Public Relations Leadership Development Cycle Study Summary

Funded by the Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations, The University of Alabama

By Elina Erzikova, Central Michigan University, & Diana Martinelli, West Virginia University
Acknowledgments

The authors are grateful to the Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations at the University of Alabama, its leadership team and advisory board for supporting this research project. In addition, they thank colleagues Andreia Athaydes and Gustavo Becker at Universidade Luterana do Brasil, Nilanjana Barhan at Southern Illinois University, and Juan Meng at University of Georgia, who conducted interviews for this study with public relations students and professionals in Brazil, India, and China, respectively.
Table of Contents

Executive Summary .............................................................................................................. 3
Research Questions & Findings .............................................................................................. 8
Research Ideas/Actions ......................................................................................................... 32
Other Possible Actions/Considerations .................................................................................. 33
References ............................................................................................................................ 35
Appendix A: Leadership Dimensions .................................................................................... 36
Appendix B: Interview Guide (Practitioners) ...................................................................... 38
Appendix C: Interview Guide (Students) ............................................................................... 39
Appendix D: Leadership Identity Development (LID) Model .................................................. 44
Executive Summary

This exploratory research study is the first known attempt to understand the process and various stages of leadership development in public relations specialists.

Using purposive in-depth interviews with PR practitioners and students from five countries (Brazil, China, India, Russia and the U.S.), this study’s objective was to obtain qualitative data about the seven public relations leadership dimensions (six personal and one organizational) (Meng & Berger, 2013; Berger & Meng, 2014), to obtain insights as to when these dimensions appear/are learned and how they are manifested. Summary findings are included here.

Preliminary Takeaways

**PR Leadership Development Cycle**

- This study indicates that the PR leadership dimensions identified by Meng & Berger (2013) may apply to all professions and not just public relations.

- Among the PR leadership dimensions identified by Meng & Berger (2013), this study indicates that having strong technical skills (the communication knowledge and expertise dimension) is viewed as the main prerequisite to develop into a PR leader; thus this dimension seems to be the critical first step for receiving PR leadership opportunities.
  
  - In the Global Study (Berger & Meng, 2014), this dimension was also found to be “a critical leadership dimension” (p. 108).
  
  - Communication knowledge and expertise can begin with public speaking and relationship maintenance at a relatively young age; it’s more formally learned and evolves through college study and professional experience.

- Other personal leadership dimensions found to be learned early in life and developed more fully over time include:
  
  - self-dynamics (first learned through family/peer interactions and through those of school/organizations/groups),
  
  - ethical orientation (first learned from family/religious values),
  
  - team collaboration (first learned through family, sports, church and school projects),
  
  - relationship-building (first learned through interactions with peers, teachers, family members, coaches).

- Strategic decision making capabilities seem to develop later in one’s professional development, after one has both technical skill and professional experience upon
which to draw. Thus, this dimension appears to be the highest-order leadership dimension, which can be successfully applied only after the other dimensions have been realized.

- In the Global Study (Berger & Meng, 2014), this dimension stood out as “the most significant leadership condition in various situations and geographic locations” (p. 108).

- Study findings align PR leadership development with generic leadership development, per the Leadership Identity Development (LID) Model (see Appendix D), as follows:
  - PR leadership development began as early as kindergarten/elementary school. Supportive and encouraging teachers helped build confidence and provided early leadership experiences.
  - Parents and other family members (grandparents, siblings) were strong role models and mentors by instilling professional aspirations and strong personal values.
  - Family members were the most commonly cited role models/mentors across cultures.
  - Most interviewees joined groups and began to take on leadership roles as adolescents, although some were in college or young professionals before first serving in such a role.
  - Leaders continued to learn and grow while they taught/inspired others; so leadership development is a twofold process of continual teaching and learning.
    - There was consensus across interviewed practitioners on the value and importance of mentoring in furthering leadership development—both for mentees and mentors.

- Also, the findings can be viewed through the lens of Brungardt (1996), who discusses the distinctions among leadership development, leadership education and leadership training, and the general leadership development lifespan categories, as follows:
  1) early childhood and adolescence
  2) formal education
  3) on-the-job experiences
  4) specialized leadership education.

★ PR Leadership Education/Training

- This study suggests that formal leadership development training should be culturally/country-specific, as follows:
• **Brazil, India and U.S.:** Leadership is often associated with egalitarianism; an ethical, collaborative approach; and giving back to society, particularly with millennials. Accordingly, trainings that focus on leading an egalitarian-style company and offering meaningful work would resonate with PR students and practitioners in these countries.

  - In addition, information about running consultancies and small business entrepreneurial models should be included in both college courses and professional training in these countries.

  o **U.S.:** Special training for and about the unique challenges and perceptions of women and underrepresented practitioners is warranted.

    - U.S. women practitioners seemed to be more aware of gender-related differences in workplace leadership styles and opportunities, while Indian female students seemed to be more aware of culturally based generational gender biases.

  o **Russia:** Having access to prominent individuals is seen as vital for established and emerging PR leaders. Accordingly, educational programs that include learning from and interacting with recognized authorities/experts would be most effective, and skill-specific training is most highly valued.

  o **India:** A diverse and complex country, where each state has its own language and culture, PR leaders must understand these differences and be adept at managing its inherently complex environment.

  o **China:** Organizations that intend to develop an effective leadership training program should take into consideration that young PR practitioners appreciate a clear direction from teachers and supervisors, but also want more autonomy over their learning. In addition, public relations students value skills-oriented training over more general leadership education.

• Overall, these culturally diverse findings give additional credence to the Global Study's findings (Berger & Meng, 2014), which demonstrated relatively weak support for developing a “global education curriculum” (p. 116) as an approach to developing PR leaders.

• This study's findings likewise supported the Plank Center–funded qualitative research study “Reaching for the Stars: Perspectives on Integrating the Newest Generation of Top Talent into PR & Communications,” conducted by Dr. Juan Meng (2014) at the University of Georgia. In this PR Leadership Development Cycle study, practitioners across countries indicated recognition that millennial PR practitioners seek transparent, collaborative leadership and meaningful work environments (i.e. transformational, as opposed to transactional, leadership styles).
Formal leadership development opportunities seem to be more widely available in the U.S. than in the other countries represented in this study.

- This finding also supports those of the Global Study (Berger & Meng, 2014).
- The majority of PR practitioners and students across cultures understand the need to continue to learn about and grow in PR leadership and seem interested in doing so, when possible and practical. However, in general, Russian practitioners and students seem skeptical of formal leadership development activities.

- Informal leadership development activities (e.g., mentoring, observation, self-teaching through reading/online seminars) are more highly prized/valued across cultures than are formal leadership development activities (e.g., courses, workshops, seminars).

- Still, formal college coursework that not only provides technical knowledge and skills but that discusses and teaches fundamentals of leadership was seen as important to further the profession as a whole and those who work within it.

- In addition, experiential application of PR skills and knowledge through extracurricular activities, internships and hands-on coursework were noted as providing important opportunities to practice both tactical and managerial skills.

**Project Background**

The study of leadership has a long history, but this cross-cultural exploratory study is the first known attempt to understand the process and various stages of leadership development in public relations specialists. Previous research (Day, Fleenor, Atwater, Sturm, McKee, 2014) defines leadership development as an interdependent process of enhancing individual leadership capabilities and expanding the collective capacity of organizations.

Using purposive in-depth interviews with PR practitioners and students from five countries (Brazil, China, India, Russia and the U.S.), this study’s objective was to obtain qualitative data about the leadership dimensions used in previous Plank Center–supported research (Berger & Meng, 2014) to glean insights as to when these dimensions appear/are learned and how they are manifested.

