

Increasing the Visibility of Advertising Research on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA): The Status of Minoritized Groups in Advertising

The advertising industry has seen increased scholarly interest in issues of diversity and inclusion. Most research regarding increasing diversity and inclusion in our field has focused specifically on historical representations of diverse groups, fantasized images, and (mis)treatment of ethnic and racially diverse populations within the workplace.¹

While practitioners acknowledge that diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) is an important endeavor for all brands alike.² However, the industry still lags behind current and forthcoming population changes and trends before we can fully understand the ways in which exclusive practices have affected the field.

More recent scholarship regarding DEIA in advertising includes the use of social identity theory and distinctiveness theory,³ often applied to assist in understanding the constructions of both internal and external communication, as brands attempt to keep pace with ever-changing population and media landscapes. As industry professionals, our efforts towards equity can and should inspire both practitioners and academics to champion inclusion efforts that lead to better outcomes created in more diverse workplaces. Still, more must be done.

Within this vein, studies have also shown that DEIA provides a competitive advantage in a changing marketplace in which consumers demand congruence between mission statements, representation, and daily practices, including industry pipelines and promotional ladders to leadership.⁴ Agency and brand commitments to higher standards have also become a major focus of interest as some organizations such as R/GA, McKinney, and W2O Group have created more measurable markers for accountability, including transparent demographic reports; university/agency partnership pipelines, especially with those institutions serving minoritized communities, such as historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and Hispanic-serving institutions (HSIs); and co-sponsored programs, such as One School and 600 & Rising, among others. Still, gaps between what would be ideal versus the industry's current standing show room for great improvement. As we continue to strive for more inclusive spaces within the advertising industry, additional research is needed to understand the barriers to entry, leadership ladder lag, and positive change. *Advertising & Society Quarterly* is committed to challenging the status quo by

elevating higher standards of diversity and inclusion in our profession, both academically and within the industry space.

Advertising & Society Quarterly's Special Issue: *Increasing the Visibility of Advertising Research on DEIA* is accepting proposals for pieces focused on diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility. More specifically, this special issue seeks to explore how the industry has and can harness DEIA as a tool for growth and societal impact. Preference will also be placed on the potential of advertising to support social justice initiatives and empower US-based ethnic- and racially- marginalized communities.

For this special issue, *ASQ* is seeking research papers, think pieces, teaching articles, and curated collections of sample advertisements (which *ASQ* can publish in color, audio, and video) that explore and reflect upon strategies in advertising spaces that centralize DEIA in numerous ways. Potential foci include but are not limited to the following:

1. Studies of ad campaigns charged with increasing awareness and understanding of agency/brand commitment to DEIA.
2. Analysis of current advertising and diversity practices and identifying opportunities for improvement.
3. Discussion of best practices to develop pathways for jobs and/or promotional opportunities to US based ethnic/racial marginalized populations in advertising.

Some other topics of consideration may include:

- Brand or agency champions on the challenges of DEIA
- Academic and industry partnerships for employment pipelines
- Tackling DEIA advertising leadership ladder lag
- Progress in DEIA brand communication
- Inclusive advertising strategies
- Historical analysis of DEIA in advertising
- Diversity representation in advertising
- Unconscious bias in ad agencies, in-house agencies, other advertising related spaces
- Strategies for multicultural advertising
- Vocabulary of diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility, and belonging in advertising (e.g., using DEI vs. DEIB vs. DEIA, etc.)
- Diverse cultural representations in internal and external communication

- Career advancement opportunities and challenges for diverse populations
- Cultural sensitivity and awareness in advertising
- Ethnic and racial targeting in advertising
- Woke washing
- Performative allyship
- Promoting diversity and inclusion through the creative process
- Forthcoming industry DEIA considerations (i.e., AI bias, algorithm implications, VR access limitations)

We invite article proposals from US and international scholars and practitioners in academic and workplace contexts. Particularly, we encourage scholar-practitioner collaborations that explore the following questions:

