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Women and Ethnic Diversity in Public Relations:

The Unconventional Role of Public Relations in Advancing Diversity

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Abstract

Diversity has become a “buzzword” in organizations (Allen, 1995) and a relevant enterprise for organizations seeking to maintain ties with key constituents. Kern-Foxworth (1989a; 1989b; 1989c; 1991a; 1991b; 2000) has perhaps been the most prolific writer about women and ethnic diversity in public relations (Pompper, 2004; Wilson et al., 2003), while others (e.g., Brunner, 2006; Grunig, 2006; Toth & Grunig, 1993) have chronicled the increased presence of women in public relations. Despite their efforts, scholars still contend little research has considered the impact of diversity in the public relations industry (Diggs-Brown & Zaharna, 1995; Hon & Brunner, 2000). The focus of this paper is to discuss the extant research and historical developments in the maturation of women and ethnic minorities in the field of public relations. Additionally, the case for public relations playing a more integral and unconventional role in diversity efforts is made before considerations for both inside and outside the academy are offered.

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“Diversity is both a big challenge and an opportunity of great value for public relations practitioners and scholars. The aim is to understand this growing phenomena, without undervaluing its complexity and richness and to move towards a more inclusive and truly committed stakeholder approach.”

- Silvia Ravazzani (2006, p. 11)

As diversity has become a “buzzword” among organizations (Allen, 1995) and has been named one of the foremost issues facing corporate America today (Clarkin & Mullany, 2004), little research has considered the impact of diversity in the public relations industry (Diggs-Brown & Zaharna, 1995; Hon & Brunner, 2000). Yet, focusing on racial diversity can bring an organization added value and, within certain contexts, competitive advantage (Richard, 2000).

Kern-Foxworth (1989a; 1989b; 1989c; 1991a; 1991b; 2000) has perhaps been the most prolific writer about women and ethnic diversity in public relations (Pompper, 2004; Wilson et al., 2003), while others (e.g., Brunner, 2006; Grunig, 2006; Toth & Grunig, 1993) have chronicled both the increased presence of women and the implications for that increased presence in public relations. Today the advancement of women and ethnic minorities as public relations practitioners merits a comprehensive full-length account individually on their own. Though this is not an exhaustive historical record, the focus of this paper is to discuss some of the research, historical developments, and the integral role of public relations in the maturation of women and ethnic minorities in the field of public relations. Additionally, considerations are offered for both inside and outside the academy.

First, some of the factors that make diversity a relevant enterprise for organizations will be discussed including the changing U.S. population, the growing presence of minority communities as markets, and the legal ramifications. Then, statistics concerning the presence of women and ethnic minorities will be offered along with a historical account of people of color in the public relations industry. Finally, the case for public relations playing a more integral and unconventional role in diversity efforts will be made before suggestions for coping with diversity challenges are offered.

Diversity as a Relevant Enterprise for Organizations

Several key issues make diversity relevant to today's organizations and to public relations practitioners seeking to maintain and develop relationships with key publics. The shifting U.S. population has resulted in an increase in Hispanics, now the largest minority population in the United States (Rose, 2002), as well as an increase in African Americans, Asian Americans, and Pacific Islanders (Wilson, Gutierrez, & Chao, 2003). Today 30 percent of the U.S. population consists of ethnic minorities, and by 2050 half of the U.S. population is estimated to be people of color (Nelson & Quick, 2006).

Along with racial and ethnic population shifts, organizations are also experiencing an older (people over 65 will comprise 20 percent of the workforce in 2020) and more female (with women making up more than 60 percent of the workforce) workforce (Nelson & Quick, 2006). Population shifts are likely to impact organizations in at least three ways. First, it changes the landscape of those an organization is capable of employing. Second, it changes the makeup of organizational cross-functional teams popularized in the 90s. Finally, it changes the nature of the environments that organizations must adapt to in order to maintain their solvency.