The interviews provided information about practitioners’ and students’ perceptions of (1) stages of PR leaders’ development; 2) the effectiveness of educational interventions (e.g., leadership courses/seminars/content embedded in PR curricula); (3) the role of mentors (e.g., parents, teachers, colleagues) and peer models; and (4) the effect of organizational conditions for leadership (culture) on leadership development.
Study Background

Elina Erzikova (Central Michigan University) and Diana Martinelli (West Virginia University) served as the study’s co-principal investigators (PIs). With the help of Bruce Berger’s contacts from previous Plank Center studies, they engaged the following other researchers: Plank Center Advisory Board member Nilanjana Barhan, Southern Illinois University; Juan Meng, University of Georgia; and Gustavo Becker and Andreia Athaydes, Universidade Luterana do Brasil [Lutheran University of Brazil].

Study Method & Participants

The interview guide was piloted in the U.S., and then researchers in each of the countries translated the study’s interview guides into their respective native languages, as applicable. Interviews were conducted with 1) five public relations practitioners of varied experience and 2) at least five public relations students at varying stages of college study who were considered to be “leaders” by their professors and/or peers (as determined through extracurricular and/or experiential activities).

Interviews were transcribed in the native language and summarized. Interviewees were asked to review the summaries and to provide clarification or additional information, as needed, to ensure the transcriptions accurately reflected their respective comments and views. Translations were performed by native speakers. (However, in rare cases when a translation was difficult to understand in English, Google translate was used to help clarify the meaning.) The summaries and transcriptions/translations were divided and reviewed by the two study PIs, who then compared and contrasted them to identify common patterns and outlying perspectives.

Included in this summary are the remarks of 51 interviewees: 25 practitioners (14 females and 11 males), who ranged in age from the mid-20s to 60s and had a combined 430 years of public relations experience, and 26 students (10 males and 16 females), who were sophomore- through graduate-level (19 undergraduates and 7 graduate students).

Study Timeline

Fall 2014
Literature review was conducted; international researchers were secured; IRB submission (Central Michigan University); U.S.-based student interviews helped refine interview guide.

Spring 2015
International researchers translated the interview guide (as applicable) into their respective native languages and identified their respective 10 participants (5 practitioners representing various lines of PR work and 5 students representing various levels of PR study).

Summer–Fall 2015
Interviews took place.
Fall 2015
Transcriptions/translations were completed; summaries were generated for interviewees’ collective review and comment.

Spring 2016
Once summary of findings was approved by participants, it was transcribed and provided to primary investigators, along with the original transcriptions/translations.

Spring–Early fall 2016
Primary investigators analyzed qualitative findings across countries to identify patterns and differences and developed findings summary.

Research Questions & Findings

This study sought to answer the following research questions, which appear below with findings and sample illustrative quotes:

1) What are public relations practitioners’ perceptions of leadership development across the lifespan?

Practitioners: Commonalities & Differences

- Across the five countries analyzed, interviewees believed they began learning leadership skills at an early age: most were in elementary school and began learning to be a leader as a result of family necessity (e.g. being the eldest child) or through sports teams or in their classrooms.

- Brazilian and Indian professionals reported first joining a group/organization in their teens, while the majority of U.S. and Russian professionals joined in elementary school.
  - U.S., Indian and Russian professionals and practitioners from China tended to be group members in school/sports, while the majority of Brazilian professionals were first members of church groups.

- Across cultures, a majority of professionals first became a group/team leader in their teens.
  - A minority of respondents reported first learning leadership skills and serving as a leader in college or as a professional.

- In Russia, India, and the U.S., leadership was first exhibited most often through school (e.g. classroom “commanders,” being involved in extra-curricular/sports activities and student council/government, respectively).
In Brazil, most became leaders through church activities.

Practitioners’ thoughts on early leadership development

- “I was constantly pushed by [others] who were saying, ‘You can do more … you can do better….’ And when I was doing more than other people, I realized ‘yes, I can.’”
  Male, latter 40s, Russia

- It’s important to receive positive reinforcement at a young age to propel one forward.
  Female, 32, U.S.

- “It is usually due to life circumstances that a person acquires some leadership qualities, while passing through a number of situations.”
  Female, 35, Russia

- “Perhaps leadership comes as a consequence” of good work, even when not actively sought or pursued.
  Female, 60s, Brazil

- Started learning leadership skills “through all the school activities and the gymnastic training my parents threw me into. But you wouldn’t know that has something to do with leadership skills because you were so young. But eventually, it has imprints on you.”
  Female, early 50s, China

2) What are public relations students’ perceptions of leadership development stages in the public relations field?

Students: Commonalities

- The majority of respondents from every country except Brazil believed they began learning leadership skills at an early age, while serving as class monitors or through sports while in grade school; the others reported being teenagers before they began learning such skills.

  - Four of the five interviewed students from Brazil reported learning leadership skills as teenagers.

    - Two Brazilian students were first team leaders through church activities; and two, through high school/college work.

  - All students from China mentioned that extracurricular activities at grade school and university provided them with opportunities to learn leadership skills.
- Two Chinese students reported learning leadership skills at elementary school after their teachers assigned them to be group leaders.
- All students from India reported being in grade school when they first began learning these skills. The skills they reported learning were as follows:
  - how to work with people,
  - how to lead in an egalitarian manner,
  - how to remain calm and in control during difficult times and
  - how to work selflessly for the welfare of the entire team.
- Four of the five Indian students were involved in leadership capacities for NGOs at the time of the interviews.
- The majority of Russian students indicated they were 7 years old when they began learning leadership skills.
  - Four of the five first served as class leaders in elementary school.
- The majority of U.S. students were 10 or younger when they began learning leadership skills.
  - Most were first leaders on sports teams; two were leaders through Student Council.

**Students’ thoughts on early leadership development**

- “Leadership development starts with the realization that you want to be a leader. You [then] start developing skills that would help you position yourself as a leader.”
  Male (junior) undergraduate, Russia

- “I learned leadership skills “mostly through my school teachers in various situations when they assigned me a leadership role with a group of my classmates or peers. That’s when you feel you are responsible for getting something finished. But I feel it is more of instructed leadership, not a problem solving process.”
  Male, 21, China

- “At the Boys & Girls Club where I went with my sister in the summers when my mom and dad were at work, there was a woman who ran the place who was like a mentor to my sister and me, and I noticed that [leadership qualities] in her.”
  Female graduate student, 24, U.S.

- “You are right asking about kindergarten: Many traits start developing at an early age and they come in handy in any occupation: self-confidence, ability to work independently, make your own decisions....”
Female graduate student, Russia

- “I had a younger brother who just joined school and I was in the fifth grade at that time. His responsibility was my responsibility. Being the eldest of the family and your youngest brother coming to school, you need to know what he’s doing and all that. [At] the age of 10 I actually began to learn the skill of leadership.”

Male, 20, India

- “In my life, I’m very fortunate to learn leadership skills at the age of 11 because I’m a trained Bharatnatyam dancer. For a dancer, leadership skills are very important because we have to synchronize and form a group from the very start of our learning. I was really fortunate to learn leadership skills because I have trained some of the people back in my childhood....”

Female, 22, India

3) Are the development stages of leadership in public relations different from those of other fields or professions? If so, how?

Practitioners: Commonalities & Differences

- The majority of Russian and Indian professionals, two practitioners from China, as well as one U.S. practitioner, believed there was no difference in PR and other fields’ leadership development; however, the majority of Brazilian and U.S. practitioners said there was a difference.

  o The Brazilian respondents believed that PR leadership development was hindered more than in other fields because of the nature of PR education (not enough emphasis on leadership or entrepreneurship in college to help facilitate and motivate future PR leaders).

  o In contrast, some U.S. and Indian professionals and practitioners from China believed the complex nature of PR professionals’ roles (internal/external listener/scanner, counselor, team orientation, relationship-focused, strong communicator) may help hasten—or at least set apart—leadership development in PR professionals.

- There was consensus across practitioners that the six PR leadership qualities identified in prior research by Berger & Meng (2013)—self-dynamics, team collaboration, ethical orientation, relationship-building skills, strategic decision-making capability and communication knowledge and expertise—were important leadership skills across all professions/fields. However, several indicated the amount of emphasis on these characteristics could vary by profession.

