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Excellent leadership in Public Relations: A question of experience and the PR practitioner

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Excellent leadership in Public Relations: A question of experience and the PR practitioner

by

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Abstract

To better understand excellent leadership in public relations (PR) of developing and experienced PR practitioners, this study focuses on the important qualities and dimensions of excellent leadership practitioners. This study continues on the work of Meng, Berger, Gower, and Heyman (2012) in their attempt to advance understanding of leadership in the PR field.

According to the study's participants (N = 72): strategic decision-making capability, problem-solving ability, and communication knowledge and expertise are the three most important qualities of excellent leadership. Moreover, respondents rated that communication skills training, individual initiative and desire, and on-the-job experiences lead to excellent PR leadership. About half of the respondents indicated that PR leadership differs in three ways from leadership in other fields: ability to strategically construct messages, possession of comprehensive vision of how communication connects an organization to its publics in the larger social system, and the possession of an unwavering belief in the importance of honest and ethical organization communications and actions.

Minimal differences between the importance levels of excellent PR leadership variables are noted; all the excellent PR leadership variables clustered around the "very important" score. It is presumed that one's stance toward excellent PR leadership reflects the current deficiency or the lack of experience one is experiencing in the realm of PR leadership.

Chapter one: Introduction

When one would compare a less experienced public relations (PR) professional with a more experienced PR professional, which conclusions can the observer draw? Are developing practitioners more gullible because of missing experience? Are experienced professionals better at decision-making than the lesser experienced? What does the term experience mean in the context of PR? Why does it contributes to successful decision-making in the PR realm?

This study first, attempts to narrow the gap between less experienced and more experienced PR practitioners, by making the differences between lesser-experienced and more experienced PR practitioners more explicit. The objective of the second phase of this study was to provide useful recommendations or reviews to a PR audience (consisting of educators, professionals, and students) improve the PR leadership realm.

This study uses *PR Excellence Theory* and the *Contingency Theory of Accommodations*, as its theoretical grounding, since both theories perform an important role in helping understand the processes of PR communications. In addition, the study about "Excellent Leadership in PR," from Meng et al., 2012), was used as a base-measurement for this study.

Many studies (e.g. J. E. Grunig, 1984, 1993, 1997, 2006; L. A. Grunig, J. E. Grunig, & Dozier, 2002; Hellweg, 1989; Hung, 2005; Meng et al., 2011; Meng et al., 2012) in the PR field try to disclose variables that affect or have an effect on PR practitioners. For example, a proposed method for optimal communicating is the two-way symmetrical approach. Other studies (e.g. Cancel, & Mitrook, 1999; Cancel, Cameron, Sallot, & Mitrook, 1997) describe that although an optimal way in communication is possible, it depends on many other variables. However, most research remains at a very descriptive status; a translation from descriptive to practical is seldom seen in the scientific field of PR.

To merge the PR theoretical and PR practical worlds together, this study focuses on the different perceptions of the themes of "Excellent PR Leadership" compared with the degree of experience in the PR field. No contemporary study attempts to narrow the bridge of experiences in the PR field. Furthermore, this study applies Gruning's Two-Way Symmetrical framework, incorporated with the Contingency Theory of Accommodations—that postulates that the most optimal communication "depends" on many other variables.

The importance of this thesis is that it provides an explanation of the different stances of lesser and more experienced PR practitioners. That is to say, when a less experienced practitioner knows the "pitfalls" about PR decision-making, the person can take full consideration of factors impacting the communication processes before implementing the decisions. Moreover, it gives developing practitioners a better foothold when defending certain plan of actions (decisions). On the other hand, the findings from this research also help senior PR practitioners that lead, educate, or work with junior PR practitioners, by understanding the cavities of the experience-gap. Additionally, this study may be beneficial for the education field, since educators can focus on the experience gap-differences, enhancing the applicability of the theoretical course objectives with the real-life practitioners' field. Similarly, it may make students more aware of their decision-making (dis)abilities and capabilities.

The study has five parts: Chapter one contains the introduction and problem statement; Chapter two introduces a literature review; Chapter three articulates the methodological explanation; Chapter four details the results; and Chapter five provides a discussion.

Chapter two: Literature review

An important aspect of a PR practitioner is dealing with key publics (Blaney, Benoit, & Brazeal, 2002; Coombs, 2000; Cunningham, 2005). This can be share- and stockholders, but also internal personnel and other significant parties. One could ask the question "who are the publics?" A better description for publics is "target." For this study, a company's important target has, more or less, an influence on the company's continuity. Since so many businesses have so many different targets, a static definition is hard to state. Therefore, the "publics" are those who have a relationship with the company.

Moreover, "key-publics" are those who have a "significant" influence on each other's relationship; hence, the company and the key-target depend on one another. Additionally, "significant" is a relative term and the implication of it can differ for every company and situation. For some companies "significant" can be the public that affect the financial aspects of the company, while for other companies "significant" can be those who affect the company's perceived image. In sum, the term "significant" depends on the context.

Researchers (Luecke, 2007; McIntosh & Luecke, 2011) differentiate six main publics for an organization. The segmentations are based on relationship characteristics and the appropriate communication medium that most likely have the highest impact on its publics. The importance to understand the organizations' publics parallels many studies (e.g. Cancel et al., 1997; Claeys, Cauberghe, & Vyncke, 2010; Coombs, 2007; Grunig, 1997, 2006; Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2002; Hearit, 2006, Kim, 2011; Shin, Heath, & Lee, 2011; Sisco, 2012).

The publics are segmented as employees, investors, customers, suppliers, community leaders, and regulators/government agencies (see table 1). Additionally, some segments have subsegments; an organization can differentiate its customers in, for example, purchasing power, financial influence, or special (communication) needs.

However, table 1 is incoherent, since the medium types excludes contemporary communication mediums like email, blogs (Jin & Liu, 2010), online platforms (Gonzalez-Herrero & Smith, 2010), and social media (Byrd, 2012); besides the notion that technological communication always changes/develops (Barnhurst, 2011; Kotcher, 1992). One could conclude that when an organization differentiates its publics, the appropriate *digital* mediums must be selected and regularly revised to maintain comprehensive communication control over its publics. Moreover, the organization's spokes-person must matched the publics' most desirable organization representative, to increase the validity of the message.

TABLE 1: Public segmentation and optimal communication methods

Segment	Key message	Media	Timing	Spokes-person
Employees	Jobs in new place; retraining program	Companywide meeting; letter to each employee	Prior to press conference, frequent follow-up	Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
Investors	Full disclosure of the change	Letter to share-holders; webcasts	Immediately	CEO, investor relation
Customers	Making changes to serve you better; changes will make the company stronger; no disruption of orders or services	Letter to all purchasing managers; industry trade magazine	Concurrent with press release	Vice President of marketing
Suppliers	Change will make the company stronger	Letter to all; personal calls to suppliers	Immediately	Corporate supply-chain manager
Community leaders	Full disclosure of the change	Meeting with community leaders	Prior to press conference	CEO
Regulators, Government agencies	Full disclosure of the change	Registered letter	Prior to press conference	CEO

Note. Adapted from "Crisis Management Master the Skills to prevent Disasters Mastering the Media." by R. Luecke, 2007, *Harvard Business School Press*, 207.

Professionals and researchers (e.g. Coombs, 1999, 2000, 2007; Gonzalez-Herrero, &

Smith, 2010; Jin, & Liu, 2010; Schwarz, & Pforr, 2011; Sisco, 2012; Valackiene, 2010; Zerman, 1995) defend the notion that preparation—through crises plans—is the key of coping with crises. However, during a crisis, "communication" is the upmost aspect to maintain control over the situation (Coombs, 2000; Valackiene, 2010); mainly because flourishing rumors are hard to control, and can have a negative effect on the company's future communication and credibility (Perloff, 2010).

Coombs (2000), a prominent scholar in the crisis communication field, describes seven crisis response-strategies of how a company can respond during crises (attack-the-accuser, denial, excuse, justification, ingratiation, corrective action, and full apology). Moreover, he classifies a variety of crises (rumors, natural disasters, malevolence, accidents, and misdeeds) and crisis factors that a company can employ during crises (evidence, damage, identifiable attacker, viable scapegoat, factual distortion, resonance of challenge, privilege/financial interest, performance history, and greater goals) (Coombs, 2000, p. 38-39). Moreover, Coombs (2007) emphasizes that all crises have, more or less, unique features but display two traits: they "are unexpected (we might know one might hit but not when) and [they are] negative" (p. 135). Therefore, a crisis starts with a sudden unwanted situation, which can create a temporary uncontrollable fear or anxiety, followed by a period of time when one tries to resolve the unwanted situation, by returning to the initial "noncrisis" situation. Moreover, several communication methods and strategies exist about how to respond to crises when they are occurring.

Because a crisis, in general, affects many publics, Springston and Keyton (2001), conducted a study of a group of communicators, to develop a technique to comprehend the dynamics of multi-public environments; described as Public Relations Field Dynamics (PRFD). PRFD is beneficial for PR practitioners because it elucidates the potential impact of an action but also the interaction between those individual publics in a wider environmental context (Cunningham, 2005). The PRFD model is composed out of three axes (based on three questions) and deals with potential influence, friendliness, and self- or community-orientation of given parties. PRFD applies each aspect on a scale of one (low) to ten (high). Furthermore, the aspects are arranged on a three-ax graph, along χ-, γ-, and Z-axes (Cunningham, 2005; Springston & Keyton, 2001). PRFD uses a 12-item Likert instrument and a three-item semantic differential instrument to answer the three questions. There are some benefits of using a three-axes graph (Springston & Keyton, 2001, p. 119):

- Three dimensions are viewed as mutually exclusive
- Placement on one dimension does not predict placement on other dimensions
- Placement on a dimension is not seen as inherently good or bad
- Allows behavior and perceptions to be tracked over time within a comparative framework
- Provides a system to see if the impact of a public's internal dynamics on the larger interdependent field

Theory of excellence

The theory of excellence describes that the main value of PR lies in the relationship between the organization and its publics (J. E. Grunig & Hunt, 1984). The question that this theory tries to answer is, "How must public relations be practiced and the communication function organized for it to contribute the most to organizational effectiveness?" (J. E. Grunig & L. A. Grunig, 2000, p. 304).

The theory of excellence identifies four major categories of effective PR applications (J. E. Grunig & L. A. Grunig, 2000):

> First, goal attaining (organizations are effective when they meet their goals), second, systems approach (organizations are effective when they survive in their environment and successfully bring in resources from the environment that are necessary for their survival), third, strategic constituencies (these are the elements of the organization's goals or help to attain them), and forth, competing value approach (provides a bridge between strategic constituencies and goals). (p. 306).

The last category provides several communication models or modes of how an organization can communicate with its publics: Distinctively, Press Agentry/Publicity Model, Public Information Model, One-Way Asymmetrical Model, and Two-Way Symmetrical Model. These models are categorized by two communication traits, one-way or two-way communication, between the company and its publics. The normative theory of excellence is two-way symmetrical communication between the organization and its publics.

To make the theory applicable for practitioners, J. E. Grunig (1997), attempted to mold the communication models into a four-quadrant matrix. The four-quadrant model uses the quadrants: direction, purpose, channel, and ethics. Two axes are represented: first, the γ-axis represents one-way symmetrical communication (disseminating information), and second, the χ-axis is the two-way symmetrical communication (exchange of information through formative and evaluative research) (J. E. Grunig, 1997, Yun, 2006). The excellence theory was proposed to offer a captivating model for PR practitioners to achieve a higher degree in their profession (Cameron, Cropp, & Bryan, 2000). However, researchers and practitioners (Cancel et al., 1997) had difficulty with the excellence theory because it was purely descriptive and inapplicable for public relation practitioners in real-life situations.

Developments of the Contingency Theory of Accommodations

The Contingency Theory of Accommodation was promulgated as an alternative to the normative theory of excellence in PR (Cancel, Cameron, Sallot, & Mitrook, 1997). The Contingency Theory of Accommodations can been seen as a logical extension of the normative theory of excellence in PR (i.e. limitations perspective and introduction) and is based on of many studies (David & Pierson, 1998; Dozier, L. A. Grunig, & J. E. Grunig, 1995; J. E. Grunig, 1976, 1984, 1992; J. E. Grunig & L. A. Grunig, 1989, 1990, 1992; Hellweg, 1989; Leichty & Springston, 1993; Long, 1987; Murphy & Dee, 1996; Pearson, 1989; Plowman, 1998; Plowman et al., 1995; Pollack, 1984, 1986; Sallot, 1993; Schneider, 1985a, 1985b; Springston, Keyton, Leichty, & Metzger, 1992; Tompkins & Cheney, 1985; Turk, 1986; Vasquez, 1996).

The Contingency Theory of Accommodations offers qualifications and reservations of the excellence theory (Cameron, Cropp, & Reber, 2001). From an extensive literature review, Cancel et al. (1997) classified 87 variables "for inclusion in the matrix of factors affecting the degree of accommodation undertaken by public relations practitioners" (p. 31). The authors conclude, "The Contingency Theory of Accommodation is a logical extension of work to date on models of public relations. The theory provides an alternative to normative theory and a structure for better understanding the dynamics of accommodation as well as the efficacy of accommodation in public relations practice" (Cancel et al., 1997, p. 56).

The Contingency Theory of Accommodation was not promulgated to replace the excellence theory, but to provide an additional (scientific) view on the PR field; moreover, the Contingency Theory of Accommodations remains normative in purpose. Cancel et al. (1997) describe three arguments; first, the stance an organization takes towards its publics is constantly changing/moving (from models to a continuum), second, the organization's stance on the continuum depends on many variables (matrix of contingent factors), and third, disentangling technique from stance (excluding specific tactics and models). Just as with the theory of excellence, the Contingency Theory of Accommodation is a descriptive theory, the theory tries to explain the variables that affect a PR practitioner. This becomes clear since the Contingency Theory of Accommodations focuses on the stance(s) of the organization; the tactics and implementations are not enclosed in the explanation of the theory (Cameron, Cropp, & Reber, 2001).

Cancel and Mitrook (1999), found support for a continuum from pure accommodative to pure advocacy in a matrix, which includes 86 variables, affecting the continuum. Furthermore, the researchers made categories of the identified variables and grouped them. Moreover, Cameron, Cropp, and Reber (2001) provide support for a continuum for the Contingency Theory of Accommodation. They comment on the theory of excellence, because in some circumstance an organization is not "able" or "allowed" to talk with its publics (i.e. "legal constraints or moral convictions against compromising with a public") invalidating the excellence theory's discernment (p. 242). Hence, the symmetrical or accommodation stances cannot be taken during some situations (Cameron, Cropp, and Reber, 2001; Jin & Cameron, 2006).

Reber, Cropp, and Cameron (2003), examined—through an in-depth analysis—a case study to illustrate the dynamics of conflict management in PR, in relation to the Contingency Theory of Accommodations, to validate the stances taken by the organization towards its publics. Their findings suggest that the term "contingency theory of management" is more appropriate than the term "Contingency Theory of Accommodation." They take this stance because in their case study, managing the organization's publics seems to the key element of the process. Interestingly, after postulation of their term, "contingency theory of management," research does not reflect this specific statement. Moreover, the study displays that, "many practitioners spend a great deal of time and attention on investor and stockholder relations, key publics that are not given a great deal of ink in scholarly journals" (p. 21). From their findings, one could conclude that the PR field is objectivity flawed because it mainly focuses on a group that has a strong financial power. The statement by itself analogues a pleonasm, since investors and stockholders are part of the key-publics (Brønn, 2007). Furthermore, the researchers suggests that "conflict management should be a key component of PR scholarship, including the study of how PR can be conceived as the managed conduct of conflict in public forums" (Reber, Cropp, & Cameron, 2003, p. 21).

Reber and Cameron (2003) arranged the contingency variables and disclosed five theoretical constructs for the contingency theory: external threats, external public characteristics, organizational characteristics, PR department characteristics, and dominant coalition characteristics. The findings propagate that "the veracity of concepts central to the Contingency Theory of Accommodation in PR and justify additional operationalizing and testing of contingencies" (p. 444).

Huang (2004) developed a multiple-item scale, called the PR Stance Assessment, and included five dimensions (mediated communication, social activities, interpersonal communication, two-way communication, and symmetrical communication). The overall conclusion was that "this study serves as a starting point for extending the present theory of models of public relations" (p. 321). Moreover, this study can be used to better understand the organizational perception of PR strategies, and improve PR practice (Yan & Cameron, 2006).

Cunningham's (2005) research is the first study that attempts to assess how the Juxtaposed Integrated Matrix (JIM)—a crisis communication tool—can function with the Contingency Theory of Accommodations. Moreover, Cunningham (2005) applies the PRFD structure with the situational variables of the Contingency Theory of Accommodations, and endeavors to amalgamate the theories into a single practical tool for PR practitioners. The matrix describes, on a scale from zero to 10, the χ -axis as "demands" (continuum of unreasonable as advocacy; zero, to reasonable as accommodative; 10), the γ-axis as "culpability" (continuum of advocacy as no; zero, to accommodative as yes; 10), and the Z-axis as the potential damage to the organization. The quadrants propose seven appropriate response strategies to the company's publics (Coombs, 1999).

