

EXPLORING CULTURE: AGENTS, STRUCTURES AND DIVERSITY WITHIN CHICAGO ADVERTISING AGENCIES

The US advertising and public relations industry has long struggled with diversity, inclusivity and equity, and it is clear that there is a dire need for increased focus on fostering diverse, inclusive and equitable cultures inside advertising agencies. To examine the relationship between social structures and the agents within them, Giddens' structuration theory helps illuminate how cultural norms and behaviors shape individual professionals' behaviors, and in this specific case, how that impacts DEI efforts inside advertising and public relations agencies. Semi-structured interviews with nine advertising and public relations professionals in the Chicago metropolitan area provide insight into the DEI initiatives of advertising and PR agencies, as well as the social structures and barriers to progress in their own agencies. Beyond that, professionals' responses inform potential strategies that advertising and PR agencies may employ to advance DEI initiatives and improve organizational culture.