- The importance of “soft skills” (a “human touch”) was alluded to by at least one practitioner in every country. (These skills were also highlighted in the Global Study.)
• *Ethics* and *entrepreneurship* were mentioned as particularly important for PR leaders by at least one practitioner in each country except Russia.

• *Collaboration* also was mentioned as a positive leadership style by practitioners across countries except Russia.

• Being *visionary* was mentioned by at least one practitioner in each country except India and China.

• *Measurement/evaluation* was mentioned as a key leadership function by some Indian and U.S. practitioners.

• Two practitioners from China emphasized the ability to *respond quickly* to an issue is part of being effective.

• Interviewees across countries noted the importance of both personal and professional growth in leadership development; many noted the following elements as being important for that growth:
  - honing occupation-related skills,
  - observing outstanding leaders’ behaviors,
  - learning by doing and
  - reflecting on mistakes.

**Practitioners’ thoughts on PR leadership development**

❖ “*As far as the basics of leadership are concerned, they’re the same across functions. I think basic knowledge and expertise, as far as your own domain is concerned, is a basic whether you’re a leader in PR or you’re a leader in another field.*”

  *Female, 44, India*

❖ “*I’ve met only few people in PR who didn’t have leadership qualities.*”

  *Male, latter 40s, Russia*

❖ “*Leadership is about taking calculated risks. And being confident and comfortable doing that…. I would say a combination of … consensus building and sort of this intuitive gut feeling you have by knowing your audiences well” are particularly important for PR leaders.*

  *Female, 32, U.S.*

❖ “*All leaders need to be proactive, visionary and an agent for change and know how to motivate staff and inspire people. Regardless of profession, leaders must act in accordance with the objectives of the organization.*”

  *Female, latter 30s, Brazil*

❖ “*Social networks have been important for me. I believe you are the company that you keep. The culture of people you surround yourself with plays an important role in leadership development.*”
Male, 27, U.S.

“First of all, you need to learn what soft skills are because ... being able to kind of catch the wavelength of every individual client and then connect with him, that’s a bit of a tricky job. That is a little different from maybe a manufacturing or any technical discipline.”

Male, 36, India

Metrics/analytics must be part of the new PR leader’s skill set, “however, it creates an interesting dynamic in terms of leadership style [to be heavily numbers-driven].”

Male, mid-50s, U.S.

“PR leadership development is very different, in my opinion. People are thinking, oh, you are doing communication job. So that’s easy, but it is not. Communicating across a very diverse group of employees, especially in my industry, is not an easy thing to do. So [it] is for leadership development. We are in the fast moving consumer goods business, and I think speed and route to market make response time of the essence.”

Male, early 50s, China

“A critical component of leadership is always being prepared for what’s around the corner when you don’t even know what’s around the corner. It takes someone who has great intellectual curiosity, is not fearful, and does not want to rest on doing what has been done for decades. I feel like our industry needs to see more of that.”

Female, 60s, U.S.

“If you look at a lot of the entrepreneurial models today, it is young leaders who are demonstrating their ability to get things done.... Delegating is what used to happen, but now it is you with the team on the idea. You co-create, and the role of the leader is more like a facilitator today, not necessarily sitting on top and giving orders and directions and suggestions.”

Female, 42, India

Students: Commonalities & Differences

• A majority of Brazilian, Chinese and Russian students believed there was no difference between PR leadership development and the development of leaders in other professional fields.

• A majority of U.S. students believed that leadership development was different for PR compared to other fields because of the profession’s focus on relationships and communications across constituencies.

• A majority of Brazilian, Chinese and Russian students and some U.S. students believed the PR leadership dimensions identified in Berger & Meng’s (2013) research —self-dynamics, team collaboration, ethical orientation, relationship building, strategic decision making, communication knowledge and expertise—were equally important for all fields, although the emphasis placed on these dimensions may vary by profession.
• Indian students weren’t sure whether there was a difference, owing to their limited professional experience.

• One Brazilian student thought there was a difference because PR training does not necessarily prepare or get people to think about being leaders.

• One Chinese student believed the process of leadership development is unique and should not be tied to a particular occupation; instead, it should be driven by the need to develop specific abilities.

• One U.S. student noted the creative factor in PR, and although the majority of Russian students and one Chinese student indicated they attended arts clubs when young (e.g. drawing, sculpting, music, theater), developing creativity was not viewed as part of leadership development.

• A majority of Indian students believed the qualities were important for PR leadership, but unsure as to whether they applied to leaders in all fields.

• Most of the American students and one Brazilian student said that at least some of the dimensions may be more important in PR than in other fields, owing to the centralized nature of the work in the organization and its specific roles and responsibilities.
  o All of the U.S. students mentioned the importance of ethics, while a minority of students in each of the other countries did.
  o Most of the U.S. and Indian students and one Chinese student mentioned the importance of relationships.
  o Brazilian and Russian students said that leaders inspire others.
  o A few U.S., Indian, and Brazilian students also mentioned the importance of PR leaders in particular to be strategic and collaborative.
  o Russian students indicated that leadership is about working for social good.
  o Russian students mentioned assertiveness as a top leadership quality.
  o A Brazilian and two U.S. students believed the whole of PR work is akin to leadership.

Students’ thoughts on PR leadership development

❖ I don’t know if leadership is different in other fields or not, “but I think there are a ton of similarities between leadership and public relations…. Public relations is a profession with a
holistic outlook; you have to have a look at all 360 degrees, and in my opinion, the leader has to look at all 360 degrees to progress and grow. Because public relations [practitioners] already have this vision ..., it ends up helping when in a leadership position.”

Male undergraduate, Brazil

- The leadership development cycle in PR is not different from those of other fields: “It starts with learning a theory and continues with applying it to practice.”

Female undergraduate, Russia

- “These six qualities [leadership dimensions] are the stepping stones to be a good leader. To be a good leader, you don’t need to have a particular field. Any field, if you want to be a leader, you have to have these six qualities in you.”

Female graduate student, India

- I think in all areas [of leadership] some characteristics are essential ... you awaken confidence, be a dynamic person, proactive, organized, credible, but I think the public relations person usually is or should be in top management ... playing strategic roles, aligned to the goals of the organization....”

Female undergraduate, Brazil

- “I think the qualities of the leader of PR have to be exactly the same as those of the other leaders, but the dimension [in which they operate—communications] is different.”

Female undergraduate, Brazil

- “I think in our culture, relationship building is important, and that is people’s perception about public relations.”

Male undergraduate, 20, China

- “Leadership comes from attitudes, to know how to act in the right time and right place, with the resources you have, regardless of what field, regardless of the focus...”

Female undergraduate, Brazil

- “Leadership development is developing traits that help you move forward, aspire to achieve the unachievable and motivate people to do the same.”

Female undergraduate, Brazil

- “You come across a lot of people who say, ‘What is the benefit in it [leadership]? You are doing it, but what will you get out of it?’ I said, ‘It’s not always what you get out of it. It’s something that you give to the society or to the people who we love.”

Male graduate student, India

- All leaders have to know how to deal with the public, know how to deal with situations and know how to take people forward, so in that context, I think there’s much similarity. Most importantly, to be an agent of change, to motivate and inspire others to follow ahead and communicate well is very important; moreover to assume responsibility for errors and be transparent with people, because when you’re a leader, when in front of a group, you need
to be very sincere with people, if you have no credibility, how will you lead? How will people trust you?”

Female undergraduate, Brazil

“With PR, there’s a lot of gray area. So being a leader in that sense, you kind of have to look at things from other people’s point of view. It’s not just numbers and formulas; it’s not just cut and dry. There is a creative factor, and consideration for your client and their views and the audiences you need to reach.”

Female undergraduate, U.S.

“There is either right or a wrong, and you can’t keep the legs in both the boats in sail, so you have to be in one boat. I feel if you are ethical and you can … not compromise the principles for anything, but at the same time you should be flexible enough to give way for new thoughts … along with your principles.”

