into different organizational practices can benefit organizations, as compared to those organizations that approach diversity as a stand-alone practice (Scott, et al., 2011).

### **Diversity Approach on Public Relations Agencies’ Websites**

From an overall industry analysis, the findings of the present study contrast with those of Uysal (2013). Uysal (2013) found that corporate websites were approaching diversity from an “Integrating diversity” approach, the present study found that most agencies are approaching diversity using an “Assimilating minorities” approach, or at least that is what can be perceived from their website communications. Nevertheless, when comparing large agencies to Uysal’s study, this study also found that most agencies are approaching diversity from a “Integrating diversity” approach. The way that agencies communicate about diversity can indicate either commitment or lack of commitment to diversity. Using the “Assimilating minorities” approach means that the industry is reflecting on their websites the most basic level of commitment to diversity and inclusion on their websites. Bardhan (2016) stated that corporations are doing a better job than public relations agencies with regard to diversity and inclusion; the lack of diversity communication on public relations agencies’ websites could be the result of the lack of industry diversity and actual commitment to it. Findings showed a significant relationship between the agency size (organizational size and business size) and the presence of diversity and

inclusion statements. Since the public relations industry is still working to achieve greater diversity, large and mid-size agencies are setting the industry standards, with some smaller agencies following. The fact that agencies with more revenue and a higher number of employees are communicating their diversity and inclusion practices more frequently may indicate that larger agencies mirror big corporations succeeding in diversity practices and have more resources to put such practices in place. This aligns with the leveraging variety approach, which states that it is important to have resources available to have concrete initiatives in place.

Even though most of the agencies do not have a diversity and inclusion statement on their websites, some agencies with a diversity and inclusion statement also included their reasoning behind why diversity and inclusion practices were important for them. When analyzing the content of the diversity and inclusion statements three themes emerged: organizational culture, impact on agency work, and agencies reflecting their audiences. These themes suggest that agencies are addressing diversity in a more complete manner and not just as a CSR initiative as has been seen before (Maier & Ravazzani, 2019; Uysal, 2013, Waymer, 2010). Diversity as part of the organizational culture supports the idea that diversity should become an organizational value and key component of organizations (Mazzei & Ravazzani, 2015; Mundy, 2015b; Waymer, 2010). Mundy (2015b) stated that companies should communicate why diversity is important and why it should be part of their organizational culture.

The impact on agency work indicates that agencies are recognizing the positive effects that diversity can have on their work, such as impacting financial performance. These agencies recognized the impact of diversity in their organizational culture and work performance and how it was important to reflect their audiences. Multiple studies support the positive effects of diversity on work performance (Cox, 1993; Herring, 2015; Nemeth, 2012). Last, the statement

that addresses that agencies should reflect their audiences supports the concept of “requisite variety” (Weick, 1979), which states that “organizations have to be preoccupied with keeping sufficient diversity inside the organizations to sense accurately the variety present in ecological changes outside it” (p. 188). Most of the agencies with diversity and inclusion statements clearly stated why diversity is important for them and how they address it. The communication of why diversity is important for the company can generate a better understanding of why some organizational practices take place and also, make those practices achieve their goals more effectively.

This study empirically tested the leveraging variety model as a theoretical framework to study diversity approaches through the way diversity was found to be communicated on websites. The present study suggests that communication of diversity and inclusion statements, as well as how they are communicated, can indicate which approach to diversity is being used by a company (See Fig. 3). By adding communication as an indicator, scholars who study diversity management approaches and diversity communication will be able to perform a more in-depth analysis regarding the different ways that organizations can communicate and address diversity in their different communication channels. Current research has shown that achieving a strong organizational alignment to diversity and inclusion, a company must merge diversity and inclusion with marketing and communications (Weber Shandwick, 2019). Therefore, communication practices are important when addressing diversity and inclusion. The communication indicator can help to merge diversity and communications successfully. Figure 7 shows the different ways that each approach might communicate diversity and inclusion issues. Furthermore, adding this indicator could help the study of diversity and inclusion communication across different channels (e.g., websites, social media and internal communication material) and

formats (e.g., webpages, social media posts and visual content as photographs or videos), as well as the communication directed to different audiences (e.g., employees, potential employees, investors and the community). A practical implication of adding this indicator is that organizations could use the model as a guide to communicate their diversity and inclusion efforts. This thesis both shows the lack of diversity communication in public relations agencies' websites and provides a model with communication practices to put in place.

<b>Approach Indicators</b>	<b>Assimilating minorities</b>	<b>Integrating Diversity</b>	<b>Leveraging variety</b>
<b>Aim</b>	Equal opportunities	Social expectations	Competition
<b>Dimensions</b>	Gender, parenthood and disability	Race, nationality, language, religion, sexual orientation, age	Competencies, knowledge, networks
<b>Practices</b>	Quota systems	Flexible working, work-life balance, expansion of the recruitment pool, training, partnership with dedicated institutions of networks, internal and external communication	Heterogeneous teams, employee networks, diverse suppliers, employment in innovation-related areas, evaluation of policy objectives
<b>Management structure</b>	Barely existent	Dedicated role and planning	Dedicated structure, planning and budget
<b>Benefits</b>	Equity of treatment, reduced lawsuits	Employee motivation, corporate image	Innovation, new markets
<b>Negative effects</b>	Lowering of hiring and promotion standards, negative self-perceptions of competence	Increased conflicts, reverse discrimination	Pigeonholing
<b>Communication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Absent.</li> <li>● Communication from EEO perspective. (i.e. EEO statement).</li> <li>● Communication of content around defining diversity and inclusion.</li> <li>● Content just present on job description and/ or blog or news section</li> <li>● Portrayed in visual content</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Diversity and inclusion communicated as part of organizational practices (CSR initiatives, community relations, volunteering).</li> <li>● Presence of D&amp;I statement (states of commitment to D&amp;I)</li> <li>● Portrayed in visual content</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Diversity and inclusion communicated as part of organizational practices</li> <li>● Presence of D&amp;I statement</li> <li>● D&amp;I as a core value of the company</li> <li>● Business importance is stated</li> <li>● Portrayed in visual content</li> </ul>

