Public Relations' Role as Diversity Advocate:
Avoiding Microaggressions and Nurturing Microaffirmations in Organizations

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Abstract

This essay considers the role of public relations practitioners in advocating for greater diversity in organizations, as prompted by a keynote speaking opportunity abroad. Despite laws and workplace policies that prohibit organizational violence in the form of microaggressions, workers continue to be marginalized and disrespected for their social identity dimensions (and intersectionalities) such as age, culture, ethnicity/race, faith/religion, gender, nationality, sexual orientation, weight, and more. Because microaggressions make real diversity and appreciation for it impossible, many advocate for organizations to break down bias barriers and this essay positions public relations practitioners as champions for this work. To make diversity authentic, practitioners are encouraged to serve as insider activists and advocate for positive microresistance and microaffirmations. Advocating for diversity in the workplace, this essay completes the internal public relations (IPR) model's *diversity* pillar to support theory building for future research and concludes with a 10-point Social Responsibility Bill of Rights to provide practical advice.

Executive Summary

Being invited to serve as keynote speaker and to conduct workshops for The Brazilian Association of Researchers of Organizational Communication and Public Relations (Abrapcorp) afforded an opportunity to reflect longitudinally on diversity research and practice in our field. Considered the largest Brazilian scientific event in organizational communication and public relations, the Abrapcorp Congress' central theme was "Diversity," hosted at the Federal University of Goiás. As part of these workshops, participants collectively expressed heavy concerns about lack of diversity and its effects on organizations and society globally. Attendees' voices and recommendations enabled crafting of a 10-point Social Responsibility Bill of Rights for public relations practitioners as champions for eradicating microaggressions and advocating for microresistance and microaffirmations.

This essay offers reflections on shaping of a social justice commitment grounded in early reading of *PR Journal*, especially Marilyn Kern-Foxworth's (1989) important predictions about ethnic diversity as the future of the field. Introducing critical race theory to our body of knowledge (Pompper, 2004) and since then using theory to undergird a modest body of work about diversity in public relations practice and theory building has involved learning from research participants how painful organizational microaggressions can be and how powerful microaffirmations are in helping to dismantle centuries of organizational hardwiring. Pompper (2010) opined that researchers who build communication theory have been silent on methodological issues associated with researching difference in public relations' published research, methods handbooks, and graduate courses and used an autoethnographic lens to position the researcher as both subject and object (Anderson, 2006) in asking research participants to reflect on power dynamics in her research projects. The current article builds on research about diversity in public relations and the role of the practitioner inside organizations as diversity advocate.

Those of us who aspire to witness the end of workplace discrimination and bias based on a person's social identity dimensions refuse to relinquish hope that the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Pub.L. 88-352, 78 Stat. 241), which outlaws discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin in the U.S., becomes a true reality. Globally, macroaggressions and hate crimes persist, as violence against immigrants, girls, women, African Americans, Muslims, Jews, and

LGBTQ community members have risen significantly in the U.S. in recent months (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2017). Googling "how bad are microaggressions in organizations," the search engine reveals articles in *Forbes*, *Fortune*, and *The Atlantic* among the 361,000 hits of popular press articles and academic research. Clearly, we're not there yet.

Holtzhausen's (2014) incorporation of postmodern values in public relations research introduced us to the concept of practitioners serving as insider activists to support positive growth and change. Likewise, Pompper (2015) advocated for public relations practitioners to act as insider activists supporting social responsibility, with an ethical obligation – including fostering a diverse workforce. Earlier, our field acknowledged that ensuring ethnic diversity is a public relations responsibility (Hon & Brunner, 2000; Kern-Foxworth, 1989). Public relations' role as diversity advocate on the inside means holding organizations accountable and inspiring them to authentically embrace social justice beyond mere mention of the word *diversity* in mission/vision statements.

Introduction

Eradicating workplaces of microaggressions requires interdisciplinary approaches undergirded by research in communication, as well as sociology, and psychology. Bey-Ling Sha edited a special issue of PRSA's *PR Journal* in 2013 about diversity-focused research in public relations, Waymer (2012) edited a collection about culture/social class/race in public relations, and Mundy's (2016) analysis of public relations' "diversity-focused literature" suggested that diversity and inclusion is framed as a route to enhancing business through engaging diverse stakeholders (business case) but added that we need a "better connection between diversity and daily public relations practice through a multicultural perspective" (p. 2). Public Relations Society of America member lists have been used for the past 30 years to track inequities among variables of demographics, salary, and perceptions of diversity in the field (e.g., Dozier, Sha, Shen, 2013) – with critics along the way (e.g., Hutton, 2005). Recently, 23 professional communication organizations worked together to examine the state of diversity, finding shortcomings in recruitment/retention, mentoring, advocacy, and general lacking in conversations about diversity (PR Coalition, 2005). According to the most recent data of the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2018), "advertising, public relations, and related services" employs 629,000 people of whom 85,000 are Caucasian/White, 5,000 are Black/African American, 8,500 are Asian, and 10,000 are Hispanic/Latin (Bureau, 2018). Data on other social identity dimensions in public relations are unavailable. However, this ethnicity/race slice of the diversity picture shows that our field still has a long road to travel to make diversity real; important work for those who concur with Weick's (1979) position that there must be as much diversity within an organization as there is outside it for the organization to be optimally effective.