Male graduate student, India

“I think leadership development in PR is a little different because we have a touch in every industry. So we have to learn to communicate with different individuals from different backgrounds who have different insights. We have to be negotiators. Sometimes we have to be a mediator. Oftentimes, we have to be that voice of reason in the midst of things.”

Female graduate student, U.S.

The most important leadership qualities are “to make decisions and establish contacts very quickly, successfully network with high-level professionals.”

Female graduate student, Russia

“I feel that PR leaders become very different. They are very personal. They become a very integral part of the life. They understand every facet.”

Male graduate student, India

“I think people should stop with any kind of stereotype, that a leader was born to be a leader, or a leader has a gift. A lot of people will only be a leader when they get to college or grad school, but I think that we are all capable of being a leader. It’s just the want to do it and the opportunity to develop practices to become a leader.”

Female undergraduate, Brazil

“My first [experience] in leadership was being the class monitor. Then I became the school sports team captain. That is how I had my introduction to leadership.”

Male graduate student, India

“I’ve always been in the leadership thing, which my parents never liked. You will not believe, ‘til graduation, they had no idea that I had served certain posts all my life. They never knew when I was the captain in my school, when I was the head girl in my school, when I was the president of the Student Government Association. They had no idea about all of that.”

Female graduate student, India
How effective do people perceive formal educational activities (e.g. college curricula, professional seminars and workshops) and informal PR leadership education (e.g. mentoring, self-learning) to be in developing or eliciting leadership in public relations?

Practitioners: Commonalities & Differences

- While largely available and accessible in the U.S., formal leadership training is not as institutionalized in the other countries of this study.
  - All of the U.S. practitioners had taken formal leadership training: some as adults on the job or through PRSA; others, in college coursework or in high school through formal club or work activities.
  - Brazilian professionals indicated formal leadership training only through college coursework, except for one: she took advantage of an entrepreneurial leadership course that her company offered its engineers.
  - Professionals from China did not have any formal leadership training, but they believed that success in public relations leadership is driven by a combination of education and experience.
  - No Indian professionals had taken any formal leadership training before beginning their careers, but they had some exposure through master’s degree study (in business and economics) or through company/agency workshops.
  - Only one Russian professional had taken formal leadership development training (through her previous work at a news organization).

- Most Indian practitioners believed that more formal leadership training at an earlier stage in their development would have been useful for facing later challenges in their careers, and they were open to such training opportunities in the future.
  - They noted it was important to get away from the office and its routine to learn new perspectives; however, a U.S. practitioner noted the impracticality/difficulty of taking time away from the office to partake in training.

- Most respondents across countries believed that ideally, formal and informal leadership education complement each other, with formal instruction offering a foundation for experiential learning.

- At least one respondent from each country except China indicated that PR leadership should be part of a PR college curriculum.

- Informal training (e.g. mentorship, self-education, observation, experience) was more highly prized and practiced across practitioners/countries than was formal training.
• Most of the practitioners (Brazil, Russia and U.S.) were currently involved in some type of informal leadership development.
  
  o Most of the Russian respondents indicated they were reading articles and books about leadership.
  
  o Most of the U.S. practitioners indicated they were mentoring others.
  
  o Most participants from China said their companies have both formal and informal mentorship and leadership programs.
  
• Practitioners across countries understood the need for continual learning.
  
  o The majority of Russian practitioners wanted training in management.
  
  o One Brazilian and one U.S. practitioner wanted training relevant to nonprofit work.
  
  o Other desired training/education across practitioners included: motivating and managing teams, budgeting, entrepreneurship, marketing, finance, digital and social media, public speaking, and access to case studies that offer examples of both successes and failures.

Practitioners’ thoughts about formal & informal PR leadership education

❖ “It is important to learn some techniques formally, but it is not enough to meet the rules and characteristics of a leader. One must get the knowledge in practice, especially in delicate situations.”
  
  Female, latter 30s, Brazil

❖ To be effective, formal leadership education needs to be both academic (i.e. university PR leadership course) and systematic (i.e. training several times a year for several years).
  
  Female, 50, Russia

❖ “Leadership training is a tool. It’s impossible to develop leadership skills if a person lacks some ‘pre-leadership’ qualities like energy, passion, and a desire to lead. Formal trainings cheer you up and give you a mechanism. You are taught about normative leadership or approaches you should use while leading a team. Formal leadership training is a reminder that there are tools that help you lead with dignity. Formal leadership training is a remedy against achieving your goal by any means.”
  
  Female, 50, Russia

❖ “My attitude toward leadership education is ironic and negative because this concept is used by all sorts of charlatans who call themselves trainers. I think you need to learn not leadership, but the sphere you will be a leader in…..”
  
  Female, 35, Russia
“Formal training provides an excellent opportunity at the beginning of the career to get a sense of the big picture....” Undergraduate PR programs should better prepare students for leadership.”

Female, latter 30s, Brazil

“My college coursework embedded some leadership principles into them— independent studies, having to present publicly, work in groups... So the practice work done in college prepared me ... as a young leader at an agency.”

Female, 32, U.S.

“If I were in charge, I would create and make a university PR leadership course mandatory....”

Male, 47, Russia

There should be more focus on leadership in college PR coursework.

Female, 50s, Brazil

“Just learning the different types of leadership [styles] would have been really helpful and prepared me a lot more.”

Female, 24, U.S.

“I think that women especially need all sorts of training. [We] tend to be more insecure. We tend to worry more. We are not born negotiators. And if we had more training, I think there would be more women in C-suites and a greater understanding of what it takes to keep women going toward leadership.”

Female, 60s, U.S.

“To be able to apply the learning from formal into your existing space is a huge challenge.”

Female, 42, India

“Leadership education is a process of learning at workplace. It is not a shining certificate that you simply put it up on your wall.”

Male, mid 40s, China

Absolutely critical, both formal and informal. It's critical to anybody who wants to progress in an organization. I don't think any of us are prepared for what leadership is in an organization ... because when we're growing up, we come from a team environment. We know how to operate in school or on a team, but we've never operated in a broader organization....

Male, early 50s, China

“I wish we had more training and more of a live environment.... It’s indeed difficult to structure that kind of training, because it’s very different getting training in a formal seminar for two days and they kind of throw everything at you. You are supposed to come out a changed person, but you are not.”

Male, 36, India
“Informal leadership education is most important. It’s about finding a true leader and analyzing his approaches, especially unpopular decisions. Reading and learning from books is also important for leadership development. Formal training is secondary.”
Female, 34, Russia

“Leadership is not a science. You can’t get an MBA and automatically be a great leader.”
Male, mid 50s, U.S.

“Informal learning has been most beneficial to me, 100 percent. It would be very hard to hear someone speak about leadership at a formal seminar and feel the same connection to the message as hearing it from someone who I see in action at work every day ... having a candid conversation with me about what leadership strategies work for them.”
Female, 32, U.S.

Students: Commonalities & Differences

- No Chinese, Indian or Russian students had any formal PR leadership training.

- A majority of students across countries except China reported formal generic leadership training through youth organizations or through school/college/internship workshops/panels.

- A majority of students from China believed they would benefit from skill-specific training more than from a general leadership course.

- The majority of Indian, Russian and U.S. students believed informal leadership education was most effective; one Chinese student thought formal leadership education would be most effective.

- A few students across countries indicated they were learning informally about leadership through work; others said they were learning informally in class, student groups, through mentoring, or by watching Ted Talks on the topic.

- Indian students believed that both formal and informal training inform each other, and they wished they had received more formal leadership education.

- Brazilian students were split between formal and informal leadership development being most effective.

- Indian students emphasized the value of informal learning through life experiences, while Russian and U.S. students mentioned more self-learning and mentoring activities.
• Two Brazilian students said they were involved in formal leadership development activities: one was participating in leadership workshops and another indicated being in a social psychology course that discusses leadership.

• Desired training topics mentioned more than once across cultures included the following:
  o crisis management and
  o team work.

• Other topics mentioned included the following:
  o Russian students indicated psychology training to better influence people;
  o a Chinese student mentioned the importance of negotiation skills;
  o also mentioned was human resources training and entrepreneurship/small business leadership training.