Figure 7. Communications practice as approach indicator

Previous studies have shown the multiple benefits that a diverse workforce can provide to organizations (Herring, 2017; Hunt et al., 2015). This study can help the industry to develop better ways to communicate their diversity and inclusion across different channels. Diversity has been shown to improve organizational reputation (Chohan, 2017), which is one of the roles of a public relations practitioners. Public relations practitioners could use the communication approach to evaluate their organizations and propose more effective ways to communicate their diversity and inclusion efforts. Communication as an approach indicator can even help organizations to start approaching diversity since the model suggests first defining diversity and inclusion before addressing diversity. In addition, public relations practitioners could use this model when creating diversity and inclusion models for their own organizations, as well as for clients.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

There are limitations concerning this research, as with all research. These limitations can be addressed by future studies. One limitation may be the measurement of visible diversity (race and gender), which could be subject to the biases of the coder. This study recognizes that diversity goes beyond appearance, but, for the purpose of this study, we uniquely focused on appearance to measure race and gender. Another limitation of this study is that it only provides a description of the websites without the reasoning behind the choices made on the websites. Therefore, this study cannot generalize why some agencies communicate diversity in certain ways. Moreover, another limitation is that the communication of organizational practices on websites does not mean that the agencies, in fact, execute those practices effectively. Because of the sample and method used, this study only focused on dimensions and practices as indicators of diversity approaches. This study did not measure other indicators presented in the “Leveraging

variety” model, such as management structures, benefits, and negative effects. Future research could focus on the benefits of the “Leveraging variety” approach and study how agencies are developing innovative and new practices accordingly (e.g., multicultural communication expertise, diversity and inclusion development as a service to offer, a specific practice to target the Hispanic market).

Future research could use other methods, such as in-depth interviews, focus groups, or surveys directed at employees in these agencies to better understand the practices that are taking place in the organizations. Future research could also interview potential employees and study the impact that the communication of diversity and inclusion as organizational practices can have on them when choosing to apply to work at an agency.

## CONCLUSION

The demographics of the United States and the world are changing quickly. Corporations and the public relations industry have recognized the importance of adapting to these changing demographics in order to succeed and achieve business goals. Diversity and inclusion practices are becoming an imperative for organizations. As the public relations industry grows, public relations agencies need to keep putting diversity and inclusion practices in place and learn how to communicate these practices effectively to attract the best talent, improve their reputation, and, in general, strengthen stakeholder relationships. Agencies must not only communicate these practices, but also utilize visuals on their websites that relate to these messages. The visuals on public relations agencies' websites should portray the diversity that the industry is aiming to achieve.

This study showed how the “Leveraging variety” model is an effective theoretical framework to study diversity in organizations from a quantitative perspective because it offers different indicators for each approach to diversity. The model provides elements that can help researchers to measure diversity and its effects in businesses. Furthermore, the present study added communication as an approach indicator to expand diversity and inclusion communication research.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix- 1

#### Sample List

	<b>Agency</b>	<b>URL</b>
1	360PR+	<a href="https://www.360pr.plus/">https://www.360pr.plus/</a>
2	5W Public Relations	<a href="https://www.5wpr.com/">https://www.5wpr.com/</a>
3	720 Strategies	<a href="https://www.720strategies.com/">https://www.720strategies.com/</a>
4	72Point	<a href="https://72point.news/">https://72point.news/</a>
5	Akrete	<a href="https://akrete.com/">https://akrete.com/</a>
6	Allison+Partners	<a href="https://www.allisonpr.com/">https://www.allisonpr.com/</a>
7	AMP3 Public Relations	<a href="https://amp3pr.com/">https://amp3pr.com/</a>
8	APCO Worldwide	<a href="https://apcoworldwide.com/">https://apcoworldwide.com/</a>
9	Archetype*	<a href="https://www.archetype.co/en/">https://www.archetype.co/en/</a>
10	ARPR	<a href="https://arpr.com/">https://arpr.com/</a>
11	Backbay communications	<a href="http://www.backbaycommunications.com/">http://www.backbaycommunications.com/</a>
12	Bader Rutter	<a href="https://baderrutter.com/">https://baderrutter.com/</a>
13	Bateman Group	<a href="https://www.bateman-group.com/">https://www.bateman-group.com/</a>
14	BCW*	<a href="https://bcw-global.com/">https://bcw-global.com/</a>
15	Beehive Strategic Communication	<a href="https://beehivepr.biz/about/">https://beehivepr.biz/about/</a>
16	BELFORT GROUP	<a href="https://www.thebelfortgroup.com/">https://www.thebelfortgroup.com/</a>
17	Bellmont Partners	<a href="https://bellmontpartners.com/">https://bellmontpartners.com/</a>
18	Berk Communications	<a href="http://berkcommunications.com">http://berkcommunications.com</a>
19	Bhava Communications	<a href="http://www.bhavacom.com/about-us/">http://www.bhavacom.com/about-us/</a>
20	Bianchi Public Relations	<a href="https://www.bianchipr.com">https://www.bianchipr.com</a>
21	BizCom Associates	<a href="http://bizcompr.com/">http://bizcompr.com/</a>
22	BLAZE	<a href="http://www.blazepr.com/">http://www.blazepr.com/</a>
23	Bliss Integrated Communications	<a href="http://www.blissintegrated.com/">http://www.blissintegrated.com/</a>
24	BoardroomPR	<a href="https://boardroompr.com/">https://boardroompr.com/</a>

