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# Adapt, Adopt or Create New Approaches? Albania and the Question of an Emerging Country in the Field of Public Relations

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of an Emerging Country in the Field

of Public Relations


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ABSTRACT

Adapt, Adopt or Create New Approaches? Albania and the Question
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The purpose of this thesis is to provide a description of the emerging state of the public relations field in Albania under the framework and influence of four main public relations worldviews including persuasive/marketing, relationship management, community building, and personal influence. This study seeks to give insights into how an emerging country in the field of public relations approaches the development of the field; whether it adapts, adopts or creates new practices. The research design proposed by the author aims to shed some light on possible theoretical meanings and themes that could be developing in countries where the field of public relations is emerging. Based on the findings and the underdeveloped nature of public relations as identified in this study, the author proposes a training program for public relations practitioners and professors that would help to advance the development of the field in Albania.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

**Purpose of the study**

As the need for public relations practice increases every day around the world, academicians recognize the challenge of coming up with a robust body of knowledge  to prepare present and future public relations practitioners to face the dynamics of diverse publics across borders (Sriramesh &Vercic, 2001). The explosion of technology and communication has resulted in an instantaneous transmission of information, consequently leading to a practice of public relations which will continue to become even more multinational and multicultural as time goes by (Sriramesh, 2003).

As public relations is spreading  at a quick rate in certain areas of the world, there are still some countries where the notion of public relations is new and only recently developing at different stages. The discussion about how global public relations impacts the field both professionally and educationally sometimes neglects to address areas of the world where the practice or study of public relations is either non-existent or new and emerging. The need for developing a body of knowledge includes a wide spectrum of countries, and the dynamics of these expanding regions are often recognized in the literature of public relations.   Sriramesh and Vercic (2001) have identified that there are, in fact, only a few studies that have contributed to the building of the global public relations body of knowledge. The majority of the studies describe only the different approaches to public relations practice in certain countries like Taiwan, Greece, India, South Korea, and Japan. Even though the studies have helped scholars to better understand public relations around the world, they fall short of making meaningful comparisons between practices in different countries (Molleda & Laskin 2005). As Sriramesh, Kim, and Takasaki (1999) have stated, "having evidence about public relations practices from a

handful of countries is only a modest, if encouraging, beginning. Many more studies are needed to begin the long process of accumulating a wealth of information that can help international public relations professionals as well as public relations scholars and students" (p. 272). Kruckeberg (1995) further describes the importance of individualizing public relations in international communities:

> Just as public relations practitioners will be called upon to examine, maintain and modify as necessary indigenous organizational and societal values and beliefs within a global context, they will need to do this for themselves as a professional community— examining, defining and articulating their values, belief systems and ideology as a global professional community. (p. 39)

This paper aims to add to the growing body of literature about the ways in which public relations is enacted in different contexts that are affected by a global environment. Specifically, it seeks to identify the ways in which public relations emerges in a developing country, not in a normal economic sense, but specifically in the field of public relations.

For the purpose of this study I have chosen Albania, my country of origin, as an example of where the field of public relations is in its emerging stage. After the fall of the communist regime in Albania in 1991, the nascence of the free press slowly brought with it the development of a mass media/communication system in its most primitive form.  Even though Albania's mass media initiatives—especially those in journalism—have advanced to a considerable level throughout the past 20 years, the field of public relations has just started to emerge. As different dynamics of public relations as a profession and area of study start to be unveiled in a country such as Albania, one might ask which possible approaches a country in the developing world of public relations might take to address the needs of the profession.

Studying the development of public relations in a country like Albania could shed light on the dynamics of public relations and how it impacts the birth and development of the industry in such a nation. Research suggests that these emerging nations have an opportunity to *adapt*, *adopt* or even *create* different models or worldviews of public relations. This study will attempt to provide a clearer picture of where public relations practices come from in countries developing in the field of public relations like Albania. Are these practices adopted or adapted from existing worldviews? Or, are these countries creating new practices and models based on their own cultural values and dynamics?

In order to provide a fuller picture of the development of mass communication in the post-communist country of Albania, it is important that a general overview of the mass media context is given. Without balanced political communication, democratic institutions would cease operation. It is for this purpose that media play a crucial role and are referred to as the fourth power. Compared to Western Europe, where the position and the culture of media owners and their staff appear to be more stable and more slow to change, the relations of media with politics and the public in the Balkan region are difficult to define by the conditions of a media market subject to fast-paced development, although its legal, economic and cultural frameworks are not yet properly consolidated. As a consequence, "media bodies do not only reflect the Albanian post-communist politics, not only reproduce it, but, in addition have a systematic relationship with the political institutions of the time" (Fuga, 2008, p. 6).

Media in the Western Balkans, including Albania, look more like an extension of politics rather than impartial instruments serving information need. As a result, it can be said that politics has had  greater impact  on the development of post-communist pluralist media than any other

factors, because during  years of democracy politicians have proved that if they can gain control over media they can eventually gain power in the government as well (Lani, 2011).

**Significance of the Study**

As mentioned previously, undertaking this study represents the first attempt to study the emerging nature of the public relations field in Albania. In this context, the study is valuable and useful for the following reasons:

1. It provides a foundational ground for the future development of public relations in Albania. The study could serve as a benchmark for developing future public relations research which would be beneficial to both the educational and professional development of the field. The study and the suggestions that it provides would be the first steps in moving forward the development of public relations in Albania.

2. It provides a theoretical and methodological framework that could possibly serve as a model or mechanism for the exploration of public relations development in other countries with similar emerging characteristics as Albania.

3. It enhances public relations research in Eastern European countries by providing a theoretical discussion that adds to the dynamics of the field in that region.

4. It adds to the global public relations body of knowledge by examining the relationship of public relations worldviews and their enactment in the global realm. As Pavlik (1987) suggested, exploring a new field provides an ongoing conversation where others are invited to criticize, add to and question the discussion, which gradually expands the knowledge of the field.

**Chapter 2: Literature Review**

The literature review section of this study will address the various discussions of academicians and scholars regarding the implications of existing influences around the world and specific models/worldviews that are more present and common in the global sphere of public relations. A closer look at these discussions and the worldviews of some of these theories provide a basic foundation for the study of the emergence of public relations in countries where the notion of public relations is in its developing phase.

**Public Relations Global Influences**

The need for a global body of knowledge has generated debates about how the global public relations realm is being influenced largely by American theories and practices. Arguably, the United States has been in the vanguard of modern-day organizational public relations practice for a century or more, and the application of the industry's skills, techniques, and methods has spread rapidly across the globe in recent decades (Freitag, 2002). U.S textbooks used to teach public relations in European universities emphasizing both the concepts and the practice of the field, placing the development of public relations within a United States framework where no space is devoted to other countries (Van Ruler, Vercic, Bütschi & Flodin, 2004). European researchers argue that the field of public relations is largely U.S dominated and that global theories cannot be established without taking into consideration other practices around the globe (Van Ruler, Vercic, Büetschi & Flodin, 2004).

At the turn of the 21st century, Hutton (1999) attempted to define public relations, explore implications of the definitions and propose a three-dimensional framework by which to analyze public relations theories and practices. However, a European study found his work flawed (Vercic, Van Ruler, Büetschi & Flodin, 2001). The results of the study conducted by Vercic et al.

(2001), as a part of the European Public Relations Body of Knowledge (EBKO) project

attempting to identify the existence of a European authenticity of public relations, showed a lack

of knowledge in public relations practice, teaching, and research in Europe. The study found

differences in definitions of public relations in Europe, identifying the field as being like "a

jelly" (p.173). The study also recognized the need for further research to uncover the

foundational structure of the field in that region (Van Ruler et al., 2001). Issues such as the

relationship between public relations academic research and education and public relations

practice in Europe, or the relationship between translations and conceptualizations of public

relations in different European languages, still need to be addressed (Van Ruler et al., 2001),

along with other possible avenues for research.

In discussing the historical origins and development of public relations, Nessman (2000)

provided evidence of the origin of public relations theories and practices in German speaking

countries even before the term was introduced to the German language. He argued that the

development of public relations in Germany was not influenced by United States public

relations, and the differences among the two were significant. If press offices are considered to

be forerunners of public relations, he claimed, then a historical overview must start in the

nineteenth century; and if public relations is interpreted as "relations with the public," then this

worldview is surely relevant and public relations is as old as human thought and activity. In this

case, "public relations would go back to Adam and Eve to the point when people had to win over

the confidence of others" (Nessman, 2000, p. 214).

When referring to the first phase of public relations development, from the eighteenth and

nineteenth centuries to the early twentieth century, Nessman (2000) explained that it was not at

all influenced by what was going on in public relations in the United States:

The evidence provided proves that it is possible to speak of an independent tradition of

public relations in Europe. In other words, the form of communication known as public

relations is not an American "invention", as many would have us believe, which has then

exported wholesale to Europe many years later (after the second World War, apparently),

but could, at a pinch, be described as a "re-import".  (p.216)

Nessman (2000) identified a second phase of development in Europe, from 1914 to 1945, and

argued that the American public relations field was strongly influenced by a German-speaker,

Sigmund Freud, through his nephew Edward L. Bernays. Bernays (1952) took some of Freud's

concepts to the U.S and posited the concept of crystallizing public relations. Regarding a third

phase of development, from 1945 onwards, Nessman (2000) argued that there is a noticeable

influence in both directions, with Americans influencing Germans and Austrians much more, but

it "would be wrong to assume that American public relations concepts were taken over wholesale

and uncritically" (p. 221).

However, attempts have been made to extend the development of the future public

relations future beyond these debates of origins and influences. An example is provided by *The

Global Alliance* organization whose vision consists in leading and serving the international

public relations profession by defining and standardizing universal public relations principles

while recognizing the diversity that allows for different applications in various parts of the global

community (Global Alliance, 2000). In its attempts to establish a common set of competencies

and standards, both in education and in the practice of public relations, the Global Alliance has

initiated several projects in the last five years that aim to unify the public relations profession,

raise standards, and share knowledge among stakeholders. These projects include the Melbourne

Mandate, the Stockholm Accords, the Curriculum Project, the Credentials Project and the code of ethics projects.

The Melbourne Mandate, issued in 2012, is set to represent a set of roles, responsibilities and principles that describe public relations professionals in their effort to face the challenges and opportunities in today's global society (Global Alliance, 2012). The development of such a mandate is an indication of the attempt to institutionalize public relations even at a global level.

Similar attempts for a standardized global public relations field can raise even more discussion about the implications of the actual possibilities of standardizing public relations globally. The first argument against such an endeavor can be the application of such standards in different cultural contexts. The following section discusses these implications in more detail.

**The cultural context of public relations**

The debate that U.S public relations practices and theories are being adopted in many countries without taking into consideration cultural differences is still prominent and far-reaching. Most of the conditions that foster professional public relations in Anglo-Saxon countries may not exist in and around most organizations in other cultures. In addition, in other countries practitioners may practice public relations according to a completely different model.

Research of the public relations field in Asian countries has shown that this adaptation effort has not been completely successful because cultural differences do not allow the application of certain American practices. Wu (2005), for example, argued that a primary function of public relations in Asia is as a political tool as opposed to being used as a tool for business as it is used in the U.S.