**Students’ thoughts about formal & informal PR leadership education**

❖ “Leadership development is mainly informal because it’s driven by a personal desire for self-improvement. It’s an individual, not a group, effort. Even if a person attends leadership seminars, there is no guarantee he would be able to be a leader.”
  Female undergraduate, Russia

❖ “I personally feel leadership is something you can learn by practicing in group activities. It is not something you will get after reading a textbook or taking an exam.”
  Male undergraduate, 20, China

❖ “You have lived for 20 years and you have not been a leader, and then you attend course and ... what? As PR students we are skeptical about such courses because studying and developing leadership is our specialty, and we know it’s not a quick and easy process.”
  Female undergraduate, Russia

❖ “Experience is paramount. The more I work with classmates as a course leader, the more I develop leadership skills. Reading books is important, but there is not a book that will make you a leader.”
  Female undergraduate, Russia

❖ “I am skeptical about leadership courses. I cannot imagine how a person can be taught to be a leader. I guess he needs to attend such seminars for a long, long time; then—maybe—it would be useful.... [However], if a person doesn’t have a potential to become a leader, courses are useless.”
  Male undergraduate, Russia

❖ “Leadership is far away from us, at least in my perception. For a fresh college graduate, who would give you a leadership role? Especially in my culture [where] everyone must respect and follow seniors.”
  Male undergraduate, 21, China
“I haven’t attended leadership courses. I would hardly go to such courses. I would only go if I knew the teacher well and see him as the authority. If a person is not the authority for me, why should I think that he can teach me something supernatural?”

Female undergraduate, Russia

“I think for me it’s more important to watch, because I am learning more while observing, but I do know it is essential to have formal training. I see the significance of the theories I learned in college, and so I believe [informal] complements the [formal].”

Female undergraduate, Brazil

“While classes are good, seminars are good, and workshops … those are things that were created for tons of people … like cattle. Informal [learning] happens more on a personal level, especially mentoring. ”

Male undergraduate, U.S.

“I watch TED Talks all the time. I keep inspirational quotes before me and read books. The informal learning is more meaningful than the formal because it’s a little more relaxed.”

Female graduate student, U.S.

“I think there were a lot of seminars that were held in my college … but I was never allowed to go…. I think if I would’ve gone there and listened to them, listened to the leaders that were there … I would have handled things in a better way.”

Female graduate student, India

“I haven’t had any formal [leadership training] because [off] the mindset that our parents have…. They have the mindset that women shouldn’t step in this field. They shouldn’t be leaders. You have to sacrifice so much and all of that. You just can’t change their school of thought because they’ve been growing up with that for the past 40 years....”

Female graduate student, India

“I feel like a lot of times there isn’t a lot of leadership training for young minorities, whether it’s someone from a low-income household or an African-American, Hispanic, Native American … often times we get placed in leadership roles and don’t know how to adjust properly or how to be a leader to a team of individuals who may not look like us, sound like us. So often times we panic or can’t hold that position for a long period of time or we aren’t offered that opportunity.”

Female graduate student, U.S.

“Both formal and informal [learning] have really helped me in my life … because formal will give you a proper structure as to what has to be done, but informal will give you a lot of learnings. It’s like you learn from formal, and you unlearn in informal, and you make your own … path. That’s how it is, because in formal, you know that these are things to be done, but in informal, you discover new things that could be done too.”

Female graduate student, India
Hands-on experiences have made the difference between me being a PR student and me being a PR leader.... “I can sit there in a class and read a book and do an assignment and listen to a guest speaker, but where I’m getting the most opportunities to lead is when you’re putting me into those actual opportunities to do the work.”

Female undergraduate, U.S.

“In formal, you learn more of the skillsets.... I think it’s hard to teach leadership in a professional or formal setting. You really have to learn leadership through doing it. It’s a process.”

Male undergraduate, U.S.

Here communication companies are very small, and the classes that we have ... don’t explain how we should play that [leadership] role in small businesses.... My friends who left college and set up businesses and now have employees are lost.... Sometimes I have the impression that it is more difficult to deal with three people than deal with ten.”

Female undergraduate, Brazil

“I have not yet done a leadership course, but I have a lot of interest and a lot of will to do so. ... I think for me it’s more important to watch, because I am learning more while observing [my boss], but I do know it is essential to have formal training.”

Female undergraduate, Brazil

5) What is the role of mentors (e.g. parents, teachers, colleagues) and peer models in developing public relations leadership skills/abilities?

Practitioners: Commonalities

- Across cultures, all professionals have or have had mentors, and all highly valued their mentors and the experience of mentoring others.

- Across cultures, the most common early mentors were family members.
  - All five of the Russian practitioners named their fathers (who were activists, community and organizational leaders) as influential early mentors in their lives.
  - Behind family, teachers were the most common mentors mentioned by U.S. and Brazilian practitioners, who noted they served as role models and/or gave them confidence and opportunities to pursue leadership positions/activities.

- Across cultures, practitioners believe that leaders/mentors are learning while teaching.

- Professionally, mentors are not necessarily older or in PR (although the majority of mentors cited by participants were both of these).
• Across cultures, respondents most often named previous or current bosses or colleagues as mentors.

• In all countries except China, the most *inspiring* mentors tended to be family members, followed by former/current bosses and, in the U.S. and Brazil, teachers.

• In China, a majority of practitioners named former or current bosses as their most inspiring mentors.

• A majority of practitioners across countries said they believed or hoped they were modeling their most inspiring mentor’s approaches to leadership, life, and mentoring others.

**Practitioners’ thoughts about mentorship**

• *He [a former boss] taught me a “human approach. He never raised his voice.”*  
  Female, mid-30s, Russia

• *My current mentor is my manager and the first leader to convey it is OK to make mistakes. She took away the fear of action and let me know that if an error is made, then learning occurs and it won’t be made again.*  
  Female, latter 30s, Brazil

• *I am definitely valuing some of the leadership skills from my former boss. But I am not copying everything because I think everyone is different. You learn new skills, and you will make some changes to make those skills be part of you. Then you have your own leadership styles. When you coach young people, they learn from you but in their own way.*  
  Male, mid 40s, China

• *“To be a good mentor, I think the ability to listen more than speak [is important] because a lot of time the people just wanted to be heard rather than being told what to do.”*  
  Male, 36, India

• *“There was so much that I’ve learned ... and I knew [new employees] would have so many questions and things they didn’t understand. It was like, ‘I want you to learn from some of the mistakes that I’ve made ... because we all make mistakes and we can all learn from them.’”*  
  Male, 27, U.S.

• *“You build a network of people who make you stronger, who stretch you in the right directions, and who provide a safe place for you to take risks....”*  
  Female, 32, U.S.
• “Every teacher has to struggle daily with arrogance, and a teacher knows that ... knowledge in excess can cause them to forget that the student also teaches the teacher.”
  Female, latter 30s, Brazil

• “I take a little bit from everybody who comes in and out of my life and try to soak up whatever I can. Some are unbelievably inspirational, and I try to learn from them.”
  Female, 60s, U.S.

• “It’s most helpful to me to have different mentors for different aspects of professional and personal life.”
  Male, 27, U.S.

• “Our CMO is a great mentor. She always encourages colleagues to think [about] what they want to ... add ... to their career profile, and, very literally, if you’re thinking about your resume, what are the next ten bullets you want on your resume? That’s motivating for people.”
  Male, mid 40s, China

• My father was an early mentor; he “told me to avoid cursing, as I would not be able to curse while talking to the British Queen.”
  Male, latter 40s, Russia

• “I am constantly looking at how to develop people into leaders in my organization; I tend to use the phrase ‘manage up’ a lot, and in essence, that means ... don’t just bring a problem; manage up by providing a couple of solutions.”
  Female, 32, U.S.

Students: Commonalities & Differences

• As with practitioners, a majority of students across countries reported family members serving as their mentors.
  o As with Russian practitioners, a majority of Russian students indicated their father was their most inspiring mentor.
  o Chinese, U.S. and Brazilian students were nearly evenly split between family members and teachers/professors being their most inspiring mentors.