Along with a shifting U.S. population, legal ramifications make diversity a relevant enterprise as well. The Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1974, the Age Discrimination Act of 1967, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, just to name a few key legislative measures, have all forced organizations into a new reality of accounting for organizational actions.

Economic ramifications of the shifting U.S. population exist as well, primarily in the form of multi-ethnic emergent markets. Kern-Foxworth (1991a) credits Gibson (1969; 1978) for being the first to recognize multi-ethnic markets as consumers worthy of company efforts to increase market share. The African American consumer market became valuable enough for identification and for being a part of several companies' efforts to create new target markets. Since Gibson's books, which spoke of the significant return on investment for companies that focused on African American communities as markets, multi-ethnic markets soon became viewed as untapped areas in the marketplace.

The African American consumer market grew twice the rate of Whites in the 80s, and Blacks constitute the majority in several United States cities like Atlanta and Memphis. With an increased disposable income amount over \$800 billion, Kern-Foxworth (1991a) predicted the "African American consumer market will be a viable asset in all aspects of American business" (p. 27). Future projections for the growth of Blacks is for this population to grow about 10 percent in each decade, while the growth rate for Whites is 2.5 percent (Wilson, Gutierrez, & Chao, 2003).

Perhaps, the Hispanic consumer market has been the most rapidly growing of the minority markets. The Hispanic population grew by 30 percent between 1980 and 1987, prompting a revamping of the English-only language use by employees and in collateral

materials of corporations. No business was immune from the ramifications of a growing Hispanic population, and future projections are for the Hispanic community to grow at a rate of 25 percent in each decade until 2050 (Wilson, Gutierrez, & Chao, 2003).

The Asian American and Pacific Islander consumer markets doubled in the 80s (Kern-Foxworth, 1991a), and have the steepest growth rate predictions at just under 30 percent in each decade until 2050 (Wilson, Gutierrez, & Chao, 2003). The Native American consumer market is perhaps the least talked about among multi-ethnic markets; however, the growth rate of this population is expected to be about 10 percent in each decade until 2050 (Wilson, Gutierrez, & Chao, 2003).

The increase in numbers, however, reflects only small portions of the challenges that multi-ethnic markets bring. Each respective group has a different set of “habits and tastes depending on cultural values and customs deriving from their respective national origins” (Kotcher, 1995, p. 7). The growth of multi-ethnic consumer markets has already prompted discussions concerning the ramifications for public relations professionals (Fry, 1992; Kern-Foxworth, 1991a; Kotcher, 1995). Questions about the levels of preparedness in the public relations industry for a new racially- and ethnically-mixed America, perhaps serves as the catalyst for the public relations industry to adjust and meet the demands associated with emergent multi-ethnic markets and diversity.

Women in Public Relations

The role of women in public relations is an admirable topic, particularly since Harlow (1944-1945) and others in their early writings concerning the growth of public relations as a legitimate profession referenced only men. Interestingly, early research about the impact of women in public relations did not incorporate ethnic diversity (Pompper, 2004). Sixty percent of

those enrolled in public relations programs were women in 1989 (Pratt, 1989), and in 1990 women comprised 33 percent of faculty positions in communication programs (Elmore & Balmert, 1995).

More recent statistics show that women constitute 70 percent of public relations practitioners (Aldoory & Toth, 2002) as well as 70 to 80 percent of college students studying public relations (Grunig, Toth, & Hon, 2000). Despite the increased presence of women, Toth and Grunig (1993) observed that women often hold more technical rather than managerial roles, perhaps because of the biased social expectations of women, while their male counterparts tend to mainly perform the managerial activities. The biased social expectations offered for the lack of managerial activities conducted by women include the notion that women are not good managers, that women are unable to handle the corporate world, and that women have the added responsibilities of having children.