The Juxtaposed Integration Matrix has the goal to work as a decision-support process; hence, to give an organization a quick strategic level-assessment of the situation before employing specific tactics, or to function as a supporting system. Additionally, the Juxtaposed Integration Matrix attempts to use the situational variables from the contingency theory and tries to address the variables in three primary questions; conclusively, to make working with all the contingency variables more manageable. The questions are to help in predetermining the stances of the organization towards its publics. See figure 1 for a visual view.

The three questions, proposed by Cunningham (2005), correlate with the three (γ, χ, and Z) axes: First, how culpable is the organization? (to address the relative power held by the organization and its publics, the urgency of the situation, potential costs or benefits, and the present or potential threats). Second, how reasonable are the public's demands? (to address the power both sides possess, obvious or perceived threats, the cost or benefit to the organization and the characteristics of the external public). Third, how damaging is the situation to the organization? (clarifies the strength of the organization's position based on the two previous questions, by answering the potential and obvious threats, the relative power of both sides and the potential costs) (Cunningham, 2005, pp. 14-16). The results from the questions can then be plotted on a graph to explain if the organization's stance should lie on the contingency continuum (Cunningham, 2005). Furthermore, the situational variables included the five stances: first, "urgency of the situation," second, "characteristics of the external public's claims or requests' claim or requests," third, "characteristics of the external public," fourth, "potential or obvious threats," and fifth, "potential cost or benefit for a corporation from choosing various stances" (Cancel et al. 1999, p. 189).

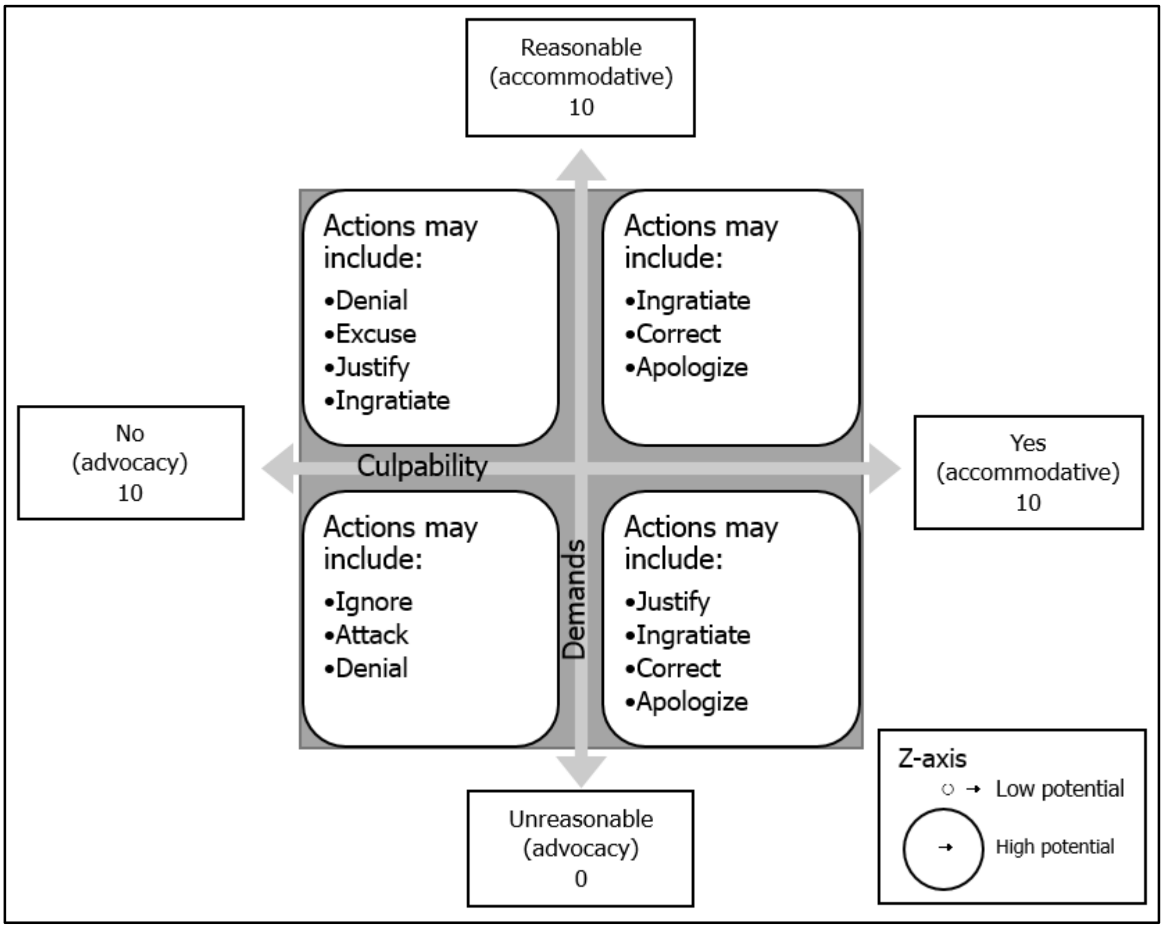

FIGURE 1. Juxtaposed Integration Matrix
Note. This overview is adapted from "Juxtaposed Integration Matrix: A Crisis Communication Tool" by J. H. Cunningham, 2005, p. 19.

Furthermore, "the relative power of the two publics in an interaction was identified as a variable" (p. 190). The following step is to select the appropriate course of action. Coombs (2000) identifies seven possible actions for communication with their publics during crises (attack-the-accuser, denial, excuse, justification, ingratiation, corrective action, and full apology) (p. 38).

Cunningham (2005) includes the variable "ignore the public" as an optional communication tactic. Figure 1 depicts the entire juxtaposed integration matrix, where each response strategy corresponds to the quadrant on the matrix.

Cunningham's (2005) results promulgate three important themes, which affect the practitioners' decision-making process during crises. First, experience; ties into confidences in decisions and the ability to effectively communicate. Second, relationships; suggests the give-and-take of social reciprocity. Third, a "gray" area; parts of public affairs that are situationally dependent or otherwise not clearly defined by regulations or policies (Cunningham, 2005, p. 34-35). Cunningham's (2005) themes parallels other research about the importance of PR practitioners during crises and variables for practitioners (e.g. Coombs, 2007; J. E. Grunig & L. A. Grunig, 2000; Lee, 2011, 2012; Lee & Cheng, 2012; Meng, 2009; Meng et al. 2012; Schwarz & Pforr, 2011; Valackiene, 2010).

Although Cunningham's study tries to justify three questions in relation to the JIM, there are some notable critical flaws. The qualitative study is conducted from three army PR practitioners, making generalizable conclusions not possible. Moreover, the study postulates three questions, but the questions inquire about the company' own stance towards its own publics, it is purely a self-examination model. Self-examination can lead to heavily biased conclusions and observations. As an example, if self-examinations were so successful, how is it possible that so many companies fail to communicate with their publics successfully (i.e. British Petroleum's, Deep Water Horizon Accident)? For an organization, it is wise to know the organization's perception of its publics; however, if the company's perception is not compared with actual data, the matrix just remains a self-examination tool.

Furthermore, the response variables, allotted in the matrix, do not have scientific support that they are placed correctly. Besides, the variables are vaguely stated, as, "the reaction 'may' include," this also implies that other possibilities "may" be possible, invalidating the matrix functionality. Moreover, the question, "how culpable is the organization?" should be better defined. What defines a culpable organization—is it the decision-makers' experience, the organizational financial power, or the company's ethical decisions? As an example, a manager could say, "yes we are culpable, and I give it score of eight" but what does score actually say? The score remains vague and relative. In addition, one could pose the question, "How consistent are the decision-makers stances?" Personal situations and circumstances (cognitive and conative) can affect the objectivity from any observer (Babbie, 2010; Saunders et al., 2003). Additionally, there is no standardized formula or questionnaire given—for example, what decides the risk-effect of the "Z-axis"? Is the Z-axis financially supported or is it assumed? Finally, because there is no formula, the matrix results abate its sustainability.

This study does not want to undermine a practitioner's experiences (see chapter experience and leadership), but this matrix, in its current form, is not applicable as a rectification model in the PR field. The variables in the matrix are too vague and no standardized questionnaire is proposed. The matrix needs refinement or should include other (working and tested) models.

Later, Shin, Cameron, and Cropp (2006), attempt to qualify the 86 contingency variables, "to construct a simple overview of the contingent factors, through factor analysis" (p. 283). This research continues with grouping the contingency variables, as a continuation from Cameron, Cropp, and Reber's (2001) research.

Shin, Cameron, and Cropp (2006) grouped 86 contingency variables in 12 factors on two dimensions, internally and externally (see table 2). The distinction of the variables helps in clarifying the internal and external communication factors; however, this remains highly descriptive and the table is not easily applicable for professionals.

TABLE 2: Quantification of the contingency factors on two dimensions

Dimensions	12 factors	86 contingent variables
External factors	External threats	litigation, government regulation, potentially damaging publicity, scarring of organization's reputation, and legitimizing activists' causes
	Industry environment	changing or static industry, industry competitors/competition, and industry resources
	Political/social/ cultural environment	political support of business, social support of business, and powerful members or connections
	Public power	public size, organization's advocacy, and public's communication
	Public relationships	past successes or failures of public, whether the public has PR counselors, community's perception of public, past media coverage of public, whether the public representatives know/like organization's representatives, public's willingness to dilute its cause, and public moves and countermoves
Internal factors	Organization's development	geographical dispersion/centralization, organization's use of technology, employees' homogeneity/heterogeneity, organization's age, and organization's knowledge growth
	Organization structure	distribution of decision-making power, job rules of employees, and hierarchy of positions
	PR department independence	past training of employees, hierarchical location of PR department, representation in top management, practitioners' experience in handling conflict, PR department's communication competency, and PR department autonomy
	PR department government	PR department funding, top management support, and PR department of external environment
	Top management characteristics	political value of top management, management style, and management altruism level
	Individual characteristics	personal ethical value, tolerance with uncertainty, comfort level with change, comfort level with conflict, ability to recognize potential or existing problems, openness to innovation, grasp of others' world-views, dogmatic personality, and predisposition towards negotiation
	Individual capabilities	individual communication competency, ability to handle complex problems, how to receive, and process and use information

Note. Adapted from "Occam's Razor in the contingency theory: A national survey on 86 contingent variables" by J. Shin, G. T. Cameron, and F. Cropp, 2006, Public Relations Review, 32(3), pp. 282-286.

From this point on, research attempts to clarify the different stances from the Contingency Theory of Accommodation, through statistical validation, case studies, and coalescing multiple theories.

Jin and Cameron (2006) developed a "scale for measuring stance as degrees of accommodation, which advances contingency theories at the measurement level" (p. 9); based on Huang's (2004) PR Stance Assessment, with five dimensions (mediated communication, social activities, interpersonal communication, two-way communication, and symmetrical communication). Moreover, the 54 items were compiled—from Shin (2003) and Huang's (2004) studies—to measure how practitioners' stance towards accommodative variables answers the five dimensions (see appendix 1). Concisely, the study clarifies the "accommodation" variable on the Contingency Theory of Accommodations' continuum.

The results promulgate two clusters of enactments of the accommodation stance: *Action-Based Accommodations* and *Qualified-Rhetoric-Mixed Accommodations*. These two enactments have each, a five-item cluster; the stances would meet the reliability and validity standards and can be applied in PR practice (See table 3; See appendix 5 for the complete table with factor loadings figures). Moreover, the results indicate that the 10-item instrument measures that stances are reflecting: "satisfying internal consistence within each factor," and "the subscales for each cluster of stance enactments," reflected reasonability and parsimony (p. 7).

The research describes, "*action-based accommodations* as yielding to the public's demands, agreeing to follow what the public proposed, accepting the publics' propositions, agreeing with the public on future action or procedure, and agreeing to try the solutions suggested by the public" (p. 9). Hence, agreeing with the publics' demands to engender a solution.

TABLE 3: Structural Analysis in Enactments of Stance as Degrees of Accommodation

Factor	**Items**
Factor 1 Action-Based	1. To yield to the public's demands
	2. To agree to follow what the public proposed
	3. To accept the publics' propositions
	4. To agree with the public on future action or procedure
	5. To agree to try the solutions suggested by the public
Factor 2 Qualified-Rhetoric-Mixed	1. To express regret or apologize to the public
	2. To collaborate with the public in order to solve the problem at hand
	3. To change my own position toward that of the public
	4. To make concessions with the public
	5. To admit wrongdoing

Note. Adapted from "Scale development for measuring stance as degree of accommodation" by Y. Jin and G. T. Cameron, 2006, *Public Relations Review*, *32*, pp. 423–425.

Moreover, the study defines, "*qualified-rhetoric-mixed accommodations* as expressing regret or apologizing to the public, collaborating with the public in order to solve the problem at hand, changing his or her own position toward that of the public, making concessions with the public, and admitting wrongdoing" (p. 9). Hence, *Qualified-Rhetoric-Mixed* is acquiescing to the publics' perceived desire, which is to hear a certain message from the company.

Both strategies do not imply that the approach is in any form either negative or positive; the strategies simply describe a particular anticipated stance taken by an organization towards its (internally and/or externally) publics.

Furthermore, the research suggests that the indexes enclose the domain of accommodation as a key aspect of stance movement on the contingency continuum (Jin & Cameron, 2006). In addition, the study disseminates that the variables "advocacy" and "accommodation" on the continuum must been seen separately, since the terms are not synchronously applicable. Meaning, that the variables do not have apposing definitions on its spectrum.

Drawing forth on the previous research, Jin and Cameron (2007) consolidate the variables from the Contingency Theory of Accommodations (from their 2006 study) with the Contingency Theory of Conflict Management. The authors noticed that the Contingency Theory of Public

Relations strongly relies on the threat concept; their study assesses two dimensions (threat type and duration) with the "public relations practitioners' cognitive appraisal of threat, affective response to threat, and the stances taken in threat-embedded crisis situations" (p. 255). Hence, the study finds support for variables affecting PR practitioners' decision-making process during crisis.

Jin and Cameron's (2007) statistical support for two independent variables, which classify the effects a crisis can have on a PR practitioner, are: threat type (internal and external) and threat duration (long-term and short-term). Moreover, they classify three outcomes of threat: (a) cognition level; (perceived necessities of company's demands and resources), (b) affective level (emotional valence and arousal), and (c), conative level (stance movements). The conative level correlates with the stance from the Contingency Theory of Accommodation.

When a PR practitioner is exposed to long-term threats, the practitioners perceive much lower situational demands when the threats are internal than when they are external (Jin & Cameron, 2007). Moreover, the results emphasize that PR practitioners in crisis situations have higher situational demands perception, and require more organizational resources when exposed to external threat than internal threat.

The main corollary from Jin and Cameron's (2007) study is:

> When a public relations practitioner is involved in crisis situations, external and long-term threats lead to the most severe consequence: The practitioner tends to perceive more situational demands and need more organizational support; the practitioner also needs to have better affective management to deal with the more intensive negative feelings triggered by the turmoil at the moment; as a result, the more accommodative stances chosen by the practitioner might lead to more accommodative recommendations and actions when designing media strategies and crisis communication plans. (p. 276).

One could postulate the following descriptive formula about how crisis situations affect the decision-making process of a PR practitioner:

$$Decision = \{Stance \begin{cases} Factor\ 1 \\ Factor\ 2 \end{cases} \begin{cases} Cognitive \\ Affective \\ Conative \end{cases} \begin{cases} Threat\ type\ (internal/external) \\ Threat\ duration\ (short/long) \end{cases}$$

Mitrook, Parish, and Seltzer (2008) attempt to comprehend media relations, community relations, and foundation through a qualitative case study from a Florida NBA franchise; in an effort to illustrate the Contingency Theory of Accommodation in the practice of PR. The research states, the organization moved "along the continuum from advocacy to accommodation in its public relations efforts…" (p.261).

The general development in PR is that the field moves to a, relative, new realm of Relationship Management Theory; which combines symbolic and behavioral relationships into one function, where "symbolic relationships [are] building… behavioral relationships between an organization and its publics" (J. E. Grunig, 1993, p. 125).

After surveying contemporary literature, about the Contingency Theory of Accommodation (CTA), a variety of questions can be proposed. First, the CTA operates in the extent of the Excellence Theory (two-way symmetrical communication), implying optimal communication between a company and its publics. CTA claims, the communication-flow—between an organization and its publics—depends on a variety of factors. However, since the variables "advocacy" and "accommodations" are not antonyms (see Jin & Cameron, 2006), and no study elucidates a correlation between the variables, one could logically deduct that the interaction, or the stance-movement on the continuum, does not portray (positive, neutral, or negative) linear movement.

Second, a variety of research (e.g. Hung, 2005; Ki & Hon, 2008; Pynnönen, Ritala, & Hallikas, 2011; Waters & Bortree, 2012) denotes different relationship aspects that affect a company's successfulness. Overall, when the communication degree between the company and its publics is high, the organization tends to be more successful (justifying the Excellence Theory). However, when an organization acts defensive about communication from its publics, it does not demonstrate willingness to accept the public stance; hence, it rejects the stances from its publics.

Swinth (1967) describes the traits of *trust relationship*, and states, "if each exposure is met with acceptance, there is continual build-up of trust, a growing confidence that they will not hurt each other intentionally" (p. 335). On the other hand, when one rejects another's stance, there is decline in confidence in the relationship. Moreover, *rejection* has many other negative psychological consequences on relationships (Marr, Thau, Aquino, & Barclay, 2012).