25	Bob Gold & Associates	<a href="https://bobgoldpr.com/">https://bobgoldpr.com/</a>
26	BOCA Communications	<a href="http://bocacommunications.com/">http://bocacommunications.com/</a>
27	Bospar	<a href="https://bospar.com/">https://bospar.com/</a>
28	Brands2Life	<a href="https://brands2life.com/">https://brands2life.com/</a>
29	Bravo Group	<a href="https://bravogroup.us/">https://bravogroup.us/</a>
30	BROADHEAD BRO	<a href="https://broadheadco.com/">https://broadheadco.com/</a>
31	Brodeur Partners	<a href="https://www.brodeur.com/">https://www.brodeur.com/</a>
32	Brownstein Group	<a href="https://www.brownsteingroup.com/">https://www.brownsteingroup.com/</a>
33	Brunswick Group	<a href="https://www.brunswickgroup.com/home/">https://www.brunswickgroup.com/home/</a>
34	Buchanan Public Relations	<a href="https://buchananpr.com/">https://buchananpr.com/</a>
35	Butler Associates, LLC	<a href="https://www.butlerassociates.com/">https://www.butlerassociates.com/</a>
36	Buttonwood Communications Group	<a href="https://www.buttonwoodpr.com/">https://www.buttonwoodpr.com/</a>
37	C+C	<a href="https://cplusc.com/">https://cplusc.com/</a>
38	Caliber Corporate Advisers	<a href="https://www.calibercorporate.com/">https://www.calibercorporate.com/</a>
39	Camron Public Relations	<a href="https://camronpr.com/">https://camronpr.com/</a>
40	Carmichael Lynch Relate	<a href="https://carmichaelynchrelate.com/">https://carmichaelynchrelate.com/</a>
41	CashmanKatz	<a href="https://cashmankatz.com/">https://cashmankatz.com/</a>
42	Cerrell Associates	<a href="https://www.cerrell.com/">https://www.cerrell.com/</a>
43	Champion Management Group	<a href="http://championmgt.com/">http://championmgt.com/</a>
44	Citigate Dewe Rogerson	<a href="https://citigatedewerogerson.com/">https://citigatedewerogerson.com/</a>
45	Citizen Relations	<a href="https://www.citizenrelations.com/">https://www.citizenrelations.com/</a>
46	Clarity PR	<a href="https://clarity.pr/">https://clarity.pr/</a>
47	CommCentric Solutions, Inc.	<a href="https://www.commcentric.com/">https://www.commcentric.com/</a>
48	Coyne Public Relations	<a href="https://www.coynepr.com/">https://www.coynepr.com/</a>
49	Crenshaw Communications	<a href="https://crenshawcomm.com/">https://crenshawcomm.com/</a>
50	Crosby	<a href="https://www.crosbymarketing.com/">https://www.crosbymarketing.com/</a>
51	Current Marketing	<a href="https://www.current.agency/">https://www.current.agency/</a>
52	Davies	<a href="https://www.daviespublicaffairs.com/">https://www.daviespublicaffairs.com/</a>
53	Day One Agency	<a href="https://www.d1a.com/">https://www.d1a.com/</a>
54	Development Counsellors Int'l (DCI)	<a href="https://aboutdci.com/">https://aboutdci.com/</a>
55	DeVries Global	<a href="http://www.devriesglobal.com/">http://www.devriesglobal.com/</a>
56	Dini von Mueffling Communications	<a href="http://dvmcpr.com/">http://dvmcpr.com/</a>
57	DKC Public Relations	<a href="https://dkcnews.com/">https://dkcnews.com/</a>

