

Teacher’s Guide to “Diverse Voices: Profiles in Leadership”

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Rationale

The public relations profession continues to evolve as a profession, but still struggles to reflect the evolving diversity of society. The lack of diversity is particularly evident among those emerging professionals—current students and recent alumni—who will lead the field into the next era. Understanding those diverse voices who have changed the face of leadership in public relations will help outline the obstacles to and benefits of increasing diversity and inclusion in the field. This book helps tell the stories of those leaders who have pointed us in this direction in the hope that the field will follow.

Overview

This teaching module aims to enhance student understanding of leadership, diversity and inclusion from the practitioner’s viewpoint. It focuses on the narratives of individuals from underrepresented and marginalized backgrounds in order to highlight the decisions and opportunities that defined their careers.

The module is designed to familiarize students with diverse leaders and guide them through the process of reflecting on their own careers and opportunities. It also teaches students the importance of diversity and inclusion as a core principle of public relations.

Lesson Format

In this one-week teaching module, students will read chapters from the “Diverse Voices” text to learn more about how diverse leadership has developed in public relations. Historically, our guiding public relations texts have omitted the experiences of diverse leaders who helped shape the field we know today. By researching additional materials and analyses of the text, students will be able to understand the history of the field of public relations, how leaders have been developed in the past and the impact of diversity and inclusion on the individuals profiled.

Learning Objectives

By using the “Diverse Voices” text, students will achieve the following learning objectives:

1. Understanding leadership development in public relations by examining chapters in the text.
2. Identifying the challenges and opportunities in public relations from the various narratives of diverse leaders.
3. Reflecting on the path to leadership and history of diversity and inclusion in public relations.
4. Question what is included and talked about and what is still left to be explored.

Activity: Locating and Reading Diversity and Inclusion Research

The instructor will assign selected chapters to the students or allow them to choose one on their own. Once the chapters have been explored, the instructor then will guide students to other research on diversity and inclusion through academic and professional sources by using search keywords that effectively locate material that matches the chapter narrative(s).

Activity: Chapter Questions

The following discussion questions are designed to encourage critical thinking on diverse leadership in public relations. After reading one of the selected chapters and the matching research about diversity and inclusion, please answer the following questions. Students can discuss their chapters in small groups to compare overlapping themes to help them understand in addition to the unique experiences in each chapter.

Sample Response 1: (Denise Hill)

1. Find at least one additional source reporting on diversity in the profession. Summarize the main points of the article. Students should be encouraged to find relatively recent sources and explore a variety of viewpoints / perspectives.

In "It's Time to Address the Lack of Racial and Ethnic Diversity in Public Relations" (<https://medium.com/@uhhray/its-time-to-address-the-lack-of-racial-and-ethnic-diversity-in-public-relations-64afc42b580b>) Aray Rivera explains how diversity and representation in public relations are important to potential clients, media and millennials. He explains that, like Denise Hill, he was often the only person of color in his graduate classes and he fears being the only person of color in his department, team and organization while working in the field. Overall, the burden on diversity should not be only on those who are underrepresented, but should be part of the goal of leadership within the organization.

2. Identify some possible solutions to improve diversity and inclusion in public relations.

Rivera calls on more policy for representation so that firms are driven to be more inclusive in their employment approach. He states that a more diverse-focused work environment is better for the field and society as a whole. And also means you are able to serve your clients and organizations better if you can talk with the variety of stakeholders that your organization serves.

3. Diversity and Inclusion are different things. How would you explain the difference, and why is distinguishing between the two important?

4. Explain some of the similarities and differences that you saw between the narrative in the text and the external source.

Both authors talk about the need for the profession to change to match society. It was interesting to see that both authors at two different time periods were experiencing similar struggles to find representation and inclusion in their classes and in their workplaces. Based on the research in the Rivera article, some firms seem to be moving in the right direction, but it needs to be a larger movement from every firm to match the demographics of society today. This will require everyone to help facilitate change and a commitment by leadership.

Activity: Personal Reflection

The instructor will ask students to choose a chapter from the text. Then they will be asked to reflect on diversity and inclusion in public relations and their experience related to the concepts covered in the text and through additional resources.

Sample Reflection Essay:

Write a short essay describing a situation where you were asked to interact with a group or public that made you feel uncomfortable because you felt you didn't know a lot about the group?

Questions you might address include:

- What were your thoughts about the chapter after reading it?
- How well do the text and resources discussed in class highlight your actual experiences?
- How well do the text and resources reflect how you feel about yourself and your own professional goals?
- What have you done to increase diversity and inclusion in work that you have produced? What new ways can you think about including elements of diversity and inclusion?
- What specific experiences did the narrative bring to mind that exemplify (or counter) the kinds of things it's designed to get you thinking about?
- Are there experiences of certain identities ***not*** reflected in the text?

Additional Resources:

Blanche, A. (n.d.). Eight Ways to Make Your D&I Efforts Less Talk and More Walk. Retrieved September 21, 2018, from <http://firstround.com/review/eight-ways-to-make-your-dandi-efforts-less-talk-and-more-walk/>

Chitkara, A. (2018). "PR Agencies Need to Be More Diverse and Inclusive. Here's How to Start." *Harvard Business Review*. Retrieved from: <https://hbr.org/2018/04/pr-agencies->

[need-to-be-more-diverse-and-inclusive-heres-how-to-start.](#)

Fiske, R., Ross, A., & Kennen, H. *PRSA Diversity and Inclusion Toolkit*. Retrieved September 21, 2018, from PRSA website: https://www.prsa.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/2016-PRSA-Diversity-and-Inclusion-Toolkit_FINAL-2.pdf

Gower, K. (n.d.). "Educate & Elevate. An Educator's Guide to Empower Others to Change the World." The Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations. Retrieved from: <http://plankcenter.ua.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Educators-Toolkit.pdf>

Logan, N. (2011). "The White Leader Prototype: A Critical Analysis of Race in Public Relations." *Journal of Public Relations Research*, Vol. 23 Issue. 4, pp. 442-457.

Mundy, D. (2015). "From Principle to Policy to Practice? Diversity as a Driver of Multicultural, Stakeholder Engagement in Public Relations." *Public Relations Journal*, Vol. 9. Retrieved from: <http://apps.prsa.org/intelligence/PRJournal/Documents/2015v09n01Mundy.pdf>.

PRWeek. (2018) "What it's like to be black in PR." <https://www.prweek.com/article/1456118/its-black-pr>.

Tindall, N. (2015, February). *PRDiversity: The Keys to the Kingdom*. Retrieved from <http://prsay.prsa.org/2016/02/22/prdiversity-the-keys-to-the-kingdom/>

Toth, E. (2009). "Diversity and Public Relations Practice." Institute for Public Relations. Retrieved from: <https://instituteforpr.org/diversity-and-pr-practice/>

Wright, N. (2018, February 21). Another perspective on being black in PR. Retrieved from <https://www.prweek.com/article/1457756/perspective-black-pr>

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