Therefore, one could deduce that when an organization is willing to interact with its publics and is willing maintain a "healthy" customer-business relationship, an organization always moves towards a more accommodative (receptive /accepting) stance.

Third, no study describes the degree of relationship between an organization and its publics; all studies continue with the descriptive framework of two-way symmetrical communication (Excellence Theory) between an organization and its publics. From a practical perspective, an organization does not, or cannot have optimal communications with *all* its publics; there are numerous variables that affect the recipients' comprehension about received messages (i.e. technological limitations, languages or jargon, or relationship degree with the organization).

The three themes that are allotted as important for PR practitioners are: experience, relationship, and a "gray" area.

Public Relations Themes

Experience

Studies (Bortee, 2011; Meng, 2009; Meng et al. 2012) emphasize that a PR practitioners' experience has a significant influence on successful decision-making. Experience is "the knowledge or skill acquired by experience over a period of time, especially that gained in a particular profession by someone at work" (Oxford University Press, 2012). It also includes the observations of a particular event that leaves an impression, or something one has encountered or underwent (Oxford University Press, 2012). Experience contributes to an increase of understanding; however, an undergoing does not automatically bequest more knowledge or skills. How a person renders an undergoing depends if the experience contributes to more understanding (Hallett, Nunes, Bryant,

& Thorpe, 2012). Furthermore, the contribution of a new experience is perceived from the person himself, making it relative; therefore, it is possible that one person increases his/her knowledge while the other person does not increases his/her knowledge. A practitioner with a high degree of experience can be called an expert, since an expert is a "person who has a comprehensive and authoritative knowledge of or skill in a particular area" (Oxford University Press, 2012).

Moreover, knowledge is the understanding, which is "known in a particular field or in total; facts and information" (Oxford University Press, 2012). A logical deduction is that when experience does not increase understanding it should be, instead, labeled as an "undergoing." Therefore, experience is the cognition, which leads to an accumulation of understanding, which can be reproduced through knowledge and/or practical acquisitions.

Cunningham (2005) states that experience leads to a "greater confidence in decision [making] and overall ability to conduct PR more effectively" (p. 35). The biggest limitation of his study (attempting to make JIM more manageable by asking three questions) is that the study's sample does not represent the PR field in general. On the other hand, Meng et al. (2012) disclose qualities of excellent leadership in PR, from a study of mid- and senior-level PR executives (N = 222). The study reveals that strategic decision-making capabilities, abilities to solve problems and produce results, as well as, communication knowledge and expertise are the most important qualities of an excellent leader in PR. Furthermore, PR practitioners become excellent through the following sources: on-the-job experiences, individual initiative and desire, and examples set by excellent role models (see appendix 4 for complete scheme) (O'Neil, 2003; Meng et al., 2012). The findings were consistent with Cunningham's (2005) research, but also other studies (e.g. Berger et al., 2007; Choi & Choi, 2009; Werder & Holtzhausen, 2009). Moreover, Meng et al. (2012) emphasize that, communications management for "organizational effectiveness at the organizational and societal levels" are the most important general aspects (Cunningham, 2005, p. 33).

Conclusively, experience leads to better decision-making capabilities since the variables positively correlate with each other.

Based on the themes (Self Dynamics, team collaboration, ethical orientation, Relationship Building, Strategic Decision-Making, and Communication Knowledge Management) from Meng et al. (2012), this research can postulates the following questions:

RQ_1: What is the effect of PR experience on the stance of a PR practitioner?

$RQ1_a$: What are the different stances taken between a lesser and a more experienced PR practitioner toward *self-insight*?

$RQ1_b$: What are the different stances taken between a lesser and a more experienced PR practitioner toward *shared vision*?

$RQ1_c$: What are the different stances taken between a lesser and a more experienced PR practitioner toward *team collaboration*?

$RQ1_d$: What are the different stances taken between a lesser and a more experienced PR practitioner toward *ethical orientation*?

$RQ1_e$: What are the different stances taken between a lesser and a more experienced PR practitioner toward *relationship building*?

$RQ1_f$: What are the different stances taken between a lesser and a more experienced PR practitioner toward *strategic decision-making*?

$RQ1_g$: What are the different stances taken between a lesser and a more experienced PR practitioner toward *communication knowledge management*?

$RQ1_h$: What are the major stance-differences between a lesser and a more experienced PR practitioner in the framework of *excellent PR practitioners*?

RQ2: Experienced PR practitioners will be more confident than less experienced PR practitioners will.

Decision-making

One could say that the main pursuit in PR' scientific research is about decision-making; hence, making the best decision in different situations. Decisions are the cognitive processes to make a judgment, create an opinion, decide something after processing, or to resolve a question (Oxford University Press, 2012). Hence, a decision leads to a conclusion or resolution after consideration. Decisions can be made from three perspectives, or a combination of those. First, psychological perspective (one's mental and physiological needs). Second, cognitive perspective (decisions made because of one's interaction with the environment). Third, a normative perspective (logic of decision-making and rationality, and the invariant choice it leads to) (Kahneman & Tversky, 2003). Thus, the core of how a decision is made depends on one's perspective towards a "problem."

There are many decision-making processes (see Nutt &Wilson, 2010) but in general it starts with problem recognition, problem defining, information collecting, decision making, implementation, and evaluation. Moreover, Taylor (1974) categorizes four problem types and the state of familiarity of an issue, see table 4.

When the familiarity of problem is high, less cognitive rendering takes place. Additionally, the term "crisis" is applicable for all problem-types except Type 4. Since type four is a well-structured problem, the initial "panic" moment does not take place.

The data, which one can use to make decisions, can be from any source, which leads to a conclusion; this can be experience, intuition, qualitative or quantitative data, or a combination of those. An important note is when data is incomplete, biased, or does not reflect the reality; it is hard to make correct conclusions. This is separate from the analytical capabilities of the decision maker. One could postulate the question, "How do you make a good decision?" or, "What is the framework of a good decision?"

TABLE 4: The different problem types

Problem type	Initial state	Terminal state	Transformation
Type 1. Resource and specification problem	unfamiliar	varies	varies
Type 2. Goals specification problems	varies	unfamiliar	varies
Type 3. Creative problem	varies	varies	unfamiliar
Type 4. Well-structured problem	familiar	familiar	familiar

Note. Adapted from "Nature of problem ill-structuredness: Implications for problem formulation and solution." by R. C. Taylor, 1974, Decision Sciences, 5, 632-643."

During the decision-making process, the consequences of a decision are analyzed for multiple parties, or communities. A community is "a group of people living in the same place or having a particular characteristic in common" (Oxford Dictionaries, 2012). The moral principles of a community are called ethics. Furthermore, the community's moral is "concerned with the principles of right and wrong behavior and the goodness or badness of human character" (Oxford Dictionaries, 2012). In a simple sense, ethics is about right and wrong (Lee, 2010; Johnson, 2012) and is discussed many PR journals (e.g. *Journal of Mass Media Ethics, Journal of Public Relations Research, Public Relation Quarterly,* or *Public Relations Review*). Moreover, Lee (2010) confirms that age, work experience (knowledge), and the number of ethics courses taken in one's PR career are significant aspects when making "good" decisions; which parallels other studies (Lee, 2011; Lindberg, 2012a, 2012b; Meng et al., 2012). Hence, a good decision is the beneficial consideration between group A and group B, or more groups.

Since the term "gray areas" has so many similarities with decision-making.

Gray areas

Cunningham (2005) describes certain "gray areas," which affects the practitioners' decision and interpretation capabilities. In sum, the "gray areas" are all other variables that affect the practitioners' decision-making; correlating with the contingency theory of accommodations' proposition, "it depends" (see variables on previous shown table 2). Moreover, an interesting point that Cunningham (2005) highlights is that "gray areas" relate to the practitioners' *gut-feelings* or *intuitions*; which is in essence synonymous (Khatri & Ng, 2000).

Limited studies—in relation with strategic decision-making—are conducted about these themes; the studies conducted are solely from a psychological perspective and do not shed much light on practical applications in the decision-making realm. Unfortunately, the inclusion and discussion about these "gray areas" in the PR field is puerile. The study from Khatri and Ng (2000) is one of the few that tries to expound intuition in the business and decision-making realm.

The rational and intuitive cognitions are described in Cognitive Continuum Theory (from the psychology and the neuroscience fields), which offers a continuum from pure intuitive to pure analytical with three quasirationality variables (namely; mostly intuition and some analysis, equally intuitive and analytic, and mostly analysis and some intuition) (Dhami & Thomson, 2010; Hammond, 2010). One could deduct that decision-making has three general traits, rational decision-making (through reason and argumentation), intuitive decision-making (through instinct and unjustified argumentation), and the decision-makers' characteristics (see figure 2).

The interfaces (A, B, & C) on figure 1. describe the interaction between the two rendering traits affecting the decision maker's stance. Moreover, the interfacial combinations, A and/or B, with "C" is the actual decision or stance after rendering towards a problem; hence, $(A|B) + C = stance$.

Dunwoody, Haarbauer, Mahan, Marino, and Tang (2000) describe that analytical thoughts are characterized by a high level of conscious control and have a slow processing rate; and intuition is not methods-driven and is not "integrated by a task-specific formula, but by a weighted average strategy" (Dunwoody et al., 2010, p. 37).

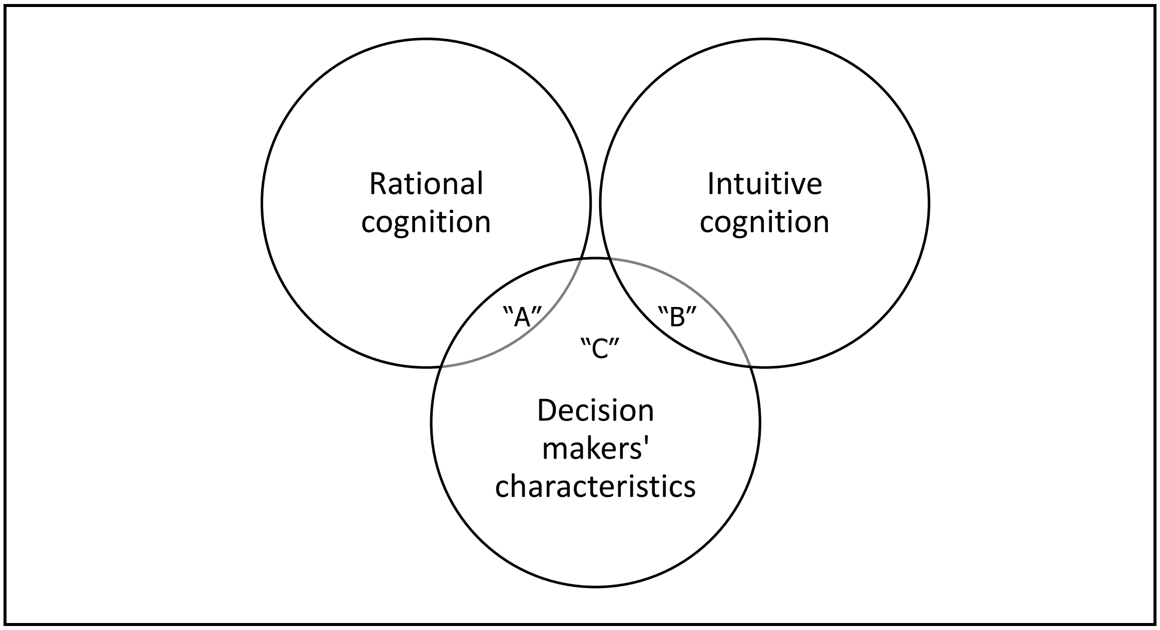

FIGURE 2. Decision-rendering process
Note. This is a visualization rendering of a the sources used in this study

Moreover, the researchers found proof that rational (analytical) cognition produced more extreme errors that intuitive cognition. See table 5 for a complete overview of the contingency variables of the analytical approach and the intuitive approach.

Prietula and Simon (1989) state, intuition is a form of sophisticated reasoning "based on 'chunking' that an expert hones over years of job-specific experience" (Khatri & Ng, 2000, p. 59). Moreover, intuition entails years of experience in problem-solving and decision-making, and is grounded upon a solid and complete grasp of the details of the business (Isenberg, 1984; Khatri & Ng, 2000).

Intuitive synthesis employs three components (Kharti & Ng, 2000): first, judgment, which is an entire scientific field on its own but concisely, it is wisdom and ethical understanding acquired through one's life; Second, experience, one's synthesizable and reproducible knowledge about a certain matter; Third, gut-feelings, which is a physical and/or mental manifest one can experience facing a choice or decision (Agor, 1990; Harper, 1988; Harung, 1993; Parikh, 1994; Vaughan, 1990). Consequently, "intuitive synthesis involves judgment, relies on past experiences, and manifests itself in the form of 'gut-feelings'" (Kharti & Ng, 2000, p. 67). With the list of Dunwoody et al. (2010) a decision maker can quickly classify when he/she is relying on intuition or on an analytical approach.

TABLE 5: Differences between ‘analytical and intuitive’ traits and inducing

Characteristics of analysis and intuition	
Analysis	**Intuition**
High insight into judgment process, and hence, publicly retraceable	Low insight into judgment process, and hence, difficult to retrace and defend
Low confidence in outcome, high confidence in method	High confidence in outcome, low confidence in method
Cues are objectively evaluated	Cues are perceptually evaluated
Slow rate of processing	Fast rate of processing
Errors few, but large when they occur	Errors normally distributed
High cognitive consistency	Low cognitive consistency
Task characteristics that induce analysis and intuition	
Analysis-inducing	**Intuition-inducing**
Less than five cues	More than five cues
Successively presented cues	Simultaneously presented cues
Low cue redundancy	High cue redundancy
Unequal weighting of cues in ecology	Equal weighting of cues in ecology
Cues objectively measured	Cues perceptually measured
Nonlinear cue functions	Linear cue functions
Organizing formula available	No organizing formula available
Task outcome available	Task outcome unavailable

Note. Adapted from “Cognitive adaptation and its consequences: A test of cognitive continuum theory.” by P. T. Dunwoody, E. Haarbauer, R. P. Mahan, C. Marino and C.-C. Tang, 2000, *Journal of Decision Making*, *13*(1), pp. 35-54”

Nevertheless, there is one important undiscussed theme about intuition: “When is intuition right or wrong?” Most studies only describe the phenomena intuition, but the effectiveness of intuition remains opaque. More research about this topic is necessary.

Interestingly, the three intuitive components match the *sources contributing variables* from Meng et al. (2012) study about excellence PR leadership. One could propose that height of the *sources contributing variables* (accumulations of all variables) contributes to the effectiveness of intuitive decisions in excellent PR leadership. With this knowledge this study postulates the following question:

Hypothesis 1. There will be a significant difference in the sources contributing variables in relation with a PR practitioners' experience.

With this understanding, one could complement (with intuition or analysis) the descriptive formula about the decision-making process of a PR practitioner.

$$Decision = \{Stance \begin{cases} Factor\ 1 \\ Factor\ 2 \end{cases} \begin{cases} Cognitive \\ Affective \\ Conative \end{cases} \begin{cases} Intuition \\ Analysis \end{cases} \begin{cases} Threat\ type\ (internal/external) \\ Threat\ duration\ (short/long) \end{cases}$$

After the Cognitive Continuum Theory's introduction, the theory researched itself into a loophole. The originator, Hammond stated in 2010 that a "lack of development is due to an overly narrow theoretical posture" (Hammond, 2010, p. 327). Furthermore, he wants to transform the Cognitive Continuum Theory into a new theory named Unjustified Cognitive Theory; however, this theory is lacking contemporary theoretical support.

Conclusively, intuition is an important aspect in decision-making, but due to a lack of research this phenomena is poorly justified, included, and combined in decision-making. Moreover, intuition can positively contribute in crisis situations since it functions quickly. The biggest down side is that intuitive decisions are hard to justify. Without further research, one could conclude that a practitioner with more experience is more effective in intuitive decision-making.

Decision-making in PR is complex, since PR practitioners have to deal with relationships of multiple internal and external publics and simultaneously, consider multiple options of approach. Moreover, relationships are under extra pressure during crises (Jim & Cameron, 2007; Valackiene, 2010).

Relationships

Research (J. E. Grunig, 2000; L. A. Grunig, J. E. Grunig, & Dozier, 2002) emphasizes that the value of communication, in PR, is of pivotal importance for building connections with the organization's publics. Moreover, studies articulate the importance of communication in relationship building; which results in a contribution to an organization's reputation. Bortree (2011) states, "that while reasons for relationship initiation play a powerful role in the organization–public relationship, organizations can minimize the impact through relationship management" (p. 48).

A predictor for two key elements in relationships, trust and commitment, is *satisfaction* (Ki & Hon, 2007; Waters & Bortree, 2012). The level of satisfaction seems to relate with the communality of the relationship (Waters & Bortree, 2012). Moreover, satisfaction is, "fulfillment of one's wishes, expectations, or needs, or the pleasure derived from this" (Oxford Dictionaries, 2012). Hence, when there is satisfaction in a relationship, both parties bequest, more or less, each other's expectations. Thus, when an organization does not move to a more accommodative stance (on the CTA) to its publics, the satisfaction—in fulfilling one's wishes, expectations, or needs—declines; ergo, endangering the relationship.