58	Dukas Public Relations	<a href="https://www.dlpr.com/">https://www.dlpr.com/</a>
59	Edelman	<a href="https://www.edelman.com/">https://www.edelman.com/</a>
60	Evoke KYNE	<a href="https://www.evokekyne.com/">https://www.evokekyne.com/</a>
61	Evoke PR & Influence	<a href="https://www.evokegroup.com/">https://www.evokegroup.com/</a>
62	EvolveMKD	<a href="http://evolvemkd.com/">http://evolvemkd.com/</a>
63	Exponent Public Relations	<a href="https://www.exponentpr.com/">https://www.exponentpr.com/</a>
64	Fahlgren Mortine	<a href="https://fahlgrenmortine.com/">https://fahlgrenmortine.com/</a>
65	Feintuch Communications	<a href="https://www.feintuchcommunications.com/">https://www.feintuchcommunications.com/</a>
66	Finn Partners	<a href="https://www.finnpartners.com/about/">https://www.finnpartners.com/about/</a>
67	Finsbury	<a href="http://www.finsbury.com/">http://www.finsbury.com/</a>
68	Fiona Hutton & Associates	<a href="https://www.fionahuttonassoc.com/">https://www.fionahuttonassoc.com/</a>
69	Fish Consulting	<a href="https://fish-consulting.com/">https://fish-consulting.com/</a>
70	FleishmanHillard	<a href="https://fleishmanhillard.com/">https://fleishmanhillard.com/</a>
71	Focus Media	<a href="https://www.focusmediausa.com/">https://www.focusmediausa.com/</a>
72	FoodMinds	<a href="https://foodminds.com/">https://foodminds.com/</a>
73	French/West/Vaughan	<a href="https://fwv-us.com/">https://fwv-us.com/</a>
74	Freud Communications	<a href="https://www.freuds.com/">https://www.freuds.com/</a>
75	FTI Consulting	<a href="https://www.fticonsulting.com/">https://www.fticonsulting.com/</a>
76	G&S Business Communications	<a href="https://www.gscommunications.com/">https://www.gscommunications.com/</a>
77	Gatesman	<a href="https://www.gatesmanagency.com/">https://www.gatesmanagency.com/</a>
78	GCI Health	<a href="https://gcihealth.com/">https://gcihealth.com/</a>
79	Global Strategy Group	<a href="https://www.globalstrategygroup.com/">https://www.globalstrategygroup.com/</a>
80	Golin	<a href="https://golin.com">https://golin.com</a>
81	Grayling	<a href="http://www.grayling.com/us">http://www.grayling.com/us</a>
82	Greenough Brand Storytellers	<a href="https://greenough.biz/">https://greenough.biz/</a>
83	Greentarget Global Group	<a href="http://greentarget.com/">http://greentarget.com/</a>
84	Gregory FCA	<a href="https://www.gregoryfca.com/">https://www.gregoryfca.com/</a>
85	Havas Formula	<a href="https://www.havasformula.com/">https://www.havasformula.com/</a>
86	Havas PR	<a href="https://havaspr.com/">https://havaspr.com/</a>
87	Hawkins International Public Relations	<a href="https://www.hawkpr.com/">https://www.hawkpr.com/</a>
88	Hemsworth Communications	<a href="http://hemsworthcommunications.com/">http://hemsworthcommunications.com/</a>
89	Highwire Public Relations	<a href="https://www.highwirepr.com/">https://www.highwirepr.com/</a>
90	Hill+Knowlton Strategies*	<a href="https://www.hkstrategies.com/">https://www.hkstrategies.com/</a>

91	Hodges Partnership, The	<a href="https://hodgespart.com/">https://hodgespart.com/</a>
92	Hollywood Agency	<a href="http://www.hollywoodagency.com/">http://www.hollywoodagency.com/</a>
93	Hot Paper Lantern	<a href="https://hotpaperlantern.com/">https://hotpaperlantern.com/</a>
94	Hotwire	<a href="https://www.hotwireglobal.com/">https://www.hotwireglobal.com/</a>
95	Hunter Public Relations	<a href="http://www.hunterpr.com/">http://www.hunterpr.com/</a>
96	ICF Next	<a href="https://www.icf.com/next">https://www.icf.com/next</a>
97	ICR	<a href="https://icrinc.com/">https://icrinc.com/</a>
98	Idea Grove	<a href="https://www.ideagrove.com/">https://www.ideagrove.com/</a>
99	Imre	<a href="https://imre.com/">https://imre.com/</a>
100	Infinite Global	<a href="http://www.infiniteglobal.com/">http://www.infiniteglobal.com/</a>
101	Ink Communications	<a href="https://ink-co.com/">https://ink-co.com/</a>
102	InkHouse	<a href="https://inkhouse.com/">https://inkhouse.com/</a>
103	Interel	<a href="https://interelgroup.com/">https://interelgroup.com/</a>
104	IW Group, Inc.	<a href="https://iwgroup.agency/">https://iwgroup.agency/</a>
105	J Public Relations	<a href="https://jpublicrelations.com/">https://jpublicrelations.com/</a>
106	Jackson Spalding	<a href="https://www.jacksonspalding.com/">https://www.jacksonspalding.com/</a>
107	Jarrard Phillips Cate & Hancock	<a href="https://jarrardinc.com/">https://jarrardinc.com/</a>
108	JeffreyGroup	<a href="https://www.jeffreygroup.com/">https://www.jeffreygroup.com/</a>
109	Jones PR	<a href="https://www.jones.pr/">https://www.jones.pr/</a>
110	JPA Health Communications	<a href="https://www.jpa.com/">https://www.jpa.com/</a>
111	Judge Public Relations, LLC	<a href="https://judgepr.com/">https://judgepr.com/</a>
112	Kaplow	<a href="https://www.kaplow.com/">https://www.kaplow.com/</a>
113	Karbo Communications	<a href="http://karbocom.com/">http://karbocom.com/</a>
114	KCD Public Relations	<a href="https://www.kcdpr.com/">https://www.kcdpr.com/</a>
115	Ketchum	<a href="https://www.ketchum.com/">https://www.ketchum.com/</a>
116	Kiterocket	<a href="https://www.kiterocket.com/">https://www.kiterocket.com/</a>
117	Kivvit	<a href="https://www.kivvit.com/">https://www.kivvit.com/</a>
118	Konnect Agency	<a href="https://www.konnectagency.com/">https://www.konnectagency.com/</a>
119	KWT Global	<a href="https://kwtglobal.com/">https://kwtglobal.com/</a>
120	L.C. Williams & Associates	<a href="http://www.lcwa.com/">http://www.lcwa.com/</a>
121	LaForce	<a href="https://laforce.nyc/">https://laforce.nyc/</a>
122	Lambert	<a href="https://lambert.com/">https://lambert.com/</a>
123	Landis Communications	<a href="https://landispr.com/">https://landispr.com/</a>