- How has the recent upsurge in conversations about diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in our societies shaped advertising practices?
- What strategies are advertising scholars and practitioners using to encourage conversations about diversity and inclusion in the workplace?
- How can practitioners leverage their influence to redress anti-Black, racist, and unjust practices in the advertising field?
- How can agencies and brands diversify leadership ladders for minoritized groups?
- How might practitioners unlearn, revise, and re-envision racist and oppressive discourse and practices in the advertising field?
- How can diversity initiatives marginalize or exclude people of color and other minoritized groups?
- How can advertising theories inform how scholars and practitioners work to redress inequities internally and externally?
- How can advertising communicators in the academy and industry work together to address inequities?
- How are dominant discourses disrupted at the workplace by majority and/or minoritized groups?
- How do diversity initiatives in advertising help us to understand the connections or relationships between access, power, and agency?
- How do organizations connect with, engage, and empower practitioners from different backgrounds?

- What policies or practices in advertising are considered discriminatory?

This is a sample list of questions, but we welcome any proposal related to advertising DEIA in theory, method, and/or practice.

Interested authors should submit a 500-word proposal in Word document format to the guest editor, Dr. Sydney Dillard, by 5pm Central, Friday, December 15, 2023 (sdillar2@depaul.edu).

The proposal and subject line of the submission email should be titled: ASQ Special issue: DEIA_Last name proposal submission. The proposal should also include a clear indication of the article's topic, its alignment with the special issue call, its contribution to the study of advertising and society, theoretical background, methods, and anticipated data/evidence. Chicago style footnotes should be used.

Authors submitting proposals will be notified if they are selected to submit full articles for review by January 26, 2024.⁵

Full drafts of articles will then be due for anonymous peer review by April 5, 2024.

The anticipated publication date for the special issue is the Spring 2025 issue of *Advertising & Society Quarterly* (roughly April 1, 2025).

If you would like to submit a paper outside of this special call, please refer to the journal's general [Call for Papers](#).

¹ Sven Brodmerkel and Richie Barker, "Hitting the 'glass wall': Investigating Everyday Ageism in the Advertising Industry," *The Sociological Review* 67, no. 6 (2019), 1383–1399, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038026119837147>; Judy Foster Davis, "Representation Matters: An Illustrated History of Race and Ethnicity in Advertising," *Advertising & Society Quarterly* 21, no. 3 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.1353/asr.2021.0002>; Kathleen Franz, Paul Chaat Smith, Fath Davis Ruffins, Cynthia Meyers, and William M. O'Barr, "Virtual Colloquium: Smithsonian Curators Reflect on Documenting the Representations of Race/Ethnicity/Diversity in Advertising," *Advertising & Society Quarterly* 21, no. 4 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.1353/asr.2020.0025>.

² For clarification of the terms, diversity represents the presence of a variety of different individuals and groups with distinct characteristics, backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences, while equity addresses the fair treatment, equal opportunities, and just distribution of resources to ensure that all individuals have a level playing field and can thrive regardless of their differences. Inclusion focuses on creating an environment where all

individuals feel welcomed, respected, valued, and included in decision-making processes, regardless of their backgrounds or identities. Accessibility targets removing barriers and providing accommodations to ensure that individuals with disabilities or diverse needs can fully participate and have equal access to opportunities, services, and facilities.

³ For example, see Wei Shao, Yunen Zhang, Anni Cheng, Sara Quach, and Park Thaichon, “Ethnicity in Advertising and Millennials: The Role of Social Identity and Social Distinctiveness,” *International Journal of Advertising* (2023), <https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2023.2172663>.

⁴ Shao et al.

⁵ Being selected to submit full articles for the special issue does not guarantee publication. All articles will undergo anonymous peer review. The editors encourage authors of submissions not recommended for inclusion in the special issue for consideration in a regular issue according to the instructions on the submission page <https://muse.jhu.edu/journal/18/doc/calls.html>.