In addition, there are three types of organizations distinguishable, which affect the publics' relationship expectations; first, personal (non-profit organization/volunteer relationship); second, professional (retailer/consumer relationship); and third, community (political party/member relationship) (Bruning, Langenhop, & Green, 2004; Ledingham, & Bruning, 1998; Ledingham, Bruning, & Wilson, 1999; Waters & Bortree, 2012). Accordingly, the publics' initial type of relationship determines the expectations of an organization. Further, publics evaluate an organizations' relationship through four main relationship qualities: trust, control mutuality, commitment, and satisfaction (Dimmick, Bell, Burgiss, & Ragsdale; 2000). How an organization performs on those variables, according to its publics, is situational. Based on practitioners' input, Meng et al. (2012) confirm that relationship-building abilities are the forth-important quality of an excellent leader in PR (see appendix 1).

Hung (2004) separates eight types of relationships on a continuum. Additionally, the study describes the most beneficial relationship-type for an organization and its publics, the "win-win zone" (see figure 3).

Importantly, enhancing relationships or tactics for improving relationships is outside the scope of this study; nevertheless, they play an important role in the successfulness of managing the organization's publics in any situation.

The eight types are described, in seven bullets, as:

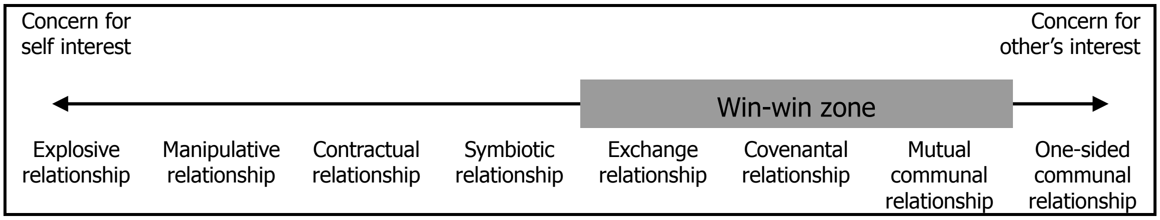

FIGURE 3. Continuum of types of relationships
Note. This figure displays the continuum of relationship types. Adapted from "Exploring types of organization-public relationships and their implications for relationship management in public relations." by C. F. Hung, 2005, *Journal of Public Relations Research*, *17*(4) pp. 393-426.

To put all the above in context, one could ask the questions: "Why should a theory be contingent?" and "When is a continuum applicable?"

Contingency theory

Contingency theory is a class of social theory that assumes that there is no best way to organize an organization, to manage a company, or to make decisions (Cameron, Sallot, Mitrook, 1997; Cancel & Mitrook, 1999; Cameron, Cropp, & Reber, 2001; Reber, Cropp, & Cameron, 2003; Reber & Cameron, 2003; Itzkowitz, 1996). The contingency theory has gone through different development stages. The first contingency theories were engendered in the 1960s (Itzkowitz, 1996). In the philosophy field contingency is defined as, "true by virtue of the way things in fact are and not by logical necessity" (Oxford University Press, 2012). Contingency theory is a development of sociologists that contrived to excel beyond the philosophical legacy by substituting empiricism and rationalism with the notion of social interaction (Itzkowitz, 1996). One could conclude that an optimal method "depends" on different variables and that there is not "one" way to achieve an optimal decision, simply because situations are too compounded.

There is a conspicuous correlation between contingency theory and chaos theory; chaos theory has applications in the realms of biology, economics, engineering, philosophy, and physics (Kiel & Elliott, 1996).

Chaos theory and system theory

Chaos theory attempts to disclose behavior as a dynamical system, without defined boundaries, which is highly sensitive to initial conditions (traits) (Alligood, Sauer, & Yorke, 1997). In sum, chaos theory describes attractors (variables) which have an unknown effect on other conditions, which makes predictions (as to the best solutions) extremely hard. This parallels with the contingency theory, which assumes that the way things in fact are does not have to be from logical rendition.

Moreover, Springston and Keyton (2001) state that the integration of other theories provides a rational augmentation of each theory. One could postulate that theories from other fields can be applied in multiple disciplines. Hence, sociologists attempt to divulge a wider spectrum of variables that affect decision-making and processes. Moreover, they have "borrowed" theories from other fields and endeavored to amalgamate them in the social science field.

The opposite of chaos theory is system theory; system theory applies a framework wherein systems or humans work (Fitch & Jagolino, 2012). System theory has two perspectives, a "closed" system theory perspective and an "open" system theory perspective (Catsigeras, 2011). A closed system has boundaries wherein (descriptive) systems functions. Moreover, system theory, in the social science realm, also discusses the effect of social structures and postulates that the social structure can—more or less—predict human behavior (Fitch & Jagolino, 2012). Allegorically speaking, in a "closed" system there is no exchange of heat with the surroundings, since the parameters are static and the system is not affected by outside variables. While an "open" system enable to exchange all of its heat, variables have an effect on the system but the system itself still operates within its parameters (or limitations). Making predictions in system theory is more manageable since the variables have a known effect on attractors. When one would place them on a span; the chaos theory can be paralleled with the contingency theory (it *depends*) and the system theory can be paralleled with theory of excellence in PR (there is *a* way for optimal behavior).

One could make the hypothetical conclusion, because the two outer-pole theories (system theory and chaos theory) are ostensible in our universe, that they are both applicable, but in which degree the theories interact with each other depends on circumstances. The notion of this hypothetical conclusion is that one theory cannot exclude the other theory. Moreover, because, the contingency theory postulates that there is no best method in general, thus threating to delegitimize its own theory. Nevertheless, to have a comprehensive picture about the differences, both theories have to be discussed.

Why continuum theories are applicable, one has to describe theories and models first.

Theories and models

In the scientific realm, scholars try to explain certain behaviors or occurrences in a variety of disciplines. Science is "the intellectual and practical activity encompassing the systematic study of the structure and behavior of the physical and natural world through observation and experiment" (Oxford University Press, 2012). Moreover, researchers attempt to disclose phenomena through theories; scientific theory—in communication science—can be defined as "a formal system of concepts and relationships tying these concepts together, with the functions of explaining, predicting, and allowing potential control over real-world phenomena" (Pavitt, 2000b). In a latter study, Pavitt (2010) adds the "function of describing" to the scientific theory definition. Moreover, other research discusses that scientific theory also needs to embrace facts (observations), laws (natural occurrences), inferences (leading to conclusions), and must be tested though hypotheses (Babbie, 2010; National Academy Press, 1998; Pavitt, 2010).

Berger (2005) is more specific, and defines that "a theory consists of a set of interrelated propositions that stipulate relationships among theoretical constructs and an account of the mechanism or mechanisms that explain the relationships stipulated in the propositions" (p. 417). There is a multitude of definitions about "theory," however, in a general sense, a theory is "a supposition or a system of ideas intended to explain something, especially one based on general principles independent of the thing to be explained" (Oxford University Press, 2012).

Baran and Davis (2012, p. 12) classified four major categories in communication theory: first, postpositivism (theory based on experiential observation directed by the scientific method), second, hermeneutic theory (the study of comprehending, specifically by interpreting action and transcript), third, critical theory (theory pursuing to understand how those, in an observed social situation, interpret their own share in that situation), and fourth, normative theory (theory seeking emancipation and alteration in a dominant social order). Furthermore, Miller (2005) proposes that all those theories "share a commitment to an increased understanding of social and communicative life and a value for high-quality scholarship" (p. 32).

Additionally, Miller (2005) states that the theory's goals, ontology, epistemology, and axiology differ in some ways. Baran and Davis (2012) complement Miller's notion and state that "these differences not only define the different types of theory, but they also help make it obvious why the definition of social science in mass communication theory is necessarily flexible" (p. 12). Hence, a theory is the logical deduction of stratified assumptions about an idea or observations, supported by data (Baran & Davis, 2012).

There are two divisions whereby scientific theory categorizes itself: it encompasses a model, and it should include a scientific explanation (Pavitt, 2010); which are described in the following paragraph:

Models and explanations

A model, in its simplest meaning, is a structure of what a theory represents (Frigg & Hartmann, 2012). In a more general sense, a model is a "simplified description, especially a mathematical one, of a system or process, to assist calculations and predictions" (Oxford University Press, 2012). Before a model can be used, it is important to understand the different types of models and their functionality.

It is possible to identify three reasons why scholars use models (Frigg & Hartmann, 2012). First, models can function as complements of theories (Redhead, 1980). Some theories appoint general limitations but do not disclose concrete data; models can help generate complementary data which can enhance the theory (Frigg & Hartmann, 2012). Second, models can assist when theories are too complex to understand (Redhead, 1980). In some scientific fields, the proposed theory is so complex that (simplified) models can ameliorate the theory's justifiability. This is applicable to social science, where models are used to help reveal certain human decisions and thinking patterns. However, Baran and Davis (2012) state that "most of the significant and interesting forms of human behavior are quite difficult to measure" (p. 9). Furthermore, models are also used in complex mathematical sciences like physics, engineering, or quantum mechanics. Third, models can function as preliminary theories. Models can help to shape and reshape theories when they are in their developing stage (Leplin, 1980).

Furthermore, Pavitt (2010) denotes three functionalities of models; they can be classified as physical, conceptual, and formal. A physical model describes a structure or process, and has two subtypes. First, a scale model is applied when a model exemplifies itself through the procedure of physical material. Second, a physical process model, when a model measures or symbolizes the actions of an event. For example, when a scale submarine is tested in a water tunnel the scale submarine represents the physical object. Furthermore, Pavitt (2010) states that these models do not have to be part of a particular theory, but are used for testing a physical outcome.

The second functionality is the conceptual model; this model is used to accommodate a symbolic representation of a procedure. An example is the water (evaporation) cycle, whereby a schematic model displays the different phases of the water evaporation cycle (Bollasina & Nigam, 2011). There are two subtypes within the conceptual model category. First, a structural model, helps to authenticate the theory's purpose; this is mostly done through diagrams and drawings (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2003) like the water evaporation model. Second, is the symbolic process model, this model is used to postulate representations of a theory, but does not present "hard" data, in the sense that the assumptions are not obvious to quantify (Babbie, 2010). An example, in social science, is the Elaboration Likelihood Model, which describes how attitudes are formed through two commination routes (Perloff, 2010).

Or, the Third-Person Effect Theory, which assumes that people's perceive mass communicated messages, have a different influence on themselves than on others (Golan & Banning, 2008).

The last functionality is formal models. These types of models attempt to disclose, abstractly, the relationships among theoretical notions (Pavitt, 2010). This model can be applied when one endeavors to compare abstract communication variables over a span of time to elucidate certain patterns. This model normally displays itself through an equation or via a diagram (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2003). See table 6 for an overview of the stated model classifications. Conclusively, a "simplified model" does not imply that any of the model's theoretical assumptions are excluded. However, a "simplified model" makes a theory easier to comprehend. Therefore, models can be used for different situations and reasons, but the overall notion is that a model displays a simplified structure what a theory represents.

TABLE 6. Model classification

Type	Category	Function	Object
Scale	Physical	Structure	Physical substance
Physical process	Physical	Process	Physical activity
Structural	Symbolic/conceptual	Structure	Diagram
Symbolic	Symbolic/conceptual	Process	Verbal analogy
Formal	Symbolic/formal	Process	Equation or diagram

The rendition from a theory to a model creates numerous difficulties, which can negatively affect its usefulness (Hodges, 2012). There is no standardized format or set of rules how to construct a model. However, there are two phases notable. First, the theoretical translation into a framework. The creator must correlate the variables into a "simplified" outline. The second phase is testing if the model validates the theoretical notions in relation with the model's validity. The difficulty with developing a model is that the model ought to correspond with the theoretical assumptions (Frigg & Hartmann; 2012). It can take years before a model is accurately tested, and displays the functions and assumptions the theory represents.

A good example of a model development is the mass–energy equivalence. Several scientist—Albert Einstein, Johannes Stark, Louis de Broglie, and Max Planck—were discussing the theory in the early 1900s, and the first proposed model in 1907 was, $M_0 = E_0/c^2$, which later changed into $e_0 = m_0 c^2$, and in the late 1940s it changed into, $E = mc^2$ (Isaacson, 2007). The process of model formulation almost took half a century. Hence, a model is functional when it is tested and when the model displays the assumptions of the theory, which can abide several years.

It is noticeable in science that the pretheoretical phase starts with hypotheses, which is molded into a theory. Before the theory is grounded, and thus can function correctly, it must be tested through qualitative and/or quantitative research methods (Babbie, 2010; Deady, 2011; Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2003). Moreover, if the model's outcome differs from the theory, it contemplates either that the theory is not complete or that the model measures phenomena which the theory excludes, or both.

Frigg and Hartmann (2012) postulate that, although models help science "there remain significant lacunas in our understanding of what models are and of how they work." Their perception is based on the lack of knowledge of the relationship between models and theories.

Since the Contingency Theory of Accommodation is proposed as a continuum this study explains this term more in-depth in the next paragraph.

Continuum

When models are do not function without revisions or alteration, it is possible that a model can functions as a continuum. Furthermore, a continuum can also be used when the variables of the span are hard to quantify. As an example, the unquantifiable term "love" can be places on a continuum scale since there are no quantifiable poles of "love," one can "love" much or less but it remains relative. Relating this to the Contingency Theory of Accommodation, an organization can have accommodative or advocacy behavior, this is also relative. In contrast to static models, something is wet or not, or there is light or not.

When the theory's variables gradually change overtime, which affect the theory and therefore the model, a continuum can be proposed (Steven, 1946). A continuum elucidates the difference when gradual changing measureable changes, without unforeseen variations or discontinuation (Steven, 1946). Oxford Dictionaries defines a continuum as "a continuous sequence in which adjacent elements are not perceptibly different from each other, although the extremes are quite distinct" (Oxford University Press, 2012). Moreover, a continuum is in contrast with categorical theories or models, which explain variation using qualitatively different states (Steven, 1946). But in short, when a theory's validity abates over time, and the theory needs revisions and alterations to be contemporary one could consider the theory appropriate for a continuum.

Nevertheless, not all theories are suitable for continua. Theories that propose nondichotomous variables (neither "yes" or "no"), who change over time in its own spectrum, lean more towards continua (Cameron, Cropp, & Bryan, 2000). On the other hand, dichotomous variables (either yes or no), categorized as nominal categorical or ordinal, who attempt to validate particular, more static, patterns are less suitable for a continuum (Cameron, Cropp, & Bryan, 2000). One could say that, "it depends on the theory and what the theory attempts to disclose." Therefore, a continuum is the result of multiple revisions of a theory, which in all likelihood never leads to a definitive theory or model but needs to be revised to be au courant.

Chapter three: Method

The method of this thesis includes two phases. The first phase explicates the differences between a lesser and more PR practitioner; an online survey through the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) generates the necessary data. The survey was created with *Qualtrics*, an advanced web-based survey application. The second phase of this research analyzes the data through SPSS 20 and engenders recommendations and conclusions for the PR field.

The *survey instrument* of Meng et al.'s (2012) research is applied for this discourse. That is to say, this thesis continues on the examination-format from Meng et al.'s (2012) study so that it can answer the proposed research questions. Therefore, this discourse is not attempting to test, alter, or criticize the existing survey instrument, unless obvious errors become apparent. If inconsistencies in the respondents' data are to occur, this study address them sufficiently. Consequently, pretesting the survey instrument or the variables is of lesser importance because the explanations about how the variables are produced can be found in earlier studies (see Meng, 2009; Meng et al. 2011; Meng, et al., 2012).

To briefly explain how the selection of variables were engendered, the original pool of items, classified for excellent PR leaders, consists of 85 statements. A latter refinement of the scale was done through several methods, in-depth interviews through 37 senior PR executives and professionals, and statistical refinements; the final scale was proposed in Meng's (2009) study. Seven key themes were classified for excellent PR leaders, namely; Self Insight, Shared Vision, Team Collaboration, Ethical Orientation, Relationship Building, Strategic Decision-Making, and Communication Knowledge Management. Those seven themes each had four to eight questions reflecting the degree of importance about excellent PR leadership. An important note for all proposed dimensions of PR leadership is that the internal consistency has a minimum of .70, satisfying Nunally's (1978) criterion for internal consistency. This is used to estimate the reliability of a psychometric test for a sample of examinees, also known as Cronbach's α (alpha) (Babbie, 2010; Saunders, Lweis, & Thornhill, 2003; Wrench et al., 2008).

First Study

The overall focus of this study is to elucidate the differences between less and more experienced PR practitioners. The dependent variables are the different themes for *Excellent PR Leaders* (Self Insight, Shared Vision, Team Collaboration, Ethical Orientation, Relationship Building, Strategic Decision-Making, and Communication Knowledge Management). The main independent variable is the categorical demographic *years of experience in PR*. Note: the other demographic data (i.e. age, gender, and education level) can be used as independent variables correspondingly, however elucidating those correlations is not the main pursuit of this thesis. If significant or notable differences in this research are apparent, the data would be included.

Actual data about how many PR professionals and educators exist in the U.S. PR field is not available. Hence, it is hard to calculate an accurate sample size with the sample size formula: $n^a = \frac{n \times 100}{re\%}$. Whereby n^a is the actual required sample size, n is the minial or corrected-minimal sample size, and $re\%$ is the estimated respondent percentage (Saunders, Lweis, & Thornhill, 2003).