Bui's (1999) research confirms that some women make a choice to put their families first. This decision could also account for the majority of women being in technical roles rather than managerial roles. Forty-one percent of females admitted to making career-sacrificing choices because of their families. Still, 75 percent of women in Bui's (1999) research stated having goals to achieve higher position levels and to advance in their careers. The desire for career advancement has drawn mixed feelings from women in other research (Aldoory & Toth, 2002). Some women agreed it was harder for women to be promoted, while others saw the glass ceiling disappearing with males leaving the industry.

While disagreement may exist in the extant literature concerning women's attitudes about promotions and the desire to assume more managerial roles, little discrepancy exists concerning women's salaries relative to their male counterparts. Women may dominate the field in terms of

numbers, but men dominate the public relations field in terms of earning higher salaries (Aldoory & Toth, 2002; Choi & Hon, 2002; Toth & Grunig, 1993; Weaver-Lariscy, Cameron, & Sweep, 1994).

Several factors exist that could account for the salary disparity, but many will contend that gender is the main factor. According to a study by Weaver-Lariscy and colleagues (1994), male practitioners held higher degrees than female practitioners. This study also reported that those who had the longest years of public relations experience were also males. The same comparable results were found almost a decade later (Choi & Hon, 2002). In one focus group discussion (Aldoory & Toth, 2002), participants suggested that because of the minority of males in public relations, males may be offered higher pay in an effort to recruit and attract more males into the field. Another explanation for the higher pay is that males, who are already in the public relations field, may be offered higher salaries to remain. A final explanation for the salary disparity is the nature of the leadership in the organization, whether those in managerial roles are predominantly male (male-dominated) or whether those in managerial roles are both male and female (gender-dominated). Choi and Hon (2002) found that in the male-dominated organizations, significant salary disparity exists between the males and females in managerial roles within the same organizations; however, in gender-dominated organizations little salary differences exist between males and females in managerial roles.

A final key consideration related to gender and diversity in public relations is women and their representation in textbooks. Kern-Foxworth's (1989) research examined public relations textbooks in an effort to see if the representations of women reflect their status and position in society. The content analytic study was comprised of 60 textbooks and coders documented the sex of the textbook authors, page content, number of pages about women, and portrayals of

women. The study revealed that representation of women does not reflect the status of women in society or in the public relations profession. She contends students are not receiving fair and consistent exposure to the contributions of women. Based on her analysis, she argues, “Women [public relations] students are now admitted to academic programs equally with men, have a few more role models, receive somewhat better counseling, but still study from biased textbooks” (p. 36).

More than 15 years later, Brunner (2006) found Kern-Foxworth’s (1989) findings are the same. Brunner found that the textbooks sampled represent men as the dominant force and that 47 percent of textbook photographs were of men, while 28 percent were of women. Her findings indicate that women were never represented as the majority in the categories analyzed. “It could be argued that this restriction of the presence of women in public relations texts leads to bias and an undue emphasis on men since the field is predominantly female” (Brunner, 2006, p. 46).

The extant literature also represents calls to reconsider researching the experiences of non-White public relations female practitioners. While public relations practitioners of color increased substantially in the 1960s and 1970s (Kern-Foxworth et al., 1994), relatively little research examined the experiences of Black female practitioners. Kern-Foxworth and colleagues (1994) examined the stature of Black female public relations practitioners in the field using a variety of individual and organizational variables. After surveying 54 Black professionals, they identified six reliable indexes including: thinking/analysis, responsibility, pressure, rules, independent, and channels. Their research findings suggest black women view themselves as independent thinkers in their respective organizations with a great deal of responsibility.

More recently, Pompper (2004) offered a refined flowchart that reinforces the unique contributions of African American female public relations practitioners relative to their

Caucasian counterparts. Rather than viewing both Caucasian and African American women in the public relations industry from the same homogenous perspective, the authors contend that an expanded view is necessary.