Gruban (1995) posed questions related to whether there are any common denominators or general principles related to the communication profession worldwide. For example, can communications be globalized the same way as products? Or, is there anything that small countries can contribute to communicators worldwide? He argues that the mistake that multinational companies make when they exercise public relations globally is sending young inexperienced managers from the West. These companies should take into consideration that business is done differently in different parts of the world, and such is the case in Central and Eastern Europe (Gruban, 1995). Ihator (2000) argued that learning the language of the country is not enough to practice public relations overseas, but cultural differences—like for example individualism versus collectivism, high-context or low-context communication styles, degrees of media independence and cultural impact on media content and channels, and orientation to time— need to be taken into consideration when practicing public relations in different parts of the world. Ihator stated, "The ethnocentric nature of communication models and paradigms developed in North America may be inadequate, or even irrelevant, abroad. The foreign publics are obviously different because of their own tradition, history, worldview, and realities of life" (Ihator, 2000, p. 44).

Practitioners with appropriate cultural preparation will be more likely to seek and accept international assignment opportunities, perceive that their experiences have been successful and satisfying, gain additional cultural competence with each assignment, and reinforce their international assignment-seeking behavior (Freitag, 2002). Building interpersonal relationships is the most important skill that public relations practitioners should have in some cultures and relationship theory can provide a useful theoretical framework for analyzing public relations in a global context (Wu, 2005).

Results indicate that academic and professional preparation for international assignments among U.S. practitioners is limited, yet cultural preparation correlates positively with success and satisfaction in international assignments (Freitag, 2002). Educators should prepare public relations students to be internationally effective, to acquire a more established knowledge and to research about public relations in different parts of the world.

The role of intercultural differences in the practice of global public relations has been a relevant variable in discussions about the best practices of public relations globally. Zaharna (2000) argued that even though these two fields appear very different from each other, beneath the surface they both deal with how culture influences communication. They share not only the culture link, but also experience and knowledge. They are both trying to develop a rich "flora" of research and provide ground support for different debates that are raised (Zaharna, 2000).

One way intercultural communication can provide expertise and help the international public relations field is by explaining the role that culture plays in communication. Practitioners can also enhance their effectiveness by having a general awareness of how culture affects the interpersonal aspects of various public relations activities. On the other hand, the international public relations field can provide the intercultural communications area with examples that can expand its theoretical base (Zaharna, 2000).

Hodges (2006) argued that international public relations research has started to make some significant contributions to our understanding of how the practice of public relations contributes to national cultures. However, Hodges (2006) suggested that "few studies emphasize the perspectives and experiences of public relations practitioners in their role as social agents within the cultures they study" (p. 4). He argued that the industry needs to deconstruct the practice and to consider the significance of public relations as an occupational group in the development of

culture.

When discussing the international public relations body of knowledge Kent and Taylor (2007) argued that such development could not be achieved by proving the existence of one model only in a given country. The authors stated the following:

Although developing a normative theory of U.S. public relations, or a normative theory of Latvian public relations may be *possible*, culture is far too complex for one set of principles (even "generic principles") to account for everything in every situation or culture. . . .The notion that there is a normative model of public relations for understanding American and international public relations is actually limiting public relations theory development. (p. 10)

The authors continued by suggesting that identifying which approach guides practice and why public relations is practiced with that approach is more important than proving the existence of principles or elements of one model (Kent & Taylor, 2007).

To expand on Kent and Taylor's (2007) suggestions, this study takes into consideration four main overarching worldviews as the underlying framework and approach to describe the emerging state of public relations in Albania. For this reason, I provide below a brief description of each of these worldviews and their global applications. This approach is specifically applicable for the study of public relations in Albania because it offers a general look at the available perspectives and possibilities that a country could operate on.

**Four overarching public relations worldview**

A review and analysis of public relations literature and scholarship has led to the identification of the following major public relations worldviews that have evolved in various parts of the world: 1) one-way persuasion model that has morphed into integrated marketing; 2)

relationship management that stems from an organizational worldview; 3) personal influence; and 4) community building, or a worldview that public relations exists to advance society over organizations. While there may be other public relations worldviews, scholarly literature and debates among academicians show that these tend to be the main areas of discussion and application of public relations in the world today. Each of these worldviews is briefly explained below.

**Persuasion/marketing worldview.** According to Muzi Falconi (2010), the persuasion or marketing-centered approach of public relations seems to originate from Edward Bernays' (1952) scientific persuasion model. Muzi Falconi explained that this model, in conjunction with the press agentry (publicity), the public information and the personal influence models, continues to be adopted by most professionals today and is "the true cradle, and marked its impressive surge of marketing as a permanent management discipline and possibly may be indicated as the most spectacular symbol of western civilization" (p. 7).

One of the concepts relevant to our discussion of the persuasive /marketing worldview, which naturally evolved from the persuasion model, is Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC). The most used and often cited definition is one that was first formally developed at Northwestern University in 1989 in collaboration with the American Association of Advertising Agencies (4As) and the association of national advertisers which characterized IMC as:
A concept of marketing communications planning that recognizes the added value of a comprehensive plan that evaluates the strategic roles of a variety of communication disciplines— general advertising, direct response, sales promotion, and public relations— and combines these disciplines to provide clarity, consistency, and maximum communication impact. (as cited in Kliatchko, 2005, p.14)

Moriarty (1994) indicated that the University of Colorado, for example, was one of the first two universities to offer an IMC graduate program in the U.S. in the early 1990s. A number of models were developed there by program director Tom Duncan and his faculty, aiming to explain IMC and move forward both the theoretical development and practical application of the program.

Kliatchko (2008), after reviewing existing definitions of IMC by other scholars (Nowak & Phelps, 1994; Duncan & Caywood 1996; Schultz & Schultz, 1998) and recognizing issues related to definitions throughout the years, proposed a new definition: "IMC is an audience-driven business process of strategically managing stakeholders, content, channels, and results of brand communication programs" (p. 8). The author also showed that controversies over IMC and public relations is the third most researched topic regarding IMC from 1990-2006, after IMC definitional and practice issues. Since it is most relevant to my study, I will focus on reviewing the aspect of IMC that emphasizes coordination among the various marketing communications tools including public relations in order to produce holistic communications campaigns (Nowak & Phelps, 1994).

The debate on whether marketing and public relations should be partners or rivals was started by Kotler and Mindak (1978) as early as 1978. The authors suggested at that time that since "the neat and tidy divisions separating marketing and public relations are breaking down" (p. 19), it may be possible to use both marketing and public relations to solve the other's problems. However, Tedlow (1979) studied the history of corporate public relations from 1900 to 1950 and concluded that the public relations function survived during that half century because it fulfilled a broader function:

It is not as a sales device, however, but as a method for protection against the political

consequences of a hostile public opinion that corporate public relations has been most

influential. If it had been restricted to sales promotion, public relations might have been

absorbed by advertising departments and could have been dismissed as a footnote to

business history. Instead, it grew into a tool for dealing with many publics, including

residents of plant communities, employees, suppliers and dealers, and politicians as well

as customers. (p. 196)

Opinions diverged further in the early 1990s as Miller and Rose (1994) discussed the

disagreement between advertising educators who favored IMC as the best of both worlds and

public relations educators who completely opposed such an umbrella approach. Moreover, the

debate deepened when the opinion of public relations practitioners was taken into consideration

and it was discovered that they "support integrated marketing communications and accept it as a

reality and necessity" (Miller & Rose, 1994, p. 14).

Moriarty (1994) argued that the debate should focus on how both fields could benefit

from each other rather than on "what marketing has learned (or borrowed) from public relations

as well as who should lead and who follows and whether public relations is being subsumed

under marketing" (p. 38).  Moriarty continued:

Public relations has much to contribute— much of IMC is, in fact, based on public

relations theories and practices — but it also has much to gain from the evolving IMC

thinking in terms of ways to expand its sphere of influence and develop more effective

strategic planning, as well as more efficient execution of those plans. (p. 44)

However, Grunig (1992) made a clear distinction between marketing strategies and public

relations strategies, arguing that marketing theory is not adequate for public relations. He stated

that "public relations must emerge as a discipline distinct from marketing and that it must be practiced separately from marketing in organizations" (p. 20). Hutton (2001) also suggested that the marketing field is "methodically reinventing itself as public relations and there is a critical need for public relations to define its intellectual and practical domain in order to regain control of its own destiny" (p. 220). The conflict still remains heated today especially with the advent of social media and the new "war" between marketing and public relations to "own" this domain.

Moriarty (1994) recollects a study conducted by Tom Duncan and Steve Everett at the University of Colorado which found that ego and turf battles were in fact the primary obstacles to the integration of marketing and public relations, rather than the differences between the two fields. Wightman (1999) also admitted that the organizational structure is "one the greatest hindrances to the successful implementation of IMC" (p. 19). According to Wightman (1999) only a few scholars have suggested solutions to the issues of organizational structure and how both marketing and public relations can be implemented in an organization.

One of the solutions to these organizational issues came from Grunig and Grunig (1998) who attempted to the implications of marketing communications and public relations serving each other, acting as a subset of each other or dually contributing to an effective organization. The authors concluded with the "overarching premise that the organization is best served by the inherent diversity of perspectives provided by marketing and public relations when those functions remain distinct and coordinated yet not integrated" (p. 142).

Wightman (1999) discussed a second solution called Hunter's Five Stage Model, proposed by Thomas Hunter in his unpublished master's thesis at the University of Salzburg. According to Wightman (1999) Hunter's model suggested that public relations and marketing be organized into two distinct departments. Marketing would focus more on analysis of consumer

markets and strategic planning, giving over its marketing communications responsibilities such as advertising and direct marketing to the public relations department, after its practitioners had achieved a highly skilled status of communications managers. This process would create a new division called the communications department and would contain three subdivisions: marketing communications, internal communications and corporate communications. Wightman (1999) stated that the Hunter model "has come the farthest in addressing all of the concerns that have been raised in the selection of an IC organizational structure" (p. 22), However, he concludes that "despite this amazing accomplishment in its analysis, a massive change in organizational thinking would have to occur in American corporations before the Hunter Five-Stage Model could have a hope of implementation" (p. 22).

The organizational structure issues, as discussed above by Wightman (1999), as part of the persuasion/marketing worldview, may be also reflected in the development of public relations in emerging countries as they look to adopt or adapt elements or characteristics of this specific approach. Thus, the discussion of where the public relations function is placed in an organization is relevant to the development of public relations around the world also.

**Relationship management worldview.** Certainly, one of the most dynamic and intriguing perspectives that has evolved in the field of public relations is that of relationship management. The relational perspective that the relationship management worldview encompasses holds that public relations is "the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the publics on whom its success or failure depends" (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 1994; as cited in Ledingham & Bruning, 2000, p.viii).

The notion that relationships ought to be at the core of public relations scholarship and practice appears first to have been advocated by Ferguson (1984) who argued on the value of relationships, "not … the organization, nor the public, nor the communication process" (as cited in Ledingham & Bruning, 2000, p.182). Later the perspective was studied by other scholars in an attempt to redefine public relations in the context of a relationship function, moving away from the "manipulation of public opinion" and focusing the attention on building and measuring relationships with publics rather than communication effectiveness (Broom & Dozier, 1990; Grunig, 1992; Ehling, 1992).