This essay revisits the context of internal public relations in order to offer better theory tools and practical advice for a transition from microaggressions in organizations to microresistance and microaffirmations. An update of the Internal Public Relations IPR model (Pompper, 2012) as it plays out in contemporary organizations would be to place the model inside a large circle that represents an organizational infrastructure of built-in bias. Biases are evidenced by barriers of discrimination, including microaggressions, that contribute to dissatisfaction in the public relations field (e.g., Len-Rios, 1998; Pompper, 2004; Tindall & Waters, 2012). While many are accountable for this reality, those in the public relations industry

have an obligation to blend internal public relations (IPR) with social responsibility and sustainability and to champion insider activism by holding leadership accountable and for brokering change. In other words, practitioners must navigate organizations toward thinking of *diversity* AS a *social responsibility* at home and around the world. Offered below is practical advice and theoretical underpinning for ongoing research about tearing down the largest barrier to organizations' authentic embrace of diversity: microaggressions.

       This essay, in six parts, encourages public relations practitioners to embrace their role as diversity advocate: 1) completing the internal public relations (IPR) model with a *diversity* pillar, 2) examining microaggression behaviors along social identity lines and why these persist, 3) advocating for microresistance and microaffirmations to make organizations' embrace of diversity authentic, 4) freeing organizations from microaggression conditions, 5) offering a 10-point Social Responsibility Bill of Rights, and 6) concluding thoughts.

Completing the IPR model
The Internal Public Relations (IPR) model (Pompper, 2012), visualizing a theoretical framework proposed by Kennan and Hazleton (2006), was created to inspire and to make predictions about intra-organizational relationships in the public relations field according to *social capital* and *diversity*. Internal communication is public relations directed to and among an organization's employees (Sowa, 2005), with an emphasis on intra-organizational relationships' attributes of trust, reciprocity, credibility, legitimacy, and mutual understanding (J. E. Grunig & Huang, 2000). Offering requirements for a developing IPR theory, Kennan and Hazleton (2006) undergirded their essay with the *social capital* concept. Social capital represents intangible resources derived from social networks (connections and group memberships) and embodies potential for success. Stated another way, social capital may be used to acquire information (intellectual capital) and other forms of economic, human, and cultural capital (Hazleton & Kennan, 2000). Because Ihlen (2005) and many others have pointed out underlying issues of power in public relations, Pompper (2012) added *diversity* to the developing IPR theory to further examine the intersecting social identity dimensions of gender, older age, and ethnicity/race among senior public relations practitioners and created a model to illustrate *social capital* as one pillar for internal public relations and *diversity* as another. Over the years, women of color have shared their voices about enduring workplace microaggressions in public relations (e.g., Len-Rios, 1998; Pompper, 2004, 2005, 2007, 2011), with experiences ranging from overt racism through covert microaggressions that have impeded their ability to achieve maximum potential.

Examining microaggression behaviors
The state of reported discrimination in U.S. organizations suggests that despite legal protections, employees continue to endure harassment and employment discrimination. It's been 55 years since U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which outlaws discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin at work, in schools, at the voting booth, an in public accommodations. Employment discrimination lawsuits have risen rapidly in recent years, perhaps due to greater awareness (including media coverage), social media, and employer panic in the form of retaliating against employees punished for formally complaining (Lucas, 2019). Employment discrimination involves not being hired based on a social identity dimension or being discriminated against on the job with regard to disability

leave, maternity leave, or retirement options (Doyle, 2019a). According to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), which enforces Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, harassment after hiring is a form of discrimination that involves unwelcome behavior by a co-worker, manager, client, or anyone else in the workplace that is based on race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), nationality, age (40 or older), disability, or genetic information (Doyle, 2019a). Organization members still offend and make their colleagues feel unwelcomed – both unintentionally (covert) and by design (overt) (Pompper, 2014). Collectively, such acts are known as *microaggressions*.