Grunig's (2006) most recent work chronicles the evolution of scholarly thinking concerning women in public relations. After offering five phases of scholarly research about women in public relations – male scholarship, compensatory, bifocal, feminist, and multifocal, she suggests a sixth phase, an integrative phase, in which male and female practitioners are viewed as members of humanity with family, career, and personal struggles that must be integrated with work life. She challenges scholars to “rethink fundamentally in our minds and in a substantial body of both scholarly and professional literature what the influx of women means to public relations practice and education” (p. 135).

People of Color in the Public Relations Profession and Academy

While the majority of management in corporate communications at large companies and CEOs of public relations firms agree that more women and minorities are needed in the industry (“Poll respondents dissatisfied,” 2006, p. 3), few research has chronicled the contributions of people of color to the public relations industry. Table 1 summarizes key people and events in the history of people of color in public relations. The source of information provided in the table is Kern-Foxworth (1991b) as well as additional insights from independent research by the authors.

Despite the historical development and increased influence of minorities in public relations, four areas of concern still persist according to an Atlanta Inter-Association Council study (cited in Diggs-Brown & Zaharna, 1995): stereotypes and associated assumptions, actual differences not valued or managed effectively, real and perceived exclusivity of the white male

club that runs public relations agencies and corporations, and the existence of unwritten rules and double standards for success that are often unknown and not communicated to minorities.

It seems the current state of management in public relations is that they value diversity within the workplace, but are “oblivious to issues of cultural diversity” (Diggs-Brown & Zaharna, 1995, p. 120). African American female practitioners address their career concerns by changing jobs, overcompensating, developing coping mechanisms, and launching their own independent consulting practices (Pompper, 2004). In addition, often minorities have a gap perception between their perceived role (as a manager) and the role they actually fill, which often more closely resembles a communication technician rather than a problem-solver (Kern-Foxworth, 1989c cited in Wilson et al., 2003).

In academic institutions, minority faculty in communication programs have increased with African Americans comprising 5 percent, Hispanic Americans comprising 1.5 percent, Asian or Pacific Islanders comprising 1.4 percent, and American Indians or Alaskan Natives comprising 1 percent according to a survey in 1990 (Elmore & Balmert, 1995). The presence of minority faculty increased to 10.4 percent in 1992 from 8.3 percent in 1990.

The Unconventional Role of Public Relations in Advancing Diversity

Some have recognized the use of the term “velvet ghetto,” which is a term designed to reflect the migration of women and minorities into the public relations field (Kern-Foxworth, 1991a; Kern-Foxworth et al., 1994; Pratt, 1989). However, this term fails to adequately account for the opportunities inherent in a growing minority market and increased minority professionals in public relations.

The impact of a growing multi-ethnic market presence forces public relations professionals to be more skilled at reaching, communicating, and advertising to these markets.

However, “the most immediate corporate response has been in market segmentation and penetration strategies designed to tap the purchasing power of these groups rather than to provide long-range services to them” (Wilson et al., 2003, p. 170).

Since public relations is a “management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the publics on whom its success or failure depends” (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2006, p. 5), the role of public relations in organizations pushes practitioners to the forefront in helping pave the way for a more diversified work force and for changes within organizations that would help the organization to adjust to its key minority publics. Indeed, “ethnic diversity is an integral part of an excellent organization” (Pompper, 2004, p. 270).

Despite the fact that the importance of diversity has “taken root” in America’s corporations (“Panel explores tactics,” 2005, p. 2). The frustration of many scholars with the public relations industry is that the industry fails to reflect the increased representation present within the American population and instead remains a “monocultural environment” (Diggs-Brown & Zaharna, 1995, p. 115). Multiple surveys among public relations professionals confirm negative perceptions about the underrepresentation of minority public relations professionals (Digg-Brown & Zaharna, 1995), the lack of sophistication in multicultural communication techniques (Kotcher, 1995), and competing perceptions among practitioners about the stages of diversity integration in their respective organizations (Hon & Brunner, 2000).