Ledingham and Bruning (1998) noted that the research and practice of public relations should focus on an organization's relationships with its key publics and the dimensions upon which those relationships are built. They continued by stating that the view of public relations as relationship management represents a conceptual change:

> In place of the traditional view of public relations primarily as a communications activity, relationship management is conceptualized as a *management* function that utilizes communication strategically. Moreover, the public relations practice traditionally has been described by what it *does*. The notion of relationship management is an attempt to define the field in terms of what it *is*. (p. 56)

Ledingham and Bruning (2000), while discussing the importance of the relational aspect of public relations, suggested the following:

> The emergence of relationship management . . . calls into question the essence of public relations—what it is and what it does or should do, its function and value within the organizational structure and the greater society, and the benefits generated not only for

sponsoring organizations but also for the publics those organizations serve and the

societies in which they exist. (p. xiii)

Later, Ledingham and Bruning (2001) suggested four fundamental developments from which the

relationship management perspective emerged and advanced into an overarching worldview of

study and practice: the recognition of the central role of relationships in public relations; the re-

conceptualization of public relations as a management function; the identification of components

and types of organization—public relationships, their linkage to public attitudes, perceptions,

knowledge and behavior, and relationship measurement strategies; and the construction of

organization—public relationship models that accommodate relationship antecedents, processes,

and consequences.

The notable shift of focus that began to take place, moving public relations from a

communications function to a management function as demonstrated by Ledingham and

Bruning's (2001) four fundamental developments, required the re-conceptualization of public

relations which encompassed "the need for management skills among those public relations

practitioners  aspiring to leadership positions" (Botan & Hazelton, 2006, p. 415). At the same

time, the Excellence Study of Public Relations (Grunig, Grunig, Dozier, Ehling, Repper &

White, 1991) defined public relations as a managerial and organizational function and

recognized the role of public relations practitioners as managers rather than as technicians. As an

important part of the relationship management approach to public relations, the excellence study

developed into the Excellence Theory of public relations (Grunig, 1992) which was created with

the idea that public relations should be effective in solving organizational problems, and it

should help organizations "build caring—even loving—relationships with other individuals and

groups they affect in a society or the world" (p. 38). Grunig and Grunig (1998) expounded on this concept of relationship-oriented public relations:

> To be effective, therefore, organizations must build long-term relationships with the
>
> publics in their environment that have consequences on organizatonal decisions or upon
>
> whom those decisions have consequences. Organizations plan public relation programs
>
> strategically when they identify strategic publics and use communication
>
> programs to build stable, open and trusting relationships with them. Thus, the quality
>
> of these relationships is an important indicator of the long-term contribution that public
>
> relations makes to organizational effectiveness. (p.144)

Based on the four models of public relations—press agentry, public information, two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical (Grunig & Hunt, 1984)—this relationship management conceptualization of public relations has been used as a guide to successful public relations practices by many organizations. Also, the theory offers a conceptual framework for a professional culture of public relations which, with appropriate application and revisions in different organizational and national cultures, is a fundamental component of effective management throughout the world (Grunig & Grunig, 2000).

Since globalization has impacted public relations in different ways, it has also prompted the development of new models of the relationship management perspective of public relations that apply cross-culturally such as Ledingham's (2008) "Post-Industrial Public Relations Pyramid" model. This new model proposed aims to illustrate the change in concept that the public relations management function is experiencing and offers a framework for the study, teaching and practice of public relations globally. Some of the areas of future research that Ledingham (2008) recognized include the need to better understand the essential nature of

relationships, explore management typologies, and better understand the linkage of organizational structure and management style with differing types of publics and cultures.

**Community building worldview.** The beneficial relationship between organizations and communities has been emphasized repeatedly in the literature (Ledingham & Bruning, 2001; Wilson, 2001; Kruckeberg & Starck, 1998). The nature of this relationship has been defined to be symbiotic and the managing of this relationship for the benefit of both the organization and the community has become the foundation of community relations (Ledingham & Bruning, 2001).

Kruckeberg and Starck (1988) looked at public relations as an active attempt to restore and maintain a sense of community that had been lost because of globalization and the development of modern means of communication. They argued that public relations practitioners need "to help their organizations and their communities restore and maintain desirable elements from an earlier social life" (p. 118-119).

Starck and Kruckeberg (2001) reaffirmed the relevance of their original thesis even in the new millennium where society has evolved to a great extent. They emphasized the urgency of community building practices and reinforced "the conviction of the importance of community in contemporary society" (p. 58). Regarding the role of corporations in community building, they argued that:

> Community building can be proactively encouraged and nurtured by corporations with the guidance and primary leadership of these organizations' public relations practitioners. There practitioners must consider, in their community-building efforts, their environmental constituencies, that is, all entities potentially affected by the corporations. (p. 59)

On the other hand, Banks (1995) argued that:

> … Organizations must recognize that their long-term ability to survive depends on fostering an attitude of social responsibility that nurtures socially healthy communities among their various publics. This observation, by which organizations see their well-being as intimately bound to the well-being of their public, is not obvious in the short term; however, over the long periods of time the convergence of interests between institutions and their relevant  publics is unavoidable, and communities, whether positive and supportive or debilitating, are created and maintained. (p. 21)

Wilson (2001) also noted that social responsibility could be better understood under a communitarian framework that emphasizes "the independent relationship and role of business as a participant in [communities] that consist of a variety of actors, individual and organizational, all cooperating for a common good that extends far beyond solely financial factors" (p. 522).

Banks (1995) argued about the fundamental goal of public relations, which is to "communicate in ways that nurture the development of positive and supportive communities, communities of which their institutions see themselves as members" (p. 21).  Wilson (2001) emphasized the role of public relations practitioners in viewing an organization's publics not only as independent from each other but also in terms of the communities they have in common. This approach will enable practitioners to cultivate the characteristics of a community and use them to cooperate successfully with each and every organizational public.

**Personal influence worldview**. The personal influence model was first reported as a new model of public relations in a meta-analysis of studies conducted in India, Greece, and Taiwan (Grunig & Grunig, Sriramesh, Huang, Lyra, 1995). This model was discovered in these countries while the authors of the study were studying the existence of the four models of public relations,

introduced by Grunig and Hunt (1984). The first four public relations models included press agentry/publicity, public information, two-way asymmetrical, and symmetrical. The press agentry and public information models focused more on incorporating communications elements and on ways to disseminate information to the masses. The two-way asymmetrical and symmetrical models focused more on communication aspects such as negotiating, resolving conflict and promoting mutual respect between an organization and its publics, but they did not necessarily use interpersonal communication to study personalized consumer behaviors and attitudes (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). Grunig et al. (1995) defined personal influence as a model where "practitioners try to establish personal relationships—friendships, if possible— with key stakeholders in the media, government, or political and activist groups" (p. 181). The authors categorized the personal influence model generally under Grunig and Hunt's (1984) asymmetrical model of public relations, and suggested that this model can be "successful in meeting organizational goals—especially in societies with rigid cultures and authoritarian political systems" (Grunig et al., 1995, p. 19).

Muzi Falconi, White, Lorenzon, and Johnson (2009) recognized three schools of thought related to the personal influence model: one defines personal influence as an individual influence based on the attributes and statuses of certain individuals; another is a dimension of relationship management and is based on relational activities that enhance managerial purposes; and the final one regards personal influence as a primary model of public relations in Asian cultures.

The definition of the personal model as an individual influence has been supported widely by Toth (2007) and Sriramesh (2007) when both suggested that interpersonal communication theories can be used to enhance the understanding of the personal influence model. Toth (2007) argued that the personal influence model is a representation of the power of

the individual where status, trustworthiness, and the credibility of a person serve as the core of the personal influence approach. Other scholars (Rhee, 2001; Coombs, 2001) have also advocated for the inclusion of interpersonal relationships and communication in public relations as a significant perspective in enhancing the understanding of the publics as the principle objective of public relations.

The relational perspective of the personal influence model has been strongly supported by Grunig and Huang (2000) as an indicator of successful public relations. In addition, Muzi Falconi et al. (2009) looked at personal influence from a relationship-building perspective. Regarding this perspective the authors explained that:

> Public relations scholarship increasingly points to the importance of relationships as an indicator of successful public relations. . . Relationship-building is a complex process, and all relationships have a personal dimension that is based on social networking and interactions with other individuals. Therefore, personal influence is an important component of relational communication [which] considers how the influence of individuals contributes to successful public relations as a result of strong personal relationships with key constituents upon whom the success or failure of the organization depends. (para. 14)

Building personal relationships with key individuals and influencers can result in outcomes such as higher levels of trust, positive media coverage, successful government and community relations, and other benefits (Taylor, 2004; Jo & Kim, 2004). When building influential personal relationships, public relations practitioners should strive to understand their stakeholders' backgrounds, cultures, histories, and communications practices and focus on establishing common ground with the hope of mutual and constantly unfolding interests (Grunig, 2001).

The personal influence model has often been looked at as a characteristic of Asian countries (Chen, 1996; Rhee, 2002; Wee, Tan, & Chew, 1996) generally because of its association with Hofstede's (1984) culture dimensions of high collectivism and power distance. Sriramesh et al. (1999) furthered the study of implications of the personal influence model in the research they conducted in Japan and South Korea, stating that "at its core, the personal influence model is a quid pro quo relationship between the public relations practitioner and strategically placed individuals, such as government regulators, media persons and tax officials" (p. 285). Muzi Falconi et al. (2009) made the following associations regarding the personal influence model:

> Many of the studies that found evidence of the personal influence model of public relations have been conducted in Asian cultures where power distance and collectivism are stronger than in Western cultures, suggesting that the personal influence model may have more currency in more rigid cultures in which power and social class have more bearing on decision making. (para.19)

One of the implications of the personal influence model is the accusation of being practiced unethically especially in Asian cultures. Huang (1990) shared an example from Taiwan, where public relations practitioners were accused of bribing government officials in order to build three nuclear plants. In an attempt to develop a contemporary Chinese philosophy of public relations, Huang (2000) recognized unethical public relations problems that result from the use of the personal influence model in modern Chinese society. Huang (2000) attributed such implications to the Chinese culture stating that:

> The basic assumption is that the characteristics of Chinese culture and Confucian traditions that emphasize authority, order, harmony, loyalty, and personal relationships,

could explain the nuances and complexities of Chinese public relations practice,

especially in relation to the practice of the personal influence model. (p. 221)

Yudarwati (2008) called on an example of unethical practice of the personal influence model in

Indonesia, where an organization had assigned public relations practitioners to live in certain

communities and get to know its members and key influencers while establishing personal

friendships without revealing their true identity. Associations of the personal influence model

with unethical practices were also reported in Greece by Lyra (1991) where practitioners pay

their friends in the media for the placement of news articles. Grunig et al. (1995) also recognized

that even though the personal influence model as an asymmetrical influence can be successful in

building relationships, "its practice often includes unethical practice or borders on unethical

practice" (p. 19).

However, the personal influence model, in and of itself, is not ethical or unethical. Like

the persuasion or information dissemination models, ethicality is based on the intent of the

person carrying out the model. Just as there are examples of unethical practices in all the models,

there are also ethical examples (Macnamara, 2006).

Wakefield (2012) recently extended the conversation of the personal influence model by

giving examples of early activities in the United States that suggest the existence and the

important role of personal influence in U.S. public relations. Wakefield (2012) explained the role

that personal influence played in early public relations practices stating that:

The focus of many public relations historians on promotion or persuasion has caused the

influence of the more interpersonal aspects of public relations to be overlooked. While

the mass media of the day certainly were utilized by practitioners in a variety of ways, it

is likely that the practitioners also used their personal influence to attract clients, to

intervene on behalf of their clients through various face-to-face communication techniques, and to help move the opinions of influential decision makers to achieve organizational and societal goals. (p. 447)

The personal influence model was also found to be present in what Kent and Taylor (2007) called "transitional economies," where the ownership of the economy has passed from government direction to free market forces in places such as some Eastern European nations. The dynamics of the development of public relations in countries like Bosnia, Croatia, Bulgaria, etc. (Taylor, 2004; Kent & Taylor; 2007) suggest that the personal influence model is a typical occurrence in these countries given the interpersonal relationship building characteristics in environments of high collectivism and power distance (Hofstede, 1984).