Meng et al. (2012) use the data from three U.S. PR firms, which provided the appropriate sample size, selected out of 50,000 participants. The sample criteria from Meng et al.'s (2012) study, applied the following measures (the added text in the brackets is a necessity for this research enabling to answer this study's research questions.)

> The sampling strategy requires that respondents from the public relations industry in the United States meet the following criteria: (a) respondents have to hold a [junior-,] medium- to senior-level position in public relations in the organization; (b) the distribution of organization type has to be considered to match the public relations industry; (c) the distribution of

> gender has to be considered to match the current status in public relations industry, and (d) multiple respondents can be obtained from organizations. (Meng et al., 2012, p. 27).

A total of 1,000 participants that match the research outline were selected, 338 visited the survey link, and 257 PR executives subsequently participated in the online survey. Which resulted in in 222 completed survey records, which led to 221 usable participant entries. Hence, there was a corresponding rate of almost 24%.

Survey outline

The survey had three parts: first, answering the questions about the seven themes of excellent PR leadership. Followed by three ranking questions with the themes: qualities of excellent leadership in PR, sources of excellent leadership skills and developments, and what makes PR leadership different. The last part collected the demographical data of the participants. See appendix 6 for the demographic data and appendix 7 for the complete survey. Questions Q00 and Q00a give a brief introduction about the survey. In the first seven pages, the participant had to allot his/her stance on a Likert importance-scale about the question, whereby "1" parallels "Not at all Important" and whereby "7" parallels "extremely important." The survey applied *radio buttons*, so multiple selections were not possible. Moreover, the survey did not allow questions to be skipped; therefore, the completion rate was significantly high, thereby increasing the study's validity.

The second section (questions Q08, Q09, and Q10c) was a drag-and-rank activity. The participants had to use a ranking scale, with their computer mouse, to identify their top three choices. The participants automatically saw the ranking score on the page. Questions Q10b and Q10c were only displayed when question Q10a was answered with "yes."

The last section contains a collection of participants PR experience, followed by the last page whereby the participants has to provide his/her demographical data. Extra emphasis was given to the confidentially of the data. This was done deliberately since the participants would provide personal data.

In comparison with the Meng et al.'s (2012) study, this research excluded the ethnicity question from the survey, since one's race does not deliver presumed beneficial data for this study. Moreover, question Q15, asking about one's gender, would be randomly placed on the questionnaire. Moreover, the terms "male" and "female" were placed horizontally in the online survey, to eliminate the possible perception of favoring a gender.

Questions Q11 (years of professional PR experience) and Q16 (one's age), used a *slider* function, instead of pregrouped classifications. With this option, this study was more specific about experiences and ages enabling to answer the study's research questions.

Moreover, question Q11, years of professional PR experience, started with "0 years" and the maximum is "50+ years." This differed from Meng et al.'s (2012) study. First, Meng et al.'s (2012) study mainly focused on mid-PR and senior-PR practitioners; the experienced group-classification started with "3-5 years," thereby excluding professionals with less than 3 years of experience. Furthermore, the results from Meng et al.'s (2012) study, displayed that 76.6% had more than 15 years of experience, extending the years has provide data being more specific. Nevertheless, SPSS allowed the data to be grouped to the initial inquiry method conformingly.

Furthermore, question Q16's slider (one's age) ranges between 18 years and 100 years. The slider was applied in this study because the original groupings were too general. The original age grouping included the age range 18 to 30 and ended with a *more-than-60-years* category, which did not reflected population of this study.

Moreover, the organization size was differentiated, the majority of the respondents, 22.1%, worked in an organization with less than 100 employees. The new grouping includes the number of employees: "Fewer than 25," "25-49," and "50-99."

Hence, the implementation of the *slider* feature allowed this thesis to generate more specific data. Moreover, this study differentiated a variety of categorical variables enabling to answer the research questions. Additionally, the estimate during of the survey was five to 10 minutes.

Second Study

This part of the thesis was used to process and analyze the collected data. First, the data was converted from Qualtrics to SPSS. Second, the data of *PR experiences* was grouped in junior-, mid-, and senior-level groups. The second step was to correlate the questions of each of the seven main themes with the demographic data, to elucidate if there was a relation with the level of experience with the questions. This led to a comprehensive list, displaying all the correlations. The following table was used:

TABLE 7. Experience groupings

<table>
<tr><td>Q01-question#</td><td>Junior-level</td><td>Mid-level</td><td>Senior-level</td></tr>
<tr><td>J+M= r .</td><td colspan="2">r= (correlation)</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>M+S= r .</td><td></td><td colspan="2">r= (correlation)</td></tr>
<tr><td>J+S= r .</td><td colspan="3">r= (correlation)</td></tr>
</table>

Only the top three main differences—per theme—were discussed, since including all questions would be very extensive. Moreover, the frequencies of the respondents are displayed, clarifying the differences between J+S, which made it possible to make the experience-gap apparent and provided recommendations for gap-narrowing.

The second part was ranking the questions Q08, Q09, and Q10c. This section also applied the junior-, mid-, and senior-level groupings. The next step compared the frequencies of the all levels to elucidate the differences.

Research questions and hypothesis

During the study's progress, small alterations were made in the research questions, which led to the following research questions and hypothesis:

RQ$_1$ What is the effect of PR experience on the stance of a PR practitioner?

RQ$_{1a}$ What are the different stances taken by a developing PR practitioner toward *self-insight*?

RQ_{1b} What are the different stances taken by a developing PR practitioner toward *shared vision*?

RQ_{1c} What are the different stances taken by a developing PR practitioner toward *team collaboration*?

RQ_{1d} What are the different stances taken by a developing PR practitioner toward *ethical orientation*?

RQ_{1e} What are the different stances taken by a developing PR practitioner toward *relationship building*?

RQ_{1f} What are the different stances taken by a developing PR practitioner toward *strategic decision-making*?

RQ_{1g} What are the different stances taken by a developing PR practitioner toward *communication knowledge management*?

RQ_2 What are the most important qualities of excellent leadership in PR a developing PR practitioners values?

RQ_3 What are the most important source contributing variables a developing PR practitioner values?

$Hypothesis_1$ Consensus of opinion is not expected from lesser-experienced PR practitioners' understandings of ethics as related to decision-making.

Chapter four: Results

The data-collecting period started on February 14, 2013 and lasted until March 15, 2013. A total of 72 participants completed the survey. Moreover, the survey completion-percentage was 96%; only question 19, "about which educational degree one had earned," had a response rate of 72% (n=52). The participants were average 21.3 years old and the age span was between 18 and 60 years, with a standard deviation of 5.48.

Of the 72 participants, 68% (n=49) were female. The majority had some college experience (53%), followed by: Associate Degree (28%), Bachelor Degree (8%), High School Graduate or equivalent (6%), or holds a Master's or Nursing Degree (both 3%).

The greater number of the participants does not hold a journalism (8%), PR (37%), or communications (15%) degree, but are educated in the fields of (a total 38%) i.e. Nursing, Biology, Computer Science, or Education (see appendix 8 for all variables).

The average years of PR related work experience was 1.53 years, with a standard deviation of 3.64 and ranges between 0 and 24 years. Additionally, the participants identified themselves working for: educational institution (39%), public corporation (24%), private corporation (17%), nonprofit organization (10%), PR agency (7%), or for a government organization (4%). Furthermore, the number of participants that worked in organizations with less than 25 employees was 51%, 25-99 employees was 22%, 100-9,999 employees was 14%, 1,000-9,999 employees was 8%, and 10,000+ employees was 15% (see appendix 9 for detailed overview). Of those organizations, 14% had 1-2 PR employees, 11% had 3-4 PR employees, 6% had 5-9 PR employees, 9% had 10-49 PR employees, 10% had 50+ PR employees, a total of 51% of the participants did not know how many PR functions their organization employs.

The survey questions, one through seven, asked to allocate the degree of importance toward 41 questions grouped in seven themes. The Likert scale ranging from "1. Not Important at all" to "7. Extremely Important."

The first theme, self-insight, which parallels RQ1a, asks: "What are the different stances taken by a developing PR practitioner toward self-insight?" This resulted in the following data:

TABLE 8. Results Research Question 1

Q. 1	Statistic	Range	Mean	Variance	Standard Deviation
1.1	The nature of being dependable.	3-7	6.25	1.01	1.00
1.2	The nature of being proactive.	4-7	6.39	0.58	0.76
1.3	The capacity for engaging in strategic decision-making.	4-7	6.33	0.68	0.82
1.4	The capacity for acting as a changing agent.	4-7	5.75	1.01	1.00
1.5	The awareness of applying diverse strategies.	3-7	6.01	0.86	0.93

The participants selected Q1.2 as the most important and Q1.4 as least important, relatively, and the means differ 0.63 points (6.39-5.75). The average mean for self-insight was 6.15. The following chart provides an overview of the importance-distribution per question:

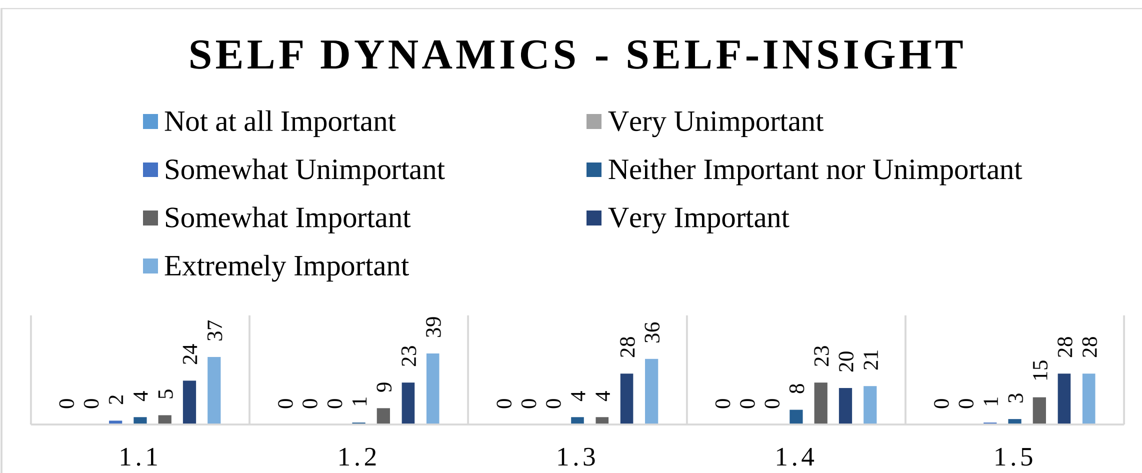

FIGURE 4. Overview importance-distribution Self Dynamics – Self-insight

The questions about shared vision, which parallels RQ1b, asks: "What are the different stances taken by a developing PR practitioner toward shared vision?" Led to the following results:

TABLE 9. Results Research Question 2

Q. 2	Statistic	Range	Mean	Variance	Standard Deviation
2.1	The nature of being forward looking.	4-7	5.89	0.72	0.85
2.2	The nature of having a vision of PR as a managerial function.	1-7	5.69	1.34	1.16
2.3	The capacity for enlisting others in a shared vision.	4-7	6.01	0.66	0.81
2.4	The capacity for providing a vision of potential changes in areas affecting the organization.	3-7	6.08	0.67	0.82
2.5	The ability to provide a clear vision about PR values and role.	1-7	6.08	1.20	1.10
2.6	The ability to provide a clear vision of how PR goals are congruent with organizational goals.	1-7	6.10	1.13	1.06

The participants indicated Q2.6 as the most important variable and Q2.2 as least important variable, relatively, and the means differ 0.41 points (6.10-5.69). The average mean for shared vision was 5.98. The following chart provides an overview of the importance-distribution per question:

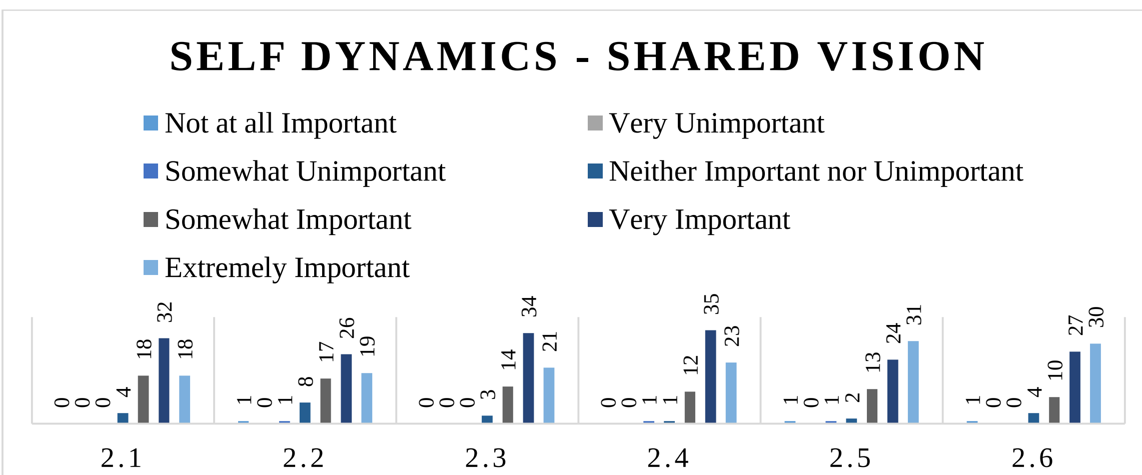

FIGURE 5. Overview importance-distribution Shared Vision

The questions about team collaboration, which parallels RQ1c, asks: "What are the different stances taken by a developing PR practitioner toward team collaboration?" Which resulted in the following data:

TABLE 10. Results Research Question 3

Q. 3	Statistic	Range	Mean	Variance	Standard Deviation
3.1	The ability to collaborate with members to define PR strategies.	1-7	6.06	1.12	1.06
3.2	The ability to develop a proactive and professional communication team.	3-7	6.42	0.75	0.87
3.3	The ability to facilitate positive interdependence among team members.	4-7	6.25	0.67	0.82
3.4	The ability to bring diverse groups together to collaboratively solve problems.	3-7	6.19	0.98	0.99
3.5	The ability to provide a clear vision about PR values and role.	1-7	6.21	1.13	1.06

The participants selected Q3.2 as the most important variable and Q3.1 as least important variable, relatively, and the means differ 0.36 points (6.42-6.06). The average mean for team collaboration was 6.23. The following chart provides an overview of the importance-distribution per question:

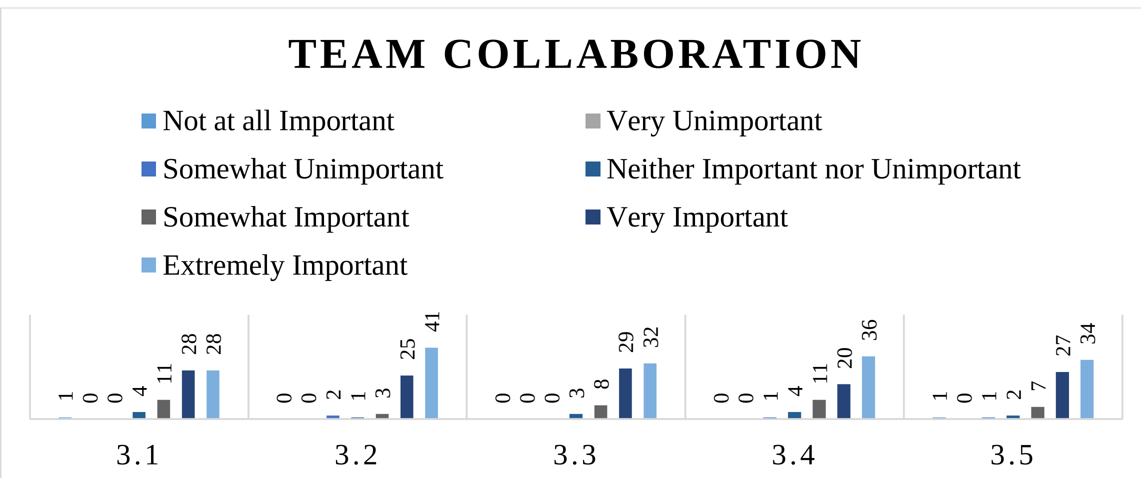

FIGURE 6. Overview importance-distribution Team Collaboration

The theme ethical orientation, which parallels RQ1d, asked the participant to answer the question, "What are the different stances taken by a developing PR practitioner toward ethical orientation?" Which led to the following figures:

TABLE 11. Results Research Question 4

Q. 4	Statistic	Range	Mean	Variance	Standard Deviation
4.1	The ability to maintain the core values of PR as professional standards.	2-7	6.21	0.82	0.90
4.2	The ability to integrate these core values into actions.	4-7	6.29	0.52	0.72
4.3	The ability to act promptly to correct erroneous communications of team members and other coworkers.	3-7	6.21	0.93	0.96
4.4	Understanding the process of representing consistent behaviors that can be trusted by others inside and outside of the organization.	3-7	6.19	0.81	0.90
4.5	Understanding ethical differences which grow out of diverse cultures.	3-7	6.22	0.94	0.97