For public relations professionals, knowing the beliefs, attitudes, talents and various backgrounds of people of different cultures is necessary to help an organization accomplish its objectives (Fry, 1992). Since public relations professionals serve as “image agents,” these individuals should not be oblivious of the cultural backgrounds, traditions and values of minority

publics (Kern-Foxworth, 1991a). Enhancing organizational image is a key benefit that many public relations practitioners associate with diversity (Hon & Brunner, 2000).

Also, public relations professionals are needed to help organizations shift the company requirements from assimilation to adopt a pluralism that focuses on changing mindsets and altering company molds (Fry, 1992). In doing so, practitioners should understand the contexts that would likely influence the impact of racial diversity on organizational performance. In Richard's (2000) research, firms in the banking industry that were in a growth strategy had higher productivity across all racially diverse groups than firms that were downsizing. Understanding the contexts present in the organizational environment can enable practitioners to better serve their respective organizations as well as to accomplish diversity efforts.

Public relations professionals are needed in the role of ombudsmen who are listening, weighing and contributing that which enhances a company's standing with minority publics (Fry, 1992). If practitioners are to be the eyes and ears of the organization in developing relationships with minority publics, they must help members of the dominant coalition understand the value of including any public regardless of race, gender, age, or physical ability to the organization's relationship building efforts.

Another integral role of public relations with diversity is the media relations function played by many public relations practitioners. Since public relations professionals are critical to the selection and presentation of the day's news, a more diversity conscious public relations professional can assist in the accurate portrayals of people of color and perhaps combat the inaccurate stories that journalists file about non-Whites (Wilson et al., 2003).

While the primary focus of this paper has been on women and ethnic diversity, the role of religious diversity in America and around the world will create increasing challenges for

organizations as well as public relations professionals (Tilson & Venkateswaran, 2006). Tilson and Venkateswaran (2004) contend “the public relations profession has yet to fully focus on religion either as a topic for discussion or research” (p. 41). The scholars suggest that the value-based, relational-approach of public relations should lead practitioners to include tolerance in their diversity training and industry preparedness. In addition, they recommend public relations professionals move toward a covenantal model of public relations rather than a contractual one (Tilson & Venkateswaran, 2006). Indeed, the industry must prepare for being fully attentive to all types of diversity.

Finally, Hon and Brunner (2000) suggest public relations is most meaningfully linked to diversity when diversity is viewed by organizational members as social responsibility. The scholars contend that this perspective provides “public relations with its greatest opportunity because no other organizational function is charged with balancing organizational and public interests in this way” (p. 336). A social responsibility viewpoint encourages thinking on diversity beyond the short-term to considering long-term symmetrical relationships built on mutual understanding and trust.

Failure to incorporate ethnic diversity in the role of public relations practitioners hinders the two-way symmetrical model (Pompper, 2004). For public relations professionals, failing to adequately capitalize on the integral role of public relations in helping organizations reach minority audiences and manage diversity means the public relations industry “could miss one of the most significant business opportunities we have seen in years” (Kotcher, 1995, p. 6).

Considerations for Both Inside and Outside of the Academy

Since the public relations industry is perhaps the most relevant field for assisting organization's in managing diversity, a number of suggestions can be offered to assist practitioners and academicians in advancing their efforts.

First, companies should assess their current perspective on diversity. Hon and Brunner's (2000) research provide confirmation that it is possible for organizations to value diversity, but have no true commitment to advancing diversity. In the organizations they researched, diversity was perceived by public relations practitioners as either highly embedded in the organization's value system, completely disregarded, moving toward a genuine commitment, or lacking the allocation of resources in order to have a true commitment. An initial step for public relations professionals is to assess the stage in which their organization exists.