Microaggression was declared the 2015 "Word of the Year" by the Global Language Monitor (Brown, 2015), a term coined to describe routine "subtle, stunning, often automatic, and nonverbal exchanges which are 'put downs' (Pierce, Carew, Pierce-Gonzalez, & Willis, 1978, p. 66). Their research examined experiences of African Americans, but in the 40 years since its publication, microaggression as an act of violence has been expanded and applied to experiences of people who identify according to many social identities. Since Sue and his colleagues (2007) produced the earliest work on *microaggression*, there are more than 15,000 published and unpublished papers citing *microaggression* (Google Scholar, 2018). Most recently, Sue (2014) defined the term as: "Brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative slights, invalidations, and insults to an individual or group because of their marginalized status in society." Often, microaggression takes the shape of everyday exchanges that cue a sense of subordination/superiority based on social identities of gender, ethnicity/race, sexual orientation, socio-economic background, nationality, religion/faith, and disability. E. B. King and colleagues (2011) pointed out that microaggressions damage organizations and people by negatively impacting performance and contributing to physical and mental problems that can lead to illegal discrimination and employer liability. If the first part of that statement doesn't make organizations stand up and take notice of the ways employees hurt one another, then the second part should. Microaggressions damage organizations with *all* shareholders are negatively impacted.

Marginalized populations in our society are the most frequent victims of microaggressions and we know that microaggressions are experienced by members of oppressed groups differently (Sue, 2011). A hostile work environment is where unwelcome comments or conduct at work based on gender, race, nationality, religion, disability, sexual orientation, age, or other legally protected characteristics "unreasonably interfere with an employee's work performance or create an intimidating or offensive work environment for the employee who is being harassed" (Doyle, 2019b). Use of words and phrases like "you people," "highly qualified," "articulate," "affirmative action," "reverse discrimination," "preferential treatment," and "quotas" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Solórzano, 1998; Williams, 1991) may constitute microaggression. Being insulted, devalued, shunned, made to feel invisible and like an outsider because of one's social identity creates a workplace that is unwelcome, hostile, and alienating. This is the opposite of respecting colleagues and embracing diversity. In such a toxic environment, Berk (2017) and others have warned that even a "well-intentioned practice of inclusion may be transformed into *de facto* exclusion" (p. 72). Critical race scholars have pointed to narrow definition of the term *racism* as one reason why microaggressions – with their subtle, psychological, institutional, and internalized effects – often go unchecked (e.g., Delgado & Stefancic, 2001) and dismissed as neuroticism or hypersensitivity (Wheeler, 2016). Over time,

culture and language evolve so that words and deeds considered to be microaggressions change and courts take these dynamics into consideration (Doyle, 2019a). The EEOC reported the largest number of reports filed in the U.S. are about retaliation (48.8% of all charges filed), race (33.9%), disability, (31.9%), sex (30.4%), age (21.8%), national origin (9.8%), religion (4.1%), and color (3.8%) (Doyle, 2019a).

Microaggressions may "rise to the level of *harassment* under certain circumstances," explained John M. Robinson, former Director of the Office of Civil Rights and Chief Diversity Officer U.S. Department of State, who further called microaggressions "the new face of exclusion" (Hasson, 2016). The U.S. State Department's website lists jokes, offensive conduct, offensive comments, and verbal/physical conduct based on an individual's race/color as examples of harassment (Hasson, 2016). Other researchers warn that monoracial thinking and failing to recognize shifting social identities that often become fixed categories in organization infrastructures also contributes to perpetuated Caucasian/White ideology and accompanying microaggressions (Harris, 2017).

Advocating for microresistance and microaffiramations
Some have argued that the public relations practitioner's role in organizations is to serve as a change catalyst and "conscience of the organization" (Holtzhausen & Voto, 2002, p. 60; Holtzhausen, Petersen, & Tindall, 2003), for organizational change may occur only when the basic assumptions that underlie work practices and organizational cultures are challenged (Kolb & Merrill-Sands, 1999; McKie & Munshi, 2007). What our research has addressed less is the power that public relations practitioners have on the inside of organizations as internal public relations (IPR) specialists with access to organizational leadership and relationship-building know-how to also organize and empower employees to support microresistance efforts and to promote microaffirmations. Microresistance is incremental daily efforts to challenge privilege based on dominant social identity dimensions, especially Caucasian/Whiteness, that help people targeted by microaggressions (Ganote, Cheung, & Souza, 2016). Microaffirmations are messages of excellence, openness, and opportunity rather than messages about deficit and marginalization (Powell, Demetriou, & Fisher, 2013), or, a series of specific actions when involved in a challenging experience or presented with an opportunity. Logan (2016) used critical race theory to undergird an analysis of Starbucks' "race together" initiative to promote the coffee retailer's multifaceted public relations campaign designed to spark a national dialogue on race. Public relations practitioners' organizing talents similarly can inspire and promote programs that applaud co-worker unity, amplify achievements of diverse team members, support human resources hiring and retention, and more.