Apart from Hofstede's (1984) cultural dimensions, Sriramesh and Vercic (2003) reinforced another important element of developing personal relationships under the personal influence classification. They referred to interpersonal trust as a key ingredient that gives credibility to a source in any form of communication. They argued that interpersonal trust should be the foundation of the personal model despite needing further study:

Interpersonal trust then should take primacy in the way public relations practitioners practice the personal model in building relationships with key stakeholders. There can be little doubt that strategies of developing and maintaining interpersonal trust are culture – specific. Yet, the body of knowledge of public relations has yet to study the linkage between culture, interpersonal, trust and public relations (p. 545).

In summary, all the examples of studies of roots of the personal influence model in different parts of the world, not just in Asia, characterize this model as a crucial tool in public relations professional's assets thus supporting what Muzi Falconi et al. (2009) claimed:

It's an untold "truth" that embarrasses scholars, educators and professionals alike, as it

implies that the *"people I know"* and the *"little black book"* modes of practice may bear

more relevance for a successful career in the public relations profession than any other

professional competence. (para. 2)

All of this discussion of worldviews begs the questions of how nations develop public relations

as an emerging concept. Do they look at what's happening around the world and adapt one or

parts of all these worldviews? Or are their cultures so distinct that they create a new model?

**Chapter 3: Research Questions**

The discussion of whether public relations practices and worldviews can be fully adopted or adapted across borders, specifically in new and emerging countries in the field of public relations, has led to the following research questions:

**RQ1:** Do the persuasion/marketing, relationship management, community building and personal influence worldviews describe public relations teachings in Albanian universities?

**RQ2:** Do the persuasion/marketing, relationship management, community building and personal influence worldviews describe public relations practice in Albania?

**RQ3:** Are there new public relations worldviews that are emerging specifically in Albania?

**RQ4:** Is there a dominant public relations worldview in Albania, and if yes, what is it?

**RQ5:** What do the findings in an emerging country in the field of public relations, like Albania, mean to the influence of public relations worldviews?

These questions were studied for this thesis. The methods used for the study, the results and their implications will be described in the subsequent chapters.

**Chapter 4: Method**

One of the longest-standing debates in science is how best to approach and understand the reality that is being studied. Lincoln and Guba (1985) described this debate in terms of two different paradigms: the naturalist versus the positivist. Patton (1999) defined *paradigm* as a "worldview build on implicit assumptions, accepted definitions, comfortable habits, values defined as truths, and beliefs projected as reality" (p.1206). The debate between the differences of these paradigms has its roots in deeper philosophical explanations about the nature of truth and reality.

The positivist paradigm looks at a single tangible reality that is divided into independent variables and processes which can be studied and measured objectively. The reality can also be predicted and controlled, and the researcher can supposedly objectively and independently measure reality or truth without changing it. The positivist paradigm supports the quantitative scientific methods—predetermined and controlled designs which include elements of objective scales and measuring instruments. The aim of the positivist inquiry is to develop generalized statements of truth that are meant to hold anywhere and at any time (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

On the other hand, the naturalist paradigm looks at reality as a social construct that can be

studied holistically and in which control and prediction are unlikely. The naturalist view assumes that the inquirer and the object of study interact and influence each other because the researcher is part of the construction process. The naturalistic paradigm supports a constructive and interpretive (qualitative) method, which consists of a natural setting with *in vivo* observations. The qualitative method relies on "thick description" (Geertz, 1973) which provides an idiographic body of knowledge that describes individual cases rather than generalizing. The evidence must be logical rather than empirical, making it impossible in this inquiry to distinguish cause from effect (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Researchers choose qualitative methods to carry out their studies because they represent a better approach to dealing with multiple realties and exposing the nature of the relationship between the investigator and the object of study. These methods also are more adaptable to the mutual shaping influences and values that are encountered during given studies (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

However, as Patton (1999) suggested, in recent years the debate between the methods of choice has softened, and the greatest challenge continues to be appropriately matching the methods to the empirical research questions and issues rather than to unanimously advocating any single methodological approach for all problems. He argued that, even though qualitative data often carry the stigma of being "soft" data, and the precision and accuracy that numbers convey can be seductive in modern society, "the point is to be pro-meaningfulness" (p. 1207).

**Qualitative Research**

With the above understanding in mind—with the emerging nature and the lack of previous scholarly research in the field of public relations in Albania and therefore the inability to specify what and how to control this natural setting—this study takes on an exploratory scope which can be best achieved by addressing the research questions qualitatively rather than

quantitatively. This approach focuses on providing a description and a meaning of what is being studied. For qualitative researchers, such meaning can be found in the context, and the researcher has to be part of it (Berg, 2009). The subject of study and the researcher in qualitative studies are intertwined; therefore, the best way to gain understanding is to be fully immersed in the phenomena of study.

The instruments in qualitative studies are human because of the nature of constructed realities and the idea that only human instruments would be able to capture and adapt to the different and multiple realities that can be encountered during a study. When using human instruments in a study is necessary to fully capture the depth of these realities, it is essential to select methods that are extensions of human activities such as speaking, talking, reading, etc. The nature of qualitative research and the way that a researcher views reality provides different types of studies, like grounded theory, ethnography, phenomenology, case studies, etc., that serve as overarching worldviews for how data gathering techniques and analyses can be appropriated to fit the human context.

Studying a developing country in the world of public relations is crucial in answering the research questions as it provides a "clean" groundwork where the existence and influence of these worldviews can be easily identified, tracked, and explained. According to Yin (2009) the case study is "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon with its real-life context when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident and in which multiple sources of evidence are used" (p. 13). Yin (2009) explains that the form of the research questions asked in the study provide clues and direction toward the appropriate research method to be used.

Even though the case study method has been critized as being considered less rigorous and less systematic (Berg, 2009), and even though good case studies are not easy to do (Yin, 2009), the dynamics of the phenomena that are being looked at in this particular study aim to understand more profoundly how public relations functions and operates in developing nations. Therefore, the type of in-depth information necessary to uncover and understand how significant characteristics of public relations interact with various factors  in a specific new and developing setting can only be gathered through a case study approach.

In order to provide an in-depth description of public relations as an emerging state in Albania, it is valuable to also look at the study in the context of possible theoretical meanings that can be generated. Even though this study is not designed on the basis of grounded theory, certain aspects of this approach can still be used in providing some theoretical discussion around the possible emerging themes. However, theoretical meanings formation is not an exclusive characteristic of grounded theory only. Yin (2009) talked about theory-building structures of case studies. He emphasized the relevance of both explanatory and exploratory case studies to theory building where, with each section of a study, a theory-building logic unfolds, revealing a new part of a theoretical argument.

The reason behind similar theoretical considerations for this study rest on the understanding that the public relations field in Albania is unexamined, and thus categorizations, interpretations and suggestions about the findings could possibly lead to theory development. Goulding (2005) noticed that there is a common misconception regarding the idea that in grounded theory, "the researcher is expected to enter the field ignorant of any theory to emerge purely from the data" (p. 296). But in reality, as Glaser and Strauss (1967)  have clarified, the categories start to emerge naturally because of  the reading, life experiences, related research and

scholarship, and it is therefore " impossible for a researcher to erase previous theoretical knowledge from his mind" (p. 253).

**Criteria for Evaluating Qualitative Research**

The main criticism that positivists have about qualitative research is related to the trustworthiness of a research study (Shenton, 2004). According to Shenton (2004), positivists argue that the quantitative concepts of validity and reliability cannot be addressed in the same way in qualitative research. However, Lincoln and Guba (1985) have proposed four criteria that should be considered by qualitative researchers in order to establish trustworthiness and achieve effectiveness in a study. These criteria include the credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability of a study.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested that the main goal of the *credibility* criteria in qualitative research is the implementation of the research in such a way that it enhances the probability that the findings will be found credible and will be approved by the constructs of the multiple realities that are being studied.  Some of the appropriate ways to increase the credibility of my study, as suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Patton (1999), include a background report of the investigator, member checks, and triangulation. A brief description of each is given in the following paragraphs.

Because the researcher is considered an instrument in the design of qualitative research, and information about his or her personal and professional experiences and previous knowledge must be reported for credibility purposes (Patton, 1999), I have included a description of my experiences with the field of study and any other pertinent information that would be relevant and may enhance the credibility criteria.

I was born and raised in Albania and moved to the United States of America at the age of 20. I have studied and worked in the field of public relations for the past eight years, traveling to Albania almost every year. Being a native, and staying in touch with my country's developments and culture, has allowed me to continually stay up-to-date with current issues and developments, especially in Albanian public relations. For this study, I was able to again travel to Albania in September of 2012 and spend five weeks gathering data.

During the data-gathering process I was able to gauge the accuracy of the field data through participants as I interviewed. Member checks were especially helpful in evaluating my observations while in the field. Securing additional member checks of interview transcripts or emerging theoretical suggestions proved to be difficult for two reasons. First, the limited period of time that I could stay in Albania did not allow for multiple interactions with the participants. Neither communication via e-mail nor follow up proved to be very efficient. Second, the implications related to the knowledge and training of the participants as suggested by the findings would not have allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the emerging theoretical discussion.

When discussing the appropriate data gathering methods for examining the public relations field, Wakefield (1997) suggested various possible approaches, such as in-depth interviews, case studies, focus groups, observations, etc. (Wakefield, 1997). Each of these approaches can be used separately, but multiple approaches of data gathering permits triangulation, which strengthens the trustworthiness of a qualitative study (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011; Yin, 2009). Thus, to enhance the credibility of my study, I gathered the data by using in-depth interviews and ethnographic artifacts, engaging in direct observation and using field notes. In addition, including participants from both the educational and professional setting

provides another element of strength in establishing credibility.

Marshall and Rossman (2006) referred to transferability as the extent to which the results of a study can be applied to similar settings and situations. The transferability approach is similar to the generalizability concept of quantitative research. Shenton (2004) explained that "since the findings of a qualitative project are specific to a small number of particular environments and individuals, it is impossible to demonstrate that the findings and conclusions are applicable to other situations and populations" (p. 69). Even though qualitative research findings cannot be generalized, they can often serve as a benchmark for future studies in similar settings. Yin (2009) talked about analytical generalization as a characteristic of case studies, where the investigator strives to generalize a particular set of findings to broader theory. This differs from statistical generalization, where an inference is made about a population or universe, a characteristic of quantitative studies. As Yin (2009) emphasized, understanding the distinction between these two types of generalization is crucial in conducting case studies.

The *dependability* construct is the naturalist approach to the techniques that positivists employ which shows that— if the research study was repeated in the same context, with the same methods and with the same participants—similar results would be obtained (Shenton, 2004). Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that since in quantitative research there cannot be validity without reliability, in qualitative research a demonstration of credibility is sufficient to establish dependability. Shenton (2004) suggests that Lincoln and Guba's argument can be achieved by "overlapping methods," such as focus groups and individual interviews (p. 71). Nevertheless, in order to address the dependability issue more directly, "the processes within the study should be reported in detail, thereby enabling a future researcher to repeat the work, if not necessarily to gain the same results" (p. 71).