124	Lansons Intermarket	<a href="http://www.intermarket.com/">http://www.intermarket.com/</a>
125	LaunchSquad	<a href="http://www.launchsquad.com/">http://www.launchsquad.com/</a>
126	LaVoie Strategic Communications Group	<a href="https://lavoiehealthscience.com/">https://lavoiehealthscience.com/</a>
127	Lazar Partners	<a href="https://www.lazarpartners.com/">https://www.lazarpartners.com/</a>
128	LDWWgroup	<a href="https://www.ldwwgroup.com/">https://www.ldwwgroup.com/</a>
129	Levick Strategic Communications	<a href="http://levick.com/">http://levick.com/</a>
130	Linhart Public Relations	<a href="https://www.linhartpr.com/">https://www.linhartpr.com/</a>
131	LLYC	<a href="https://www.llorenteycuenca.com/en/">https://www.llorenteycuenca.com/en/</a>
132	Lou Hammond Group	<a href="https://louhammond.com/">https://louhammond.com/</a>
133	Lovell Communications	<a href="http://www.lovell.com/">http://www.lovell.com/</a>
134	M Booth	<a href="https://www.mbooth.com/">https://www.mbooth.com/</a>
135	Maccabee	<a href="https://maccabee.com/">https://maccabee.com/</a>
136	Makovsky & Company	<a href="http://www.makovsky.com/">http://www.makovsky.com/</a>
137	Manifest	<a href="https://manifest.com/">https://manifest.com/</a>
138	March communications	<a href="https://www.marchcomms.com/">https://www.marchcomms.com/</a>
139	Marco de Comunicación	<a href="http://www.marco.agency/">http://www.marco.agency/</a>
140	Marcus Thomas	<a href="https://www.marcusthomasllc.com/">https://www.marcusthomasllc.com/</a>
141	Marina Maher Communications	<a href="https://www.hellommc.com/">https://www.hellommc.com/</a>
142	Marketing Maven Public Relations	<a href="https://www.marketingmaven.com/">https://www.marketingmaven.com/</a>
143	Matter Communications	<a href="https://www.matternow.com/">https://www.matternow.com/</a>
144	Max Borges Agency	<a href="https://www.maxborgesagency.com/">https://www.maxborgesagency.com/</a>
145	MC Group	<a href="https://www.mcgroup.com/">https://www.mcgroup.com/</a>
146	MCC	<a href="http://mcc-pr.com/">http://mcc-pr.com/</a>
147	MCS Healthcare Public Relations	<a href="https://www.mcspr.com/">https://www.mcspr.com/</a>
148	Merrit Group	<a href="https://www.merrittgrp.com/">https://www.merrittgrp.com/</a>
149	Method Communications	<a href="https://www.methodcommunications.com/">https://www.methodcommunications.com/</a>
150	Mitchell Communications Group, LLC	<a href="https://www.mitchcommgroup.com/">https://www.mitchcommgroup.com/</a>
151	Moore Communications Group	<a href="https://themooreagency.com/">https://themooreagency.com/</a>
152	Mower	<a href="https://www.mower.com/">https://www.mower.com/</a>
153	MP&F Strategic Communications	<a href="https://mpf.com/">https://mpf.com/</a>
154	MRB Public Relations	<a href="https://mrbpr.com/">https://mrbpr.com/</a>
155	MSL**	<a href="https://mslgroup.com/">https://mslgroup.com/</a>
156	Murphy O'Brien	<a href="https://www.murphyobrien.com/">https://www.murphyobrien.com/</a>

157	MWWPR	<a href="https://www.mww.com/">https://www.mww.com/</a>
158	Nebo	<a href="https://www.neboagency.com/">https://www.neboagency.com/</a>
159	Newlink	<a href="http://www.newlink-group.com/">http://www.newlink-group.com/</a>
160	NFJ, an MMGY Global company	<a href="https://www.njfpr.com/">https://www.njfpr.com/</a>
161	North 6th Agency	<a href="https://www.n6a.com/">https://www.n6a.com/</a>
162	Novitas communications	<a href="https://novitascommunications.com/">https://novitascommunications.com/</a>
163	Nuffer, Smith, Tucker	<a href="http://nstpr.com/our-story/">http://nstpr.com/our-story/</a>
164	O'Malley Hansen Communications	<a href="http://www.omalleyhansen.com/">http://www.omalleyhansen.com/</a>
165	Ogilvy*	<a href="https://www.ogilvy.com/">https://www.ogilvy.com/</a>
166	Orangefiery	<a href="http://orangefiery.com/">http://orangefiery.com/</a>
167	OutCast	<a href="https://theoutcastagency.com/">https://theoutcastagency.com/</a>
168	Padilla	<a href="https://padillaco.com/">https://padillaco.com/</a>
169	PAN Communications	<a href="https://www.pancommunications.com/">https://www.pancommunications.com/</a>
170	Peppercomm	<a href="https://www.peppercomm.com/">https://www.peppercomm.com/</a>
171	Perry Communications Group	<a href="https://perrycom.com/">https://perrycom.com/</a>
172	Pierpont Communications	<a href="https://www.piercom.com/">https://www.piercom.com/</a>
173	Porter Novelli	<a href="https://www.porternovelli.com/">https://www.porternovelli.com/</a>
174	Portland communications	<a href="https://portland-communications.com/">https://portland-communications.com/</a>
175	Praytell	<a href="https://praytelligence.com/">https://praytelligence.com/</a>
176	Prosek Partners	<a href="https://www.prosek.com/">https://www.prosek.com/</a>
177	PRR	<a href="https://www.prrbiz.com/">https://www.prrbiz.com/</a>
178	Public Communications Inc.	<a href="https://www.pcipr.com/">https://www.pcipr.com/</a>
179	Public Integrated Communications	<a href="https://www.worldwidepic.com/">https://www.worldwidepic.com/</a>
180	PublicCity PR	<a href="https://www.publiccitypr.net/">https://www.publiccitypr.net/</a>
181	Pugh and Tiller PR	<a href="https://pughandtillerpr.com/">https://pughandtillerpr.com/</a>
182	Purple Public Relations	<a href="https://purplepr.com/">https://purplepr.com/</a>
183	Racepoint Global	<a href="https://racepointglobal.com/">https://racepointglobal.com/</a>
184	Raffetto Herman Communications	<a href="https://rhstrategic.com/">https://rhstrategic.com/</a>
185	Rasky Partners	<a href="https://rasky.com/">https://rasky.com/</a>
186	rbb Communications	<a href="https://rbbcommunications.com/">https://rbbcommunications.com/</a>
187	Regan Luxury	<a href="https://regancomm.com/regan-luxury/">https://regancomm.com/regan-luxury/</a>
188	ReviveHealth	<a href="https://www.thinkrevivehealth.com/">https://www.thinkrevivehealth.com/</a>
189	RF Binder	<a href="https://www.rfbinder.com/">https://www.rfbinder.com/</a>