Offered here is a completed version of the IPR model for theory building which acknowledges public relations' practical role in constructing IPR through mobilizing *social capital* and advocating for *diversity*. It promotes celebration of social identity dimensions and their intersectionalities among organization members, encouraging microresistance and promoting microaffirmations. Depending upon one's standpoint – as a victim, as an aggressor, or as a bystander – there are multiple ways to respond to microaggressions and to prevent them from occurring in the first place.

In addition, microaggression victims in organizations consistently must be on guard to protect themselves, to keep their own emotions in check, and to avoid striking back at their

victimizer (Berk, 2017). Discovering an employer's workplace policy and gaining support from a human resources department are important first steps. Then, following up when cooler heads prevail to educate a victimizer about the effects of what s/he said or did may be a good next step toward building respect. Second, victimizers must take these issues seriously and actually want to become sensitized to effects of their words and actions by listening to victims and asking for clarification rather than denying and stonewalling. By owning up to their actions, apologizing, and promising to learn and do better, they can move forward in positive ways. Finally, bystanders have a responsibility to lessen the impact and to become allies for microaggression victims by offering support, serving as a witness, and using incidents as teachable moments.

Also, those who experience microaggressions may benefit of the advice of Yosso (2005), who posited that there are six types of capital that collectively form cultural wealth and can be used by communities of color to survive and resist macro- and micro-forms of oppression: aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistant. Cultural wealth serves as a conceptual framework and method to better understand ways communities without privilege operate in their world and how these community resources can be activated to help the members of that community to survive and be resilient in other spaces. Other researchers have called such acts *lifting as we climb* among African-American women (Beane, 2018), same-gender dyad mentoring (e.g., Tam, Dozier, Lauzen, & Real, 2009), and same-sexual-orientation mentoring with a warning about potential backlash of this strategy when LGBTQ members may be too fearful to disclose their sexual orientation (Clutterbuck & Ragins, 2011).

Similarly, organizational scholars have advocated for displaying *microaffirmations*; positive small works that employees may perform to show one another respect, provide encouragement, foster healthy relationships, and help marginalized people succeed and feel welcome (Rowe, 2008). These tiny acts also include leading rather than pushing, building a sense of community, listening attentively, giving credit where it is due, providing comfort/support in times of distress, and building on strengths/successes rather than focusing on faults/weaknesses (Scully & Rowe, 2009).

As diversity advocates, public relations practitioners and others who see microaggressions also could consider microresistance measures. Those who travel by train in the U.S., no doubt, are aware of an anti-terrorism communication campaign that Amtrak calls "If you see something, say something." This message is consistent with U.S. Homeland Security measures to empower Americans to identify and report potential security threats since 2001. In organizations, standing by passively when witnessing microaggressions targeting others may signal tacit approval for aggressors. When witnessing microaggression, do something. Pierce (1974) recommended that allies and victims actively and carefully question an aggressor's behavior, with a goal of inviting correction and education rather than retribution. Strategies for placing the responsibility for an insult on the aggressor rather than blaming the victim could involve opening dialog to communicate feelings and meeting privately with an aggressor. Researchers have advocated for microresistance (Ganote, Cheung, & Souza, 2016; Rockquemore, 2016) based on describing clearly what you see happening, expressing what you think/imagine others might be thinking, expressing your feelings about the situation, and stating what you would have liked to see happen (Berk, 2017).

As advocate for microresistance, the public relations practitioner connects management and stakeholders. S/he must recognize that to practice public relations is to "walk a fine line

between reality and senior management's ideals" (e.g., Vieira, 2018). As an intrinsic conduit for free speech, the practitioner likely will serve as an interpreter and touchstone in conflict resolution as part of the internal public relations process. As J. E. and L. A. Grunig (1992) pointed out, communication is "not a magical solution to conflict" (p. 314). *Effectiveness* of the communication, however, is vital (Jandt, 2017). While a microaggression-free workplace benefits everyone, realities of one's socio-psychological background, context, and timing sometimes complicate communication that sets intention and interpretation at odds (e.g., Tannen, 1990; Keteyian, 2012). Microresistance supported by public relations could take the form of informal interventions to facilitate two-way communication. For example, one employee's asking another about the origin of an accent could be perceived as a microaggression. Here, the public relations practitioner could work with the human resources counterpart to enable employees to achieve mutual understanding before conflict erupts. The goal is to open communication channels for high comfort levels all around. Overly strict policies that restrict communication about sensitive topics run the risk of creating silos, inspiring higher employee turnover, isolation, and reduced mentoring (e.g., Banks, 2000; Church & Rotolo, 2013; Forbes Human Resources Council, 2019; Ford & Brown, 2015).