**Research Process for the Study**

In the following section, I will provide a description of each of the data gathering processes included in this study including in-depth interviews, ethnographic artifacts and observation. The approach of using multiple data sources is in fact a major strength of a case study which as stated before (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) permits triangulation. Yin (2009) also emphasized the advantage of using multiple sources evidence by stating that:

The most important advantage presented by using multiple sources of evidence is the development of *converging lines of inquiry*, a process of triangulation and corroboration emphasized repeatedly…Thus, any case study finding or conclusion is like to be more convincing and accurate if it is based on several different sources of information following a corroboratory mode. (p. 115-116)

As Berg (2009) has stated, along with many others (Denzin, 1978; Spradely, 1979; Patton, 2002; Salkind, 2008; Babbie, 2007), interviewing is defined "simply as a conversation with a purpose" (p. 101). He argues that even though the interview process has been characterized by authors (Fontana & Frey, 1998; Grobel, 2004) as science or as an "innate quality" or skill possessed only by certain people, it is a process whose basic procedures, strategies, and rules can be taught and learned. When looking at this current study's interview process as one of the methods of choice, one needs to take into consideration that this study's interview process was a learning process with room for future improvements.

For this study, I used semi-standardized in-depth interviews, which allowed me the freedom to explore and to probe far beyond the answers of the initially prepared questions of the interview guide (see Appendix A). The semi-standardized questions helped guide the interview,

allowing each interviewee to shape the conversation as necessary. Because the purpose of this study was to explore rather than confirm theory, the semi-standardized interview best fit the nature of the research (Berg, 2009), giving me the flexibility to pursue information avenues that added depth to the data-gathering process.

To carry out my research. I focused on interviewing two main categories of "actors" in the public relations field in Albania: 1) communications or public relations university professors, and 2) public relations practitioners. Since the study aimed to give an overall description of the state of public relations in Albania, having participants from both the academic and the professional field ensured that the data gathered addressed the research questions. Another reason why I chose to include two types of subjects is that public relations in Albania could be emerging differently in each of these realms, and therefore, they both needed to be considered for the study.

The study was also going to include foreign public relations practitioners operating in Albania, but such contacts could not be made due to the difficulties of gathering information about them and locating such offices and services. As Patton (1999) suggested, selecting different types of subjects and data sources for interviewing is another way to strengthen the credibility of the study.

Initially I planned to conduct a total of 10 in-depth interviews each lasting between 45 minutes to an hour. However, when I arrived in Albania, I found this was more difficult than I had previously thought. At the end of the data-gathering process, I had conducted nine interviews in Albania but was able to use only seven of them as data for analysis. Of the final participants, three were professors from two of the four universities in the entire nation that offer a mass communication program. The other four participants were Albanian public relations

practitioners. From the initial 10 interviews, one was canceled due to legal complications that arose around the interviewee and the other two interviews were not used for analysis because the responses generated from the discussion proved to be irrelevant to the purpose and intent of the study.

To support the qualitative research design of the study, the interview participants were purposefully selected. Patton (1999) suggested that purposive sampling allows for studying the research questions more in depth and detail, where the focus rests on "illuminating important cases rather than generalizing from a sample to a population" (p. 1197). First, I contacted universities in Albania to get some general information regarding public relations programs and to identify possible interview participants. Currently in Albania, there are four universities (one public and three private) that offer fairly established mass communication programs. After identifying key individuals in each of the universities, I extended invitations to them to participate in the study. Out of six public relations professors that teach in the four universities that offer a mass communications degree, three professors from two universities participated in the study. Due to scheduling conflicts and previous commitments I was not able to interview all six professors.

The public relations practitioners in Albania were identified by using the online professional network LinkedIn. I searched for Albanian professionals that included *public relations* in their job titles. The search did not generate many results, and at first I was able to schedule an interview with only one practitioner. However, this interview generated referrals to other possible practitioners who I could possibly interview, and as the study moved along I was able to conduct four interviews with practitioners. Interviews were conducted in Albanian, which is also the author's native language. In addition to audio-recording the interviews and

transcribing them for the analysis process, I took notes during the interviews and kept a journal throughout the research process.

In addition to in-depth interviews, I engaged in direct observation to extend the pool of data from which to derive answers to my questions. Regarding obeservation Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested that:

> Allows the inquirer to see the world as his subjects see it. . . to capture the phenomenon in and on its own terms, and to grasp the culture in its own natural, ongoing enviroment; observation. . . provides the inquirer with acces to the emotional reactions of the group introspectively. (p. 273)

I organized the observation notes in preliminary categories throughout the data-gathering process. To enhance the observation techniques, I conducted most of the interviews in the participant's work environment, such as a university campus or a job sites where relevant behavioral or environmental conditions were available for observation. Non-verbal communication played an important role in the observation process. I specifically paid attention to the interviewee's level of comfort and trust in conveying information and answering questions. The surroundings of participant's work environment or office locations were valuable sources of information as well. As Yin (2009) suggested "direct observations might be made throughout a field visit, including those occasions during which other evidence, such as that from interviews, is being collected" (p. 109). Specifics on information derived from observation techniques will be further addressed in the results section of this study.

To triangulate the third element of data sources, ethnography artifacts, I asked university professors for copies of documents such as class syllabi, lesson plans, copies of lectures, lists of available public relations academic resources, notes, and book titles used in public relation

classes. I also asked practitioners for any documents that I could use as data such as media lists, public relations strategic planning guidelines, progress reports, organizational records proposals and any other forms of internal records. In addition, I used Google to search for any possible documents or information that would add value to the data collection such as public relations blogs, newspaper articles, websites and public relations professional organizations in Albania. Implications of attaining such documents and data findings will be discussed later in the study.

All the data gathered from the in-depth interviews, direct observation, and ethnographic artifacts were then compiled and prepared for analysis. Field notes from observations and ethnographic artifacts were treated similarly to transcripts of the audio-recorded interviews and other notes taken during the research process.

**Constant Comparative Analysis**

As supported by Berg (2009), because of the exploratory nature of this study and its aim to provide some description, suggestions, and possible generation of theory, I felt that constant comparative analysis was the best approach to organize, categorize and analyze the data I gathered. The constant comparative analysis seemed the best approach for this study because, as Glaser and Strauss (1967) stated, it "can be applied for the same study to any kind of qualitative information, including observations, interviews, documents, articles, books, and so forth" (p. 438). Because the previous knowledge of theories and concepts cannot be erased from the researcher's mind, as mentioned earlier in the study, the initial categories for organizing the data were constructed based on the literature review.

This method of analyzing was specifically used as a step-by-step process to code the data into categories stemming from the literature review, compare themes as they emerged, and

identify any new classifications. Also, since the study of public relations in Albania was based on existing public relations worldviews and their influence around the world, it seemed reasonable to use such information in generating preliminary categories for organizing the data.

Because of the interaction between the investigator and the multiple realities idea, qualitative researchers argue for the importance of an intuitive knowledge, known as tacit knowledge, as the only way of appreciating this interaction and "mirroring the value patterns of the investigator" (Lincoln & Guba, p. 40). Tacit knowledge seems to provide a way to deal with certain concepts in conversation between the researcher and the subject of research. The use of tacit knowledge is seen, for example, in the use of non-verbal communication, when we refer to information of a situation without any explicit knowledge on the part of the sender or the receiver. Tacit knowledge is an indispensable part of the research process because it is influential whether it is recognized or not. I relied on tacit knowledge not only throughout the data gathering process, but during analysis as well. As the sole researcher and analyst, I used tacit knowledge while dealing with language considerations. Because the number of Albanian speakers on campus that could review the translation of the data transcripts was limited, I relied on tacit knowledge as I organized the data from Albanian into English categories and themes.

However, as Agar (1986) emphasized, the researcher needs to exercise continuous "systematic doubt" while analyzing the data so that it avoids any possible bias, jeopardizing credibility. In philosophy, systematic doubt is the notion that we have reason to believe only what has been proved, acknowledging all possible doubts. In other words, it is a belief in the justification of doubting until truth is proven.

During the analysis process, I checked the data continually to make sure that the categories or themes that were emerging were supported by the data rather than coming from my

own personal reasoning. In addition, I looked for patterns that could have possibly emerged as a result of my pre-determined knowledge.  Such patterns and themes were not present in my final categories because they were not supported in the data.

 I initiated the transcribing process and the preliminary organization of the data in the field in order to use it for member checks, but I did not use any computer software for analyzing the data as it was unavailable to me.

**Coding**

For the purpose of analysis, I coded the data by using open, axial, and selective coding (Strauss &Corbin, 1990). Holton (2007) describing open coding explained that:

> Line-by-line coding forces the researcher to verify and saturate categories, minimizes missing an important category, and ensures relevance by generating codes with emergent fit to the substantive area under study. It also ensures relevance of the emerging theory by enabling the researcher to see which direction to take in theoretically sampling before becoming too selective and focused on a particular problem. (para. 8)

 Open coding involves naming and labeling paragraphs, sentences, or phrases in the transcript by providing a description of that specific chunk of data. The name of the codes should be meaningful and provide an indication of the idea or concept that relates to a specific theme or category. As Strauss and Corbin (1990) explained, the purpose of open coding is to compare and contrast initial patterns in order to discover and define preliminary subcategories.

First, I read and reviewed the data transcripts several times in order to generate possible coding names and descriptions. The code-generating process was in part influenced from the researcher's previous knowledge of the field, which, as mentioned before by Glasser and Strauss

(1967), is impossible to eliminate. Then, I started to code the text line-by-line by marking and highlighting the text area every time a code was assigned. As the coding process evolved, I reviewed the transcribed text several times to make sure that I was capturing all the data and organizing it into existing conceptual ideas or new ones as they emerged. This step of the coding process resulted in an extensive number of codes which I carefully combined and reorganized in order to eliminate repetitive codes and generate more descriptive ones. I kept a separate list of the codes with a description of each code's meaning and the main concern it addressed.

Axial coding was used to group together and analyze the subcategories that emerged from the open-coding process. The criteria by which these subcategories were grouped together were determined by the research questions. For example, all the coding subcategories that described public relations characteristics in the Albanian education setting (RQ1) were grouped together. The same pattern was followed for RQ2 which describes the professional practice of public relations in Albania. The remaining coded data were assigned to possible subcategories of the other research questions without making a distinction between educational and professional settings. Such steps were followed in order to assure that all the research questions were addressed. Axial coding allowed for connections to be made by constantly comparing the subcategories and looking for main categories to submerge (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). As main categories and themes started to emerge, I returned to the data to verify that the categories were supported by the data.

Selective coding is most useful in bringing the categories together and identifying a possible core concept, which usually describes the scope of a research study (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This step of the coding process helps to refine the categories and their interconnections. I used selective coding to specifically address the purpose of this research study and to identify

recurring themes and categories that would help in identifying whether a developing country in the field of public relations adapts, adopts, or creates new practices.