190	Rogers&Cowan	<a href="https://www.rogersandcowan.com/">https://www.rogersandcowan.com/</a>
191	ROI Communication	<a href="https://roico.com/">https://roico.com/</a>
192	Rosica Communications	<a href="https://www.rosica.com/">https://www.rosica.com/</a>
193	Ruder Finn, Inc.	<a href="https://www.ruderfinn.com/">https://www.ruderfinn.com/</a>
194	RxMosaic	<a href="https://www.rxmosaic.com/">https://www.rxmosaic.com/</a>
195	Sam Brown Inc.	<a href="https://www.sambrown.com/">https://www.sambrown.com/</a>
196	Saxum	<a href="https://saxum.com/">https://saxum.com/</a>
197	Schwartz Media Strategies	<a href="http://www.schwartz-media.com/">http://www.schwartz-media.com/</a>
198	Sharp Communications	<a href="https://www.sharpthink.com/">https://www.sharpthink.com/</a>
199	Shift Communications Inc.	<a href="https://www.shiftcomm.com/">https://www.shiftcomm.com/</a>
200	Silverline Communications	<a href="https://teamsilverline.com/">https://teamsilverline.com/</a>
201	Singer Associates	<a href="https://singersf.com/">https://singersf.com/</a>
202	Sloane & Company	<a href="https://www.sloanepr.com/">https://www.sloanepr.com/</a>
203	Spark	<a href="https://sparkpr.com/">https://sparkpr.com/</a>
204	Spectrum	<a href="http://spectrum-publicrelations.com/">http://spectrum-publicrelations.com/</a>
205	SPM Communications	<a href="https://spmcommunications.com/">https://spmcommunications.com/</a>
206	Standing Partnership	<a href="https://standingpartnership.com/">https://standingpartnership.com/</a>
207	Stanton Communications	<a href="https://stantoncomm.com/">https://stantoncomm.com/</a>
208	Steinreich Communications Group	<a href="https://scompr.com/">https://scompr.com/</a>
209	Story Partners	<a href="https://storypartnersdc.com/">https://storypartnersdc.com/</a>
210	Stuntman PR	<a href="http://www.stuntmanpr.com/">http://www.stuntmanpr.com/</a>
211	Syneos Health Communications	<a href="https://syneoshealthcommunications.com/">https://syneoshealthcommunications.com/</a>
212	Taft Communications	<a href="https://taftcommunications.com">https://taftcommunications.com</a>
213	Taylor	<a href="https://taylorstrategy.com/">https://taylorstrategy.com/</a>
214	The Bradford Group	<a href="http://www.thebradfordgroup.com/">http://www.thebradfordgroup.com/</a>
215	The Communications Store	<a href="https://www.thecommunicationsstore.co.uk/">https://www.thecommunicationsstore.co.uk/</a>
216	The Dana Agency	<a href="https://thedanaagency.com/">https://thedanaagency.com/</a>
217	The Garrity Group	<a href="http://www.garritypr.com/">http://www.garritypr.com/</a>
218	The Hoffman Agency	<a href="https://www.hoffman.com/">https://www.hoffman.com/</a>
219	The Hoyte Organization Inc.	<a href="https://www.hoytorg.com/">https://www.hoytorg.com/</a>
220	The SPI Group LLC	<a href="https://www.spigroup.com/">https://www.spigroup.com/</a>
221	TogoRun	<a href="https://togorun.com/">https://togorun.com/</a>
222	Touchdown PR	<a href="http://www.touchdownpr.com/">http://www.touchdownpr.com/</a>