Figure 1: Completed model for Internal Public Relations Theory
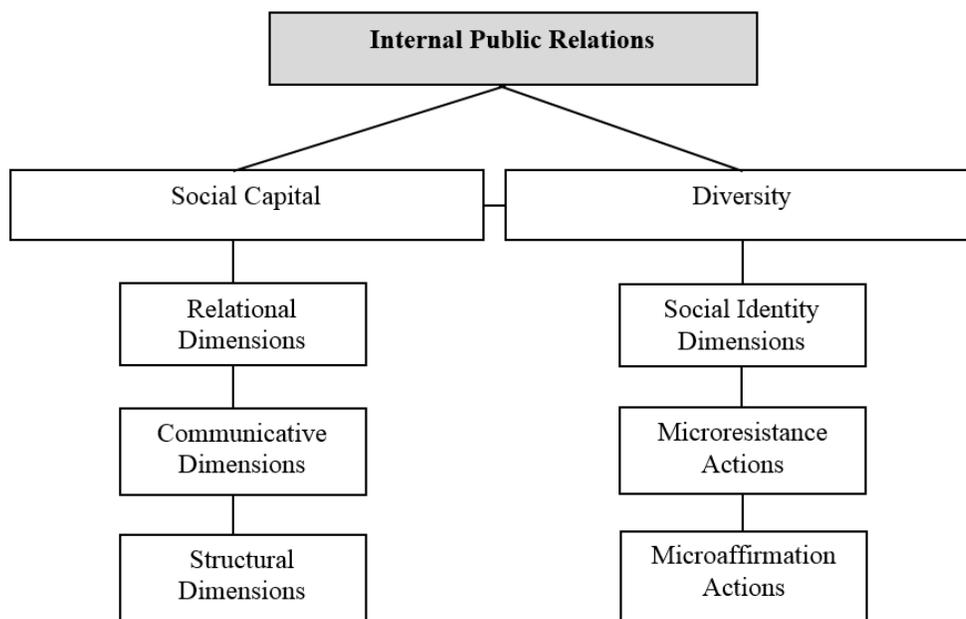
Ultimately, microresistance in multiple forms benefits individuals at work because this amplifies and supports diversity through action and not just lip service. In public relations practice, specifically, the IPR model consists of two pillars of *social capital* and *diversity*. Taken

together, these two supports for internal public relations theorizing provide a foundation for helping organizations to navigate toward authentic social responsibility and sustainability – which goes beyond a mere mission or vision statement that simply mentions the word *diversity*. Doing so supports a vision for greater professionalism and leadership in the field that could help to make organizations more beneficial to society in terms of what Elkington (1999) has operationalized as positive impact on people, planet, and profit. As *social capital's* relationship, communicative, and structural dimensions play out in organizations, so too does potential for success, overall job satisfaction, and a livable workplace where diversity in all its dimensions is respected.

Freeing organizations from microaggression conditions
There are several routes to reversing conditions that contribute to organizations' inability to fully embrace diversity. Consider the foundation for thinking about organizations' internal workings as indicator of its attention to diversity, ethical undergirding, and outward-facing persona which first was laid in the U.S. in the 1980s when Patrick Jackson (1985) published about advancing a future for public relations as a "philosophy" central to making democracy work effectively (p. 24) through "demonstrating our professionalism" (Jackson, 1988, p. 27) and by embodying and training others in leadership (Jackson, 1991). Beyond Jackson's framing in terms of democratic or capitalist outgrowth, organizations in addition to governmental bodies also should support the ethics of embracing internal public relations. As such, we must consider diversity in terms of social identity intersectionalities – we are more than the sum of just our gender, ethnicity/race, sexual orientation, faith/religion, and so much more. Too, public relations practitioners must be ever vigilant that their employers do not use the diversity/social responsibility and sustainability dynamic as a veneer for drawing attention away from unethical practices. Fortunately, it's not too hard to find examples that could indicate this is happening. Look at Starbucks' 2014 "Race Together" campaign – while a short three years after the campaign, a Starbucks employee in Philadelphia, PA, called the police on young African-American men who simply sat in the eating area without yet purchasing something as they waited for a friend. The corporation's quick action and highly publicized campaign to retrain all employees to respect diversity may be a step in the right direction. Organizations must not enable microaggressions in the workplace even as they make claims of social responsibility.