Students’ thoughts about mentorship

❖ Professional development is the process of following someone who is able to provide teachable moments.
  Male undergraduate, Russia
“I definitely will model my painting teachers’ teaching style if I am going to teach someone ... one day. My teachers are tough and strict, but I liked it as it disciplines me. So I will be looking for perfection in my art work.’

Female undergraduate, 20, China

“So I felt like if [leadership] trainings were offered and also that informal training, you know—having that mentor there who looks like you, sounds like you, is from where you are—gives you a better perspective and also lets you know that it’s possible.”

Female graduate student, U.S.

“I have mentors who are women, who are men, who are white, who are black. I love it because it gives you the aspect of being well rounded. But for me, being an African-American woman, having two mentors who are African-American women, who are successful in the industry, and they’re moms and they’re wives and, you know, they travel—they have traveled the world. That lets me know that it’s possible.”

Female graduate student, U.S.

“I saw that in leadership it is not a matter of you being perfect—it’s a matter of you facing the fear of the unknown and finding solutions for the needs around you.”

Female undergraduate, Brazil

“I think my Dad is my mentor, so is my mother. He always makes sure I’m comfortable and not taking on too much work on my own. If I have a question, they are there. I think that’s a sign of really great family letting you figure things out on your own, but also give you emotional support when you need them to be there for you.”

Male undergraduate, 21, China

“I mirror a lot and often I think about what she [my mentor] could do to solve a problem.... I try to repeat and adapt to the group using her tactics, and it has worked so well to this day.”

Female undergraduate, Brazil

I learned informally how to be a leader while working for our student PR agency. My teacher served as my mentor in this agency role.

Female undergraduate, Brazil

“Being a mentor myself has been one of the most meaningful aspects because it gives me that insight of what I would want from the professional I’ll be involved with, into how I can better myself as a young professional.”

Female graduate student, U.S.

“I think it’s not really leadership when it comes to PR but more of mentorship.... I think thinking aloud and thinking together is a better way rather than just imposing.”

Female graduate student, India

“Relationships are the best ... having someone help you get to where you want to be as a leader.”

Male undergraduate, U.S.
“I’ve always been that person that my friends rely on. That’s happened since probably 6th grade. But college was really when I started to get involved in mentoring....”

Male undergraduate, U.S.

“My mother taught me to be self-confident, and if I failed doing a task, not to be discouraged; get up and keep going. My mother is very strong spiritually; I want to be as strong as she is.”

Female undergraduate, Russia

“...My father has always been my inspiration. Even when there were hard times in our family, he always stood fast, and he was very calm and composed and always led us like a leader. I always say that he was someone that I still regard has inspired me to be a leader.”

Male undergraduate, India

“I like leadership that gives strict guidelines, so I know where I should be headed creatively and what is expected of me. But I like freedom in the sense that I can do what I want after that and let my creativity not be restrained, so that I can do my best work. So in this case, I think my parents influenced me the most.”

Male undergraduate, 21, China

“There are still some areas as a young person that I am shaky and unsure about. And I think one of the main things is being able to talk to someone or being able to have that one-on-one with someone about the adjustment from academia to the ‘real world.’ How to be as confident in the office as I was in the classroom....”

Female graduate student, U.S.

6) What are the effects of organizational (cultural) conditions on public relations leadership development? (Note: asked only of practitioners)

Practitioners: Commonalities & Differences

• At least one practitioner from each country except Russia noted a boss’s respectful belief in others as part of an environment conducive to leadership development.

• At least one practitioner from every country except the U.S. and China said a negative authoritative environment can make someone a better practitioner by necessity.

• U.S., Chinese and Indian practitioners noted that that a PR agency’s structure can help foster or hinder leadership development.
  o The Indian practitioners said their agency environment taught them to be less individualistic and aggressive and to grow into more team-oriented and collaborative leaders.
A U.S. practitioner indicated large agencies typically offer few leadership opportunities for young staff, owing to their more formalized, established leadership structure.

Two practitioners from China discussed leadership difficulties associated with balancing the profitability and communication priorities within their agencies.

- Several Russian and U.S. professionals emphasized the role mentors had in creating a positive work environment.
- An Indian and U.S. professional both thought an organization’s strong focus on employee learning and development helps to grow leaders.
- Russian and Brazilian practitioners both mentioned perfectionism as an expectation in the workplace; however, the former saw it as a positive motivator, while the latter saw it as unreasonable and rigid.
- All three female U.S. practitioners discussed gender as playing a role in leadership development; however, no other practitioners in any other countries mentioned it.
- Indian professionals noted a strong economy provides PR leadership opportunities that otherwise might not exist.

**Practitioners’ thoughts on positive leadership development environments**

- “She [my boss] let go and moved on to different approaches when needed, without bitterness. She had belief in the ability of people to be successful. She’d convey, ‘Not to worry, you’ll get it done, and you’ll do it well.’”
  
  Female, 60s, U.S.

- “Being treated with equal respect, regardless of position, helps leadership development in an organization.”
  
  Female, 36 Brazil

- “I’ve always respected people who’ve given me a lot of independence and who’ve given me a lot of encouragement, even if the idea doesn’t sound good in the first shot. [They] would let me go ahead with ideas I had…. That is one thing which I really appreciated.”
  
  Female, 44, India

- “The two core values we believe in are first, trust is essentially everything. Our founder firmly believes that public relations is about trust between not just your stakeholders but even between the agency and the client. It’s about establishing that trust. And the other value is the concept about the gold standard. So it’s this whole idea where we basically try to produce the gold standard for our clients for everything that we do. Even when it comes down to ethics, for example. These two core values are important to guide our leadership and everyone else in the agency.”
Male, mid 40s, China

“A lot of it is the support received. Someone coaching them through it—giving her outlines of goals/things to work toward instead of leaving her on her own to figure things out. Having a solid mentor who can encourage large-scale thinking and longer-term planning for the organization and for her....”

Female, 24, U.S.

“I think there is only developing leaders where there is room for that, where there is a dialogue and transparency, where leadership is exercised in a democratic manner, decentralized....”

Female, 60s, Brazil

“If you come across people who enhance you, who pick you up, who make you feel good about your work, your ideas, or your strengths, it just makes you look up to them more.”

Female, 44, India

“There were earlier very different leadership styles in our work environment, which was more of the top-down kind of approach. Now, over the years, because of the time I spent with a lot of the young people who were coming in the business, their values are very different.... They don’t take too kindly to a top-down approach.... They are more into a collaborative approach, and that’s why over the years I learned the value of a collaborative leadership style.”

Female, 42, India

“Smaller organizations can provide people with more opportunities to exhibit leadership, be called upon to lead.”

Male, 27, U.S.

“A positive impact [for leadership development] is the exposure to various different experiences within the organization. Being able to extend in the role so as not to be stuck in the specialization, but to be more of a generalist.”

Male, early 50s, China

“I believe this generation is more like me, in that it values openness and candid conversations, and they may choose smaller start-ups over more established, larger corporations, so they can have a stake in it and have those honest conversations. And in PR, if we can’t have those conversations, I feel like we can’t really do our job....”

Female, 32, U.S.

“We want a culture not of ‘I,’ but of ‘we’ in our firm.”

Female, 42, India

“There are places I’ve been where they want to grow leaders and keep leaders, and understand that people are important to the organization. Those companies that have long-range vision I say are the best places to work and to grow leadership, and the worst places are the ones that ... quite frankly, view it as a factory....”
Male, mid 50s, U.S.