Holton (2007) emphasized the crucial role that memos play in the coding and analyzing process of the research. She stated that:

> Memos are theoretical notes about the data and the conceptual connections between categories. The process runs parallel with the coding and analysis process to capture the researcher's emergent ideation of substantive and theoretical codes and categories. Memo writing is a continual process that helps to raise the data to a conceptual level and develop the properties of each category. (para. 29)

Throughout the coding and analysis process, I kept memos which were extremely helpful in discovering possible connections and themes that lead to the formation of theoretical meanings. Regarding the theoretical meanings and core concepts that could emerge from the type of analysis used in this study, Glaser and Strauss (1967) explained that they can be be presented either as a "well-codified set of propositions or in a running theoretical discussion, using conceptual categories and their properties" (p. 31). The authors prefer the discussion form, because it is often easier to comprehend and tends not to "freeze" the theory in a set of propositions (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Based on the findings, it seems appropriate to follow the authors' preference and present the conceptual categories that emerged from this study in a discussion form. To facilitate this discussion, first I will present the findings and observations organized by each of the research questions. The following section will address the answers to each research question based on the influence of the four main worldviews of public relations and their enactment in Albania.

**Chapter 5: Results**

Before I provide answers to the research questions it is important to note certain

implications of the multiple sources of data approach. Observations during the interview process

helped me notice that the participants were fairly reluctant in sharing detailed information with

me about some of the questions. This was also reflected in the interview process where the

participants felt uncomfortable in answering questions about specific details regarding lesson

plans and syllabuses, program and class evaluations, content sources and other documents. For

example, when I asked one public relations professor if I could obtain copies of syllabuses that

professors use for their classes, the participant provided me with a catalog description of all the

classes offered in the mass communication program.

Similarly, practitioners were reluctant in sharing documents. Such occurrences may be

explained by the lack of documents and artifacts as a result of the unorganized professional

setting that may characterize Albania as a country due to continuing socio-economic problems.

Confidentiality implications may have also been a factor in not disclosing such information.

An overall reluctance was reflected through all three of the data gathering sources: interviews, ethnographic artifacts, and direct observation. There were only a few occasions where there were small distinction between what the participants were saying in the interview and what could be observed or shown from ethnographic artifacts. For example, one participant was discussing the development and the online presence of the Albanian Institute of Public Relation, but when I searched online the website page was no longer available. The following sections unveil all the findings that were suggested based on all of the three methods of data gathering.

*RQ1: Do the persuasion/marketing, relationship management, community building and personal influence worldviews describe public relations teachings in Albanian universities?*

In trying to provide an answer to this research question, it is important to recognize that the data does not show an overt and clear indication of well-established public relations worldviews in Albania. It appears that in Albania's public relations domain there seem to be certain elements and influences of each of the worldviews reviewed in the literature of this study, but they are not sufficient to determine a clear direction of public relations teachings in the university settings. Most of the public relations classes that have been offered in Albanian universities have fallen under the umbrella of journalism programs. Only recently, a few universities have started to develop mass communication programs and upper division classes which teach basic public relations. Classes offered include Entry to Public Relations, Public Relations and Media Writing, Political Public Relations, Business Public Relations, NGO Public Relations, Marketing Communication Campaigns, Social Theories and Public Relations and Media Relations. There are currently no public relations undergraduate degrees offered in universities in Albania, but rather public relations emphases.

Students can also pursue their interest in public relations by completing a two-year professional or research-oriented master's degree. Currently, higher education in Albania is organized based on the Bologna Process, a system with two main cycles, undergraduate and graduate. The Bologna Process was signed in Bologna, Italy, in 1999 by ministers of higher education from 29 European countries, aiming to create a European Higher Education Area based on international cooperation and academic exchange. Today the Bologna Process represents 47 participating European countries (Bologna Process, 2007). The master's degrees offered in the Bologna system are quite different from master's programs offered in the United States. Under the Bologna Process students complete their undergraduate degrees in three years and then are recommended to enroll in a master's program and emphasis in their field of study. In contrast, American university programs offer emphases of the field in a student's undergraduate years.

Albanian master's degrees seem to be an extension of undergraduate studies, where public relations knowledge is introduced rather than further expanded and specialized. The master's programs overall lack generation of scientific research studies and seem to focus more on teaching of public relations skills and less on theoretical elements.

Another problem with public relations education in Albania is that the undergraduate public relations classes that are offered as part of mass communications or journalism studies are not always taught from specialized public relations professors. It seems that only a few professors who teach public relations classes have a degree in public relations, which they have obtained mostly in European and U.S. universities. Most of the professors usually come from journalism and marketing backgrounds or other social sciences. Since a well-established public relations background and experience is absent, course content and

organization is influenced more by the views and backgrounds of the professors rather than by standardized criteria set by the industry or the university.

The data suggests that most of the professors do not follow a well-organized course plan with a syllabus, and most of the lectures derive from translations of certain chapters from mostly U.S. and European (English and French) public relations textbooks. Albanian public relations textbooks are non-existent, with the exception of a translation of Joe Marcoi's *Public Relations: The Complete Guide,* which approaches public relations as an integral ingredient to successful marketing campaigns. This textbook is used by professors in two out of the four universities that offer mass communications programs. In addition, overall, there seems to be a mismatch between certain class topics and subjects and the textbooks used for the classes. For example, in one university Joe Marcoi's book on marketing public relations is listed as a textbook for classes such as Social Theories and Public Relations and Public Relations Writing. There seem to be no criteria for selecting topics of teaching and discussion other than the professor's judgment of the important areas of study in public relations. Often this judgment may be impaired because professors in Albania, especially those who do not come from a public relations background, may lack opportunities and resources to stay up-to-date with recent developments in research and practice in the field of public relations.

The public relations professors that I interviewed generally pointed out elements of the persuasion /marketing worldview as more dominant in their teaching curricula. They often referred to terms such as *below the line, above the line, marketing design, promotional sales, direct marketing*, and *integrated marketing,* thus associating public relations with a powerful approach to assist marketing efforts. However, elements of the Excellence theory also came up during the interviews, indicating the influence of the relationship management worldview. Press

agentry, symmetrical, and asymmetrical communications models are included as teaching topics in various communications classes. One of the universities offers a class titled Social Theories and Public Relations in which they address corporate social responsibility and public sphere. Even though these are too limited to be considered an influence, they seem to indicate some elements of the community building worldview discussed in the literature review. There are no indications of the personal influence worldview or elements of it being taught in any of the public relations classes offered in Albanian universities.

Overall, it appears that most of the public relations classes offered in Albanian universities focus their teachings on elements of the persuasion /marketing and relationship management worldviews. Even though these approaches are not recognized and categorized as distinct public relations worldviews by university professors in Albania, certain elements and influences of their teaching suggest connections to these two overarching worldviews.

*RQ2: Do the persuasion/marketing, relationship management, community building and personal influence worldviews describe public relations practice in Albania?*

The data indicate that public relations in Albania, generally speaking, is a new and emerging practice that is generally not fully applied by businesses or sectors such as the government, NGOs, and community. However, there are some organizations such as the largest commercial real estate company, telecommunications companies, private universities, and political parties that employ certain public relations practices as part of their structure. Nonetheless, public relations functions in even these organizations are not fully established and seem to fall under the marketing division along with advertising. There seems to be a general misconception between marketing applications of product development and marketing communications operations, thus creating a hazy area where both public relations and advertising

are included.

Most of the organizations that practice public relations—like two of the telecommunications companies, Eagle Mobile and Plus Communication—fulfill their needs in-house by hosting public relations practitioners under their marketing communications division staff. However, depending on the given needs and situations there are occasions when an organization outsources public relations services. Currently in Albania, there are two local agencies that offer public relations services, COMPORT and Publix PR. COMPORT was established in 2003 by owner and CEO Alban Bala, previously a well-known journalist. Alban established his agency under the platform of integrated and evidence-based communication, influenced and inspired by Burson-Marsteller, a leading global public relations and communications firm. COMPORT offers services in PR and media, marketing and advertising, research, and training; however, the focus seems to be on investor relations. Because of the CEO's international business contacts, the agency has played a leading role in promoting Albania as a country, opening collaboration between international business and investors and the Albanian government. Through establishing the Albanian Institute of Public Relations (AIPR), COMPORT has provided and initiated various projects and venues of collaboration between many local and regional institutions.

On the other hand, Publix PR seems to have a more traditional and exclusive approach to public relations. The agency, established in 2008, is part of Universal Media Group and is managed by Ilva Tare, a well-known and key Albanian journalist. They offer PR services that focus mostly on media relations, campaign management and reputation building. Vodafone Albania, one of the biggest telecommunications companies in the country (a branch of Vodafone Group), is one of the biggest clients of Publix PR.

In addition to these local public relations agencies, there are many other smaller local and international (e.g., Ogilvy, McCann Erickson) marketing and advertising agencies that include public relations as part of their full-communications platform. These companies' understanding of public relations seems to be approached as an integrated marketing function as well, thus adding to the pattern that seems to have emerged from the data. However, even though public relations in Albania seems to be categorized mostly as a marketing function and shows elements of the persuasion/marketing worldview, when it comes to ways of practicing public relations, a strong recurring theme of the data analysis indicated elements of the personal influence worldview as the most used approach of public relations.

As evidenced in the study, most public relations practitioners in Albania come from a journalistic background. Search results from LinkedIn supported this fact, and three out of the four public relations practitioners that I interviewed were previous journalists. These practitioners seemed to use and strongly rely on their personal contacts and friendships to benefit and enhance public relations responsibilities such as media relations, event organizing, relationship maintenance, public appearances of executives, image reputation, investor relations, etc. Also, practitioners use personal contacts and friendships and the requesting and granting of favors to influence key government individuals on issues or topics relevant to the organizations that they represent. During the interviews one of the practitioners recognized individual talent as an important skills to succeed in public relations, but influential relationships and friendships seem to be at the core of public relations practicing in Albania.

As themes emerged during the analysis process, elements of the community building worldview were also present but there were no sufficient data to assess whether the approach is a general practice in Albania. Again, the telecommunications companies and some big banks are

generally the ones to engage in various forms of corporate social responsibility practices. These companies mostly focus their community-building efforts on environmental constituencies and education-enhancing projects. On some occasions, given the country's slow socio-economic development, organizations also support welfare programs. Other than these occurrences, it seems that public relations approaches to help build and maintain a sense of community is absent.

Another aspect of the public relations field in Albania includes the use of its practices by the two main political parties. This practice occurs more often during election times, even though the political parties may use public relations tactics to enhance their public appearances on television throughout their term. The use of public relations to organize national and local election campaigns is a new practice and has only been heavily implemented during the last one or two election cycles. Both political parties' press offices are very active during election time and spokespersons from each engage in several press conferences throughout the election period. During the election campaigns, political candidates are promoted mostly in public rallies and television debate talk shows where invitations to participate are sent by the media to the political parties.

This kind of organization is typical for government offices as well. Even though some ministries and government agencies have a public relations department, it seems that in most cases it is just a press office. There are no public affairs practitioners but rather spokespersons who engage with the media by releasing a press release or organizing a press conference in the event of important announcements. The press office of the prime minister seems to be the only government entity that is more active and engaging with the media. It is important to also notice the implications of the role and influence of the political parties in the media system. Even

though media in Albania are considered independent, transparency of ownership—or more precisely, the transparency of media funding— remains an unresolved issue and a topic of constant debate. However, political affiliations of the media outlets are not hard to distinguish.

As shown by the results, overall there seems to be noticeable elements of all the worldviews discussed in the literature review. However, elements and influences of the persuasion/marketing and the personal influence worldviews are practiced more often in the Albanian professional setting of public relations.