Furthermore, let's pull back the lens and look at how links between social capital and diversity play out in areas beyond U.S. borders among multinational corporations and in areas where microaggressions based on ethnicity/race and other social identity dimensions usually are hidden in the margins. Public relations is an emblematic profession of our times and there is an apparent enthusiasm for business case thinking even in research, as Edwards (2018) has noted. It makes money sense to develop and maintain a diverse workplace. Yet, diversity initiatives underpinned by business case rationales – rather than the right thing to do – seldom succeed in the long term to eradicate microaggressions or demolish systemic infrastructural barriers to enable individual employees to achieve their maximum potential. This is because such diversity initiatives are grounded in organizations' current needs, rather than considering unique contexts of individual social identity groups and perhaps more poignantly, a willingness to *change the way we do things around here*. Such a reaction is trivializing, ignores the roots of social identity respect issues, and never results in positive change (e.g., Dobbin & Kalev, 2016).

Beyond U.S. shores, *managing* diversity as a policy approach has its critics, too. Wrench (2005) worried that U.S.-based corporations, in particular, encroach on responsibility of elected governments and fail to consider nation contexts or involve labor unions when seeking to manage diversity. Public relations scholar, Edwards (2014), similarly argued that *managing* diversity smacks of a position of privilege by turning it into an object – a *thing* – rather than a context for the way people live and something within organizations' power to change. At a fundamental level, Green and her colleagues (2005) suggested that because "the language of diversity is overwhelmingly positive," (p. 193), healthy debate that problematizes the root causes of discrimination and disadvantage become obscured, concluding that managing diversity involves political struggle.

This article posits that managing diversity from a theoretical approach with actionable suggestions for building IPR not in a vacuum but with open dialog across organizational levels maximizes social capital for successful embrace of diversity. For example, simply hiring or retaining people that look like an audience that an organization is trying to reach with messages is shortsighted. Such practices commodify social identity dimensions such as ethnicity/race, sexual orientation, gender, and more because they are emptied of their complex association with social identity. They're not respected and this *tokenism* approach doesn't work in the long term because those people are not considered central to the organization's main function and they're not supported once hired. This is why they eventually leave organizations before they can achieve their maximum potential. In normative public relations research on diversity, the idea of counting diversity is reflected in the notion of requisite variety (Sha & Ford, 2007), where the level of diversity in the profession is determined by the variety of audiences that need to be addressed. Hiring people who look like current managers, failing to have recruiters and human resources personnel who mirror the organization's stakeholders perpetuates the –isms. It prolongs privilege and contributes to microaggression conditions. Importantly, because boundaries between organizations and society are permeable, we cannot EVER forget about historic context of so many –isms that undergird microaggressions and inhibit authentic diversity. Racism. Sexism. Colonialism.

Freeing organizations from microaggression conditions and possibly restructuring to dismantle infrastructures that undergird inequities is not easy work. There are no quick fixes. Moreover, just talking about it has been likened to *a puff of smoke* that dissipates because public relations practitioners are charged with routine organizational and client demands. Yet, one may argue that to *not talk about* microaggressions is to be complicit in supporting their persistence. At the very least, organizations should offer a Workplace Microaggression Inventory or any number of other assessments to identify social identity biases among employees and procedures – and offer support and education for all employees through workshops and other means. Some organizations lament that since the 1990s the bulk of their diversity budget goes to funding workshops that research findings suggest do not work (e.g., Dobbin & Kalev, 2016) because diversity levels remain relatively stagnant and workshops further exacerbate anger among high-status groups who resist participation because they feel threatened by loss of privilege (Dover, Major, & Kaiser, 2017). Research findings in public relations suggest that high levels of bias endure, making increased diversity an ongoing challenge worth conquering. Recalling that a New York Mexican-American agency executive, 52, who participated in the Pompper (2007)

study told a story about how her co-workers *laugh out loud* during sexual harassment awareness workshops, it is the role of the public relations practitioners as insider activists to put communication skills to work informing employees that pro-diversity workshops are no laughing matter. Making pro-diversity workshops voluntary but providing incentives, linking them with mentoring programs, and engaging with cross- work teams where people of varying social identity dimensions get to know one another can boost the success of pro-diversity workshops and training (Johnson, 2017). Indeed, public relations practitioners as insider activists and champions for diversity can support this work in many ways.