223	TRansMedia Group	<a href="https://www.transmediagroup.com/">https://www.transmediagroup.com/</a>
224	Trevelino/Keller	<a href="https://trevelinokeller.com/">https://trevelinokeller.com/</a>
225	Tunheim	<a href="https://tunheim.com/">https://tunheim.com/</a>
226	Vault Communications	<a href="https://www.vaultcommunications.com/">https://www.vaultcommunications.com/</a>
227	Vested	<a href="https://fullyvested.com/">https://fullyvested.com/</a>
228	W2O	<a href="https://www.w2ogroup.com/">https://www.w2ogroup.com/</a>
229	Walker Sands Communications	<a href="https://www.walkersands.com/">https://www.walkersands.com/</a>
230	WE Communications	<a href="https://www.we-worldwide.com/">https://www.we-worldwide.com/</a>
231	Weber Shandwick	<a href="https://www.webershandwick.com/">https://www.webershandwick.com/</a>
232	Westbound Communications	<a href="https://westboundcommunications.com/">https://westboundcommunications.com/</a>
233	WordWrite	<a href="https://www.wordwritepr.com/">https://www.wordwritepr.com/</a>
234	Zapwater Communications	<a href="https://www.zapwater.com/">https://www.zapwater.com/</a>
235	Zeno Group	<a href="https://www.zenogroup.com/">https://www.zenogroup.com/</a>
236	Zimmerman Agency	<a href="https://www.zimmerman.com/">https://www.zimmerman.com/</a>

**Table.1.** Sample list of agencies

Rank in list	Company
1	AT&T
5	Eli Lilly and Company
7	Accenture
10	Abbott
12	BASF
14	Target
31	Sanofi
34	Walmart
36	KeyBank
45	HP Inc.

**Table 2.** Random list of 10 companies from DiversityInc. Top 50 list.

## Appendix 2 Codebook

### Webpages content coding

- 1. Equal opportunity and/or nondiscrimination policies statement:** the company states that is an equal opportunity workplace or that has nondiscrimination policies.
  - For example: “[AGENCY NAME] is an Equal Opportunity workplace” or “Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer. [AGENCY NAME] adheres to a policy of making all employment decisions without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, citizenship or any other protected

classification which may be applicable under the law of the particular state or locality in which you are applying for employment with [AGENCY NAME].”

- This must be stated on the company’s website not on other recruitment website.

Code ID	Code
Present	1
Absent	0

- 2. Diversity and inclusion statement:** content on the website that specifically talks about the company commitment with diversity and inclusion. Diversity is defined as content that addresses as visible and underlying diversity. Mention of characteristics as age, gender, nationality, sexual orientation, ethnicity, race, religion, marital status, veteran status, diversity of thought, parenthood, identity and minorities group.

Code ID	Code
Present	1
Absent	0

- 3. Dimension of diversity addressed:** Code all the ones that are mentioned on the webpages coded.

Code ID	Code
Present	1
Absent	0

List of diversity dimensions:

1. Age: Mention of age or generations (millennials, gen Z, baby boomer, Gen X)
2. Gender identity: Mention of genders as male, female, nonbinary or transgender (Source: Glaad.org).
3. Disability: a disability is typically defined as someone who (1) has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more "major life activities," (2) has a record of such an impairment, or (3) is regarded as having such an impairment. (dol.org).
4. Race: Geographic pattern of variation in some biological traits that distinguish different human populations. Race types include: White, Black or African American, Asian, American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or other pacific islander. (Source: U.S. Census). Race is mainly defined by physical characteristics such as skin and hair color. Even though the U.S. Census 2020 form will not add Middle Eastern or North African as a race option, this research will.
5. Ethnicity: includes cultural characteristics that define a specific group. These characteristics include religious practices, language use, cuisine, and mode of dress. For the purpose of this study, ethnicity is defined whether a person is Hispanic origin or not. Categories are Hispanic Latino or Not Hispanic Latino (Source: U.S. Census). Hispanic means people who speak Spanish and/or are descended from Spanish-speaking populations. Spain and some countries in Latin America speak Spanish.

Latino refers to people who are from or descended from people from Latin America and Caribbean. Latin America and Caribbean countries include Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Chile, Costa Rica, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, St. Lucia, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay and Venezuela. (Source: World Bank)

6. Sexual orientation: Sexual orientation describes a person’s enduring, physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction to another person. Some categories are straight, gay, lesbian and bisexual (Source: Glaad.org).
7. Parenthood status: the status of having or not children.
8. Diversity of skills and professional backgrounds: mention of diverse and Variety of professional backgrounds.
9. Mention of beliefs in general: other beliefs can include political affiliations and religious beliefs. Religion is the search for emotional comfort, meaning, self-development, and physical health. If mention affiliation as Christian, non-Christian faiths (Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu) or unaffiliated (Atheist, Agnostic). (Source: Pew Research Center).
10. Identity: referencing to the individuality of a member. When the concept of “diversity of thought” is mention, it should be coded as identity.
11. Other: the following dimensions of diversity will be coded under “other”
  - a. Veteran status: “a person who served in the active military, naval, or air service and who was discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable.” (Source: Code of Federal Regulations).
  - b. Marital status: Mention of someone marital status includes married, widowed, divorces, separated, or never married.
  - c. Other: any other dimension of diversity that is not present on this codebook.

Code this category as follow:

Code ID	Code
Veteran status	1
Marital Status	2
Other	3

- 4. Diversity and inclusion organizational practices:** Code all the ones that are mentioned on the webpages coded.

Code ID	Code
Present	1
Absent	0

1. Diversity Training: instructional programs aimed at facilitating positive intergroup interactions, reducing prejudice and discrimination, and enhancing

the skills, knowledge, and motivation of participants to interact with diverse others.