Another strategy is to recognize that hiring multi-ethnic employees can be valuable and can assist an organization in its endeavors to reach multi-ethnic communities. At a minimum, recruitment and hiring strategies can help an organization avoid criticism from failing to employ a more racial and ethnically diverse group of individuals (Ford, 2006). In 1993, Ketchum Public Relations hired multilingual and multicultural communications professionals, Ketchum Asociados, based in Miami, to assist the agency in helping clients reach its Hispanic markets (Kotcher, 1995). Also, Fleischmann-Hilliard's Los Angeles office started a Minority Internship Training Program that recruited minority juniors and seniors from colleges and universities (Wilson et al., 2003). Specialized organizational structures, like this, designed to meet the needs of a growing multi-ethnic market can prove beneficial for organizations seeking to have their minority employees play a greater role in tapping minority markets. Indeed, hiring talented professionals who represent the markets to which companies are trying to sell is beneficial. Also,

these same professionals are likely to be proficient in bi-lingual skills as is needed for reaching many ethnic markets (Rose, 2002).

After hiring a more multi-ethnic workforce, organizations will need to ensure programs exist that address the special needs of minority employees (Diggs-Brown & Zaharna, 1995; Kotcher, 1995). Hiring is a first step, but retention is equally important. Kern-Foxworth's (1989b) research suggests that despite the presence of more minorities in public relations positions, problems still remain for these individuals in offering policy input and career advancement, and some research supports the fact that the public relations industry appears "unresponsive to the special needs of ethnic minorities" (Diggs-Brown & Zaharna, 1995, p. 120). The firms surveyed by Diggs-Brown and Zaharna (1995) had no specialized training programs or support groups designed to meet the needs of minority employees. "Knee-jerk" diversity programs have been criticized for having more negative effects with organizations rather than enhancing an organization's hiring and retention efforts (Hone & Brunner, 2000). Therefore, public relations professionals should offer planned, intentional, and strategic diversity programs that follow the four-step public relations process advocated within the profession.

Also, academic institutions must recognize that hiring women and multi-ethnic faculty members not only impacts the nature of teaching in public relations education, but also impacts the output of textbooks, research articles, and monographs (Brunner, 2006; Kern-Foxworth, 1989a; Pratt, 1989). While it is likely true that at the risk of being labeled as feminists, women have been cautioned against researching issues related to their plight (Grunig, 2006), many women (and men as well) have forged along this path anyway. If others follow in this program of research, the visibility and voice of women in public relations textbooks can increase. Giving female and multi-ethnic public relations students the opportunity to interact with faculty

members who have similar backgrounds assists the students in feeling validated and offers a path of scholarship for them to follow. Greater representation of women and multi-ethnic faculty also enhances the profession as the faculty members are invited to serve as guest speakers, conduct workshops, advise or consult organizations, and “interact with organizations that cater to people of color (Ford, 2005, p. 6).

Mentoring in both the academic and professional settings would enhance diversity efforts in the public relations industry as well. Seasoned professionals or faculty members should be expected to give back to the profession by ensuring a younger colleague has access to their assistance, encouragement, and guidance. Pratt (1989) argued for the greater involvement of more seasoned faculty members in enabling junior faculty to grow and to be more involved in scholarly research. Pompper’s (2004) research identified mentoring as a key role played by African American female practitioners in helping to shape future generations of minority public relations professionals.

Greater involvement by women and minority faculty in research submitted through a peer-reviewed process can also help the academy in enhanced diversity efforts. Journals which have blind review processes can provide at least two benefits for women and minority faculty seeking credibility. First, the process can be color- and gender-blind. Second, the process can provide an external source of validation as journals will have acceptance or rejection rates available and published.

Along with supporting the academy with increased minority faculty representation, institutions must seek to support the field of minority candidates by strengthening programs that target minority students and encouraging them to pursue academic careers in public relations. In

this way, “colleges and universities can be the catalysts for transformations and ideals” (Kern-Foxworth, 2000, p. 17).