Offering a social responsibility bill of rights
To advocate for microresistance and microaffirmations in organizations, at ABRAPCORP 2018 we asked as part of practitioner, student, and faculty workshops: What does diversity *look like* in IPR? We completed the *diversity* side of the IPR model to show organizations a path forward as authentic, socially responsible, and sustainable businesses and nonprofits from the inside out. Two groups of 10 people worked for about 90 minutes putting together a Social Responsibility Bill of Rights as a guide for eradicating microaggressions and instead advocating for microresistance and microaffirmations. Each tenet is detailed and explained next.
1.   Listen, but avoid *selective listening*.
        Active listening is engaged communication by focusing on the speaker, asking questions that paraphrase the speaker's message to ensure understanding, respecting the speaker by not interrupting, and taking in ALL that a speaker is saying before rushing to judgment. Among communication researchers, listening is an under-examined skill (e.g., Brunner, 2008). A key microaffirmation in organizations is listening to recognize and validate a person's experiences and affirming emotional reactions (Powell, Demetriou, & Fisher, 2013). Macnamara's (2015) *architecture of listening* in organizations report is based on 36 case studies of major government, corporate, NGO, and non-profit organizations in the U.K., U.S., and Australia and concludes that effective listening enables organizations to improve in engagement, trust, healthy democracy, social equity, and business sustainability. Public relations practitioners can facilitate open-door meetings with leadership and conduct regular interviews and focus groups to listen to employee stakeholders.
2.   Allow every group to have a voice while also acknowledging rights of those who may choose to exclude themselves.
        hooks (1989) argued for considering the margins as a site of creativity and power, considering this space as a petri dish for counter-hegemonic discourse where resistance and radical perspectives are born. Organizations may learn much by tapping into margin spaces to discover ways to understand and include those voices, working to break down barriers that obstruct inclusive two-way communication. Yet, organizations must recognize potential risks of openness (no matter how well intentioned) to LGBTQ community members who feel pressure to hide their sexual orientation and/or gender identity on the job (Workplace divided, n.d.); a reality for public relations practitioners, as well (Tindall & Waters, 2012).
3.   Promote a climate of heterogeneity where all ideas are valued.
        Organization communication scholars have written about the virtues of problematizing culture in organizations for greater understanding (e.g., Mumby & Stohl, 1996) and business etiquette advisors long have underscored the merits of what Wilson (2015) called being "other aware," or including a multiplicity of input for decision making.

4.   Train people in organizations to be welcoming.

Being cordial, open, and receptive to the new team members in organizations sounds like common sense. However, as Rowe (2008) explained, it can be the "little acts of disrespect," (p. 45) or microinequities that speak volumes about organizational cultures where certain people seem to fit and others do not. Examples include leavings names off lists, not introducing certain people in meetings, mistakenly confusing names of people of the same race/ethnicity, consistently misspelling names, failing to provide schedules/food/space for certain groups, uncomfortable invitations for LGBTQ, women, or non-Christians (Rowe, 2008). For civility and retention, both human resources and public relations could take the lead in making new hires feel welcome and using research methods like the communication audit to ensure organizational communication materials are respectful.

5.   Problematize discourse that relies on frameworks such as "normal vs. different." Respect by avoiding views of "other" as "different."

Advice from the *words matter movement* are steeped in carefully using "thoughtful and deliberate positive communication" (Baldridge, 2018), not unlike popular attention to *emotional intelligence* in recent years (e.g., Signs, n.d.) Having a "high EQ" means one simultaneously is conscious of her/his own emotional states as well as others'. Words such as "normal," "different," and "other" in organizations' formal policies and documents, as well as during informal gatherings, are emotionally charged and must be used with caution. While some postmodern researchers argue that pointing out "difference" can have affirming benefits, others suggest being identified this way means deviation from some dominant group standard or norm (Hare-Mustin & Maracek, 1988). The public relations practitioner is well positioned to serve as an advocate and to coach management about diversity of social identities, and attending to work-life conflict negotiated by working parents who care for children (Shen & Jiang, 2013) and parents/in-laws (Pompper, 2011). Again, using research tools to gauge *how are we doing* among stakeholders can reveal communication and relationship-building shortcomings.

6.   Go beyond quotas and change negative attitudes about "quota hires."

Backlash to U.S. policies designed to foster equality where discrimination has disadvantaged certain groups in employment, education, housing – such as those of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) – has spawned a master narrative of *lesser-than* in conjunction with compliance. For example, employees considered hired *only* to fill a quota or in response to affirmative action can suffer bullying that further marginalizes them from fully assimilating in organizations when other employees' biases and competitive impulses lead them to consider these new employees as less than competent. Caucasian/White men worry that these measures discriminate against them, however (Jedel & Kujawa, 2017). Organizations' communication vehicles often produced internally by public relations teams must share stories that amplify all voices and provide information about ways people of varying social identity dimensions and intersectionalities make organizations personifications of the mission/vision statement.

7.   Avoid negative labels and judgments that lead to generalizing and marginalizing.

Behaviors and social identities that appear outside dominant cultural norms may be labeled and generalized as *deviant*, *different*, or *unacceptable* by dominant groups. Labeling theory developed by sociologists (Becker, 1963; Durkheim, 1897/1951) emerged long ago to explain how recipients of criticism are hurt and sometimes can respond to stigma of labels as self-fulfilling prophecy. More recently, social constructivist theory (Grant, 2007) is used to

explain and predict ways that human development is socially situated and knowledge is constructed through interaction with others. Public relations, human resources, and other organization members who contribute to leadership speeches, policymaking, websites, and other communication and relationship-building tools and materials must ensure that labels and judgments that lead to generalizing and marginalizing are eliminated.