“**I’m seeing a lot more focus on building capacity in this organization than I saw in a lot of other organizations. There’s a lot of stress on training, on meetings, on collaboration, on conversations, group calls to discuss things, so a lot of this kind of stuff which I think is very positive and which really helps in getting you focused and centered on what it is that you want to do and how....**

Female, 44, India

“**We have a very open communications culture because we are a global agency and we do have the open culture where we do work fairly closely with marketing in all the regions. Juniors are encouraged to actually openly discuss things with the senior employees or even question authority, things like that.”**

Male, mid 40s, China

**Practitioners’ thoughts on negative leadership environments**

“**Insecure leaders create insecurity in their staffs. If they are nervous and afraid of making mistakes and get upset/angry, that transfers to others in the organization, and it stifles their growth and that of the organization.”**

Female, latter 30s, Brazil

“I had a boss who believed young people enter the workforce with our organization and are bound to leave in a couple of years. His mindset was that we should just expect them to go. As the supervisor of some extraordinary young people, this was a challenge. It stifled their ambition to grow and stifled our organization’s potential.”

Male, mid-50s, U.S.

There was a time I was so harshly criticized by my boss that it made me question my ability and competence. I did not mind the criticism, but the way it was given created a negative effect. I have often wondered what would have happened to me professionally if I had had low self-esteem....

Female, latter 30s, Brazil

“Sometimes men in our industry don’t think about things.... For example, the male CEO invited mid-level managers to a retreat. All of the mid-level managers were female, but the other people he asked to run the retreat with him were all white males. That is a negative environment for female leadership, although unintentionally so.”

Female, 60s, U.S.

“Some companies are still old-fashioned: they demand total dedication from employees but don’t give them respect in return, such as holidays or normal work schedules.”

Female, mid-20s, Brazil
“We are quite a large organization and also we do tend to be a marketing organization, so a lot of the decisions taken tend to be skewed in the direction of marketing and financial decisions, rather than communications priorities.”

Male, early 50s, China.

“The old Indian mentality of ‘if you’re not loud enough, if you are not pushy enough, you are not the boss’ is a negative world [in which to work].”

Male, 36, India

Dictatorial environments can cause “spontaneous leaders to bloom” by necessity.

Female, 60s, Brazil

“Negativity drove me to do better.”

Male, 42, India

Other practitioner thoughts on organizational environments

“Leadership is not based on authority, but by seduction to the cause”—to be able to gather and sensitize people to work as a team.

Female, latter 20s, Brazil

“Women must find their place in a tricky atmosphere and have opportunities to learn and grow with other women.”

Female, 32, U.S.

“Sometimes an informal leader has more power in an organization than a formal leader—the head of the organization. Bosses are appointed not because of their qualifications but because they are older than other members.”

Female, 34, Russia
References


Appendix A
Leadership Dimensions
(adapted from Meng & Berger, 2013)

Dimension 1
Self-dynamics: the ability to use one’s personal and professional strengths to effectively contribute to organizational goals. These strengths include such things as being:

- dependable
- proactive
- forward-looking/visionary
- a change agent

Dimension 2
Team Collaboration: the ability to work with others to positively support the public relations function and the organization. This ability is demonstrated by such things as:

- motivating and inspiring others
- proactive, professional communications
- the interactive development (engaging others in the development) of PR strategies
- facilitating a positive interdependence among team members
- bringing diverse groups together

Dimension 3
Ethical Orientation: the degree of commitment to professional values and standards when philosophical and legal dilemmas arise or responsibilities and loyalties conflict.

This commitment is demonstrated by:

- consistently integrating professional PR values and standards into action
- acting promptly to correct erroneous information
- understanding differences that grow out of diverse cultures

Dimension 4
Relationship Building: a commitment to share network resources, build connections and cultivate relationships with key stakeholders to facilitate mutual benefits for the organization and its publics. This commitment is demonstrated by:

- the ability to foster trust and credibility across organizational stakeholders
- the ability to develop coalitions to support ideas/actions
- mentoring/helping young professionals
being sought out for advice/counsel by organizational executive

**Dimension 5**

**Strategic Decision-Making Capability:** an understanding of external sociopolitical environments and internal organizational structures, processes and practices, and the ability to translate that knowledge into effective advocacy and organizational progress.

This capability is demonstrated by:

- the ability to span boundaries and interpret and relay information across internal/external publics
- knowledge of the organization, its business climate and environment
- inclusion in determining organizational direction

**Dimension 6**

**Communication Knowledge Management:** the possession of public relations expertise and the ability to seek out, organize and effectively apply public relations knowledge to enhance the organization’s overall communications effectiveness. This expertise is demonstrated by the ability to:

- manage crisis situations
- use research to understand and solve communication problems
- systematically evaluate communication programs
- obtain sufficient resources to support communication strategies
- use mass, specialized, digital and social media to effectively communicate with publics
Appendix B
Leadership Development Cycle
Interview Guide (Practitioners)

Current working definition:
Leadership development is an interdependent process of enhancing individual leadership capabilities and expanding the collective capacity of organizations to facilitate social and operational effectiveness through engaging members in common goals and shared meaning. Note for interviewers. If time allows, please ask your interviewees what “leadership development” means to them.

Interviewer reads this statement to the participant:
Hello, I am____________________, and I am calling in regard to a research study being conducted at The Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations, the University of Alabama. By virtue of your professional success/accomplishments/long-term contributions to the profession, you are considered a leader in professional public relations and communication management, and this research study examines the specifics of leadership development of public relations practitioners and students. I would like to ask you some questions about this topic, which will take about 60 minutes of your time. I will tape record and later transcribe your answers. None of these questions will ask you about personal matters, and your answers will be kept confidential. None of your comments will be linked to you. Your participation will help us better understand what the key issues are in leadership development. The results also may help us better prepare public relations leaders for the future. No risk is involved, but answering these questions is completely voluntary. That means you may refuse to take part in the study or, if you decide to participate in the study, you may decide not to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable, or to stop the interview at any time. We will keep your identity as confidential as possible. We will not identify you by name in any publications; however, we would like to provide a description of your professional status, and we can work with you, if desired, to provide a description with which you’re comfortable.

After my interviews are complete, I will summarize the comments of all participants I’m talking to and ask each of you to review the summary independently to help ensure its accuracy and completeness, per our individual conversation.

Do you have any questions about this study or your involvement?

May I ask the first question?

Opening Questions
1. Please tell me your current job title and your primary job responsibilities.
2. How many years have you worked in public relations and communications, and what drew you to this profession?
Thank you for that background. Our topic is leadership development of public relations practitioners and students. In this study, I am using the terms “leader” and “leadership” to refer to an individual(s) who is responsible for organizing and leading a communication group, unit or entire function to help an organization achieve its objectives.

The fact that you have been chosen to participate in this study means that you are considered by our research team to be an emerging or recognized PR leader. So my first question is:

3. At what age do you believe you began to learn leadership skills? Could you please give examples?

4. At what stage did you
   - become a group member (e.g., sports team, youth organization, band, choir …)?
   - have an opportunity to be a group or team leader?
   - have formal leadership training?
   - become a mentor?

Do you mind reflecting on these experiences? What was your most powerful or meaningful experience in terms of leadership development? Why?

5. Do you think the leadership development cycle in PR, meaning the ways in which PR practitioners learn about and learn how to implement leadership skills, is different from those of other fields? If so, how? Could you please provide examples?

6. [Note: This list with the definitions (see Appendix A) of each of the dimensions should be sent to participants in advance via email, if phone interviews are being conducted. For in-person interviews, the list should be given to participants prior to the interview, if possible, to allow them time to read and reflect on the definitions before proceeding.]

This is a list of previously identified most important PR leadership qualities:
   - self-dynamics
   - team collaboration
   - ethical orientation
   - relationship-building skills
   - strategic decision-making capability
   - communication knowledge and expertise.

Do you think these qualities are different from those that might occur or be deemed important in other fields? If so, what might be different and how?

7. There are two broad types of leadership education - formal (your college course work, professional seminars, courses and workshops) and informal (mentoring and self-learning). Have you had any formal PR leadership education? If yes, what kind? Did you find these activities effective in improving your leadership skills? Please provide specific examples. And what about informal PR leadership education? Did you find these activities effective in improving your leadership skills? Please provide specific examples.
8. Based on your overall PR educational experience, how would you compare the two types of leadership education—formal and informal—in terms of improving your PR leadership skills? In other words, which seemed more/most valuable and why?