The participants chose Q4.2 as the most important variable and Q4.4 as least important variable, relatively, and the means differ 0.1 point (6.29-6.19). The average mean for ethical orientation was 6.22. The following chart provides an overview of the importance-distribution per question:

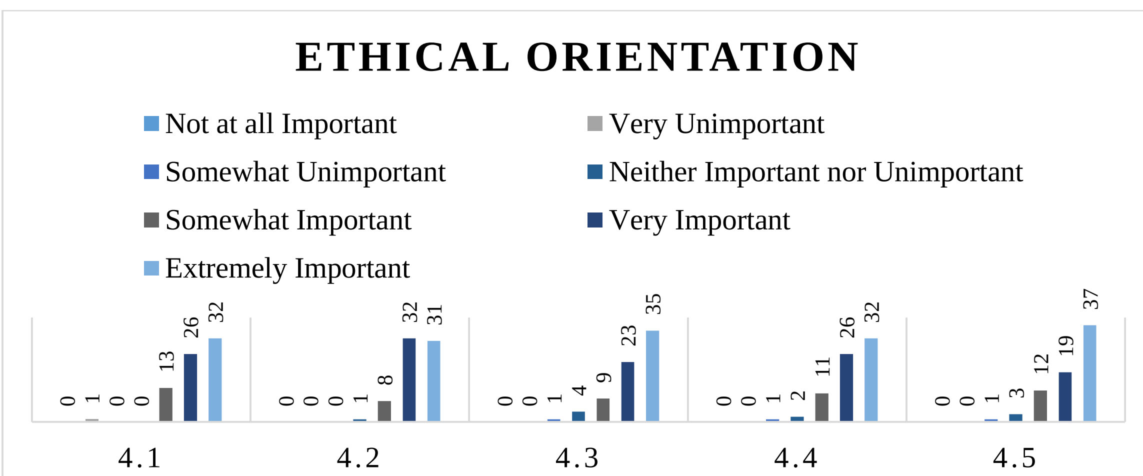

FIGURE 7. Overview importance-distribution Ethical Orientation

The question about relationship building, which parallels RQ1e, asked the participants to answer, "What are the different stances taken by a developing PR practitioner toward relationship building?" Which led to the following material:

TABLE 12. Results Research Question 5

Q.5	Statistic	Range	Mean	Variance	Standard Deviation
5.1	The ability to foster trust and credibility with organizational decision makers.	4-7	6.44	0.48	0.69
5.2	The ability to develop coalitions to support proposed ideas or actions.	5-7	6.19	0.50	0.70
5.3	The ability to mentor and help young professionals achieve success on the job.	4-7	6.01	0.80	0.90
5.4	Being sought out for advice and counsel by executives in the organization.	4-7	5.86	0.91	0.95
5.5	The understanding the process of regularly briefing members of the organization about public relations programs and results.	4-7	6.10	0.74	0.86
5.6	The ability to cultivate relationships with key external publics.	4-7	6.47	0.51	0.71
5.7	The ability to foster trust and credibility with media representatives.	4-7	6.44	0.62	0.79
5.8	The ability to understand the needs for key publics.	3-7	6.35	0.85	0.92

The participants designated Q5.6 as the most important variable and Q5.4 as least important variable, relatively, and the means differ 0.61 points (6.47-5.86). The average mean for relationship building was 6.23. Figure 8 provides an overview of the importance-distribution per question.

The questions about strategic decision-making, which parallels RQ1f, which asked the participant to answer, "What are the different stances taken by a developing PR practitioner toward strategic decision-making?" Has led to the following figures in Table 13.

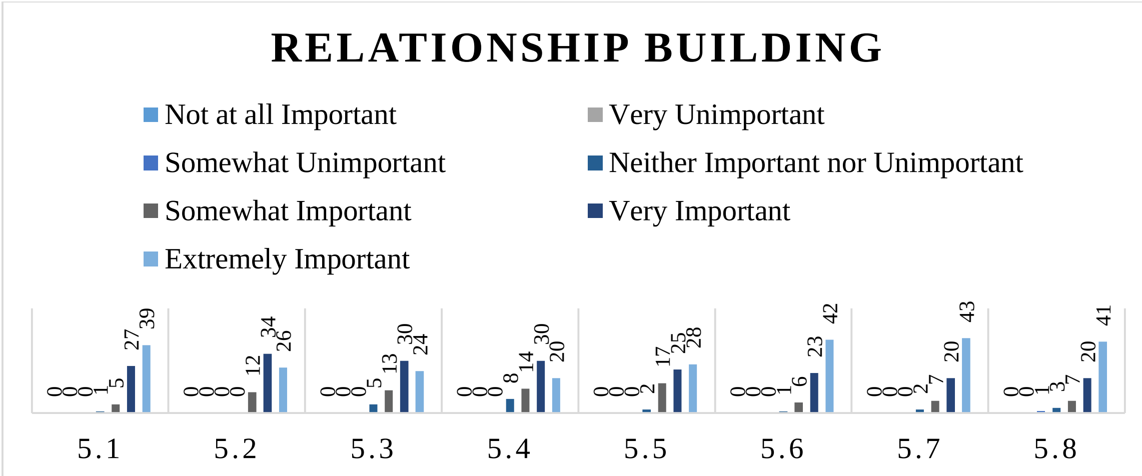

FIGURE 8. Overview importance-distribution Relationship Building

TABLE 13. Results Research Question 6

Q. 6	**Statistic**	Range	Mean	Variance	Standard Deviation
6.1	The ability to span internal/external boundaries and interpret information from publics for organizational decision makers.	2	5.92	1.09	1.04
6.2	The knowledge of the organization's business and its environment.	4	6.21	0.76	0.87
6.3	The knowledge of the organization's decision-making processes, practices, and structures.	4	6.25	0.58	0.76
6.4	Been included in strategic decision-making groups in the organization.	3	6.03	0.87	0.93

The participants designated Q6.3 as the most important variable and Q5.92 as least important variable, relatively, and the means differ 0.33 points (6.25-5.92). The average mean for strategic decision-making was 6.1. Figure 9 provides an overview of the importance-distribution per question.

The questions about communication knowledge management, which parallels RQ1g, which asks the participant to answer, "What are the different stances taken by a developing PR practitioner toward communication knowledge management?" Has led to the following data shown in Table 14.

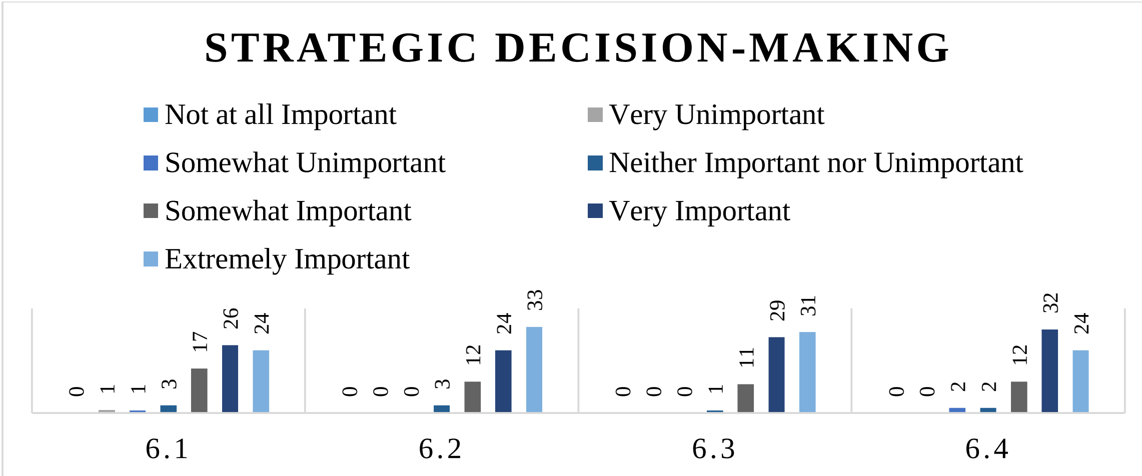

FIGURE 9. Overview importance-distribution Strategic Decision-Making

TABLE 14. Results Research Question 7

Q. 7	**Statistic**	Range	Mean	Variance	Standard Deviation
7.1	The ability to apply public relations knowledge to crisis situations.	3-7	6.35	0.96	0.98
7.2	The ability to systematically evaluate communication programs and results to increase quality and effectiveness.	4-7	6.25	0.64	0.80
7.3	The ability to obtain sufficient resources to support needed strategies and projects.	3-7	6.06	0.79	0.89
7.4	The ability to use knowledge of mass and specialized media to help the organization communicate effectively with publics.	3-7	6.32	0.73	0.85
7.5	The ability to strategically use new technologies to help the organization communicate and interact with publics.	3-7	6.28	0.74	0.86
7.6	Known the process of using research to develop appropriate strategies, messages, and activities.	3-7	6.11	0.89	0.94
7.7	Known the process of using research to help solve communication problems.	3-7	6.15	0.86	0.93
7.8	Known the process of converting knowledge about publics and policies into effective and representative advocacy of these publics with decision makers.	3-7	6.01	0.92	0.96

The participants chose Q7.1 as the most important variable and Q7.8 as least important variable, relatively, and the means differ 0.34 points (6.35-6.01). The average mean for communication knowledge management was 6.19.

The following chart provides an overview of the importance-distribution per question:

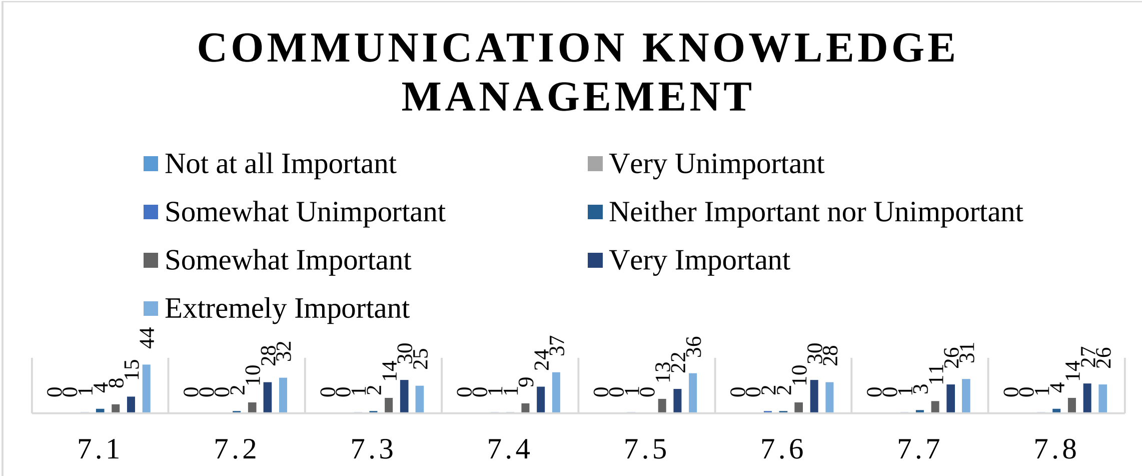

FIGURE 10. Overview importance-distribution Communication Knowledge Management

All the 41 questions had a mean score of 6.06, and can therefore be qualified as "very important." The difference between the highest and lowest variable's mean was 0.78 (Q. 5.6's mean was 6.47, Q. 2.2's mean was 5.69) (see appendix 10 & 11 for a complete overview). Additionally, the participants allocated the five highest ranked variables as:

TABLE 15. Highest ranked variables

#	Q.	Answer	Mean
1	5.6	The ability to cultivate relationships with key external publics.	6.47
2	5.1	The ability to foster trust and credibility with organizational decision makers.	6.44
3	5.7	The ability to foster trust and credibility with media representatives.	6.44
4	3.2	The ability to develop a proactive and professional communication team.	6.42
5	1.2	The nature of being proactive.	6.39

The participants' top three (5.6, 5.1 & 5.7) are all about the relationship building theme. On the other hand, the lowest ranked variables the participants assign are:

TABLE 16. Lowest ranked variables

#	Q	Answer	Mean
41	2.2	The nature of having a vision of PR as a managerial function.	5.69
40	1.4	The capacity for acting as a changing agent.	5.75
39	5.4	Being sought out for advice and counsel by executives in the organization.	5.86
38	2.1	The nature of being forward looking.	5.89
37	6.1	The ability to span internal/external boundaries and interpret information from publics for organizational decision makers.	5.92

Survey question 8, which parallels RQ2, asks, "What are the most important qualities of excellent leadership in PR a developing PR practitioners values?" Led to the following top three:

TABLE 17. Results Research Question 8

Q. 8	#	Answer	#1	#2	#3
8.01	1	Communication knowledge and expertise	19	22	9
8.08	2	Being trustworthy and dependable	11	10	8
8.04	3	Relationship-building abilities	9	10	4

Moreover, survey question 9, which parallels RQ3, asked, "What are the most important source contributing variables a developing PR practitioner values?" Resulted in the following table:

TABLE 18. Results Research Question 9

Q. 9	#	Answer	#1	#2	#3
9.8	1	Communication skills training (persuasion, listening, public speaking, etc.)	23	12	9
9.9	2	Individual initiative and desire	15	9	6
9.5	3	On-the-job experiences	11	13	12

A total of 47% (n=34) participants believed that excellent leadership in PR is somewhat different compared to other fields, which led to the following results (asked in Q11):

TABLE 19. Results Research Question 11

Q. 11	#	Answer	#1	#2	#3
11.01	1	Ability to strategically construct messages	10	4	2
11.02	2	A clear and compelling vision of how communication connects the organization to its publics and the larger social system	6	8	7
11.10	3	An unwavering belief in the importance of honest and ethical organizational communications and actions	5	1	0

The mean distribution per theme was:

TABLE 20. Mean distribution per theme

Themes	Mean difference between variables	Mean
Qs1 - Self-insight	.63	6.15
Qs2 - Shared vision	.41	5.98
Qs3 - Team collaboration	.36	6.23
Qs4 - Ethical orientation	.10	6.22
Qs5 - Relationship building	.61	6.23
Qs6 - Strategic decision-making	.33	6.10
Qs7 - Communication knowledge management	.34	6.19

Highest ranked themes, viewed by developing PR practitioners, are Team Collaboration and Relationship Building (both 6.23), directly followed by Strategic Ethical Orientation (6.22). The least valued theme, relatively, was Shared Vision, with a mean of 5.98. Additionally, the participants mostly agreed on the theme Ethical Orientation (Qs4) since the difference between the participants' answers were the smallest, with a mean difference of 0.1. More variation was notable in for Self-insight (Qs1) where the answers had a mean difference of 0.63.

Focusing on the themes Ethical Orientation (Qs4) and Strategic Decision-Making (Qs6), alludes to hypothesis 1, which postulates that a consensus of opinion is not expected from lesser-experienced PR practitioners' understandings of ethics as related to decision-making, displays the following correlation statistics:

TABLE 21. Correlations results RQ4 and RQ6

Correlations between Q4 and Q6									
		Q.4.1	**Q.4.2**	**Q.4.3**	**Q.4.4**	**Q.4.5**	**Q.6.1**	**Q.6.2**	**Q.6.3**
Q. 4.2	Pearson Correlation	,728**							
	Sig. (2-tailed)***								
Q. 4.3	Pearson Correlation	,581**	,642**						
	Sig. (2-tailed)***								
Q. 4.4	Pearson Correlation	,609**	,629**	,522**					
	Sig. (2-tailed)***								
Q. 4.5	Pearson Correlation	,430**	,350**	,252*	,420**				
	Sig. (2-tailed)***		.003	.033					
Q. 6.1	Pearson Correlation	,556**	,557**	,465**	,648**	,353**			
	Sig. (2-tailed)***				.000	.002			
Q. 6.2	Pearson Correlation	,535**	,508**	,535**	,488**	,345**	,623**		
	Sig. (2-tailed)***					.003			
Q. 6.3	Pearson Correlation	,515**	,505**	,406**	,503**	,419**	,644**	,640**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)***								
Q. 6.4	Pearson Correlation	,360**	,260*	,307**	,396**	,398**	,623**	,512**	,740**
	Sig. (2-tailed)***	.002	.028	.009	.001	.001			

***. Only significant (2-tailed) scores higher than .000 are displayed.

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Chapter five: Discussion

How PR leadership is perceived by developing PR practitioners is an understudied area. Knowing how developing PR practitioners identify various leadership themes will make it possible to compare and improve those views for the education field; results from this study can be used to refine PR education programs. Moreover, compared to other studies in the same realm (e.g. Meng at al. 2011, & Meng at al. 2012), this research provides a broader scope about how PR leadership was perceived by different age groups and PR related work experience groups. Furthermore, the findings can help professionals who will work with developing/starting PR practitioners to improve understanding how they view PR leadership.

This study has three questions; first, "what is the effect of PR experience on the stance of a PR practitioner?"; second, "what are the most important qualities of excellent leadership in PR a developing PR practitioner values?"; and lastly, "what are the most important source contributing variables a developing PR practitioner values?"

Overall, the results suggest that the variables are perceived as "very important" to "extremely important," with a mean of 6.06. Because the variables do not display a high variance, it is questionable whether the variables are different in importance. In hindsight of perhaps the measurement categories rating scale is too narrow. This study suggests that the proposed excellent PR leadership variables are all important perceived by developing PR practitioners, despite the experience level. Which answers research question 1, What is the effect of PR experience on the stance of a PR practitioner? Furthermore, looking at the highest rated theme variables, relationship building was allocated highest, which can be an important perceived theme for starting professionals.