8.   Embrace self-expression and one's right to express diversity – rather than imposing conformity.
        Whether it be form of dress or jewelry, a desire to express faith/spirituality through prayer, or some other form of expression, many social identity attributes constitute federally protected classes in the U.S. and organizations increasingly offer prayer/meditation space and other accommodations for employees. Gurchiek (2018) reflected on organizations building an atmosphere of openness and the concept of "bringing your whole self to work." An example of this may mean providing a station for Muslims' ritual feet washing. Also, acceptance of transgender people at work has been an organizational focus in recent years due to confusion, conflict, and bias (Pierce, 2016). Overall, respectful pluralism enables employees to feel comfortable interacting with one another. Human resources and public relations practitioners can support these efforts through communication to provide information and resolve conflicts.

9.   Respect and preserve existing diversity – in organizations and local communities.
        Public relations researchers have revealed the normative value of respecting and preserving diversity inside and beyond organizational walls. From ongoing relationship building to crisis management, attention to diversity in order to reduce risk and conflict includes respecting the local community and its history (Liu & Pompper, 2012). Moreover, corporations have been shaping race relations in the U.S. since slavery (Logan, 2018) and when one acquires an organization, one acquires its history. Today's companies may not have owned or leased slaves, but a predecessor organization it acquired may have. Also, when nonprofits partner with corporations to acknowledge their errors and misjudgments in relationships with people and the environment, partnerships must be free from quid pro quo. Organizations that seek to change neighborhood dynamics as a result of construction or other changes must tread carefully and the public relations practitioner is well equipped to serve as community liaison respecting both employer and stakeholders.

10.   Promote deep social and cultural change.
        People have firmly rooted beliefs that exude in behaviors in complex ways that may cause others pain, fear, and undergird laws and policies that contribute to institutionalized discrimination. Rowe (2008) characterized *microinequities* as "cumulative" and "corrosive" for "a principal scaffolding for discrimination in the U.S." (p. 45). To promote authentic and deep social change, these biases must be revealed, discussed, and ultimately eradicated.
        At the conference, we concluded that public relations practitioners in organizations must be the insider activist and advocate for dismantling the perpetuation of majority heterosexual-Christian- Caucasian/White- ideology and accompanying microaggressions in organizations as a key step in making workplaces authentically diverse. As we pondered, "what's next?" we encouraged one another to write, blog, speak publicly, take these discussions to students and practitioners for reflection and discussion, and to provoke organizational leaders to carefully consider the issues. It is my hope that this article inspires such activities.

Concluding Thoughts

For the public relations industry, the 10-point list supplements PRSA's long-time support for diversity in organizations. This support has been evident in creation of PRSA's vision/mission, its National Diversity & Inclusion Committee, chapter awards for diversity, providing membership dollars to the PRSA Foundation for diversity programs and initiatives, sharing of college faculty lesson plans, sponsorship of a diversity-themed Bateman Case Study competition, adding diversity to college public relations program certification criteria, and more (PRSA, n.d.) What this article contributes is additional encouragement for public relations practitioners to adopt the insider activist role for diversity thinking and action in organizations based on inspiration from the 10-point Social Responsibility Bill of Rights developed during workshops of The Brazilian Association of Researchers of Organizational Communication and Public Relations (Abrapcorp), in Brazil.

Reflection on the public relations body of scholarship about diversity has enabled this article to further amplify Holtzhausen's (2014) addition of postmodern values to public relations practice and research. As insider activists, practitioners acknowledge their role in advocating for microresistance by representing communities who may lack social capital for making organizational management in powerful positions listen to their voices. Practitioners are expert communicators well prepared to use communication and relationship building to counsel organizations and clients. Internally, considering diversity in policymaking and every day to make it authentic is a responsibility for relationship building among managers as well as with mid-level and entry-level employees who must be respected and valued. Faculty members who haven't talked about the value of diversity thinking and action are encouraged to do so and to teach students about the insider activist role responsibility to advocate for diversity. Academic researchers might consider further testing and building IPR theory by examining organizations' responsibility to eliminate microaggressions from and add microaffirmations to workplaces. Overall, this article advocates for more communication and leadership that is authentic, supportive, and respectful. Pro-diversity conditions that are free of workplace microaggressions must emerge for organizational attention to diversity to rise above mere mention in a vision/mission statement. With public relations advocacy, this is possible.

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