Another suggestion for the academy is to rethink theory-building in light of considering ethnic diversity’s impact on public relations or multicultural public relations. Numerous articles have focused on the experiences of women and African Americans (e.g., Hon & Brunner, 2000; Kern-Foxworth 1989b, 1989c; Kern Foxworth et a., 1994) and the state of the industry (Elmore & Balmert, 1995); however, theory building has moved slowly (Pompper, 2005). Banks (1995) has offered a multicultural public relations approach based on the social-interpretive theory of intercultural communication, and calls have been made to extend J. E. Grunig’s (1992) excellence model of public relations (Pompper, 2004); however, a greater focus on middle-range theories that bring isomorphic elements found in previous research together would assist the profession in moving towards a comprehensive picture of what is required for public relations efforts which seek to have a long-term impact with multicultural or ethnically diverse audiences.

A final consideration for public relations educators is the need to alter curriculum to include enough specific information for reaching diverse audiences that constitute ethnic markets. Rose (2002) suggests the “current model of curricula of public relations education are not sufficient to adequately address the needs of the Hispanic market” (p. 15). Additionally, Kern-Foxworth (1989a) found curriculum did not represent the reality of the status and accomplishments of women in public relations. Pompper (2005) also explored the perceptions of female African American practitioners and found “overall respondents characterized public relations curricula as still out of step with multicultural world realities to the degree that it is detrimental” (p. 310). The need for public relations curriculum to avoid pigeonholing, stereotypes, and de-valuing appears to be great.

Conclusion

This paper has traced the evolution of women and ethnic minorities in the public relations industry as well as shared some of the extant literature germane to diversity and public relations. A number of conflicting perspectives among practitioners on the role of diversity, the connection between public relations and diversity, and the progress within the industry made in diversity efforts still exists.

Research, however, clearly suggests that women and minorities continue to be underrepresented, paid less, unable to climb the management ladder, and marginalized (Kern-Foxworth, 1989b, 1989c; Pompper, 2004). Perhaps, Hon and Brunner (2000) summarized it best when they argued a “wide gulf alone suggests that the link between diversity issues and public relations continues to be a topic that needs further research and discussion” (p. 332).

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Table 1

*Key People & Events in the History of People of Color in Public Relations**

Year	Person	Significant Event
1934	Joseph Varney Baker	First African American public relations practitioner to gain national prominence by beginning Joseph V. Baker & Associates and serving as public relations consultant for the Pennsylvania Railroad Company
1949	Barbara Harris	First African American woman to handle major corporate accounts by joining Joseph V. Baker & Associates
1969	D. Parke Gibson	Organized the first meeting of the American Association of Minority Consultants; opened own public relations firm in 1960
1970	Frank M Seymour	First multi-ethnic agency to win a Silver Anvil Award from PRSA
1978		PRSA established the first Minority Affairs Task Force
1979	Gerald “Jerry” Lundy	First black elected president of the Philadelphia PRSA chapter
1980	Inez Kaiser	First African American female to open a public relations firm with national accounts
1982		The Black Public Relations Society (BPRS, pronounced beepers) was established
1983		PRSA’s Minority Affairs Task Force was upgraded to the Minority Affairs Committee
1984		The Hispanic Public Relations Association was organized in Los Angeles

1987	Ruby Miller	First woman of color elected to the PRSA National Board of Directors
1988		The Interassociation Council of Atlanta (IAC) was formed in Atlanta by a small, racially diverse group of public relations practitioners from the BPRS, the IABC, and the PRSA
1999	Marilyn Kern-Foxworth	Elected first African American female president of the Association for Education in Journalism & Mass Communication
2005		The Public Relations Coalition, comprised of 23 organizations (including PRSA, IABC, and AWIC) with more than 50,000 members, held a diversity summit entitled, “Focus on Diversity: Lowering the Barriers, Raising the Bar” in New York City

* The primary source of information in this table stems from Kern-Foxworth (1991b) along with additional independent research by the authors.