The ranking question, "what are the most important qualities of excellent leadership in PR a developing PR practitioner values," provides a more accurate overview about which trait was significant for developing PR practitioners. Moreover, communication knowledge and expertise, being trustworthy and dependable, and relationship-building abilities are ranked as the most important. Which enables this study to answer research question 2, "what are the most important qualities of excellent leadership in PR a developing PR practitioner values?"

For the other ranking question, communication skill training was identified as the most important trait excellent PR leadership inhabits, followed by individual initiative and desire, and on-the-job experiences. This enables this study to answer research question 3, "what are the most important source-contributing variables a developing PR practitioner values?"

The participants who believed that PR leadership is not bound to the PR field itself but is, somewhat, interchangeable with other fields, which can be the result of the imprecise definition of the term excellent *public relations* leadership. Differences in definitions exist because respondents argue that PR leadership differs because of: (1) a leader's ability to strategically construct message, (2) have a clear and compelling vision of how communication connects the organization to its publics and the lager social system, and (3) have an unwavering belief in the importance of honest and ethical organizational communications and actions.

However, it can be assumed that the lack of experience can change the overall view toward the same excellent PR leadership mannerisms. As an example, senior PR practitioners can assign on-the-job experiences as more important than developing PR practitioners can assign. This could even be a logical conclusion; the lack of experience within a field can prejudice one's perception. This study does not postulate that more or less experience is better than the other is, but that each level of experience leads to a different stance towards a topic. The results of this study differ from Meng et al.'s (2012), which researched the same stances from senior practitioners; implying that stance development or change *can* occur overtime.

This knowledge can be of particular interest for organizations who are developing career paths for PR practitioners. For example and depending on the situation, young practitioners may need more exposure/guidance with communication problem-solving cases, while senior practitioners may desire more exposure/training with strategic-decision making cases, to improve their strategic decision-making traits.

Lastly, the highly rated themes, ethical orientation and strategic decision-making, correlate little to low with each other. Therefore, this study can confirm the hypothesis that a widely consensus of opinion is not expected. This implies that developing PR practitioners' understanding towards its ethical orientation operates with little to low relational effect of each other.

Challenges

This research experienced several challenges during its data-collecting phase: the third parties' unwillingness to collaborate with this study, the lack of financial resources, and the limited time span made it hard to collect extensive data, which impedes answering the originally proposed research questions. Therefore, minimal changes were made to the research questions: instead of focusing on the experience, this study was focusing on developing PR practitioners. As a result, some of the literary review's content does not necessarily reflect as strong a connection to the findings as I had initially intended.

Moreover, this study aimed at collaboration with PR associations that had ties with developing and experienced PR practitioners, like the PRSA and the Florida Public Relations Associations (FPRSA), and both of their local chapters. In January, several PR societies were approached (through telephone and email). The PRSA recommended to approach its local chapter since an opportunity for collaboration was unfeasible within the research period. The Tampa Bay chapter of the PRSA responded in an email, "I don't think my company website would be a relevant source of survey-takers for you, and I'm not sure when my next enewsletter will be going out[…]." Moreover, the FPRSA did not responded on any of the communication attempts made. Additionally, I approached USF's Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) and had several meetings with the Vice President. USF PRSSA was willing to distribute my survey via their social networking handles (Facebook & Twitter) and would help to bring the study in contact with more experienced prospects. Unfortunately, after repeated attempts, the distribution and contact with experienced practitioners was never realized.

In the meantime, this research was looking into alternative ways to recruit participants. The most optimal solution was to distribute the online survey URL via the social media handle LinkedIn. LinkedIn is an online platform where professionals can network, join groups of a particular interest, or can do other business-related activities with other members. Some groups are solely focusing on PR and were highly suitable for this research. A total of 18 PR related groups were joined with the author's LinkedIn account, the groups had an accumulative number of 301,865 members measured on April, 2, 2013.

Additionally, the survey was distributed via email to undergraduate students from the University of South Florida who followed the class Mass Media & Society.

Limitations

The limited number of participants affected the data and consequently the ability to generalize the findings. Moreover, many participants are not affiliated with or educated about the PR field, which can lead into a different understanding of the term *public relations*. Therefore, it is unclear if a participant understands leadership in PR the same as one who is educated in the field.

In addition, it was not possible to purchase any datasheets because of the limited financial resources; also, the narrow time span had an undesirable effect on collaboration with PR-related alliances.

Furthermore, because the study was not aimed at other than working PR practitioners at first, the question, "what type of company one worked for," did not include an "unemployed" or a "not applicable" option. Therefore, participants who did not work for a PR firm had to select one of the options available.

The incorporation of social media led to some other limitations: during the data collecting phase, late February, this research had to include the question, "in which continent did you complete this survey," since the reach was beyond the U.S.

The usage of LinkedIn led to some challenges; some of the groups were not joinable without approval by a moderator, which, in some cases, took several weeks. Moreover, it is unknown how many active members a group includes—also, the members' relationship between the groups is unknown. It is assumable that the same members have multiple group memberships; hence, the number of unique members is assumed to be lower than the accumulated total. Besides, LinkedIn works with a conversation timeline, the newest posts are placed at the top of the page. Thus, the actual exposure of the message to participants varied between groups. Additionally, some of the groups have little conversation while other groups have an abundance of conversation. Besides the timeline and groups, complete access to the author's LinkedIn account was available for anyone who joined LinkedIn, which leads to source credibility questions pertaining to profile image, number of connections, institutional affiliations.

Future research

Since decisions are made through analytical or intuitive rendering, it would be valuable for the PR field to understand to which degree intuitive decisions have an effect on PR leadership's successfulness. Measuring how incoming variables/cases are classified and how decisions are a result of those classifications, is a useful method.

It is implied that there is a stance-difference development related to experience. A semilongitudinal study that measures starting PR students and measures the same students when they complete their educational track would clarify this assumption.

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Appendix 1. Communication tactics during crisis situations

1. To have dialogue with the public
2. To give what the public wants as they stated
3. To make concessions with the public
4. To collaborate with the public in order to solve a problem
5. To yield to the public
6. To concern the public's benefit as well
7. To change my own position toward the public
8. To accept the public's propositions
9. To explain two sides of an argument
10. To suggest compromise to an argument
11. To show care about the Public
12. To state that you and the Public can work out the problem at hand
13. To agree to try the solutions suggested by the Public
14. To respect the Public's feelings
15. To be concerned about the outcome, benefit of the Public
16. To provide some aid or assistance to the Public
17. To agree to follow what the Public proposed
18. To minimize complaints about the Public
19. To stop criticizing or blaming the Public
20. To accept the accusation from the Public
21. To comment on the situation
22. To suggest action or policy
23. To request action of the Public
24. To ask for information from the Public
25. To meet with the Public
26. To send note to the Public
27. To express regret or apologize to the Public
28. To admit wrongdoing
29. To agree with the Public on future action or procedure
30. To promise financial support
31. To attribute a mistake to the lack of knowledge of my organization
32. To express the good intention of my organization
33. To reduce the negative feelings of the Public
34. To separate the actions of my organization from the characteristics of my organization
35. To pay damages to the Public due to the mistake of my organization
36. To correct action for a mistake made by my organization
37. To send out press releases and hold press conferences
38. To distribute position papers or other information
39. To use mass media to clarify the position of my organization
40. To send out organizational publications to address the issue

41. To use advertising to repair the image of my organization
42. To organize activities involving the Public to influence legislators for the benefit of my organization
43. To hold special events inviting the Public to attend
44. To give cards and gifts to the Public
45. To state in public showing appreciation of the Public
46. To contact the representative of the public in person
47. To research on the issue to understand the positions of my organization and the public
48. To conduct research to evaluate the communication between my organization and the public
49. To listen to or try to understand the opinions of the public
50. To consult the key people related to the public during my decision making
51. To take into account the possible negative impact on the public
52. To consider both sides' opinions and positions
53. To consider how my decision might influence the public
54. To explain the motives and reasons for actions and policies to the public

Retrieved from: Jin and Cameron (2006) pp. 15-17.

Appendix 2. Top three important qualities of excellent leadership in PR

TABLE A1 Top three important qualities of excellent leadership in PR

Qualities of Excellent leadership in PR (in the order of frequencies)	1st		2nd		3rd		Total (Freq.)
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	
*Strategies decision-making capabilities	55	24.8	50	22.5	16	10.4	121
*Ability to solve problems and produce result	28	12.6	30	13.5	55	25.0	133
*Communication knowledge and expertise	50	22.5	29	13.1	23	10.4	102
Relationship-building abilities	15	6.8	31	14.0	32	14.5	78
Being trustworthy and dependable	16	7.2	18	8.1	16	7.3	50
Ethical values and orientation	17	7.7	13	5.9	15	6.8	45
An organizational culture that support communication	17	7.7	6	2.7	20	9.1	43
Team collaboration and inspiring	4	1.8	17	7.7	19	8.6	40
Being visionary and inspiring	8	3.6	17	7.7	13	5.9	39
Ability to demonstrate the value of PR	11	5.5	10	4.5	11	5.0	32
Total (Freq. & Percent)	221	99.5	221	99.5	220	99.1	

Note. *Top three important qualities of excellent leadership in PR based on overall frequencies. Retrieved from Meng et al. (2012) p. 30.

Appendix 3. Sources that contribute to development PR leadership

TABLE A2. Top three important sources contributing to the development of excellent PR leadership

Sources of Excellent leadership skills and development (in the order of frequencies)	1st		2nd		3rd		Total (Freq.)
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	
*On-the-job experience	63	28.4	61	27.5	38	17.1	162
*Individual initiative and desire	46	20.7	33	14.9	54	24.3	133
*Examples set by excellent role models	59	26.6	43	19.4	29	13.1	131
Powerful personal experiences or events	24	10.8	28	12.6	24	10.8	76
Communication skills or events	12	5.4	22	9.9	25	11.3	59
Mentors and mentoring programs	4	1.8	22	9.9	28	12.6	54
Formal education (university level)	9	4.1	5	2.3	6	2.7	20
Professional development programs (e.g., trough Public Relations Society of America, IABC or others)	1	.5	5	2.3	14	6.3	20
Genetics	3	1.4	1	.5	2	.9	6
Total (Freq. & Percent)	221	99.5	220	99.1	200	99.1	

Note. *Top three important sources contributing to the development of excellent leadership in PR based on overall frequencies.

Retrieved from Meng et al. (2012) p. 30.

Appendix 4. Measurement Instrument

TABLE A3. Measurement Instrument

Measurement items for excellence PR practitioners

1. Self Dynamics	An excellent public relations leader should exhibit…
1a. Self Insight	
S1	The nature of being dependable.
S2	
S3	The nature of being proactive.
S4	The capacity for engaging in strategic decision-making.
S5	The capacity for acting as a changing agent.
S6	The awareness of applying diverse strategies.
1b. Shared Visions	
V1	The nature of being forward looking.
V2	The nature of having a vision of PR as a managerial function.
V3	The capacity for enlisting others in a shared vision.
V4	The capacity for providing a vision of potential changes in areas affecting the organization.
V5	The ability to provide a clear vision about PR values and role.
V6	The ability to provide a clear vision of how PR goals are congruent with organizational goals.
2. Team Collaboration	
T1	The ability to collaborate with members to define PR strategies.
T2	
T3	The ability to develop a proactive and professional communication team.
T4	The ability to facilitate positive interdependence among team members.
T5	The ability to bring diverse groups together to collaboratively solve problems.
T6	The ability to inspire and motivate other members.
3. Ethical Orientation	
E1	The ability to maintain the core values of PR as professional standards.
E2	The ability to integrate these core values into actions.
E3	
E4	The ability to act promptly to correct erroneous communications of team members and other coworkers.
E5	Understanding the process of representing consistent behaviors that can be trusted by others inside and outside of the organization.
E6	Understanding ethical differences which grow out of diverse cultures.
4. Relationship Building	
R1	The ability to foster trust and credibility with organizational decision makers.
R2	The ability to develop coalitions to support proposed ideas or actions.
R3	The ability to mentor and help young professionals achieve success on the job.
R4	Being sought out for advice and counsel by executives in the organization.
R5	Understanding the process of regularly briefing members of the organization about public relations programs and results.
R6	The ability to cultivate relationships with key external publics.

R7	The ability to foster trust and credibility with media representatives.
R8	The ability to understand the needs for key publics.
5. Strategic Decision-Making	
D1	
D2	The ability to span internal/external boundaries and interpret information from publics for organizational decision makers.
D3	The knowledge of the organization's business and its environment.
D4	The knowledge of the organization's decision-making processes, practices, and structures.
D5	Been included in strategic decision-making groups in the organization.
6. Communication Knowledge Management	
C1	The ability to apply public relations knowledge to crisis situations.
C2	The ability to systematically evaluate communication programs and results to increase quality and effectiveness.
C3	The ability to obtain sufficient resources to support needed strategies and projects.
C4	The ability to use knowledge of mass and specialized media to help the organization communicate effectively with publics.
C5	The ability to strategically use new technologies to help the organization communicate and interact with publics.
C6	Known the process of using research to develop appropriate strategies, messages, and activities.
C7	Known the process of using research to help solve communication problems.
C8	Known the process of converting knowledge about publics and policies into effective and representative advocacy of these publics with decision makers.

Appendix 5. Structural analysis (including factor loading)

TABLE A4. Structural Analysis in Enactments of Stance as Degrees of Accommodation

Factor	Items	Factor loadings	
		EFA*	CFA**
Factor 1 Action-Based	To yield to the public's demands	.93	.72
	To agree to follow what the public proposed	.89	.88
	To accept the publics' propositions	.83	.83
	To agree with the public on future action or procedure	.58	.77
	To agree to try the solutions suggested by the public	.54	.79
Factor 2 Qualified-Thetoric-Mixed	To express regret or apologize to the public	.91	.67
	To collaborate with the public in order to solve the problem at hand	.72	.59
	To change my own position toward that of the public	.58	.70
	To make concessions with the public	.48	.83
	To admit wrongdoing	.43	.51

(Jin & Cameron, 2006, p. 14)

Note *: Exploratory Factor Analysis using Principal Axis Factoring with Promax Rotation with Kaiser Normalization. Factor loadings of values less than .40 were suppressed. The two factors accounted for 64.87% of the variance. Coefficients of internal consistency are .89 and .80, respectively.

Note **: Confirmatory Factor Analysis via AMOS and a Maximum Likelihood Criterion: Two-factor oblique model, Comparative Fit Index = .91, Non-Normal Fit Index = .88, Normed Fit Index = .90. Coefficients of internal consistency are .89 and .79, respectively.

Demographic Statistics of EFA* (N = 103) and CFA** (N = 144)

Appendix 6. Categorical demographic profiles

TABLE A5. Categorical Demographic Profiles

Categorical Demographic Profiles
Categorical Variables

Gender	Organization size
Male	Fewer than 25
Female	25-49
Age	50-99
Younger than 21	100-499
21-30	500-999
31-40	1,000-2,499
41-50	2,500-4,999
51-60	5,000-9,999
Over 60	10,000-24,999
Years of experience in PR	25,000-49,999
Less than 3 years	50,000 or more
3 to 5 years	Size of PR employees inside the organization
5 to 10 years	1-2
10 to 15 years	3-4
More than 15 years	5-9
Type of organization working for	10-19
Public corporation	20-49
Private corporation	50-99
Public Relations agency	100 or more
Nonprofit organization	Do not know
Government organization	
Education institution	
Highest completed education	If you obtained your degree from a college/university, what was your major?
High school graduate or equivalent	Business in general
Some college	Communication
Associate degree	English
Bachelor's degree	Journalism
Master's degree	Political science
Doctoral degree	Public Relations
Law degree	Other, please specify:…
Other, please specify:…	
	Your gender:
	Male
	Female

Appendix 7. Survey questionnaire

Questionnaire

Thesis | Experience

Q00 Excellent Leadership in Public Relations Survey Excellent leadership in public relations includes a number of interrelated qualities and dimensions, each of which is important. However, some qualities are likely to be more important than others, and this survey seeks your perceptions about the relative importance of a number of qualities of excellent leadership in public relations. (Estimate duration of this survey is 5-10 minutes)

Q00a Survey outline This survey is divided in three sections. For the first seven questions, Section I, please carefully assess each statement to indicate the extent to which you agree with its relative importance to excellent leadership in public relations. Use a scale of 1-7 for your answer, where "1" equals "not at all important" and "7" equals "extremely important."

Q1 1. An excellent public relations leader should exhibit...

	Not at all Important (1)	Very Unimportant (2)	Somewhat Unimportant (3)	Neither Important nor Unimportant (4)	Somewhat Important (5)	Very Important (6)	Extremely Important (7)
The nature of being dependable. (1)							
The nature of being proactive. (2)							
The capacity for engaging in strategic decision-making. (3)							
The capacity for acting as a changing agent. (4)							

The awareness of applying diverse strategies. (5)							

Q2 2. An excellent public relations leader should exhibit...