*RQ3: Are there new public relations worldviews that seem to be emerging specifically in Albania?*

The data suggest no elements or characteristics of new public relations worldviews or approaches emerging in the country. Because of this emerging and unconsolidated state of public relations development in Albania, it may be too early to detect the nascence of worldview tendencies and approaches. The lack of clarity of the public relations practice and its institutionalization as well as the relative newness of the field may be the reasons why this question cannot be addressed in full at this time. Also, a closer examination of the relationship of Albanian culture or other generic principles with public relations may bring to light new findings. Even though the element of culture has been taken into consideration in this study overall dynamics of the findings may provide a basic explanation of cultural influences, the scope of this study does not constitute an examination of Albania's specific cultural elements and their relationship to public relations. However, even though future studies may attempt to explore this question further, they may not show any new findings, either.

*RQ4: Is there a dominant public relations worldview in Albania, and if so, what is it?*

As reflected in the findings of this study, interviews with public relations practitioners,

observations, and ethnographic artifacts point out certain elements of all four of the worldviews discussed in the literature review section. However, it seems that overall public relations practices in Albania consist mostly of a mix of elements of the persuasion/ marketing and personal influence worldviews. It is important to notice that even though the relationship management elements were detected as part of the academic setting, this development is not reflected in the professional practice of public relations.

On the other hand, the personal influence worldview, not present in university teachings at all, is actually a very persistent approach when it comes to carrying out the responsibilities of the public relations functions in Albania. These differences may be due in part to the non-established nature of the public relations field in the country and a lack of organization, knowledge, and training. Because the majority of both public relations professors and practitioners do not come from a traditional educational public relations background or experience they have a disadvantage in their efforts to establish and institutionalize the field. I will attempt to provide some suggestions in the discussion section of this study to address some of the concerns and the implications of future development of the public relations field in Albania, and how these suggestions contribute to the global realm of knowledge in public relations.

**Chapter 6: Discussion**

As it appears from the results of this study, the public relations field in Albania currently identifies with elements of the persuasion/marketing approach but is carried out under the personal influence approach. Since we cannot yet talk about public relations in Albania as an established field of communications, conclusions and discussions can only be made at the levels of associations and elements regarding the influence of the main worldviews discussed in the literature review. The results of this study may have several explanations, and I will attempt to make some suggestions that could help in understanding the implications of this study of the public relations field in Albania and what these implications mean in relation to the global realm of public relations.

Studies of public relations (Taylor, 2004; Kent & Taylor, 2007; VanSlyke Turk, 1996) in other Eastern Europe countries, such as Bosnia, Romania, Bulgaria and Croatia, recognize the influence that the communist background of a country can have in the development of public relations. Even though the past communist regime may not be directly impacting the development of public relations in these countries, implications such as lack of trust, socio-

economic development, propaganda, and relationships between people and organizations, as Taylor (2004) suggests, are at the core of understanding the dynamics of public relations in similar countries.

Considering this, it can be insinuated that the elements of the persuasion /marketing approach seen in Albania may be the outcome of the propagandistic nature of the political system that existed in Albania for over 40 years. Even though the literature defines persuasion as interacting and attempting to "satisfy the needs of both the persuader and the persuadee" (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2006, p. 1), it still recognizes that "elements of informative and persuasive communication may be incorporated in propagandistic communication" (Jowett and O'Donnell, 2006).

Carey, in his 1997 study, referred to the use of propaganda in the corporate world as "communications where the form and content is selected with the single-minded purpose of bringing some target audience to adopt attitudes and beliefs chosen in advance by the sponsors of the communications" (as cited in Jowett & O'Donnell, 2006, p. 5). Carey classified commercial advertising and public relations as "forms of propaganda activity common to a democracy," thus extending the definition of propaganda in the twenty-first century. Furthermore, Jowett and O'Donnell (2006) attempted to clarify the distinction between propaganda and persuasion by examining propaganda as a subcategory of persuasion while pointing out Doob's (1966) observation of the gradual replacement of the word propaganda with words such as *information*, *communication* and *persuasion*.

Given these points, a valid argument can be made regarding the expansion of the concept of propaganda into a persuasion /marketing approach in public relations in Albania. VanSlyke Turk (1996) reached similar conclusions while studying Romania's history of public relations,

relating its development to marketing and attaching these findings to the years that Romania lived under communism. She also stated that public relations "as practiced in Romania is largely non-strategic, is closely linked with marketing, is rarely located near the top of the organizational hierarchy, almost never follows the two-way symmetrical model, and is practiced by would-be technicians with virtually no public relations training" (p. 344). Moreover, since most public relations practitioners are journalists that have started their career during the communist regime, we can make the assertion that their views and practices may have been impacted, to at least a certain degree, by the propagandistic environment of the time.

However, we cannot attribute the evidence of the persuasion /marketing approach solely to the historic background of the country. This connection is only one lens through which we can gain some perspective into how the public relations worldviews are enacted in Albania. Evidence from the data shows that current elements of the persuasion/marketing worldview in Albania are similar to those practiced in more developed nations in the field of public relations. This also leads us to suggest that the development of the persuasive/marketing worldview may not only be influenced by the country's past political system but it may have also emerged as a result of the dynamics of the global public sphere.

As Volkmer (2003) has argued, the public is not only part of one society or political system, it "has turned into a more or less autonomous global public sphere which can be considered not as a space between the 'public' and the state but between the state and an extra-societal global community (p. 10). The author emphasized the role of an "international information order" and global media, specifically the internet, in the global setting stating that:

Only a few, very recent approaches in cultural studies and sociology interpret global

media flow by a new globalized perspective which interprets rising new communication

segments within the global context of inter-relating communication structures and options, highlighting a new relativistic "intertextuality" with effects on a diversified global culture. (p. 12)

Volkmer (2003) continued by giving a description of five different media environments created under the influence of the internet. One of these environments, the post-communist transition, is specifically relevant to Albania and our discussion of how the persuasion/marketing approach can be enacted in such an environment. The author characterized the post-communist transition environment as follows:

Push-mass media (TV) are in these societies undergoing the transition from communism toward democracy. This environment can be characterized by an ill-defined legal situation, a still vivid history of socialist media policy and a commercial market in which international and domestic broadcasters exist alongside various unlicensed local and regional stations. (p. 14)

In addition, public relations in Albania, even though viewed mostly as a publicity function, is executed through personal contacts and friendships—typical characteristics of the personal influence worldview. When stories are published in the media they are dictated mostly by personal relationships with the journalists rather than their news value. As demonstrated in similar findings in countries like Croatia and Bosnia (Kent & Taylor 2007; Taylor, 2004), personal relationships have a strong influence on the development of public relations in in former communist nations. Studies in other Eastern European countries also show applications of the personal influence worldview. For example, Karadjov noted that in Bulgaria, "the everyday experience of practitioners includes offering favors to journalists and keeping negative information about the organization out of the news through personal relationships" (as cited in

Taylor, 2004, p. 149). Tsetsura (2003), in a case study she conducted about a public relations campaign in Russia, recognized the value and importance of interpersonal relationships in an emerging stage of public relations. Studies (Rossbach, Newsom, & Carrell, 1999; Vercic, 1999, 2003) in Hungary and Slovenia reflect similar findings of the value of interpersonal relationships in such societies.

Overall, we can suggest that there is a fundamental intersection between personal relationships and public relations in Eastern European countries. However, the study of Albania is the first in the Balkan region to demonstrate characteristics of public relations development similar to other Eastern European nations, and analogous studies in nations like Macedonia, Montenegro, and Kosovo are still needed in order to draw more robust conclusions.

As Taylor (2004) pointed out, the commonalities that Eastern European countries share "are not so much cultural, but rather may be the outcome of 40 or more years of communist social, economic, and political systems" (p. 155). Taylor further explained the importance of trust as a crucial component of developing and keeping personal relationships and friendships. She suggested that a low level of trust in the government and society in general in former communist nations urges people to draw closer to an immediate set of friends and family, thus developing stronger ties that are maintained through face-to-face interactions. Consequently, a low level of trust and its effects are inherited as society attempts to form democracy and move from a government-imposed economic system to an organizational approach of the free market and private enterprise. These suggestions shed some light on why the personal influence worldview is so relevant in these countries and can help draw parallels between a nation's road to economic and political development and its emergence in the public relations field.

However, final suggestions cannot be made without drawing upon cultural dynamics as well. When Sriramesh (1991) introduced the personal influence model as a practice first evidenced in India—and later expanded in Greece and other Asian countries (Grunig et al., 1995; Huang, 2000; Sriramesh, Kim, & Takasaki, 1999)—he and others relied strongly on Hofstede's (1984) culture dimensions, mostly power distance and collectivism, to explain the dynamics of the model. Even though no studies of Hofstede's (1984) culture dimensions have been conducted in Albania, similarities with surrounding countries like Croatia, Romania, Bulgaria, and Greece can still be seen, thus leading to the assumption that Albania shares the same values of high collectivism and power distance. In this context, the findings in Albania are supported even at a cultural dimensions level, adding to the dynamics expansions of personal influence applications.

Since the introduction of the personal influence model, many scholarly discussions have emerged regarding the exploration of the role of personal influence from a relationship management standpoint. Recently, Wakefield (2012) returned personal influence to the attention of public relations scholars by discussing the evidence of the early existence of this model in the United States. Muzi Falconi et al. (2009) also stated that:

> Relationship-building is a complex process, and all relationships have a personal dimension that is based on social networking and interactions with other individuals. Therefore, personal influence is an important component of relational communication [which] considers how the influence of individuals contributes to successful public relations as a result of strong personal relationships with key constituents upon whom the success or failure of the organization depends (para. 11).

Consequently, even though elements of the relationship-building or management approach of public relations are not overt in Albania, evidence of the personal influence worldview may in

itself suggest that the underlying foundation of public relations comes down to— even in developing countries in the field— in what Wakefield (2012) suggested: "building and maintaining mutually beneficial relationships" (p. 422). Given the evidence shown by Wakefield (2012) regarding the existence of the personal influence model in early public relations in the United States, it can be argued that this model may not be as country-or-cultural specific as Sriramesh (1991) suggested, but that it is a core function of relationship building worldwide.

These suggestions bring us to the next part of our discussion: a description of what the findings in an emerging country in the field of public relations, like Albania, may mean to the global realm of public relations. Initially, this particular exploration was presented in the form of a research question (RQ5) as part of the research design, but as I conducted the first interviews, I noticed a lack of necessary public relations knowledge and training in the participants that sufficient data were unable to be gathered in order to analyze and address this matter. As the author, I saw it more effective to use RQ5 as part of the discussion, where suggestions and recommendations can be generated, rather than eliminating the question altogether.

The findings of this study suggest that the field of public relations in Albania, including both the academic and the professional features, is underdeveloped. Even though various global elements and influences can be detected, the overall development of the field lacks a strong foundation and direction necessary for the future of public relations in the country. Given the purpose of my study, the attempt to explore the nascent stage of public relations in Albania under the influence of public relations worldviews from afar, and the findings that resulted from this exploration, it can be inferred that Albania is not adopting or creating any new approaches to public relations but rather adapting some elements of existing worldviews. This development can

be considered typical for countries where public relations is emerging and starting to establish itself in the economic and political settings of the given environment.

The adaptation of existing worldviews has its own implications and variations depending on a country's culture, media systems, and political and socio-economic development. Previous studies in Eastern European countries (Kent & Taylor, 2007; Vercic, 2003) have recognized that in order to understand the dynamics of public relations development in a country, it is important to consider a generic approach; however, using the only generic principles of one theory or worldview to confirm whether a country/region conforms to it "falls short of providing scholars and practitioners the tools they need to conduct and study global public relations" (Kent & Taylor, 2007, p. 10).