9. What leadership education (development), if any, do you wish you had received, but didn’t?

10. Are you involved in any formal or informal leadership development right now? If so, what?

11. Did anyone in your past ever mentor you in PR leadership? If so, who? Who is your current informal and/or formal mentor (if any)? Parents, teachers, peers, job supervisor? Other?

12. Please recall childhood, adolescent, or early adulthood situations where your formal or informal mentors helped you hone your leadership skills.

13. Who has been your most inspiring mentor? (in childhood – under 18 – or anytime?) Do you think you are modeling his/her approaches when you mentor others these days?

14. What environmental factors (if any) have positively impacted your development as a leader (e.g., organizational culture, social network)? Conversely, what factors (if any) have negatively impacted your development as a leader?

15. In what situations have you observed the impact of organizational climate or culture on individuals’ leadership development? Please provide examples, if possible.

16. Any other issues related to leadership development that you believe should be discussed?

Demographic data:

1. Gender: ___
2. Age: ___
3. Level of education: _________
4. Major area of study: _________
5. Total years of professional experience in PR: ___
6. Type of his/her current organization (educational institution): _____________
7. Levels between the respondent’s position and the highest ranked communication leader in his/her organization: ___
   (“0” for the top leader in public relations)

Country:_________
Appendix C
Leadership Development Cycle
Interview Guide (Students)

Current working definition:
Leadership development is an interdependent process of enhancing individual leadership capabilities and expanding the collective capacity of organizations to facilitate social and operational effectiveness through engaging members in common goals and shared meaning.

Note for interviewers. If time allows, please ask your interviewees what “leadership development” means to them.

Interviewer reads this statement to the participant:

Hello, I am ______________________, and I am calling in regard to a research study being conducted at The Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations, the University of Alabama. By virtue of your campus activities/scholarship, you are known as a student leader, and this research study examines the specifics of leadership development of public relations practitioners and students. I would like to ask you some questions about this topic, which will take about 60 minutes of your time. I will tape record and later transcribe your answers. None of these questions will ask you about personal matters, and your answers will be kept confidential. None of your comments will be linked to you. Your participation will help us better understand what the key issues are in leadership development. The results also may help us better prepare public relations leaders for the future. No risk is involved, but answering these questions is completely voluntary. That means you may refuse to take part in the study or, if you decide to participate in the study, you may decide not to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable, or to stop the interview at any time.

Do you have any questions about this study or your involvement?

May I ask the first question?

Opening Questions

1. Please tell me your current class standing and your class/extracurricular responsibilities.
2. How many years have you studied public relations and communications, and what drew you to this profession?

Thank you for that background. Our topic is leadership development of public relations practitioners and students. In this study, I am using the terms “leader” and “leadership” to refer to an individual(s) who is responsible for organizing and leading a communication group, unit or entire function to help an organization achieve its objectives. [Note for interviewers. In our study, we recognize that not all leaders are “formal” ones, but peer leaders are difficult to
identify, so for this study we focused on participants whom we knew were leaders to some degree.]

The fact that you have been chosen to participate in this study means that you are a PR student leader and that is our topic for today’s session: Leadership, broadly speaking. So my first question is:

3. At what age do you believe you began to learn leadership skills? Can you think of any examples?

4. At what stage did you
   - become a group member (e.g., sports team, youth organization, band, choir …)?
   - have an opportunity to be a group or team leader?
   - have any formal leadership training (meaning coursework, seminars, workshops)?
   - have informal leadership training (meaning serving as a team captain, organization/group officer, a tutor or teaching aide/assistant, self-teach yourself through reading/research)?
   - become a mentor?

Do you mind reflecting on these experiences? What do you believe was your most powerful or meaningful experience in terms of leadership development? Why?

5. Do you think the leadership development cycle in PR is different from those of other fields? If so, how? Can you think of any examples?

6. This is a list of previously identified most important PR leadership qualities: [Same comments here as on the practitioners guide—See Appendix A]

   • self-dynamics
   • team collaboration
   • ethical orientation
   • relationship-building skills
   • strategic decision-making capability
   • communication knowledge and expertise.

Do you think these qualities are different from those that might occur or be deemed important in other fields? If so, what might be different and how?

As mentioned before, there are two broad types of leadership education - formal (your college coursework, professional seminars, courses and workshops) and informal (mentoring, experience and self-learning).

7. Have you had any formal public relations leadership education (such as coursework, seminars, workshops)? If yes, what kind? Did you find these activities effective in improving your leadership skills? Please provide specific examples, if possible. And what about informal PR leadership education (such as self-teaching, experience, mentoring)? Please provide examples, if possible. Did you find these activities effective in improving your leadership skills?
8. Based on your educational experience, how would you compare the two types of leadership education in terms of improving your PR leadership skills?

9. Is there any leadership education (development) do you wish you had received, but didn’t?

10. What leadership development are you doing now?

11. Who mentored you in the past? Who is your current informal and/or formal mentor (if any)? Parents, teachers, peers, job supervisor? Other?

12. Please recall childhood, adolescent, or early adulthood situations where your formal or informal mentors helped you hone your leadership skills.

13. Who has been your most inspiring mentor? (in childhood – under 18 – or anytime?) Do you think you are modeling his/her approaches when you mentor others these days?

14. Any other issues related to leadership development that you believe should be discussed?

Demographic data:

2. Gender: ___
3. Age: ___
4. Level of education: _________
5. Major area of study: _________
6. Total years of professional experience in PR (if any): ___
7. Type of his/her current educational institution: _____________________________
8. Levels between the respondent’s position and the highest ranked communication leader in his/her student organization: ___
   (“0” for the top leader in public relations)
9. His/her primary PR position at a student organization: _________
   Country: ___
Appendix D

Leadership Identity Development (LID) Model
(Komives, Longerbeam, Owen, Mainella & Osteen, 2006)

1) Awareness
   a. Recognizes that leadership is happening
   b. Gets exposure to involvement with others
   c. Becomes aware of national leaders and authority figures
   d. Receives affirmation from adults (e.g. parents, teachers, scout leaders, religious leaders, coaches)

2) Exploration/Engagement
   a. Intentional involvement (e.g. sports, religious institutions, scouts, dance, student government, service)
   b. Experiences groups for the first time
   c. Takes on responsibilities
   d. Develops personal skills
   e. Identifies some personal strengths and weaknesses
   f. Builds self-confidence
   g. Is an active follower or member
   h. Engages in diverse contexts/situations (e.g. sports, clubs, class projects)
   i. Receives both affirmation of adults and attributions of others (e.g. peers see me as a leader)

3) Leader Identified—begins to change from dependent follower to independent leader during this state
   a. Tries new roles
   b. Identifies needed skills
   c. Takes on individual responsibility
   d. Individual accomplishments are important
   e. Sees leadership as a “position”
   f. Eliminates activities that aren’t meaningful
   g. Organizes to get things done
   h. Takes on broader responsibilities

4) Leadership Differentiated—moves to interdependent leader during this stage
   a. Joins with others on shared tasks/goals whether leader or not
   b. New belief that leadership can come from anywhere in the group
   c. Learns to trust and value others and their involvement
   d. Open to and values diversity and other perspectives
   e. Lets go of control and values servant leadership
   f. Develops comfort leading as an active team member
   g. Sees the big picture
   h. Values connections to others
   i. Learns group and team skills
   j. Practices leadership in ongoing peer relationships
5) Generativity
   a. Becomes committed to personal passions
   b. Accepts responsibility for the development of others
   c. Promotes team learning
   d. Feels responsibility for sustaining the organization
   e. Sponsors and develops others
   f. Has concern for the leadership pipeline
   g. Values shared learning and reflection

6) Integration/Synthesis
   a. Continues self-development and life-long learning
   b. Strives for congruence and internal confidence
   c. Sees leadership as a life-long developmental process
   d. Wants to leave things better
   e. Recognition of being a role models to others
   f. Sees organizational complexity across context