2. Flexible working: offering to employees the opportunity to work from home, flexible work-schedule, getting vacations for special occasions and seasons.
3. Resources groups: identity-based employee networks (LGBT group, women group, Latino group, Asian group, etc.)
4. Strategic partnerships: strategic partnerships to advance efforts for equal opportunity of women and underrepresented groups. Partnership with different networks of professional organizations, nonprofits, certifications and academia. For example: The agency states that is a member of initiatives as CEO action or partnership with nonprofits that help minority groups.
5. Mentorship program: a structured program to develop beneficial one-on-one relationships between students and professionals or just between professionals.
6. Minority recruitment program (job recruitment, internships, fellowships): recruitment initiatives to recruit professionals from minority group.
7. Professional development program (it can be in the company or with the community as tutoring programs): training and educational opportunities to educate and improve professional skills. Internships program well-structured. If it is an internship program directed to a minority group, code as minority recruitment program.
8. Diversity and inclusion activities with the community: these activities include donation or volunteering for nonprofits who work with diverse and minority groups. These groups include women, racial minorities (Black and Hispanic-Latino), LGBTQ, veterans and persons with disabilities. These activities can also include diversity supplier programs. A diversity supplier program is a supply chain program created to connect minority groups such women-, veteran-, persons with disabilities-, and LGBT-owned small businesses to business opportunities

**5. Diversity related information on website:** Code all the ones that are mentioned on the webpages coded.

1. Diversity and inclusion officer and/or council:
  - a. D&I officer: person in the company whose role in the company is to empower employees. Its role is strategic and provides important connection with other functional areas within the organization such as marketing, legal, and human resources
  - b. D&I council: members who advocate for diversity and inclusion practices in organization.

Code ID	Code
Present	1
Absent	0

2. Location of the diversity content on the website.

<b>Code ID</b>	<b>Code</b>
Home page	1
About us/ mission and vision/ values	2
Culture/career/team	3
CSR/ community	4
Ethics	5
Diversity and inclusion (exclusive page for this content)	6
Multiple locations	7
Other	8
No presence	0

6. Agencies information on website:

1. Agency locations

<b>Code ID</b>	<b>Code</b>
The agency has international locations	1
The agency does not have international locations	2
Information not provided on website	99

Partner agencies in other countries do not count as international locations. It must be the same company.

2. Practice areas of agency

<b>Code ID</b>	<b>Code</b>
One practices area (healthcare, fashion industry, public affairs, etc.)	1
Multiple practices areas	2
Information not provided on website	99

3. Firm independency: Independent firm means that is an agency that does not have a parent company and is a stand-alone company. Parent companies include Interpublic Group, WPP, Omnicom Group, BlueFocus Communication Group, DJE Holding, PROI Worldwide, Publicis Groupe, Worldcom Public Relations

Group, Huntsworth Group, IPREX, Havas PR and Next 15 (Source: The Holmes Report).

<b>Code ID</b>	<b>Code</b>
Independent firm	1
Not an independent firm	2
Information not provided on website	99

4. CEO gender

- i. Code the highest leadership presented on website. If the agency does not have a CEO, but a president or principal is the highest leader, code president or principal.
- ii. If the founder is the current CEO and highest leader of the organization, code it as CEO/president. Nevertheless, if there is a founder and a CEO on the website, only code CEO.
- iii. If there is a CEO and a president, only code CEO.
- iv. If the agency highest leaders are two because it has co-founders, code both of them separately.

<b>Code ID</b>	<b>Code</b>
Female	1
Male	2
Both	3
Unable to determine	4
Information not provided on website	99

5. Leadership/Team gender: If there is a section where part of the team or leadership team of the company is presented, code as follow:
- If the agency has different sections for leadership and for the team, only code the leadership section.
  - If the leadership section only presents one leadership member of the company, code as 99
  - If the leadership/ team section shows a distinction between global and U.S. team, code only the U.S. leadership.

<b>Code ID</b>	<b>Code</b>
0%-25% female	1
26%-50% female	2

51%-75% female	3
75%-100% female	4
Information not provided on website	99

### Visual content analysis

Do not code picture of leadership or team sections since it will be already code with team and CEO gender. Code pictures present on coded webpages.

6. Quantity of people on the picture

CODE ID	CODE
1 person	1
2 to 4 people on the picture	2
More than 4 people on the picture	3

7. Gender portrayed:

Code ID	Code
Female	1
Male	2
Both	3
Other	4
Unable to determine	99

8. Race portrayed:

Code ID	Code
Exclusively White	1
Exclusively Black	2
Exclusively Other	3
White and Black	4
White and Other	5
Black and Other	6
3 or more races	7
Unable to determine	99

White: A person having origins in any of the original people of Europe. People from the Middle East, or North Africa will have a separate category.

Examples:

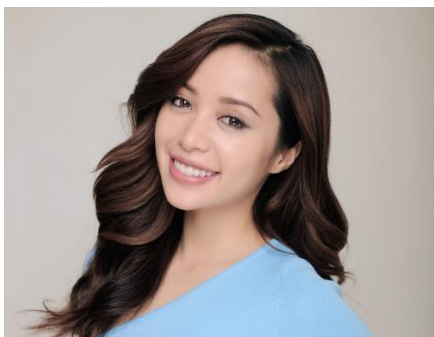


**Black or African American:** A person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa.

Examples:



**Asian or Asian American:** A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent including, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam.



**Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander** – A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands.



**American Indian or Alaska Native** – A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America) and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment.



**Middle Eastern or North African (MENA):** Arabs and Arab American will fit in this category. Arab American are those who come from the Arab World. The Arab world includes Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syrian, Tunisia, UAE, Gaza and Yemen (Source: Arab American Institute and World Bank).