It has been argued by Kent and Taylor (2007) that in order to extend the body of public relations knowledge and practice globally, it is essential to generate studies that aim to understand the dynamic communications processes of a given nation rather than proving the existence of single models or worldviews. Kent and Taylor (2007) expounded on this idea:

> When scholars and professionals reduce the study of public relations to proving existence of one theoretical framework, they necessarily cut themselves off from other useful features of public relations. Public relations is a humanistic activity, an art, and even if one grand theory of public relations were capable of explaining the practice of public relations in every nation, we believe that such a theory would obscure more than it illuminated. (p. 13)

The authors suggested that a "modern generic study (rhetorical genre theory or RGT)" (p. 11), which consists of a triangulation of knowledge, information and scholarship from many areas relevant to communication such as cultural issues, organizational and audience concepts, media

systems, language and historical values, and communication theories and principles, provides a richer understanding of the dynamics of an area of study in that nation. Kent and Taylor (2007) explained that identifying which model of public relations is practiced "serves little more than a descriptive function helping practitioners understand a nation's culture. Symmetrical arguments do little for advancing scholars and practitioners' understanding or international public relations in general" (p. 13).

The types of studies that Kent and Taylor (2007) referred to require that previous research be conducted in a nation beforehand in different areas related to communications or public relations. Given the lack of scientific research and similar studies in Albania, the design of my study, even though is not based on the approach that Kent and Taylor (2007) discussed, adds to the global public relations discussion and knowledge in various other ways. The study of public relations in Albania uses multiple foundational theories and worldviews simultaneously rather than single approaches, to exploring and describing the dynamics of a "virgin territory" of the field of public relations. In the future, as academic research advances in Albania, and more studies of different areas relevant to communications are conducted, the generic approach would be more relevant in furthering public relations research in Albania while developing more lengthy studies.

The findings of this Albanian study point out interesting connections and relationships of the worldviews with each other that could be further examined in future studies. In this context, the study is significant to the global knowledge of public relations not only because it enhances the understanding of how global dynamics are enacted in Albania, thus adding information from a country never studied before, but also because it brings to light possible interactions between

different worldviews that, if further enhanced, could provide meaningful avenues for the future development of public relations in Albania and the region.

Examples of how the findings of the study could be used to further the development of public relations in Albania include a look at the dynamics of the personal influence worldview presently in the country. The personal influence worldview has often been identified as a characteristic of authoritarian cultures (Grunig et al., 1995). Moreover, it has been associated with unethical actions including bribery and exchange of favors, as demonstrated in studies conducted in India, South Korea and other Asian countries (Grunig et al., 1995). Another technique called *hospitality relations* was identified as part of the personal influence model by Sriramesh (1991) while he was studying public relations in India. He wrote the following regarding practitioners who engaged in hospitality relations:

> Their objective was to keep strategically placed persons "in good humor." Practitioners tried to maintain a good personal relationship with these individuals so that they could use this goodwill later to seek favors. One senior executive called this exchange between public relations practitioners and strategically placed individuals "quid pro quo." He said that by giving gifts and hosting lunches or dinners, a good public relations officer "fans the egos" of the recipients, thus keeping a channel open for asking favors for the organization when needed. (p. 191)

Even though the act of receiving gifts and money in exchange for favors, or being engaged in *hospitality* activities is not considered unethical in certain cultures, these "dark" attributes remain attached to the personal influence approach. However, given the findings of this worldview in Albania and elsewhere (Wakefield, 2012), the characteristics of this model could, in fact, be used

toward building stronger trusting relationships that can benefit not only the field and the profession of public relations but also the community and society in Albania and similar nations.

Because relationships in post-communist societies generally suffer from a lack of trust (Taylor, 2004; Kent & Taylor, 2007), the personal influence model, if applied appropriately, could be helpful in increasing the level of trust and making business, government, community and social relationships more mutually beneficial. On this occasion, personal influence would help the advancement of the relationship management worldview, which is currently subdued in the domain of public relations in Albania. The whole process would further the role and purpose of the public relations by providing a more robust environment conductive to the institutionalization of the public relations field in Albania.

Given the above discussion, the author of this study, in collaboration with public relations professors from Brigham Young University who have extensive international and global experiences in the field of public relations, has proposed the development of a training program for Albania. The purpose of this program will be to provide help and guidance to public relations educators and practitioners in Albania as to how they can advance the field in their country. Since there is a noticeable lack of public relations knowledge, background, experience, and training among educators and practitioners there, the training program will serve as a resource in providing information, helping to create standards and a code of ethics, developing curricula, furthering research and possibly fulfilling other public relations needs.

The proposed training program will be designed in the form of workshops and lectures during a period of three to five days. One of the main objectives of this program will be to inform the participants of the current developments of public relations in Albania generated from the findings of this study. The theoretical framework of this specific study will be used as a

foundational base to develop the training's content and discussion topics. The participants will learn about the overarching worldviews of global public relations, how these views have influenced Albania, and what these conditions could mean for the advancement of public relations in Albania. Apart from lectures and workshop sessions where the main worldviews are presented, the program would include several discussion sessions among the Albanian participants and the presenters about which worldviews might be most appropriately developed in the country (see Appendix B).

Additionally, the training program will be particularly beneficial in introducing the personal influence worldview in university public relations courses. As the findings of my study demonstrated, this worldview is theoretically unknown in Albanian academic settings; therefore the training program would be the first step in implementing the above proposed ways of how the personal influence model can contribute to the development of public relations in Albania. Obtaining knowledge of all of the public relations worldviews and the dynamics associated with each of them would be particularly helpful for educators in establishing an inclusive approach to teaching and research in the academic domain of public relations.

The value and significance of this study is enhanced even further with the proposal of such a training program. Even though the purpose of qualitative research is not to generalize the findings of a study, it is possible that the current study along with the training program be used not only as a benchmark for future research in the country of Albania but also serve as a mechanism or model for approaching the study of public relations in other countries where the field is similarly emerging. The first countries that would benefit from such an approach would be those in the Balkan region, such as Kosovo, Montenegro and Macedonia, given the geographic and historic similarities. These suggestions bring back the Yin's (2009) discussion

introduced earlier regarding the generalization of the findings to theory. One of the ways that Yin (2009) proposes such a generalization is by conducting multiple-case studies which can be used to determine whether similar or contrasting findings will be produced.

An example of public relations training in countries where the public relations field had just started to emerge is provided by Slovenia (Vercic, 2003). The first public relations agency in Slovenia was established in 1989 and two years later two American public relations professors at the University of Maryland, Larissa and James Grunig, visited the country and gave a lecture to the Public Relations Society of Slovenia. The professors visited again a year later to give the first lecture at the University of Ljubljana (Vercic, 2003). These visits established a form of collaboration between practitioners and scholars that influenced the development of public relations in Slovenia. Today, the city of Lake Bled in Slovenia hosts one of the most attended international conferences in public relations and communications.

The development of public relations in Slovenia illustrates how collaboration between practitioners and academicians along with expert training can move forward the development of the field of public relations. The proposed training program for Albania aims to provide a similar learning environment for professors and practitioners in the country, where they can learn how to advance the teaching and practice of the public relations field.

**Chapter 7: Limitations**

After conducting this research, it is important to recognize some limitations that could have impacted the findings of the study. In recognizing these limitations, an invitation is extended to future researchers to make possible improvements on some of the aspects of the study.

First, the study was limited by the author's short stay in the country. A longer period of stay would have provided the author more time and opportunities to develop more networking connections resulting in more participants and a bigger data pool.

Second, the author's lack of experience in conducting qualitative research may have limited this study's possibilities to develop in better ways. Possessing better interview skills could have improved the interview process in making it more comfortable for the participants and efficient as a data gathering technique.

Finally, the lack of previous studies in the public relations field and related fields overall was also a limitation, but in the same time it allows for the development of many possible studies in the future.

**Chapter 8: Conclusion**

The purpose of this study consisted in providing a description of the emerging state of the public relations field in Albania under the framework and influence of four main public relations worldviews that are applied globally. The study sought to provide some insight into how a country approaches the development of public relations— whether it adapts, adopts or creates new practices. After a review of the literature on aspects of public relations applied globally, the author proposed a research plan whose findings would shed some light on possible theoretical meanings that could develop in countries where the field of public relations is emerging.

After considering the issues and questions that this study addressed, the author felt that the research questions would be best addressed qualitatively. The author engaged in in-depth interviews, participant observation and ethnographic artifacts in order to gather the data for the study. The data was then coded and analyzed in order to generate the findings for this study.

A closer examination of the emerging themes and categories in the analysis process resulted in suggestions of several elements from the four main worldviews discussed in the literature review. It was suggested that, in Albania, there seems to be a mix of elements from the persuasive/marketing and personal influence worldviews. Implications and possible explanations of such findings were also discussed in the study.

It was implied that the findings could be related to the country's historical background and current socio-economic or other such factors. Based on the findings and the underdeveloped nature of public relations identified by this research, the author proposed a training program for public relations practitioners and professors that would help to advance the development of the field in Albania. This study along with the training program implementation could be used as a model in studying the development of public relations in other emerging countries similar to Albania.

Lastly, because this study is the first attempt at understanding the dynamics of the emergence of the public relations field in the country of Albania, there are many possibilities for the development of future research. Future studies could focus on evaluating specific aspects of the development of public relations in Albania in relation to the country's cultural dynamics or other socio-economic conditions.

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Appendix A

Interview guide—Semi standardized questions

*Confidentiality: The contents of the interviews were recorded in their entire length, then transcribed

and treated confidentially. Only those directly involved in the research had access to them. Subjects

were volunteers and were not coerced into participation nor penalized for non-participation.

Subjects were not at any risk in regards to their comments. The names of subjects were not attached

to their comments.*

1.  What do you think is the general understanding or perception of the public relations field in Albania?

2.  Do you see any patterns of persuasion/marketing elements taught in public relations classes?

3.  Do you see any patterns of persuasion/marketing elements practiced in the professional field of public relations?

4.  Would you say that public relation is primarily taught as a managerial function in university classes?

5.  Would you say that the function of public relations in the professional setting in Albania is primarily managerial?

6.  What role do networking and friendship relationships play in the practice of public relations in Albania?

7.  In your public relations class, do you teach about personal relationships or friendships that public relations practitioners can form with key individuals in the media, government, or politicians and activist? How relevant is that in Albania?

8.  How prominent would you say is the idea of public relations as an active attempt to restore and maintain a sense of community in Albania?

9.  Do you use any examples or literature in your public relations class that reflects a community role of public relations?

10. Overall, what would you say is the perception of the public relations function in Albania?

11. In what ways do you think global public relations theories and practices have impacted the emergence of the public relations field in Albania?

Appendix B

Training Program Proposal—General Outline

1.  Introduction Session: Get to know each other

2.  Discussion Session I among native participants

    a.  What is the state of public relations in Albania?

3.  Introduction/ lecture on the available public relations worldviews

    a.  Persuasive/Marketing

    b.  Relationship Management

    c.  Community Building

    d.  Personal Influence

4.  Discussion Session II – Which worldviews should be used in Albania?

    a.  Educational setting

    b.  Professional setting

    c.  Why?

5.  Where do we want to go from here? What does the future of public relations in Albania

    look like?

    a.  University programs

    b.  Professional development

    c.  Code of Ethics

    d.   Professional and educational organizations

    e.   Textbooks and practicums/other needs