	Not at all Important (1)	Very Unimportant (2)	Somewhat Unimportant (3)	Neither Important nor Unimportant (4)	Somewhat Important (5)	Very Important (6)	Extremely Important (7)
The nature of being forward looking. (1)							
The nature of having a vision of PR as a managerial function. (2)							
The capacity for enlisting others in a shared vision. (3)							
The capacity for providing a vision of potential changes in areas affecting the organization. (4)							
The ability to provide a clear vision about PR							

values and role. (5)							
The ability to provide a clear vision of how PR goals are congruent with organizational goals. (6)							

Q3 3. An excellent public relations leader should exhibit...

	Not at all Important (1)	Very Unimportant (2)	Somewhat Unimportant (3)	Neither Important nor Unimportant (4)	Somewhat Important (5)	Very Important (6)	Extremely Important (7)
The ability to collaborate with members to define PR strategies. (1)							
The ability to develop a proactive and professional communication team. (2)							
The ability to facilitate positive interdependence among team members. (3)							
The ability to bring diverse groups together to collaboratively solve problems. (4)							

The ability to provide a clear vision about PR values and role. (5)							

Q4 4. An excellent public relations leader should exhibit...

	Not at all Importa nt (1)	Very Unimport ant (2)	Somewha t Unimport ant (3)	Neither Important nor Unimport ant (4)	Somewh at Importa nt (5)	Very Importa nt (6)	Extrem ely Importa nt (7)
The ability to maintain the core values of PR as professional standards. (1)							
The ability to integrate these core values into actions. (2)							
The ability to act promptly to correct erroneous communicati ons of team members and other coworkers. (3)							
Understandi ng the process of representing consistent behaviors that can be trusted by others inside and outside of the							

organization. (4)							
Understanding ethical differences which grow out of diverse cultures. (5)							

Q5 5. An excellent public relations leader should exhibit...

	Not at all Important (1)	Very Unimportant (2)	Somewhat Unimportant (3)	Neither Important nor Unimportant (4)	Somewhat Important (5)	Very Important (6)	Extremely Important (7)
The ability to foster trust and credibility with organizational decision makers. (1)							
The ability to develop coalitions to support proposed ideas or actions. (2)							
The ability to mentor and help young professionals achieve success on the job. (3)							
Being sought out for advice and counsel by executives in the organization. (4)							

The understanding the process of regularly briefing members of the organization about public relations programs and results. (5)							
The ability to cultivate relationships with key external publics. (6)							
The ability to foster trust and credibility with media representatives. (7)							
The ability to understand the needs for key publics. (8)							

Q6 6. An excellent public relations leader should exhibit...

	Not at all Important (1)	Very Unimportant (2)	Somewhat Unimportant (3)	Neither Important nor Unimportant (4)	Somewhat Important (5)	Very Important (6)	Extremely Important (7)
The ability to span internal/external boundaries and interpret information from publics							

for organizational decision makers. (1)							
The knowledge of the organization's business and its environment. (2)							
The knowledge of the organization's decision-making processes, practices, and structures. (3)							
Been included in strategic decision-making groups in the organization. (4)							

Q7 7. An excellent public relations leader should exhibit...

	Not at all Important (1)	Very Unimportant (2)	Somewhat Unimportant (3)	Neither Important nor Unimportant (4)	Somewhat Important (5)	Very Important (6)	Extremely Important (7)
The ability to apply public relations knowledge to crisis situations. (1)							

The ability to systematically evaluate communication programs and results to increase quality and effectiveness. (2)							
The ability to obtain sufficient resources to support needed strategies and projects. (3)							
The ability to use knowledge of mass and specialized media to help the organization communicate effectively with publics. (4)							
The ability to strategically use new technologies to help the organization communicate and interact with publics. (5)							
Known the process of using research to develop appropriate strategies,							

messages, and activities. (6)							
Known the process of using research to help solve communication problems. (7)							
Known the process of converting knowledge about publics and policies into effective and representative advocacy of these publics with decision makers. (8)							

This is the second section of the survey. This section asks you to rank qualities and dimensions of leadership in PR. Please rank three of the following qualities or aspects you believe contribute the most to excellent leadership in public relations. (You can move the aspects by dragging them with your mouse to the top of the text frame, to create your top three)

Q8 8. Most Important Qualities and Dimensions of Excellent Leadership in PR
______ Communication knowledge and expertise (1)
______ Strategic decision-making capabilities (2)
______ Ability to demonstrate the value of public relations (3)
______ Relationship-building abilities (4)
______ Ethical values and orientation (5)
______ Being visionary and inspiring (6)
______ Ability to collaborate and build teams (7)
______ Being trustworthy and dependable (8)
______ Ability to solve problems and produce results (9)
______ An organizational culture that supports communication (10)

Please rank three of the following qualities or aspects you believe contribute the most to excellent leadership in public relations. (You can move the aspects by dragging them with your mouse to the top of the text frame, to create your top three)

Q9 9. Most Important Qualities and Dimensions of Excellent Leadership in PR

______ Examples set by excellent role models (1)
______ Powerful personal experiences or events (2)
______ Genetics (3)
______ Formal education (university level) (4)
______ On-the-job experiences (5)
______ Mentors and mentoring programs (6)
______ Professional development programs (e.g., through PRSA, IABC or others) (7)
______ Communication skills training (persuasion, listening, public speaking, etc.) (8)
______ Individual initiative and desire (9)

Q10 10. Do you believe that the qualities of excellent leadership in public relations are somewhat different from the qualities of excellent leadership in other fields or disciplines?

❍ Yes. I believe the qualities of excellent leadership in PR are somewhat different. (1)
❍ No. Excellent leadership is more or less the same in any field. (2)

Answer If 10. Do you believe that the qualities of excellent leader... Yes. I believe the qualities of excellent leadership in PR are somewhat different. Is Selected

Q10b Because you answered "yes" to the previous question. Please rank three of the following qualities or aspects you believe contribute the most to excellent leadership in public relations. (You can move the aspects by dragging them with your mouse to the top of the page, to create your top three)

Answer If 10. Do you believe that the qualities of excellent leader... Yes. I believe the qualities of excellent leadership in PR are somewhat different. Is Selected

Q10c 10b. Please indicate the most important ways (up to three) in which leadership in public relations is different from leadership in other fields based on the following list.

______ Ability to strategically construct messages (1)
______ A clear and compelling vision of how communication connects the organization to its publics and the larger social system (2)
______ Ability to advocate effectively with executives on behalf of diverse publics (3)
______ Comprehensive understanding of media and information systems, channels and technologies (4)
______ Ability to do more with fewer resources than other leaders in the organization (5)
______ Strong negotiation and conflict-resolution skills (6)
______ Comprehensive understanding of the needs and concerns of diverse publics (7)
______ Ability to effectively develop and carry out comprehensive communication strategic plans (8)
______ Ability to cultivate relationships with a wide range of individuals inside and outside the organization (9)
______ An unwavering belief in the importance of honest and ethical organizational communications and actions (10)

This is the last section of the survey. Please complete the following questions, which will capture demographic information that will be used only for categorizing the data. All information will be kept completely confidential.

Q11 11. Your total years of professional experience in public relations:

❍ Less than 3 years (1)
❍ 3 to 5 years (2)
❍ 5 to 10 years (3)
❍ 10 to 15 years (4)
❍ More than 15 years (5)

Q12 12. The type of organization for which you work:

- Public corporation (1)
- Private corporation (2)
- Public Relations agency (3)
- Nonprofit organization (4)
- Government organization (5)
- Education institution (6)

Q13 13. Total number of employees in your entire organization:

- <25(1)
- 25-49 (2)
- 50-99 (3)
- 100-499 (4)
- 500-999 (5)
- 1,000-2,499 (6)
- 2,500-4,999 (7)
- 5,000-9,999 (8)
- 10,000-24,999 (9)
- 25,000-49,999 (10)
- 50,000> (11)

Q14 14. Size of PR employees inside the organization

- 1-2 (1)
- 3-4 (2)
- 5-9 (3)
- 10-19 (4)
- 20-49 (5)
- 50-99 (6)
- 100 or more (7)
- Do not know (8)

Q15 15. What is your gender?

- Male (1)
- Female (2)

Q16 16. What is your age?

______ Your age (1)

Q17 17. Your level of education:

- High school graduate or equivalent (1)
- Some college (2)
- Associate degree (3)
- Bachelor's degree (4)
- Master's degree (5)
- Doctoral degree (6)
- Law degree (7)
- Other, please specify:… (8) ____________________

Q18 18. If you obtained your degree from a college/university, what was your major?

- Journalism (1)
- Public Relations (2)
- English (3)
- Communication (4)

- ❍ Business in general (5)
- ❍ Political science (6)
- ❍ Other, please specify (7) ____________________

Appendix 8. List of all contributing educational fields

List of all contributing educational fields

- Advertising
- Biology (2x)
- Bio-Med
- Biomedical science
- Business
- Computer science (2x)
- Education (2x)
- General AA
- International Relations
- International Studies
- n/a
- Nursing (2x)
- Physical therapy
- Psychology and Marketing
- Theatre
- TV production/ broadcasting

Appendix 9. Participants' age range

TABLE A6. Are range participants

#	Answer	Response	%
1	<25	37	51%
2	25-49	6	8%
3	50-99	3	4%
4	100-499	7	10%
5	500-999	2	3%
6	1,000-2,499	1	1%
7	2,500-4,999	3	4%
8	5,000-9,999	2	3%
9	10,000-24,999	1	1%
10	25,000-49,999	3	4%
11	50,000>	7	10%
	Total	72	100%

Appendix 10. Highest to lowest ranked variables

TABLE A7. Highest to lowest ranked variables

#	Q.	Statistic	Mean	Variance	Standard Deviation
1	5.6	The ability to cultivate relationships with key external publics.	6.47	0.51	0.71
2	5.1	The ability to foster trust and credibility with organizational decision makers.	6.44	0.48	0.69
3	5.7	The ability to foster trust and credibility with media representatives.	6.44	0.62	0.79
4	3.2	The ability to develop a proactive and professional communication team.	6.42	0.75	0.87
5	1.2	The nature of being proactive.	6.39	0.58	0.76
6	5.8	The ability to understand the needs for key publics.	6.35	0.85	0.92
7	7.1	The ability to apply public relations knowledge to crisis situations.	6.35	0.96	0.98
8	1.3	The capacity for engaging in strategic decision-making.	6.33	0.68	0.82
9	7.4	The ability to use knowledge of mass and specialized media to help the organization communicate effectively with publics.	6.32	0.73	0.85
10	4.2	The ability to integrate these core values into actions.	6.29	0.52	0.72
11	7.5	The ability to strategically use new technologies to help the organization communicate and interact with publics.	6.28	0.74	0.86
12	1.1	The nature of being dependable.	6.25	1.01	1.00
13	3.3	The ability to facilitate positive interdependence among team members.	6.25	0.67	0.82
14	6.3	The knowledge of the organization's decision-making processes, practices, and structures.	6.25	0.58	0.76
15	7.2	The ability to systematically evaluate communication programs and results to increase quality and effectiveness.	6.25	0.64	0.80
16	4.5	Understanding ethical differences which grow out of diverse cultures.	6.22	0.94	0.97
17	3.5	The ability to provide a clear vision about PR values and role.	6.21	1.13	1.06
18	4.1	The ability to maintain the core values of PR as professional standards.	6.21	0.82	0.90
19	4.3	The ability to act promptly to correct erroneous communications of team members and other coworkers.	6.21	0.93	0.96
20	6.2	The knowledge of the organization's business and its environment.	6.21	0.76	0.87

21	3.4	The ability to bring diverse groups together to collaboratively solve problems.	6.19	0.98	0.99
22	4.4	Understanding the process of representing consistent behaviors that can be trusted by others inside and outside of the organization.	6.19	0.81	0.90
23	5.2	The ability to develop coalitions to support proposed ideas or actions.	6.19	0.50	0.70
24	7.7	Known the process of using research to help solve communication problems.	6.15	0.86	0.93
25	7.6	Known the process of using research to develop appropriate strategies, messages, and activities.	6.11	0.89	0.94
26	2.6	The ability to provide a clear vision of how PR goals are congruent with organizational goals.	6.10	1.13	1.06
27	5.5	The understanding the process of regularly briefing members of the organization about public relations programs and results.	6.10	0.74	0.86
28	2.4	The capacity for providing a vision of potential changes in areas affecting the organization.	6.08	0.67	0.82
29	2.5	The ability to provide a clear vision about PR values and role.	6.08	1.20	1.10
30	3.1	The ability to collaborate with members to define PR strategies.	6.06	1.12	1.06
31	7.3	The ability to obtain sufficient resources to support needed strategies and projects.	6.06	0.79	0.89
32	6.4	Been included in strategic decision-making groups in the organization.	6.03	0.87	0.93
33	1.5	The awareness of applying diverse strategies.	6.01	0.86	0.93
34	2.3	The capacity for enlisting others in a shared vision.	6.01	0.66	0.81
35	5.3	The ability to mentor and help young professionals achieve success on the job.	6.01	0.80	0.90
36	7.8	Known the process of converting knowledge about publics and policies into effective and representative advocacy of these publics with decision makers.	6.01	0.92	0.96
37	6.1	The ability to span internal/external boundaries and interpret information from publics for organizational decision makers.	5.92	1.09	1.04
38	2.1	The nature of being forward looking.	5.89	0.72	0.85
39	5.4	Being sought out for advice and counsel by executives in the organization.	5.86	0.91	0.95
40	1.4	The capacity for acting as a changing agent.	5.75	1.01	1.00
41	2.2	The nature of having a vision of PR as a managerial function.	5.69	1.34	1.16
Average mean			6.06		

Appendix 11. Complete list of ranking questions

TABLE A8. Complete list of ranking questions

Q. 8	Answer	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	#8	#9	#10
8.01	Communication knowledge and expertise	19	22	9	8	5	4	2	1	2	0
8.08	Being trustworthy and dependable	11	10	8	5	9	8	3	10	6	2
8.04	Relationship-building abilities	9	10	4	14	11	9	7	4	3	1
8.02	Strategic decision-making capabilities	9	9	21	12	7	4	5	3	0	2
8.09	Ability to solve problems and produce results	7	8	8	7	6	9	3	4	16	4
8.05	Ethical values and orientation	7	3	1	5	11	16	10	9	6	4
8.03	Ability to demonstrate the value of public relations	5	5	8	9	6	9	7	6	11	6
8.07	Ability to collaborate and build teams	3	3	6	5	6	4	11	21	9	4
8.10	An organizational culture that supports communication	2	2	2	1	4	2	6	1	11	41
8.06	Being visionary and inspiring	0	0	5	6	7	7	18	13	8	8

Q. 9	Answer	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	#8	#9
9.8	Communication skills training (persuasion, listening, public speaking, etc.)	23	12	9	2	8	3	6	7	2
9.9	Individual initiative and desire	15	9	6	6	7	5	3	8	13
9.5	On-the-job experiences	11	13	12	9	10	8	5	3	1
9.1	Examples set by excellent role models	8	11	8	16	4	11	5	7	2
9.2	Powerful personal experiences or events	7	8	11	15	10	6	10	4	1
9.4	Formal education (university level)	6	8	11	8	9	14	14	1	1
9.7	Professional development programs (e.g., through PRSA, IABC or others)	1	7	10	7	8	5	5	22	7
9.6	Mentors and mentoring programs	1	2	5	7	8	8	22	16	3
9.3	Genetics	0	2	0	2	8	12	2	4	42

Q. 11	Answer	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	#8	#9	#10
11.01	Ability to strategically construct messages	10	4	2	8	7	1	0	1	1	0
11.02	A clear and compelling vision of how communication connects the organization to its publics and the larger social system	6	8	7	5	5	1	0	1	0	1
11.10	An unwavering belief in the importance of honest and ethical organizational communications and actions	5	1	0	2	1	0	1	1	1	22
11.09	Ability to cultivate relationships with a wide range of individuals inside and outside the organization	3	4	6	2	1	1	1	2	10	4
11.08	Ability to effectively develop and carry out comprehensive communication strategic plans	3	3	1	1	1	2	3	7	10	3
11.06	Strong negotiation and conflict-resolution skills	3	2	1	2	2	7	4	7	5	1
11.07	Comprehensive understanding of the needs and concerns of diverse publics	2	1	3	5	2	1	8	6	5	1
11.03	Ability to advocate effectively with executives on behalf of diverse publics	1	6	8	3	4	10	1	0	0	1
11.05	Ability to do more with fewer resources than other leaders in the organization	1	1	0	3	4	6	10	6	2	1
11.04	Comprehensive understanding of media and information systems, channels and technologies	0	4	6	3	7	5	6	3	0	0
	Total	34	34	34	34	34	34	34	34	34	34

About the Author

Rob Oldenbanning was born in Groningen, the Netherlands and earned a Bachelor of Business Administration degree in 2008. With a concentration in Hotel and Event Management, from Tio University of Applied Sciences, Utrecht, the Netherlands. During his thesis completion, he worked for three years as Senior Account Executive at Paylogic B.V. in Amsterdam. In 2010, he quit his job and sold his house to pursuit a master's degree in the United States. In 2011 he was admitted at the University of South Florida (USF), for a master's in Strategic Mass Communications Management, where he graduated in May 2013. At USF, he worked as graduate assistant and was a teaching assistant for several semesters. His long-term goal (10-15 years) is to obtain an Executive Master of Business Administration (EMBA) degree, with the ambition to excel in decision-making and leadership.